



## Media release

### **SMU RECEIVES S\$3.5 MILLION GIFT FROM KWAN IM THONG HOOD CHO TEMPLE TO ADVANCE INTER-RELIGIOUS STUDIES AND SUPPORT STUDENTS IN NEED**

**SINGAPORE, 7 April 2025** – Amidst evolving global religious dynamics, Singapore Management University (SMU) has announced the establishment of the **Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple Chair Professorship in Inter-Religious Studies & Harmony**, made possible by a generous **S\$2.5 million gift** from Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple. This initiative reinforces Singapore’s position as a global model of religious cohesion through insightful and impactful research, community engagement, and academic leadership.

As interfaith dialogue adapts to evolving challenges, from global geopolitical shifts to changing religious affiliations among younger generations, the Professorship will play a pivotal role in shaping research, education, and policy conversations around inter-religious understanding.

The inaugural holder of this prestigious Professorship is [Professor Alan Chan](#), **SMU Provost**, who will lead efforts to deepen interfaith dialogue, educate future leaders on religious diversity, and collaborate with scholars, policymakers, and community leaders. Under his guidance, SMU will spearhead research-driven solutions that address contemporary inter-religious issues.

#### **A Step in Strengthening Religious Harmony**

Singapore’s social fabric has long been underpinned by strong interfaith relations and multiracial cohesion, but these foundations require active effort to sustain. The Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple Chair Professorship will focus on:

- **Advancing Research and Education** – Deepen our understanding of religious diversity, interfaith dialogue, and harmony through rigorous academic study.
- **Community Engagement** – Educate students, nurture future leaders in inter-religious harmony, and foster deeper connections among diverse faith and cultural communities through outreach efforts such as public forums and collaborations with different religious organisations.

The initiative will be embedded within SMU’s [Cultures of the Modern World basket under the Core Curriculum](#), ensuring that SMU’s undergraduate students are equipped with a nuanced understanding of religious diversity.

*“I am deeply honoured to have been conferred this Chair Professorship. The generous support of the Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple will contribute significantly to fostering understanding and mutual respect across faiths, which helps build cohesive communities and is especially relevant to multi-cultural and multi-religious Singapore. I look very much forward to engaging our students and promoting scholarship and dialogue in inter-religious studies and harmony,”* said Professor Alan Chan, SMU Provost.

Professor Alan Chan will also deliver an annual public lecture series, fostering dialogue among scholars, government agencies, and community leaders on pressing issues in inter-religious relations.

### **Supporting Students in Need**

Beyond academia, Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple is extending its commitment to education with an additional S\$1 million towards the [Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple Bursary](#). This builds on its earlier S\$1 million gift in 2015 to support underprivileged students at SMU.

Starting from Academic Year 2025/2026, the enhanced bursary will provide four annual awards of S\$8,300 each, covering tuition and study-related expenses for up to four years. This funding ensures that deserving Singaporean and Singapore Permanent Resident students can pursue their education without financial constraints.

### **A Heritage of Impactful Philanthropy**

Established in 1884, Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple has been a pillar of philanthropy in Singapore, supporting education, healthcare, and social welfare. This latest gift to SMU reflects its enduring dedication to fostering a more inclusive and compassionate society.

SMU President Professor Lily Kong expressed appreciation for the Temple's generosity:

*"I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple for their unwavering generosity and belief in the power of education. This gift strengthens SMU's role in advancing inter-religious understanding, not only by empowering students but also by supporting faculty in pioneering research and shaping knowledge that contributes to both Singapore and the world. Through rigorous scholarship and meaningful engagement, we will continue to foster dialogue, expand perspectives, and drive impactful change."*

Dr Tan Choon Kim, Chairman, Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple added:

*"Education is central to society. By advancing inter-religious studies and supporting students in need, we hope to contribute to a more united and understanding society. SMU's commitment to academic excellence and its dedication to nurturing socially responsible leaders align with our values, making it a natural partner for this endeavour."*

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### **About Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple**

Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple (观音堂佛祖庙) is a traditional Chinese Buddhist temple situated at 178 Waterloo Street in Singapore. Built in 1884, it is one of the oldest temples in Singapore and is a popular place of worship for local devotees of Guan Yin (观音), the Goddess of Mercy. The Temple is known for its work towards charity, contributing to, amongst others, many health and educational institutions.

### **About SMU**

A premier university in Asia, 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 13,000 students across undergraduate, postgraduate professional and postgraduate research programmes, SMU comprises of eight schools: School of Accountancy, Lee Kong Chian School of Business, School of Economics, School of Computing and Information Systems, Yong Pung How School of Law, School of Social Sciences, College of Integrative Studies, and College of Graduate Research Studies. SMU offers a wide range of bachelors', masters', and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with its schools, as well as in multidisciplinary combinations of these areas.

SMU emphasises rigorous, high-impact, multi- and interdisciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance. SMU faculty members collaborate with leading international researchers and universities around the world, 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](http://www.smu.edu.sg)

SMU celebrates its 25 years of meaningful impact this year, and remains committed to its vision of driving innovation, transcending boundaries and transforming lives.

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