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**Speech by Professor Lily Kong
At the official opening ceremony
of the School of Social Science and College of Integrative Studies building
on 28 October 2022**

Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat

SMU colleagues, students and alumni

Ladies and gentlemen

A very good morning and a warm welcome to SMU.

1. The SMU campus is a very special one. It was designed, integrated and constructed in the heart of a fully developed cityscape. The growth of our campus footprint in this vibrant precinct and the addition of this new building that we are officially launching today signals the strengthening of our roots here as a unique, global city university with ever stronger ties with our communities and stakeholders in the heart of Singapore.
2. Constructed using Mass Engineered Timber to lower its carbon footprint, this 'green' building adds over 12,700 square metres of teaching, learning, research and faculty space to our campus. It houses mainly the School of Social Sciences (SOSS), which is celebrating its 15th anniversary, and the College of Integrative Studies (CIS), which has just been established this year. We have here a 'teenager' and an 'infant'. Despite being at very different points of their 'life journey', both will play a critical role in helping SMU achieve its Vision 2025 goals.
3. There are also four Centres and a Research Lab housed in this building – namely: the Wee Kim Wee Centre, the Centre for Research on Successful Ageing, the Lien Centre for Social Innovation, the Secure Mobile Centre, and the Research Lab for Intelligent Software Engineering.
4. The combination of these occupants is not accidental. We have put different groups together to allow for that interdisciplinary work that we believe in, that will allow SMU to further deliver transformative education, address societal challenges through cutting edge research, and engage with the city and world to make a meaningful impact.

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5. The **School of Social Sciences** has come a long way since 2002, when it was originally established as the School of Economics and Social Sciences, or SESS. In 2007, the SESS was restructured into two separate schools — SOSS and the School of Economics. This move allowed both schools to focus on their individual strengths and develop distinctive curriculum.
6. Indeed, SOSS has matured and grown steadily over the last 15 years, nurturing its graduates into national achievers, entrepreneurs, and community builders, contributing successfully to Singapore and beyond.
7. The School today offers four primary majors – Psychology, Political Science, Sociology, and PLE (Politics, Law and Economics), as well as three second majors – Global Asia, Public Policy and Public Management, and Arts and Culture Management. Its students are encouraged to broaden their perspectives by reading one of the many second majors offered across the University in the other schools, or even pursue a double degree.
8. In 2017, SOSS commemorated its 10th anniversary with the introduction of a Fast-track Master of Philosophy in Psychology that enabled talented undergraduates to earn a master's degree within one year after graduation. This year, as the School turns 15, it introduces a new track in 'Sustainable Futures' under the PLE major, to allow students to study climate change and other environmental issues, as well as explore the potential and impact of new technologies.
9. In research, a key highlight is the **Centre for Research on Successful Ageing** (ROSA), also housed in this building. It was founded with an MOE AcRF Tier 3 grant and generous support from the Ngee Ann Kongsi. ROSA's research seeks to understand the well-being of older adults holistically, inform policy-making and promote successful ageing in Singapore.

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10. Let me now turn to the **College of Integrative Studies** (or CIS). From the onset, SMU has been committed to providing students with a transformative education, and nurturing graduates who are capable of navigating cross-disciplinary boundaries and who can respond nimbly to societal needs.
11. CIS takes interdisciplinary education to the next level. Its students can take their freshman year to explore their interest across disciplines and declare their degree programmes only at the end of their first year. Valuing the uniqueness of each student, the College also allows undergraduates to design their own Individualised Major. At the postgraduate level, the College offers a Masters and a PhD in Asian Urbanisms, taking a consciously interdisciplinary approach. This is very timely indeed, as Asia is urbanising at a speed and scale never before seen.
12. By taking such an unprecedented approach, we want to develop for Singapore's future economy new talents with the ability to forge solutions beyond a single discipline, and to reframe challenges and address them in impactful ways.
13. The College also undertakes the delivery of SMU's Core Curriculum for all students across all Schools and oversees Prinsep Street Residences, through which it inspires students to co-live, co-work and co-learn in a shared space, to form connections, and to build a vibrant community in the Bras Basah Bugis Precinct.
14. With integration at its core, the College also houses the **Wee Kim Wee Centre**, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. We decided to locate the Centre within this new College because the Centre is dedicated to providing opportunities for intercultural dialogue in the development of a multicultural consciousness, which is indicative of what the College is working towards.
15. Meanwhile, the other Centres and Labs are doing important work in addressing societal challenges and engaging the city and the world.

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- a. The **Lien Centre of Social Innovation** is offering thought leadership, evidence-to-action translational research, and capacity-building programmes to professionals and youths in Singapore and beyond.
- b. The **Secure Mobile Centre** is conducting research on mobile platform security, mobile app security, mobile user privacy protection, and IoT security for smart nation application. It is also hosting the National Satellite of Excellence in Mobile Systems Security and Cloud Security (NSoE MSS-CS) sponsored by National Research Foundation.
- c. And last but not least, the **Research Lab for Intelligent Software Engineering** is conducting research at the intersection of software engineering, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity, with projects currently valued at over S\$16 million in research funding.

Conclusion

16. Indeed, this new building encompasses hardware and software that are aligned to SMU's Vision 2025. It is a wonderful new addition to our campus, as our university continues to respond nimbly to a world of new challenges and opportunities. This is something that DPM Heng was involved in about 20 years ago, when he was a Director in Higher Education at MOE and had helped us to secure this building. We are deeply grateful to be located in the heart of the city, and will continue to play our part in engaging the city around us.

17. Thank you.

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