We are familiar with the valuable old Chinese saying:

happiness is when you help others. However, in our fast-paced society, we often forget to extend our helping hand to those in need. Hence it gives me great pleasure to be here today, at the launch of an exciting initiative for our alumni and by our alumni.

The NUS–SBF Business Advisors Programme was first conceived when the economy was suffering from the effects
of the global economic meltdown and massive layoffs were happening. I remember the three-hour long conversation that I had with Shuh Lan on the subject.

As a School, we saw this as our social responsibility to help.

First out was a series that we did in collaboration with The Straits Times. Through our 12 articles, we helped the public make sense of what was happening. We felt that understanding reduces anxiety and fear.

Following the series was another series with the Business Times. Our focus was to shed light on the effects of the crisis on Singapore businesses and possible strategies that they could consider. We went back for a second collaboration with The Straits Times, this time on connecting the crisis to globalisation. We wanted to contribute to public policy discussions, in particular, we wanted to dampen excess policy swings and to highlight critical policy challenges.
We have also organised workshops to address the impact, sent out letters to our alumni to rally their spirits and plead with their sharing hearts.

The various Business School alumni associations and our alumni office are doing their part. We have launched job placement and career counselling services, retooling seminars and a host of career enhancement schemes to help our displaced alumni. For example, in the first half of this year, our alumni office sourced close to 500 good quality jobs especially for our business alumni, all posted online. We experienced 35,000 pageviews from close to 5,000 unique visitors. Indeed, the need is tremendous. Today, the Business Advisors Programme will strengthen our string of initiatives.

We are still in an economic winter even though there are signs of a recovery. This initiative aims to help displaced NUS Business School alumni who are professionals,
managers, executives and technicians, by linking them with a small or medium size enterprise who needs their unique skill set.

SMEs are usually vulnerable to economic crisis. With the right talent on board, it could increase their capability to adapt and navigate through the difficult global market and explore new opportunities, especially at the beginning of the recovery.

Since many of our alumni are also owners of SMEs, this programme also provides the opportunity for a vibrant exchange of ideas and perspectives, particularly befitting the changing business environment.

I would like to thank all those who have made this possible. To Spring Singapore, thank you for your strong support in this initiative. To Singapore Business Federation, thank you
for your partnership. To President Tan Chorh Chuan, thank you for NUS’s support on this initiative.

I would also like to thank the members of the Business Advisors Programme Steering Committee for their leadership and drive. They include representatives from NUS Business School Alumni Association (Benny Lee, Sonny Yuen), MBA and Mandarin Alumni associations (Patrick Chan, Desmond Peh and William Chung), Singapore Business Federation (Chai Boon) and the NUS Entrepreneurship Centre (Prof Wong Poh Kam and David Lim).

What we are doing now will have a long and lasting impact on many individuals. Let’s urge ourselves to march forward together as community with optimism, the Economic Spring is coming.

Have a pleasant evening ahead.