

**Remarks by Prof Arnoud De Meyer, SMU President
At the Opening Ceremony of SMU Commencement 2016
Suntec City Convention Centre
13 July 2016 (Wednesday)**

Guest of Honour, Mr Ong Ye Kung, Acting Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) and Senior Minister of State for Defence;

Mr Ho Kwon Ping, Chairman, SMU Board of Trustees;

Members of the Board of Trustees;

Members of the faculty and staff of SMU;

Graduates of the Class of 2016 together with your family and friends;

Good afternoon.

I wish to thank the Class of 2016 for everything you have done to enrich SMU. You studied hard. You produced many projects and did many presentations. You carried out the internships and the community service and were our ambassadors overseas. You have filled the Concourse and campus with music, dance and excitement as you practised your CCAs. You have brought honour and visibility to SMU.

Today is the end of that journey, but the commencement of many others. I will focus on just three. The commencement of your career in a fast-changing world of work, the start of you taking a bigger role in a wider society, and your new status as SMU alumni.

1. World of work is changing

I truly hope that the last four years at SMU have been a very positive experience for you – preparing you not just for a job, but for a life of career and for life.

There were no doubt great experiences, a lot of learning inside and outside the classrooms, new and long-lasting friendships, several successes and moments of pride and probably also a few disappointments. But I truly hope that all these experiences were moments of learning and that you discovered yourself, your strengths and weaknesses in a team and

your potential role in society. I also hope that you learned how to learn continuously. Your cohort participated in the piloting of SMU-X – and experiential learning is, after all, what SMU-X is all about.

Of last year's graduates – your seniors, 89% agreed that global exposure increased their ability to work with others from different cultures. I hope even more of you feel the same and will build on the meaningful international exposure the majority of you have received here.

Many of you have already started a professional career or will soon start one. That professional world is a very different one from what it used to be. Many of you will live and work longer and may pursue several different careers. It often has been said that 50% of the jobs that will exist in ten years from now, don't exist today. We may not even imagine what they will be. Therefore my strongest advice I can give you today is to be flexible in the development of your professional career and continue to learn: continue to be curious, continue to absorb new knowledge and insights, and continue to be critical of whatever information you receive.

2. Play your part in society

Mr Ho and Minister Ong have already emphasised your duty to become responsible citizens. The future is yours to shape – and as members of the younger generation in the UK have recently discovered in the EU membership referendum, if you do not speak out and play an active role, you may not like the consequences.

In this region – in Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan – only 10-20% of each cohort go to university. In Singapore it is growing towards a target of 40% by 2020. This means you will always be among the privileged group to have had the opportunity to obtain tertiary education. So put all that you have learned and experienced to good use – for the sake of yourselves and others.

I know from talking with many of you recently that you greatly value what you have learned from community service. Some of you admit that you would not have participated if it was not compulsory – yet have gone on to do far more than the minimum 80 hours required. The undergraduate cohort which enrolled in AY2012 – the majority of which is here today – as of 30 June has completed very nearly ¼ million hours (249,450) hours. Thank you for your commitment.

3. Become an active alumnus/alumna

Although you have now graduated, this is not the end of your relationship with SMU. Today you become SMU alumni and join a global network of individuals who share experiences, contacts and knowledge wherever they go in the world. You also go out as ambassadors for SMU. I hope you will make us proud with your achievements.

As we mature as an institution we will involve our alumni much more in the University's activities. We recently opened an alumni café, as an interim alumni clubhouse on campus. There are plans for some 12 interaction events for alumni interest groups in the year ahead; and class reunions will in future be held every three years, rather than every five years. We realise that many of you are interested in contributing more by giving your time and skills to supporting University life, through mentoring students, coaching CCA groups, taking on leadership roles in our alumni groups and Alumni Association, assisting faculty members in their research and facilitating deeper ties with industry.

I hope you will actively join us in these activities and that the next generation of SMU students will be able to count on you, just as SMU will always be ready to support you.

4. CIRCLE Awards

I urge all of you to keep the spirit of SMU alive and carry our CIRCLE values of Commitment, Integrity, Responsibility, Collegiality, Leadership and Excellence with you wherever you go. These values are an integral part of SMU's holistic approach to education. I will shortly present CIRCLE Awards to those students who have embraced and best demonstrated these values during their time here. The winners have been actively involved in serving and giving back to SMU and the community at large. They have demonstrated leadership abilities, are upright in character, and well-respected by peers, staff, and faculty. To them and to the entire Class of 2016, my heartiest congratulations and best wishes. I am confident you will step out to become leaders in your chosen fields and help to shape a better world.
