The ever-evolving Singapore skyline has seen a surge in iconic landmarks in the past decade, from the twelve giant Supertrees at the Gardens by the Bay to the Marina Bay Waterfront Promenade, which boasts an uninterrupted 3.5-kilometre boardwalk that gives a panoramic view of the central business district.

A majestic sight to behold, the Supertrees are also considered a construction feat. Some of the Supertrees have canopies that are nary an arm’s length from one another, while the biggest Supertree is as tall as a 16-storey building with a canopy that stretches the length of an Olympic swimming pool.

These iconic buildings and architectural landmarks are the brainchild of Mr Von Lee Yong Miang (CEE/1995), Founder and Executive Chairman of home-grown building construction company Expand Group. The company just celebrated its 16th anniversary this year, along with the milestone of achieving an aggregate revenue of S$1 billion and current outstanding orders of S$500 million.

PAYING IT FORWARD

The award-winning developer now wants to build something less tangible than a Supertree, yet possibly even more rewarding. He is looking to grow human talent—specifically ambitious, young engineers—to help fertilise the field that has led to his success today.

By bestowing onto his alma mater a S$1 million gift to start the Von Lee Yong Miang Bursary Fund, Mr Lee has made it possible for NTU to fund up to ten students per academic year in any engineering field of study, providing each student with a stipend of S$10,000.

In a nod to his generous giving, the endowment will be matched by the Singapore Government, bringing the total endowment to S$2.5 million.

“I recalled how in my earlier years I had also benefited from the university and the many helping hands which helped me during my financially constrained years,” Mr Lee shared.

“This motivated me to establish this bursary to help a lot more undergraduates access the quintessential tertiary education so that they will be able to focus in their academic achievement. Eventually, the recipients can likewise contribute to and serve society.”

The Supertree builder never forgot his NTU roots
Mr Lee presented the cheque to Professor Lee Sing Kong, NTU’s Vice President (Alumni and Advancement), during Expand Group’s 16th anniversary celebration held at the Conrad Centennial Hotel on 7 July 2016.

Also present at the ceremony was Mr Victor Tay, NTU’s Chief Development Officer, and Mr Inderjit Singh, member of the NTU Board of Trustees and CEO of Solstar International Pte Ltd.

“...I recalled how in my earlier years I had also benefited from the university and the many helping hands which helped me during my financially constrained years...”

REMEMBERING ONE’S ROOTS

There is a Chinese saying, ‘pin ibui si yuan’, which means it is important to remember the source of one’s success. Mr Lee, who is a recipient of the prestigious Pingat Bakti Masyarakat (Public Service Medal) for his contributions to public service in Singapore, certainly understands that phrase very well.

In an interview with the Business Times in July 2015, Mr Lee said that Expand Group counts as part of its mission to provide housing for the population and “to beautify and shape the nation’s landscape”.

During the cheque presentation ceremony, Prof Lee expressed his gratitude to Mr Lee for creating this bursary fund, which will provide a lifeline to many disadvantaged students at NTU.

“NTU is very grateful to our esteemed alumnus, Mr Lee, for his generosity. We are very proud that whilst he has become so successful in his career, he has made such a tremendous effort to help others because he remembers the assistance he received many years ago as an NTU undergraduate,” Prof Lee said.

“Mr Lee’s gift will not only benefit students with financial difficulties, but also be an inspiration to other successful alumni to give back to society, promoting a culture of giving.”

From left: Mr Von Lee, Mr Inderjit Singh, Professor Lee Sing Kong, and Mr Victor Tay at the cheque presentation ceremony on 7 July 2016.