

President's State of the University Address 2023



SMU President Professor Lily Kong addressing the audience.

In a memorable event that brought together over 600 members of the SMU community, SMU President Professor Lily Kong delivered her fifth President's State of the University Address (PSOUA) on 12 October 2023 at SMU Hall. Breaking away from the traditional format, this year's address embraced a people-centric approach that allowed faculty, staff, and students to share their experiences and achievements through a series of videos, with Prof Kong serving as the narrator. The President's Address touched on significant developments, strategic priorities, and future endeavours that are shaping the course of SMU.

Strategic Priorities: Vision 2025

Prof Kong began her Address by revisiting SMU's progress in the three key priorities across the University's strategic thrusts of Transformative Education, Cutting Edge Research, and Engaged City University.

Transformative Education

The past year was marked by numerous achievements in Transformative Education. Two new colleges were introduced, a groundbreaking co-curricular transcript was launched, and existing programmes were nurtured with a focus on innovation. Undergraduate recruitment has been a success, and efforts to enhance coordination for postgraduate recruitment are underway. The University is committed to recognising and rewarding the contributions of its diverse teaching faculty, including adjuncts and affiliates.

Cutting Edge Research

In Cutting Edge Research, SMU hosted several important research conferences and in research grant applications, the University

saw an increase in grant income. Quality, not just quantity, continued to be emphasised, with a focus on enhancing the quality of publications, academic impact, and societal and economic impact. Key thematic research areas included Digital Transformation and Sustainable Living, with an exploration of measures beyond academic metrics to assess impact.

Engaged City University

SMU's commitment to being an Engaged City University is evidenced by the establishment of the President's External Engagement Council (PEEC). PEEC is responsible for coordinating strategies in Internationalisation, Industry Engagement, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Alumni Engagement, and Brand and Reputation Building. These initiatives aim to position SMU as a quintessentially Asian institution through internationalisation, foster connections between academia and industry, encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, harness alumni support, and promote engagement with the community.



Prof Kong chatted with the audience in a relaxed Q&A session.

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Members of the audience enjoying Prof Kong's informal style of presentation.

Enablers: People, Resources, and Infrastructure

Underpinning these strategic priorities are the enablers: People, Resources, and Infrastructure. The President discussed efforts related to Infrastructure, including the use of sustainable building materials, workplace transformation initiatives, and Project Optimus, a service transformation project. She emphasised the importance of clear objectives, empathetic leadership, strong planning, preparation, execution, communication, and realistic workloads in these initiatives.

Celebrating SMU's People

Prof Kong acknowledged the contributions of faculty, staff, alumni, and benefactors who have generously supported the University. Initiatives were introduced to support faculty and staff, including enhanced leave benefits and policies. For students, financial aid increased, well-being support offered, and initiatives like SMU Mental Health Week launched.

Future Outlook

Looking ahead, Prof Kong announced that in 2024, SMU will embark on a strategic visioning exercise to define a new vision, mission, and values for the University beyond 2025, as well as the next five-year strategic plan. This inclusive process will involve various stakeholders, including the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, students, alumni, and industry partners.

SMU's 25th Anniversary Celebration

Prof Kong concluded her address by sharing the exciting news that planning for SMU's 25th Anniversary celebration in 2025 is underway. The celebrations will commence on Patron's Day 2025, and she encouraged everyone to get involved and share their ideas for this significant occasion.

In closing, the President expressed her gratitude for the dedication and commitment of all members of the SMU community, reinforcing the importance of their ongoing support in shaping the future of the University.