

## Salutatorian Address



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The proverb goes, “Be humble for you are made of earth. Be noble for you are made of stars.”

SMU has helped me to discover the hidden stars in me. However, she humbly reminds me that just yesterday, I was still made of earth...

Many years ago, nobody would have thought that I would be standing here today. My parents are divorced and my mother shouldered most of the burdens of raising me. Being delinquent and rebellious as a youth, I hung out with street gangs and frequently got into trouble. I dropped out of two junior colleges and studied in two polytechnics before graduating from Singapore Polytechnic. Even then, with only mediocre grades. My mother's disappointed tears shall always haunt my adult memory...

Luckily, like many Singaporean boys, national service started me on a journey to become a better person. I chose to study at SMU because the university seemed kinder, and more interested in getting to know an applicant, rather than merely judging an individual solely based on “As”, “Bs” and “Cs”. Moreover, like many, I thought SMU seemed different. Four years on, I can confidently say that SMU is indeed different and it is her uniqueness that transformed me into who I am today. As such, I would like to take this opportunity to offer four reasons on why I think SMU is different.

1. Firstly, SMU is different because of my dean, Professor Steven Miller. Not only did he take a huge chance by admitting a young punk like me into the School of Information Systems (SIS), he was always there to guide and encourage me.

In fact, I remember there was even once, my teammates and I were working late in school on a Sunday night and Steve found us as he was leaving his office. Now, it was midnight on a Sunday and one would think that a loving and concerned dean would tell his students to go home. But, he did not! Instead, he told us to keep working hard and remember to tidy up the furniture when we were done. His brand of tough love would go on to prepare SIS students well for the real world. For that, we are eternally grateful. Thank you Steve!

2. The second reason that SMU is different is because of the School of Information Systems. SIS students have a reputation for being the hardest working in the whole SMU. While projects from other schools end with a presentation, SIS projects begin with one. SIS projects begin with a presentation and end only with the successful implementation of our proposed solutions.

Our dean likes to refer to us as “Business Change Commandos”, but among ourselves, we are less modest than that. We like to call ourselves the “don't eat, don't sleep, don't go home, work every night in school, terrors of SMU security guards in the night”. Thank you my fellow SIS students. It is because of you that our endless overnights in school have been colourful and never lonely. I shall forever miss those times. Then again, maybe not too much...

3. Thirdly, SMU is different because of our committed faculty and staff. Without them, this young punk would not have been able to fulfil his dream of embarking on two exchanges to the top universities in the US and the UK. It is because of their hard work and dedication that they made it administratively possible for me to be here today. For all the 11pm emails and behind-the-scenes help, I am deeply grateful. Thank you!

4. Above all, SMU is different because of our vibrant student life. To excel in SMU, one must balance school work with an active CCA participation. What knowledge the seminar rooms impart, CCAs convert them into life skills. Some might ask, with only 24 hours a day, how could SMU students cope with so much work? The answer lies that in SMU, it is not the smartest or the most hardworking who would excel. Instead, it is the ones who could learn to work well in teams and inspire their peers to perform beyond expectations. The most important lessons which I have learnt in SMU were taught to me by my peers, who were selfless in contributing to SMU student life.

Thank you, my teammates in the School of Information Systems Society. Despite my character flaws and inexperience, you stuck by me and taught me the real meaning of leadership.

Thank you, my colleagues in the Student Association Council. You taught me that only when we put aside our differences and focus on our shared goals, then could we start to achieve things.

Thank you, my friends in SMU Xtremists Outdoor Adventure Club. You guys taught me the importance of daring to dream.

Thank you, Peer Helpers, for teaching me to listen and to value everyone.

Last but not least, thank you, Levin Angsana, my SIS brother. Your passion to live life to the fullest will live forever in those who you have touched.

In short, SMU is different because of our people. It is each and every one of you that made SMU so special for me. And it is you who have shaped the person who I am today.

And so my classmates, as we embark on a new journey in our lives,

Let us never forget the lessons which SMU has taught us;

Let us never lose the friendship which we have forged;

Let us never fear what lies ahead.

Thank you mum for never giving up on me;

Thank you dad for travelling all the way from Malaysia to be here today;

Thank you sis for making sure that I always have a sandwich in my bag every morning;

Thank you, class of 2008. From Bukit Timah to City Campus, it has been my honour to have lived, loved and work hard along side you. I wish you all the best for the challenges that lie ahead.

I love SMU.

Thank you.