

**SPEECH BY MS GRACE FU, SENIOR MINISTER OF
STATE, MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT &
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
AT THE NTU ALUMNI NIGHT 2009 HELD ON
SATURDAY, 24 OCTOBER 2009, 7:30PM AT NANYANG
AUDITORIUM, NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL
UNIVERSITY**

Dr Su Guaning, President of NTU

Distinguished alumni,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening.

The new era of alumni engagement

1. Thank you for inviting me to your Alumni Night. I am delighted to be here this evening to join you in recognizing alumni who have done themselves and their alma mater proud. This occasion is the highlight of the

University's Homecoming and as your President has mentioned, some of the returning alumni have begun celebrating since last evening. After years of not seeing one another, I believe the barbeque they were treated to has helped to rekindle old friendships.

2. Alumni play a major role in the development of their alma mater. Allow me to share my experience in engaging the alumni of schools through my position in **COMPASS** (**COM**munity and **PA**rents in **S**upport of **S**chools. Many alumni harbored a deep sense of gratitude towards their alma mater that compelled them to give their time and resources to the school. Our engagement has taught us that the positive school experience they have had and the fond memories of school days spent with friends create a strong sense of belonging, connecting them to their alma mater long after they have left school. This is

what motivates the schools' alumni, whom we endearingly term 'old boys' and 'old girls', to return year after year. The sense of duty can be a valuable source of energy and when mobilized appropriately, can be very beneficial to the development of the school. NTU is one such institution – long tradition, tumultuous history and passionate alumni who have settled in many parts of the world but yet tied by heart strings to the institution.

Of bloom and passion

3. I am told by the organizing committee that the design for the backdrop, dandelions, was chosen to symbolize the relationship between the alumni and NTU.

The dandelion stamens are blown far and wide by the wind. Wherever they fall, they thrive and bloom. In much the same way, upon graduation, alumni will leave the comfort zone of the campus, some may travel beyond our shores.

As they thrive and bloom in their new habitat, the fact that they shared the same heritage as the mother plant remained. The dandelions are symbolic of the Nanyang Spirit, the hallmark of the NTU alumni.

4. I understand that more than 130,000 alumni call NTU home and your alumni community is expanding. That they are spread out across 110 different countries presents a challenge for the University to connect with those overseas. I am aware that NTU has been intensifying its engagement with its overseas alumni. The University has set up 20 alumni associations abroad, in China, Indonesia, India, Thailand, United Kingdom, and Vietnam. I commend the NTU alumni who have come forward to set up overseas chapters, in particular, those based in China. Indeed, the means by which the University is establishing its global

alumni network is something the other local universities can emulate.

Schooling future generations

5. While a common heritage and experience can be a positive force to rally alumni towards the school, we should also ensure that the efforts to retain common memories do not hinder progress and development. Singapore has always emphasized development of our human capital through education. Universities play a key role in developing talent. The education our universities provide needs to be relevant and inspirational. Our education system has to prepare our students for a world that is more globalized and knowledge intensive. In two years' time, Singapore will have a new publicly-funded university to add to the three that we now have, so that more places can be created for deserving students. NTU, NUS and SMU will compete with the fourth university for

students, particularly in the fields of engineering and applied science. Another university will be set up to offer Poly graduands university education as an extension of the Poly programme. The changes in the education landscape will impose new challenges on the incumbent universities and faculties. I urge you to support your alma mater by focusing on the challenges and opportunities that are ahead of you. Build on your linkages to China and India and harness the strengths of your alumni all around the world. Offer a world-class education to the best in Singapore and the world and make NTU a university of choice.

Effective recognition

6. How can alumni contribute? First, by being credible and inspiring role models. Alumni speak with credibility and their success stories will give the students confidence about the school and about themselves. Second,

alumni provide helpful connections in the commercial world for internship, career and business opportunities. More importantly, alumni can support bright students who are in need. The American universities do this extremely well – they understood that the brightest attract the brightest. Through their endowment funds, they are prepared to subsidize bright students heavily. The bright students are grateful for the help, tend to be successful in life and are in turn willing to contribute to the university. This helps to generate a virtuous cycle.

7. The 26 alumni whom the University are honouring tonight demonstrate the attributes of exemplary alumni. NTU is presenting its top honours to three truly outstanding individuals - Mr Chia Ban Seng, Datuk Er Kok Leong and Dr William Tan. Not only have you accomplished much in your careers, you have volunteered time and effort

to serve your alma mater. To you and all award winners tonight, I offer my heartiest congratulations.

Conclusion

8. Winston Churchill once said, “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.” When one gives, one develops a greater sense of belonging. I hope many more NTU alumni will step forward to give their best not only to the University, but to Singapore and the world. Come August 2010, NTU, as the world’s first Youth Olympic Games Village, will be playing host to young athletes from all over the world. Students, staff and alumni who have volunteered to help out during this once-in-a-lifetime occasion will get to experience this special feeling of giving and belonging. I am certain you will do Singapore proud.

9. I wish you all an enjoyable evening of renewing ties with one another and with your alma mater. Once again, thank you for inviting me to be a part of this very special occasion.

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