

New NTU graduates urged to keep on learning

Global forces changing nature of work and economy, says Grace Fu at uni convocation

Jolene Ang

Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu remembers how, when she graduated from the National University of Singapore in 1985 with a degree in accountancy, technological disruptions were changing the way people worked.

Back then, the computing revolution had just begun. "It was a time when what I learnt in school was made redundant in a few years," she said.

Things are largely the same today. "Change, rapid transformation and anxiety affect every cohort of youth," she added.

"But believe me, every generation will find their own way to discover new opportunities."

She was addressing graduands from the Chinese, English, History, Linguistics and Multilingual Studies, and Philosophy programmes at the convocation ceremony for Nanyang Technological University's School of Humanities yesterday. Bachelor degrees were awarded to 390 graduands while 55 received higher degrees at the Nanyang Auditorium.

Said Ms Fu: "A small, open economy, Singapore is susceptible to global forces. Increasing trade frictions, anti-globalisation, protectionism, technological advancements, demographic shifts – these are words we hear these

days and they are changing our economy, 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."

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

On learning constantly, Ms Fu said: "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 can't 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.

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