

SPEECH BY PROFESSOR TAN CHORH CHUAN, PRESIDENT, NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE AT THE WELCOME LUNCH FOR NUS' NINTH CHANCELLOR, HIS EXCELLENCY DR TONY TAN KENG YAM, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE, ON MONDAY, 28 NOVEMBER 2011, 12.30 PM, AT NUS UNIVERSITY HALL

Our Chancellor, Your Excellency Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, President of the Republic of Singapore, and Mrs Mary Tan

Minister for Education, Mr Heng Swee Keat

NUS Pro-Chancellors

Chairman, NUS Board of Trustees, Mr Wong Ngit Liong & Mrs Wong

Members of the Board of Trustees

Distinguished Guests

Ladies & Gentlemen

It is a great pleasure and honour for me, on behalf of the NUS Board of Trustees and the entire University community, to welcome warmly President Tony Tan, as NUS' 9th Chancellor.

Today's event is an expression of the deep honour, the great enthusiasm and tremendous warmth with which the whole NUS family greets the appointment of our new Chancellor. We are indeed grateful to President Tony Tan and Mrs Tan for so kindly agreeing to grace this occasion with their presence, and to accept our welcome and good wishes.

Our new Chancellor is, of course, no stranger to the NUS community and to the higher education sector in Singapore.

In fact, in his previous capacity as Minister for Education and later as Deputy Prime Minister overseeing higher education, President Tony Tan was one of the principal architects of the transformation of Singapore's university sector.

Under his visionary leadership, Singapore's universities have made enormous strides. Notably, university education has been made accessible to more Singaporeans regardless of their family or financial backgrounds. In 1991, he inaugurated the Universities' Endowment Fund to garner community and philanthropic support to promote academic and research excellence. He was also instrumental in the globalisation of Singapore's university sector.

For NUS, his powerful vision of Singapore's universities as world-class institutions excelling in education, research and entrepreneurship in service of Singapore and society, provided the impetus and support that has enabled us to rapidly attain our current high global reputation.

For today's happy event, however, I would like to highlight one truly remarkable fact that may not be as widely-known.

This fact is also a source of great pride and inspiration for the NUS family.

The fact is this: During the course of his illustrious career, President Tony Tan has played every possible role within our University – as a student, a faculty member, a Vice Chancellor, an active alumnus and now our Chancellor.

In each of these roles, he has achieved a level of distinction that is quite unparalleled.

Please allow me to expand on this.

President Tony Tan was an undergraduate student in our predecessor institution, the University of Singapore. He studied Physics and was well known for his scholarship and academic brilliance. He emerged top of his class in 1962 with a First Class Honours degree and then, went on to obtain a Master of Science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on an Asia Foundation Scholarship.

President Tony Tan then returned to his alma mater as a faculty member in 1964 where he taught Physics. The following year, he set off to pursue a PhD in Applied Mathematics at the University of Adelaide and amazingly, he completed his doctoral studies in just two years.

He then returned to his alma mater again, this time at the Department of Mathematics from 1967 to 1969. As a faculty member, he was remembered for his keen intellect and deep academic insights.

Then, in 1980, President Tony Tan was appointed as the first Vice Chancellor of the newly formed National University of Singapore. In this role, he successfully brought together the University of Singapore and Nanyang University, two very different institutions with very different cultures and in so doing, laid the solid foundations which enabled NUS to embark on its current steep trajectory of global excellence.

Beyond all these, President Tony Tan and Mrs Tan are also active and very supportive alumni of NUS. They regularly attend alumni events and support many alumni initiatives, from class reunions to the Bash@Bukit Timah, from the Eusoff College reunions to NUS Society functions. For his many contributions, President Tony Tan was conferred the Eminent Alumnus Award by our University in 2005, the highest recognition for alumni from NUS.

This afternoon, as we welcome President Tony Tan as our new Chancellor, it is with a certain sense of completeness, since his new and vital position at the head of NUS caps the distinguished and remarkable series of roles that he has played in our University over the past five decades.

We are also delighted that NUS will have the benefit once again of his presence at the helm of our University. President Tony Tan truly stands out as a beacon and source of inspiration for every part of the NUS community. We thank The President and Mrs Tan once again for gracing this Welcome lunch. We look forward with great anticipation to your continuing strong support for our University.

Thank you.

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