

THE POWER OF POTENTIAL

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INFLUENCING THE FUTURE THROUGH PHILANTHROPY



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CREATING NEW KNOWLEDGE, GENERATING NEW IDEAS

Professor Ho Teck Hua, Deputy President (Research and Technology) and Tan Chin Tuan Centennial Professor, National University of Singapore (NUS), explains the relationship between a university and research and the role of philanthropy in helping to find solutions to complex problems.

Why is research important to a university?

A university's reputation and academic standing are built upon the quality of its research.

The central mission of a university is the creation and dissemination of

knowledge. Hence it is important for a university to actively discover and create new knowledge and to generate new ideas, which in turn lead to new approaches to solving important problems. The source of all this new knowledge and new ideas is the research carried out by the university's faculty and students.

The higher the quality of a university's research, the greater its social and/or economic impact locally and globally. Once a university is recognised for its research excellence, it will be able to recruit the best academic talent from around the world, attract high quality students from local and international sources, and secure partnerships with premier academic institutions, key government agencies and leading industry players.

**Has this been true for NUS?
Has research played a key role in establishing our reputation?**

Yes, it most certainly has.

The Singapore government has been investing significantly in public sector research and development (R&D) since the year 2000. As a result, more funding for grants and facilities has become available and NUS researchers have competed successfully for this funding. The additional resources have also enabled us to recruit more top-notch scientists to join NUS. The volume and quality of our research output have risen steadily since then and this has played a major role in NUS' rapid rise to the top of the world university rankings.

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Thanks to these achievements, today, NUS is an attractive destination for both young and established researchers from around the world. The opportunity to perform high-quality research in a well-connected, interdisciplinary environment with some of the world's best facilities and thought leaders in their fields makes NUS a highly sought after environment in which to build a successful research career.

Has any of NUS' research been supported by private gifts?

Over the years, NUS has been fortunate to receive many gifts from private individuals and charitable foundations. Several of these were provided specifically to support of research-related activities, such as new treatments for childhood leukaemia and cardiovascular diseases, the development of intervention programmes to help the elderly take better care of themselves, and comparative research into population trends across Asia and the impact of these trends on public policy decisions.

The largest gift towards research that NUS has received from a foreign institution was

the recent endowment of £10 million from the Lloyd's Register Foundation to establish the Institute for the Public Understanding of Risk at NUS. This is the first research institute of its kind in Asia.

Given its success to date, why does NUS seek private gifts to support its research?

NUS is very grateful to all our government and industry sponsors for their research grants. We have made good use of the funds entrusted to us. However, on average, only 15 per cent to 20 per cent of total applicants are successful in most national grant calls. Many worthy proposals and ideas are not selected for funding.

In addition, many government and industry sponsors prefer to fund applied research projects that can deliver potential solutions within the next two to three years. It is increasingly harder to find long-term support for fundamental research to discover new insights into solving complex challenges as well as develop novel technologies that require a longer time frame for development and validation.

Gifts can help to bridge these funding gaps so that revolutionary ideas are not lost and NUS can continue to remain at the cutting edge of innovation and discovery. Such gifts will also allow researchers to have the intellectual freedom to pursue their passions in generating out-of-the-box ideas on a sustainable, long-term basis.

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