

Mr Vincent Cai, 31, was among the National University of Singapore graduands yesterday morning. He completed a master's in public health while working as part of the contact-tracing task group tackling the Covid-19 pandemic here. PHOTO: COURTESY OF VINCENT CAI



NUS holds its first online graduation ceremony

In all, there will be 60 such events for over 23,500 students of the 2020, 2021 cohorts

Goh Yan Han

A total of 186 students from the National University of Singapore (NUS) graduated in a virtual ceremony yesterday morning.

This is the first time NUS has held a graduation ceremony in this manner.

Yesterday's event was the first of 60 online ceremonies that will see more than 23,500 students from the classes of 2020 and 2021 graduating. Those from the class of 2020 had their graduation ceremonies postponed to this year.

President Halimah Yacob, who is also NUS chancellor, gave a speech to the graduating students, in which she noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had upended Singaporeans' way of life and altered the face of an already disruptive future.

"It is a reminder that sometimes, even the best-laid plans can be overturned by events that are not within our control," she said.

Addressing 154 graduates from the NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health and 32 graduates from the Master of Science in Industry 4.0 programme offered by the NUS School of Continuing and Lifelong Education, Madam Halimah encouraged them to hold steadfast to values of respect, integrity, innovation, excellence and

resilience during these challenging times.

She said: "I encourage you to embody these traits in the path ahead, strive to give your best in whatever you do, stay curious and keep learning. More importantly, show respect and humility to all you meet along the way."

The class of 2020 comprises 11,582 graduates, of whom 6,973 have been conferred bachelor's degrees and 4,609 have been conferred graduate degrees.

The class of 2021 comprises 11,990 graduates, of whom 6,982 will be conferred bachelor's degrees and 5,008 will be conferred graduate degrees.

NUS had originally planned for in-person graduation ceremonies to take place from June 17 to the end of next month, but made the switch to online ceremonies amid a spike in Covid-19 cases last month.

Mr Vincent Cai, 31, was among yesterday morning's graduands. He had completed a master's in public health while working as part of the contact-tracing task group tackling the Covid-19 pandemic here.

Mr Cai, who did his undergraduate degree in sports science and management, said he took up the master's degree as public health has a wider impact and reach in improving the health of people through policy and control measures.



PHOTO: NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

VALUABLE ADVICE

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PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB, who is also National University of Singapore chancellor, in her speech to the graduating students.

He joined the communicable diseases division of the Health Ministry in November 2019 after learning about infectious diseases through the course.

He had been focused on diseases like measles and rubella when the pandemic hit and resources were channelled to tackle Covid-19, so he was reassigned to do contact tracing.

When asked about his biggest takeaway from the course, Mr Cai said: "It is to do the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people. For example, the measures we are now taking amid the pandemic may be an inconvenience to most, but overall, the benefits of protection and prevention outweigh the benefits of not taking any control measures."

Mr Cai said he would continue his work on contact tracing until the end of the pandemic and would then return to his area of interest in tackling measles, rubella and other droplet-borne diseases.

At the ceremony, NUS president Tan Eng Chye said he was proud of how the cohorts of 2020 and 2021 had shown resolve, adaptability and an unwavering commitment to excellence during this difficult period.

"Many of you have had to make major adjustments to your plans and career pathways... I would urge that you nurture a new mindset, be prepared to chart new paths and move boldly to seize emerging opportunities."

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