NUS L&D Academy Learning Symposium (and Learning Awards Ceremony)
Opening Address by Prof Tan Eng Chye, NUS President
Wednesday, 29 October 2025, 9 am, University Hall Auditorium

Good morning to all colleagues here.

It is my pleasure to join you for this inaugural NUS Learning & Development (L&D) Academy Learning Symposium. The theme of this symposium is *"Human & Artificial Intelligence: Unlocking Potential, Embracing Tomorrow"* – it captures both the challenges and opportunities of our time.

As Singapore's flagship national university, education is one of our core mission areas. We seek to deliver a rich and transformative education to all our students. But beyond undergraduates, NUS also plays an important role in reskilling and upskilling the Singapore workforce, supporting and enabling our alumni and the broader workforce to thrive and stay competitive in a world that is being transformed by data and AI.

This symposium builds on the foundation and spirit of a learning community. Colleagues across NUS are coming together to share, learn, and celebrate how far we have come in building a culture of lifelong learning here.

We are charting a unique course on the future of university education. Our strategy for Continuing Education and Training or CET rests on three key threads. The first is stackability and mobility. Learners can build capabilities, one credential at a time, through micro-credentials that stack into full formal qualifications. This flexibility facilitates career transition and advancement, building momentum for lifelong growth, wherever their careers take them.

Work-integrated, industry-relevant learning is the second area. Learning is deep, instinctive and powerful when it addresses real workplace issues, especially when learners can contribute immediately and directly to their organisations.

Lastly, through data-informed and human-centred learning, NUS seeks to harness data to personalise learning pathways for adults. For example, in the Data Literacy Programme (DLP), workshops are contextualised to participants' demographics, background, professional domains and familiarity with data. The programme is also adult-learner centric, structured for busy working professionals through a blended approach that combines interactive workshops, self-paced e-learning, and workplace-based projects.

These key threads are already shaping CET across NUS. L&D Academy has aligned with this approach, tailoring learning pathways for our Executive & Administrative (E&A) staff that are modular, stackable, and directly contributes to workplace impact. For example, the new MSc in Applied Data Science demonstrates how micro-credentials can lead to multiple pathways and qualifications, tailored to each learner's professional needs and motivation. This is the first of such models piloted through the Data Literacy Programme. Similar offerings will be progressively developed for the rest of L&D Academy's programmes in AI and other areas.

You may recall that about five years ago, NUS had sensed that rapid technology shifts will disrupt industries and job roles. We then embarked aggressively on upskilling our E&A staff in data literacy and AI, two essential skills. To date, DLP and the Artificial Intelligence Competency Programme (AICP) have already trained more than 4,000 staff. Structured across Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced levels, these programmes enable colleagues to progress at a sustainable, self-directed pace while applying their learning directly to their work. I am glad to see that colleagues are changing how they work, streamlining workflows, enhancing efficiency, enabling better service delivery and making data-driven and more robust recommendations.

The university is committed to staff development. Beyond providing training opportunities, we have taken a further step forward to recognise staff for the skills they have acquired. In July this year, we announced the launch of the Skills Recognition Scheme. Colleagues who demonstrate mastery in data science, validated through real workplace projects, co-teaching, and knowledge sharing in communities of practice, will be formally recognised with secondary job titles such as *Associate Data Scientist* or *Data Scientist*. They will also receive a commensurate skills allowance on top of their regular salary. The scheme serves as a visible affirmation of professional development by NUS. It closes the loop between learning and

performance – skills are not just acquired, but valued and rewarded. We look forward to welcoming our first batch of Associate Data Scientists under this Data Literacy Skills Recognition Scheme in mid-2026.

NUS is also pioneering different approaches to workplace learning. A key initiative this year was the launch of the Data Literacy Community of Practice in April 2025, organised monthly by the L&D Academy for DLP alumni. I understand that every gathering has been fully subscribed, demonstrating the strong appetite for peer-led learning. This Community of Practice represents a progressive approach of learning at work. They are learner-driven, practice-oriented, and built on sharing authentic workplace experiences. Colleagues exchange templates, dashboards, and code snippets; troubleshoot problems together, and inspire one another to strive for better solutions.

Why do these efforts matter? Because NUS, as Singapore's flagship public university championing the national CET agenda, must be an example in shaping a workforce that is future-ready and agile. When our staff are data-confident and AI-fluent, colleagues from Finance spot anomalies and reduce risks, HR partners anticipate skills gaps and design targeted interventions, facilities teams use sensors and dashboards to optimise energy and maintenance, and communicators create content with AI tools while safeguarding authenticity and ethics. These are not abstract scenarios – they are already happening across our units. Our mission now is to scale these practices – to ensure every staff is empowered, and every team is supported to bring learning into daily operations.

This brings me to the Learning Awards which will be presented later. The awards are testament that our lifelong learning efforts are paying off at the workplace – our staff are translating training into tangible achievements. This year, we are proud to recognise 7 colleagues who have completed the full Advanced level of DLP, and 9 colleagues who completed the full Intermediate level. 35 top performing learners will be recognised for excelling in their coursework and projects. At the Basic level, 67 colleagues are receiving the Top Group Project Award, which showcases their teamwork in solving our workplace challenges.

We also recognise the top performing learners from AICP, who have demonstrated their ability to apply AI creatively. 71 colleagues are receiving the Project Excellence Award across the

Basic, Intermediate, and Python courses. 13 colleagues are being awarded the Pass with Merit distinction, reflecting exceptional mastery at the Intermediate and Python levels.

More than 180 staff in total are receiving awards today from the Class of 2024 and 2025. Each of you embodies the spirit of lifelong learning, demonstrating your initiative and courage in stepping forward, your dedication to persist, and the excellence to apply your skills to drive impact. I extend my warmest congratulations to all our award recipients.

As we celebrate today's achievements, let us also look forward. Every skill built, project completed, and recognition earned strengthens not only the individual, but also NUS as a whole. Together, we are building a community that learns better, adapts faster, and serves with greater purpose. With the advent of AI, we must continue to unlock and augment human potential, guided always by sound human judgment and values.

On this note, I wish you a fulfilling day of learning, and I thank the L&D Academy for putting today's event together for the NUS community. Thank you.