

PRESIDENT'S STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY ADDRESS 2024



SMU President Prof Lily Kong delivering her sixth President's State of the University Address.

On 20 September 2024, SMU President Professor Lily Kong delivered her sixth President's State of the University Address to a gathering of nearly 520 faculty, staff, students, and guests at SMU Hall.

Kicking off the event was an exhilarating performance by SMU Samba Masala, fresh from their recent success at the Samba Festival in Coburg. Professor Kong launched into a discussion of the University's progress over the last five years, from 2020, when the SMU2025 strategic plan took effect. She took a broader view, sharing milestones in the University's transformative education, cutting-edge research, and commitment to being an engaged city university.

Transformative education

SMU's core objective is to nurture students into global citizens, change agents, and lifelong learners. The establishment of two new schools – the College of Integrative Studies and the College of Graduate Research Studies – achieves this objective, enhancing inter-disciplinary studies at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

SMU bridged academia with industry through initiatives such as work-study degree programmes and electives that combine classroom learning with practical experience, empowering students with real-world skills. Additionally, postgraduate and professional programmes, including the Industry Practice Master, prepare learners for the future of work.

Furthermore, digital and sustainability literacy are now integral components of the



Prof Kong addressed more than 520 faculty, staff, students, and guests at SMU Hall.

undergraduate curriculum. The University is scaling its digital education initiatives, including blended learning, and ensuring students gain global exposure through partnerships like the TREBLE programme.

The University plans to continue innovating in pedagogy, develop new academic programmes, and expand co-curricular offerings in preparation for the next phase of its strategic plan, set to launch in September 2025.

Cutting-edge research

Research excellence is a cornerstone of the SMU2025 plan. Since 2020, SMU has launched several new research centres, including ROSA (Research on Successful Ageing), the Singapore Green Finance Centre, RISE (Research for Intelligent Software Engineering), and the Urban Institute. These centres address critical societal needs in ageing, green finance, digital transformation, and urban development, in alignment with SMU's themes of Digital Transformation, Sustainable Living, and Growth in Asia.

SMU bolsters its research through external grants and collaborations with local and international institutions, such as joint grant calls, MAKER workshops, and alliances, including the Asia-Pacific Research Alliance on Law and Sustainability.



The annual Address is a much-anticipated opportunity for the SMU community to connect and engage.

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SMU Samba Masala got the Address off to a rousing start.

The University will implement a research impact framework to evaluate academic and societal contributions. Additionally, SMU will focus on key research themes, leading to the establishment of new university-level research institutes that foster collaboration and ensure SMU's leadership in impactful research.

Engaged city university

SMU's commitment to being an Engaged City University remains strong. Internationally, the University has expanded its presence through Overseas Centres in Jakarta, Bangkok, and Ho Chi Minh City, bolstering its partnerships across Southeast Asia. Locally, SMU continues to engage with the innovation ecosystem through initiatives like the Lee Kuan Yew Global Business Plan Competition and SMU Protégé Ventures. The University's Office of Industry

Engagement is deepening research collaborations, particularly in urbanism and data analytics, further reinforcing SMU's role in fostering impactful partnerships.

SMU2025 and Beyond

As SMU approaches its Silver Jubilee in 2025, Professor Kong reflected on the collaborative spirit that has driven the University's success. In her 2019 address, she called for a shift from “ego” to “eco,” from “me” to “we,” urging the SMU community to adopt a founder mentality of teamwork, trust, and commitment. This same spirit has been exemplified in the work of the SMU25 Taskforce and the successful launch of the University's Overseas Centres.

Professor Kong also spoke about SMU's plans to unveil a refreshed Vision and Mission that would embody SMU's purpose as a global city university rooted in Asia, driven ultimately by an aspiration to transform lives.