It impressed his former ACS (Barker Road) Principal, Mr Ng Eng Chin who complimented it that it was “a speech that shows maturity and gratitude for all the things God has blessed him with and to challenge others also to reflect upon their lives and pursue what is important in our journey of life”.

Good afternoon distinguished guests, professors and faculty members, family and friends, ladies and gentlemen. Class of 2009, I am humbled by this honour and privilege to represent all of you on this podium.

I have many to thank. Singapore Press Holdings for kindly conferring me with this award, The Lee Foundation for sponsoring my education at SMU, my family for your understanding and support of my idealistic ambitions. Mum & dad, you have never pressured me to study nor asked me to take a particular path in life. For that I’m thankful because you allowed me to discover myself and find my identity in God. Today is a bonus for you and I hope that I have made you proud.

I would also like to thank my SMU friends (you guys know who you are), who have encouraged and blessed me along the way. To be called your friend - Is my privilege.

I would also like to mention my former principal from ACS Barker Road, Mr Ng Eng Chin whom to me accomplished his mission of touching and changing lives. All of you have made my journey at SMU both possible and complete.

I believe I represent the graduating class in saying a big thank you to all our professors and faculty members for nurturing our minds. And for being accessible to us and allowing us to be your friends. And to the school’s administrative offices, especially the Office of Student Life, a big thank you on behalf of the class, for supporting us and seeing to a smooth SMU education experience for all of us.

Singaporeans like to complain. It has been said that no matter what the occasion is, or where they are, there is always something to complain about. As SMU students, we are sometimes guilty of that. Like “Why are the freshmen always booking the groups study rooms?” or “How come food at the city campus is so expensive?” or “Why is the business regalia the ugliest of all the other schools?” or the dreaded, “Where is this group mate? Why so-and-so did not send his part?”

Looking at the times that we are graduating into, it is not surprising that there is even more to complain about, with the economic crisis, soft job market, H1N1 and North Korea threatening to launch missiles.

Complaining is easy. Giving thanks is hard. Today I would like to remind us all, to give thanks. As a graduating class, there are many things to be thankful for, but one thing stands out above the rest - We should be thankful that we are rich.

In my reflections about this current economic crisis, I am reminded that the most important account that we’ll ever need to manage, is not our own bank savings or stock portfolios – as cliché as it sounds, what’s most important is the ‘account’ of our lives.

A few weeks ago, I was at an ATM checking my savings balance. In that moment I felt poor because I had taken out my life savings and invested it in various pursuits. But today, as I check the ‘account’ of my life, I realise that I have been enriched by my experiences and the relationships forged at SMU and I am thankful for this.

Indeed, SMU has given us many opportunities and we grabbed them for many reasons including conviction, passion or just for a challenge. I had my fair share of that and many of you have done so in your own way, you’ve jumped out of a plane, conquered mountains, won at international competitions against all odds and even started online fashion empires. We are thankful for this.

It is also heartening to observe that several of you in our graduating class, have in the face of this tough job market, embarked on entrepreneurial ventures in the profit and non-profit world. As a word of encouragement, if an African American can become the President of the United States, no challenge is insurmountable. So continue to seize every opportunity and do us the class of 2009 proud! We are thankful for you.

In doing all of these things at SMU, we learnt that at times, the activities that we participated in purely because they looked good on our resumes became chores or even ‘work’.

Yet in the times where we took a leap, we had fun and we stretched ourselves in new ways that only SMU could provide.

Personally, in managing a café, I felt the joy of seeing satisfied faces and it tested my time management skills. In befriending the intellectually disabled, I learnt humility and compassion. In pursuing videography at SMU Broadcast and Entertainment, I met Jasmine, the love of my life. In being a part of SMU, I have been blessed by true friendships.

For all that we have been through, I am richer than I have ever been and so are you. Let us be thankful for this.

As we graduate today, our future is bound by the shared history of these last 4 years at SMU. We have seen much in such a short time, we have worked hard and we’ve learnt a lot.

Our accounts are ‘rich’ today because we are from SMU. So let us be thankful for SMU.

Since we are rich, may I humbly suggest then, that we invest this wealth in the lives of others. For when we take a stake in the lives of others, our riches will never cease and others will be thankful for us.

Class of 2009, congratulations! Be thankful, for we are rich and we have graduated! Thank you.

As the highest ranking student of his graduating cohort of 2009 Vincent Ha was presented this year’s SPH Valedictorian Award. He graduated Summa Cum Laude with a double degree in Business Management and Accountancy. He was also on the Dean’s List for 2006, 2007 and 2008 and won the Deloitte Meritorious Award in 2006 and 2007. Vincent attended ACS (Juniors) Class of 96, ACS (Barker Road) Class of 2000 & ACJC Class of 2002.