

**SPEECH BY PROFESSOR ARNOUD DE MEYER, SMU PRESIDENT
AT SMU COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY 2018
TUESDAY, 31 JULY 2018, AT SMU HALL**

Guest of Honour, Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister of Finance;

Mr JY Pillay, Chancellor, 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 really delighted to be here with all of you today to share in the joy of our latest graduands and in the pride of their families.

Today is significant as it marks the end of one exciting period in your lives but also the beginning of a potentially far 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.

Four years ago, you were sitting in a gathering just like this – excited and full of enthusiasm – at Convocation 2014 after your freshman team-building camp. You had been selected during our rigorous admissions process and you showed the potential in benefiting from SMU’s transformative education. Many of you when you first joined SMU were timid and unsure of yourselves but over the years with us, you learnt and acquired knowledge and a whole range of different skills. I am especially pleased that many of you have come up to me and remarked that SMU has helped to create a different “you” – one who is more confident and articulate, with a strong sense of ethics and social responsibility.

You would also have had a journey through SMU filled with many valuable opportunities. I hope that you seized these opportunities to give yourself an enriching experience. You had the chance to discover the world, to study and form friendships with your peers overseas through global exposure, which is to be a mandatory part of an SMU education. Nearly all of you went overseas to spend a semester in a partner university for student exchange, to do

internships, community service projects or business study missions. Many also participated in overseas cultural programmes and CCAs.

Moreover, you also learnt and experienced helping the needy and less privileged in society, and I hope you found out that you can make a real difference.

I hope that these experiences have given you useful knowledge and also made you innovative and resilient and with a sense of social responsibility. You have learnt that when things go wrong and you fail, you have to pick yourself up and find another way to overcome the obstacle. As Mr Ho and Minister Heng mentioned, through SMU-X many of you have experienced what can be achieved when you collaborate with others to tackle real-world problems. You have the analytical skills, creativity, communication skills, focus and determination that prepare you for leadership and success in your future career.

All of the hard knowledge you learnt here will be important in the early years of your career. But it is developing SMU graduates' drive, initiative and "Can Do" attitude that is most valued by employers. These qualities will help you move onwards and upwards in your careers.

Don't forget that education is a lifelong process – you have "learnt how to learn" and now need to constantly hone your skills and upgrade your knowledge. We hope that you will continue your lifelong education journey with us, through our rapidly increasing range of postgraduate, executive and professional programmes and the SMU Academy.

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.

We are heartened that every batch of our graduates has enjoyed high employment rates. And as you step into the working world, I urge for 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 2018, my heartiest congratulations and best wishes to all of you. I am confident that you will make a positive impact in your chosen field and help to shape a better world for all of us.

Thank you.