

Launch of The Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Centre

Speech by Professor Tan Eng Chye
Deputy President (Academic Affairs) and Provost

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Cinnamon College

Mr Teo Chee Hean, Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security,
Mr Sam Tan Chin Siong, Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Manpower &
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Mr Hsieh Fu Hua, Chairman of the NUS Board of Trustees,

Mr Chua Thian Poh,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

A very good morning to everyone, and I bid you a warm welcome to University Town, a vibrant part of the Kent Ridge Campus. We are gathered here to celebrate the launch of the Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Centre.

As Singapore's flagship public university NUS strives to provide a holistic and transformative education that nurtures graduates who are innovative, able and confident to lead and serve the needs of the economy, community and society.

All human beings need a sense of belonging. We are all part of many communities, (online and offline), and communities are what connect us to the many relationships we develop. We draw strength and resources from the communities we are part of; we support, contribute and build one another up in our communities.

The notion and spirit of community has played a critical role in the history of NUS. NUS was founded in 1905, by a group of businessmen and community leaders, led by Tan Jiak Kim, to serve the needs of the local community. Today, NUS continues to nurture graduates who are deeply passionate about the community.

Like many other societies, complex social issues are emerging in Singapore and we will have to navigate through and chart our course. These include a rapidly-ageing population, mental health issues, people with disabilities, caregiver stress, chronic poverty, vulnerable children and youth, and integration of migrants. To mobilise communities to come together to address social issues, we need community leaders who are driven by a passion to serve the community.

With this objective in mind, in 2011, Mr Chua Thian Poh made a very generous gift of S\$5 million to NUS to establish the Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Programme to nurture the next generation of community leaders.

The Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Programme is an especially meaningful programme. It offers excellent opportunities to students of all disciplines, whether one is from Engineering, Computing, Medicine or the Arts - regardless your degree major, to be involved in community development. Through this Programme, NUS students partner more than 90 different social service organisations to research on social and community issues, develop innovative solutions, and measure the impact of social interventions.

For this, NUS is deeply grateful for the vision and heart of Mr Chua Thian Poh.

The students enrolled in this Programme are known as Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Programme fellows. To date, there are 114 graduated fellows. We are proud to share that the Programme has left an indelible mark on them, and has instilled in them a spirit to serve society.

One graduated fellow of the Programme is Dr Andrew Arjun Sayampanathan. Whilst he was a fellow, he mapped the aspirations, needs and assets of the community in Kampong Glam for the Central Singapore Community Development Council. Today, as a medical doctor with MOH Holdings, Andrew is continuing his voluntary role as advisor for the Constructing Care Collaboration, a medical student project he initiated with his peers to serve the migrant worker community.

Then, there is Miss Lok Yan Lin, who developed and pilot-tested an alternative food rations distribution model for the elderly residents of Lengkok Bahru. She is now working in the Social

Policy and Services Group at the Ministry of Social and Family Development. Yan Lin remains actively involved in the community and serves as a Youth Executive Committee leader in the Bukit Batok East Community Club.

Earlier this year, a second, very generous gift of S\$5 million from Mr Chua Thian Poh has enabled the Programme to progress to the next phase, that is, the establishment of the Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Centre. With this gift, we can double our yearly intake from 40 to 80 students. Two new modules will also be added – the *Community Development Practicum* and the *Engaging and Building Communities* module. These additions will form the core experience of the fellows, allowing them to develop tools for enabling transformative social change.

The Centre will provide a physical presence, a home if you will, for the fellows and alumni. The Centre will offer more resources for social research projects. It will encourage greater collaboration with social service organisations in Singapore by providing a space for fellows, alumni and partner organisations to meet, exchange ideas, and develop solutions for the better of the community.

Mr Chua, on behalf of NUS and the community we serve, thank you for your vision, initiative and generosity. The benefits of your gift will extend into the future and beyond the walls of NUS. Thank you too, for your belief in NUS as a worthy partner of your philanthropic efforts. We look forward to an enduring partnership with you, and your continued support in nurturing the next generation of leaders with a heart to serve and give back to the community.

On this note, I wish the Chua Thian Poh Leadership Centre every success. Thank you.