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7 in 10 NTU students secure jobs before graduation: Survey



NTU valedictorian Edward Yee at his convocation ceremony yesterday. ST PHOTOS: JASON QUAH

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Despite concerns about a bleak labour market amid economic uncertainties, about seven in 10 Nanyang Technological University (NTU) students this year secured jobs before graduation, a preliminary survey of more than 5,000 graduates showed.

This is similar to what graduates have experienced in previous years.

More than seven in 10 found employment prior to graduation, according to a poll by the university last year, while two in three secured jobs before collecting their degrees in 2017. In 2016, the figure was almost seven in 10.

The National University of Singapore and the Singapore Management University do not conduct preliminary polls of their graduates and employment, but contribute to an annual joint graduate employment survey by the six autonomous universities here.

At the university's first convocation ceremony of the year, held at the NTU campus yesterday, 272 graduates out of a cohort of more than 9,000 received their degrees.

Another 19 ceremonies will be held until next Wednesday, where 6,097 will receive bachelor's degrees and 3,356 will receive higher degrees.

Some of this year's graduates are choosing to further their studies.

Valedictorian Edward Yee, 24, secured the prestigious Rhodes Scholarship and will be heading to the University of Oxford in September to pursue a master's degree in evidence-based social intervention and policy evaluation.

Mr Yee, who struggled with dyslexia throughout his schooling life, graduated yesterday with honours in his double degree in business and accountancy.

He was diagnosed with dyslexia in Primary 5, but never saw it as a disability. "It is a strength and something that has shaped who I am," he said.

During his time at university, he co-founded start-up Givfunds, which provides low-cost loans to South Asian social enterprises.

Mr Yee was inspired to start Givfunds after backpacking around Asia at the end of his first year in 2016. On his travels, he met many social entrepreneurs who did not have sufficient resources to help everyone they wanted to.

He said: "It was during university that I found my purpose, which was to be an enabler for changemakers. I can't do what they do, so the next best thing is to help them."

At the ceremony, President Halimah Yacob, who is the NTU chancellor, conferred honorary doctorates on Mrs Margaret Lien, 77, and Sir Keith O'Nions, 74, in honour of their contributions to NTU and the community in Singapore.

More than 33,000 NTU students have benefited from attending courses at the Margaret Lien Centre of Professional Success at NTU, set up in 2013 to prepare students for professional life by developing sound moral values and personal skills.

Sir Keith was a key player in establishing the partnership between NTU and Imperial College London (ICL) to form the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine when he was president and rector of ICL.

"Getting two great institutions to work together isn't easy," Sir Keith, who was also a member of the NTU Board of Trustees from 2011 to last year, told The Straits Times.

"It required a lot of people, not just me... to be very committed and work together well."

NTU's first batch of doctors graduated last year.

Of the honorary doctorate he received, which he said is his 14th, Sir Keith said: "You never expect to get these, and you should never get involved with universities because you might get some recognition. But when it happens, it's a great privilege."