

Welcome Address
by SMU President, Professor Arnoud De Meyer
at the International Trading Professional Conversion Programme Graduation Ceremony
held at SMU on 15 November 2017

Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister, Prime Minister's Office, and Second Minister for Home Affairs and Manpower

Dr Koh Poh Koon, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry, and National Development

Friends from the industry

Members of the SMU Community

Ladies and gentlemen

A very good afternoon to all of you, and welcome to SMU.

1. I am pleased to see so many of us gathered here today for this special occasion. It is momentous not just for the 20 graduands of the International Trading Professional Conversion Programme, who will be awarded their Specialist Diploma in International Trading today after a one-year journey with SMU's International Trading Institute (ITI@SMU). Today is also a milestone for SMU, because this is the first cohort of the first Professional Conversion Programme that our University has embarked upon, together with our partners – International Enterprise Singapore, Workforce Singapore and the International Chamber of Commerce Academy.
2. This Professional Conversion Programme, or PCP, is a national effort under Workforce Singapore's Adapt and Grow Initiative to equip mid-career professionals with the skills and knowledge they need to secure new opportunities in the Wholesale Trade sector. It is also to enable current professionals to upskill themselves so that they can help their companies become future-ready, in the current dynamic and disruptive landscape.

3. As Singapore's economy transforms, I am convinced that all stakeholders have to work together to address the urgent need for Singapore's workforce to be continually upskilled and reskilled. Over the years, SMU has developed an excellent track record built on its practice-based and application-centric curriculum. As an Institute of Higher Learning, I am pleased that our University has this opportunity to play our part in grooming talent for Singapore's Wholesale Trade sector, and in preparing PMETs adequately for their new careers.
4. Many of you would recall that Minister Ong Ye Kung officially launched the International Trading PCP in July last year. By November 2016, ITI had successfully matched its first batch of 20 Non-Commodities Track participants with 16 companies, and began training them on-the-job, and helping them acquire new skills that would help them perform effectively in their new roles. To-date, ITI has rolled out two more intakes of the Non-Commodities Track, and one intake of the Commodities Track. All in all, we have a total of 74 participants enrolled, including those who will be graduating today. All of them are transitioning smoothly into their diverse roles within 53 companies.
5. Just four months ago, the Government also announced that Wholesale Trade is one of five priority sectors in which it will provide help to create jobs for and enhance skills of PMETs. This sector holds tremendous potential for growth but is also very likely to be significantly affected by disruptive technology.
6. In this respect, the 12-month, three-phased, part-time curriculum of the International Trading PCP, which is customised for both the Commodities and Non-Commodities companies, is indeed designed to prepare participants for these challenges ahead. Aside from key and fundamental modules such as 'Supply Chain', 'Risk Management' and 'Trade Documentation', we have also incorporated digitalisation-relevant modules, such as 'Online Marketing and eCommerce Platforms' and 'Fintech' to empower them to effect business model transformation for the companies they are matched to. To provide an immersive and enriching experience, classroom training is blended with e-learning components, and enhanced with seminars with industry experts, site visits to companies and project work.

7. I am pleased that we are witnessing 20 success stories today – I will share a few with you here. Among our graduands are Mr Jumadi Bin Mohamed Yosop and Ms Grace Chua. Jumadi used to work in an administrative role in the public service. Under the programme, he was matched to logistics company, Riverwood, as a Finance and HR Manager. As a result of networking, discussions and exposure which he received in the course of the PCP, he has introduced new ideas for internationalisation to his current employer. And as a result of this, Riverwood is now exploring the global halal logistics market.
8. Grace is another graduand who, until a year ago, was completely new to the trading value chain. She had taken a 15-year hiatus from work to concentrate on taking care of her family. The International Trading PCP came as a timely opportunity at a point in time when she was ready to return to the workforce. With a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Statistics, a Master of Commerce in Applied Finance, *and now* with new skills and knowledge acquired from the PCP, Grace is currently serving as an Account & Project Manager with Assure IT Pte Ltd, and plays a key role in growing the company's interactive and collaborative solutions.
9. Amongst the participants in our newest cohort, we have Ms Emily Tan. Emily has spent most of her working years with a local supermarket retail chain, responsible for sourcing and procurement. Along the way, she upgraded herself and completed an MBA. Having worked 34 years on the 'buy' side, she has decided to make a career switch to the 'sell' side. She has been employed by distribution and brand management firm, Corlison Pte Ltd, where she will start work next week as an Export Manager. With the PCP's comprehensive curriculum, coupled with her past experience, I believe Emily will ease into her new job with confidence.
10. On this note, let me extend my heartiest congratulations to all our 20 graduands. My congratulations also go to the rest of our participants who are currently enrolled in the programme, and new participants who will start their journey next week. Like Jumadi, Grace and Emily, you have chosen this PCP to restart your careers in a vibrant sector

driven by new opportunities from digitalisation and internationalisation. With Wholesale Trade contributing to 12% of Singapore's GDP and with the Government targeting 10,000 more jobs in this sector by 2020, I would say that your career ahead is indeed bright.

11. Thank you.

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