

SMU Commencement for Class of 2020, Opening Ceremony

SMU Hall, 15 December 2021, 11.30am

Speech by SMU Chairman Mr Ho Kwon Ping

Guest of Honour, Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen

Chancellor, SMU, Mr Lim Chee On

Pro-Chancellor, SMU, Mr Eddie Teo

Members of the Board of Trustees

Faculty and staff of SMU;

The Class of 2020;

Parents and guests;

Everyone joining us at SMU Hall and online

Good morning.

Welcome to the Opening Ceremony of SMU Commencement for the Class of 2020.

This occasion has been a very long time coming as the ceremony was originally planned to be held in July 2020 but had to be postponed due to the measures in relation to the COVID-19 situation. Instead, I spoke to your cohort via video link in the Virtual Graduation Fair.

Completing your programmes, taking exams and seeking to commence your careers during a period of unprecedented disruption tested the resilience, resourcefulness and creativity that SMU had sought to develop in you. We believe in you, wish you all the very best, and know you will continue to fly the SMU flag high and with honour.

Your graduation is a testament to these qualities in you. Your cohort will not be defined by what you missed out on, but by how you overcame these challenges in your daily lives in the last two years. They helped you to graduate and will be defining characteristic of your generation.

You may have felt disappointed and upset due to the turn of events in the last two years. That would have been natural, but I hope that you turn that feeling into positive energy that will bring meaningful change to your own life and those around you. Safe management measures during the Circuit Breaker and subsequent phases brought the closeness of family ties, strength of communities and mutual support, sense of unity and purpose to the fore in Singapore. In adversity, you found strength in yourselves and in your relationships. Make sure that all this is not forgotten or diminished as you make your way forward in your careers and in your personal lives.

Remember, the sacrifices made by others to help you complete your graduation, to keep you and your families safe, to maintain Singapore's safety and security.

The world has changed since you graduated and so has your future in it. You face a world of economic and social challenges, a world where the status quo is being challenged and disrupted by unforeseen circumstances. While experts have conflicting opinions and many global leaders have been more divisive than unifying, decisive action, leadership and collaboration are needed now more than ever before.

I urge you to stay positive and open to career opportunities around you. Take a long-term view of where you would like to see yourself as you embark on your career journey and enjoy the adventure as you are likely to take on different roles during your lives. Remember, careers are now rarely linear, so broad experience and evidence of drive will always be recognised. And stay curious, keep on learning and build up your treasure trove of knowledge, skills and experience which have been imparted to you.

Our Guest of Honour today, Dr Ng Eng Hen, is a medical doctor by profession. Dr Ng served as a consultant surgeon at the Singapore General Hospital from

1992 to 1997 and maintained a private practice in Mount Elizabeth Hospital as a surgical oncologist from 1997 to 2001.

He contested the 2001 General Election under the PAP banner and was elected a Member of Parliament for Bishan-Toa Payoh Group GRC. In 2002, he was appointed a Minister of State at the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Manpower.

In his 17 years in politics, Dr Ng has served as Minister for Manpower, Minister for Education, Minister for Defence and Leader of the House. He is Chairman of the University Restructuring Committee, Chairman of the Jobs Task Force and Chairman, Inter-Ministerial Committee on Low Wage Workers, amongst many other roles.

He kindly recorded a video message for your virtual graduation ceremony in 2020, and I am delighted to welcome him here today to address you in person.

Please give a warm welcome to Dr Ng Eng Hen.