Welcome Speech by Principal at Republic Polytechnic's Official Opening on 31 Jul 6.30 pm – The Republic Polytechnic Cultural Centre

Mr Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister;
Your Excellency Mr Takaaji Kojima;
Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Minister for Education;
Mr Khaw Boon Wan, Minister for Health;
Mr Masagos Zulkifli Senior Parliamentary Secretary,
Ministry of Education;
Members of Parliament;
Our distinguished Friends and Colleagues from the MOE, ministries, statutory boards;
Industry and the community;
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of Mr Lee Hsien Yang Chairman of the Republic Polytechnic Board, members of the RP Board of Governors,
Alumni, Students and Staff, I welcome you to Republic Polytechnic.

I would like to express our sincere gratitude to our Prime Minister for his presence as our Guest of Honour to officiate the Opening of Republic Polytechnic’s Campus. We are most delighted that all of you have taken time off your busy schedules to join us for RP’s Official Opening.

The thinking that went into building a new polytechnic started months before the RP Act came into existence in August 2002. I speak for all my colleagues who were with me since the beginning - it has been a marvelous five years as we breathed and lived the creed of doing things differently while aiming high. The task, as we saw it, was building a campus with a difference, exploiting technology to the fullest extent possible and offering an industry relevant curriculum that added diversity to the options available to O level school leavers and ITE graduates. In short, we aim to provide the best education experience and nurture well-rounded and loyal Singaporeans.

What we strive to do is to bring the best out of each and every one of our students as we equip them to compete, as they develop careers for themselves and contribute to the evolution of our country into a top global city. Our students will face a future that demands continual learning and innovative thinking, solving problems which are not yet known, using technologies which are not yet invented.
The RP team in 2002 had 3 key challenges. We had to set up a sound, robust, quality education system, an efficient and lean administrative system and build a campus with an environment that facilitates intellectual exchange and social interaction among staff and students, creating an ambience that supports the pedagogical system that we have adopted for RP.

RP’s unique pedagogy, which centres on engaging students fully so they can truly learn, is both sound and rigorous. Our academic systems and processes served us well as shown by the fact that we graduated two cohorts who went on to higher studies or jobs that pay as well as what other polytechnic graduates are paid, as reported in the latest Graduate Employment Survey.

This year we offer 26 diplomas which enjoy good take-up and next year we will offer new diplomas in vibrant areas such as hospitality, civil aviation and digital entertainment electronics. In summary, RP has delivered its promise of giving greater choice to school leavers in terms of learning style and a wide range of diploma courses. With our One-Day, One-Problem™ PBL approach, we have contributed in the provision of diversity in our tertiary education landscape.

The second task was to develop a governance and administrative system that is lean, efficient with the highest level of integrity. We had the opportunity to drive the use of the technologies
available moving towards a paperless campus (to the extent that is possible) supported by the latest communication and networking technologies. RP today exemplifies the workplace of the future because of the way we use IT to improve our work all the time. The admin clock speed at RP is fast. Our staff are at home with IM, MSN, IP phone, wireless projectors and so on.

Additionally, RP’s various awards in organizational excellence show that the administrative system put in place is recognized for its dedication to quality. We practice outsourcing and cultivate good relations with various vendors who in turn help us to give better support to academic staff, which will, of course, then translate into a better learning experience for our students.

The third task was to build the physical infrastructure. We challenged the architects to design a campus that is distinctive, iconic for our students and prospective students, functional and supportive of the lifestyle that we envisage on campus. A key consideration was to build a campus that was appropriate, with responsibility for utilization of the budget that we were given in clear sight.

The outcome met all our expectations. We host you today in our cultural centre’s concert hall. Later you will have the opportunity to walk through our Agora, our magnificent library and on to the lawn. And yes, we are known as the ‘fenceless’ campus which was an idea we carefully thought through. Although some members of the public expressed incomprehension but more have
begun to appreciate that we want to make residents feel welcome and be a campus for the community in many ways. RP’s campus is attractive to students, we believe, because of the care with which we designed it.

With the completion of RP’s campus and the platform we have built in the last five years, RP is now embarking on a new trajectory. The next 5 years will be more exciting. We will aim for VIBRANT hub status and make our presence felt in 3 key areas: education, technology and the arts.

**Educational Hub**

RP’s Diplomas form the core of our HUB. Around our core we will have a plethora of partnerships offering opportunities for our graduands and life-long learners in Singapore. This will transform our campus into one which will be vibrant 52 weeks a year and from 8 to 10 everyday. Campus lifestyle will change and the make up of our campus community will change – it will add to the diversity, enriching one and all.

This HUB is already in the works. We are working to partner an overseas university on the Foreign Specialised Institutes (FSI) scheme in Sports Science. This programme is expected to commence in 2009. We are also working closely with Singapore Sports Council (SSC) to engage in research and development work in areas such as Sports Science and Sports Management.
Together, they will develop a Continuing Education Roadmap and coaching programmes to train sports administrators, leisure managers, sports educators, fitness leaders and coaches via specialist diplomas.

Our School of Engineering will work with Mil-Com Aerospace Training Centre, a subsidiary of Mil-Com Aerospace Group and a Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) accredited Training Centre, to launch a joint training programme in aircraft maintenance at RP’s Woodlands campus. Its curriculum is aligned with the CAAS Singapore Airworthiness Requirement 66 (SAR-66) Category B2. RP intends to extend this training opportunity to working adults, as part of RP’s Continuing Education Training (CET) Programme. The response from the industry has been favourable as companies are exploring various outsourcing models to meet their training requirements.

We have partnered Monash University’s Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences to develop the Integrated Programme in Biomedical Science (IPBMS). We are now exploring a similar structured programme in Pharmaceutical Science and Allied Health – nutrition, dietetics, and medical imaging. Recently, RP signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Parkway Group Healthcare which will look into providing Advanced Diplomas and Specialist Diplomas in Allied Health programmes such as medical imaging, pharmacy management and practice. These diplomas will offer options of pre-employment training to students and adults.
Another partner for RP is the National Community Leadership Institute (NACLI), a national training institute whose key mission is in “leadership training aimed at instilling a sense of national identity and spirit of dedicated service to a multi-racial community”, RP will offer community leadership programmes. We have developed programmes that will be launched later in the year.

**Technology Hub**

RP as a technology hub goes in tandem with our evolution into an educational hub. As some of you may be aware, RP is well-connected to the industry through several joint laboratories such as the RP-NEC RFID Centre, RP-Agilent Wireless Solutions Laboratory and RP Enterprise Computing Learning Centre (in partnership with IBM) and coming up soon are the RP-Renesas Embedded Systems Laboratory as well as the RP-Xilinx Programmable Solutions Laboratory. RP aims to be a technology node that is networked with the other key technology players in Singapore – the Universities and the National Research Institutes. Key programmes in EWT and IDM are in place.

To take us closer to being a cultural hub, an exciting collaboration was inked between RP and the National Arts Council (NAC) to further develop the arts scene by building capabilities, growing audiences and increasing engagement and participation. Both parties will work together to establish a regional arts hub in the northern part of Singapore, and bring the arts to the local community. This tie-up capitalises on the polytechnic’s purpose-
built arts facilities and allows heartlanders greater access to and engagement in quality arts experiences. The NAC-RP MOU, effective from August 2006 to August 2008, will also serve as a pilot which NAC hopes to eventually extend to other regional centres.

We have initiated the RP Artiste in Residence programme. We host the Gamelan Asmara and the Singapore Acapella – they add to the cultural vibrancy on campus and contribute to the education and enrichment programmes for our students. RP’s arts entrepreneurship programme will be launched shortly and a ‘work in progress’ is a programme on ethnic art.

Our Vision is in the Making

Today as we celebrate our first 5 years with the opening of our campus, we look forward to an exciting 5 years ahead. We will succeed, with your support and encouragement.

I now have the pleasure to invite onstage our Guest-of-Honour, Prime Minister, Mr Lee Hsien Loong.

Thank you.

LOW TECK SENG (PROF)
Principal & CEO