

Valedictorian Speech for Ceremony C11 - 12 July 2026 Sunday (7:00pm)

Dr. Mohamed Mikhail Kennerley

Doctor of Philosophy (Electrical and Computer Engineering)

Good evening.

Professor Aaron Thean, Deputy President (Academic Affairs) and Provost;
Professor Teo Yik Ying, Vice President (Global Health) and Dean, Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health;
Professor Teo Kie Leong, Dean, College of Design and Engineering;
Mr Joshua Lee Wai Khin, Corporate Vice President and Country Manager, Micron Semiconductor Asia; Operations Pte Ltd;
Distinguished Guests, Fellow Graduates, Parents and Friends;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am honoured to represent the Electrical and Computer Engineering graduating class of 2026 and to celebrate this evening alongside our fellow graduates from the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health.

Tonight is a celebration of all the work we have done to reach this moment. Most of us are not here alone. We have family and friends celebrating with us, and I'm sure many of us were hoping for more than the tickets assigned. I think that says something. Not just about how much we want to share this moment, but about how much this moment was made possible by the people we want to share it with.

I still remember back in my first year, how unfocused I was. I would lose track of conversations with my wife because I was still thinking about failed experiments. But I vividly remember what she told me at that moment: "This is important, but it is not everything." Those words grounded me. She may not have understood exactly what I was working on, but she understood me.

And I think many of us had a moment like that. Maybe not in those exact words. But someone, who pulled you back from the edge of losing perspective. A friend who dragged you out for dinner. A parent who called at the right time. We carry those moments with us. They became the thing we returned to when the work got heavy again.

In my third year, my wife and I had a daughter. And what had been a quiet reminder became something I felt in a much more immediate way. There was someone who needed me to actually show up, not just be physically present.

And here is what surprised me: The work I am most proud of was done in the first year of my daughter's life, which, as any parent in this room will know, is also one of the most demanding years of your life. Finding the why behind the what gave me a kind of focus I had not had before.

All of us have just completed something that asked a great deal of us. We gave this process everything it asked for. And that commitment matters.

But somewhere in the middle of all that, most of us found something that carried us. For many, it was family. For others, it was friends who showed up. For some, it was a hobby you fiercely protected, a small act of keeping the part of yourself outside the work, alive. That is part of why you are here tonight.

So as we celebrate this degree, I hope we also celebrate how we got here.

Think of the people behind you. They are not just here to watch you receive your degree. They are here because they are part of what it represents. The ones who waited up. The ones who listened to you explain your research even when they had no idea what you were talking about. The ones who held up your confidence on the days you had none left.

Without them, many of us would not have made it across the finish line. They may not know how much it mattered. So, tell them tonight. And then carry that with you into whatever comes next.

Because the work will come back. The next deadline, the next thing that asks for everything. And when it does, remember what got you through this one.

The people around you are not a distraction from the work. They are the reason the work is worth doing.

The work matters.

But it is not everything.

Congratulations, Class of 2026.

Thank you.