



**Speech by Mr Ho Kwon Ping, SMU Chairman
at SMU Academic Year Opening Ceremony 2019
Friday, 16 August 2019, at SMU Hall**

Mr Lim Chee Onn, Chancellor of SMU;
Mr Eddie Teo, Pro-Chancellor of SMU;
Members of the Board of Trustees;
Distinguished guests;
Faculty and staff of SMU;
Students and alumni;

Good evening and welcome to the Academic Year Opening Ceremony and Convocation Ceremony for SMU.

Whilst this is a ceremony for everyone to celebrate the beginning of a new Academic Year at SMU, it is of particular significance to the freshmen here – as this is your first opportunity to meet and interact with the wider SMU community.

The remarkable way the garden theme for tonight has been executed and the student and alumni performances alone signal that you have joined a very different university.

You will see tonight, just as you will have discovered through your Freshman Orientation activities, that SMU has its own distinctive culture and this may, or may not be different from the character of your schools or Junior Colleges. I urge you to absorb the spirit of our university, as it is fundamental to the transformative education that is the hallmark of SMU.

SMU is about so much more than developing academic excellence in your chosen disciplines – it is about providing you with a holistic education. One aspect of this is that it is participative. You are generally expected to learn what you need to learn before your seminars, which are for discussing your ideas, developing critical thinking and practising verbal reasoning and communication skills. Speaking up in class is not an option – it is obligatory.

You will be expected to seek to develop your leadership and entrepreneurial skills. Whether you are participating in class projects, CCA clubs, community service or study missions – in Singapore or overseas – there will be opportunities for you to take the lead.

There is also a strong infrastructure to support business entrepreneurship – through student clubs, our business incubators and class projects. So seize those opportunities, because you will be well-supported. SMU has a small, tightly-knit campus community of faculty, staff, professionals, peers and alumni mentors who will be there to help. So don't be afraid to fail, because SMU offers you a safe environment in which to learn valuable lessons in life – to try, fail, and then just pick yourself up and try and try again, until you succeed.

Community service also offers you incredible opportunities to learn more about the real world, about yourselves and the ways that you can contribute to making the lives of others better. You will already know that it is mandatory to complete at least 80 hours of community services before graduating – but you may not know that SMU undergraduates, on average, voluntarily exceed this by some 75% and contribute well over 135 community service hours throughout their years at SMU.

Finally, you will have unrivalled opportunities to see the world while you are at SMU. We now expect every one of you to experience some form of global exposure while you are here, whether through summer programmes, study missions, SMU-X overseas projects, overseas exchanges, community services, short-term study, overseas internships or co-curricular activities.

In closing, I just want to mention that you are lucky to be joining us at an exciting time. Just as Singapore is celebrating its bicentenary next year, SMU will be marking its 20th anniversary in 2020. That is a significant milestone – so it will be pretty big party -- and I look forward to celebrating it with you.

Thank you all for coming here today. Have a very enjoyable evening and I wish you all the best for the academic year ahead.