

**SPEECH BY PROF LILY KONG, SMU PRESIDENT  
AT SMU COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY 2019  
TUESDAY, 30 JULY 2018, AT SMU HALL**

Mr JY Pillay, Chancellor of SMU;

Mr Lim Chee Onn and Mr Eddie Teo, Pro-Chancellors of SMU;

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

Members of the Board of Trustees;

Faculty, staff and students of SMU;

Parents and guests;

Good afternoon.

I am truly delighted to be here with all of you today to share in the joy of our latest graduands and in the pride of your families.

Today is significant as it marks the end of one exciting period in your lives but also the beginning of a potentially even more exhilarating adventure. That is why we call this a “commencement”. Your hard work and achievements have taken you closer towards your aspirations, and they deserve to be celebrated.

Earlier this year, I outlined strategies to help SMU work towards realising our shared Vision 2025. These were based on what I call the 4Is – internationalisation, integration, industry and innovation. Whilst they were framed to help SMU, as an organisation, achieve its goals, I think that you, as graduates, can apply similar strategies to help you reach for *your* dreams. Let me look at the 4Is in turn.

First, **Internationalisation**. At SMU, you had the chance to discover the world, to study and form friendships with your peers overseas through global exposure. Nearly all of you went abroad to spend a semester in a partner university on student exchange, or to do internships, community service projects or business study missions. Many also participated in overseas cultural programmes and CCAs. In the modern interconnected world, you will need to build on the global mindset that we have encouraged you to develop during your time here. The companies or organisations that you work for – or launch – will be competing and acting on a global stage. You will be vying for jobs not only against your peers in Singapore but from around the region and further afield. Many of you will also be working

overseas, at least for part of your careers. Put the global exposure you experienced at SMU to good use, but be sure to build on it whenever you can.

Second, **Industry**. SMU has honed you to be 'job ready', with relevant hard and soft skills, practical experience gained through internships, SMU-X projects and community service projects. All these have made you amongst the most sought-after university graduates – with higher employment rates and starting salaries than your peers graduating from other Singapore institutions. Do not squander this advantage. You will need to work hard to constantly update and upgrade your skills through lifelong learning to ensure that you always have the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the jobs of tomorrow.

The third of the 4I strategies is **Innovation**. I commend those of you who have used your time here to found start-ups or trial innovative products and services. However, even those of you pursuing careers as employees in established organisations should approach challenges with an entrepreneurial mind-set. Always seek new challenges and opportunities, look for the best solutions, not just the easiest. When things go wrong and you fail, as you inevitably will from time to time, be resilient and strong – pick yourself up, learn from the experience and carry on. Use your creativity to surprise, inspire and lead. Innovate.

The last of the 4Is is **Integration**. This is putting everything together to make a meaningful impact. You have experienced a broad-based holistic and transformative education at SMU. You have achieved academic excellence; pursued artistic, sporting and cultural interests through your CCAs; developed hard, soft and heart skills; helped the needy and less privileged in society; and applied your knowledge and experience to tackle real-world challenges. You have the analytical skills, creativity, communication skills, focus and determination that prepare you for leadership and success in your future career. Don't let the world of work force you to narrow your perspectives. Maintain a balance between your career pursuits and personal development, and seek to add value in everything

I want to also acknowledge the parents, siblings, relatives and friends present. You have played such a crucial role in these graduands' journey and in their achievement. Today is a celebration for you too. Please join me in giving them a big round of applause.

To our new graduands, you now join the ranks of some 24,000 alumni. I encourage you to stay connected with one another, with your Schools and to the University. I am sure you will cherish the enduring friendships that you have formed and nurtured here.

My thanks to all of you who have kept up the SMU tradition of contributing collectively to a graduating class scholarship. Your contributions will enable needy students to enjoy the SMU education you had. We truly appreciate your generosity.

As you step into the working world, I urge all of you to carry our CIRCLE values of Commitment, Integrity, Responsibility, Collegiality, Leadership and Excellence with you wherever you go.

These values are a vital part of SMU's holistic approach to education. At SMU, both the training of graduates intellectually and the nurturing of graduates with a heart are critical to the mission of the University. In recognition of the students who have embraced these values, the University confers on them SMU's CIRCLE Awards at the Commencement Ceremony each year. CIRCLE Award 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. They are role models.

To them and to the entire Class of 2019, my heartiest congratulations and best wishes to all of you. I am confident that you will make a meaningful impact in your chosen field and help to shape a better world for all of us.

Thank you.