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Citation

Singapore Management University. Wee Kim Wee Centre Celebrates 20 Years of Making Meaningful Impact. (2022).

Available at: https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/oh_pressrelease/217

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Media Release

Wee Kim Wee Centre Celebrates 20 Years of Making Meaningful Impact

The Wee Kim Wee Centre is celebrating its 20th anniversary with the opening of the new Wee Kim Wee Room housed at Singapore Management University and the launch of the Wee Kim Wee Heritage Fund

Singapore, 4 November 2022 (Friday) – Commemorating its 20th anniversary, the [Wee Kim Wee Centre \(WKWC\)](#) is unveiling the new Wee Kim Wee Room at Singapore Management University (SMU), which houses some of the original belongings of former President Wee Kim Wee and Mrs Wee, and formally launching the Wee Kim Wee Heritage Fund. The WKWC, housed in [SMU's College of Integrative Studies](#), aims to advance learning and dialogue about major cross-cultural issues.

"It is a privilege for this Centre to be associated with the late Dr Wee Kim Wee, who believed passionately in practising and fostering communication, understanding, and goodwill in a complex world," said Professor [Lily Kong](#), SMU President.

"2022 marks the Wee Kim Wee Centre's 20th anniversary. I would like to thank the amazing team at the Centre, whose steadfast diligence and adaptability allowed the Centre to reinvent itself through the years. We also thank the Wee family and our partners, whose invaluable support and generosity makes it possible for us sustain the work of the Centre and declare today that the torch is still blazing," said Professor [Elvin Lim](#), Director of Wee Kim Wee Centre and Dean, SMU College of Integrative Studies.

The 20th anniversary event of the WKWC, held at SMU on 4 November 2022, was officiated by Mr Desmond Lee, Minister for National Development & Minister-in-charge of Social Services Integration. More than 50 donors, supporters, and close friends and family of the late Dr Wee attended the event. They paid tribute to the former President through speeches, interviews, videos and the unveiling of a new Wee Kim Wee Room at SMU Administration Building.

Breathing life into history with the new Wee Kim Wee Room

The premise of the Wee Kim Wee Room is to bring life to the story of Dr Wee Kim Wee, who is best remembered as a "People's President" of a multi-cultural country. Dr Wee was also a journalist, a newspaper man, a Diplomat to Malaysia, Japan and South Korea, a Peranakan family man and an embodiment of cross-cultural sensitivity in his personal and professional life. His experiences, values and beliefs have been mindfully distilled into the immersive space within the Wee Kim Wee Room.

"When I first broached the idea of setting up the Wee Kim Wee Room, I was delighted that Professor Kong immediately understood what it meant to put up a "living gallery". This was not to be a dry, lifeless museum, but a meaningful, living heritage. We hope you will enjoy reminiscing the past with the present in mind, as well as the many human stories embedded in each and every item within this room," said Ms Wee Eng Hwa, daughter of Dr Wee Kim Wee.

With the unveiling of the new Wee Kim Wee Room, Professor Lim said, "We invite you to join us in exploring our very own Wee Kim Wee Room at SMU. Within this time capsule, the treasured

belongings, furniture and paintings that have been generously entrusted by the Wee family to SMU, will inspire visitors to learn about and remember the values of Dr Wee and Mrs Wee, a couple who was much loved and respected by citizens.”

The Wee Kim Wee Room will be made accessible to the public via scheduled tours, starting from early 2023.

Launch of the Wee Kim Wee Heritage Fund

SMU formally launched the [Wee Kim Wee Heritage Fund](#) at the event. The Heritage Fund will help to preserve the heritage and memory of Dr Wee and Mrs Wee in three ways. It will allow for the continuing upkeep of the Wee Kim Wee Room; support educational activities that embody the values that Dr Wee held fast to, and support students with financial need.

“Wee Kim Wee did not have money to go through secondary school. I know for a fact that he would have been very pleased with every dollar that goes to supporting this fund,” said Ms Wee.

Dr Wee Hong Neo, daughter of Dr Wee, kickstarted the Fund with \$200,000 in 2021, while Ms Wee has committed all the nett proceeds from the sale of the third edition of her best-selling volume, *Cooking for the President*, to the Heritage Fund. The third edition will be made available at [The SMU Shop](#), with more details to be released soon.

Interdisciplinary education and intercultural engagement

The CIS and the WKWC stand united in the view that the boundaries between the classroom, boardroom and public square are fluid and porous, and that the academic mission of the university is enhanced and best championed when informed by sustained and critical public engagement. Combining the intercultural and the interdisciplinary aspects, the CIS and the WKWC are envisioned to be institutions that will stand Singapore in good stead for the future.

“The 20th anniversary of the Wee Kim Wee Centre is focused on forging a “cultural consciousness” and commitment to lifelong learning, which are values that the new College of Integrative Studies embraces. As we look ahead into the Wee Kim Wee Centre’s next 20 years, we will carry on Dr Wee’s spirit of cultivating social and cultural diversity. By combining the intercultural and the interdisciplinary aspects, we will deliver transformative education that nurtures graduates with the skills and compassion to make meaningful impact to society,” said Professor Lim.

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Enclosures:

- Annex 1 - About the Wee Kim Wee Centre (WKWC)
- Annex 2 - Key elements of the Wee Kim Wee Room at SMU

About Singapore Management University

Established in 2000, Singapore Management University (SMU) is recognised for its disciplinary and multi-disciplinary research that address issues of global relevance, impacting business, government, and society. Its distinctive education, incorporating innovative experiential learning, aims to nurture global citizens, entrepreneurs and change agents. With more than 12,000 students, SMU offers a wide range of bachelors, masters and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with six of its eight schools - Accountancy, Business, Computing, Economics, Law and Social Sciences. Its seventh school, the SMU College of Integrative Studies, offers degree programmes in deep, integrative interdisciplinary education. The College of Graduate Research Studies, SMU's eighth school, enhances integration and interdisciplinarity across the various SMU postgraduate research programmes that will enable our students to gain a holistic learning experience and well-grounded approach to their research. SMU also offers a growing number of executive development and continuing education programmes. Through its city campus, SMU focuses on making meaningful impact on Singapore and beyond through its partnerships with industry, policy makers and academic institutions. www.smu.edu.sg

Fact Sheet – About the Wee Kim Wee Centre (WKWC)

Introduction

The WKWC's story started twenty years ago when it was set up to advance learning and foster intercultural exchange and dialogue. Initially named the Centre for Cross-Cultural Studies at inception in 2000, the WKWC was one of the first Centres to be established in SMU, signalling from the very start that SMU was a university that was going to cross borders.

It adopted the name of the former Singapore President in 2002, as his life best exemplified a “cross-cultural” dimension that could serve to inspire SMU and the community. The Centre received Mr Wee's unreserved blessings, on the condition that the Centre should help educate citizenry and that it should not be profit-making.

Today, the WKWC is housed under SMU's CIS, which was established earlier this year and is a strategic element of the [University's Vision 2025](#) of growing impact and transforming education. The partnership between the WKWC and the CIS began in 2019, when the CIS was first incarnated as the Office of Core Curriculum, overseeing the delivery of the revamped SMU Core Curriculum, which every SMU undergraduate student takes as part of their education journey. Through the programmes and events spearheaded by the WKWC, the student experience of the SMU Core Curriculum has been enriched by contact and dialogue with public intellectuals addressing real-world questions from a diversity of perspectives.

Mission

Throughout the past two decades, the Wee Kim Wee Centre of SMU has aligned itself with the late President Wee's belief in the importance of critical dialogue as part of cross-cultural engagement between alternative perspectives, social and cultural diversity, civic engagement, and lifelong learning.

It is in honour of these values and commitments that the Centre hosts and supports conferences and publications. As part of its continued commitment to encourage students to embrace and confront topical questions facing the modern world, the Centre also organises endowed yearly lectures. The Centre's staff works with myriad stakeholders to promote a greater awareness of the ways in which diversity brings value to economy, society and polity.

The Centre's mission stands in close alignment with [SMU's Vision 2025](#) ambitions, in nurturing the readiness of students to dialogue and interact with community, and to publicly address and engage with the pressing questions that confront humanity.

Find out more about the Centre by viewing the video [here](#).



Key Milestones of the Wee Kim Wee Centre

2000	Inception as the Centre for Cross-Cultural Studies at SMU
2002	Renamed as Wee Kim Wee Centre of SMU, after the late President Wee Kim Wee
2015	Tribute to the late “People’s President” for his 100th birthday and 15th anniversary celebration
2019	<p>WKWC partners SMU’s Office of Core Curriculum, overseeing the delivery of the revamped SMU Core Curriculum, which every SMU undergraduate student takes as part of their education journey</p> <p>WKWC organises the very first large-scale multidisciplinary lecture under the Core Curriculum <i>Big Questions</i> course, giving more than 1,000 SMU students the opportunity to engage with Harvard Business School Professor Michael I. Norton, who speaks on a topic related to “Happiness and Suffering”. This event is part of the Shaw Foundation Distinguished Faculty Lecture Series.</p> <p>WKWC launches the inaugural TY Lee Mindfulness Lecture Series, where US-based Dr Steven Hickman spoke to students about Mindfulness and Compassion in the new millennium and how ancient practices can meet modern challenges.</p> <p>WKWC launches the Ngee Ann Kongsi Lecture Series, where US-based Dr Sonu Bedi spoke to students about his interpretation of <i>Private Racism</i>, that justice is perceived as the government’s duty but in fact, should be beyond the state as justice is also the individual’s duty.</p>
2022	<p>WKWC becomes a key partner of SMU’s 7th School, the College of Integrative Studies</p> <p>WKWC commemorates its 20th anniversary with the opening of the Wee Kim Wee Room housed at SMU Administration Building, and the launch of the Wee Kim Wee Heritage Fund</p>

Fact Sheet – Key elements of the Wee Kim Wee Room at SMU

In conceptualising the Wee Kim Wee Room, the SMU team met with Dr Wee's family members to better understand how the former President and First Lady used the lounge, dining room and office in the apartment in Cavenagh Court for meetings and entertaining after the presidency.

A cosy, two-room floor plan was recreated, allowing visitors to step back in time and into the sanctum of the former Singapore President. The depth of the collection in the room, from framed paintings to the details of a miniature medicine case perched beside the office table, creates an environment that delivers an authentic slice of life, with visitors enjoying the feel of walking through Dr Wee's home.



The Wee Kim Wee Room at SMU Administration Building houses treasured belongings that have been generously entrusted by the Wee family to SMU. It aims to inspire visitors to learn about the values espoused by Dr Wee Kim Wee and Mrs Wee.

Among the many interesting artefacts in the Wee Kim Wee Room are a 1970s leather sofa set of eclectic blue, a cookbook of sought-after Peranakan recipes, along with numerous knick-knacks, files and personal items that give a glimpse into how Dr Wee and Mrs Wee lived and worked.

By adopting a warm and personal tone, the room and its contents invite visitors to reflect on the importance of respectful dialogue involving alternative perspectives, and always with compassion and humility - principles advocated by Dr Wee and Mrs Wee and the rich experiences of their lifetimes. Memorabilia which have been curated mindfully and placed within the room are embedded with QR codes that allow visitors to take a deeper dive into history by reading the narrative of each item and enhancing their learning experience.

The Wee Kim Wee Room will be made accessible to the public via scheduled tours, starting from early 2023.