

**SMU Commencement for Class of 2026,
Opening Ceremony
SMU Hall, Tuesday 28 July 2026, 1pm
Speech by SMU President Prof Lily Kong**

Guest-of-Honour, Dr Leow Kah Shin, Co-Founder, Quantedge Capital;
Chancellor of SMU Mr Lim Chee Onn;
Pro-Chancellors Justice Judith Prakash, and Mr Kuok Khoon Ean;
SMU alumna and honorary degree recipient Ms Yip Pin Xiu;
Chairman Mr Piyush Gupta and Members of the Board of Trustees;
Faculty and staff;
Parents and guests;
And most importantly, the Class of 2026
Congratulations on reaching this milestone!

Today marks far more than the completion of a degree. It is a celebration of your perseverance, your growth, and the many quiet acts of courage that have brought you here. Each of you has travelled a distinctive path, shaped by aspirations, uncertainties, friendships, setbacks, discoveries, and moments of renewal.

At SMU, you have not merely acquired knowledge. You have learned to navigate complexity, to work across differences, and to support one another through seasons of challenge and change. These are achievements worthy of deep pride.

Entering a World in Transition

Let me say a few words about the world you are stepping into.

Many of you began your university journey during a period marked by global disruption and profound uncertainty. The COVID-19 pandemic altered the rhythms of everyday life and reshaped assumptions about work, society, and the future itself.

As you graduate, you step into a world that continues to evolve rapidly. Technological transformations are accelerating. Economic and geopolitical uncertainties persist. Communities across the world grapple with pressing social and environmental challenges. Yet, amidst these realities lie immense opportunities: to reimagine possibilities, to build bridges, and to contribute meaningfully to society.

Your years at SMU have prepared you not simply to respond to change, but to shape it – with wisdom, imagination, and humanity.

Leading with Purpose

A university education is ultimately not only about professional preparation. It is also about who you become – thoughtful citizens, compassionate leaders, individuals who understand that success gains its fullest meaning when it uplifts others.

The world will reward innovation and expertise, but it will also call upon your judgement, your integrity, and your empathy. What will distinguish you is not only what you know, but how you choose to engage with uncertainty, with difference, and with difficulty.

I hope you will move forward with both confidence and humility: confident in your abilities, yet humble enough to continue learning; ambitious in your aspirations, yet attentive to the needs of others.

Because leadership, after all, is not measured only by influence or accomplishment. It is also reflected in generosity of spirit, courage in adversity, and the willingness to serve a purpose larger than yourself.

Remaining Connected

Graduation is not an ending, but the beginning of a lifelong relationship with SMU. Wherever your paths may lead, whether into your first professional role, a new venture, public service, further study, or an unexpected opportunity, you remain part of a vibrant and global SMU community.

Our alumni network, which hits 50,000 strong with this year's Commencement, is built not only on professional connections, but on shared experiences and enduring relationships. I encourage you to stay engaged, to support one another generously, and in time, to pay forward the encouragement and guidance you yourselves have received.

SMU, too, remains committed to walking alongside you – through initiatives such as our Lifelong Career Support, because learning and growth do not end at commencement. I have spoken about how universities should not just be four-year institutions during which undergraduates secure your degrees, but 60-year institutions that walk the journey with you for that length of time.

Looking Ahead

As you step into this next chapter, I hope you will remain curious, and open. Dare to imagine possibilities beyond the familiar.

May you pursue excellence with integrity, embrace diversity with empathy, and seek not only personal success, but meaningful impact.

And amidst the demands of achievement, remember also to care for your well-being and for those around you. A fulfilling life is built not solely on accomplishment, but on purpose, relationships, balance, and joy.

With Gratitude

Before I close, let me thank you for your Graduating Class Gift. Your generosity will help future students flourish and create opportunities for generations to come.

Congratulations once again, Class of 2026. Wherever life takes you, know this – SMU will always be a place you can return to, a home that celebrates your accomplishments, and believes in your potential.

Thank you.

END.