

Learn constantly, broadly and bravely, Grace Fu tells NTU humanities graduands



Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu also highlighted two questions the graduands should ask themselves - what their purpose in life is, and what success means to them. ST PHOTO: KHALID BABA

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SINGAPORE - Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu remembers how many of her accountancy course mates had difficulty finding jobs when they graduated from the National University of Singapore in 1985.

The challenges they faced and concerns they had then, she said, were similar to those that young people are facing today.

She was addressing graduands from the Chinese, English, History, Linguistics and Multilingual Studies, and Philosophy programmes on Friday (July 26) at the convocation ceremony for Nanyang Technological University's School of Humanities.

Bachelor's degrees were awarded to 390 graduands, while 55 received higher degrees at the Nanyang Auditorium.

"As newly minted graduates, some of you are charged with excitement, and are ready for the world ahead of you; some of you are undecided on a path to take and wondering what the future holds," Ms Fu said.

"A small, open economy, Singapore is susceptible to global forces. Increasing trade frictions, anti-globalisation, protectionism, technological advancements, demographic shifts - these are the words that we hear these days and they are changing our economy, our jobs, the nature of our industry."

"You might be asking yourself, 'Am I prepared for what lies ahead?'. I had the same question when I graduated."

At the time, in 1985, the computing revolution had just begun, she said. "So technology was completely changing the way we worked then... It was a time when what I learnt in school was made redundant in a few years."

"Change, rapid transformation, and anxiety affect every cohort of youth. It might sound nonchalant. But believe me, every generation will find their own way to discover new opportunities. And there's every reason to believe that your generation can do, too."

But she also cautioned that the journey will not be easy, and advised the graduands to learn "constantly, broadly and bravely".

On learning constantly, Ms Fu said: "There's always something we can glean from the people around us. Embrace the spirit of humility, and willingness to keep learning and growing even when there's no set test date ahead of us. The examination in life will come at the most unexpected time and place."

Learning broadly entails "having a strong sense of curiosity, and spirit of exploration", she added.

"We cannot predict what jobs will look like in the future... So if you can make connections across different fields and disciplines and apply yourself to creating new value, you'll have an advantage."

And to learn bravely is to "get out of your comfort zone and venture into areas you might not be familiar with", she said, encouraging the graduands to look beyond Singapore's shores to explore opportunities in regional markets.

She also highlighted two questions they should ask themselves - what their purpose in life is, and what success means to them.

"These two questions are linked. Success can only be defined by the purpose you have set for yourself.

"I will suggest to you that every one of you can have a purpose that is more than your own individual well-being. And that success is about leaving a worthy legacy in our society."