Updated: 23rd July 2009, 1500 hrs

**NTU President Su says greater strategic focus is becoming an imperative for university**

The Nanyang Technological University had been entrepreneurial in its approach, seizing opportunities as they arise to build up the university during its rapid build-up phase.

And now that it's getting onto a higher plateau, greater strategic focus is becoming an imperative.

NTU President Su Guaning said this today when he addressed graduates on the first day of the university's six-day convocation period.

He said NTU's Board of Trustees and the University Leadership will be addressing future challenges in an upcoming strategic planning workshop.

"There are some hard choices to be made. Once the directions are set, we must be resolute and united in moving NTU decisively ahead."

Dr Su's comments came just two days after Education Minister Ng Eng Hen acknowledged the achievements of NTU over the last few years, but exhorted it to aim higher.

Among other things, Dr Ng had asked which fields should NTU seek to distinguish and differentiate itself, to be among the best.

Dr Su said NTU has been asking those questions themselves, and working on the issues.

And there are two directions on which there is broad consensus.

The first is sustainability, which he said will be a major theme for NTU going forward.

"In our workshop with the renowned Santa Fe Institute and Institute Para Limes this February, we addressed the issues of Complexity Theory. Much of the future development in NTU's future Complexity agenda would be directed at sustainable cities."

And the second direction is to position NTU as the knowledge hub of what's been dubbed the new silk road of the 21st century.

"Our deep insight into China gives us a leg up in developing opportunities there. We are also looking at other opportunities in India. In the aftermath of the financial turmoil of 2008, with Asia taking on increasing weight globally, we have a great opportunity to develop ourselves as the knowledge hub on the new silk road of the 21st century."
Dr Su also gave updates on the undergraduate situation at NTU.

From 2003 to 2009, the number of undergraduate applications almost doubled - from 20,000 a year to 38,000 a year.

NTU's undergraduate population also grew from 15,000 in 2003 to 21,000 this year, while external research funding grew from 71 million dollars to 224 million dollars over the past six years.

"We have been monitoring our graduate employment statistics closely. Up to convocation, the employment rate is just a few percentage points behind last year."

This year's graduating cohort of about 8,000 students is the largest ever from NTU.

They include the pioneer cohort of students from the School of Art, Design and Media, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the School of Physical and Mathematical Sciences.