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[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Join Us](#) | [News & Events](#) | [Interest Groups](#) | [Opportunities](#) | [Success Stories](#) | [Partners](#) | [Links](#) | [Sitemap](#)

News and Events

[Home](#) > [News And Events](#) > [State Of The University Address 2009 Scaling New Heights In A Changed World](#)

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- > [Fundings](#)
- > [Industry](#)
- > [Research Centre](#)

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State of the University Address 2009: Scaling new heights in a changed world

30 Oct 2009

Our world is fast changing and NUS needs to make full use of the window of opportunities to impel the university forward and scale new heights in a changed world. To achieve this, NUS President Tan Chorh Chuan said the University will need to continue to aggressively build upon talent, a transformative education and world-class research, as well as intensify the efforts in making NUS a significant player in the rapid rise of Asia. Delivering his State of the University Address on 30 October 2009 at the University Cultural Centre Theatre, Prof Tan spoke on the implications of the fundamental changes in the world economy and financial system after the global financial crisis for NUS. He also spoke on Asia's ascent on the world stage and the need for the University to build on its expertise as a well-connected hub by offering a new and integrative understanding of Asia.

With regard to the implications of the changed world, Prof Tan noted that NUS will have to make three strategic adjustments in the areas of research and institutional development. This includes intensifying efforts to make NUS a pre-eminent knowledge centre in Asia, increasing the University's agility to be more responsive to change and thirdly, to boost NUS' standing as a global university by extending its global reach.

To achieve an integrated understanding of the key issues in Asia, NUS will focus on advancing more integrative research, specifically in the areas of Asia studies and sustainability. Prof Tan said: "The new NUS Global Asia Institute set up in September this year will provide the platform for integrative Asia-studies (and) an initial set of research themes has been defined following extensive consultations." He added that a critical output of GAI will be finding solutions to real-world problems.

An Integrative Sustainability Solutions Cluster will also be established to create powerful synergies among the NUS research groups and centres working in the area of environmental sustainability. To meet the breadth of expertise required for such an approach, the University will be drawing on existing staff across NUS and recruiting top-notch faculty.

Speaking on one of the steps taken for the University to become more responsive to change, Prof Tan said NUS will be introducing the Grooming Excellent Managers programme for promising Executive and Professional staff. The programme will provide selected staff with the chance to grow as leaders through tailored development opportunities such as training attachments in top universities overseas.

Prof Tan noted that the changed world and the growing importance of Asia will present unique opportunities for NUS to make a quantum leap to be a leading global university, but at the same time, it will also pose challenges for the University. However, he added that NUS is well placed to succeed. "Our talent pool is growing by leaps and bounds. Our dynamism and creativity help us stand out as a global university," he said.

How NUS can best position itself to seize the opportunities brought about by the changing world? Said Prof Tan: "Like trekkers on a demanding quest, we cannot stop. We must

News :

> [Latest News](#)

Calendar of Events:

> [Latest Events](#)

push harder and with even fiercer energy, impelled forward by our steely resolve, our fire in the belly and above all, our self-belief. It is not just our strategies and our plans, but our mental strength and attitude that will determine if we will succeed or not.”



FRIENDLY EXCHANGE: Prof Tan Chorh Chuan (second from left) chatting with guests before the event



STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS 2009: Prof Tan Chorh Chuan addressing the audience at the University Cultural Centre Theatre

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