

Media Release

Singaporean SMU professor appointed to World Bank-backed global panel on skills to raise incomes and reduce poverty

Singapore, 5 August 2026 – Singaporean psychologist Professor David Chan (陈振中教授) from the Singapore Management University (SMU) has been appointed to a new global expert panel jointly established by the World Bank Group and the Center for Global Development. The **Global Advisory Panel on Skills (GAPS)** is tasked with identifying the most effective skills interventions to raise incomes and reduce poverty in low-and middle-income countries, as governments worldwide grapple with widening skills gaps due to lack of enabling environments amid the advances in digital technology and artificial intelligence (AI)-driven transformation.

The international expert panel's recommendations are expected to help inform how governments and international development organisations invest in workforce training and skills policies. The panel appointment comes at a time when countries across the world are accelerating investments in workforce reskilling and lifelong learning to remain competitive amid rapid technological change.

Drawing on and sorting through the global evidence, the expert panel will review what works in helping workers and societies adapt to AI, demographic shifts and evolving workforce needs, with its recommendations expected to inform international policy on skills development and employment.

Professor Chan is one of up to 22 experts selected from academia, public policy and professional practice worldwide to serve on the international advisory panel. He was invited to join the panel for his expertise in the social and behavioural sciences and background in evidence-based policymaking, particularly his leadership in research methods and work on how individuals adapt to changes at work.

The global expert panel is independent of but complements the World Bank Group's High-Level Advisory Council on Jobs co-chaired by **Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam** and **former Chile President Michelle Bachelet**. Both the council on jobs and the expert panel on skills are initiatives operating in parallel under the World Bank Group, but they have distinct roles.

The global expert panel on skills will serve as the analytical and evidence-driven engine for intervention recommendations that directly feeds into the broader objectives of the advisory council on jobs. Similar to the advisory council on jobs, members of the global advisory panel on skills are appointed for an initial two-year term and may be renewed for subsequent terms.

Professor Chan, who has been the first Singaporean and first Asian to receive several prestigious international psychology awards recognising both his scientific achievements and their real-world impact, said:

“I'm humbled and honoured to be invited to serve on this global expert panel for a worthy cause. I hope we can help translate rigorous scientific evidence into practical solutions that enable countries to respond to rapid technological and economic change, particularly by helping people develop the skills and adaptability needed for the future of work.”

On what he thinks of the significance of his international reputation and the appointment of a Singaporean to this important global initiative, he said:

“The significance is not only about one individual Singaporean. It is a timely reinforcement of how people with different expertise and background, as individuals and collectively as a team, can play important roles in contributing solutions to challenges and make real, meaningful impact in various ways. Of course, it is good that Singapore has a voice in these important international efforts. But ultimately, a reminder that we must never forget is, whether we are formally recognised or not, what matters is the positive and practical difference we can all help make to people's lives, locally or globally”.

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About Professor David Chan

David Chan is Professor of Psychology at SMU and a member of the Singapore Social Science Research Council, a Research Fellow at the Centre for Liveable Cities (CLC), and a Research Fellow at the SMU Longevity Societies and Economies Institute (LSEI). His works in diverse areas of social-behavioural sciences published in top psychology, management and methods journals have been cited extensively in various disciplines. A 2020 study by Stanford University on researcher impact among all scientists across all disciplines named him in the top one percent worldwide. He is Elected Fellow of six international psychological associations and has received numerous international achievement awards such as the Distinguished Early Career Contributions Award, the Scientist-Practitioner Presidential Recognition Award, and the Raymond Katzell Award in Industrial and Organizational Psychology. Together with Economics Nobel Laureate Professor Daniel Kahneman, he served on an international committee who authored a report on national well-being across countries which was subsequently incorporated by the United Nations in its Human Development Report.

About SMU

Singapore Management University (SMU) is Asia's premier global city university at the nexus of management, social sciences and technology. Established in 2000, the University's vision foregrounds its DNA in driving innovations, transcending boundaries and transforming lives. SMU's mission is to nurture a community of independent lifelong learners and change agents, enable world-class researchers to address societal challenges, harness partnerships to serve as gateway between Asia and the world, and transform lives to create sustainable futures.

Recognised for its award-winning pedagogy, SMU's interactive, collaborative and practice-oriented education prepares graduates to be agile, adaptive and ready to create meaningful impact across business, government and society. SMU graduates are consistently ranked among the most employable in Singapore, and command one of the highest mean starting salaries.

SMU offers a future-oriented suite of undergraduate, postgraduate professional and postgraduate research programmes through six schools and two colleges: 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. Their programmes include multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary pathways that reflect the complex challenges of today's world.

SMU's research is rigorous, high-impact and interdisciplinary, addressing globally relevant issues from an Asian perspective. Its faculty also collaborates with leading researchers, universities, industry, government and community partners to advance knowledge, shape policy and practice, and deliver real-world solutions.

Located in the heart of downtown Singapore, SMU's city campus strengthens its strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community, enabling the University to turn ideas into action and create impact where it matters. www.smu.edu.sg

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