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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **SMU launches inaugural TEDx Conference**

Singapore, 20 September 2013 (Friday) – Embracing the Singapore Management University’s (SMU) culture of ‘Want Something, Do Something’ and its philosophy of being “A Different U”, the inaugural TEDxSingaporeManagementUniversity Conference will be launched today to share and celebrate ideas and experiences that are unconventional and worth spreading.

As the first TEDx event to be organized by SMU, the Conference boasts an impressive line-up of speakers, and aims to attract some 100 SMU students, faculty and staff. Aptly themed ‘Defying Logic’, the Conference serves to showcase ideas from remarkable individuals who have defied all odds to achieve success in life, and/or have embarked on paths less travelled.

Said Professor Arnoud De Meyer, President of SMU, “The TEDx Conference at SMU is very much in line with our goal of delivering a holistic and broad-based education, and creating a stimulating and dynamic learning environment through dialogue and exchange of ideas. It is a good platform for speakers and audience alike, who hail from diverse backgrounds, to come together and share, discuss and debate ideas that are worth spreading. Besides broadening one’s mind and offering fresh insights into a myriad of issues, such interactions might germinate even more ideas that could inspire and motivate. The theme of this inaugural Conference also reflects our determination to break new frontiers and scale new heights in our constant pursuit of excellence.”

The speakers include filmmaker Anthony Chen who recently won the Camera d’Or for Best Film at the 2013 Cannes Film Festival, urban farmers Bjorn Low and Calvin Soh, motivational speaker Chatri Sityodtong, life coach David King Thorairajan (an SMU alumni), three-time Paralympian Gregory Burns, handcraft maker Pamela Yeo whose products are made from materials in war-ravaged countries, Singapore’s award-winning countertenor Phua Ee Kia, as well as SMU student writer and publisher Luke Robert. The topics of their speeches range from philosophy, art, music and filmmaking, to martial arts, science, technology and animation.

This TEDx event is independently organised.

Rohini Chopra, a third-year student at SMU School of Economics, and one of the three SMU international students who conceived the idea of TEDxSingaporeManagementUniversity while on a business and cultural study trip to India in end 2012, said “We chose ‘Defying Logic’ as our theme since it resonates with SMU’s spirit of celebrating those who dare to be different and unconventional and choose to deviate from the norm. We hope that all participants leave the event feeling inspired and empowered to take on a world of endless possibilities.”

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## **About the 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. It is known for its interactive and technologically-enabled pedagogy of seminar-style teaching in small class sizes.

Home to about 8,000 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, offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. [www.smu.edu.sg](http://www.smu.edu.sg)

## **About TED**

TED is a nonprofit organization devoted to Ideas Worth Spreading. Started as a conference in California 26 years ago, TED has grown to support those world-changing ideas with many initiatives.

At a TED conference, the world's leading thinkers and doers are asked to give the talk of their lives in 18 minutes or less. TED speakers have included Roger Ebert, Sheryl Sandberg, Bill Gates, Elizabeth Gilbert, Benoit Mandelbrot, Philippe Starck, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Brian Greene, Isabel Allende and former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown. Three major TED events are held each year: The TED Conference takes place every spring in Vancouver, Canada, simultaneous with TEDActive, in Whistler, BC; and the TEDGlobal Conference takes place each summer in Edinburgh, Scotland.

On TED.com, talks from TED conferences are shared with the world for free as TED Talks videos. A new TED Talk is posted every weekday. Through the Open Translation Project, TED Talks are subtitled by volunteers worldwide into more than 90 languages. Through our distribution networks, TED Talks are shared on TV, radio, Netflix and many websites.

The TEDx initiative grants free licenses to people around the world to organize TED-style events in their communities with TED Talks and live speakers. More than 5,000 TEDx events have been held, and selected talks from these events are also turned into TED Talks videos.

The annual TED Prize grants \$1 million to an exceptional individual with a wish to change the world. The TED Fellows program helps world-changing innovators from around the globe to become part of the TED community and, with its help, amplify the impact of their remarkable projects and activities. TED-Ed creates short video lessons by pairing master teachers with animators, for use in classroom instruction or independent learning.

## **About TEDx, x = independently organized event**

In the spirit of ideas worth spreading, TEDx is a program of local, self-organized events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience. At a TEDx event, TEDTalks video and live speakers combine to spark deep discussion and connection in a small group. These local, self-organized events are branded TEDx, where x = independently organized TED event. The TED Conference provides general guidance for the TEDx program, but individual TEDx events are self-organized. (Subject to certain rules and regulations.)

For more information on TEDxSingaporeManagementUniversity, please visit

Website: <http://tedxsingaporemanagementuniversity.com/>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/TEDxSingaporeManagementUniversity>

**Speakers at TEDxSingaporeManagementUniversity inaugural conference**

Passionate about filmmaking, **Anthony Chen** believes in exploring universal truths about the human condition. As the director, producer, and writer of *Ilo Ilo*, his first feature film, he has received rave acclaims from critics and audience alike. In particular, at the recent 2013 Cannes Film Festival, he garnered the prestigious Camera d'Or for Best Film and a fifteen-minute long standing ovation.

**Bjorn Low and Calvin Soh** have defied logic through their interest and passion in urban farming. Bjorn Low founded Edible Gardens, a social and ecological enterprise that aims to change the food production landscape in Singapore. Calvin is an urban farmer and founder of Ninety Nine Percent, a brand consultancy. Winner of several local and global advertising awards, Calvin says his aim is to follow in his children's footsteps, and in the words of his 10-year old son, Dylan, "Don't always say no to me. Let me live a little."

**Chatri Sityodtong** is a self-made business leader, global investor, and motivational speaker. His lifelong passion for martial arts has seen him fight professionally in over 30 fights across different disciplines for over 20 years, and even opened his own Mixed Martial Arts academy.

**David King Thorairajan** is the Executive Director and Founder of the Ministry of Empowerment, a Singapore-based life coaching company, and a renowned motivational speaker. Having won many awards locally and internationally, he hopes to inspire thousands of youths-at-risk and families through positive influence.

**Gregory Burns** is a world-class athlete and internationally recognised artist. He set four world records in swimming during three Paralympic Games. As a painter, he has received critical acclaim in a dozen countries. Despite having contracted polio as a child, Gregory was never hindered from participating in arts and sports.

**Pamela Yeo**, along with two close friends, co-founded the online store 'Saught' which fashions handcrafted products. They began this business with the objective to promote peace and sustainable development in post-conflict countries. With this goal in mind, Pamela crafts products from materials such as scrap metal and landmines found in war-ravaged nations like Cambodia.

**Luke Robert**, 25, is the founder of locally-based publishing studio, Heaven & Hell Studios. Established in February 2011, he has written and published three fiction books under the 'Of Heaven & Hell Series' - Genesis (2009), Apocalypse (2011) and Revelations (2012). Luke is currently in his third year at SMU. He is in the midst of launching his latest project - Principalities, a dynamic digital comic series.

Singapore-born countertenor and choral director, **Phua Ee Kia**, made his public solo debut at the age of 17 with the role of 'Cobweb' in the Singapore Lyric Opera's production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1997). At 18, he topped a nationwide audition to sing the treble solo in Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* (1998) with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. Since then, Phua has also collaborated

with many local ensembles including the Striiings Quartet, Oxley Quartet, the Teng Ensemble, as well as the Philharmonic Orchestra (Singapore).