



NEWS RELEASE

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NTU Singapore honours the far-reaching contributions of Koh Boon Hwee, Singapore's longest-serving university chairman

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore) today honoured the leadership and achievements of **Mr Koh Boon Hwee**, at an appreciation event held for him and three retiring members of the NTU Board of Trustees.

For his 28 years of dedicated service as NTU Chairman, **Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Economic Policies Mr Heng Swee Keat** presented Mr Koh with a commemorative book, titled "**The Visionary Chairman: How Koh Boon Hwee Steered NTU from Fledging to Fast-Rising**".

In a video tribute to Mr Koh played during the event, Mr Heng, who was Minister for Education from 2011 to 2015, said: "The standard of education and research in NTU have reached new heights, and NTU is now one of the most highly regarded universities in the world. You have done so well that all education ministers have refused to let you go. So you had to serve 28 years – an amazing record." He added that Mr Koh has been "an outstanding Chair of the NTU Board of Trustees."

During his three decades of chairmanship, Mr Koh worked with five NTU chancellors, eight education ministers and four NTU presidents. Through all these changes and transitions, he provided the steady hand that steered NTU and ensured it stayed on course.

Mr Koh has been succeeded by **Ms Goh Swee Chen**, Chairman of the National Arts Council. Ms Goh said: "It is an honour for me to succeed Boon Hwee as the Chairman of NTU Board of Trustees. He has done an extraordinary job in stewardship and steering the development of the NTU in the last three decades, alongside the Trustees and the various NTU leadership teams."

No newcomer to change and challenges, Mr Koh is known for his Midas touch in Singapore's corporate world. He previously oversaw SingTel's transformation into a telco powerhouse from a statutory board in 1993, guided Singapore Airlines through the challenging period following the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States

in 2011, and steered DBS through the global financial crisis of 2008.

NTU President Professor Subra Suresh said: “It has been my privilege to interact with Mr Koh closely over the past four years. He was central to NTU’s incredible growth and progress through the years, and his impact can be seen in all aspects of the University today: our academic expansion and the growth of scholarship and research; flourishing corporate and philanthropic partnerships; and the beautiful transformation of the NTU campus. We are grateful to Mr Koh for his visionary leadership, sharp strategic insights, and wise counsel.”

Mr Koh has always been passionate about education as he believes it is the greatest means of social mobility.

NTU Pro-Chancellor and Trustee Emeritus Ms Jennie Chua said: “Boon Hwee has chaired three of Singapore’s largest companies – DBS, Singapore Airlines and Singtel – and he also sits on the boards of many interesting companies. I once asked him: ‘If you have to slowly give up your boards, how would you choose?’

“He said it’s very simple – NTU will be the last one he would give up, as he enjoys it most and he’s truly passionate about the cause of education.”

Mr Koh joined the NTU Council in 1991, the year NTU was inaugurated and became the Chairman of the NTU Council two years later. Mr Koh said in the book that the turning point for NTU was its corporatisation in 2006, which paved the way for the Board of Trustees and leadership to chart NTU’s own course. He became the Founding Chairman of the Board of Trustees until he stepped down in March this year.

“Koh Boon Hwee was Chairman for 28 years – a good portion of NTU’s history. That is very unique and something for the Guinness Book of Records,” quipped the third NTU President **Professor Bertil Andersson**. “But more important than the many years is the fact that during his chairmanship, NTU transformed from a local teaching institution with a technological focus to a world-leading, comprehensive, and research-intensive university.”

NTU’s founding President, **Professor Cham Tao Soon**, said in the book: “Mr Koh came with an abundance of experiences in large and small companies in Singapore, which was useful to NTU being a university of the industries. He shared with us how industries dealt with innovations and therefore how we should train our students to be effective when they graduate.”

An angel investor, Mr Koh has always had a deep interest in entrepreneurship. Trustee Emeritus and entrepreneur Inderjit Singh reveals in the book that Mr Koh and him once assessed the commercial viability of a technology by two NTU professors. They both invested S\$1 million to spin off the company which is progressing well today.

In the book, NTU's second president **Professor Su Guaning** said: "The most impressive part of Boon Hwee was how far ahead of the curve he was... Nothing shocked him, and we often got the feeling he was hinting to us: 'Go faster, go faster'. He was the ideal chairman to have when we were undergoing a transformation of such a dizzying scale."

Stanford Emeritus **Professor Haresh Shah**, who served on the NTU Board from 2006 to 2015 and was Chair of NTU's Academic Affairs Committee, said: "I have never met a person who comes from a non-academic background who understands and masters the needs of all the stakeholders in a university. He was a master at guiding us to focus and not get overwhelmed with too many ideas that were not of high priority towards our road to excellence."

Mr Koh's ambition as a young man was to be a professor, so his heart has always been in education. The top student from St Andrew's School in 1969, Mr Koh believes that like him, nobody forgets a good teacher. It was in this spirit that Mr Koh made a personal gift of S\$2.5 million to NTU in 2010 that allows students to honour teachers, which is now known as the Koh Boon Hwee Scholars Award.

In the book, **Sonali Manimaran**, one of the 264 Koh Boon Hwee scholars in the last decade, said: "The Koh Boon Hwee Scholars Award gave me the chance to give back to the teachers who have generously helped me throughout my education in NTU and Victoria Junior College. I have tremendously benefitted from the teaching, guidance and advice offered by my teachers in these institutions."

Mr Koh is a retired corporate leader but continues to be an active angel investor. Not one who seeks the limelight, this limited-edition commemorative book is not for sale, but copies will be made available at public libraries.

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About Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

A research-intensive public university, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (NTU Singapore) has 33,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students in the Engineering, Business, Science, Humanities, Arts, & Social Sciences, and Graduate colleges. It also has a medical school, the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine, set up jointly with Imperial College London.

NTU is also home to world-class autonomous institutes – the National Institute of Education, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Earth Observatory of Singapore, and Singapore Centre for Environmental Life Sciences Engineering – and various leading research centres such as the Nanyang Environment & Water Research Institute (NEWRI) and Energy Research Institute @ NTU (ERI@N).

Ranked amongst the world's top universities by QS, NTU has also been named the world's top young university for the past seven years. The University's main campus is frequently listed among the Top 15 most beautiful university campuses in the world and it has 57 Green Mark-certified (equivalent to LEED-certified) building projects, of which 95% are certified Green Mark Platinum. Apart from its main campus, NTU also has a campus in Singapore's healthcare district.

Under the NTU Smart Campus vision, the University harnesses the power of digital technology and tech-enabled solutions to support better learning and living experiences, the discovery of new knowledge, and the sustainability of resources.

For more information, visit www.ntu.edu.sg