ADDRESS BY GUEST-OF-HONOUR

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY

AT THE FINALE OF NTU-JC-HSA CHALLENGE 2005

HELD AT SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

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Good Morning,

Professor Lim Mong King, Vice-President of the Nanyang Technological University, and Chairman, Health Sciences Authority,

Associate Professor Simon Yu, Vice-Dean of Admissions,

Assistant Professor Sze Chun Chau, Chairman, Scientific Committee for the NTU-JC-HSA Challenge,

Distinguished Guests,

Young Ladies and Gentlemen.

This morning, we come to the close of the NTU-JC-HSA Challenge. I congratulate the organisers for putting together such a varied and well-balanced programme. I would also like to congratulate each of the students here for having successfully completed the programme.
To reflect the emerging field of life sciences, this year’s NTU-JC-HSA Challenge chose the very current and exciting theme: “Life’s Wonders”.

During the 5-day residential programme, you had the privilege of learning from leading research scientists and regulatory experts from NTU, HSA and other organisations. The topics were wide-ranging, spanning modern biology, drug discovery and development, innovation, food safety and forensic sciences.

Participants had the opportunity to use the latest information technology tools for accessing relevant literature, computational biology, 3-D modeling and imaging and bioinformatics. Practical laboratory applications were featured in sessions on DNA manipulation, flow cytometry and X-ray crystallography.

The interface between academia and industry was bridged with visits to the Health Sciences Authority, the Waseda-Olympus Bioscience Research Institute and the Novartis Institute for Tropical Diseases. These visits gave a preview of scientists and researchers at work in their respective areas of specialty. They showed how scientists carry out research and apply knowledge and expertise.

A highlight in the application of scientific concepts and tools was the challenging MENSA Crime Investigation Game. I understand that the participants enjoyed the suspense and thrill of examining the motives, means and opportunities of each suspect, using forensic evidence to identify the murderer.

Another key event during the residential programme was meeting with academic advisors to discuss projects. This intense personal interaction allowed the participants first-hand experience in working as teams in brainstorming, identifying suitable projects, defining the problems and coming up with creative concepts and solutions. After the residential programme, participants spent two months refining their research concepts, gathering relevant information, applying IT tools and developing prototypes of the solutions.
During the Challenge, I believe many of the participants had been inspired by the NTU lecturers, guest speakers and project advisors. The possibilities and the challenges in scientific research are indeed fascinating and immense. In a recent news release, the Economic Development Board reported that the manufacturing output of our biomedical sciences industry grew to S$15.8 billion in 2004, a 33.2% increase over the previous year. Value-added showed a robust 48% growth to reach S$10.1 billion. Employment in this sector grew by 6.7% to 9,225 in 2004. Last year, DPM Tony Tan announced the new target for Singapore life sciences industry to reach S$25 billion in manufacturing output and an employment of 15,000 by 2015. Life science is indeed alive and well in Singapore.

In conclusion, I wish you all success in your ongoing adventure of discovering Life’s Wonders and look forward to your many contributions to life sciences in Singapore.