Thirty-seven alumni were lauded with the prestigious Nanyang Alumni Awards for flying the NTU flag high.

Bulliance and grit best describe this year’s recipients of the Nanyang Alumni Awards. On the evening of 13 October 2018, a total of 37 outstanding NTU alumni returned to their alma mater to be honoured for their significant contributions to the University and society.

Among them, three prominent individuals received the Nanyang Distinguished Alumni Award, the highest accolade conferred upon NTU alumni—entrepreneur and philanthropist Dato’ Sri Dr Tahir (Commerce/1976); Managing Director and CEO of GIC Mr Lim Chow Kiat (NBS/1993); and global investor turned CEO Adjunct Professor Tan Chin Hwee (NBS/1995). As they built their respective careers, they have also contributed to their communities and helped others around them achieve their aspirations.

OF RISK AND RETURN

Even as a student at Nanyang University, Dr Tahir already displayed a flair for entrepreneurship, having established a small retail business exporting goods from Singapore to his hometown in Surabaya, Indonesia. But it was only in 1986 that his big break came. Seizing an opportunity to venture into the garment and textile manufacturing industry, he started Mayapada Group, earning a strong return on investment over the next four years.

Never one to settle, Dr Tahir eventually decided to move into the finance sector; he established Bank Mayapada, today the Group’s flagship entity. Dr Tahir remains the Group’s Chairman and President Commissioner, as well as its controlling shareholder. Where others might view these transitions as risky endeavours, Dr Tahir saw them as surmountable challenges. “In business and life, there are risks. You have to take calculated risks, which means risks that you can afford,” he said. “I would never say that if I’m a latecomer to a particular business, I could not do well.”

Despite his success, Dr Tahir has not forgotten his humble roots—his parents earned a living by building rickshaws, and their hardship was not lost on him. Seeking to give back to society, he started the Tahir Foundation to serve the less fortunate in Indonesia, Southeast Asia and beyond. Funded by proceeds from his business empire, the Foundation champions initiatives benefiting healthcare and education. Dr Tahir also partnered with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to create a combined US$200 million global fund to alleviate social and welfare problems in Indonesia, as well as improve the lives of the world’s poorest by eradicating diseases such as polio.

“The objective of life, in my philosophy, is to create value for a lot of people. I use my position as a means to create happiness for others.”

– Dato’ Sri Dr Tahir
**A WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE**

Creating value is also something close to Mr Lim’s heart. Having joined Singapore’s sovereign wealth fund GIC Pte Ltd in 1993 as a portfolio manager, Mr Lim rose swiftly through the ranks with his sharp intellect. Today, as the Managing Director and CEO of GIC, he oversees more than US$100 billion in assets across 40 geographies worldwide.

Mr Lim credits his NTU education for granting him the breadth of knowledge that has served him well over the years. In addition to his degree in accountancy from NTU, he has also taken courses in law, statistics, communication, IT and organisational behaviour.

“Looking back, my parents’ decision to send me to Singapore for education when I was 13 years old was greatly beneficial for my growth. The knowledge and values I picked up during my formative years here were very helpful for dealing with the ups and downs of investing and leading an organisation,” he said, adding that he has also benefited from the many opportunities at GIC over the last 25 years, which include overseas postings and external attachments.

Always keen to contribute to his alma mater, Mr Lim has served on the NTU Board of Trustees, a key pillar of university governance, since 2015. He is also Chairman of the Board of Governors of NTU’s Wealth Management Institute, which was established with the support of Temasek and GIC to catalyse Singapore’s growth ambitions as a premier international wealth and asset management centre. He believes that these efforts will help nurture talent and safeguard Singapore’s future.

“One’s achievements can most often be traced to the opportunities afforded by others, so it’s most important to keep creating opportunities for as many people as possible,” he said.

Ultimately, it’s about increasing happiness, Mr Lim noted, adding that he draws inspiration from long-time GIC partner and fund manager Ray Dalio, who wrote that “meaningful relationships + meaningful work = happiness”.

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**IGNITING PASSION**

For Prof Tan, however, happiness lies in helping others achieve their potential. “My real calling has been mentoring. I think I do this better and with more passion than my role as CEO or in my past position as an investor!” he said.

With a strong track record of success in his prior and current appointments, Prof Tan is more than qualified to give advice on matters in the world of finance. He was a Managing Director at Amaranth Advisors, an American multi-strategy hedge fund, before becoming a partner at leading global alternative investment firm Apollo Global Management, where he founded its Asian operations. Today, he is Trafigura Group’s CEO for Asia Pacific, a position he was headhunted to fill in 2016. Trafigura is in the business of global logistics for commodities and is ranked 32nd in the 2018 Fortune 500 list of companies.

Prof Tan has certainly come a long way from the days of living in a one-room Housing and Development Board apartment in Toa Payoh. But behind the rags-to-riches story is an enduring motto that has kept Prof Tan focussed: there is no shortcut in life when it comes to acquiring knowledge and experience. Asked to choose between the two, he mused that “experience without knowledge is better than knowledge without experience”.

On receiving the Nanyang Distinguished Alumni Award, Prof Tan noted that it was his honour to serve as an NTU Board Trustee, an adjunct professor and a mentor to NTU students.

For NTU alumni, he had some thought-provoking words: “We all sit around a campfire built by others. Each of us warms our hands by the fire, and each of has a responsibility to see if we can bring one more log to the fire. I hope to see our alumni stepping up and giving back to the school we love,” he said.

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“**The knowledge and values I picked up during my formative years were very helpful for dealing with the ups and downs of investing and leading an organisation.**”

— Mr Lim Chow Kiat

“My real calling has been mentoring. I think I do this better and with more passion than my role as CEO or in my past position as an investor!”

— Adjunct Professor Tan Chin Hwee
NANYANG DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

This is the highest honour bestowed upon the alumni of the University, to recognise the truly remarkable accomplishments of alumni who have gained national, regional or international distinction as outstanding examples of their chosen fields or professions, and whose endeavours reflect admirably on or bring honour to the University.

DATO’ SRI DR TAHIR
Commerce
B.Com./ Class of 1976
Entrepreneur extraordinaire

Dr Tahir is the Chairman and CEO of the Mayapada Group, one of Indonesia’s leading conglomerates involved in banking, healthcare and real estate. He was placed eighth on Forbes’ list of Indonesia’s 50 Richest in 2017 and has received numerous accolades over the course of his successful career, including the Bintang Jasa Utama—accorded to Indonesian and foreign citizens in acknowledgement of extraordinary contributions to the country’s development—and the Ernst & Young Indonesia Entrepreneur Of The Year award in 2011. Most recently, he was conferred the Bintang Mahaputera Nararya medal by Indonesian President Joko Widodo. Dr Tahir is the first Chinese recipient of this medal.

Mr Lim Chow Kiat
NTU wishes to congratulate all the 37 award winners whose achievements can most often be traced to opportunities afforded by others, so it’s most important to keep creating opportunities for as many people as possible.”

ADJUNCT PROFESSOR TAN CHIN HWEE
Nanyang Business School
B.Acc. / Class of 1995
Leading global investor turned CEO of commodity trading giant

Prof Tan is known in financial circles as an astute investor. In 2016, he joined the global commodities logistics giant Trafigura Group as CEO for Asia Pacific, becoming the first Singaporean and Asian to take up such a senior position in the firm. Just over a year since he came on board, Asia’s contribution to the firm’s revenue jumped by around US$10 billion. Since then, Prof Tan has not forgotten the needy in society. Together with a group of friends, he has helped distribute necessities to those living in one-bedroom flats. Motivated by his own daughter’s premature birth, he also helped establish the Premmies Fund with KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital to help parents with premature babies cope with the financial burden. Most of all though, Prof Tan believes in paying it forward by being a mentor. He had more than 40 mentees at one point while at Apollo Global Management, and has also helped set up a mentoring programme at UFA Society Singapore.

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Meanwhile, seven alumni were presented with the Nanyang Alumni Achievement Award in honour of their accomplishments at the national level. Er Chong Kee Sen (CSE/1987), Executive Director of civil and structural engineering consulting firm Engineers 9000 Pte Ltd, was one such alumnus. Throughout his illustrious career, Er Chong has championed numerous initiatives and programmes to empower the next generation of leaders in engineering.

“The University has not only imparted deep knowledge and skills to me, but also instilled values such as compassion and empathy,” he said. “This has spurred me to contribute to my alma mater and to the engineering profession via the Institution of Engineers, Singapore.”

Another Nanyang Alumni Achievement Award recipient was Ms Tan Aik Na (NBB/1993), Vice President for Administration at NTU, who has helped the University develop people-centric policies and streamline administrative processes using technology.

“Leadership starts with people and connecting them to a common purpose. This award is dedicated to all who have walked alongside me in this journey so far,” she said, adding that NTU is more than just a workplace for her. “NTU holds an impact in Singapore and on the global stage. NTU wishes to congratulate all the 37 award winners whose achievements can most often be traced to opportunities afforded by others, so it’s most important to keep creating opportunities for as many people as possible.”

THE GIFT OF GIVING BACK

In addition, 11 alumni under the age of 40 were presented with the Nanyang Outstanding Young Alumni Award. Many of these awards were inspirations to their peers.

For example, Ms Nur-Syihahdat Binte Alim (WKWSIC/2013) is a Corporate Strategy Senior Executive with Sport Singapore who wears a second hat as a national archer. Not one to let her cerebral palsy get in the way of her ambitions, she has gone on to place strongly in many other international sports meets.

Last but not least, the Nanyang Alumni Service Award was bestowed on 16 alumni for their sustained commitment to NTU. One recipient of this award was Ms Jean Chan Sook Chong (MAE/2014), a senior repair design engineer at Cyient Singapore Pte Ltd. Ms Chan joined the MAE Alumni Association upon her graduation in 2014 and served as its President from 2016 to 2018. During her tenure, she actively participated in alumni activities is an extension of doing what she enjoyed doing during her university days.

“Staying active in the alumni association after graduation has been greatly rewarding in terms of the friendship and teamwork formed from working together with peers to organise activities for our alumni,” she said. Collectively, these 37 award-winning alumni are making an impact in Singapore and on the global stage. NTU wishes them all the best in their future undertakings.”

One’s achievements can most often be traced to the opportunities afforded by others, so it’s most important to keep creating opportunities for as many people as possible.”
Mr Lim Cheng Eng
Science
B.Sc. / Class of 1967
Outstanding businessman and devoted alumnus
After graduating from Nanyang University’s Chemistry programme in 1967, Mr Lim took up a teaching role with Huayi Government Chinese Middle School (today Hua Yi Secondary School). It was only three years later that he would take his first strides in the business world by joining the family business—Hock Lam Pte Ltd—which imports White Rabbit Milk Candy and other popular food products. Mr Lim would eventually go on to take over the business, establishing it as a major importer and exporter of confectionery to Southeast Asia.
Mr Lim has maintained strong ties with NTU, having served as the Chairman of the Combined Class Reunion (Classes of 1966-1969) and a Council Member (1999) at the Association of Nanyang University Graduates. He also helped establish a student bursary fund under his name towards the support of students in financial need.

Mr Shafie Bin Shamsuddin
Nanyang Business School
B.Bus. / Class of 1996
Retail business leader
Mr Shafie is currently President and CEO of PT. Trans Retail Indonesia, a subsidiary of CT Corp that owns and operates retail businesses including grocery shops, hypermarkets, mini-markets and convenience stores. Prior to joining the Jakarta-based company, he had an illustrious career with the Carrefour Group and last held the position of Executive Director, Global Talent Management and Organisational Development.
While known for his sharp business acumen, Mr Shafie also has a compassionate side to him. He supported Mercy Relief in the aftermath of the 2009 Padang earthquake. Eager to contribute to his alma mater, Mr Shafie was an adjunct lecturer for NTU’s Masters for Managerial Economics programme for high-level Chinese officials.

Ms Tan Aik Na
Nanyang Business School
B.Acc. / Class of 1993
Steward of NTU’s world-class administration
Leadership takes many forms. Ms Tan is a leader who is always willing to challenge convention and the status quo. Since joining NTU in August 2016, she has made it her mission to put people at the heart of its operations. As the Vice President for Administration, Ms Tan has accelerated the transformation of the University’s administrative functions and organisation to support NTU’s continued growth ambitions.
Ms Tan is also a trailblazer. In 2011, she was the first Asian woman in chemical giant DuPont’s 210-year history to be appointed global CFO of its world-leading Titanium Technologies business. In January 2018, she became the first female alumni to be appointed a Vice President at NTU.
NANYANG OUTSTANDING YOUNG ALUMNI AWARD

To recognise alumni under the age of 40 whose endeavours in their chosen fields or professions are worthy of recognition and have brought honour to the University.

Ms Jessica Ma Thiri Aung (SSS/2010)
Mr Liu Xi (EEE/2015)
Ms Low Ser En (ADM/2013)
Mr Li Xiaojun (NBS/2009)
Mr Wu Tiansheng (NTC/2014)
Ms Yasmin Binti Ahmad Mazlani (NTC/2016)
Ms Nur Syahidah Binte Alim (WKWSCI/2013)
Mr Albert Zhang Yizhong (SSS/2010)
Asst Prof Zhang Yi (SCBE/2007)
Mdm Tauled Tunisha Bte Mohd Paser (NIE/2002)
Dr Tommy Ong Chung Yaw (MAE/2005; NTC/2005 & 2006)
Ms Yasmin Binti Ahmad Madlami (NTC/2016)
NANYANG ALUMNI SERVICE AWARD

To recognise alumni whose dedication and volunteer commitments, through alumni clubs and associations or the University’s programmes and activities, have significantly enriched the University.

Mr Sundar Arackiyaraj (MAE/2014)
Ms Lee Hui Min (SBS/2012)
Mr Foo Hee Kiang (CSE/1987)
Mr Chong Weng Hoe (NBS/1997)
Mr Stanwin Siow Kwong Ting (SCSE/2012)
Ms Jean Chan Sook Chong (MAE/2014)
Mr Leong Kok Hou (MAE/2012)
Mr Ng Kah Meng (EEE/2011)
Mr Xiong Junhong (NBS/2012)
Mr Chang Wenn Yuan (Science/1959)
Mr Tan Yong An (SoH/2011; NIE/2012)
Ms Gillian Ang Lay Tin (NBS/2002)
Mr Chu Sui-Lung (HSS/2006)
Mr Shen Genlin (NBS/2008)
Mr Tang Tiebao (NBS/2005)
Mr Ng Jun Xiong (NBS/2005)
Ms Gillian Ang Lay Tin (NBS/2002)
Mr Ng Kah Meng (EEE/2011)
Mr Foo Hee Kiang (CSE/1987)
Mr Chong Weng Hoe (NBS/1997)
Mr Stanwin Siow Kwong Ting (SCSE/2012)
Ms Jean Chan Sook Chong (MAE/2014)
Mr Leong Kok Hou (MAE/2012)
Mr Ng Kah Meng (EEE/2011)
Mr Xiong Junhong (NBS/2012)
Mr Chang Wenn Yuan (Science/1959)
Mr Tan Yong An (SoH/2011; NIE/2012)