A very good morning

It is my pleasure this morning to be here at the opening of the NTU Career Fair 2005. I am certainly happy to note that there is a marked increase in the number of employers participating in the fair this year. We have 57 at this fair, compared to 35 in the last fair.

This must be a sign that more employers are now recruiting. This seems to confirm the latest Hudson report, published in the Straits Times last Saturday, which showed slightly over 4 in 10 firms planning to hire in the first three months of this year. This is certainly good news for the graduating class of year 2005.

However, our economy is expected to slow down this year to 3 to 4% GDP and stabilize at this growth rate in the medium to long term. The competition for jobs is expected to be fierce as employers will be more selective in their recruitment of human talent from the wider choice of universities in Singapore and abroad.

How can NTU prepare our graduates to meet this latest challenge?

In our mission to be a global university of excellence, we have implemented a New Undergraduate Experience in NTU. Among the many new initiatives introduced, one is to broaden the curriculum by offering many non-core subject electives and minors on top of the core subjects. The aim is to provide a complete educational experience that not only trains students in their professional disciplines, but also helps them to understand and reflect on the broader issues and trends and country they live in. We hope to produce graduates who are proficient in their profession and competent in many areas, and stay relevant in the fast-changing world.

Being a residential campus, NTU is in a unique position to engage undergraduates better through residential education which provides more opportunities and a more ready environment to hone leadership skills. The hall environment also provides better interaction among students and helps build strong identity and bonding.
By enlisting the help of career coaches in NTU and using career profiling tools available in our CareerHub, students can choose subject electives & minors that will enhance their chosen careers. In this way, NTU will produce more rounded graduates who can compete much more effectively in the job market.

At the same time, our engineering attachment programmes will be made more flexible to cater to the needs of students with varied interests and prior practical experiences. There will be a short 10-week industrial orientation, a 22-week industrial attachment and a long 30-week enhanced industrial attachment. A similar review will be carried out on the attachment and internship programmes of other schools.

These different programmes all aim to prepare students for the real world of work by enhancing their academic, professional and personal competencies. The flexible durations allow students to achieve a balance of academic & practical exposure, in keeping with the experience they had before coming into NTU.

To provide a global perspective for our graduates, we have International Student Exchange programmes (INSTEP), Overseas Attachments and our latest Initiative, the Global Immersion Programme (GIP) where students work in organisations in Beijing & Shanghai, 4 days a week and study Chinese culture, history and economics at Beijing University, Tsinghua University & Jiao Tong University for the remaining 1½ days a week.

Around 120 students are now in China for 24 weeks, under GIP. Nanyang Business School has also taken the initiative to teach CQ (Culture Quotient) to reduce the adaptation learning curve for our graduates who move overseas on assignment or work globally.

Our CareerHub activities will expand with the acquisition of more career profiling tools, career books and other resources. The Hub will also train more career coaches, acquire more space for coaching and market its activities aggressively to students & alumni. Organisations are encouraged to make use of our CareerHub resources and work closely with OPA in their search for talented individuals from NTU. The CareerHub self funds its activities and will need all your support to make it a hub of excellence.

I am confident that you will be happy and satisfied employing our NTU graduates as we have put in a lot of effort in producing them for you.

Once again, I would like to thank you all for taking part in this Fair and for providing employment opportunities for our graduating classes.

I look forward to seeing you all again at our Fair next year.

May I also take this opportunity to wish all of you a Happy & Prosperous Chinese New Year and a fruitful two days here.

Thank you, ladies & gentlemen.