Address by SMU Chairman Mr Ho Kwon Ping
to welcome

US Secretary of State John Kerry

Mochtar Riady Auditorium,
4 August 2015, 2pm

Secretary of State of the United States of America, The Honourable John Forbes Kerry;

United States Ambassador to Singapore, The Honourable Kirk Wagar;

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

Faculty, Staff and Students;

It is my privilege today to welcome you to Singapore Management University. We are honoured to be co-hosting Secretary Kerry’s visit together with the US Embassy, American Chamber of Commerce and the US Asean Business Council.

Nearly three years ago, in November 2012, Secretary Kerry’s predecessor, Mrs Hillary Rodham Clinton, also spoke in this very same auditorium. SMU is proud to serve as a thought leadership platform for top US policy makers, like our Guest of Honour Secretary Kerry, as he delivers a major speech on America and the Asia Pacific.

Secretary Kerry is a multi-faceted man. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Yale University, where he majored in political science; and a Juris Doctor degree from Boston College Law School. At university, he was very active in both sporting and intellectual co-curricular activities.
He is a man of proven bravery who was decorated with several medals for distinguished service in the Vietnam War. He is a man of profound conscience, who vociferously opposed the war after his return, yet fought for the rights of returning veterans. He was a co-founder of Vietnam Veterans of America and continued this cause as a Senator.

After receiving his law degree in 1976, Secretary Kerry worked as a prosecutor in Massachusetts, and six years later was elected Lieutenant Governor of the same state. Two years afterwards, he was elected to the United States Senate where he served for 28 years.

In 2009, Secretary Kerry became Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, capping an almost three-decade role in shaping key foreign policy and national security issues facing the United States. In 2013 he became the first sitting Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman to become Secretary of State in over a century.

Secretary Kerry was also the Democratic Party's nominee for President of the United States in 2004, and the author of best-selling books, including *A Call to Service: My Vision for a Better America* and *This Moment on Earth*, a book on the environment which he co-authored with his wife, Teresa Heinz Kerry.

We can learn many lessons from his life and achievements, especially for our students here today. It is a great privilege to have Secretary Kerry here today to share his thoughts and insights.
Founded at the start of the new millennium with its first student intake in the year 2000, Singapore Management University is the first university in Singapore to be modelled after an American system with a broad-based education. The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania was the key collaborator in curriculum and course design. Carnegie Mellon is now another important academic partner.

Our roughly 8,000 students now get to choose from some 15 double degrees and over 40 second majors from six schools at the undergraduate level, and from more than 20 degree programmes at the graduate level. Almost three-quarters of our students graduate with either a double degree or a second major.

We also encourage them to become socially responsible and ethically aware citizens. Students take ethics as a core module and serve compulsory community service. More than 250 years of collective community service have been chalked up by our students since our founding only 15 years ago.

With the world as their hinterland, almost ninety percent of each graduating cohort has gone overseas for a variety of SMU programs.

For our 300-plus faculty members, of paramount interest is high-impact cross-disciplinary research that addresses Asian issues with global relevance. They collaborate with international researchers from some 220 leading universities around the world, with 20 per cent of them based in the US. Sixty per cent of our faculty hold degrees from US institutions – including from Secretary Kerry’s alma maters Yale University and Boston College.
I am also delighted that US Ambassador Kirk Wagar will be share some of his thoughts with us.

Many of you, I am sure, already know Ambassador Wagar and his lovely wife Crystal. In less than two years, they have befriended more Singaporeans than several of their predecessors combined. Kirk is a good friend of SMU and has, among other things, appeared on Channel NewsAsia’s Perspectives televised panel discussion, for which SMU was the knowledge partner. Among his many contributions to promoting art and literature in Singapore, he also supported the American Writer’s Festival, which SMU co-hosted.

Please join me in giving a warm welcome to Ambassador Wagar.