

Farewell Appreciation Dinner for Mr S Dhanabalan, Chairman, NUS Business School Management Advisory Board

14 Jun 2017, 6 pm
The Scholar, Inner Chamber,
Kent Ridge Guild House

Mr S Dhanabalan

Distinguished guests and colleagues

Good evening to everyone.

In his video message, President Tan Chorh Chuan has conveyed his heartfelt of his appreciation to Mr Dhanabalan. I would also like to reiterate our university's sincere gratitude to Mr Dhanabalan for serving as the inaugural Chairman of the NUS Business School's Management Advisory Board, since its formation in July 2009.

I know Mr Dhanabalan as a down-to-earth, unassuming and patient man that gave little away about his sterling reputation and contributions as one of Singapore's most notable leaders, who had steered the country's miraculous journey from third world to first.

In Singapore's initial years, Mr Dhanabalan was responsible for many firsts in this country's nation-building: amongst others, Mr Dhanabalan drafted the proposal to set up the Economic Development Board; he was also recruited by the late Mr Hon Sui Sen to establish DBS. During his nearly 17 years in Cabinet, Mr Dhanabalan helmed a wide array of ministries that included foreign affairs, culture, community development, national development as well as trade and industry.

For his stellar contributions as a leader and mentor to the community, businesses and in Government, Mr Dhanabalan was the 8th individual to be conferred the Order of Temasek (First Class) in 2015, when Singapore celebrated SG50.

Mr Dhanabalan is a role model to all of us – one who serves the country and community assiduously. He retired from politics in September 1992, but returned three months later to

serve in Cabinet when Singapore's two deputy prime ministers were taken ill. Till today, he continues to serve the nation in the Council of Presidential Advisors and as a permanent member of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights.

In 2009, NUS conferred Mr Dhanabalan our highest honour—the NUS Eminent Alumni Award. It is the University's greater privilege, to have a distinguished gentleman of such intellect, integrity and intriguing life experiences, to chair the Business School's advisory board, shaping the School's strategies to groom future leaders.

We are grateful beneficiaries of Mr Dhanabalan's commitment to the NUS Business School. In the video, we can observe many telling moments of Mr Dhanabalan's leadership style. Mr Dhanabalan hosts students in his office, giving them a rare opportunity to observe him up close and personal. He was one of the first senior business leaders who invited our students over, engaging them on ethical leadership in the business world. I am pleased to note that the Business School has taken Mr Dhanabalan's views on ethics seriously and this aspect has been incorporated into every core module in the new BBA curriculum.

We have also learnt much from Mr Dhanabalan on his approach to hiring the right people for the job. A staunch advocate of hiring right and developing talent, Mr Dhanabalan had spent considerable effort to engage in fireside chats with senior executives in the Asia Leaders in Financial Institutions (ALFI) programme. He emphasized how one should never lose sight of doing the right things, and reminded our participants to live not just by profits, but by principles, and to hire people with values and integrity.

On behalf of the NUS community, I would like to once again, express my sincere gratitude to Mr Dhanabalan for his leadership and support to the School over the past 8 years. I would also like to thank all the members on the Board, especially Mr Liew Mun Leong, who has served on the Board since its formation.

We would also like to extend a warm welcome to Mr Liew as he assumes the role as the Chairman of the NUS Business School Advisory Board. We look forward to working together to bring the Business School forward and to scale new peaks of excellence.

On this note, I wish everyone a pleasant and memorable evening.