

**Commencement 2022, Opening Ceremony
Held on 26 July 2022**

**Citation for the Conferment of Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa) on Dr Tony Tan
Read by SMU Chairman, Mr Ho Kwon Ping**

The Singapore Management University wishes to confer upon Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa).

It is a privilege and an honour to read the citation for this visionary man, who has made great contributions to our nation and this University.

Dr Tan was born in Singapore on 7 February 1940 and attended St Patrick's School and St Joseph's Institution. He went on to receive a First-Class Honours Degree in Physics from the University of Singapore, a Master of Science degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a PhD in Applied Mathematics from the University of Adelaide.

I recall when Dr Tan and I were touring the Bukit Timah campus of SMU many years ago I asked him, that having gone to so many universities, which was his favourite? The Bukit Timah campus he said, because that's where he first met Mrs Tan.

He began his career at the University of Singapore as a lecturer first in the Physics Department in 1964 and then the Department of Mathematics in 1967.

In 1969, he left the University to begin a career in banking with the Overseas-Chinese Banking Corporation, where he rose to become General Manager. He left OCBC in 1979 to enter politics.

Dr Tan was elected as a Member of Parliament in 1979 and over the next 12 years served as Senior Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Minister for Finance and concurrently as the Minister for Trade and Industry, and lastly as Minister for Education.

In December 1991, Dr Tan stepped down from the Cabinet to return to the private sector as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of OCBC. Dr Tan rejoined the Cabinet in August 1995 and was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence. In August 2003, Dr Tan was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Co-ordinating Minister for Security and Defence.

Dr Tan was also part of the trade union movement. He was appointed Chairman of NTUC Investment and Cooperative Committee in 1979 and served as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of NTUC Income from 1980 to 1991. In 1988 Dr Tan was awarded the NTUC Medal of Honour by the National Trade Union Congress.

Dr Tan retired from the Cabinet in September 2005 and was appointed Deputy Chairman and Executive Director of the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation Private Limited (GIC), Chairman of the National Research Foundation and Deputy Chairman of the Research, Innovation and Enterprise Council, and Chairman of Singapore Press Holdings Limited (SPH).

In July 2011, Dr Tan stepped down from his positions at the GIC and SPH to contest in the Presidential Election. He won the election and was sworn in as the seventh President of the Republic of Singapore on 1 September 2011.

Dr Tan has been conferred numerous honours for his work by institutions in Singapore and overseas, including the US, UK and Europe. He has honorary degrees from seven other distinguished universities around the world.

Dr Tan championed the development of higher education in Singapore as Minister for Education, Minister-in-charge for National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological Institute (1981-1983) and Deputy Prime Minister overseeing higher education (1995-2005).

Under Dr Tan's guidance, university education in Singapore became more globalised and was made accessible to more Singaporeans regardless of their family or financial background.

He was the driving force behind creating SMU as Singapore's third university to meet the rising number of graduates required to service our economy. He helped to differentiate it from Singapore's two existing universities, NUS and NTU, in that it was modelled after American universities and distinguished by broad-based education, departing from the British models on which they were founded.

It was also the country's first publicly funded autonomous university, rather than a government statutory board. This gave it greater autonomy in faculty recruitment, remuneration and administration and SMU introduced bold changes with respect to research, curriculum design and teaching pedagogy. The establishment of SMU spurred competitiveness in the sector that has driven Singapore's universities to compete confidently among the world's best.

Dr Tan continued to guide the development of SMU, including during his years as Patron from 2011 and then as Honorary Patron and Distinguished Senior Fellow since September 2017. He maintains an office at SMU and continues to interact with the SMU Community.

Like many other Singaporeans, I have personally benefitted from Dr Tan's incisive and analytical mind. A favourite phrase of his which I've long adopted is "return to first principles" whenever we discussed plans and options which became quite convoluted.

This adherence to first principles in whatever we do, and no matter how we evolve, has served SMU well in the past, and I hope for the future also.

Chancellor of SMU, I commend Dr Tony Tan to you to be conferred with the degree of Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa) by Singapore Management University.

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