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The Ngee Ann Kongsi and Singapore Management University partner to promote research on elderly well-being

The Ngee Ann Kongsi intends to support SMU with \$15 million over seven years, which will be SMU's largest non-government research funding to date

Singapore, 28 August 2020 – The Ngee Ann Kongsi and Singapore Management University (SMU) announced today at a virtual media briefing that The Ngee Ann Kongsi has formalised its intention to contribute \$15 million over seven years to SMU, in support of research on elderly wellbeing and successful ageing in Singapore. The event was graced by Guest-of-Honour, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, Speaker of Parliament and Chairperson of the People's Action Party (PAP) Seniors Group.

The intended \$15 million funding support will go towards the growth and expansion of SMU's Centre for Research on Successful Ageing (ROSA). This amount will be the largest research funding that SMU is receiving from a non-government organisation. It is also a significant milestone for The Ngee Ann Kongsi as it will be its largest donation towards research to date. Since the 1930s, The Ngee Ann Kongsi has been making significant contributions to the education scene in Singapore, supporting schools and tertiary institutions through donations and scholarships to benefit not only the Teochew community, but all Singaporeans.

As part of the intended funding support, \$1.5 million will go towards ROSA to help scale the centre's translational initiatives this year. The Ngee Ann Kongsi has also formalised the intention to provide financial support towards ROSA for the next six years.

The partnership will enable ROSA to increase its outreach efforts to share the Centre's findings with targeted groups, including policy makers, academia, non-profit organisations, and non-government organisations. It will also further strengthen the translation of research insights into policy innovations that advance the holistic well-being¹ of older adults in Singapore. This comes on the back of a \$9.95 million Tier 3 grant from the Ministry of Education, one of the highest given to a social sciences research project in Singapore.

In commending this initiative, Guest-of-Honour, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, Speaker of the Parliament of Singapore, and Chairperson of the People's Action Party (PAP) Seniors Group, said, "Getting Singapore prepared for successful ageing requires long-term planning and constant feedback from the community. The partnership between SMU and The Ngee Ann Kongsi sets a strong example of how tertiary institutions and non-government organisations can work together to achieve the goal. This is a timely partnership to improve elderly outreach and welfare initiatives, as Singapore gears up for the post Covid-19 future. I hope to see more of such collaborations that bring together the resources, knowledge, experts and experiences across different fields. Together, we can help our seniors lead meaningful and fulfilling lives".

¹ Please refer to Annex A for more information.



Mr Jamie Teo, President of The Ngee Ann Kongsi, said, “We are always exploring opportunities to strengthen our philanthropic support for the education scene in Singapore, to benefit not only the Teochew community, but all Singaporeans. SMU was the first university in Singapore that The Ngee Ann Kongsi donated to, back in 2007. We have since enjoyed a strong, long-standing relationship, and have supported the university’s growth in various areas. We hope that our intended funding support of \$15 million will help to support the continued growth and expansion of ROSA, and in turn, build a more inclusive society that advances elderly wellbeing and successful ageing.”

Professor Lily Kong, President of SMU, said, “I would like to convey our sincere appreciation to The Ngee Ann Kongsi for this significant gift. It affirms the quality and rigour of SMU’s research, and the impact that our research creates. Ageing is a pressing and complex issue for Singapore, impacting individuals and the country. Many factors come into play in ageing successfully, such as economic and social engagement, and physical and mental health. This generous gift by The Kongsi will strengthen ROSA’s capabilities to create new knowledge and offer multidisciplinary insights into Singapore’s ageing situation. It will provide a more holistic understanding of the well-being of older adults, in turn contributing to informed decision-making to tackle the various issues of ageing. ROSA will continue to engage with various stakeholders and to share relevant findings that can further the work in the ageing field. We look forward to continuing this meaningful and fulfilling partnership with The Kongsi.”

Professor Paulin Tay Straughan, Director at SMU’s ROSA, said, “I am immensely grateful for the generous support of The Ngee Ann Kongsi that has enabled the Centre to strengthen its translational research efforts. This includes expanding our outreach efforts to the community including government and private stakeholders to communicate our findings and inform policy. Through this important grant, we will provide evidence-based propositions to redesign the way society is organised so that we can leverage improved life expectancy through impactful interventions.”

Under the fresh leadership of Professor Paulin Straughan as Centre Director and Principal Investigator, ROSA will also be undertaking regular thought leadership publications, roundtables and conferences to share research findings on a regular basis.

Strengthening the Singapore Life Panel² (SLP)

The Ngee Ann Kongsi’s intended funding support will provide SMU’s ROSA with the necessary support and funding to refresh the SLP, and enable ROSA to undertake future surveys with a wider and larger sample, as well as a broader research focus incorporating the social, physical and mental well-being of elderly Singaporeans. This will allow for a more holistic research illustrating the unique picture of ageing in Singapore.

² The Singapore Life Panel[®] is a unique longitudinal panel data set and incorporates a suite of purpose-driven models (Singapore Life Cycle Model) and new econometric methodology, providing the platform for ongoing investigation of economic, social, physical and mental issues for Singapore and other ageing populations. It yields about 7,500 responses each month.



The SLP, one of the largest high-frequency surveys in the world, is a longitudinal population representative monthly survey that tracks the lives of Singaporeans aged 55 to 75. The survey has been ongoing since 2015.

Uniquely ROSA: Singapore Life Panel findings on the impact of Covid-19 measures on older adults in Singapore

During the virtual media briefing, Professor Paulin Tay Straughan unveiled selected research findings from ROSA's May-July 2020 Singapore Life Panel.

In the May, June and July 2020 runs of the survey, specific questions regarding the Covid-19 pandemic were fielded to better understand how it has affected respondents. From the insights gathered, Professor Straughan shared on Covid-19's impact on older adults in Singapore, including the impact of Circuit breaker and post-Circuit Breaker measures, and also identified their needs.

Some of the key findings are:

- During Circuit Breaker:
 - On average, social satisfaction of older adults in Singapore declined and social isolation increased significantly during the Circuit Breaker. Of particular concern are older adults living alone. While most continue to rely on support from family, there is a growing group who will have to rely on support from the community. This points to the need to increase support for improving infrastructure and programmes to leverage resources in the neighbourhood and neighbourhood communities.
- With the easing of Covid-19 restrictions:
 - Findings from July's data suggest that older Singaporeans are generally satisfied with the measures set in place by the government to cope with the pandemic whilst safeguarding the well-being of Singaporeans, with 70.32% of respondents feeling positively about how the government is handling the pandemic.
 - While a majority of respondents were found to be coping well emotionally, 23% of respondents still reported feeling either stressed or very stressed about the Covid-19 outbreak.
 - Although social well-being has rebounded during Phase 2, it has not yet returned to pre-Circuit Breaker levels.
 - Those who are digitally wired were able to augment physical interactions with virtual exchanges with their friends and family.
 - After the Circuit Breaker measures were lifted in the months of June and July, overall satisfaction with life among respondents improved. The progressive increase in life satisfaction across the various social, economic, and mental well-



being domains suggests that most older Singaporeans are adapting well to precautionary measures set in place, even with social distancing restrictions. However, it is important to note that there are still some who face difficulty coping.

- Older Singaporeans who experienced an unforeseen loss in income during this period reported lower life satisfaction levels than others and may find greater difficulty in seeking employment in the current climate. This suggests in terms of policy intervention that income support from the government must be provided for those who experienced losses of income in order to ensure that our seniors are financially equipped with the means to improve their well-being during this period.

Case Study: Identifying gaps and deriving insights; Suggested policy intervention

The challenges faced by older Singaporeans in seeking employment during this period can be seen in the case study of Mdm A (not her real name), who is a respondent of the SLP in her 70s. She is self-dependent and previously worked part-time in the food industry. Her last -earned income was around \$200 in March, before restaurants were hit hard by the Covid-19 pandemic. Her employer was unable to offer her further employment during the Circuit Breaker. Mdm A has since been unable to find alternative employment. In July, she received \$500 in government financial assistance, which she is grateful for.

Even with the easing of dining restrictions, Mdm A shared that restaurants require less manpower now and would prefer to offer jobs to colleagues who are younger than her. In order to reskill and keep herself relevant, she attended a 4-day customer service course in June. Expressing keen interest to work, Mdm A hopes that the government can help her find a job.

The extensive responses and data garnered through SLP will allow the challenges faced by older adults to be timely identified and illustrated. The findings pinpoint gaps where there could be possible governmental intervention to provide much-needed assistance.

For example, in Mdm A's case – at face-value, the challenges regarding employability appear to be due to the lack of willingness on the part of employers to hire older workers in Singapore. Policy interventions that can potentially help these older adults could focus on increasing employability, possibly through upskilling of the elderly, or job placements that do not place the elderly at risk to allow them to pick up new skills. In the short run, as it is likely that the root cause of their anxieties is their lack of income, continued income support in the form of payouts or subsidies will be vital in helping them cope.

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About The Ngee Ann Kongsi

The Ngee Ann Kongsi was founded in 1845 by Teochew immigrants from China providing welfare services for its members. It was formally incorporated under the Ngee Ann Kongsi (Incorporation) Ordinance in 1933. The foundation is an active advocate in education which funds scholarships and study awards to disadvantaged students as well as promotes cultural and welfare activities. The Kongsi also places a deep emphasis on preserving Chinese heritage in Singapore.

About SMU Centre for Research on Successful Ageing (ROSA)

ROSA is a multidisciplinary research centre based in SMU. It was established with an MOE Academic Research Fund Tier 3 research grant, as well as the generous support of The Ngee Ann Kongsi. Research at ROSA seeks to define and measure a holistic construct of well-being and to identify the factors that impact Singaporeans' well-being as they progress through the later phases of life. Through close collaboration with government and other partner agencies, ROSA also aims to translate research insights into policy innovations that advance the well-being of older adults holistically and promote successful ageing in Singapore. ROSA brings together a diverse team of leading international and local researchers in ageing and age-related issues from various disciplines. Through empirical evidence derived from a longitudinal methodological approach, the multidisciplinary and multi-institutional research team advances propositions that promote successful ageing in Singapore.

About Singapore Management University (SMU)

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 to produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy. SMU's education is known for its highly interactive, collaborative and project-based approach to learning.

Home to over 10,000 students across undergraduate, postgraduate professional and postgraduate research programmes, SMU is comprised of 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. SMU offers a wide range



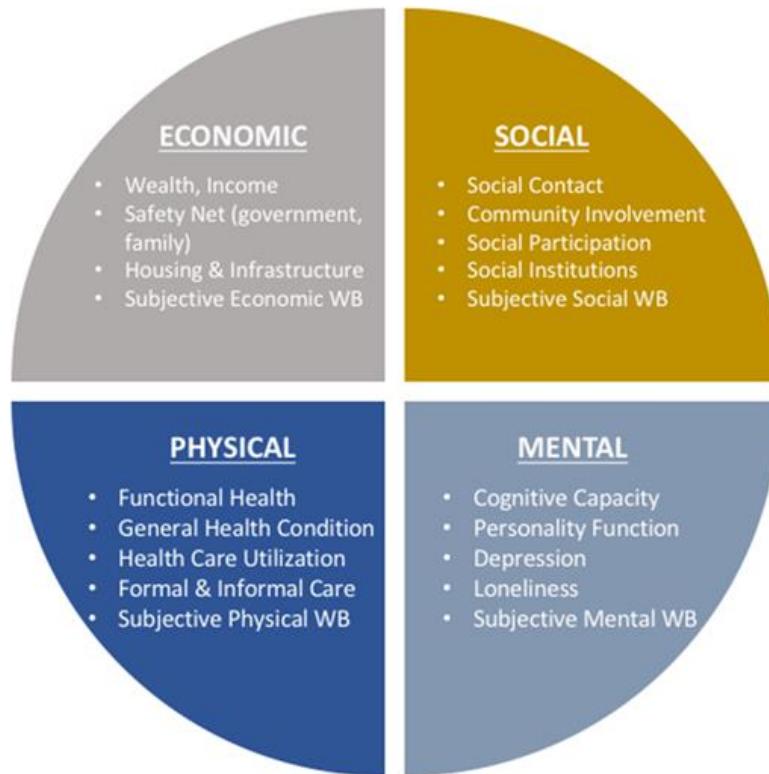
of bachelors', masters' and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with the six schools, as well as in interdisciplinary combinations of these areas.

SMU has an emphasis on generating rigorous, high-impact, and relevant multi-disciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance. SMU's faculty members collaborate with leading international researchers and universities from USA, Europe, China and India, as well as with partners in the business community and public sector. SMU's city campus is a modern facility located in the heart of downtown Singapore, fostering strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community. www.smu.edu.sg



Annex A: Research Aspects of Holistic Well-being

HOLISTIC WELL-BEING



1. **Economic well-being:** Issues relating to the access to economic resources and their capacity to contribute to an individual's needs and aspirations, and their ability to cope with the financial implications of risks such as health-care costs and loss of income through unemployment.
2. **Physical well-being:** Issues relating to the functional and organic components of the physical well-being of individuals, as well as the incidence and management of chronic diseases in later life.
3. **Mental well-being:** Issues relating to individuals' cognitive capacity, self-regulation, personality makeup, subjective well-being and other aspects of mental well-being that enable an individual to function in daily life.
4. **Social well-being:** Issues relating to the quality of social support, social participation and integration, and the social contribution and acceptance individuals experience in the three layers of family, community and society.



Annex B: The Ngee Ann Kongsi's Past Gifts to SMU

The Ngee Ann Kongsi Auditorium

In 2007, SMU became the first university in Singapore to receive an endowed contribution from The Ngee Ann Kongsi where it names an auditorium and lecture series after the Teochew philanthropic foundation

In recognition of the generous gift of \$3 million, SMU has named in perpetuity its 300-seater conference hall – The Ngee Ann Kongsi Auditorium – and launched a new series of annual lectures called 'The Ngee Ann Kongsi Annual Lecture Series'.

The Ngee Ann Kongsi Auditorium is a state-of-the-art lecture hall equipped with multimedia facilities and furnished with disabled-friendly seats. Located on the second level of the School of Accountancy, it has hosted numerous university-wide events, public lectures, forums and corporate events attended by Singapore and foreign ministers, ambassadors, prominent business leaders and academic luminaries.

The Ngee Ann Kongsi Annual Lecture Series

Since 2008, the Ngee Ann Kongsi Annual Lecture Series has been a platform for industry leaders and eminent scholars of international renown to share their knowledge and perspectives with an audience as diverse as pre-university students, undergraduates and faculty of SMU, executives and civic leaders, entrepreneurs, government officials and other interested members of the Singapore community.

Kwa Geok Choo Law Library

In 2011, The Ngee Ann Kongsi made an endowed donation of \$10 million to SMU in support of the development of the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library at the SMU School of Law building. The Ngee Ann Kongsi was the largest contributor towards the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library fund at that time.

The Kwa Geok Choo Law Library has been named in memory of the late Madam Kwa Geok Choo, wife of former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. It boasts a rich depository of knowledge and is designed to stay ahead of the changing patterns of knowledge acquisition and transmission through the broad and deep use of the latest digital technologies.

Establishing the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library was first proposed in 2009. The Kwa Geok Choo Law Library building opened its doors as Singapore Management University's second library on 3 January 2017.

Kwa Geok Choo Top Law Student Award

Funded by a generous endowed contribution by The Ngee Ann Kongsi, the Award is given annually to an outstanding graduating Bachelor of Laws student from the School of Law. The



purpose of the Award is aimed at inspiring students to embrace a holistic education and all-round excellence.