



## Media Release

### **SMU is Asia's first "Changemaker Campus" accredited by Ashoka and hosts first social innovation youth conference**

- *SMU is recognised for social innovation in higher education by global social entrepreneurship NGO Ashoka*
- *Lien Centre for Social Innovation organised Social iCon 2016 conference on social innovation and youth empowerment with Ashoka*

**Singapore, 11 November 2016 (Friday)** – The Singapore Management University (SMU) has been accredited by Ashoka, a global non-profit organisation supporting leading social entrepreneurs worldwide, as Asia's first "Changemaker Campus". It joins the ranks of renowned universities such as Cornell University and Brown University in a list of 37 institutions in total that have been designated this status. This accreditation is recognition of SMU's commitment to social innovation in the higher education landscape.

The Changemaker Campus appointment, which is awarded after a rigorous 1-2 year selection process, recognises universities and colleges globally that have embedded social innovation as a core value. The institution is a model of campus-wide excellence in social innovation and changemaking, and is committed to transforming higher education. Through thought leadership and collaboration with one another facilitated by Ashoka, these institutions work collectively to advance social innovation and changemaking, to make them the new norm, in higher education and beyond.

Ashoka has pioneered the field of social entrepreneurship globally over the last 35 years, becoming the world's leading professional network of system changing social entrepreneurs. Through the search and selection of Ashoka Fellows, it has supported over 3,200 social innovators in 88 countries, including two Nobel Prize winners.

Members of SMU's "Change Team" appointed to oversee new and ongoing SMU Changemaker Campus initiatives include:

- Bervyn Lee, Associate Dean of Students, whose office advocates the SMU LifeLessons framework and oversees student life and matters;
- Jonathan Chang, Executive Director, Lien Centre of Social Innovation (LCSI);
- Devi, Head, Centre for Social Responsibility, which drives students' community service as part of SMU's curriculum;

- Tan Gan Hup, Associate Director, Office of President, which spearheaded SMU-X, an innovative pedagogy that exposes students to multi-disciplinary, real-world problem-solving;
- Professor Thomas Menkhoff, Professor of Organisational Behaviour & Human Resources (Education), and Academic Director, Master of Science in Innovation, Lee Kong Chian School of Business, which perpetuates innovation for pedagogy, business and organisational excellence; and
- Adeline Bek, Assistant Director, Office of Alumni Relations, which fosters engagements and networks among SMU graduates.

As part of the changemaking efforts, the LCSi at SMU, which managed and spearheaded SMU's efforts in achieving this recognition officially in 2016, hosted the Social iCon 2016 conference on social innovation and youth empowerment today at SMU, in partnership with Ashoka Singapore.

Themed "ChangeGeneration", the event gathered over 10 international Ashoka Fellows and over 20 local and regional social innovators, collectively from more than 15 nationalities. It featured youth speakers prominently. They were joined by more than 150 participants consisting of students, social entrepreneurs, educators, parents, businesses, government and social impact organisations representatives.

The conference was aimed at creating mindset shifts and calling for action to prepare the next generation to live and thrive in a world of accelerated changes, technological advancements and complex problems. These require creativity, empathy and action to create socially innovative solutions, and youth involvement and empowerment to make bigger changes with positive social impact.

Jonathan Chang, Director of LCSi said, "Ashoka's philosophy of generating a 'world in which everyone is a changemaker' aligns well with SMU's vision of creating broad-based, creative, entrepreneurial leaders to make sustained global impact, and LCSi's focus and strengths on social innovation. SMU is a natural fit with social innovation and changemaking, which is about merging the ability to address complex social issues, with the boundary-breaking and pragmatic determination of the innovator, in a higher education space to accelerate the impact."

He added that cultivating strategic knowledge and resilience among youth with impact- and action-oriented insights and engagements to address ever-changing social needs, is in line with SMU's holistic and transformative education approach.

Sumitra Pasupathy, Country Director, Ashoka Singapore said, "We are in a new world that is constantly changing with rapid technological innovations changing the way we live, work and play. For this new 'Digital Age', we need to believe in young people as empowered beings, who are fully competent and capable to take charge, to respond to the fast changing future and most importantly to shape a better world. Young people who develop to become truly empathic, creative in solving challenges, and take leadership and work collaboratively to create this change. This is why the work that SMU, the Lien Centre for Social Innovation, 1,200 international Ashoka

Fellows (social innovators), 200 schools and 37 universities globally are doing right now is so important. And we need parents, schools, universities, social entrepreneurs, businesses and all stakeholders in a child's life to do this together.”

The global Ashoka Fellows, featured for the first time in Southeast Asia, are some of the world's leading, high-impact social innovators advocating for youth empowerment. They included Dr Yuhyun Park from South Korea, who recently presented at the World Economic Forum, and who founded infollutionZERO foundation to arm children against cyberbullying, game addiction, and online predators by teaching them to become responsible digital citizens. Ali Raza Khan from Pakistan, whose YES Network trains underprivileged youth to be social entrepreneurs; and others working in youth empowerment hailing from countries as far-flung as United Kingdom, Norway, South Africa, and Turkey.

Showcasing that impactful changemaking can start at a young age, young Singaporeans and SMU social entrepreneurs were featured throughout the event. One of them is 27-year-old Jamon Mok, who has already founded his second social business, and co-founded his first business Gaazab Social Ventures while he was a student at SMU. His latest venture, Backstreet Academy, is a peer-to-peer online platform that connects travellers with experiences curated by local people.

Two inspiring youth leaders opened the conference by 'walking the talk', speaking on changemaking in their journey. A series of five TED-style SMU Social Innovation Talks were delivered by SMU students and alumni.

In a working world, where organisations seek to become more adaptive and innovative, changemaking skills like empathy, complex problem-solving, and leadership already set young professionals apart. Zia Zaman, Chief Innovation Officer at MetLife, Rasheed Schroff, VP at FOSSIL Brand, and others addressed this trend in a panel discussion on how business leaders can foster a new changemaking generation.

Other panel discussions with multi-sector leaders focused on the fundamental changes needed for a successful paradigm shift towards youth agency, and explored why young people's self-directedness to create and make a difference is critical in their teens. In the afternoon, breakout sessions, strategic conversations and workshops were conducted to map out actions and share resources and tools.

Other sessions included a discussion on how we need to redefine what success means for children as we inspire them for life; a conversation about the key role universities play in catalysing social innovation; and a look at youth leadership and entrepreneurship in Singapore and the region.

Dr Yuhyun Park, Ashoka Fellow, and Founder of infollutionZERO foundation from South Korea, said, “As we enter the fourth industrial revolution driven by new digital technologies, our children need the competencies and empowerment to thrive in the new era. Kids need to be equipped with digital intelligence - the technical, social

and mental skills that will allow them to leverage their potential and drive positive change. This requires an environment in which kids can learn and be safe, can apply their own values and talents to challenges, and are inspired to create and contribute. Creating such an environment requires collaboration from the whole village – corporate, public and civic sector partners need to come together to ensure that our kids have the best possible foundation for building the future.”

"It is time to stop treating young people as empty vessels into which we pour our wisdom and instead we must treat young people as the most promising resource available to us in developing a new societal structure and meeting the high service needs of our communities," said Ali Raza Khan, Founder and CEO, YES Network from Pakistan.

For more information on Social iCon 2016: “ChangeGeneration”, please visit [www.smu.edu.sg/changegeneration](http://www.smu.edu.sg/changegeneration)

**Media Contacts:**

**SMU**

Charlene Liew  
Asst Director, Corporate Communications  
+65 6828 0020  
[charleneliew@smu.edu.sg](mailto:charleneliew@smu.edu.sg)

**Ashoka**

Sumitra Pasupathy  
Country Director, Ashoka Singapore  
+65-96991524  
[sumitra@ashoka.org](mailto:sumitra@ashoka.org)

## **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 9,300 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](http://www.smu.edu.sg)

## **About the Lien Centre for Social Innovation**

The Lien Centre for Social Innovation, a partnership between the Lien Foundation and Singapore Management University (SMU), was established in 2006 to advance the thinking and capability of the social sector. Its vision is to be a thought leader and catalyst for positive social change in Singapore and beyond. Its mission is to catalyse innovative responses to social needs through applied research and capacity building in collaboration with the public, private and social sectors. <http://centres.smu.edu.sg/lien/>

## **About Ashoka**

Ashoka has pioneered the field of social entrepreneurship globally in over the last 35 years, becoming the world's leading professional network of system changing social entrepreneurs. Through the search and selection of Ashoka Fellows, it has now supported over 3,200 social innovators in 88 countries, including two Nobel Prize winners. Ashoka Singapore was started in 2011 with the mission of serving changemakers in Singapore and Asia. <http://ashokau.org/>