

Speech by Prof Ho Teck Hua, NUS Senior Deputy President and Provost
NUS University Awards
17 Mar 2022, 6.30 pm, Regent Singapore Royal Pavilion Ballroom

NUS Chairman

Award Recipients

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Good evening to everyone here, as well as to those of you joining us on the webcast. The University Awards ceremony is an occasion to honour those among us who have scaled peaks of excellence in education, research, and service.
2. This ceremony is usually a large celebration with dinner at the University Cultural Centre. However, this evening we are reminded that “small is beautiful”.
3. Even in the middle of a pandemic, and perhaps even because of it, we must celebrate the contributions of members of the NUS community. This is similar to how we celebrate students’ achievements at their commencement ceremonies. Even in the tough research environment created by the pandemic, our colleagues have continued to produce stellar work and be awarded tenure and promotion. These are reasons to celebrate.
4. In many ways, NUS is stronger than before. We have developed capabilities in ways we never imagined. For example, our educators and students can now seamlessly transition between face-to-face and virtual learning.
5. The pandemic also prompted us to sharpen our focus as a future-oriented institution taking bold initiatives in education, research, and innovation and enterprise. These initiatives will in turn attract world-class talent to NUS.

6. In education, we are accelerating the transformation of our educational model. We aim to create a rigorous common curriculum, flexible academic pathways, and a truly interdisciplinary education that will create a mindset for lifelong learning. Our graduates can get educated in multiple areas, their careers will not be limited by their first degree, and they will get the training needed to pivot and seize new opportunities.
7. Our three new colleges – the College of Humanities and Sciences, the College of Design and Engineering, and NUS College – are fully aligned with the new model. Common curricula are also being planned for majors in the health sciences, computing, and business. Therefore, by the end of June 2024, the whole university will be engaged in interdisciplinary teaching and learning.
8. NUS will also continue to develop new peaks of excellence in research. As a comprehensive university, we are in a unique position to provide platforms where researchers can work together in interdisciplinary teams, to brainstorm, and create innovative solutions.
9. The Smart Nation Research Cluster is one such platform. Since 2016, the cluster has engaged in fundamental research in data science, artificial intelligence, optimisation, and cybersecurity. Today, the Smart Nation Research Cluster is working with more than one billion dollars in research grants. AI Singapore, the largest national level research programme is part of the cluster. There are also three joint labs with Grab, Singapore Airlines, and Singtel.
10. The Materials Research Cluster is another platform. In 2021, 14 NUS materials research scientists and engineers were recognised as being among the world's highly cited researchers. Last year, the Ministry of Education supported the creation of the Institute for Functional Intelligent Materials, called I-FIM for short, a two-hundred-million-dollar research centre of excellence. I-FIM is the first institute in the world dedicated to the design, synthesis, and application of functional intelligent materials.

11. Talent is central to securing a bright future for NUS. The Covid-19 pandemic has created a window of opportunity for NUS to develop a powerful talent ecosystem by recruiting and nurturing a critical mass of world-class talent across many fields. Our talent will prepare our students for the future, lead research breakthroughs, and found deep tech startups. This talent ecosystem will give the university an even higher development trajectory.
12. To help create this ecosystem, our colleges, faculties, and schools have been empowered to bring in talent at every level. We aim to bring in 10 senior hires per year. In 2019, we introduced the Presidential Young Professorship, or PYP, scheme to attract the most promising assistant professors. More than 40 PYPs have been hired and we plan to bring in at least 25 PYP faculty per year.
13. Education is integral to NUS, so the university will continue to welcome passionate and gifted educators and practitioners on our educator track. Among top universities, NUS is the only institution that offers a formal pathway to tenured professorship based on a peak of excellence in education. We are committed to developing a strong pool of educators who excel in educational scholarship and can spearhead impactful and transformative learning experiences for our students.
14. But even as we pursue global talent, NUS is deeply committed to nurturing a strong base of Singaporean talent. Since 2015, more than 60 Singaporean academics pursuing their postgraduate and postdoctoral training have been awarded NUS Overseas Graduate Scholarships or Overseas Postdoctoral Fellowships. We aim to recruit at least 10 of these scholars every year. Young Singaporean academics who have not received scholarships can apply for an Inauguration Grant when they join NUS.
15. This evening, I have had the opportunity to share how NUS is investing in talent and sustained excellence in education and research. I look forward to honouring even more recipients at future University Awards ceremonies.
16. To all our award recipients, I convey my heartiest congratulations. Today's

celebration is a reminder that even in a pandemic, your work has continued at the highest levels. Your dedication to pursuing your passions, honing your craft, and reaching for excellence serves as an inspiration to us all.

Thank you.