Mr Wong Ngit Liong
NUS Board of Trustees Chairman
and Mrs Wong

Professor Tan Eng Chye
NUS Deputy President and Provost
and Mrs Tan

Professor Shen Zuowei
NUS Faculty of Science Dean
and Mrs Shen

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to join you tonight to celebrate the 85th anniversary of the NUS Faculty of Science this evening.
Some of you may know that my association with the NUS Science Faculty goes way back to 1959 when I enrolled as a student at the Department of Physics in the then University of Malaya. The University was renamed University of Singapore when I graduated in 1962. I started my academic career in 1964 in this faculty as a lecturer with the Physics Department, and later on lectured in the Department of Mathematics from 1967 to 1969.

NUS and the Faculty of Science have gone through many changes since then but the Science Faculty has remained steadfast in its task of equipping our people with the knowledge and skills needed for Singapore’s development. In the 1960’s and 1970’s, the Science Faculty played an important role in producing an increasing number of graduates in the fundamental sciences to support Singapore’s industrialisation programme. It also helped shape the nation’s Science education landscape by training numerous Science teachers to cultivate the next generation of students. Since the 90’s, the undergraduate
curriculum was restructured into a modular system to allow for
greater flexibility and cross-disciplinary training. In addition to
programmes on fundamental sciences, many new programmes
and specialisations were introduced in response to the needs of
local industries. Graduates with strong grounding in Mathematics
and Science were sought after in the services sector in areas like
financial services, risk management and logistics. The Faculty
also produced graduates for new industries in the biomedical,
chemical and pharmaceutical sectors.

As NUS transformed from a teaching college to a research-
intensive world-class university, the Faculty of Science grew
from strength to strength in its research capabilities. Efforts were
stepped up to nurture home-grown talent as well as attract top-
notch overseas talent. Today, the NUS Faculty of Science is
ranked among the best Science faculties in the world. It hosts
many different clusters of research expertise, ranging from basic
research for creating knowledge and understanding the natural
world to applied research that drives innovation and impacts
society. These research clusters include two national-level Research Centres of Excellence, the Centre for Quantum Technologies and the Mechanobiology Institute.

A new generation of scientists has emerged in the Faculty. Many are acknowledged leaders in their fields and their research outputs are translating to real-world applications. Professor Loh Kian Ping, for example, put Singapore on the world map for graphene and 2-D materials research, which could potentially revolutionise materials technologies. Professor Peter Ho, renowned for his work in organic semiconductor devices, is working with leading companies to commercialise the technologies being developed.

The transformative education programmes and cutting-edge research of the Faculty help to attract high calibre students to Science. Just one example, Dr Yeo Sze Ling is an exemplary member of the alumni who persevered against great odds to
succeed and make a difference to society. Dr Yeo who lost her sight to glaucoma at the age of four, graduated at the top of her class in the Department of Mathematics and then proceeded to obtain her Ph.D. degree from the Department. She is currently a research engineer at A*STAR and gives back to society by mentoring and tutoring visually handicapped students. Professor Ng Huck Hui, alumni and now a faculty member with the Department of Biological Sciences, is an internationally renowned scientist in stem cell research and his research has opened up new possibilities in personalised regenerative medicine and drug discovery. Beyond science and technology, many Science alumni have contributed to Singapore in a wide variety of fields. The example that comes immediately to mind is Ms Olivia Lum who graduated in Chemistry and went on to found her own company Hyflux. Today Hyflux is a leading global water solutions company operating some of the world’s largest desalination plants across the globe.
Ladies and gentlemen, NUS and the Faculty of Science must remain adaptable and innovative to meet the new challenges in a fast-changing, increasingly interconnected and complex world. With a curriculum that provides strong domain knowledge, transferrable skillsets, and global perspectives, the Faculty is in a very good position to prepare its students for their future careers. The Faculty’s high-impact research and collaborations with industry and the public sector, also enable it to translate its research into products and services that benefit society.

Let me conclude by congratulating the NUS Faculty of Science on its success and contributions to Singapore over the past 85 years. May NUS and the Faculty continue to enjoy many more years of Education and Research Excellence.

Thank you.