



**REMARKS BY MR HSIEH FU HUA  
CHAIRMAN, NUS BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
5 JANUARY 2018, 1.20 PM  
SHANGRI-LA HOTEL, SINGAPORE, TOWER BALLROOM**

Mdm Halimah Yacob, NUS Chancellor and President of the Republic of Singapore

Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Deputy Prime Minister, and Coordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies

Mr Goh Chok Tong, Emeritus Senior Minister

Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Finance

Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills)

NUS Pro-Chancellors

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. Firstly, Happy New Year and thank you for being with us today to honour Professors Tan Chorh Chuan and Tan Eng Chye.
2. We are here because of these two outstanding gentlemen who have devoted almost all their lives to transforming our nation's flagship university into an internationally acknowledged university of distinction.
3. In this first week of a new year, I am drawn to think about beginnings. I recount how from the start of Singapore's independence, our late Mr Lee Kuan Yew paid very close attention to the development of the national university as he believed it should serve the country and not exist *in vacuo*.
4. Unbeknownst to many, Mr Lee would take a drive around NUS' campuses ever so often. On one such visit, Mr Lee made a surprise stop at Kent Ridge during NUS Open House just three months after

Chorh Chuan took on his role as NUS President. He asked to see the most senior person on campus that afternoon and it was Mrs Ovidia Lim-Rajaram who was around as organiser of the Open House.

5. In his typical manner, he started quizzing her. How many students do you have and how many live on campus? When will University Town be ready and are there enough beds? Students must live on campus. We also need more shade. Something must be done immediately about providing more trees. Call Chorh Chuan, he instructed.

6. It was a Sunday afternoon and Chorh Chuan was off on a hike to the heights of Bukit Timah. After several desperate attempts, Ovidia turned towards looking for Provost Tan Eng Chye instead. As usual, Eng Chye was at base camp. Although his well-deserved siesta was interrupted, I'm sure he did not mind. Because after all, how often do you get a wake-up call from Mr Lee himself?

7. Chorh Chuan, not only did you conquer Bukit Timah Hill and other remote terrain, you scaled much greater heights, not just for yourself, but for NUS. NUS has broken new grounds in education and research. A full citation of the many contributions of Chorh Chuan will be shared later. But to highlight a few, you have raised the performance of the University and encouraged a culture of boldness. You have placed us amongst leading universities internationally. With the deep bench strength that you have helped develop, we were therefore able to draw from within, your successor and the core leadership team.

8. Chorh Chuan, this same heart of the explorer has seen you constantly expanding frontiers for NUS and for the nation. This led you to take on many challenges for NUS and now to attend to the very important national healthcare mission. We are sad to lose you as our President, but are heartened that you remain with us as a highly distinguished member of our academia. We thank you for being an outstanding University President.

9. Eng Chye, you have been by Chorh Chuan's side for a decade, manning the base as Chorh Chuan ventured far and wide to grow the University's footprint. You have enjoyed the full trust and support not only of Chorh Chuan, but of the Board, faculty, staff, students, alumni and university partners all around.

10. As evident when you were Dean of Science and then later on as Provost, you have been a dedicated, grounded and modest leader ever ready to harness the talents within and beyond the

university. This led to your nomination of Prof Ho Teck Hua as your close number two as Senior Deputy President and Provost, and also as a Board member of NUS. You certainly appreciate the exponential power of two and more as you build NUS.

11. Above all, you are one who does his best and delivers. Eng Chye, you are our unanimous choice for President of NUS. Just as you had taken the call from Mr Lee, you have now answered the call to lead NUS. And for that, we thank you.

12. Whilst Chorh Chuan has enabled NUS to approach the slopes of Mount Everest, Eng Chye will now have to lead us on a different mountain trek, perhaps to scale one like K2. Some of you may know that K2 is much more treacherous than Mount Everest — not unlike the uncertain world we are in today.

13. The challenges may change, but the quest for a national university remains eternal. And I would like to draw on the words of Mr Lee who in 1966 said these words, and I think it captures well the quest of this University. “A national university... responds to the needs and the challenge of our time in this particular part of the world and in this society.” “When the university is able to creatively pursue the problems of our society, define them, and then set out to attack them and provide solutions, then I say the university has been established, it has become a national university.”

14. As Chorh Chuan and his predecessors did, we believe and are confident that Eng Chye will follow to pursue the goal that Mr Lee entrusted this University.

15. Thank you.