

Valedictorian Speech for Ceremony C17 - 14 July 2026 Tuesday (7:00pm)

Ravichandran Harini

Bachelor of Engineering (Materials Science and Engineering) with Honours

Associate Professor Teo Chiang Juay, Vice Dean of Undergraduate Programmes, College of Design and Engineering;

Mr Tan Wenyou, Chief Financial Officer, Evo Commerce;

Distinguished guests, fellow graduates, parents, and friends;

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good evening. It is wonderful to see so many of us gathered here today as we celebrate this special milestone together.

My name is Harini, and it is truly an honour to stand here today as Valedictorian for the graduating class of Materials Science and Engineering.

Many of us have heard this before: "University will fly by."

At the start, four years felt like a long time. But now, here we are. The lectures, labs, projects, late-night submissions, and intense group chats have all become memories.

For many of us, NUS became a place where we found our people: the friends who sat beside us in class, survived the same deadlines, and replied to our desperate 2am messages with that reassuring, "Same, I also don't know, man."

And of course, we were guided by our professors and educators. I still remember one of our first MSE lab sessions, when my group felt completely out of our depth working on supercapacitors. In the middle of that, Dr Vincent took out a pen and paper at the lab bench and carefully explained the concepts to us. It was a simple moment, but it reminded us of what good teaching does. It gives us the confidence to try.

There is a saying that we can only connect the dots backwards. University often felt exactly like that.

When we first entered NUS, many of us were stepping into a place much bigger than ourselves, not yet knowing which choices would end up shaping us.

It could have been a module we took on a whim, a project that began as a requirement, or a conversation that changed how we saw ourselves. At the time, these moments felt scattered. But slowly, they began to connect, becoming part of a story we could not have planned from the start.

Our cohort began university in what people now call the pre-AI era. Then somewhere along the way, artificial intelligence entered the picture. Suddenly, one of the most common prompts outside LT3 became, "Please explain this like my exam starts in five minutes."

AI became the new Google, the new study buddy, and, for many of us, a new way of learning.

More than anything, AI reminds us that we are graduating into a world that will keep changing faster than we expect.

That is why the courage we gained in university matters. In NUS, we had the safety net to try and to make mistakes. As we graduate, that safety net may look different. But I hope we carry forward what it has taught us: to stay thoughtful, curious, and human; to step into unfamiliar spaces; and to keep growing, even when the path is not clear.

Looking back, the dots connect more easily than they ever did at the time. And when we trace those paths back, we realise something else: none of us reached this moment alone.

On behalf of the graduating class, thank you to our professors, lecturers, mentors, lab assistants, administrative staff, donors, and everyone in the NUS community who helped make this milestone possible.

And on a personal note, thank you Dr Vincent and Prof Silvija for helping me grow within and beyond MSE. Thank you, Dr Jovan and Dr Elliot, for making the Innovation and Design Programme feel like a place where we belonged beyond our primary majors.

To Amma and Appa, and to the loved ones who have stood by me through every high and low, thank you. I hope I have made you proud.

To my friends, thank you for being there through every doubt, every crash-out, and every "Eureka!" moment.

And to my fellow graduates, thank you for being part of each other's stories.

As we leave NUS, may we stay connected to what shaped us, carry forward the courage to keep growing, and move forward with gratitude for the people who made this journey possible.

We may not know what comes next, but university has taught us that not knowing is not the same as not being ready.

Congratulations Class of 2026!

We did it!