



## PROVOST'S MESSAGE



Dear Students

I hope you are keeping well as we enter the extended phase of the circuit breaker this week. As we stay home in support of Singapore's measures to break the chains of COVID-19 transmission, I encourage you to stay healthy, resilient and positive. Consider taking this downtime to enrich yourselves with new experiences and reconnect with your loved ones at home.

Even as we press on, diverse groups are being impacted by the evolving COVID-19 situation in Singapore. We recognise that there are students in our community who are facing financial hardship - some have family members whose livelihoods have been affected, some students themselves may have lost their part-time income.

In these challenging times, the well-being of our students remains our utmost priority. To help those undergraduate students who are facing financial hardship because of the pandemic, the University has set up a \$2.5 million **SMU Resilience Fund**. The Fund comprises three components - **SMU CARES** (comprising funds from the University's own resources), **SMU GIVES** (made up of contributions from the SMU Community), and **SMU HELPS** (assistance supported by donors).

### **SMU CARES**

As a relief to undergraduates in need of financial help during this difficult period, SMU has established the **Undergraduate Supplementary Assistance Plan** to help undergraduates whose gross monthly household per capita income does not exceed \$500 and whose family members' livelihoods are being affected by the COVID-19 outbreak. The Plan aims to assist up to 1,000 undergraduates with a one-off \$500 grant each. Repayment is not required for this grant, and it may be given in addition to regular scholarship, bursaries and/or study awards. More details can be found [here](#).

The **Global Exposure Contingency Fund** (renamed from SMU Financial Assistance Scheme) was set up in early April 2020 to help defray the financial costs of those students who were affected due to the cancellation of overseas programmes and the recall to Singapore. University funds have been set aside to help students who are unable to recover expenses associated with air tickets, accommodation, local transport, mobile/data plans, visa/entry fees associated with the recall/cancellation, as well as to cover alternative accommodation for serving Stay Home Notice requirements in Singapore. More details can be found [here](#).

## **SMU GIVES**

As SMU stands in solidarity in our response to COVID-19, SMU GIVES is a platform that allows our faculty, staff and alumni to contribute to the SMU Resilience Fund through various ongoing and forthcoming initiatives. Funds collected will primarily be channelled into bursaries for full-time undergraduates from financially challenged families at SMU, and an emergency fund available to postgraduates in need of immediate assistance.

Fund-raising efforts among our faculty and staff are on-going. I am very heartened that many of our alumni have also been enthusiastically offering their support in a variety of ways.

The Alumni Committee for the SMU Alumni Community Fund has allocated a sum of \$168,000 since the start of the outbreak to support undergraduates impacted by the pandemic, and this amount continues to grow. In addition to actively approaching employers to facilitate permanent and contract employment opportunities, the Dato' Kho Hui Meng Career Centre is also reaching out to our alumni on offering traineeship and employment. We hope to make the opportunities available to you soon.

We are now looking to boost further contributions from our Community and will be launching several initiatives in the coming weeks and months to help our undergraduates. They include:

- Launch of **SMU Imagine Better coffee-table book** on 30 May. The book celebrates more than 100 alumni who have made a difference through their work or personal/social causes. With a minimum donation of S\$50, donors will receive a limited edition of the book.
- **SMOO Challenge**, to be launched on 1 July, will bring the SMU community together as 'One SMU' through a virtual race on a platform powered by one of our alumni businesses, while doing good at the same time.
- **The Wishing Tree** project, which anchors on the Bodhi Tree standing on SMU's Campus Green and representing respect for our past and a yearning for a better

future, will be launched on 1 July. A virtual Wishing Tree will come alive for members of the SMU Community to pen well wishes and kind thoughts to the University and to each other, as well as to contribute to bursaries to support financially challenged students in their educational pursuits.

## **SMU HELPS**

As part of the broader Imagine Better Giving Campaign led by the Office of Advancement, SMU HELPS demonstrates putting 'imagination to action' by leveraging new and existing gifts from our donors to support COVID-19 responses. The continued support of donors will further boost the range of financial assistance available to affected students.

Existing **Emergency Grants** are readily accessible to undergraduates in need of urgent financial aid. Ranging from \$500 to \$5,000 each, affected students can apply for these grants, made possible by contributions from the University's donors. They include: [Collaboration \(同心清誠\) Special Grant](#); [Dr Ernest Kan Care Grant](#); [Joe Grimberg Emergency Grant](#); [Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple Emergency Grant](#); [Mr & Mrs Kho Man Kai Emergency Grant](#); [SMU School of Accountancy Care Fund](#); [SMU Student Life Financial Grant](#), and [LKCSB Students' Fund Emergency Grant](#).

SMU Law Academy has also launched a **COVID-19 Seminar Series** targeted at the legal profession, which will help raise funds to support law students who have been affected by the pandemic. The first webinar held on 30 April raised \$50,000 from the legal fraternity; two more webinars are scheduled to take place this month.

The University continues to pursue ongoing conversations with donors to provide additional financial aid in the coming months.

### A Collective Effort

With our collective effort and strong community spirit, I am certain we will be able to extend more help to more students.

The SMU Resilience Fund will work together with existing relief measures by the Government to provide some financial stability for affected students. Affected students can enquire with the Centre for Student Financial Assistance ([finasst@smu.edu.sg](mailto:finasst@smu.edu.sg)), and will be advised on the most suitable financial aid based on their circumstances and needs.

Once again, I would like to thank all our students for your patience and understanding during these challenging times. We remain committed to your well-being and safety. Please stay home and stay strong. I look forward to seeing all of you back on campus when the situation improves.

Kindest regards

Timothy Clark

