

Speech by Dr Joel Lee, Director of the School and Chemical and Life Sciences

Guest-of-Honour
Mr Teo Ser Luck
Minister of State for Trade and Industry

Mr Lee Soo Chye
President of Spirit of Enterprise

Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening.

I am indeed honoured to be invited here to share with you the Student Entrepreneur Programme at SOE, that our students from Nanyang Polytechnic have participated in and benefited from.

As the Director of the School and Chemical and Life Sciences, we prepare our students for job opportunities in the life sciences industry and you may be wondering how's that related to entrepreneurship?

When we started the Life Sciences programmes in 2000 at Nanyang Polytechnic, we wanted to be unique and different from other polytechnics. To help us craft that competitive edge, we designed business modules into our life sciences curriculum so as to prepare our students to be more well-rounded and adaptable for management jobs in their technical areas of specialisation. Even within the education business, we have to continuously improve our programmes to meet the needs of the Singapore economy. Hence, moving in line with the government's emphasis on entrepreneurship, we have included entrepreneurship modules to encourage our students to be entrepreneurs, whether later in life or as a career choice to start-up their own companies after graduation. As part of this entrepreneurship programme at Nanyang Polytechnic today, we have mentors, who are real CEOs of life sciences companies, to teach and guide the students in idea generation, feasibility study, prototype development, market testing and even business plan writing. Students learn about intellectual property, innovation management, bio-enterprise and the essentials of business management. There is much hands-on practice and we have also included an entrepreneur interview in one of these modules so that students get to speak face-to-face with an entrepreneur to appreciate the real challenges of an entrepreneur.

So, it was an easy match for us when we found out that Spirit Of Enterprise or SOE was engaging students to interview entrepreneurs. We approached Kelly, the Executive Director of SOE, with the idea of making this a part of our business modules curriculum. With that partnership made, we mobilised the whole small cohort of life sciences students to do it. So, we started this year, by getting students, working in groups, to undertake the interviews. I am happy to announce that our students have completed more than 40 interviews to date.

SOE has a structured system which benefits students during the interview. By working with SOE, the business owners are more willing to share their stories with students. In this way, students' learning is enhanced. Through the face-to-face interview, students can feel the emotions, the pulse, the aspirations, the sweat and tears of the entrepreneurs. Challenges mentioned in the books, now become real and alive. In fact, the students say that there are a lot of things that they did not know. These interviews gave them an insight into what the entrepreneurs think. The entrepreneurs' experiences have prepared them mentally too. Initially there may be fear, however, after hearing how the entrepreneurs overcome their challenges with their determination, perseverance and sheer grit, these entrepreneurs have become real life heroes and heroines. They have become role models and serve to inspire the students to be entrepreneurs one day, with their true spirit of enterprise. Through the Student Entrepreneur Programme, our students learn real life skills embodied within the spirit of enterprise. These are essential life skills for our students in an uncertain world.

This spirit of enterprise is laudable and I look forward to a continued relationship between our young students and the entrepreneurs through the facilitation of SOE! Thank you.