

**Speech by Professor Tan Chorh Chuan  
President, National University of Singapore  
Commencement 2011**

**Monday, 4 July 2011 at 11 am at University Cultural Centre**

NUS Chancellor, President S R Nathan

Minister for Education, Mr Heng Swee Keat

NUS Pro-Chancellors

Chairman and members of the NUS Board of Trustees,

Our Honorary Doctorate recipient Mr Philip Yeo,

Our special guest, Professor Brodhead, President of Duke University

Distinguished Guests

Graduands, Parents and Families

Alumni and Friends

Ladies and Gentlemen

To the graduating Class of 2011, I extend my heartiest congratulations!

We are delighted to celebrate this happy occasion with you. It marks the end of a chapter of hard work and achievement for you, and signals the start of a new and exciting next phase of your lives.

I especially want to congratulate the parents and families of our new graduates. Your unstinting support and love has been a vital factor in their success. You should be very proud because they have done well academically, and they have also seized the many opportunities in NUS to develop and grow as individuals and as leaders. And in the process, they have excelled and contributed in many different ways.

For example, the arts and culture scene on campus, and indeed in Singapore, has been set ablaze by the creativity of students from across all our Schools in the university. The highlight was last year's Rag and Flag Day, held in conjunction with the Youth Olympic Games, and powered by the sheer energy of over 6000 students. The float displays were truly awesome and the students also raised half a million dollars for charity.



Caption: Eusoff Hall Float – Winner of the NUS President's Shield and the NUSSU Challenge Shield

Our students continued to win many prestigious international competitions from music to law, from business to engineering. Our sportsmen and women did us proud at the Commonwealth and Asian Games by clinching top spots and medals. The student-team from our Mechanical Engineering Department won the top 2 prizes in Robocup 2010, the world's largest robotic competition. The life-sized humanoid robot they created did so well in the "dribble-and-kick" challenge that I suggest they nickname it "Ronaldo".



Caption: Robot BIP III and the ROBOCUP2010 winning team from NUS

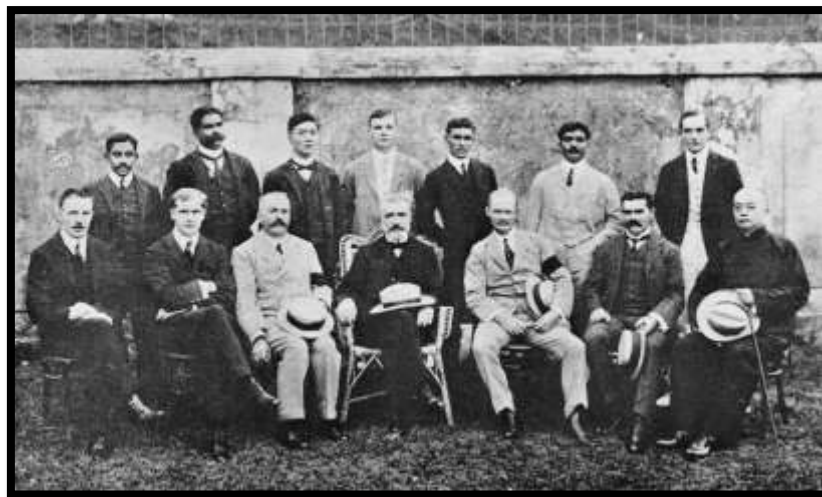
Very importantly, our students also contributed much to service to the wider community. They gave selflessly of their time and talent in many different ways to help the less-advantaged in Singapore and the region.

So, for our new graduates, with the benefit of what you have learnt both inside and outside the classroom, you can look to the future with confidence. You are also graduating at a time of growth and opportunity.

The Straits Times on June 18 had a front-page report of the rosy employment situation where “job-seekers are the ones calling the shots”. This is of course, great news for you. As you consider the many options in front of you, choose not just with your head, but with your heart. And once you have made a choice, give it your very best. No matter what you elect to pursue, if you do so with commitment, imagination and courage, you will find fulfilment in your work and lives.

In the 2009 Commencement, the main ceremony marked the 80th anniversary of our Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, the Faculty of Dentistry and the Faculty of Science. At today's main ceremony, we celebrate a remarkable double milestone.

For the new graduates of the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, this is the 100<sup>th</sup> year since our first medical school graduation. On 23 June 1911, the Acting Governor of the Straits Settlement, The Hon E.L. Brockman presented diplomas to the first graduating class of students from the medical school which would eventually become NUS.



The Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser issue of June 1911 reported the event thus: “there was a considerable gathering of students, and their friends of the medical world ...” “The Medical School was started in 1905, ....and 4 existing buildings, part of the Lunatic Asylum, were converted into classrooms”.

I think you would agree that we have made substantial progress since those early days. Yet, for our new medical graduates, you should always remember that you are part of a long and rich history of selfless and devoted service to the community. Your work and contributions will extend and redefine the

tradition of medical excellence that has been the hallmark of our university for the past century.

For the new graduates of the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School, this is the very first commencement. You represent the beginning of a new and different medical tradition in NUS and Singapore. As the pioneering class, you will blaze a new trail of excellence and commitment to our patients and society, which future classes will emulate and build upon.

Your education is rooted in the ground-breaking partnership between NUS and Duke University – one which draws on the best of 2 outstanding global universities. This collaboration has been a great success. Despite being new, the School already stands out for its innovative teaching and the quality of its faculty, students and research. We believe that the School will make novel contributions in global medical education, and as a platform for joint research on vital health issues for Asia and the rest of the world.

We are very honoured by the presence today of Professor Richard Brodhead, President of Duke University. President Brodhead has made transformative changes that have made Duke one of the most highly sought-after choices for students, among the universities in the United States. Under his visionary leadership, Duke has powered into the top ranks of the world's leading research universities. He has also championed Duke's efforts to translate its research to innovations, services and ideas that benefit society. President Brodhead is one of the pre-eminent leaders in global higher education, and we look forward to hearing from him shortly.

Today's ceremony is also very special because NUS will be conferring an Honorary Doctor of Letters on a remarkable individual, Mr Philip Yeo.

Apart from his countless accomplishments and contributions, Mr Yeo stands out for his zest for learning, his passion and his indefatigable “can-do” spirit. His deep interest in education is legendary. He lives life at a pace that leaves the rest of us breathless. Yet he always has time for young people, for his scholars and for his colleagues and friends.

He is truly a source of great inspiration for all of us, particularly for our fresh graduates.

Finally, I would like to end by once again congratulating the Class of 2011, your parents and loved ones. We will miss you, Class of 2011, because you have truly enriched our university community. Despite the tough requirements of your academic programmes, you have made a real difference to our campus and to the broader society through your talent, boundless energy and creativity.

We welcome you back warmly, as our newest alumni. I hope that NUS will always have a special place in your hearts and lives, just as you will always have a special place in our University.

I leave you with the remarks which Professor Croucher, our Medical School Dean, shared with the graduating students in June 1911. They are still highly relevant today, despite the passage of a century, and apply equally to all our new graduates, regardless of the field of study you pursued.

“Although (you) have finished the course at school, (your) studies would have to continue to the end of (your) professional life.” Indeed, learning to learn continually and effectively, will be vital to your success in work and life.

Congratulations and all the very best! Thank you.