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PRESS RELEASE

Singapore's first Institute for Service Excellence established at SMU

Singapore, 18 July 2007 – Singapore's first institute for service excellence was established at the Singapore Management University (SMU) today by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) and SMU. The new Institute of Service Excellence@SMU (ISES) is set to champion service excellence and to raise Singapore to a higher level of service competitiveness. ISES will work in close collaboration and consultation with government agencies and industry leaders.

The establishment of ISES is timely as a recent survey had shown that only 52% of business decision makers are motivated to raise service standards, compared to 74% of the general population and 65% of service staff. In promoting a culture of service excellence in Singapore, ISES will therefore pro-actively engage business leaders to use service excellence as a business strategy. It will adopt a three-prong approach, focusing its work in the following three key areas:

(a) Research & Thought Leadership

Leveraging the world-class research capabilities of SMU, ISES will drive new and applied research in areas related to service excellence. Research will be conducted by SMU faculty with a strong track record in generating quality research in a broad range of areas from customer equity, customer relationship management, service marketing, brand leadership and value, electronic services to supply chain management. Research will have a strong focus on Singapore and relevance in Asia.

Along with developing a body of research will be regular publication of case studies, journal articles and a newsletter which capture trends and developments relevant to the industry. ISES will also groom young talent in service excellence by placing promising undergraduates in company internships and consulting projects, thereby growing a pool of top graduates for the service industry.

(b) Industry Engagement

ISES will embark on engaging CEOs and business leaders in building their capabilities for service excellence. It will engage business decision makers to use service excellence as a business strategy to enhance service competitiveness in Singapore. The objective is to equip the industry with the latest tools and strategies to sharpen their competitive edge. ISES will also reach out and enhance the service competitiveness of enterprises that are not from the traditional service and hospitality-related sectors, such as finance, logistics and healthcare.

ISES will leverage the relationships which SMU have developed with local, regional and global companies in engaging the industry. Examples of activities which ISES will organise include annual conferences, distinguished speaker series, roundtable forums and workshops. The institute will also explore consultancy services and undergraduate business case competitions in collaboration with the industry. Professional and executive education will be made available to train senior executives in the area of service excellence.

(c) Benchmarking & Comparative Analysis

Developing a reliable, credible and influential indicator for service excellence for Singapore and Asia Pacific is one of the key deliverables of ISES. The institute will measure and benchmark customer satisfaction levels over time and across different sectors and countries by developing the Singapore Customer Satisfaction Index modelled after the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index, a leading economic indicator and reputable predictor of service excellence in the United States. This index will provide an objective, comprehensive and rigorous report card of service levels in various industry sectors every year.

Set up to take the 'Go-the-Extra-Mile-for-Service' (GEMS) Movement into its next phase, ISES was launched by Minister for Transport and Second Minister for Foreign Affairs Mr Raymond Lim, who is also the Chairman of the GEMS Executive Committee (EXCO), at an event held at the SMU campus. ISES is established to sustain and build upon some of the key initiatives of the GEMS Movement, which was launched in October 2005 to raise service levels and promote a culture of service excellence in Singapore. The GEMS Movement was led by an EXCO and supported by three government agencies - WDA, SPRING Singapore and the Singapore Tourism Board - in implementing its initiatives and programmes. The Government has chosen to partner with SMU – known for being dynamic, forward-looking and enterprising with a strong relationship with the business world – to spearhead the next phase of GEMS Movement with a renewed focus.

A governing council for ISES has been formed to provide strategic directions for the institute as well as to coordinate and oversee service-related activities between ISES and the three supporting agencies. Ms Jennie Chua and Mr Tan Suee Chieh will chair the governing council. Ms Jennie Chua, Chairman of Sentosa Cove and a prominent figure in the hospitality industry, will provide perspectives and insights as a business leader. A former GEMS EXCO member, Ms Chua will help provide continuity during the transition as the governing council is being established. Mr Tan Suee Chieh, Chief Executive Officer of NTUC Income, will complement by providing perspectives of a business leader from a service industry that is less hospitality based, but where good systems and processes are critical to serving customers. Besides working with the governing council and engaging the industry, ISES will also collaborate with world-class service providers in the private sector and leading institutions to perform its key roles.

Said Ms Jennie Chua, "Employers need to take the lead in making service competitiveness their business strategy. Companies may find it daunting to review their service levels, as many changes would involve time and money. This would typically mean having to review their internal systems and how they interact with

customers. ISES therefore presents an opportunity for us to engage CEOs and help them realise the advantage they can create for themselves if they were to be able to raise their service standards. This could, in turn, help increase their revenue potential due to greater customer loyalty and possibly even gain new ones."

Added Mr Tan Suee Chieh, "The problem with customer service in Singapore is not one of processes and KPIs but one of attitude, mindset and possibly culture. Good service should receive a commensurate reward, and this is an area that needs to be addressed. In addition, we, as customers, need to reflect on our own attitude and level of respect towards service personnel. I see leadership, structure, technology, and training as the key ingredients in developing and maintaining a service excellence culture. A top level focus such as ISES is therefore a step in the right direction. It sends a clear signal that at a national level, we recognise that customer satisfaction is a vital issue and that we are doing something concrete about it."

Said Professor Tan Chin Tiong, Provost and Deputy President of SMU, "The Institute of Service Excellence@SMU will play an important role in being a change agent as well as pursue innovative solutions to achieve a higher level of service excellence in Singapore . The synergy with SMU is obvious – the university is able to bring together a cross-disciplinary team of professionals from academia, the government and the private sector to provide capability-building, industry engagement and thought leadership."

The establishment of ISES represents a continuation of a long-term effort to establish service excellence in Singapore . With this pursuit, it is envisaged that customer focus will one day become firmly embedded in every company's practices, and service excellence will be part of its product or service delivery process.

About Singapore Workforce Development Agency

The Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) seeks to enhance the employability and competitiveness of our workforce to meet the changing needs of Singapore 's economy. Working with industry, unions, employers, economic agencies, professional associations and training organisations, the agency's efforts are targeted at supporting industry growth by building a pipeline of workers through training and skills upgrading, and raising industry standards through enhancing manpower capabilities. For more information, visit www.wda.gov.sg

About GEMS

GEMS (Go-the-Extra-Mile-for-Service) was launched in October 2005 by Minister Raymond Lim as a nation-wide movement to raise service levels and develop a culture of service excellence. It is supported by an Executive Committee (EXCO), comprising members of diverse backgrounds, including businessmen, union leaders and representatives from the media and government agencies. The GEMS movement seeks to encourage everyone – from businessmen to service workers to customers – to play their part and take the initiative to improve service levels.

As a Service Worker - demonstrate the capability of performing ordinary task in extraordinary ways in the normal course of your duties.

As an Employer / Management - take the lead to create a service culture and system within your organisation to excel in service delivery.

As a Customer - encourage great service by showing simple gestures of appreciations such as smile, greet and thank for service rendered by the service providers.