

NTU endowment fund started in honour of late dean

Justin Ong

The Nanyang Technological University's (NTU) pioneer engineering batch of 1985 launched an endowment fund in honour of the university's late Emeritus Professor Chen Charng Ning yesterday.

Prof Chen – who was founding dean of NTU's then School of Civil and Structural Engineering, a deputy president of the university and founding chairman of the Building and Construction Authority – died on Nov 30 last year. He was 80 years old.

He was also board chairman of Santarli Holdings, whose construction arm seeded \$1 million to the fund “without hesitation”, according to former MP Lee Bee Wah.

She co-chairs the endowment fund committee alongside fellow former MP Inderjit Singh. They are both from the 1985 cohort.

The fund aims to award scholarships worth up to \$15,000 and bursaries of up to \$10,000 annually,



Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat, flanked by Santarli Construction managing director Lee Boon Teow (left) and NTU deputy president Ling San, with the firm's \$1 million cheque to the university's new Professor Chen Charng Ning Endowment Fund yesterday. With them were Prof Chen's widow, Mrs Christine Chen (right), former MPs Lee Bee Wah and Inderjit Singh, and NTU vice-president for advancement Lien Siaou-Sze. PHOTO: MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

for engineering undergraduates from underprivileged families.

It is already halfway to its goal of raising at least \$2 million.

Speaking as guest of honour at the launch, Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat said that for every dollar raised, the Government will contribute \$1.50 to NTU's general endowment fund.

“On top of this, the Government also provides a 250 per cent tax deduction to the donor. So, in total, for every dollar donated, the Government contributes up to \$2,” added Mr Heng, who is also Coordinating Minister for Economic Policies and Finance Minister.

Mr Heng said the endowment is particularly meaningful in the light of the Covid-19 outbreak. “Many undergraduates and their families are going through difficult times, and your generosity can help ensure we maintain social mobility.”

Speakers at the event took turns to describe the late Prof Chen's lasting legacy.

Ms Lee said Prof Chen was a caring and kind-hearted fatherly figure, as well as an excellent teacher. “Many of his students are doing

very well in the (construction) industry and we owe it to him for imparting his knowledge to us,” she said. “Prof Chen's teachings and the memories he gave us have left a profound impact on our lives. It is only befitting that we do something to honour him.”

Her batchmates collectively felt that the most meaningful way to do so would be to set up an endowment fund, added Ms Lee.

“The importance of education is why Prof Chen went into the profession to impart his knowledge to us,” she said. “We should pay it forward by doing our part to make quality education accessible and affordable for our next generation of Singaporeans.”

Mr Heng said Prof Chen left an indelible mark not just on his students and Singapore, but also on the international stage.

“He was appointed by the World Bank on numerous occasions to work on projects, including in China, Vietnam and Laos. His work helped to improve the lives of many people in the region.”

justino@sph.com.sg