

Valedictorian Speech for Ceremony C18 - 15 July 2026 Monday (10:00am)

Liu Congzhi

Bachelor of Engineering (Civil Engineering) with Honours

Built through the Ordinary

Professor Teo Kie Leong, Dean, College of Design and Engineering;
Er. Aaron Foong Kit Kuen, Senior Executive Director, Civil Structural and Construction Engineering, Global Lead, SJ Group;
Distinguished Guests, Fellow Graduates, Parents and Friends;
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good Morning.

It is a great honour for me to stand here today on behalf of the graduating Class of 2026 in Civil and Environmental Engineering.

I actually looked up some tips online on how to give a great commencement speech, and apparently, it requires two things: charisma and inspiration. So right off the bat, let me manage everyone's expectations on both.

Jokes aside, TODAY, as we sit here in our gowns, Commencement feels extraordinary. And it really is, marking the end of a major chapter, and for many of us, the beginning of work, further studies, or a path we may not have even expected.

But what brought us here was not one extraordinary moment. It was the accumulation of many ordinary ones.

Going to classes day after day, working on seemingly endless assignments one after another, fighting through the long queues at Technoedge, walking into midterms being a lot less prepared than we should have.

While these everyday moments might not have seemed eventful, they have shaped who we are through the ordinary.

We learnt resilience when submissions, labs, CCAs, mid-terms, and life somehow decided to happen all at once.

We learnt judgement when our hand-calculated answers were off by several magnitudes, or when our chat-gpted answers looked convincing but actually, made no sense at all.

And somewhere in the middle of all this pressure, we learnt something else too: we found a sense of camaraderie.

We discovered it in small moments. Attempting assignments together because we were all equally lost. Asking each other what needs to be done for the lab. Seeing one another before an exam and exchanging that look which said with no words, “We are so cooked.”

Semester after semester, the same familiar faces gradually became part of our university life.

That, to me, captures an important part of our experience. It is not the final grade that matters, but the process of figuring things out together. The uncertainty, the repeated effort, the collaboration, and the shared hope that eventually, things will work out.

And they did! Since we are all here today, I’d like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to those who supported us along the way.

To our professors and lecturers in the Civil and Environmental Engineering Department, thank you not only for teaching us technical knowledge, but also for helping us to develop the patience, discipline, and rigour that came with it.

To our department’s administrative staff, thank you for guiding us, supporting us, and ensuring that help was always available when we needed it.

To our families and loved ones, thank you for the sacrifices, encouragement, and quiet support that often went unseen. Even if we have not said it enough, we know that this day belongs to you as well.

And to my fellow graduates, thank you for the shared notes, group chats, last-minute advice, laughter, complaints, and companionship that carried us through our four years of engineering school.

As we are leaving NUS, we may not remember every equation in every chapter, every concept in every module, or every clause in every Eurocode. But I hope we do carry forward the kind of people we became while learning them.

People who can keep going when things are uncertain. People who can work with others even when it is difficult. People who understand that good judgement is built slowly, through repeated effort, learning from mistakes, and dedication to the work in front of us.

The world we are entering is complex and constantly changing. There will be moments of success that we celebrate, but there will also be moments of uncertainty, routine, and work that may feel unremarkable.

But if our time here has taught us anything, it is that the unremarkable parts of our life are not insignificant. They are often where our growth takes root: in just showing up, doing the work, improving along the way, and supporting the people around us.

So as we move into the next chapter, I hope we carry forward not only the technical knowledge we've gained, but also an appreciation for the ordinary.

May we continue to find meaning in small moments, joy in everyday experiences, and pride in steady progress.

Because in the end, our lives are not built only through extraordinary milestones.

They are built, day by day, through ordinary moments.

Congratulations, Class of 2026.

Thank you.