

**SPEECH BY DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER HENG SWEE KEAT  
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL  
SCIENCE / COLLEGE OF INTEGRATIVE STUDIES BUILDING  
ON 28 OCTOBER 2022**

SMU President, Professor Lily Kong,

SMU Provost, Professor Timothy Clark

Faculty, staff, students and alumni of SMU

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

1. I am always happy to be back in SMU.
  - a. Over the years, I have visited your vibrant campus many times.
  - b. I attended the SMU Commencement in 2018, when I met many of your passionate graduates and their proud parents.
  - c. I am glad to be back this morning, in fact the second time this week, to join you for the launch of this new building for the School of Social Sciences and College of Integrative Studies.

**Pushing New Frontiers**

2. SMU has been a pioneer in our educational landscape from the very beginning.
  - a. I was the Director of Higher Education in MOE when SMU was conceived. Dr Tony Tan was then the minister overseeing higher education, and I was involved in many of the very interesting early discussions.
  - b. SMU was set up to allow more students to access higher education. To differentiate itself from the two existing well-established research-intensive universities, SMU has from the outset pioneered more innovative ways of teaching and learning.
  - c. SMU introduced a pedagogy with strong emphasis on collaborative project work and classroom participation.
  - d. There is also a strong focus on community service, practical work experience through internships, as well as global exposure.
  - e. Being located in the heart of the city, SMU can build stronger links with professionals in our commercial and financial centre. But as the land is prime, SMU's campus has to occupy a smaller land footprint, which you have used innovatively to bring faculty and students from different faculties closer together.

3. Over the years, I have followed SMU's progress closely, and have been delighted to see how well the university has developed.

- a. You started with the Schools of Business and Accountancy, building on Singapore's strengths as a node for global commerce and business.
- b. You have since expanded to a range of different disciplines – Economics, Social Sciences, Computing & Information Systems and Law.
- c. To help your students develop global perspectives, SMU has since 2018 made global exposure a graduation requirement for all students. The School of Social Sciences also offers a second major on Global Asia, to enable students to better understand our region.
- d. Your graduates are highly sought after. Not just for their sound grounding in their respective disciplines, but also for their soft skills and confidence.

4. **Around the world, higher education will continue to play a key role in preparing students to meet new challenges in a changing world.**

- a. **The challenges ahead are many. But so too the many exciting opportunities. Often, challenges and opportunities are different sides of the same coin.**
- b. **It is critical for students to build the right skills that can help them catch the waves of the future.**
- c. **For universities to succeed in preparing students for the future, universities themselves must continue to push the frontiers.**
- d. **So, it is most timely that we are launching this new sustainable building at the heart of SMU's campus in the city.**

#### **Interdisciplinarity & Impact**

5. This new building houses 2 schools, 4 centres, and a research lab under one roof.

- a. Lily has explained what SMU is seeking to achieve, and how **SMU is continuing to push the frontiers.**
- b. **Let me touch on two dimensions – Interdisciplinarity and Impact.**

6. **First, interdisciplinarity**

7. The key challenges of our time – whether it is climate change or ageing – are multifaceted and complex.

- a. There are no easy solutions, certainly not from a single perspective.

- b. Rigorous disciplinary knowledge enables us to understand a specific dimension of the issue more deeply. But often, the solution requires the synthesis of different perspectives.
  - c. By having team with members from different disciplines and backgrounds, we broaden the appreciation of issues from different angles, and are more likely to create more innovative solutions.
8. An interdisciplinary education has been a hallmark of an SMU education.
- a. Your core curriculum provides a broad-based and interdisciplinary foundation, including in economics, ethics, Asia studies, and global challenges.
  - b. At the same time, SMU provides a flexible academic pathway for all your students. For example, all SMU students can choose a 2<sup>nd</sup> major or even pursue a 2<sup>nd</sup> degree in a different discipline.
9. So, I congratulate SMU on taking a further step in interdisciplinary education.
- a. You recently launched the new College of Integrative Studies, which will be housed in this new building.
  - b. As Lily said, this new College takes inter-disciplinary education to the next level.
  - c. Students will have significant flexibility to explore and design their majors. This will prepare them well for future complex challenges.
  - d. The College will take in its first batch of students next year
10. I am also glad that this new building will facilitate the integration of different schools and centres of research. This will help the cross-pollination of ideas.
- a. We can achieve even more together, if we deepen our collaboration across our entire ecosystem in Singapore – our institutes of higher learning, research institutes, industry, and of course the social sector.
  - b. Better still, let us go beyond our shores, to collaborate with the best universities and companies, and the best people around the world, and continue to welcome international students and researchers, who bring valuable and diverse perspectives.
  - c. In a more uncertain and volatile world, it will be even more important to build an international network of bridges.
11. **I have spoken about Interdisciplinarity. The second point I would touch on is Impact.**
12. Universities must not be ivory towers. Instead, universities must marshal the spirit of inquiry and deep expertise of your staff, and the sense of adventure of the students to push the frontiers of knowledge, and to create meaningful, impactful innovation.

**[FOR IMMEDIATE REPORTING]**

- a. In this way, you can be active contributors to solutions that address the challenges of our time.
  - b. By enabling students to build the habits of rigorous thinking and creative problem solving, universities can create a major multiplier effect.
13. I am glad that SMU has been advancing this.
- a. You are nurturing changemakers who aspire to make an impact.
  - b. For example, your Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship has incubated more than 300 start-ups. I was impressed by many of these dynamic start-ups, when I attended the Lee Kuan Yew Global Business Plan Competition last year.
  - c. The schools, centres and labs housed in this new building also speak directly to how you are making an impact on our key challenges and opportunities – whether it is ageing, social innovation, or digitalisation.
14. To prepare your graduates to tackle key challenges, SMU has also continually evolved your curriculum.
- a. Take climate change for instance.
  - b. The sustainability major in the Lee Kong Chian School of Business, launched 3 years ago, is the first of its kind in Singapore.
  - c. The School of Social Sciences has also introduced a sustainability futures track in its curriculum. As Lily mentioned in her speech, SOSS has continuously innovated its curriculum over the past 15 years, to keep up with evolving needs.
  - d. And SMU has also done well to embed sustainability across all disciplines with close to 30 courses and programmes offered in its undergraduate, postgraduate, professional and continuing education. Indeed, this will be a key horizontal skill for the future.

**Launch of New Building**

15. This brings me to my final point – this building that we are launching today demonstrates SMU's tangible commitment towards sustainability.
16. Sustainability is one of the key priorities in your Vision 2025. You have made significant and steady progress on this front.
- a. In 2018, when I attended the SMU Commencement at your law school building, it was the first new building in your campus to be awarded the Green Mark Platinum.
  - b. By 2019, the entire SMU campus had achieved 100% Green Mark Platinum status.
17. This new building we are opening today is yet another step forward.

- a. Careful thought has gone into it – from upstream design, to construction, and operations.
- b. For example, the self-shading building design reduces reliance on air-conditioning, and lowers overall energy consumption.
- c. You have also taken a lifecycle approach, by focusing on sustainability beyond the completion of the building. The rooftop solar farm will generate renewable energy.
- d. With this new building, SMU is now the largest solar power plant in Singapore's city centre, meeting 12% of the campus' total energy consumption.
- e. And I am glad that SMU has even bolder plans in the years ahead, to achieve a carbon neutral campus by 2030.

## **Conclusion**

18. Let me conclude.
19. Over the years, SMU has been a pioneer in our educational landscape.
  - a. This new building, and the schools and research centres that come under its roof, demonstrate SMU's continued commitment to push new frontiers.
  - b. Every time I visit your campus, you have taken further steps forward.
  - c. And I am sure that you will continue to make good progress in time to come.
20. So my heartiest congratulations, and I am confident that the learning and discussions that take place in this new building will prepare your students to make a positive impact on the world.
21. Thank you very much.