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Preparing Students for the Future with Integrative Studies

- *Graced by Guest-of-Honour, Mr Chan Chun Sing, Minister for Education, the Education Leaders' Symposium convened 150 senior educators from more than 20 Singapore post-secondary institutions to discuss how integrative studies is changing the landscape of pre-university and higher education*
- *Integrative learning will prepare the next generation of self-directed talent, who will play a critical role in developing innovative solutions for the future needs of Singapore*

9 November 2022 (Wednesday), Singapore – [Singapore Management University \(SMU\)](#) today hosted the Education Leaders' Symposium with a theme of "Integrative Studies and the Future of Learning". The one-day event focused on equipping educators with a knowhow of adopting integrative methodology in their classrooms, to steer students towards integrative learning, a programme offered by SMU [College of Integrative Studies \(CIS\)](#).

The Symposium was graced by Guest-of-Honour Mr Chan Chun Sing, Minister for Education, who addressed the audience via a pre-recorded message. In his speech, Mr Chan congratulated SMU on the official launch of its CIS, an [incubator of interdisciplinary learning](#). The CIS is an integral element of [SMU Vision 2025](#), which identifies key priorities setting the University in line with the future needs of Singapore as well as Asia.

"Unlike graduates of conventional schools where there is a more predictable pathway, CIS graduates will chart their own path, and will be particularly well-placed to take up employment in the frontier roles of modern industries," said Professor Elvin Lim, Dean, College of Integrative Studies. Professor Lim delivered a keynote address at the Symposium themed "Redefining Specialisation for the Post-Industrial Age", where he discussed how the idea of "specialisation" needs to be redefined and updated for the modern age.

The Symposium also featured a panel discussion to uncover the composite skills that employers are looking for in tomorrow's talents, how the future of work for both the public and private sectors will evolve and what this means for the future of education and learning. Panellists included Mr Ong Tze Ch'in, 2 Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Sustainability and Environment; Mr Loh Wee Lee, CEO, Lazada Singapore and Associate Professor Lieven Demeester, Associate Provost (Teaching & Learning Innovation), SMU.

The Symposium served as an opportunity to elevate integrative studies to the top of the education agenda and to set the wheels in motion of taking interdisciplinary learning to the next level. As modern challenges increase in complexity, traditional "specialists" will need to reconfigure their skill-sets to become experts in more than one area to address such issues effectively. Educators are key to helping students respond to these demands by building the competencies to facilitate cross-disciplinary integration.

Against this backdrop, the CIS will prepare students for this new world through integrative learning. It will offer Singapore's first Individualised Major, and initiate its students into self-directed, and indeed lifelong learning.

Through its deeply interdisciplinary approach, the CIS will cultivate students who can connect ideas and perspectives across disciplines and adopt an integrative approach to reframing and addressing today's and tomorrow's challenges.

SMU Education Leaders' Symposium 2022

The concept of integrative learning, and its implications on the future of education and learning, was debated at length by panelists from the private and public sectors, at the SMU Education Leaders' Symposium, held at the SMU Yong Pung How School of Law.

More than 140 principals, senior educators and counsellors from 21 education institutions, including Singapore's junior colleges, polytechnics, IB and IP schools, attended the Symposium on 9 November 2022.

Organised by SMU Office of Admissions & Financial Assistance, the annual event is a unique opportunity for educators across Singapore's schools to share best practices in the delivery of transformative education, discuss the future direction of higher education and how best to prepare graduates to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

This year's Symposium featured a range of six breakout sessions that examined the scope of using an integrative lens in teaching, research and collaboration.

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Enclosures:

- Annex 1 – Profiles of students taking the CIS Individualised Second Major
- Annex 2 - [About SMU College of Integrative Studies \(CIS\)](#)

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

Annex 1: Profiles of students taking the CIS Individualised Second Major

Lauren Angelina KOEK Tsui Lyn 库克翠玲

Year 2, School of Information Systems, Singapore Management University 新大信息系统学院

Lauren is a 19-year-old Singaporean and currently a second-year Computing and Law student from SMU School of Computing and Information Systems.

She is majoring in Computing & Law, with a second major in Innovation & Psychology from the College of Integrative Studies.

Why Lauren chose the Individualised (Second) Major offered by CIS

“As someone who has dabbled in a myriad of different disciplines and topics in my pre-university days (medical law, mock trials, business case competitions, engineering competitions), I was at a loss for what to pursue in university. However, after entering SMU, I found out about CIS which gave me the opportunity to integrate my interests together while ensuring that it is applicable to the real world,” said Lauren.

About Lauren’s choice of Computing & Law, with a second major in Innovation & Psychology

“As a co-founder of an international youth organization, [Future Lawyers](#), my interest to be part of the startup ecosystem peaked. With so many disruptive startups changing our everyday routines, I wanted to learn more about the intricacies of ideating disruptive solutions and successfully executing them while leveraging the knowledge of human psychology. Further, given that my primary degree is in a newly emerging field, I believe that in order to penetrate the market, it is essential to have a better understanding of human psychology. That way, we can better encourage the uptake of technology within the law fraternity,” said Lauren.

Career aspirations

In 2019, at the age of 16, Lauren started a not-for-profit in Toronto with the goal of educating youth about the journey of a legal career.

“When I started the organisation, it was meant to only help students in Toronto. However, 3 years on, as opportunities arose, I managed to open chapters internationally in Singapore, the Canadian Atlantic, California, India and Australia. Further, through this experience, and with my sister graduating with a PhD in Neuroscience, we are looking at the possibility of joining forces and starting a venture together sometime in the future. I am very grateful for all the encouragement and support that my family has provided me with and am excited for what is to come,” said Lauren.

Kango Lee Zhen Xiong 李振雄

Year 2, School of Information Systems, Singapore Management University 新大信息系统学院

Kango is a 23-year-old Singaporean and currently a second-year Smart City Management and Technology (SMT) student from SMU School of Computing and Information Systems.

He is majoring in Smart City Management and Technology, with a second major in Sustainable Technologies from the College of Integrative Studies.

Why he chose the Individualised (Second) Major offered by CIS

“Entering SMU and my first major, Smart City Management and Technology, I had initially envisioned a larger focus on social sustainability. However, I realised that in the field of Information Systems, students must be trained rigorously to be technically competent, and there was little room for understanding and exploring the social side of sustainability.

Coming across the Individualised Second Major (ISM) program, I wanted to finally build upon the technical skills I received from my first major by learning more about human societies and their relationship with technology and the natural world.

Building my second major isn’t just a unique and personalised learning experience for me - it is also an empowering move for me to assume the responsibility for my own education, and for me to craft my curriculum to my passions and future career,” said Kango.

About Kango’s choice of a major in SMT, with a second major in Sustainable Technologies:

“As regions all around the world begin to urbanise rapidly, cities too, are developing rapidly to meet the needs of a fast-growing population. As with many other things, technology has been playing a huge part in transforming the systems of a city, which in turn transforms the way we live, love, play and eat. These systems, as wonderful as they are, are powerful – and as we all know, with great power comes great responsibility. As I have seen more of the world and the cities we live in, I have realized the importance of these systems and how much they influence our lives. They could allow us to thrive together as one planet, or they could turn against us and consume us from within. This is why I believe so strongly in the development of fair, equitable, and inclusive systems and technologies so that we could thrive and herald a new future not just for people – but also for our planet, and the beautifully diverse biodiversity we share it with,” said Kango.

Career aspirations

“After graduation, I want to work in the sustainability field, as a Smart Systems Analyst, Sustainable Solutions Designer, or Sustainability Consultant,” said Kango.

Annex 2: About [SMU College of Integrative Studies \(CIS\)](#)

Established in 2022, the College of Integrative Studies (CIS) is SMU's seventh School and plays a pivotal role in helping students traverse and integrate the disciplinary areas associated with the other SMU Schools – Accountancy, Business, Economics, Computing, Law and Social Sciences.

The CIS will take individualised learning to the next level and is a strategic element of the University's [Vision 2025](#) of growing impact and transforming education. The CIS is different in that it emphasises the importance of integrating ideas and perspectives across disciplines to derive new solutions in emerging areas, particularly those related to SMU's three priority areas of Digital Transformation, Growth in Asia, and Sustainable Living.

The CIS aims to nurture graduates who will confidently navigate the inter-related issues of a complex world, find solutions beyond a single discipline or traditional paradigm, and contribute to industry and society in meaningful ways.

- **What the College offers to students**

The CIS oversees the SMU Core Curriculum, and three undergraduate programmes: a deferred declaration of degree, an Individualised Major culminating in a Bachelors of Integrative Studies, and an Individualised Second Major. At the postgraduate level, the CIS offers two postgraduate programmes (a MPhil and a PhD) in Asian Urbanisms, taking a consciously interdisciplinary approach.

The College also houses the Wee Kim Wee Centre, and manages SMU's Residential Living and Learning initiatives, including the Prinsep Street Residences and its programmes.

- **The College's Deferred Declaration of Degree (D3) Programme**

The Deferred Declaration of Degree is a one-year introduction to the different degree programme that SMU has to offer. Students enjoy the flexibility to explore their intellectual interests and talents via Core Curriculum courses, as well as disciplinary courses from other SMU Schools.

Students will also participate in regular forums and discussions featuring industry leaders and alumni to better understand the latest trends across sectors, as they consider their degree interests and potential career choices.

By the end of their first year, students on the programme may apply to pursue the Individualised Major offered by the CIS, or any of the other SMU undergraduate programmes. The CIS will work closely with the Schools to pre-screen students during admissions to facilitate these deferred degree declarations.

- **The College's Individualised Major**

The CIS is the only institution in Singapore offering students an Individualised Major, allowing students to build a major from selections across the University's entire suite of courses. There will be two tracks in this major - professional, and research. The professional track will be more immersed in industry topics and experience, while the research track will be more focussed on research and analysis and suited for students who wish to embark on a policy-making or

academic career. Each student will be assigned a faculty advisor, and, for those on the professional track, an industry mentor as well, to guide them in customising and designing their major according to their strengths as well as the evolving needs of industry and society.

Students will graduate with a Bachelor of Integrative Studies degree upon successful completion of the degree requirements, inclusive of the first year under the D3 programme. With this, CIS provides an avenue for students to configure their own unique path that is aligned with their educational background, current interests and future ambitions.

The Individualised Second Major offers students who are not in the Bachelor of Integrative Studies programme an opportunity to undertake an interdisciplinary secondary major. Students have the option of choosing either a professional or research track, just like with the Individualised Major. As per the Individualised Major, all students enrolled in the Individualised Second Major, regardless of track, will be assigned a faculty advisor. Together with their faculty advisors, students will draw up a study plan indicating the proposed title and theme of their major, and secure approval of their coursework and capstone project/dissertation topic.

- **Teaching faculty of the College**

The CIS faculty of around two dozen respected scholar-teachers come from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and are renown for cutting-edge interdisciplinary research. They include colleagues with expertise in computer science, economics, environmental science, history, geography, law, literature, and political science; many of whom work across disciplines and are experts in some of the biggest challenges and opportunities for Singapore and Asia's future. In time, the CIS anticipates an even more diverse faculty with interests that intersect with and complement the expertise of our faculty in SMU's six Schools.

- **The College's first student intake**

The CIS will welcome its first intake of up to 100 students in Academic Year 2023/24.

Existing SMU students who are keen on the CIS academic offerings may apply to enrol in the Individualised Second Major, where they can design a second major to complement or supplement their primary degree. The first cohort of students on the second major have started their programmes in AY2022/23.
