ANNEX – RECIPIENTS OF 2019 FASS DISTINGUISHED ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES ALUMNI AWARD

- Mrs Ann Elizabeth Wee (Affiliate alumna)
- Mr S. Chandra Das (Class of ’65)
- Ambassador Barry Desker (Class of ’70)
- Mr Wong Kan Seng (Class of ’70)
- Ms Janet Lim (Class of ’75)

Mrs Ann Elizabeth Wee

Mrs Ann Elizabeth Wee, an NUS Affiliate Alumni, is highly respected as the Founding Mother of Social Work in Singapore for her pioneering efforts and unparalleled contributions to the country’s social service sector.

Mrs Wee’s career in social work spans six decades. After four years at the Methodist Girls’ School, Mrs Wee joined the Social Welfare Department in 1955 as its only Caucasian social worker. To better communicate with and advocate for her clients who are mainly from low income families, she picked up Cantonese and Hokkien on the job. At the same time, Mrs Wee began part-time teaching at the then University of Malaya.

In 1957, Mrs Wee began teaching full-time at the Department of Social Work, and formally assumed headship of the Department in 1967, a role which she served until her retirement in 1986. As the Department’s longest serving Head, Mrs Wee was the driving force behind the University’s decision to upgrade its two-year diploma course to a full-fledged Honours Degree programme, paving the way for social workers to be recognised as professionals, enjoy better career prospects, and gain access to policymaking. To impart her knowledge to future generations of social workers, Mrs Wee further co-authored Social Work in the Singapore Context, the only textbook on social work in Singapore.

Mrs Wee’s contributions extend beyond the academic sphere and she served on panels that traversed demographics and issues. In addition to volunteering on the Advisory Panel to the Juvenile Court for nearly four decades (1970 – 2009), Mrs Wee also served as an advisor on women’s and girl’s issues with the Ministry of Social Affairs; on the board of governors of the National Youth Leadership Training Institute; and several other boards and committees.

Mrs Wee was bestowed with the Public Service Star in 1972, and again with the Public Service Star (Bar) in 2004. Inducted into the Singapore Women’s Hall of Fame in 2014, Mrs Wee’s public awards further include The Most Outstanding MCYS Volunteer Award (2004), Meritorious Service Medal (2010), and NUSS Distinguished Member Award (2012). Notably, Mrs Wee was also the inaugural recipient of the Lifetime Volunteer Achievement Award presented by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports in 2009.

In celebration of Mrs Wee’s lasting contributions, the Department of Social Work established the Ann Wee NUS Social Work Alumni Award in 2014, during the Faculty’s 85th Anniversary celebrations. This award is presented in her honour by NUS to recognise excellence in social work.

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Mr S. Chandra Das
Class of ‘65

Mr S. Chandra Das graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Economics in 1965 from University of Singapore. Before entering university, he worked as a teacher after completing his Certificate in Education at the Teachers Training College in 1960.

Mr Das has more than 40 years of experience in a number of different sectors, helming corporates, government entities and social enterprises at the highest levels. He began his career in 1965, joining the Economic Development Board and rising to become its Director of Export Promotion Centre until 1968, when the Centre was absorbed to form INTRACO, Singapore’s primary trading arm to explore overseas markets and identify new sources of raw materials. Mr Das served as Intraco’s Managing Director for 10 years until 1986.

He has been appointed to the Boards of numerous listed corporate entities like NOL, Sembawang, Jurong Shipyard and currently, he serves as Chairman of the TalkMed Group Ltd, Deputy Chairman of Yeo Hiap Seng Ltd and as a Director of Ascendas-Singbridge Pte Ltd. Mr Das has been involved with NTUC Co-operatives since 1972 and was Chairman of NTUC Fairprice from 1993 to 2005. He also chaired the Central Co-operative Fund for 10 years. On the diplomatic front, he was Singapore’s first Trade Representative to the USSR from 1970 to 1971. From 2005 to 2014, he was Singapore’s Non-Resident Ambassador to Turkey and currently serves as Non-Resident High Commissioner to Sri Lanka.

Mr Das was elected as a Member of Parliament in 1980 and retired in 1996 after serving for four terms. He has held prominent and pioneering roles in the public service, including Chairman of the Government Feedback Unit. He was the first Chairman of the Trade Development Board and has also served on the Boards of the Port of Singapore Authority and the Public Utilities Board. Currently, he serves as a Life Trustee of SINDA and has been a Pro-Chancellor of the Nanyang Technological University since 2007.

In recognition of his significant contributions to the co-operative movement, public sector and business community, Mr Das has been conferred numerous awards, including Golden Cross of Merit of Poland, President’s Medal by Singapore Australian Business Council, Distinguished Service (Star) Award by National Trades Union Congress, and the Public Star Award (BBM) by Singapore Government. The University of Newcastle, Australia and St John’s University, (New York) had also conferred him Honorary Doctorates.

Ambassador Barry Desker
Class of ’70

Ambassador Barry Desker graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (First Class Honours) from the University of Singapore in 1970. Upon graduation, he joined the Foreign Service, where he is still serving.

Ambassador Desker is the Distinguished Fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University. He is a Member of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, Singapore and a Member of the Board of Directors of the Lee Kuan Yew Exchange Fellowship. He has been the Non-Resident Ambassador of Singapore to the Holy See and Spain since 2007.

He was the Chief Executive Officer of the Singapore Trade Development Board from 1994 to 2000 and Singapore’s Ambassador to Indonesia from 1986 to 1993. From 2000 to 2014, he was the Director of the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies and served as founding
Dean of RSIS from 2007 to 2014. He was the Chair of the ASEAN Inter-Governmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) in 2018.

A President’s Scholar, he was educated at the University of Singapore, University of London and Cornell University. He was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters by University of Warwick in 2012 and Honorary Doctor of Laws by the University of Exeter in 2013.

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Mr Wong Kan Seng
Class of ’70

Mr Wong Kan Seng graduated from the University of Singapore with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in 1970.

He joined the Administrative Service and held various appointments in the Ministries of Labour and Defence. He graduated from the London Business School with a Master of Science (Business Studies) in 1979. In 1981, he joined Hewlett Packard, Singapore.

After the 1984 General Elections, Mr Wong was appointed to political office in 1985. In his 26 years in the Government, he has held Ministerial appointments in the Communications and Information, Community Development, Foreign Affairs and Home Affairs ministries. He was also the Leader of the Singapore Parliament (1987-2007), and Deputy Chairman of the People’s Association (1992-2006). Mr Wong was appointed Deputy Prime Minister in 2005.

In addition to his ministerial portfolio, Mr Wong chaired a number of ministerial-level committees which coordinated work across several ministries, for example, on national security, crisis management such as SARS, Singapore population and talent policies, and community engagement. He also co-chaired the China-Singapore Joint Council for Bilateral Cooperation, the Suzhou Industrial Park and the Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-city Joint Steering Councils, as well as the Qatar-Singapore High Level Committee.

Mr Wong was also the Chairman of the Chinese Development Assistance Council (1992-2004), and a Trustee (2004-2012). He was the Adviser to the National Transport Workers' Union (1985-2012), Chairman of the Lien Ying Chow Legacy Fellowship Council (2011-2017) and a Board Member of the INTERPOL Foundation for a Safer World from (2014-2017).

He stepped down from the Cabinet in 2011 and as a Member of Parliament in 2015. Mr Wong is currently the Chairman of Ascendas-Singbridge and the Chairman of United Overseas Bank. He is a member of the Bo’ao Forum for Asia (BFA) Board of Directors.

Mr Wong was conferred the Public Administration Medal (Silver) by the President of the Republic of Singapore in 1976, and the Medal of Honour by the National Trades Union Congress in 1998. He received the London Business School Alumni Achievement Award in 2004.

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Ms Janet Lim
Class of ’75

Ms Janet Lim graduated with a Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) in 1975. She was immediately recruited into the Administrative Service of the Singapore Civil Service, but left after a year and half to pursue postgraduate studies at the University of Bielefeld, Germany. After completing her Master’s degree in Sociology and Development Studies, she was
recruited by the United Nations Refugees Agency (UNHCR) in Geneva, which disrupted her pursuit of PhD study.

She was the former Assistant High Commissioner in charge of operations at UNHCR, with the rank of Assistant Secretary General. She joined the United Nations in 1980 and spent most of her 34-year UN career working for refugees in major crises all over the world. Most notably she worked in UNHCR field operations in Thailand and Malaysia during the height of the Indo-Chinese refugee crisis in the 80's. Her field assignments have also included Syria, Turkey, Western Sahara, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan. Ms Lim made her mark at UNHCR when she helped establish the organisation’s Emergency Response system, in the aftermath of the first Gulf War, at a time when most UN agencies were not very operational. Subsequently, she was assigned to a number of senior management positions at Headquarters, including being the Director of the Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, culminating in her last appointment as Assistant High Commissioner, which she served for 5 years. Beyond UNHCR, Ms Lim has also been seconded to senior positions in UNAIDS and UNAMA (Peacekeeping operation in Afghanistan).

Ms Lim is currently a Fellow at the Singapore Management University and a Fellow at the Geneva Center for Security Policy (GCSP), a think tank based in Geneva. She is a member of the Board of Directors of an international NGO called Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP) and participates regularly in a Track 2 forum called Asia Dialogue on Forced Migration, focusing on forced displacement.

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