

SPEECH BY NUS PRESIDENT PROFESSOR TAN CHORH CHUAN
NUS CAREER FAIR 2010 OPENING
4 FEBRUARY 2010, 9.30 AM AT MPSH 4

Mr Teng Theng Dar, CEO, Singapore Business Federation

Mr Dhiren Shantilal, Senior Vice President of Kelly Services Asia Pacific

Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Students and Friends

Good morning.

Thank you for joining us for the opening of NUS Career Fair 2010, organized by our Office of Student Affairs and the NUS Career Centre.

Global economy and graduate employment opportunities

This time last year, the mood was a somber one. The global financial system was in turmoil. Singapore was bracing for the full impact of the global recession. For the graduating class of 2009, the immediate future then appeared fraught with difficulty.

This time last year, NUS launched several schemes to help our graduating cohort to ride out the storm. Along with the government's support schemes, these blunted the impact of the global crisis on our graduates.

Today, the worst seems to be over, and Singapore's economy is growing again. A survey among employers conducted by the NUS Career Centre across several industries last December, showed that almost 90% of the respondents have the intention to hire fresh graduates this year. More than a quarter of the recruiters who responded to the survey also indicated that they would each recruit more than 20 fresh graduates.

These are positive and welcoming signs. I think our students have reasons to be optimistic. As you set out in your career search, be resourceful and boldly seek opportunities, but at the same time, I urge you not to take your opportunities for granted. The global economic recovery is still fragile and many uncertainties remain.

A key question therefore is this: How can NUS work with you to help you further stand out? To enable you to excel in a tough and uncertain environment?

Employers tell us that they value graduates who have good Emotional Quotient (EQ), and are able to work effectively across different cultures and disciplines.

NUS students would know that our university has created numerous and unique educational pathways for our students to gain strong global and cross-cultural perspectives while honing their life skills and EQ. One in two undergraduates have an overseas educational experience and one in five spend six months or more abroad. NUS students can choose from international programmes ranging from internships to student exchange, from the NUS Overseas College to joint and double-degree programmes with prestigious NUS partners.

Take Gaurav Goenka for example. Gaurav is our Mechanical Engineering graduate student and a NUS Double Degree holder with École Centrale Paris. He interned with the Boston Consulting Group in Paris, and was part of a four-member team tasked to help restructure a billion dollar French retailer and bring it back to profitability. Gaurav soon became an integral part of the team and a regular at meetings with the group's CEO and Board of Directors.

Even though it was a multi-national workplace, Gaurav had to adapt to the Parisian work-culture that was different compared to that of India or Singapore. He found that his young age, nationality or the fact that he had not yet completed his studies was no barrier. All they were concerned with was the quality of his work.

I am delighted to share that Gaurav was offered a job at the Boston Consulting Group, even before he had completed his studies in NUS.

Nurturing global minds and Asian talents

The world needs talented individuals who can function effectively at a global level, have initiative and resilience, and can navigate well around unpredictable situations. In addition, employers worldwide are scouting for Asia-savvy talent to ride on Asia's growth wave. The talent war in Asia is intensifying as more and more global corporations gravitate towards Asia to tap on the immense growth potential here.

Singapore needs such talent too. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong noted in his New Year Message this year that Singapore must focus to secure our long-term position in a post-crisis economy, to carve a role and a niche for ourselves amidst the Asian economic giants, tapping on Asia's progress and vibrancy.

At NUS, we are of the same mind. Our vision is to be a "Leading Global University, centred in Asia". Through our distinctive global education programmes, NUS aims to nurture our students to become "Global Talent" and "Asia's Best".

Enhancing Global Exposure – New Initiatives

Today, I am pleased to announce that the NUS Career Centre is launching two more initiatives to enhance our students' global exposure and to further increase our graduates' competitive edge in the market. We believe these new programmes will bring out the very best in our own local talent, which in turn would help attract high-value manufacturing and multinational companies to Singapore, and allow Singapore-based companies to scale up their operations regionally and globally.

First, NUS will be working closely with Kelly Services to give NUS students a head start for entry into the employment market. NUS undergraduate and graduate students as well as alumni will have access to Kelly Services' wide connections to job opportunities in knowledge-based industries here such as those in engineering, IT, banking, finance, law, R&D, healthcare, education and professional services. Mr Dhiren Shantilal, Senior Vice President of Kelly Services Asia Pacific will share more about this in his speech shortly.

Second, riding on our strategic partnership with the Singapore Business Federation (SBF), the NUS Career Centre has launched a new internship programme called the SBF-NUS Global Internship and Mentorship Programme (GIM). Under this scheme, NUS students will go through a 12 or 24 week internship at the global or overseas offices of multi-national corporations and be mentored by senior management staff of these companies. The interns would also get to participate in SBF's organized trade and other events for added global and cross-cultural exposure.

These initiatives complement the Global Talent Programme (GTP) that was introduced by the NUS Career Centre last year. This programme aims to expose and equip our students with the relevant global and career competencies, thereby enhancing their employability. We plan to conduct, as part of GTP, workshops in EQ, diversity management, and cross-cultural communication to equip NUS graduates with these critical life skills. There will also be a "Global Talent, Asia's Best" talk series, featuring accomplished individuals and alumni who have succeeded globally and in Asia, to share their experiences and insights.

Closing

To our students who are here with us today, I urge you to make full use of the many programmes available in NUS, and seize the opportunity to venture beyond our campus and Singapore's shores. Spending a semester or two at an overseas internship is more than seeing the sights or working in a different setting. An overseas stint can transform

a person in surprising and delightful ways. As the Chinese saying goes, “Journeying ten thousand miles is more valuable than reading ten thousand scrolls”. Just ask people like Gaurav, who have ventured on global internship before you.

To representatives from Kelly Services, Singapore Business Foundation and the employers who are here today, I would like to thank you on behalf of the University for your support and the opportunities that you are providing for our students. You are helping to unlock and hone the special qualities and promise of our students, as they embark on a future full of possibilities and challenges. We hope to continue building on our collaborations, and to help meet your talent requirements.

Finally, I would like to thank Dean of Students Tan Teck Koon, Ms Corrine Ong and her team for doing such a great job organizing this fair.

In closing, I wish you all a fruitful time at the NUS Career Fair 2010. Thank you.