



Press Release – **Embargoed until 1pm on 25 February 2025**

**SMU announces first batch of startups
for the University’s flagship deep tech accelerator programme**

- *The Urban SustainInnovator (USI) was launched by the Minister for National Development at the 12th edition of SMU’s Lee Kuan Yew Global Business Plan Competition (LKYGBPC) to nurture promising urban solutions and sustainability-focused startups*
- *Backed by a public-private consortium that connects startups to global networks, the USI is designed to boost Singapore’s role as Asia’s gateway for deep tech startups while boosting local talent development for innovation and entrepreneurship*
- *The selection process is highly competitive with the initial cohort comprising seven startups picked from 1,500 startups from 91 countries*

Singapore, 25 February 2025 (Wednesday) – Singapore Management University (SMU) today announced the **first batch of seven startup selected to join its deep tech accelerator programme – Urban SustainInnovator (USI)**, Singapore’s first global accelerator programme dedicated to scaling and anchoring breakthrough solutions in the urban solutions and sustainability space.

First launched at [SMU’s Lee Kuan Yew Global Business Plan Competition \(LKYGBPC\)](#) last September by Mr Chee Hong Tat, Singapore’s Minister for National Development, the USI is hosted by SMU’s Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE) and is dedicated to the development of top-tier urban and sustainability-focused startups worldwide.

The inaugural cohort attended the first of four quarterly deep-dive sessions for the accelerator programme. The startups were selected from past LKYGBPC finalists, and the frontier innovations that they are developing include self-healing concrete, nanotechnology-enabled photosynthesis for increasing farming yields, fully circular plastics made without carbon emissions and airless wheels based on space technology. (Please refer to Annex 2 for more details.)

Anchor in Singapore, scale for the world

[Professor Lim Sun Sun](#), SMU’s Vice President of Partnerships and Engagement, and Chair of the USI Programme Management Committee, welcomed the founders of the seven startups and their mentors to the two-day session held at SMU. She said, “The Urban SustainInnovator reinforces SMU’s commitment to driving innovations that transform lives. Together, we’ll look to foster global talent, elevate knowledge in Singapore’s workforce, and catalyse ground-breaking solutions that address today’s pressing climate problems.”

“With S\$40 million of investment recently announced by the Ministry of National Development (MND) and Ministry of Sustainability and the Environment (MSE) in developing, piloting and commercialising promising urban and sustainability solutions, Singapore is becoming a dynamic global Deep Tech gateway to Asia,” she added.

The USI programme is the first global accelerator housed in Singapore dedicated to scaling and anchoring breakthrough solutions in the urban and sustainability space. This 12-month hybrid, non-residential programme is open to urban and sustainability-focused startups globally. The USI convenes a strong network of venture capitalists, R&D experts, corporates

and regulators who offer in-kind support and mentorship to promising startups. Participants receive structured guidance on fundraising, market access, and R&D as they build and launch their ventures. Backed by a robust public-private consortium, this zero-equity, zero-fee programme is supported by A*STAR, Antler, Building Construction Authority, Energy Market Authority, ST Engineering, The GEAR by Kajima, TRIREC, and Wavemaker Partners.

Professor Lim also noted that the USI complements initiatives such as the National Graduate Research Innovation Programme (National GRIP), collectively establishes a trusted ecosystem across Asia, and convenes high-potential deep tech startups with sustainability, technology, and business partners across universities worldwide.

How USI accelerates startup growth

At the outset of the programme, startups define clear 12-month growth milestones. Each startup is paired with a dedicated Lead Mentor drawn from USI's consortium of business, scientific, and government leaders, ensuring continuity and tailored guidance. Beyond one-to-one mentorship, USI curates targeted support and access that address the unique needs of each startup. This includes access to investors and industry partners for pilot deployment, support for scaling in Singapore and across Asia, and accreditation for fast-tracked commercialisation.

Participants can expand their networks across Asia, particularly in markets where SMU has a local presence, such as Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam, opening doors for greater collaboration and regional exposure.

Startups can also tap into SMU's talent initiatives, such as the [Global Innovation Immersion programme](#), to support their early resourcing needs as they begin their expansion into Asia through the USI.

SMU has a strong track record of supporting startups focused on sustainability. The university's flagship LKYGBPC was first organised in 2002 as a platform for startup scouting and international roadshows. Over 23 years, it has evolved into a comprehensive support and mentorship programme for next-generation founders, reinforcing SMU's role as a launchpad for global deep-tech startups in Singapore.

In addition, nearly 40 per cent of startups from SMU IIE's incubator, the [Business Innovations Generator](#), have focused on addressing UN Sustainable Development Goals and advancing sustainability innovation. In the past five years, these startups have collectively raised over S\$875 million.

For more information on the Urban Sustalnnovator, please visit <https://iie.smu.edu.sg/usi>

Enclosures:

- Annex 1 - Chinese translation of titles and terms
- Annex 2 - Startups selected for the first cohort of the Urban Sustalnnovator
- Annex 3 - Quotes from the partners of the Urban Sustalnnovator

About SMU IIE (新加坡管理大学创新与创业研究院)

The Singapore Management University's Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE) empowers aspiring entrepreneurs and innovators to create positive change. It offers tailored training programmes, an equity-free incubator, and a vibrant community that connects innovators through events and networking opportunities, including the renowned Lee Kuan

Yew Global Business Plan Competition (LKYGBPC). For more information:
<https://iie.smu.edu.sg>

About SMU (新加坡管理大学)

Established in 2000, Singapore Management University (SMU) is recognised for its disciplinary and multi-disciplinary research that addresses issues of global relevance, impacting business, government, and society. Its distinctive education, incorporating innovative experiential learning, aims to nurture global citizens, entrepreneurs and change agents. With more than 13,000 students, SMU offers a wide range of bachelors, masters and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with six of its eight schools - Accountancy, Business, Computing, Economics, Law and Social Sciences. Its seventh school, the SMU College of Integrative Studies, offers degree programmes in deep, integrative interdisciplinary education. The College of Graduate Research Studies, SMU's eighth school, enhances integration and interdisciplinarity across the various SMU postgraduate research programmes that will enable students to gain a holistic learning experience and well-grounded approach to their research. SMU also offers a growing number of executive development and continuing education programmes. Through its city campus, SMU focuses on making meaningful impact on Singapore and beyond through its partnerships with industry, policymakers and academic institutions. <https://www.smu.edu.sg/>

For media enquiries, please contact:

Koh Joh Ting (Ms)
SMU Corporate Communications & Marketing
Mobile: (65) 9336 3288
Email: jtkoh@smu.edu.sg

Rony J Palathinkal
SMU Institute of Innovation & Entrepreneurship
Email: ronyp@smu.edu.sg

Annex 1
Chinese translation of titles and terms

Urban Sustainnovator	城市可持续发展加速器
Lee Kuan Yew Global Business Plan Competition (LKYGBPC)	李光耀全球创新创业大赛
Singapore Management University (SMU)	新加坡管理大学 (简称: 新大)
SMU IIE	新加坡管理大学创新与创业研究院
Professor Lim Sun Sun, Vice President of Partnerships and Engagement in SMU, and Lee Kong Chian Professor of Communication & Technology	林珊珊教授 新加坡管理大学 合作与交流总监 李光前通信与科技教授

Annex 2

Startups selected for the first cohort of the Urban Sustalnnovator

Startup	Country	Solution
Inviscid AI	Singapore	Inviscid AI offers a physics-informed AI for building management system. Deep physical understanding is combined with cutting-edge machine learning to create digital twins that optimise indoor climate and energy systems in real-time.
Macrocycle Technologies	US	Macrocycle Technologies creates patented technology that takes plastic and polyester waste to produce virgin-grade MacroCycle PET or polyester resins, specially crafted to fit the needs and products of the customers without additional green premium.
Mimicrete	UK	Mimicrete provides self-healing concrete solutions that help mitigate against further cracking and subsequent structural issues, lengthening concrete lifetime and reducing the need for inefficiencies in engineering and repair
Pronoe	France	Pronoe develops automated water treatment systems that are seamlessly integrated downstream from industrial sites, effectively mitigating coastal acidification and enhancing the ocean's natural ability to capture and store CO ₂
Qarbotech	Malaysia	Qarbotech is a nanotechnology-enabled agritech company that develops and manufactures photosynthesis enhancers to increase crop productivity. The company delivers scalable, science-backed solutions to improve food security while also reducing the environmental footprint of agriculture.
Sesame Sustainability	US	Sesame combines emissions modelling, techno-economic analysis, and system optimisation into a single platform, enabling companies to model, and verify energy transition investments with confidence
Smart Tire	US	Smart Tire uses advanced shape-memory alloys to make tyres airless, flat-proof, and highly durable. The technology improves safety, reliability, and reduces waste, maintenance and downtime.

Annex 3

Quotes from the partners of the Urban SustaInnovator

“SMU’s launch of the Urban SustaInnovator is a strong signal of Singapore’s commitment to backing founders tackling critical urban and sustainability challenges. At Antler, we believe breakthrough innovation happens when capital, mentorship, and deep industry access come together - and USI creates exactly that platform. We’re excited to support the next generation of founders scaling meaningful solutions from Singapore to the world.”

- **Rufus Sorsa, Associate Partner, Antler**

“BCA is pleased to be a Government Partner for SMU’s inaugural run of the USI Accelerator. We are excited that promising start-ups and their solutions with the potential to transform the Built Environment have since been successfully onboarded. Singapore welcomes new, innovative solutions that address our industry’s priorities in safety, productivity, sustainability, and resilience. To this end, BCA stands ready to champion and facilitate support for start-ups through further partnerships, commercialisation, and deployment of their solutions.”

- **Jonathan Cheng, Chief Technology Officer, Building and Construction Authority of Singapore**

“As an operating partner of the Urban SustaInnovator, The GEAR by Kajima is proud to contribute our deep industry expertise to guide and accelerate the growth of promising startups. Our unique position of having a living lab and testbed facility, and engagement from Kajima’s Technical Research Institute, enables us to offer startups real-world environments to validate their solutions, collaborate with research teams, and establish a strong foothold in Singapore.”

- **Luke Wu, Managing Director, The GEAR by Kajima**

“Driven by a shared commitment in addressing critical challenges that cities face today, ST Engineering is participating in the Urban SustaInnovator programme to drive urban and sustainability innovation. We bring scale, deep domain expertise and access to real-world environments to help our startup partners validate, refine and grow their solutions. The opportunity to co-create alongside these bold innovators will inspire, unlock new possibilities and strengthen the ecosystem. Together, we can create meaningful impact for cities and communities.”

- **Gareth Tang, President, Urban Solutions, ST Engineering**

"At TRIREC, our mission is to back technologies and entrepreneurs that are striving to improve our world. The Urban SustaInnovator is an important platform to help accelerate ideas that can help cut emissions and transition towards a low-carbon future. We are excited to work with founders who are tackling urban sustainability challenges head-on, and to support them in scaling innovations that can deliver measurable impact. "

- **Melvyn Yeo, Managing Partner, TRIREC**

“Wavemaker Partners is proud to support Urban SustaInnovator, reflecting our long-standing commitment since our founding in 2012 to deep tech, alongside enterprise and sustainability, recognising its massive potential despite being undervalued in Southeast Asia. We aim to provide USI founders with the tailored support that deep tech ventures often struggle to find, while contributing to Singapore’s position as a global hub for innovation and technological advancement that solve urgent real-world challenges.”

- **Paul Santos, Co-founder and Managing Partner, Wavemaker Partner**