



**Welcome Address by SMU President Professor Arnoud De Meyer  
at the Inaugural SMU China Forum  
13 November 2013, Wednesday, 9.00am  
Mochtar Riady Auditorium, Level 5  
SMU Administration Building**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam

Mr Ho Kwon Ping, SMU Chairman

His Excellency Duan Jielong, China's Ambassador to Singapore

Our Keynote Speaker Professor Justin Lin and panel members

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning and a very warm welcome to the inaugural SMU China Forum.

We are all aware that China's emergence as a political heavyweight and an economic superpower has wide and far-reaching implications. It is a country with a long history and many different faces. Change in China is taking place at great speed.

The new leadership of China is faced with a myriad of complex challenges. These include rapid urbanisation, maintaining social stability, strengthening the social safety net, narrowing the income gap, an ageing population, and restructuring its economy to sustain growth.

## **SMU China Forum**

Against this backdrop, the SMU China Forum has been organised to provide business leaders, entrepreneurs, policymakers and researchers with a more comprehensive and integrated understanding of some of the influences and trends that are shaping China's growth and development. It aims to enable participants of this Forum, as the theme suggests, to 'Be China Ready', by coming together to share, discuss and debate ideas and issues about China that are current and relevant.

With these objectives in mind, we have with us today a stellar line-up of scholars and thought leaders who will share with us their valuable insights on various aspects of China. They are Professor Justin Lin from Peking University who was formerly the Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of the World Bank; Professor Peng Xizhe from Fudan University; Professor Gan Li from Southwestern University of Finance and Economics; Ms Diana Tsui, Head of Corporate Social Responsibility & Diversity, KPMG China & CEO of KPMG Foundation; and Mr Lim Ming Yan, President and Group CEO of CapitaLand Limited.

The topics they will discuss range from factors that have contributed to China's extraordinary growth, potential challenges and opportunities arising from its demographic trends, household income and consumption, social investment and ageing in China.

## **SMU China Initiatives**

This Forum is an integral part of SMU's China Initiatives which was established in the second quarter of 2012. The SMU China Initiatives aims to raise our profile in China as a research university in the broad field of social sciences. By doing so, we want to contribute to the Singapore-China collaboration in business, government and civic society by nurturing China-ready and bicultural graduates who are able to function effectively in the business and financial environment in China. We do so by providing many more opportunities for exchange and internships. The other major undertaking of the SMU China Initiatives is to actively drive and strengthen our collaboration with existing and new partner universities in research and postgraduate

education. Our aim is to play a key role in creating and sharing knowledge and thought leadership that will benefit both Singapore and China.

### **Our China Strategy**

SMU's long-term strategy in China consists of four priorities:

First, and as I mentioned already, we want to raise the profile and reputation of SMU in China. This is part of our overall strategy to build the SMU brand and image internationally. We have strong collaborations in Europe and the US, and have started moving into China, India and ASEAN. In fact, SMU started our engagement with China back in 2007 when our Lee Kong Chian School of Business began collaborating with Xiamen University on a Master of Applied Finance China programme. By raising our profile in China, SMU hopes to continue to attract high quality Chinese faculty and postgraduate students to undertake teaching, research and learning in a holistic environment at SMU. This will enable us to contribute to SMU's mission to generate leading-edge research with global impact and produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy.

Secondly, we aim to improve the quality of students from China admitted into SMU's undergraduate, postgraduate and executive programmes.

Thirdly, we want to broaden the engagement between SMU faculty members and their counterparts at leading Chinese universities in joint research and PhD co-supervision. This is part of our strategic goal of developing SMU as an Asian Knowledge Hub. Our emphasis is on generating rigorous, high-impact, cross-disciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance, SMU is therefore constantly looking for opportunities to deepen the creation and transmission of knowledge by working with like-minded partners, including our counterparts in China. I am sure the unique insights of China generated from this research will be useful to our students, the academia, governments, and businesses.

Our fourth priority is to enhance student exchange programmes and internships in China for SMU students. At SMU, one of the ways we promote multicultural learning

is by giving our students global exposure. We believe this will help broaden our students' view of the world, and develop their cross-cultural knowledge and competencies which are critical in the world we live in. As many of you will already know, our aim is to have 100% of our students experience some form of global exposure. In 2011 to 2012, we registered a 77% participation rate which has since seen an increase to 84% for this year's graduating cohort. At the same time, we have hosted the largest number of international exchange students - 834 students from 168 university partners spanning 43 countries. China, which has a number of leading universities and numerous world-renowned companies, will be invaluable in enhancing our students' learning experiences and broadening their understanding of the country.

### **Current Collaborations**

To-date, SMU has collaborations with leading Chinese institutions across research, undergraduate programmes, postgraduate programmes, and training & development.

#### **(a) Research**

In Research, the six schools at SMU have already published research papers on China and are also collaborating with Chinese universities and corporate partners on specific areas of research. To give you an idea of the varied research work done at SMU, let me give you a few examples. Our School of Accountancy focus its research on corporate governance whilst our Lee Kong Chian School of Business has done a fair bit of research on corporate philanthropy and finance. Our School of Law is undertaking research on the World Trade Organisation and business laws in China; and at the same time, our School of Economics is focusing on innovation, health and labour issues in China. In addition, the School of Information Systems is working on research in social media and big data transfer, while the School of Social Sciences is conducting research on social development and China's international relations.

SMU's School of Social Sciences is working with Fudan University's State Innovative Institute for Public Management and Public Policy Studies to set up a Joint Research Centre on Development Studies. The Centre will conduct research on issues related to social development in China, including rural reforms, land policy, urbanisation,

migration and ageing. This is SMU's first joint research centre with a university in China.

The School of Social Sciences has also received a \$400,000 Tier 2 research grant from Singapore's Ministry of Education to undertake a three-year research project to systematically examine a series of social changes that have been sweeping through rural China in recent years. The research will focus on policies in three areas: land management, agricultural modernisation, and social welfare.

SMU's School of Information Systems has set up a research lab with Ping An Banking and Insurance Group to promote research, application and technology transfer of "Big Data". This is the first research partnership between SMU and a major Chinese corporation. Our School of Information Systems will utilise its expertise in analytics, data analysis and data mining to provide a range of business solutions to Ping An. These include analysing user behaviour base on large-scale social media data, and establishing a customised information extraction and filtering system for better and timely social information tracking, filtering and responding.

Our faculty from the Lee Kong Chian School of Business has published a number of papers on China's innovation landscape, its innovation capacity, intellectual property rights and patenting strategies. There are also studies and projects examining Corporate Social Responsibility in China.

### **(b) Undergraduate Programmes**

In undergraduate programmes, we want to provide SMU students with opportunities to network with some of the best brains in China and to be China-ready. To do this, SMU has inked new student exchange MOUs with top Chinese universities including Tsinghua University, Peking University, Fudan University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, and Southwest University of Finance and Economics.

In addition, SMU is working with a number of major corporations in different Chinese cities to provide our students with structured internships whilst the students are on exchange in China. We want to make the exchange programmes more attractive and

enriching, and encourage our students to opt for Chinese universities for their exchange since this is coupled with internship opportunities. For a start, we are working with Singapore-based companies and MNCs with presence in China, before extending our collaboration to include Chinese companies.

### **(c) Postgraduate Programmes**

In postgraduate programmes, our School of Information Systems had signed a Double-Masters agreement with Peking University's School of Software and Microelectronics in June 2013 where students graduate with a Peking University Masters degree and a SMU MITB Master degree. The programme welcomed its first batch of 28 students in September this year.

SMU's School of Economics has also tied-up with Xiamen University, Huazhong University of Science and Technology and Southwest University of Finance and Economics for its Master of Science in Financial Economics programme.

Last month, a SMU delegation which I led met with Mr Hao Ping, Vice Minister of China's Ministry of Education and Chairman of China Scholarship Council, to discuss collaboration in PhD programmes. SMU is proud to announce that we have been included into the China Scholarship Council's list of partners. Our university will be providing scholarships to high quality PhD candidates from China to undergo PhD co-supervision programmes at SMU and to pursue SMU PhD programmes.

### **(d) Training and Development**

On training and development, SMU's Centre for Professional Studies and the Singapore Chinese Chamber Institute of Business signed an MOU to leverage on the strengths of both parties to organise training and networking programmes for government officials and business executives from China.

At the same time, our Centre for Professional Studies is collaborating with Sichuan Administration Institute for training and research partnerships.

Just last week, SMU's Business Families Institute signed an agreement with Zhejiang Family Business Centre to undertake research aimed at helping Chinese families look at succession planning.

We are currently in discussion with several Chinese universities who have expressed interest in training programmes which include Commodities Trading, Shipping Business, and Trade Finance offered by SMU's Financial Training Institute and International Trading Institute.

### **Community Outreach**

At SMU, our students are encouraged to take up internships, community outreach projects, and international exchange programmes. The purpose is to broaden their outlook and deliver a holistic undergraduate educational experience that will develop them into broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy.

For the past five to six years, SMU students have been involved in several community service projects in China. These include our undergraduates sharing with under-privileged students the basic business, innovation and accounting skills. SMU students have also reached out to a number of primary schools in rural China to develop confidence in the children, acquaint them with arts, and introduce them to other enrichment activities.

Since 2011, SMU has sent students on cultural exchanges to the city of Kashgar in China's Xinjiang Province. Our students have set up three cultural centres to help preserve the ethnic cultures there, and also helped trainee teachers in Kashgar on their conversational English. In August this year, during Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's visit to China, SMU and Kashgar Teachers College (KTC) agreed to co-organise an annual English Festival to promote international exchange and to cultivate conversational English ability of KTC students.

## **Conclusion**

What I have just shared demonstrates a commitment by SMU to broaden and deepen our ties with China to encompass more areas of collaboration as we develop new strengths in research and education. We believe this will help contribute to knowledge creation and talent development for both Singapore and China.

Today's Forum is the first of what we hope would be many to be organised in the years to come. We plan to have such an annual gathering of minds, alternating between Singapore and China, and to discuss topical issues about China which are of interest and relevance. We hope that by working with our academic and corporate partners through the China Forum, research collaboration, exchange programmes, as well as training and development, SMU will be able to develop linkages, expertise and knowledge on China and Asia so that we become a partner of choice for universities, institutions and the business industry.

On behalf of SMU, I would like to thank our Guest-of-Honour DPM Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Professor Justin Lin and the panel members for taking the time from their busy schedules to join us this morning in their strong support of SMU's efforts.

It is now my privilege to invite our Guest-of-Honour, DPM Tharman Shanmugaratnam to share with us his thoughts and observations on China.

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming DPM Tharman on stage.

Thank you.