

Media Release

SMU Launches **GROW to Kickstart a Green Movement**
Building a Sustainable Community Begins with 'A Different U'



Guest-of-Honour Mayor for Central Singapore District Denise Phua (left), and SMU President Professor Arnoud De Meyer, jointly planting the symbolic nutmeg plant sapling to launch SMU GROW. The initiative hopes that people from all walks of life can start becoming gardeners and contribute to building a green and sustainable community.

Singapore, 6 January 2015 - Ushering in the brand-new year with a fresh initiative **GROW** that sprouted today, SMU goes back to basics, advocating that transformative education begins with 'U' sowing the seeds and taking grounded steps to make a difference – in building a green and sustainable community for tomorrow.

Officiating the launch, SMU President Professor Arnoud De Meyer and Mayor for Central Singapore District Denise Phua, joined hands in sharing the seeds of inspiration, planting the initiative firmly in the ground, and imparting the vision of SMU **GROW**. Also gracing the launch were partners from the Bras Basah Residents Committee, Edible Gardens, Potato Productions, and Nicole's Café by Sterling.

With two nutmeg saplings planted today, the sprouts are young but the nutmeg has long history and deep significance to the area surrounding SMU, Central Singapore District, as well as Singapore and Southeast Asia. Once an important commercial crop with plantations in Bras

Basah and Orchard Road, the nutmeg has versatile uses for culinary, medicinal and other purposes. The plant serves to remind the University of its roots and task of educating the next generation to be pillars of society that do not forget heritage and serve the society well.

Carrying the mission of being 'A Different U' at its heart, the University kickstarted its **GROW** initiative, with the aim of growing a garden of food and having a greener future for the community eventually. The university-wide urban farm programme invites students, staff and faculty to connect physical spaces within the city campus with food, sustainability, business and the environment.

The programme aims to do so differently – by bringing together people from all walks of life from the community at large, and not just from within SMU, as 'gardeners' and partners in learning. It endeavours to build a more meaningful garden and more cohesive community this way, anchoring a way of thinking and living that the truly well-educated strive to make the lives of others better.

As the only local university with a campus integrated into the heart of the city, SMU's pulse connects to multiple stakeholders, who live and breathe in the same air and space in the vibrant urban centre downtown.

The initiative signals another positive step for the University as it strives in becoming a leader in transformative education – one of the building blocks of SMU Vision 2025 – by making a difference in the lives of not just students, faculty and staff, but also the community around SMU, through holistic learning and experiences. This cannot take place just inside the classroom, but must also be outside, in the real world classroom.

For a start, the initiative sees down-to-earth activities taking root. The rollout includes conducting workshops for staff and faculty that introduce sustainable living through growing foods in environmentally-friendly ways, having planter boxes up for adoption, serving healthy meals to staff, and running a logo design contest. SMU **GROW** will be dovetailed with the 80-hour community service required of SMU students, and built into the annual community service project SMU Challenge that delivers food and household needs to Queenstown residents. It will also be woven into co-curricular activities (CCAs) and classroom modules. Food from each harvest will be brought to the community organised by The Centre for Social Responsibility (C4SR), and **GROW** welcomes individuals and groups to garden and grow food for a good cause at SMU.

The University hopes that more of such initiatives will mushroom through other mainstream curriculum, CCAs and partnerships. This also ties in with SMU's other efforts in encouraging students to build meaningful, creative and wholesome experiences, along with such initiatives as developing a values-based reflection journal SMU LifeLessons Pathfinder, and SMU-X, an innovative brand of project-based learning that bridges theory with practice.

The overall notion is geared towards but not limited to or exhaustive in these aspects: sharing knowledge on eating and living right, sustainable farming and living, urban eco practices that protect the environment, growing food and feeding people, nurturing and build a caring

community, contributing back to society, and making meaningful connections in society with no boundaries.

SMU **GROW** believes that the simple act of planting can inform and shape views on life, society, sustainability, trade and development. Aiming to cultivating change through experiential and reflexive learning, the programme joins a global urban farming movement that seeks to create global awareness on environmentalism, food production, consumption and security; promote sustainable urban living; provide for underprivileged members in the community; and enrich SMU's holistic, broad-based education.

SMU undergraduate Mervin Soon, who is also President of SMU Verts, the University's environmental club championing green awareness, is highly supportive. "An SMU educated student realises that there is much more to pursue beyond academic excellence – we are given constant opportunities to broaden our exposure and vision, and also transform our thinking. The University inculcates that we should be the best for the world – and that means continuous learning and significant contribution in society for the long run, and not just solely striving to be the best in academic qualification during our school years," he said.

SMU President, Professor Arnoud De Meyer, highlighting the importance of **GROW**, shared SMU's rationale and vision for the initiative. "Embarking on **GROW** advocates the start of a new dimension of growth for SMU, especially as we start SMU's 15th year. We believe that in a transformative education, social good and all-rounded learning is at the heart of academic pursuit; and 'U' includes not just the University campus and students, but many individuals and organisations that matter and transform 'U'.

"Knowledge and growth have no boundaries and everyone is a student in society. Growing a garden physically and in your heart brings the community back to fundamental basics that are important to life. We need to produce food for our body and soul, and are responsible for a better and greener future, through our own hands. A real education must make the lives of others better. And we want to start with the community right where we are, within the Central CDC."

Guest-of-Honour, Mayor Denise Phua, remarked, "Today, as a combined community, we pledge to grow and build a caring society through the launch of SMU **GROW**. The garden is by no means large relative to the needs of many. What is important is the spirit of bringing together people from all walks of life to start becoming 'gardeners', and inspiring more to grow with this initiative.

"May the seeds sown in this garden also grow in the gardens within each of us, as we grow towards being a more caring and giving society."

For more information, visit www.facebook.com/smugrow or email grow@smu.edu.sg

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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 over 8,300 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

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