

SMU Valedictorian Awards set up to honour Hong Leong founder

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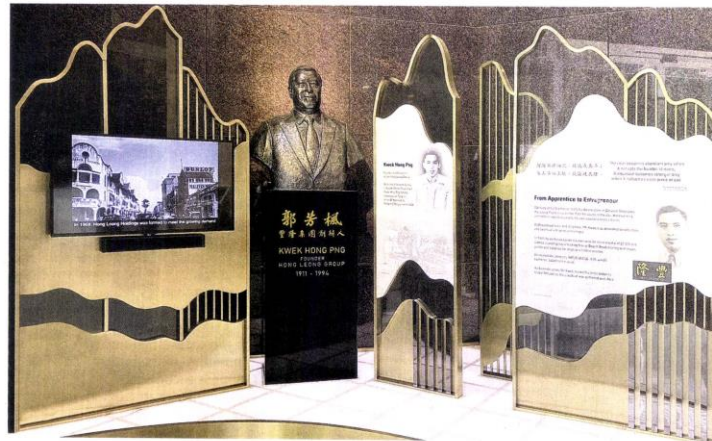
THE late Kwek Hong Png created a lasting legacy for his family when he founded the Hong Leong Group in 1963.

Though the pioneer entrepreneur never received a formal education, he understood its importance and through his own sacrifices made it possible for his children and grandchildren to receive an education.

Now, the third generation of Kweks has established the Kwek Hong Png Valedictorian Awards at the Singapore Management University (SMU) to honour the 25th anniversary of the Hong Leong Group founder's passing, and to commemorate his life's work and achievements. The 10 grandchildren of the late Mr Kwek together made an endowed gift, with the distributions intended for funding the award in perpetuity.

The *Business Times* understands that the significant amount committed to the endowment was not disclosed to respect the family's wishes for confidentiality. Set to commence next year, for the academic year of 2019-2020, S\$70,000 will be presented to the top graduates of each SMU cohort, split into equal awards of S\$10,000 each.

The Kwek Hong Png University Valedictorian Award will be presented to the



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top graduating undergraduate of SMU, and the remaining six awards – the Kwek Hong Png School Valedictorian Awards – will be given to the top graduating undergraduates of each of SMU's six schools.

Speaking about his late grandfather, Mr Sherman Kwek said: "By the time of his passing in 1994, he had touched many lives and inspired numerous people in the course of his long and remarkable life. The endowed gift by his grandchildren seeks to commemorate his achievements and perpetuate his legacy."

Mr Kwek is among the grandchildren who spearheaded the gift endowment and saw it to fruition at SMU. He hopes that the award recipients will take inspiration and

learn valuable life lessons from the forefathers who built Singapore, and to understand what it means to "persevere and remain strong in the face of adversity".

Expressing the university's appreciation, SMU President Lily Kong said the awards will "further encourage our students to scale new heights of excellence to become individuals with an enterprising spirit, equipped with deep knowledge in selected domains and industry capabilities required to thrive in the 21st century, as well as a passion to give back to society".

Recipients will have to exemplify diligent participation in co-curricular activities, and embody a strong entrepreneurial spirit, coupled with high levels of creativ-

ity and innovation.

As a reflection of the late Mr Kwek's philanthropy, potential awardees will also have to be actively involved in community development programmes, and believe in giving back to society and helping the less fortunate.

Born in 1913, the late Mr Kwek spent his childhood on a farm in China's Fujian Province, before his yearning for a better life brought him to Singapore. After working at a hardware store and gaining experience, he started Hong Leong in 1941 as a general trading firm dealing in ropes, paints, ship and rubber estate supplies, eventually growing it into one of Singapore and Asia's largest conglomerates.