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**SMU Commencement for Class of 2023
Opening Ceremony
SMU Hall, 25 July 2023
Speech by SMU President Prof Lily Kong**

Guest-of-Honour, The Honourable Justice Judith Prakash

Chancellor of Singapore Management University, Mr Lim Chee Onn;

Pro-Chancellor, Mr Eddie Teo;

Honorary Degree Recipient Mr JY Pillay;

Chairman of the SMU Board of Trustees Mr Piyush Gupta, and members of the Board of Trustees;

Faculty, staff, and the Class of 2023;

Parents and guests;

A very afternoon to all of you.

It is with great pride and admiration that I extend my heartfelt congratulations to each and every one of you graduating today. You have accomplished something truly remarkable in your lives, and the ceremony today marks a momentous occasion.

As you embark on the next chapter of your journey beyond SMU, remember that the knowledge and skills you have acquired throughout your time here will serve as a firm foundation to thrive in a rapidly changing world. The experiences you have garnered, both inside and outside the classrooms – as we witnessed a little while ago – have equipped you to confront the challenges that lie ahead.

For some, the challenges and uncertainties you will face may seem daunting, but I have every confidence that you possess the resilience and adaptability to

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overcome them. Remember, it is not the absence of failure that defines you, but rather how you rise from adversity and grow stronger.

Some of you may be eager to dive headlong into your chosen career paths, I would like to urge you not to neglect the exploration of your passions and interests beyond work. Embrace opportunities that push you beyond your comfort zone, for it is through such endeavours that you will experience profound professional and personal growth.

Maintain an insatiable curiosity, an open mind, and an unwavering commitment to learning. The world we inhabit is in a perpetual state of flux, and it is imperative that you keep pace with the latest advancements in your respective fields. Throughout your time at SMU, you have had the opportunity to form strong friendships, create cherished memories, and forge connections that will transcend borders and time. I encourage you to nurture these relationships, tap into the vast network of SMU alumni for mutual support and assistance, and they will become your support system, your sounding board, and your source of inspiration as you navigate the complex world that awaits. Seek guidance from mentors and cultivate relationships with professionals in your industry to broaden your horizons and gain fresh perspectives. And when you have appropriate knowledge and experience to share, please consider offering your own services as a mentor to those following after you at SMU.

Always bear in mind that your journey of lifelong learning has only just begun. That's why we call it "Commencement". In this ever-evolving world, it is crucial that you continuously upgrade and update your skills and knowledge to remain ahead and relevant. As you navigate through this remarkable odyssey, we hope that you will consider SMU as your ally, be it through our postgraduate

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programmes, professional and research initiatives, SMU Executive Development, or SMU Academy.

Whatever paths you choose to follow, hold true to the SMU Circle Values, of Commitment, Integrity, Responsibility, Collegiality, Leadership and Excellence, which SMU believes are important in living a meaningful life.

Please remember to prioritize your well-being, in all its dimensions, as you have learned to do through the SMU Resilience Framework. Continue to embrace sustainability in your lives and maintain your intellectual, physical, emotional, social, career and financial health. Your time at SMU was marked by the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, and I thank you for your forbearance and for staying the course. You have shown resilience over the last several years; and the resilience you have displayed in overcoming those obstacles is a testament to your character.

In its relatively brief existence, SMU has fostered a culture of giving that is rare for such a young institution. Year after year, our students have exemplified this spirit of generosity by giving back to SMU in ever-increasing numbers.

Following the noble tradition set by the pioneer cohort, the Class of 2023 has established a Graduating Class Gift. We commend you for acknowledging the value of your education at SMU and for affording others the opportunity to partake in this exceptional experience.

Once again, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to all of you on your remarkable achievement of graduating from Singapore Management University. The future lies before you, and I wholeheartedly wish you every success in all your endeavours!

Thank you.

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