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## **NUS gets largest donation of \$29m from ex-banker**

**Ex-OCBC chairman's gift will help fund four prestigious professorships**

**By Sandra Davie**

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THE National University of Singapore received its single largest donation yesterday - \$29 million from former OCBC chairman Tan Chin Tuan - giving its fund-raising efforts a major boost as it moves towards greater autonomy.

With the Government matching Mr Tan's gift dollar for dollar, NUS' endowment fund, which stands at just over \$1 billion, will be boosted by another \$58 million.

Mr Tan's granddaughter, Ms Chew Gek Khim, who spoke on behalf of the Tan Foundation, said her grandfather had always valued education. 'Education opens up minds and opportunities, and provides those willing and capable a chance to develop their potential to the fullest. His gift to NUS is a reflection of that philosophy,' she said.

Previously, the largest donation to NUS was a \$25 million gift from the foundation of the late Dr Yong Loo Lin in 2003, which went into the establishment of a music conservatory.

Mr Tan's donation comes at a time when the Government has urged the universities to seek out more of their own funding to meet the rising cost of higher education.

As recommended by a government committee reviewing university governance and funding, NUS and the Nanyang Technological University are to be restructured into privately-run institutions, like the Singapore Management University.

NUS president Shih Choon Fong yesterday said Mr Tan's gift comes at a momentous and historic time, as the university celebrates its centennial.

Just over one-third of the \$29 million will go towards funding four Tan Chin Tuan Centennial Professorships.

The NUS, which described them as its most prestigious professorships, said they will be bestowed on academics who have demonstrated an exceptional level of achievement in their field of study.

The rest of the money will go towards funding faculty and student collaborations with the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, including joint programmes for architecture and arts and social science students.

One of the two wings of the new administrative block being built at NUS' Kent Ridge campus will also carry the 98-year-old retired banker's name, said Mr Chew Kheng Chuan, who heads the university's fund-raising unit.

'We see this as one way to give permanence and honour to our benefactors who give generously,' he said.

Naming buildings, professorships and scholarships after benefactors is one way by which many American universities encourage donations from alumni, and NUS is looking into creating more opportunities for such funding.