

Welcome, Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. Let me begin with an apology — an apology to our 15th S R Nathan Fellow, Professor Lily Kong. I'm afraid I've set a near-impossible task when I asked her to do this S R Nathan lecture series. I asked her to talk about the idea of the University. Actually, this idea has a very long history. The first book with that title was — of course — Cardinal Newman's "*The Idea of the University*" in 1875, and his vision was a liberal religious one. Later in the 19th century, we had the debates between T. H. Huxley — representing the then-nascent scientific spirit, and Matthew Arnold — the literary one. We had various rehearsals of the same argument, the same debate in the 20th century. One of the most famous being the one that was spawned by C. P. Snow's "*The Two Cultures*" in — I think — late 1950s, which spawned a furious response from the literary scholar F. R. Leavis. So, if anyone in Singapore is qualified to step into this ancient landmine, it is Professor Kong. She's a geographer by training but she's the president of what is now one of the world's premier management schools. She's a humanist and a social scientist who has done more than most to bridge the two cultures that Snow alluded to.
2. Her lecture series is titled "*Universities Reinvented*". That's her way of getting around the idea of the university. You have to reinvent it — shaping legacy and impact for the new world. In her first lecture today, titled "*Through the Looking Glass*" — as you've heard — Prof Kong will take us through the historical journey of universities, exploring how they have transformed to reflect changing societal contexts, political power, and economic demands. She will examine whether universities today have lost their way and invite us to consider how they can be reinvented to remain relevant in today's world. In a second lecture, which is to be delivered on the 4th November, titled "*At the Crossroads: Universities for the 100-Year Life*", she will address the evolving role of universities in the context of an increasingly long human lifespan, which she says hopefully a hundred years. Finally in a third lecture on 27th November — titled "*Beyond the Ivory Tower*", she will examine the

responsibilities of the universities to society today — what would be the modern balance between “town and gown”, so to speak.

3. I would like to thank Professor Tan Tai Yong, President of the Singapore University of Social Sciences and the 6th S R Nathan Fellow, for moderating today's Q&A.
4. The S R Nathan Fellowship for the Study of Singapore was established in 2014 in honour of our longest-serving President, the late Mr S R Nathan. It's been 10 years and I'm most grateful to the string of our distinguished fellows for establishing the prestige of this series — from Ho Kwon Ping to Tan Chong Meng, from Chan Heng Chee to Joseph Liow, from Tan Tai Yong to Wang Gung Wu, who is also here.
5. And now, Singapore's 21st-century answer to the 19th-century Cardinal Newman, Professor Lily Kong, President of SMU.