SMU

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News

New SMU graduates conferred degrees

By Lai Ching Xuan

The new SMU graduates were conferred their degrees at a commencement ceremony held yesterday. The ceremony was attended by university president Prof. David Judson and provost Prof. Robert G. Engstrom.

Prof. Judson said that the university had made significant progress in its first four years. He congratulated the graduates on their achievements and wished them success in their future endeavors. "We are proud of what you have accomplished," he said. "May your future be filled with happiness and success.""
Yong Pung How and Lee Seng Gee awarded honorary degrees

Former Chief Justice Mr Yong Pung How and philanthropist Dr Lee Seng Gee have been awarded honorary degrees by SMU. This is first time that SMU is conferring its highest academic degree since the university started.

Former Finance Minister Dr Richard Hu conferred the degree on Mr Yong in his capacity as Chancellor of SMU. Dr Lee was unable to be at the ceremony due to health reasons. Instead, he was conferred the honorary degree at a separate ceremony in his home the day before.

SMU Chairman Mr Ho Kwon Ping said that the honorary degrees were the highest awards given by a university to outstanding individuals. Their contributions and achievements in society reflected the university's vision, inspire and provide leadership to students.

Mr Ho described Mr Yong as a pragmatic yet visionary former Chief Justice who instituted major reforms to the legal system and applied his corporate experience in making impactful judicial judgments.

Mr Ho added that the honorary degree was to recognize not only Mr Yong's past achievements but also his continued leadership of the SMU School of Law as advisory board chairman.

Dr Lee Seng Gee is the son of the late Dr Lee Kong Chian and also the chairman of the Lee Foundation. Mr Ho recited Dr Lee's thank you speech at his private residence the day before.

Dr Lee had said: “Due to my stroke, I am not able to be with the graduates at the commencement ceremony on 14th July. However, I take this opportunity to congratulate all who are graduating on this happy occasion, and say to you: embrace lifelong learning, be prepared to always learn new things with a global outlook, and give back to society when the time is ripe for you to do so.”

Mr Yong encouraged all SMU graduates to pursue their dreams and passions but it was more important that they chose a career that interested them and provided them with satisfaction.

He said: “You should not pursue only what is trendy or lucrative because this may not be your cup of tea or what you are good at ultimately.”

He also advised SMU graduates who were already working to adapt to their environment and not expect the environment to adapt to them. He also hoped that graduates would give their best to their job and seize all opportunities.

There are 860 SMU graduates and this is the largest cohort of graduate the university has produced. SMU President Professor Howard Hunter announced that the university had achieved $200,000 for its Alumni Scholarship Fund and would be able to fund one scholarship for a needy student every year.
She gave up overseas studies for her younger siblings

Four years ago, Alvina Teh gave up a scholarship to do her university studies overseas. The reason was she could not bear to leave her five younger siblings.

Today, she never looked back or regretted her decision – being awarded Valedictorian among 860 SMU graduates.

Alvina comes from a large family with a total of eight brothers and sisters. She is ranked number four in the family. When she had to decide on an overseas education years ago, she saw how little her siblings were and she could not bear to leave them.

"I do not wish to miss out on the chance to see them grow up. Hence, I decided to stay put. I had thought that was a sacrifice but it turned out to be a blessing instead. I lost nothing but instead could enjoy a world class education and wonderful family life," said Alvina.

A business management graduate, Alvina spent a very colourful four years in SMU. Not only did she have the chance to do participate in a dialogue with Minister Mentor Mr Lee Kuan Yew and Mr George Soros, she also did a four-month exchange in prestigious Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

She was also very active in entertainment and broadcasting activities, helping to set up the campus radio station and campus TV. Last year, she was one of 10 young men and women to be selected to take part in a TV forum with MM Lee.

Alvina loved reading. She started a ReadSMU campaign on campus to encourage fellow classmates to read beyond their curriculum materials. She also found her job through her love for books. Three years ago, she, her sister and her brother set up a publishing company. Instead of seeking employment in the high-paying corporate sector, she decided to be involved in her family business.

Her brother, Mr Trevor Teh (26 years old) also graduated together with Alvina and both donned the graduation gowns together.

Trevor said: "Large families like ours are very rare these days. Through the conflicts here and there, we learnt to be more united."

Living together with all her other siblings, Alvina said: "My family is the one I can trust the most. When I have my own family in future, I will also want to maintain such close ties."