

**Opening Address
by Professor Lily Kong, SMU President
At SMU Academy Day
Held on 21 October 2025**

1. Good morning, and a very warm welcome to the inaugural SMU Academy Day.
2. Mr Tan Wee Beng, Deputy Chief Executive (Operations and Regulation), SkillsFuture Singapore; distinguished guests from the five Polytechnics and Institute of Technical Education; industry and government partners; faculty, colleagues and friends - thank you for joining us.
3. This year marks SMU's 25th anniversary, and in this milestone anniversary year, I am delighted that we are celebrating our very first SMU Academy Day.
4. In 2017, as Provost, I had set up SMU Academy. It pulled together various parts of the university that had been offering short courses in professional and continuing education, and the SMU Academy sat alongside, as it does today, SMU Executive Development. Whereas SMU Executive Development (or ExD, for short) offers development for executives, SMUA seeks to empower professionals to enable individuals and organisations meet reskilling and upskilling needs. Since 2017, SMUA has grown significantly, with over 1,500 courses available to meet different needs.
5. Today's theme is *'The Upskilling Imperative: Bold Moves to Transform Your Talent'*. In a world of constant change, standing still is indeed the greatest risk. Learners must have a positive and proactive mindset towards lifelong learning; and institutions must collaborate more deeply than ever to create seamless pathways across different stages of learning.

6. This morning, we take an important step in that direction. SMU is signing a Memorandum of Understanding with five Polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Education – a first collaboration of its kind that recognises the power of lifelong learning across Singapore’s educational institutions.
7. The MoU recognises real-world experience and prior learning, reducing duplication and accelerating progression. Polytechnic Advanced and Specialist Diploma holders may now receive credit exemptions into SMU’s Industry Graduate Diplomas (IGDs) and the Industry Practice Master of Digital Economy (IPMDE). For ITE diploma graduates, the MoU establishes, for the very first time, a direct progression pathway into a graduate-level programme at SMU.
8. The impact is significant: a deeper respect for the expertise our learners already bring, enabling a shorter time to achieve a degree, and greater and timely relevance for the workplace.
9. Let me illustrate briefly.
 - First, imagine Siti, who is a marketing analyst with a Specialist Diploma in Data Analytics and has been automating dashboards for years. Under this new agreement, her proven skills and knowledge are recognised, allowing her to advance her analytics qualifications through an Industry Graduate Diploma in the analytics field and eventually progress seamlessly into the Industry Practice Master of Digital Economy.
 - Second, picture Wei Ming, who started with a Work Study Diploma from ITE, who then upskilled by stacking CET modules in cloud and cybersecurity, and now leads an operations team. Previously, entry into a graduate-level programme required a Polytechnic diploma plus 10 years of work experience. Under the new pathway, his ITE qualification and experience now qualify him

directly for the Industry Practice Master of Digital Economy, allowing him to deepen both technical and leadership skills while working.

10. The above learners may be fictional, but the new pathway is real. It provides tangible opportunities for Singaporeans to keep moving forward and realise their aspirations; it is practical, paced, and purposeful.
11. On behalf of SMU, I extend my heartfelt thanks to our partners from the five polytechnics, ITE and SkillsFuture Singapore – for your trust, vision and your commitment to lifelong learning. My appreciation also goes to our industry partners and to my SMU Academy colleagues for curating today’s programme.
12. This collaboration exemplifies SMU’s 2030 impact agenda – developing human capital that is future-ready, enabling economic development through innovation and productivity, and uplifting societies through accessible lifelong learning. Together, we are strengthening the ecosystem that keeps Singapore’s workforce resilient, adaptable, and socially conscious.
13. In education, we often say learning is a journey. Every journey needs a clear map, open roads and trusted companions. With this MoU, we are giving learners a clearer map and a smoother road. SMU is honoured to travel this journey with all of you, as part of a shared community of lifelong learning and opportunity.
14. Thank you.

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