

**SMU Commencement for Class of 2021, Opening Ceremony**

**SMU Hall, 7 January 2022, 10.30am**

**Speech by SMU Chairman Mr Ho Kwon Ping**

Guest of Honour, Finance Minister Mr Lawrence Wong

Chancellor, SMU, Mr Lim Chee On

Pro-Chancellor, SMU, Mr Eddie Teo

Members of the Board of Trustees

Faculty and staff of SMU;

The Class of 2021;

Parents and guests;

Everyone at SMU Hall and online

Good morning.

Welcome to the Opening Ceremony of SMU Commencement for the Class of 2021. I am so sorry that I'm not able to join you on this special day.

At your virtual graduation ceremony in August, I promised that we would hold SMU's usual formal Commencement ceremony – with fanfares, gowns and

regalia – when Covid-19 Safe Management Measures allowed. I am delighted that your day has finally come.

Completing your programmes, taking exams and seeking to commence your careers during a period of unprecedented disruption tested the resilience, resourcefulness and creativity that SMU had sought to develop in you. We believe in you, wish you all the very best, and know you will continue to fly the SMU flag high and with honour.

Some of you may have had to shoulder additional burdens – with extra household responsibilities, as well as competition for space, privacy and technology in your homes.

Last year's graduating cohort at SMU faced the same challenges, yet as usual for SMU graduates, they enjoyed the highest employment rates and starting salaries in Singapore. While it is too early to gauge the employment rate for your cohort, I know that many of you have begun very promising careers.

For all of you, this pandemic has been a generation defining moment. The whole world will look back in awe one day at how your generation showed strength and courage. The pandemic is something that has profoundly affected every person entering adulthood around the world at this moment in time.

Through this you have developed and proven your resilience, adaptability and creativity in overcoming the novel challenges resulting from this novel coronavirus.

While the pandemic has taught us that no one can predict the future for Singapore or the global economy, our Guest of Honour today can certainly provide invaluable insights. Mr Lawrence Wong was first elected a Member of Parliament in 2011 and has been re-elected twice. He has held positions in the Ministry of Defence; the Ministry of Communications and Information; the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth; the Ministry of National Development; and the Ministry of Education.

Mr Wong co-chairs the Multi-Ministry Taskforce on COVID-19 and is the Deputy Chairman of the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS). He is also a member of the GIC Board, the Future Economy Council, the Research, Innovation and Enterprise Council and the National Research Foundation Board, and co-chairs the Singapore-Shanghai Comprehensive Cooperation Council.

He chairs the PAP Community Foundation and contributes to the labour movement as Chairman of the Singapore Labour Foundation, and Advisor to the Union of Power and Gas Employees.

Beginning his career as a civil servant, Mr Wong had worked previously as the Chief Executive of the Energy Market Authority and the Principal Private Secretary to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. At the community level, he was involved in youth work in the church and voluntary organisations.

Mr Wong was educated at Tanjong Katong Secondary School and Victoria Junior College. He obtained his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor. He also holds a Master's degree in Public Administration from the Harvard Kennedy School.

He kindly recorded a video message for your virtual graduation ceremony, and I am delighted that he is there today to address you in person.

Have a wonderful ceremony and my very best wishes to all for the future.