

*Embargoed till 9.00pm, 13 August 2014*

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**Remarks**  
**By Mr Ho Kwon Ping, SMU Chairman**  
**At Convocation 2014**  
**Suntec City Convention Centre**  
**Wednesday 13 August 2014, 7pm**

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Guest of Honour, Ms Yong Ying-I,

Permanent Secretary (Public Service Division),  
Permanent Secretary (National Research Foundation)  
and Chairman of the Infocomm Development  
Authority”;

Mr J Y Pillay, SMU Pro-Chancellor;

SMU Trustees;

Distinguished Guests, Colleagues;

SMU Freshmen of 2014 together with your family  
and friends;

Tonight’s Star-Wars-themed Convocation, like the  
freshman camps you’ve already undergone, gives you  
some idea of the spirit of SMU. We take an innovative  
approach to everything we do. That is our point of  
difference from others, and this spirit inspired our tag  
line, “A Different U”.

Not only is the University different from its competitors, but in creating a different “YOU”, our mission is to transform you into a confident, articulate and future-ready graduate.

And so, good evening and in keeping with the Star Wars theme, let me welcome to the Rebel Alliance, founded in the last few years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the pioneers of this university set out to challenge the then-prevalent culture of group-think in the educational landscape.

From even its conceptualisation, Singapore Management University was intended to be an alternative institution in many ways.

Alternative in terms of intellectual approach: encouraging non-conformist, innovative but responsible thinking by students and faculty, and even us stodgy board of trustees.

Alternative in terms of educational model: a more personalised, highly interactive pedagogy, based on seminar style teaching in small-sized classes, which in most other universities is reserved for postgraduate classes.

Alternative in terms of personal development: You and your peers will often be doing more talking than your professors – and classroom time is not just listen and take notes, but to explore ideas, articulate your views and argue your opinions, between fellow students and with your professors.

After 14 successful years and turning out graduates, the alternative institution has become

establishment. Our approach, our methods in our madness, are emulated by others. God forbid, we're now mainstream ...

And so it must be, as any upstart start-up must one day confront its own maturity. As Singapore enters its fiftieth year of independence, and we celebrate our 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year, SMU stands on the brink of a new stage of development.

In so doing, some key principles will never change.

We will continue to provide a holistic education that produces well-rounded graduates;

We will continue to teach business ethics through action, by making community service a compulsory requirement;

We will continue to encourage overseas exposure through overseas community service and internships, business study missions and student exchanges;

But to the extent that the only constancy in life is the force of change, we are changing considerably.

You are joining us as we embark on a new phase of strategic development that we call Vision 2025. In this strategic plan, SMU will evolve into a more comprehensive university, rooted in the social sciences.

You will be taking a newly revised curriculum which will more closely than now, integrate academic development, personal development, and community engagement.

You will benefit from infrastructural changes to the library and right across the campus to increase the space available for individual and collaborative study.

In fact, we are drawing up plans for a residential facility to be built within the next five years that will give groups of students space for project-based learning and time to live and work with their teammates while they incubate their ideas...

SMU's next growth phase will also include a stimulating environment to promote world-class research and increase research-based teaching that will make an impact on education, business and society.

I hope you've enjoyed our Star Wars, science-fiction fantasy adventure theme this evening. But like so many things in SMU, there is more to this than meets the eye. There is an underlying message in the Star Wars theme that is pertinent to your lives at SMU and beyond. It is the idea of duality – an universal theme that good and evil are not separate entities but in fact reside in all of us. And that "Force" can be used for the betterment of society or for purely selfish gain.

Being in SMU already makes you a member of a small, privileged elite – not necessarily measured by current wealth, but certainly by access to future wealth, power and influence.

This "Force" which will become part of you from hereon, can either be wasted, or used for bad, or for good. Remember always that with great power comes great responsibility, and this is perhaps the most important lesson you will learn in your four years here.

I believe our Guest of Honour this evening will support us in promoting these values because, as a career public servant, she has dedicated her life to serving society.

Ms Yong has served in various agencies. She joined the Administrative Service in 1985 after graduating with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree in Economics from Cambridge University on an Overseas Merit Scholarship. She also holds an MBA from Harvard.

Ms Yong served in the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Trade and Industry and Ministry of Home Affairs before her appointment as Principal Private Secretary to the then Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in 1997.

She also served in the former Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and was the founding CEO of the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore and founding Chairman of the Workforce Development Agency.

Ms Yong presently helms the Public Service Division of the Prime Minister's Office as the Singapore Government's chief human resource officer, with the goal of sustaining a first-class public service. She also guides the public service to be future ready and prepared for longer-term challenges and risks.

She leads the National Research Foundation, which is the Prime Minister's programme office guiding the nation's research innovation and enterprise strategies, funding research programmes nation-wide and catalysing new capability development.

She is Chairman of the Civil Service College, as well as Chairman of the IDA. She serves on the Boards of the Singapore China Foundation and the Singapore Symphony Orchestra.

Please give Ms Yong Ying-I a warm welcome when the emcees introduce her, after this short interlude.

“May the Force be with You!”