

Remarks by Prof Arnoud De Meyer

SMU President

At SMU Commencement 2017 Opening Ceremony

School of Law Building, Tuesday 11 July 2017

Guest of Honour, Mr K Shanmugam

Minister for Law and Home Affairs;

Mr J Y Pillay, Chancellor of SMU;

Mr Lim Chee Onn, Pro-Chancellor of SMU;

Mr Ho Kwon Ping, Chairman of the SMU Board of Trustees;

Members of the Board of Trustees;

Friends of SMU and invited guests;

Members of the faculty and staff of SMU;

Graduates of the Class of 2017 together with your family and friends;

Good afternoon.

Two decades of SMU

Today is a special day, not only for those of you who are graduating, but also for your friends and family members.

It is a proud moment too for the SMU faculty and staff members who have guided you along the way for these past years.

Some of you may also be aware that we are now marking a milestone for SMU as an institution, and for SMU Chairman Mr Ho Kwon Ping. It was 20 years ago, on 16 July 1997, that a Straits Times story announced Singapore's third university would take a radical new approach with Mr Ho installed as its chairman. In January 1998, Mr Ho told the press that the university would eventually be located in a 'prime urban site', 'be devoted to the study and practice of management, and 'introduce innovation', from its admissions process, location, curriculum and pedagogy, in order 'to attract those who are intelligent and creative in different ways'.

And here we all are at SMU two decades later!

Mr Ho created SMU with a constantly changing team – although the original Working Committee under Professor Tan Teck Meng included members many of you will be familiar with today, including professors Low Aik Meng, Pang Yang Hoong, Leong Kwong Sin, Low Kee Yang, Khoo Teng Aun, Hwang Soo Chiat and Michael Gan.

SMU was also established with remarkable speed. The University opened its doors to the first cohort of students just three years after that article was published – that's a year shorter than most of you have taken to earn your degrees!

So as we congratulate you on all you have achieved, let us also applaud Mr Ho and his team of pioneers for their achievements over the past 20 years.

Strength of teamwork

SMU was built and is sustained through teamwork. And the power of teamwork should be one of the most valuable lessons you have learned here. Your degree has been earned through the teamwork of your family and friends, staff and faculty members – as well as the teachers and staff who nurtured you through schools, colleges and polytechnics before you came here.

Your SMU education has also given you many opportunities to learn how to be strong team players and leaders. From the very start during your Freshman Orientation camp, through your CCAs, and community service.

Teamwork is also a feature of SMU's interactive pedagogy, in which classroom learning is driven by what you and your peers put in; collaborative study is also teamwork; and so are SMU-X projects with industry partners.

I am quite sure that throughout your career, the soft skills you developed through such experiences here will be of equal use as the hard skills and knowledge learned at SMU.

Value of SMU Community

A lot of you have benefitted from the guidance provided by peer helpers, alumni, and mentors. Many of you have also benefitted from scholarships and financial support funded by donors. All of you have have gained from internships offered by SMU's industry partners.

Those in this network are all members of the wider SMU Community and you are now part of this. You can give to and gain from this community. Please stay engaged through the SMU Alumni Association – join the groups that are relevant to you to stay in touch with your schools, CCAs, and overseas chapters if you work abroad.

Your alumni network is made up of nearly 20,000 valuable contacts around the world, in many industries and sectors, at every level.

Many of you gave generously to the Class Gift – this is a strong SMU tradition of providing financial help to future cohorts. There are other ways you can continue to contribute – through making financial donations, arranging internships, mentoring, providing accommodation for exchange students, and so on.

Society as a team

There is another team that has supported you growing up and through SMU – Singapore and the wider society.

The government, civil servants, tax payers – almost everyone in Singapore and many beyond have contributed something to getting you here today. The university core and community service have prepared you to become responsible and valuable members of that society.

Support and get involved in community service projects and charities. Get involved in grassroots organisations and take an active interest in politics and policy making – Singapore and the world need the ideas, creativity and energy of youth to solve fundamental social, political, economic and environmental challenges facing us today.

Wrap up

Perhaps one day, some of you will become SMU Board Members, one of you might even be a future SMU Chairman.

These are team players – socially aware and responsible. They are leaders in their own sectors; yet as leaders of the SMU Community they give their time freely. They do it to give back to society.

Maybe one of you might even create a new university.

Mr Ho can tell you anything is possible – just look at what he and his team achieved with SMU, starting with nothing but ideas, 20 years ago.

CIRCLE Awards

I urge all of you to keep the spirit of SMU alive and carry our CIRCLE values of Commitment, Integrity, Responsibility, Collegiality, Leadership and Excellence with you wherever you go. These values are an integral part of SMU's holistic approach to education. I will shortly present CIRCLE Awards to those students who have embraced and best demonstrated these values during their time

here. The winners have been actively involved in serving and giving back to SMU and the community at large. They have demonstrated leadership abilities, are upright in character, and well-respected by peers, staff, and faculty. To them and to the entire Class of 2017, my heartiest congratulations and best wishes. I am confident you will step out to become leaders in your chosen fields and help to shape a better world.

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