Good evening.

This annual Student Achievement Awards is something I look forward to every year. It is a special opportunity for me to meet so many students from across the University, at an event that celebrates their unique talents and contributions to our University and society at large.

The Awards are also a reflection of how crucial it is for students to learn not just “in the classroom” but “outside of the classroom” as well.

To have a rich and fulfilling life and career, the majority of us would find that the most important personal qualities needed are: positive attitude, boldness and resilience, and the ability to work well with other people. It is not possible to cultivate these qualities by studying about them – they can only be nurtured through experiential education, particularly through involvement in events or programmes that take you out of your comfort zone.

In NUS, we strive to provide an environment that challenges all our students to reach and achieve beyond what they thought was possible. In line with this, the University strongly supports the total development of our students by encouraging them to go beyond their academic curricula and be involved in activities that build character and leadership qualities. The sum total of these formal and informal learning experiences makes up each student's adventure of learning and self-discovery at the University.

This evening, we recognise the outstanding accomplishments of individuals and student groups who have uncovered their interests and taken full advantage of the wide range of learning opportunities beyond the classroom. I extend my warmest congratulations to the 21 outstanding individuals and 39 exceptional student groups who will be receiving their Student Achievement Awards.
Awards shortly. I applaud their exemplary efforts and recognise their sterling attainments.

The diverse achievements of this year's award winners are impressive. Let me just highlight a few.

First, Danny Tan Wei Qiang. Danny, who is a recent graduate from our Department of Building, was the brains behind the NeuroMOD Technologies team, which won the First Prize in the 4th Annual Intel+UC Berkeley Technology Entrepreneurship Challenge. For this Challenge, winners of 15 national business plan competitions worldwide were invited to compete for top honours at the Haas School of Business, UC Berkeley. This is the first time that a Singapore team has won this prestigious global business plan competition.

Next, Law graduate Edward Ti Seng Wei. Edward won the Middleton Award for Best Speaker at the 10th International Maritime Law Arbitration Moot held at University of Queensland, Brisbane earlier this year. Pitted against some of the brightest Law students from top universities around the world, Edward flew the NUS flag high when he also won the Best Written Memorandum at the same Moot competition.

Another commendable achievement is that of Sarah Cheng Xue Mei, who is receiving the NUS Student Achievement Award for the second time. A final year FASS student, Sarah was awarded the Honour of Distinction in the Fashion (Amateur) category of the third Annual Photography Masters Cup in March this year. The Photography Masters Cup is the equivalent of the Oscar awards for excellence in photography. Sarah also excels in music and the theatre – she is a vocalist with NUS Jazz Band and has also taken part in and directed stage plays.

Let me also mention NUS AIESEC. Since 1981, this student organisation has been offering a rich menu of activities and programmes for our students, centred on raising awareness of social issues and responsibilities. Earlier this
year, NUS AIESEC organised a Social Entrepreneurship Week, engaging social entrepreneurs to share their experiences with our students. Its new initiative, BEADS – acronym for Being Engaged and Dynamic in Society – has been effective in spreading the message of the dangers posed by the HIV/AIDS among thousands of youths in Singapore, through its workshops, multimedia competitions and other mass events. I consider this a great accomplishment and service to our society, particularly to our youths.

The individuals and groups I have mentioned, as well as our other award recipients this evening differ in the nature of their contributions. But one common thread binds them together. Each one of them has maximised the opportunities to work boldly and with passion towards their personal goals. In the process, they have realised their own potential while creating a positive impact both within the University, and the community and society at large. By successfully holding themselves to their own high standards, they have lit the lamp that shows the way forward for their fellow students.

On this note, I would like to congratulate once again all our award recipients for their outstanding contributions and personal achievements. I wish all of you continued success as you continue to explore the limits of the possible and continue to inspire others.

Thank you.