

New NTU endowment fund in honour of late engineering dean kicks off with \$1m donation



Late Emeritus Professor Chen Charng Ning was founding dean of NTU's then School of Civil and Structural Engineering. PHOTOS: NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY, SINGAPORE/FACEBOOK, JASON QUAH

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SINGAPORE - The Nanyang Technological University's (NTU) pioneer engineering batch of 1985 on Wednesday (Dec 30) launched an endowment fund in honour of the late Emeritus Professor Chen Charng Ning.

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.

He was also board chairman of Santarli Holdings, whose construction arm seeded \$1 million to the fund "without hesitation", according to former member of Parliament 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 to engineering undergraduates from underprivileged families. It is already halfway to its goal of raising at least \$2 million.

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Speaking as guest of honour at the launch, Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat said that for every dollar raised, the Government would 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 Finance Minister.

He said the endowment fund is particularly meaningful in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"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.

In Ms Lee's welcome address, she 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 the most meaningful way to do so would be to set up an endowment fund, said Ms Lee.

"The importance of education is why Prof Chen went into the profession to impart his knowledge to us," she added.

"We should pay it forward, by doing our part to make quality education accessible and affordable for our next generation of Singaporeans."

NTU provost Ling San described Prof Chen as a pioneer who laid the foundation for the university's strengths, and an exemplary figure who inspired the type of giving spirit NTU hopes to instil in its students and alumni.

Mr Heng, who is also coordinating minister for economic policies, 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."

Later, in closing remarks, Mr Singh shared that the class of 1985 had first decided to start raising funds for NTU in 2005 - and by 2010, had contributed more than \$3 million in donations to the university.

Its newly launched endowment fund this year marks the cohort's 35th year of graduation, and its continued efforts in giving back to NTU, said Mr Singh.

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In October this year, the family of Dr Ong Yong Peng, a National Institute of Education don who died last year, [gave \\$120,000 for an endowment to spur character and citizenship education.](#)

It followed an NTU Priorities Fund which was seeded and launched in April with a personal gift of \$100,000 from NTU president Subra Suresh and his wife Mary Suresh. As of August, it had attracted donations of about \$1.5 million in total.

Source: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/parenting-education/new-ntu-endowment-fund-in-honour-of-late-engineering-dean-kicks-off>