Ladies & Gentlemen,

1. It is my privilege to join you this evening as we celebrate the very generous gift that the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School (GMS) is receiving from the Estate of Tan Sri Khoo Teck Puat.

2. This gift of $80 million is especially encouraging because it comes early in the GMS’ journey to becoming a premier medical school in Asia and beyond. The school has made excellent progress in recruiting quality faculty, and welcomes its first intake of students in August this year. Over 300 applications were received, of which 125 are being considered, for the 25 places that the GMS will offer
initially. Construction of the GMS’ permanent facilities will begin soon, and by 2009, the GMS will move into its very own signature building in Outram, near the site of Singapore’s first medical school. The substantial gift that the GMS is receiving today provides strong support for its vision and its potential to become a beacon of excellence in medical education in Asia and beyond.

Vision and Objective of the GMS

3. The idea for a graduate medical school came out of the recommendations of the Medical Education Review Panel chaired by Lord Ronald Oxburgh in 2001. The Panel proposed that Singapore establish a graduate medical school based at the Singapore General Hospital (SGH) and train clinicians in research to meet the needs of the healthcare and biomedical industry.

4. Duke University was chosen to collaborate on this new medical school because it would provide a proven but different and innovative model of medical education, one designed to produce well-trained physicians with sufficient grounding in research to be further developed to become excellent clinician-scientists. The Duke-NUS GMS’ curriculum seeks to provide a group of exceptional graduate students with early clinical exposure, increased research opportunities and the chance to work alongside the best physician-scientists.

5. The GMS will also be about attracting and developing people. It will serve as a new avenue to attract and anchor talent in Singapore, as well as to nurture
and deepen the pool of local researchers and clinician-scientists. It is part of our broader strategy for creating a virtuous cycle of excellence in research in Singapore, with top quality local and foreign scientists working alongside each other, and inspiring bright young minds from Singapore and abroad to base themselves here, pursue post-graduate training and dedicate themselves to excellence in research. The GMS will be an important pillar in this strategy for attracting and developing people, together with the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine and the other peaks of excellence that we are developing in our universities and A*STAR.

Confluence of Support for the GMS

Strength of Commitment from Duke and NUS

6. No institution that we set up is assured of success. But there are a number of reasons why we are confident that the GMS will achieve its promise as a leading medical school in Asia and beyond.

7. First and foremost is the strong commitment from both Duke and NUS to this endeavour. Duke’s commitment has been reflected in the active involvement of its leadership in the GMS, from day one. Victor Dzau, Chancellor for Health Affairs at Duke and President and CEO of the Duke University Health System, has been fully involved not just in bringing Duke into this major venture in
Singapore but now in seeing to its success as a member of the Board chaired by Tony Chew and of its Executive Committee. Dr Sanders Williams is concurrently the Dean of Duke University School of Medicine and Dean of GMS - a rare arrangement when a top university enters into an overseas venture. His appointment was a powerful signal of Duke’s commitment. Other senior members of the Duke faculty have also committed to spending a significant amount of time at the GMS.

8. In this regard, I am very glad that we are able to announce the approval by the Duke University Board of Trustees that the GMS will award a joint M.D. degree to graduates of the four-year GMS programme. The GMS’s first graduating class in 2011 will receive a joint M.D. degree from both Duke University and NUS. The award of a joint degree with NUS by a leading US university is a major milestone that has come much earlier than would be expected of a new school. It is the strongest possible statement of the ownership and confidence of both Duke and NUS in the GMS. Credit must go especially to Dr Sanders Williams for his role in making this possible at this early stage.

Strong support from the Government

9. A second source of confidence for the GMS is the full support that it is receiving from the Government of Singapore. The Ministry of Education, Ministry
of Health and Ministry of Trade and Industry are joint stakeholders in the GMS. We will spare no effort to ensure its success.

10. The joint involvement of the three Ministries in the GMS was deliberate, and augurs well for its future. We will provide the necessary resources and support for the GMS to become a leading player in medical education, together with the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, and help boost Singapore’s efforts in translational medicine, particularly in fields that are relevant to our population and those in the wider Asian region. We will also support the continuing collaboration and synergy between the work of investigators at the GMS and those at NUS, A*STAR, SingHealth and National Healthcare Group.

11. The Government believes that these synergies and linkages between medical education, research and clinical care have to be built up and strengthened, in order to contribute to the improvement of Singapore’s healthcare system and bring benefits to our people.

Philanthropic Support

12. A third and vital piece for the success of the GMS is the support of private donors and foundations. The decision by the Estate of Tan Sri Khoo Teck Puat, to contribute S$80million to the GMS is a powerful statement of how private philanthropy can partner with the Government and our universities and research
institutions to take Singapore to a new and higher plane in education and research.

13. Today’s gift is, I understand, the largest single donation to date granted by the Estate. The Ministry of Education will match the gift dollar-for-dollar, bringing the total sum being received by the GMS to S$160 million.

14. The late Tan Sri Khoo Teck Puat had dedicated much of his life driving philanthropic efforts in healthcare and education. It is thus befitting that the GMS’ new signature building on the Outram Campus, close to the site of Singapore’s first medical school, will be named after him. When completed in 2009, the new buildings will have state-of-the-art facilities for research and education with the capacity to house up to 500 researchers, staff, faculty and students.

**Conclusion**

15. Today is therefore an important day for medical education, healthcare research, and philanthropy in Singapore. The gift by the Estate of Tan Sri Khoo Teck Puat, coming together with the announcement of the joint Duke-NUS degree for the very first batch of students, has given the GMS a big lift. It will help the GMS sustain its efforts to attract top quality faculty and students and contribute to Singapore’s strategies for achieving excellence in healthcare.
16. I would like to express the Government's gratitude to all the individuals who have been working hard, often well beyond the call of duty, to ensure that the Duke-NUS GMS takes off successfully. The early stamp of quality and progress being achieved by GMS would not have been possible without the active and astute guidance of its Governing Board led by Mr Tony Chew, whom as many of us know has sacrificed a considerable amount of his personal time to making sure this whole project succeeds; the strong leadership of its management led by Dean, Dr Sanders William; and the dedication of all its staff. It is the work of all these individuals, most of whom I have not been able to name, and the support they have been given by officials in Government, which has ensured that tight timelines have been met to allow the GMS to open its doors to its first batch of students this August.

17. In closing, I would like on behalf of the Government to express my gratitude to the Estate of Tan Sri Khoo Teck Puat and to Ms Mavis Khoo and other family members of the late Tan Sri who are here with us tonight. The generosity accorded to GMS and the confidence placed on GMS will I am sure drive everyone involved to work towards establishing an institution of global distinction in the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School, which will benefit the people of Singapore and the wider region.

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