

# Empowering universities to have a truly transformative impact, and the importance of UEF

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President, National University of Singapore 2008-2017  
Provost, National University of Singapore 2004-2008

# Main points

1. Research universities with a truly transformative impact are crucial for success in a future with many unpredictable challenges and opportunities
2. Four most important requirements are:
  - **Talent** – academic, entrepreneurial, administrative, diverse
  - **Governance** – autonomy with accountability; performance-based + collaboration
  - **Funding** - ample & diversified
  - **Culture** – “can do” spirit that feels empowered to help shape the future
3. The transformation of NUS was enabled by autonomy + ample resources with endowment playing a key role

**Leading research universities can have a truly  
transformative impact nationally and internationally  
in at least 3 ways**

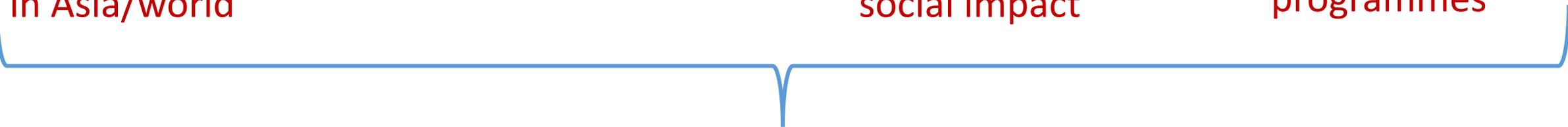
# #1: World-class talent & research which creates broad-based, high-impact value

Advance health & policy, address societal challenges nationally, in Asia/world

Drive growth of national innovation ecosystem

Successful start-ups that spawn new economic sectors, social impact

Be a centre of world-leading Industry R&D programmes



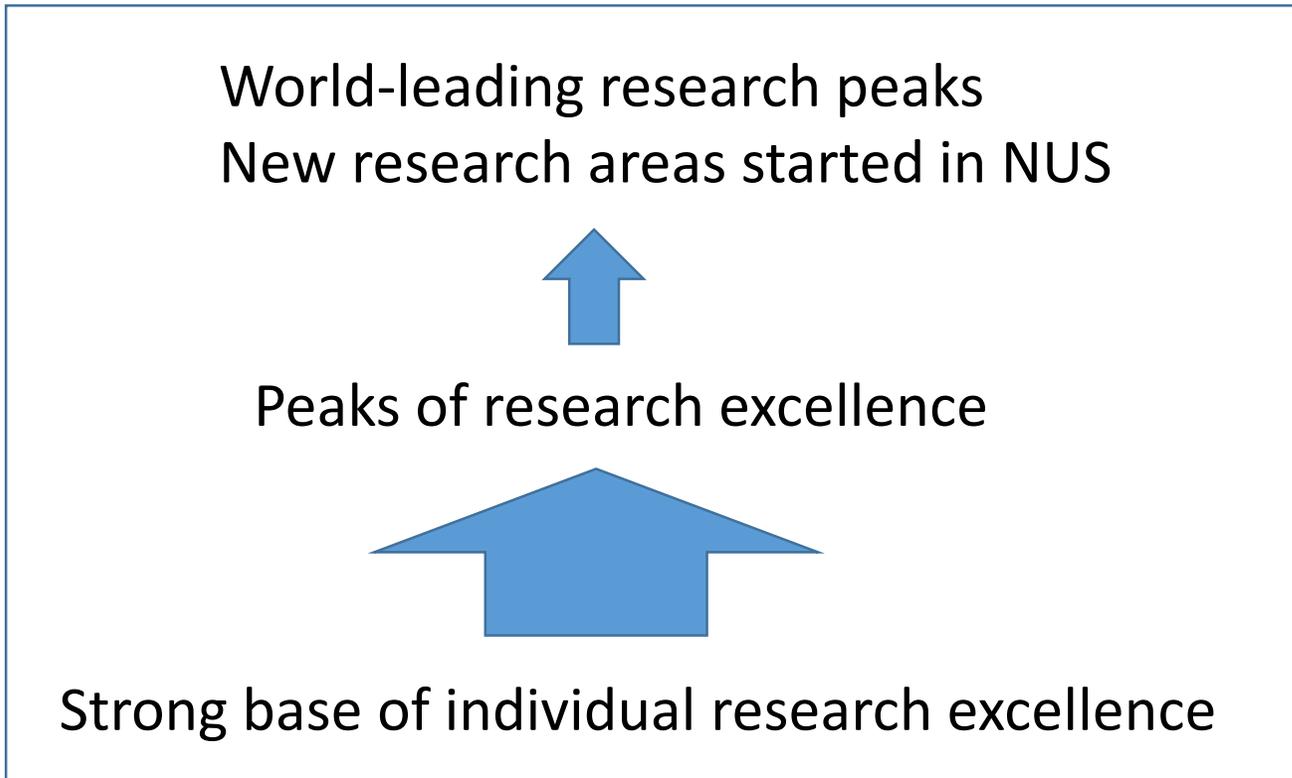
World-leading research peaks  
Important new research areas started

↑  
Peaks of multidisciplinary research excellence

↑  
Strong base of individual research excellence

## #2: Effectively use the research environment to educate graduates who are future-ready & globally competitive, who can be leaders in different sectors

### Research that makes a strong impact



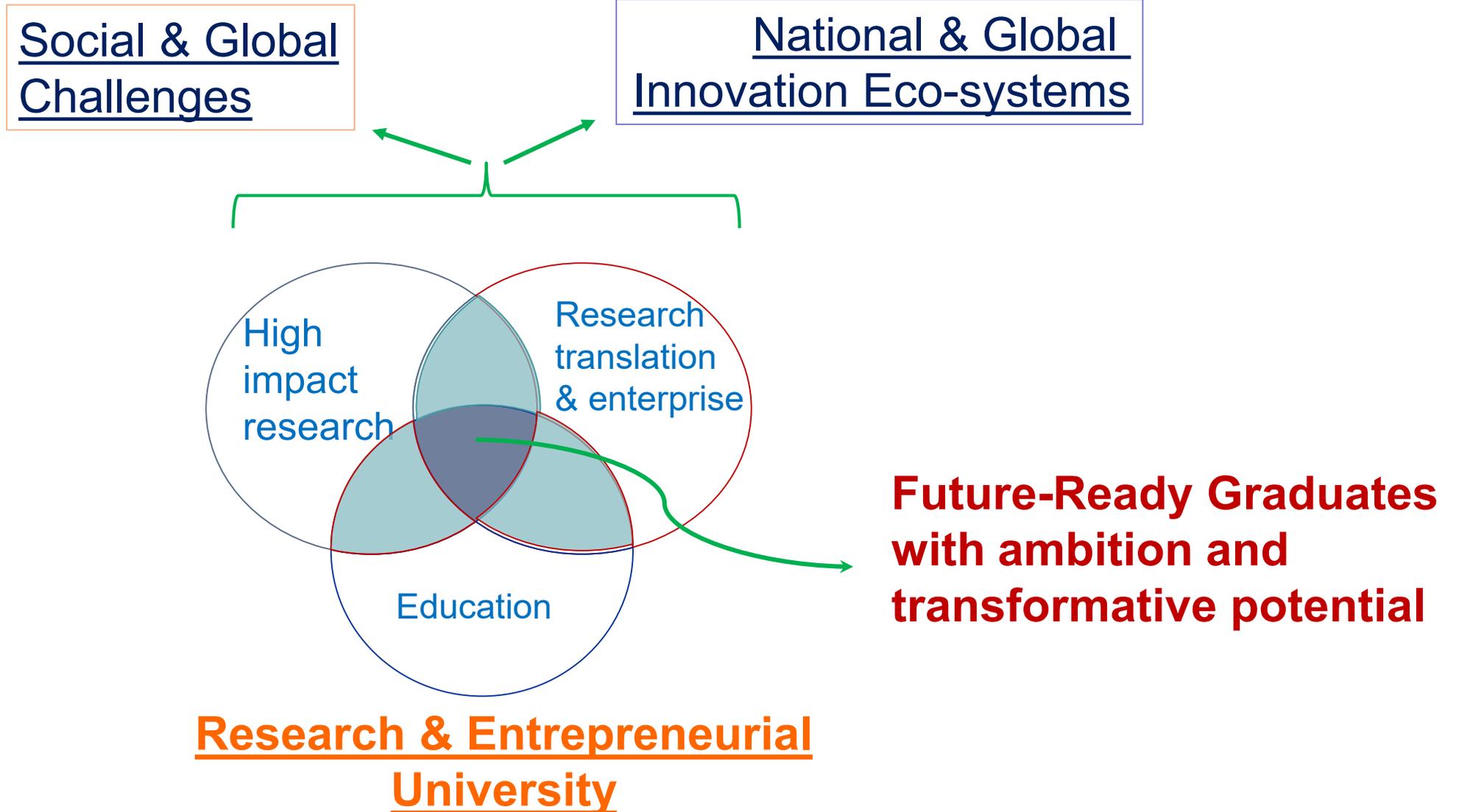
**Broad-based education  
+ critical thinking**

“Zoom out – Zoom in”

**Foundations for effective  
life-long learning**

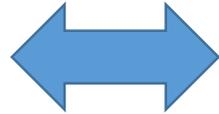
**Function well in Asia &  
the world**

# #3: The university as the place where the future is imagined & shaped, & young people and faculty are inspired & empowered

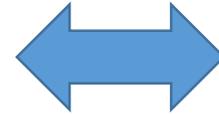


# What are the most important things needed to enable Universities to have a truly transformative impact?

Strategic Vision  
&  
Leadership



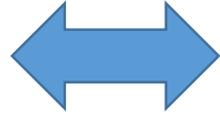
Autonomy  
with  
Accountability



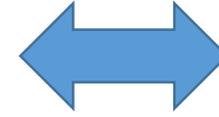
Ample  
diversified  
resources

Government funding  
Competitive research funding  
Industry funding  
**Gifts & Endowment**

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Autonomy  
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Strategic Vision  
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**Empowers the university to**

Pursue novel ideas, seed major initiatives, make “bets” on talent

Weave education, research & entrepreneurship in ways that are often not supportable by usual funding sources

**Think and plan long-term**

Helps make faculty, staff & university more entrepreneurial & responsive to the ideas of broader range of stakeholders, and motivates their commitment

# An illustration from NUS:

Building the local Innovation & Enterprise ecosystem & connecting it to global hubs

## RESEARCH

Faculty  
Researchers  
Students

**NUS Enterprise  
Ecosystem**

**NUS Overseas Colleges**

Undergraduate students  
entrepreneurial development



*The Economist* dubs Blk71  
“the world’s most tightly  
packed entrepreneurial  
ecosystem”

**LOCAL**

**LAUNCHPADS**

**GLOBAL**



Silicon Valley



China



# Empowering students to help shape the future

## The case of PatSnap

Founded 2007, NUS Overseas College alumnus Jeffrey Tiong  
Patent data analytics solutions.

One of world's fastest-growing IP platforms,  
sold in > 40 countries;  
clients include leading universities,  
US FDA, NIH, Haier, etc.

Began with 10 people in Suzhou;  
**in 2021, became first NUS student  
start-up to become a Unicorn**



NUS Research Institute @ Suzhou, China

# Recap of Main points

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