My heartiest thanks to NUS Chancellor, His Excellency President S R Nathan, Minister of Education Mr. Heng Swee Keat, and NUS President Professor Tan Chorh Chuan for bestowing on me the honorary Doctor of Letters.

My heartiest congratulations to all of you, the 2011 NUS graduates, and to your happy parents and family.

Graduation is a time of celebration and excitement. You have many things to be thrilled about – there’s a sense of finality in completing your university education. And you have a bright future ahead. Singapore’s economy is firmly on track after the 2009 global financial crisis. Graduation can also be a time of uncertainty and fear. Always remember that YOUR future is what YOU make it out to be. In your case, it truly is. You blossom in a time that is different in many ways from when I graduated.

I completed my A levels in 1965 when Singapore was ejected by Malaysia. In 1966, I was fortunate to receive a Canadian Government Colombo Plan Scholarship to study at the University of Toronto.

In 1970, the British Far East Forces, the largest single employer in Singapore, began its withdrawal. 70,000 Singaporeans directly serving the British were retrenched. Unemployment was already high! When my peers and I graduated, our future was definitely uncertain. The majority of us simply wanted to get a job. Any job! To support our parents; to support ourselves. On completion of my Industrial Engineering course in May 1970, I skipped the convocation ceremony and flew home. For over 3 weeks, there was no news from the Public Service Commission other than "oh, you are back!" Finally, in the fourth week, PSC posted me, a fresh engineer, to the Budget Division, Ministry of Finance!

Now, you have a far different Challenge today. You are free to choose essentially any job you want as you are faced with a plethora of choices. You do not need to immediately accept the first job that comes your way. Many will decide on their next step based on the "best" option available. Some of you will think that the metric should be based on how much money you can make or how fast you can be promoted. Others believe it should be based on what your friends and parents want you to do.
Let me now share with you, 3 lessons I learnt after I graduated, a long time ago, that may of some use to you.

The first lesson. **Pick a job that makes you “happy”**. The real secret to what career will make you happy, lies within you. Choose a career that fits with what you already like to do. **Look for a career that you will have passion for.**

Many who work 9 to 5 – are unhappy with their work. They make money to support their hobbies – be it golf, or vacationing. There is nothing wrong with that. But if you are going to spend 8-10 hours a day on something – **do something you enjoy!**

**Andrew Lloyd Webber**, the famous composer of musical theater hits (such as Evita, CATS, *The Phantom of the Opera* and *The Wizard of Oz* this year), loved to build stages and to stage pretend screenplays as a child. Everyone here with an iPod, iPhone or an iPad must have heard of **Steve Jobs**. Steve dropped out of renowned liberal arts Reed College in Oregon, reputed to possess a student-run nuclear reactor supporting its science programs. Steve did not want to financially burden his adopted blue collar parents. Steve "free loaded" at Reed College to read and learn calligraphy. He then went on to create **user friendly** Apple computers with its beautiful fonts, easy graphic user interface (GUI) and the all familiar **mouse**.

When I was in primary school, I had a neighbour who bought used motor car engines from the Sungei Road junk yard. He would rebuild them in his make shift garage next door. I would pop over and happily dirty my hands helping him clean the greasy small engine cylinder parts. He rebuilt and resold car engines at a profit. At St Joseph's Institution, I headed the aeromodelling club; making, flying and crashing model planes. Taking up engineering studies in university was therefore a natural pursuit.

Coming back to the Budget Division, Ministry of Finance in June 1970. After a month of bean counting, I begged for a transfer, to an engineering job anywhere! That request landed me in Mindef for 15 years. Followed by 25 more years at EDB and A*STAR. Personally, I have been fortunate to have a job that I truly enjoy. I am an engineer at heart – I love building and creating systems and industries. I have been Permanent Secretary (Defence) responsible for logistics, defence research and industries; founded the National Computer Board; created the Singapore Technologies Group; and built up SembCorp and CapitaLand.

The second lesson I want to convey, is **“while it is good to seize opportunities for oneself, it is far more rewarding to create opportunities for others”**.

This lesson came home to me at the age of 24 like most of you when I was given the responsibility to **find alternative jobs** for the shocked and scared Singaporeans who were retrenched as a result of the withdrawal of the British forces. From then on, it has been a personal mission for me to identify and build new industries that **create jobs** for successive generations of Singaporeans. This includes expanding our manufacturing
base; promoting exportable services; investing in research and development; and identifying new and emerging industries such as biomedical sciences.

Most people associate me with creating “jobs” for Singaporeans at EDB, ASTAR and now at Spring Singapore. To be effective in my job creation, I keep up with trends in a broad range of industries. I read avidly, discussed with officers involved in the respective industries, spoke to local and international industry leaders. I do not stop learning, always curious and ready to admit that I don’t know. One of the emerging technologies in 2000 was Genetics. NUS Science faculty helped create a full week’s crash course on "Genetics for Dummies" for me and 14 fellow sufferers.

Creating opportunities for others have also included investing in People. I set up scholarship programs in all the organizations that I have been involved. The largest programs were at EDB where over 500 engineering and economics scholars were trained from 1990; followed by the 1,000 BS-PhD scholarships at A*STAR launched in 2001. It is satisfying for me to see how the young people I interviewed and selected, grow and develop. It is even more satisfying to see them contribute in their career, in their community and to Singapore’s development.

Singapore must build up a dynamic pyramid of Global and Local Large and Small & Medium enterprises (SMEs) in all sectors of Singapore’s economy. SMEs need competent CEOs and strong management teams. SPRING launched a program to upgrade 1,000 SME CEOs and develop a core of 500 future young CEOs.

The bosses went back to school with SPRING’s funding support for Executive Education and part time Executive MBA. For aspiring future Young Bosses, SPRING funds programs at NUS, NTU and SMU for studies in social sciences, law, accountancy, business administration and science & engineering subjects of course. Followed on by two years of assured training employment with SPRING, work with SMEs and startups, an opportunity to join a growing SME of their choice or launch their own company.

The final lesson I have to share with you is “Boldly Make New Friends”; you never know where that might lead. Do not be afraid to look up amazing people, befriend them and learn from them. In your Facebook, Linked-In generation, social networks are so interconnected, it makes it even easier to get to know people you respect and can learn from. Let me relate just 2 examples.

For my work, I read up books on cancer research written by Professor Robert A. Weinberg. And also the book on Professor Weinberg by NY Times Science writer, Natalie Angier called “Natural Obsessions: Striving to Unlock the Deepest Secrets of the Cancer Cell”. Prof. Weinberg was a founding Member of the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research in 1984. A pioneer in cancer research known for his discoveries of the first human oncogene — a gene that causes normal cells to form tumors.
In 2000, I called on Professor Weinberg in Boston and invited him to Singapore. After a satisfying first visit, Bob gladly agreed to chair the scientific advisory board of our Genomics Institute of Singapore under Dr Edison Liu.

Similarly, I learned of the strong Chemistry Department of The Scripps Research Institute and read up on the pharmaceutical-related work of Professor K C Nicolaou, the Department's head since 1989.

In 2001, I visited him in San Diego; his office was occupied by a whole lot of artifacts from Ancient Greece. Including a replica of Alexander the Great's sword of his world conquests! I immediately started the conversation by talking about the conspiracy theory that Alexander was poisoned by his closest generals in 323 BC. His face brightened up! He followed on with more stories of Alexander's conquests of Egypt, Asia Minor and Persia from 334 BC at a young age of 22. That led to K C coming to Singapore to help set up the Synthetic Chemistry Lab at Biopolis.

In every organization that I have been involved with, I built up friendships and relationships. Many of the investors and talents which I helped attract to Singapore and several international partners have become personal friends. A good percentage of my EDB and A*STAR scholars and staff are from Malaysia, China, India and Vietnam. Many have become new Singaporeans.

My Singaporean scholars were mostly from our HDB heartlands. All have one common trait - a Passion to contribute, a Thirst for learning and Daring to do. I remain in close touch with them even after I move on to other pursuits.

Work is meaningful and infinitely more fun when you are doing it with kindred spirits who believe in the same cause. At the end of a challenging project, when you are celebrating success with those who ran the full marathon with you – it is the relationships at the heart of everything that makes it worthwhile.

As I look back on my career, what have been memorable for me are not the achievements. Neither is the advancements. What has been memorable is the fun I have had in all the jobs I have held! What is fulfilling to see is what new opportunities my work has generated for others. Finally, the friendships I have built along the way have made it an enjoyable journey! That is what lasts.

In short, my advice to you is if you “do what you love”, “create opportunities for others” and “boldly make new friends”, you will certainly succeed and be happy.

May I wish you, Bon Voyage as you sail off to a new life ahead.

Thank you.