

Publication: The Straits Times, pg B02

Date: 08 January 2020

Headline: 7 SMU awards set up to honour late Hong Leong founder

7 SMU awards set up to honour late Hong Leong founder

He grew up on a farm in Xiamen, China, and at the age of 16 in the late 1920s boarded a ship bound for Singapore armed with just an \$8 ticket, a straw mat and a quilt for warmth.

It was here that Mr Kwek Hong Png cut his teeth at a hardware store and gradually gained enough experience to start a general trading firm in 1941 called Hong Leong, which dealt in ropes, paints, ship and rubber-estate supplies.

The business eventually grew to become one of Singapore's and Asia's largest conglomerates, Hong Leong Group, which has gross as-

sets of more than \$40 billion and employs over 40,000 people across various continents. Its four core businesses are property development, hotels, financial services and trade and industry.

Mr Kwek died in 1994 at the age of 83. Last month, to mark his 25th death anniversary and commemorate his life's work and achievements, 10 of his grandchildren announced an endowment gift to the Singapore Management University (SMU).

Starting in the current academic year, which began last August, and

continuing in perpetuity, \$70,000 will be split equally into seven awards consisting of \$10,000 each.

The awards will be presented to the top graduating students from each cohort.

The Kwek Hong Png University Valedictorian Award will be presented to SMU's top graduating undergraduate. The other six awards, known as the Kwek Hong Png School Valedictorian Awards, will be presented to the top graduating undergraduates of each of the six schools at SMU.

The university said these awards are "the most prestigious and eminent awards that graduating students can aspire to at the university and school level".

Award recipients must embody the values of the late Mr Kwek, namely diligence, tenacity, valour, compassion and humility. They must also have earned the respect of their fellow graduates and demonstrated outstanding leadership qualities and extraordinary ar-



A bronze bust of the late Hong Leong Group founder Kwek Hong Png in the Founder's Gallery at the lobby of Republic Plaza. PHOTO: HONG LEONG GROUP

tification skills, SMU added.

They should also exhibit a strong entrepreneurial spirit and high levels of creativity and innovation, be actively involved in community development programmes, and believe in giving back to society.

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".

Thanking the late Mr Kwek's 10

grandchildren, Professor Kong added: "This gift is a strong testament to their confidence in the quality of our graduates and will no doubt create a positive and lasting impact on SMU."

One of the grandchildren, Mr Sherman Kwek, said of his late grandfather: "He epitomised the courageous nature and unwavering determination that represents the Chinese entrepreneurial spirit and, all the while, he never failed to emphasise the importance of education and giving back to society."

"He had touched many lives and inspired numerous people in the course of his long and remarkable life... With these awards, we hope

that the young recipients will take inspiration and learn valuable life lessons from all the forefathers of our great nation, and understand what it means to persevere and remain strong in the face of adversity," he said.

Jolene Ang

Source: The Straits Times @ Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Permission required for reproduction