



**Remarks by
Professor Arnoud De Meyer, SMU President
At the Launch of SMU GROW**

6 January 2015

Our Guest-of-Honour, Ms Denise Phua, Mayor for Central Singapore District;
Mr Ronnie Ma, Chairman of the Bras Basah Residents' Committee, and Members
of the Community of Central CDC;
Staff, Faculty, Students of SMU;
Members of the Alumni of SMU;
Business Partners and Supporters of SMU GROW;
Media and Friends

Thank you for attending today's launch and starting on the GROW journey with us.

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.

When the Singapore Management University was first conceptualised as the third university in Singapore, about 18 years ago now, bold steps were taken to offer an education that was to be different, that provided alternative opportunities for learning, that adopted a seminar-style pedagogy to allow for a classroom experience that would be more interactive and engaging.

We are now at the cusp of yet another significant change in our undergraduate education. In August 2014, we announced that SMU will be looking into allowing student CCAs (or co-curricular activities) to be considered as part of our undergraduate requirement. And in December we introduced SMU Labs, an initiative that brings together not just the academic co-curricular experiences of the student, but also involving other stakeholders such as community and business partners, to dovetail learning with real-world issues and concerns.

This move is part of our SMU Vision 2025 to develop a transformative education. You might ask, “What does SMU seek to transform in this vision?” Let me share at least three levels.

First, the SMU education seeks to transform the lives of others, beginning first with those who live in our precinct and district. We firmly believe that a real education is one that makes the world a better place, and the lives of others enriched. And SMU is doing this beginning with the community in the Central CDC. By anchoring real social issues at the heart of learning, students go beyond finding classroom solutions to experience real and positive human impact. We seek to make the lives of others who live around us better.

Second, the SMU education itself must transform to optimise learning. We seek to transform our classroom, so to speak, to integrate mainstream academic curriculum with the co-curriculum, tap on the knowledge and skills of others in the business and community and not just the professors, harness the partnerships and collective resources, and present a model of learning that does not compartmentalise student experiences, but brings meaning across experiences. Today’s SMU GROW initiative is our first that will bring together staff, faculty, students and alumni, with families and members of the community as ‘gardeners’, businesses within our district as partners,

for the benefit of others within the community. We will look into the details of how the academic modules, the activities of the SMU Student Club Verts (which is SMU's student club that looks at the environment and environmental issues), and our community service efforts can all be synergised and integrated.

Finally SMU seeks to transform the student. We firmly believe that one should not confuse an academic qualification with a real education. We aspire towards shaping the educated SMU graduate to be one who realises that while the pursuit of academic excellence might lead towards being the best in the world, it is far more important to be the best FOR the world. We aim to transform thinking, to move away from success to significance, and deepen one's resolve to be a self-directed life-long learner, a confident and competent leader, and a global citizen.

This is just the first step... a small and simple step to signify larger things to come. We hope that this initiative, which began with several individuals coming together with a common interest in gardening, organic farming and sustainable living, will seed a new age of education that will bring real change.

It leaves me now to thank several people for being part of this initiative.

Our Guest-of-Honour, Ms Denise Phua, Mayor for Central Singapore District, not just for gracing this event and supporting it, but for leading and championing a way of living;

The community of Central CDC, represented here by the Bras Basah RC Chairman, Mr Ronnie Ma;

Our partners in this effort, Edible Gardens, Potato Productions Pte Ltd, and Nicole's Café by Sterling;

Members of the media, for your interest in this effort;

Staff and faculty of SMU, who have worked hard on this effort, and will continue to work on SMU GROW;

And of course, the students and alumni of SMU, who are at the heart of our initiatives.

Thank you.

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