



## **Media Release**

### **SMU is First IHL to Launch AI-Chatbot to better serve its students**

*Singapore, 27 February 2018 (Tuesday)* – The Singapore Management University (SMU) has officially launched its [Student Services Hub](#) on 27 February 2018 to better serve the needs of its approximately 10,000 undergraduates and postgraduates.

The Student Services Hub is a convenient one-stop centre that amalgamates student services, from handling student payments, insurance, locker rentals and the like, to addressing student queries on myriad aspects of student life. Unlike other student centres, SMU's Student Services Hub has a distinguishing feature - the use of an AI-Chatbot, to address, on a 24/7 basis, more than 1000 frequently asked questions across student areas like academic, admissions, student life, internships, exchanges and career tips. This use of AI to serve students needs is a first in institutions of higher learning in Singapore. Annex A contains details on the services offered by Student Services Hub, while Annex B contains details on the Chatbot.

A second distinguishing feature of Student Services Hub is the use of Peer Advisors. Patterned after SMU's highly successful [peer helpers](#) programme where students support other students at risk and the career champions initiative where senior students lend guidance on resume writing and interview tips, the Student Services Hub will be distinguished by its team of student Peer Advisors. Peer Advisors will offer a first level of in-person advice and guidance and be role models of service excellence. They will share their experiences and direct students to the best information source for student enquiries. Our Peer Advisors have gone through both customer service training by professional trainers in the hospitality industry, and product knowledge training by our Student Services Hub team. Annex C contains details on the Peer Advisors Programme.

A third distinguishing feature of Student Services Hub is the bite-sized workshops that it will run. This "THRIVE programme" will offer short workshops in life skills development and self-management skills to ensure that students build a strong foundation in independent decision-making and effectively adapt to the demands and challenges of university life. Please refer to Annex D for details on the THRIVE programme.

Professor Lily Kong, SMU Provost, said, "SMU's Student Services Hub (SSH) is unique as it is a hybrid concept – it is a combination of an information, transaction and programming hub, to ensure that our students have a smooth and seamless experience while at SMU. The SSH takes SMU's student centricity to the next level."

Professor Paulin Straughan, Dean of Students, SMU shared that, "SMU is first in the Singapore higher-education space to deploy the use of an AI-Chatbot. "AskSmooSmoo" will be the first line of contact to handle simple frequently asked questions and requests as a new channel of communication. This self-service option for our students will free up staff to handle more complicated and high-value demands when serving the student community."

Lim Yi Bin, an SMU Peer Advisor and Year 2 student of School of Information Systems, said, "Working at the Student Services Hub has given me the opportunity to interact with people from different Schools and units on campus. I was trained to adapt to the different situations presented during work. In addition, daily administrative duties allowed me to gain greater proficiency in using various work applications, boosting my confidence in these skills."

Toshin Canute Sequeira, an SMU year 3 student of School of Economics, added, "The launch of the Student Services Hub (SSH) is yet another step towards effectively equipping our community for student life and beyond. We've been fortunate to be able to give our input right from the planning stages. By streamlining services and having a unique online presence through a chatbot, SSH will further enhance the SMU student experience while augmenting our curriculum by providing us with the avenue to learn essential life skills through the THRIVE programme."

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### **About Singapore Management University**

A premier university in Asia, the Singapore Management University (SMU) is internationally recognised for its world-class research and distinguished teaching. Established in 2000, SMU's mission is to generate leading-edge research with global impact and produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy. SMU education is known for its highly interactive, collaborative and project-based approach to learning, and for its technologically enabled pedagogy of seminar-style teaching in small class sizes.

Home to around 10,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students, SMU comprises six schools: School of Accountancy, Lee Kong Chian School of Business, School of Economics, School of Information Systems, School of Law, and School of Social Sciences. SMU offers a wide range of bachelors, masters and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with the six schools, as well as in interdisciplinary combinations of these areas.

SMU has an emphasis on generating rigorous, high-impact, and relevant multi-disciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance. SMU faculty members collaborate with leading international researchers and universities from USA, Europe, China and India, as well as with partners in the business community and public sector, through its research institutes, centres and labs. SMU's city campus is a state-of-the art facility located in the heart of downtown Singapore, fostering strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community. [www.smu.edu.sg](http://www.smu.edu.sg)

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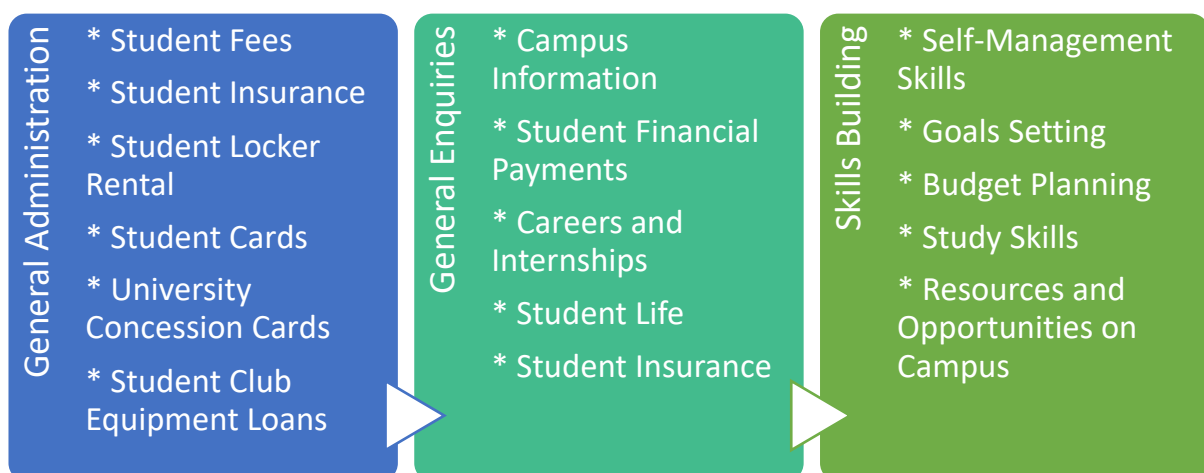

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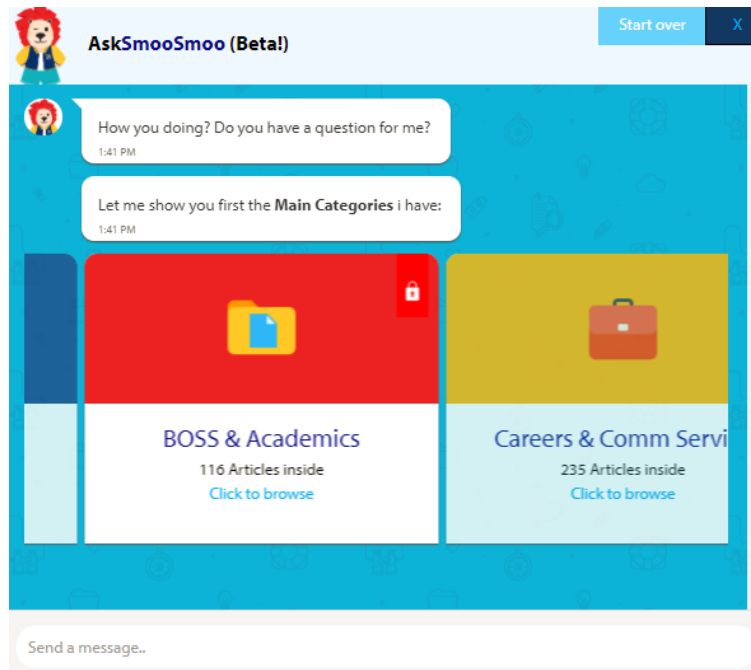
**STUDENT SERVICES HUB**  
*Engaging Students through Services*

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Student Services Hub serves as a central student services and knowledge centre – a place where students find it convenient to complete their university transactions, and simultaneously where learning takes place through our Centre Programming initiative to support the learning goals of our students and graduates.

**Suite of services offered by Student Services Hub:**






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**AskSmooSmoo**  
*AI-Chatbot for Student Services*

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### What is a Chatbot?

A Chatbot, is a service powered by rules that a person interacts with via a chat interface and has recently become increasingly used in many industries, providing an alternative interface to a database of information.

### All about “AskSmooSmoo”

- ✓ In today’s information age, our audience’s (students and families) expectations have changed with less preference for canned responses, long search and wait times, endless service menus, verbose FAQ lists, and spammy, impersonal content flooding their inboxes and prefers to get answers to their questions quickly
- ✓ As such, front-line higher education professionals, such as those in Student Services Hub, must adapt to meet the demands of our stakeholders
- ✓ A first in the Higher-Ed space in Singapore, Student Services Hub has deployed a chatbot “AskSmooSmoo” as a first line of contact to handle simple frequently asked questions and requests as a new channel of communication, which is self-service for our students. This will free up staff to handle more complicated and high-value demands when serving the student community

- ✓ Powered by artificial intelligence AskSmooSmoo AI is based on ElasticSearch, Microsoft Cognitive services
- ✓ Content is drawn from a central knowledge base of over >1000 FAQs across student services and areas like Academics, Admissions, Student Life, Careers & Community Service, Exchange and more
- ✓ Able to do sentiment analysis, multi-lingual, handle misspellings, guided answers, tell jokes, and even the weather
- ✓ AskSmooSmoo will continue to grow in capability as the ChatBot Knowledge Bank expands to include more student related business areas at SMU as well as having the technology include machine-learning and the harnessing of greater AI capability
- ✓ Advantages
  - Productivity gains from the 24/7 support availability
  - Enhanced interactive experience
  - Consistent and accurate responses to help students navigate the web of information on campus
  - Scalability




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**PEER-LED GUIDANCE**  
*Our Student Service Champions*

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SMU has been a game changer in the local higher-education space in engaging peer guidance - from the peer helpers who support students at risk, to career champions who lend guidance on resume writing and interview tips.

Peer guidance and mentorship have seen great success on campus, and we are modelling this for our team of student Peer Advisors.

- The role of our Peer Advisors is to provide first level advice and guidance. They share their experiences and direct our students to the best information source for student enquiries.
- Our Peer Advisors have gone through both customer service training by professional trainers in the hospitality industry, and product knowledge training by our Student Services Hub team.
- This programme also offers our student participants an opportunity to work on campus for additional income, and more importantly, imparts them with customer service and administrative skills which will boost their employability.
- At Student Services Hub, we strive to design a Peer Advisor experience that is centred around SMU Lifelessons and CIRCLE Values. We want each of them to become a self-directed learner, a trusted leader and a responsible global citizen – a role model for all students.




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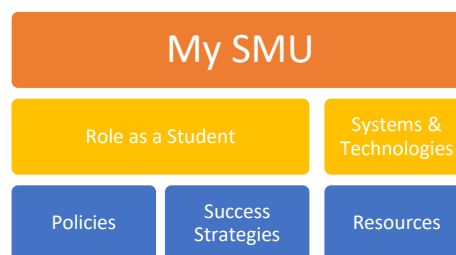
### THRIVE PROGRAMME

*Student Success Workshops*

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The **THRIVE** programme is centred on knowledge building of SMU and life skills development - to empower our students to make informed choices and equip them with self-management skills to ensure Student Success.

#### Programme Overview



- The series of bite-sized Student Success workshops aims to build a strong foundation to enable student participants in independent decision-making while effectively adapt to the demands and challenges of university life for an optimum experience at SMU.
- The workshops aim to support students as they transition in each phase of SMU life to develop and maintain the essential skills that are integral to being a successful student.
- Workshops, offered all year round, will guide students on goal setting and offer step-by-step strategies to improve their study management skills, time management/productivity skills, organisational skills and improving their adversity quotient – encouraging them to be active life-long learners in today's every-changing and complex world.