

**SPEECH BY DR JOHN LIM
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
AT THE 17TH NANYANG POLYTECHNIC GRADUATION CEREMONY
MONDAY, 17 MAY 2010, 1500HRS
NANYANG POLYTECHNIC, SINGAPORE**

Mr. Chan Lee Mun, Principal and CEO, Nanyang Polytechnic,
Members of the Board of Governors,
Members of the Advisory Committee,
Distinguished guests.

1. I am delighted to be here today to celebrate this important occasion with all graduands, together with your families, friends and lecturers. I would like to congratulate all of you for what you have achieved and can truly be proud of after three years of commitment and hard work.

2. Your enthusiasm, talent and success already make this a special gathering. But it is even more special because this ceremony marks a major milestone for all of you as you have completed one exciting phase of your life as a student and are now about to take the next step on your life journeys into a new phase with fresh opportunities and challenges.

3. At this session, five Diploma courses in NYP's School of Chemical & Life Sciences and the School of Engineering, including the pioneer batch of students from the Diploma in Pharmaceutical Science, are represented. It so happens that I was here four years ago to witness the graduation of the pioneer batch of students from the Pharmaceutical and Clinical Trials track. So I am very encouraged and happy to see how NYP's courses have evolved and developed to offer even wider opportunities, in step with Singapore's growth as a global life sciences hub.

4. For those of you graduating in Pharmaceutical Science, this is timely for two reasons. The first is that there is increasing demand for pharmacy technicians to help meet the rising healthcare needs of our ageing population. The second is that our pharmaceutical manufacturing and biomedical sciences sector continues to show strong growth.

Continued Growth of Life Sciences Industry

5. The Life Sciences sector is still thriving as a very important pillar of Singapore's economy, and is contributing significantly to our GDP even as the world recovers from the economic crisis.

6. The 21st Century has been hailed as the 'Bio-century' because the chemical and life sciences are expected to have amazing impact on our human existence. Great changes are sweeping across products, practices and processes in the pharmaceutical sciences, biomedical engineering, molecular biotechnology, petrochemical and food science industries. You are all poised to enter these flourishing and fast growing industries, driven by the creation, accumulation and application of knowledge. Collectively, these industries address critical issues of human need and well-being, and have the potential to extend the quantity and expand the quality of all our lives.

7. With the new knowledge and wide range of skills you have acquired in your respective courses, you are ready to play key roles in the continued growth of Singapore even as you expand your own experiences and horizons.

Quality Education in NYP

8. The scope and contributions of polytechnic education have grown to new levels of excellence over the years. It is more than a decade since I was Director of Higher Education in the Ministry of Education, but I still remember the first positive impression NYP made on me as being a particularly progressive and vibrant polytechnic. NYP has always had very strong industry connections because of the links it had with the Economic Development Board when it was established. Today, your institution continues to make important contributions to industry by providing a solid and holistic education, and cutting-edge training facilities that have equipped you with the knowledge and skills to excel in an innovation-based economy.

9. In the course of your studies in NYP, many of you would also have had opportunities for overseas immersion, job attachments, or exchange programmes. These have enabled you to understand and appreciate some of the latest developments and trends in the world. The ability to always keep track of changes in your respective fields is an important skill because knowledge and technology continue to change at a very fast pace. The facts of what you have learned can easily become outdated. So scanning your environment and sizing up new developments will better enable you to stay relevant, seize emerging opportunities, and allow you to survive and prosper - in the way which polytechnic graduates are well known for.

Spirit of Innovation in NYP

10. Industry collaborations such as the one with Eu Yan Sang International for TCM research to having your very own Teaching Drug Store and pilot plants are excellent examples that demonstrate how the culture of innovation permeates through NYP by continually developing and implementing new and innovative pedagogic systems. I am told that NYP achieved the Innovation Excellence Award last year, so it is very timely for me to congratulate your institution and all of you for this important success – this is a true testament of your branding as an innovative polytechnic!

11. As NYP graduands, you should always remember and be proud of how having received an education in such an innovative institution sets you apart from others. You should go into your working lives, confident of how innovation should not only be a hallmark of how you work but also enable you to make the best of opportunities that come your way. Innovation can apply to the most practical and even apparently small work processes you come across, so don't miss out on daily opportunities to innovate just because you are only dreaming of big breakthroughs. Creativity should be the fuel that drives innovation and helps you to make a difference in work and in life because you are able to see things differently from others.

12. It was Albert Einstein who said, *"to raise new questions, a new possibility, to regard old problems from a new angle, requires creative imagination and that marks real advancement in science."*

Innovation and HSA

13. In my own organization, the Health Sciences Authority, we have enshrined innovation in our vision statement “to be the leading innovating authority protecting and advancing national health and safety”. Since it was established in 2001, HSA has developed rapidly and now consists of three professional groups covering health products regulation, blood services and applied sciences. Our unique range of capabilities makes HSA different from organizations in other countries, as we are the equivalent of what would normally be several different national centres. Our work covers regulation of health products (including pharmaceuticals, biologics, cell and tissue therapy, medical devices and complementary medicines), the national blood bank, cell processing and analytical chemistry laboratories, CSI forensic services, and also the national mortuary.

14. With these different types of scientific expertise under one roof, we continuously explore how to synergize the activities of the various Groups in order to find new ways of doing our scientific work and establish thought leadership on a regional and global level. Faced with challenges such as the fast pace of scientific and technological advancement, and external environmental issues such as pandemics, HSA always has to constantly adapt and innovate in order to advance and fulfill our mission as a public health protection authority. We work closely with global agencies such as the World Health Organisation and are also pioneering innovative projects through our HSA Academy where we work with counterpart agencies overseas and industry. One project is now exploring a new model of drug development, for which HSA is the anchor international regulatory agency as our partners have confidence that Singapore has one of the best chances of successfully piloting a new system.

15. Just as Singapore and all organizations need to continually evolve and reposition in order to remain competitive and ride through uncertain times, you – as individuals - will also need to accept change as a way of life. Be willing to learn and re-learn to ensure that your knowledge and skills continue to remain relevant. Adjust and align yourselves with the world, adapt quickly to changes, and adopt the mindset and drive to push the boundaries and break new frontiers.

16. To quote George Bernard Shaw: *“I do not believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they cannot find them, make them.”*

The Importance of Values

17. As an organization, HSA places a lot of emphasis on our Core Values of serving the nation, having a passion for excellence, developing our HSA community, inspiring trust, and living innovation. But because our first organizational Core Value is “Service to the Nation”, we have also found that we have naturally attracted a lot of enthusiastic individuals into HSA who are very committed to excelling and inspiring trust. This is especially important since many areas of work we are involved in have major impact on the well-being and safety of the man in the street. I am often heartened in my meet-the-staff sessions, that the new recruits to our organization seem genuinely enthused by the difference they can make in their work to safeguard public health, and are serious about living out the core values in serving the nation as well as the world.

18. Core Values are important in defining the identity of an organization. But they are even more critical for each of us as individuals. Your commitment to a set of sound and right values is critical for your success in life. Innovation will open new doors for you. But Integrity in how you achieve results and make decisions is critical for you to succeed as a human being. Even as you are about to enter working life or a further phase of study and development, it is not too early for you to ask yourselves how you would like others to remember you at the end of your life.

19. Integrity has increasingly taken a back seat to short-term success. This is a dangerous practice and has had long-lasting and negative effects on both individuals and organizations. The Floyd Landis doping case is a classic example. After Stage 16 of the 2006 Tour de France, when he had lost ten minutes, Floyd Landis came back superhumanly in Stage 17, riding solo and passing the entire cycling cohort. However, a urine sample taken from Landis immediately after his win tested positive two times for banned illegal substances in his body. Although he claimed innocence, it was all over as the International Cycling Union stripped him of his 2006 Tour de France title. In addition as a negative rippling effect, this alleged scandal cost Landis huge amounts in terms of product endorsements. In another well known example, Enron, one of America's largest and most innovative companies in the 1990s, fell from grace when it was discovered that the company's executives devised a network of "dubious" partnerships to keep debts off the balance sheet while raking in profits and benefitting themselves. In 2001, Enron left behind more than US\$30 billion of debts, worthless shares and 21,000 workers around the world lost their jobs.

20. It is important for you to remember that the ends do not always justify the means. At the end of the day, you will do yourselves, your family and NYP proud by achieving much but by doing so as Innovative Individuals of Integrity.

Life-Long Learning

21. The diplomas you are about to receive should be seen only as a launching pad. Over time, you have to build on the good foundation that NYP has given you and reinforce it with further learning, upgrading and training.

22. There will always be something new to learn and discover. Don't limit yourself to knowledge and skills related only to your own discipline. To remain relevant in the labour market, you should not only continuously improve and update your knowledge and skills, but also apply them in a wider variety of contexts. Education is no longer something that ends in your early twenties. It has to become a lifelong process, so make lifelong learning a passion as well as a way of life.

23. Passion is something that is important to see you through difficult situations and spur you on to higher heights. As you enter the workforce, you have to expect that you will encounter challenging and rough situations. But if you always maintain an optimistic outlook and can find passion and enthusiasm for what you are doing and what you are aiming for, you can overcome the obstacles and find significance and personal fulfillment in all that you do.

24. Don't under-estimate the importance of finding and nurturing good friendships at work and in your personal lives. A strong network of people you can trust, who will encourage you in difficult situations and who will celebrate your successes with you, is invaluable in life and will help you to maintain balance.

25. And don't forget, even as you go about achieving your goals, to look out for those whom you can help and inspire along the way. To quote Albert Einstein again, "*it is every man's obligation to put back into the world at least the equivalent of what he takes out of it*".

26. In closing, let me wish all of you a bright future ahead. Your NYP education has given you a good head start. The economy is beginning to look up and there is a sea of opportunities waiting for you. I encourage you to make the best use of your talents and abilities to improve the quality of life and benefit mankind.

27. Once again, my heartiest congratulations to all of you graduating today!

Thank you.