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Conceptualising SMU : The People and Ideas behind the SMU Story, Oral History Interview with Low Kee Yang (Excerpt with Audio)

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Singapore Management University

Li Ka Shing Library

Conceptualizing SMU: The People and Ideas behind the SMU Story

Interviewee: Low Kee Yang

Interviewer: Patricia Meyer

Date: 12 November 2010

Location: Singapore Management University, Li Ka Shing Library Recording Studio

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Patricia Meyer: I'm Pat Meyer, today I'll be speaking with Low Kee Yang, for the 'Conceptualizing SMU' oral history project. We're meeting in the recording studio of the Li Ka Shing Library at Singapore Management University. Today is Friday, the 12th of November, 2010. Today we'll be talking about your recollections and perspective on the formation in the early days of SMU and your role as deputy dean in the business school, and then your role in starting the law school. I'd like to start by just stepping back, and ask you to summarize your career before you were part of a third university effort.

Low Kee Yang: Right. Immediately before joining SMU [Singapore Management University] I was in NTU [Nanyang Technological University], in the Nanyang Business School. I was the head of the law division at Nanyang Technological University. So, that was just before joining SMU.

Patricia Meyer: In 1996 or 1997 there were changes in university education being discussed. How did you first become aware of these plans?

Low Kee Yang: There were talks of making a change in starting a new university. And the original plan was actually for NUS [National University of Singapore] and NTU both to close their business schools, and for business discipline to move to SMU. So SMU originally was supposed to be this big university with lots of management students, that was the original plan. And NTU was being brought in to help in this, in particular Tan Teck Meng who was the dean of the Nanyang Business School was asked to lead a team to help start SMU. And it was the initiative was from Dr. Tony Tan, then Deputy Prime Minister who had special interest in universities.

Patricia Meyer: Can you tell us about the seven 'I's and how they were incorporated in the SMU curriculum?

Low Kee Yang: Basically the seven 'I's came about because we were preparing to go out to give talks to prospective students, to junior colleges, et cetera. And I just thought that it'd be convenient to come up with something uniform, I mean. So we came up with seven 'I's. And the 'I's were, if I try to recall, one is international, alright, to tell the student that the environment that you're going to work in is very international, so your education has to give you some global perspective. Secondly, second 'I' is interdisciplinary, and your understanding of the world must be holistic, you must see how one area affects the other. So like in a company a CEO he has to know all aspects. He's got directors, department heads in about seven to ten areas and he must understand each of these. So university education that prepares one for the working world must be interdisciplinary. Alright, so that's the second 'I'. Another 'I' is IT savvy. This one everyone knows, computer, everything. You must know how to use a computer and the technological aids that are available out there, so that's another 'I'. I think another 'I' was integrity. We think integrity's important, because the value of a person lies primarily in integrity, and we hope somehow to inculcate that within our students. And then another 'I' was interpersonal relations, the

ability to work, relate well. EQ skills, alright, EQ skills developed through team work, through, we in fact have the core, a course called Leadership and Team Building within our core program. So that was another 'I'. And there were a few more, it came up to about seven, yeah. I thought it was a neat way of capturing some of the important aspects of university education. So we went out there with seven 'I's to, for the students, and also explained how each of these 'I's were being accomplished through the programme that we had for them.

Patricia Meyer: Were you also involved in developing what's known as the 'CIRCLE' values?

Low Kee Yang: Yes. There were 'CIRCLE' values which we discussed and before that were the other values that, the talent and friend things. We were discussing the corporate philosophy on students and staff. So, the earlier version used was the acronym of 'FRIEND' for a student. So 'FRIEND' is one focus we want the students to know what they want to accomplish in the university and in life. And responsible in the work, family, et cetera. To be intellectual, to cultivate that thinking ability. To be entrepreneurial, creative, enterprising. To be noble, to have values of integrity, honour, virtue. And to be dynamic, to adapt to and manage change. So 'FRIEND' was one possibility. Another alternative was 'FAMILY'. 'FAMILY' stands for friend, ambassador, manager, innovator, learner, youth. Alright, so that was another. So for students we, in the early days we used this values that the student as a friend. And in fact in our offer letters to faculty we told them that students are friends and as faculty you are 'TALENT'. 'TALENT' stands for teacher, academic, leader, expert, natural and team player. So this was what we came up with after brainstorming. I brainstormed with Yang Hoong, Kwong Sin and Kai Chong. So we came up with 'FRIEND' and 'TALENT'.

Patricia Meyer: And can you tell us a little bit more about how you, how you developed those core values?

Low Kee Yang: So I was more involved in the legal and incorporation aspects of SMU. Because it was, it was said that SMU was supposed to be private, which is very different, because at that time, NUS and NTU were not private, they were public. They were institutions incorporated by statute. And the intention at that time was to make SMU a private university, which was a new concept. So I was supposed to work together with people from Ministry of Education and the, I think it's the AGC, it's the government authority Attorney General's Chambers and our lawyers, and to come up with this creature, which is supposed to be so-called private university.

Patricia Meyer: Can you tell us more about what is the significance of having a private university? What does that mean?

Low Kee Yang: I think the intention was that this university would have a high degree of autonomy, and therefore would be free to decide how things should be done. An important aspect of this whole SMU project was that Dr. Tony Tan wanted SMU to be an experiment to try new

things, which if successful, would be applied to NUS and NTU. And so one aspect of this was having a private university. So, SMU was not incorporated by statute, although there's an SMU act. The Act simply describes some of the things that SMU does and gives SMU the right to confer degrees. But SMU was started by incorporating a company limited by guarantee. Alright, so, and in that format there're two trusted individuals who are the subscribers or the, members of the company. And then it's supposed to be run more like a company, having a board of directors, except we call it board of trustees. Alright. In comparison in NUS and NTU the advisory board, or whatever name they want to use for that body, is just supervisory and it doesn't meet that often. In contrast at SMU the board of trustees meets once a year for almost a full day, and then there's also sub-committees which meet about, twice a year or so. Therefore the involvement of the board of trustees is much more significant in this new model.

I would also add that we were modelled largely upon Wharton, and therefore there's a deliberate intention to move away from the traditional role model which is the British model, towards the American model. Alright, so, that was quite a switch in many ways. If I were to, you know, deviate a little bit, for example, this whole process of hiring faculty. In the old system, the dean or the head of department more or less decides. In the American system it's very different because the shortlisted applicants have to come for a job talk and present to the existing faculty. The existing faculty get to give their feedback and vote on it et cetera. So, the American model is much more collegiate whereas in the British model, the appointment holder has quite a lot of power, yeah. So, one thing to do was to do something private, another thing was to do something different, which is American. And American in several ways, one, the curriculum is supposed to be broad-based, not so specialist. Secondly, the pedagogy is supposed to be interactive, not lecture tutorials. And thirdly, the whole method of governance, university governance, is very different in the American model as compared to the British model.

Patricia Meyer:

Can you tell us about the logo for the new university?

Low Kee Yang:

By the way there's an earlier logo, I think very few people know about it. You can ask around, maybe nobody remembers it. There's an earlier logo, makeshift one for name card. It is three bars, each one with the word Singapore, Management, University. It's in corporate blue colour. I, at that time I said, that's the easiest thing to do. I have to try and find it somewhere. It's the first logo for SMU, just the three, three blocks – Singapore Management University.

Now, the logo that we have now, as usual we send out for tenders. And I, if I recall, there're about three to four tenders, people who came to present. So, and this group that finally won the tender, gave this logo that you see, but not this logo, you've got to take away the tangram pieces on one side; they only provided tangram pieces for one side, not the other side, so it's harder to see, and so...

Half of the face, only half of the, so-called the eyes, the lips et cetera, alright, because it's more stylish, but I remember that not many people in the meeting saw that design. Fortunately that this company that's tendering gave an alternative design, one of the

simple ones like Singapore Youth Festival, something like that, very standard in Singapore. And so they won the tender, and then in the process they swung us back to this one. But I think that the, the logo is very important. In fact I think that the logo plays quite an important part, but probably subliminal part of the success of SMU, especially amongst the young people. You just take a look at NUS logo, NTU logo, and then you look at SMU and you know what I mean. So I thought it was very smart because there's a lion which represents Singapore, there's the tangram pieces that represent management, and there's the eyebrow of the lion which represents intellect, or university. So it's a very clever design, simple, but quite profound. In fact after the presentation I told the group, I said, "It's excellent." I said, "I don't know whether you'll win," but I said, "It's excellent," yeah. So, yeah I think the logo is extremely good, and plays some part in helping students to identify and feel that they belong.

I might as well complete the picture because, you know, there's a lot of questions asking about why SMU is so successful and I would add that SMU exceeded everybody's expectations, including the people from the core team. And I think there're several reasons, one is that it was a new kind of education. So this American holistic curriculum was actually very attractive. The seminar style teaching et cetera was extremely important. The city location is also very important. And then, a lot of other things would include the governance, and all the various persons that have come along and played a part. In fact so many people played a part in SMU that it's so difficult to say who gave what. And it will keep on going, even after 10 years, 20 years.

Oh I would also add that the fact that we interview all shortlisted students is significant, because that expands on the criteria for admissions. In NUS the only people who get interviewed in the past was the medical students, but the SMU process of admissions includes a short-listing, includes the interviews which I think is very important, because what you can draw out of a person in a face-to-face interview is a lot more than what the paper can show, yeah. So I think that was a very good part of our system. But it's expensive; it's expensive because it takes faculty time, yeah. So over time, various schools evolved different ways of doing it. So for example, at first the interviews were two faculty to one student. And then it's now gone to variations, so like the law school, for law school we decided to have three students interviewed by two faculty. For business school I'm told that they even have like, eight students in a group being asked a case, et cetera. So there're various ways of doing it, but the point is that what you can draw out through interaction is a lot more than what you can see on paper. So I think that was a very good move on the part of SMU to have a more holistic assessment for admissions. And equally on the student assessment, course assessment, that is also holistic. So you have got typically class participation, presentations, and exam. And in the early days we set the rule, we said that almost all exams, exams generally must be open book exams, alright. If you want to make it closed, discuss with the associate dean.

Patricia Meyer: Can you also tell us about the first admissions exercise you're involved in, the very first exercise?

Low Kee Yang: I think the, the trying to bring in the first batch of students was very challenging, because you are coming up with a product that's not seen at all. You got no building, no track

record, and you're supposed to persuade these young people who've got choices, you know, to come to you. So we had to go and give talks et cetera, and to tell them about the distinctives of SMU. And yeah, and I think part of it is to believe in it yourself. You've got to believe in it then you can persuade them to believe in it. So you give quite a lot of talks, and I would say that the first batch was reasonably good, you know. There were those who were adventurous enough to join us, but there were those who preferred to play safe and they went to NUS and NTU. So it was a challenging task trying to get the first batch of students, but I think we did reasonably well.

Patricia Meyer: I just want to try to step through the various legal things that you were specifically involved with.

Low Kee Yang: Alright. So basically on the legal side of it you need to incorporate an institution or organisation, a bit like when you're doing a business, you know. So you got to get that set up, you got to get your internal constitutional documents done, which is, they call the memorandum and articles. Alright, that is on documentation side. More important is the legal side, it's whether the government is happy with the model that you're proposing. So they had to be comfortable with this model of having a so-called private university with some governmental representation but not control. So that's the tricky part, and so you have to decide the composition of board of trustees, who appoints how many et cetera, the degree to which they have freedom, things like that. Because the government is investing so much money in this it had to be satisfied that this will work and this will be desirable, in that the way it works will be desirable. So you have to put in place a structure that was satisfactory to the government.

Patricia Meyer: So there's the Companies Act that creates the company with the two members and the incorporation that follows?

Low Kee Yang: In our case the act did not incorporate SMU. In the case of NUS and NTU and all public bodies there's an act which brings it to pass. So it's called a statutory corporation. SMU was not such an institution. SMU was a company that was incorporated under the Companies Act. The SMU Act simply recognises SMU and gave it the right to award degrees. Whereas in the case of NUS and NTU the act brought the university into being. So SMU was not brought into being by a statute, SMU was registered as a company, in the Companies Act. And then the act, the SMU Act was to give SMU the power to award degrees. That's different from the previous model, yeah.

Patricia Meyer: Can you tell us about your appointment as deputy dean for the school of business and who made the appointment and when it happened?

Low Kee Yang: My colleague Tsui Kai Chong was asked by Janice Bellace to be dean, and so he asked me to help out as deputy dean. So I, so I naturally said yes, I mean, you're part of a core team to help and whatever is necessary. So I agreed to that. So I was assisting Kai Chong

in the biz [business] school for the initial three years, I think.

Patricia Meyer: And what did she represent in terms of what's different about how SMU does its admissions?

Low Kee Yang: We were trying to give people opportunities to show that they had the capability to do well in the university course, et cetera. And so maybe they don't conform with your traditional expectations of what is a good student. Alright, and so we were trying to see whether there were some other areas of talents or achievements, accomplishments that they had which showed you that they are different and they have something that's worth considering, alright. So we considered some of these cases based on, you know, special talents, et cetera. So in addition to this interview, which is very useful, there's also this whole idea of considering, you know, people who have some special talents. But then we did it differently from, and I guess we still do, from the way it's done in like, American colleges where you bring someone in because he plays football, basketball very well and they may never graduate but it doesn't matter. But in our case it's not, I mean, you take someone in you must be sure that the person will graduate, otherwise don't bring that person in. Yeah, so I think that is a different slant of the way we handle special talents.

Patricia Meyer: Can you tell us some of your memories from the very first days of classes?

Low Kee Yang: When we had our very first batch of students, I suggested to Kai Chong, I said, "Let's do something different." So what we did was that, I went to buy boxes of Fuji apples – red, juicy Fuji apples, and went into the first class and just gave each student an apple. So we did that for our first batch, the first class of the first batch. So every one of them – if they can recall – received a nice, juicy, red apple. We wanted to do that because it's special, you know. So I think they might remember that.

And another very memorable thing – I don't know whether anyone has mentioned – I think at that time our students were starting their second year. NUS Business School sent us an invitation to have our students participate in their case competition. We were a bit apprehensive because we had our students in the beginning of second year. Nevertheless we sent a team. And then, so the competition was held. And the day after the competition there was a blackout on the news, because SMU won. (some laughter) There were three teams from SMU [should be NUS], three teams from NTU and one from SMU. SMU won, you know. And the judges asked, "Hey, where did you get the students from?" And in fact I asked one of the students, the team members, I asked him, "So what did you all do?" And he told me, I think his name's Byron, I think he said, "Actually, we just doing it like we do it in class." So our seminar style teaching with the requirements of presentations and all that is actually extremely good. Apparently what our students did was that four of them, the four of them did simultaneous presentations, with PowerPoint but people interjecting back and forth. And that was so different, because the traditional one is that four of you, you know, each one stand, sit down, stand, sit down, yeah. So the SMU team just blew the judges away. It's very interesting to see that, you know, such a young university at that time could come up with something pretty good. And from time to time when I spoke to

parents, it's very interesting what they tell me. They say that just after a term at SMU they can see changes in their child, son or daughter. And they find that the son or daughter has become much more confident, much more eloquent, actually. And that's the refrain you hear from employers. I think it is the result of having to do presentations in your three to four years of studies. And it's quite challenging, and you can see it, because before the presentations, you can see the students pacing up and down, repeating, you know, rehearsing what they're going to say and all that. And so at the end of about four years, having done about 30 over presentations, with different combinations of people, you're very good at presenting, and also reasonably good at dealing with people in a team, some people are slackers and all sorts of things. So I think that the experience is very beneficial for our students.

Patricia Meyer: Did your teaching style change when you were at SMU?

Low Kee Yang: Just as much as you expect and desire the students to be quick minded and spontaneous the faculty themselves must be so. Yeah, so I think that definitely when someone joins SMU to teach at SMU he or she must be prepared to change. I would say that you must be very confident, you must not be camera shy and just take the questions as they come. So if you're spontaneous about it, it makes the class learning much more interesting, and that's important, yeah.

Patricia Meyer: What was the student reaction to this new type of teaching?

Low Kee Yang: I think that by and large and I don't think it has changed over the years, I found that the students who come to SMU actually are quite enthusiastic and they're prepared to speak up in class. So, I've always found SMU students to be engaging. I like teaching students at SMU, the atmosphere's lively, et cetera. But of course much depends on the instructor in making the subject come alive and yeah, it's not that easy. But by and large SMU has excellent teachers. In general at SMU the teaching rating is four out of five, and that's extremely high, because three is the average. I mean, in the scale of one to five three is average so four is very good, you know. So I think we have managed to get very good teachers or at least, you know, help teachers to become very good.

Patricia Meyer: How did that idea for a law school begin to take shape? How did that happen?

Low Kee Yang: I think that the first time this emerged was when we had a visitor by the name of Howard Hunter. Yeah, who became SMU's third president. So he had visited us in the early days. And I think he proposed a law school for SMU. That's because law is a discipline with so much substance, so many areas of specialisation, et cetera. So if you want to study law there's a lot that can, needs to be studied. So at NUS for example law was a four year programme. Yeah, so if you wanted to have a law degree you definitely needed a separate law school.

Patricia Meyer: What were the obstacles to creating a law school at SMU? What are the challenges?

Low Kee Yang: Challenges... In the first place the authorities must agree that you can start a law school. And typically if there was some attempt to start a law school, then the argument would be that, no, NUS law faculty is good enough. Alright. And in fact when we were proposing a law school the third time round, I say third time because I believe there was a second time where Andrew Pang who was then chair of law department proposed a law school, alright.

Patricia Meyer: There had been several proposals coming from SMU?

Low Kee Yang: Yes, that's right. I think the first one was by Howard Hunter, second one was Andrew Pang, and the third one was when I was department chair and I was asked to put a proposal. So, in a way, third time lucky I guess. So that was the third time we had proposed. We were asked to send in a proposal in October '05, we sent a proposal in November '05. And in July '06 we were given in-principle approval. And in January '07 it was announced that SMU would start a law school. And in August we began with our first batch. So it's pretty fast, so from the time we're asked to send in a proposal we sent it in, in a month. And about six months later, seven months later we were given in-principle approval. And another six months later it was finalised, yeah. And it was a very hectic period, very.

Patricia Meyer: Can you just tell us a little bit about the strategy for how to position the law school?

Low Kee Yang: When we were thinking about how to do the proposal, we had to come up with arguments which were compelling. So, as I recall it, we said that SMU should be permitted to start a law school for three reasons. First of all for diversity, alright, because we want to provide a different kind of university education. Secondly, for competition's sake, because it's not good to have a monopoly. And that argument was quite attractive because Singapore had not long before that, instituted the Competition Act, right. So it's in keeping with the flavour of the time. And the third reason I gave was that it's part of a national progression of the development of SMU. So these were the three reasons given, right.

And on diversity, you know, the idea was again to give holistic education. In NUS the law programme is very specialised, it's almost all, completely law that you study. We were proposing something pretty different. We actually proposed as much as 40 percent non-law; the final model accepted was 30 percent non-law, yeah. So in terms of diversity we wanted some different approach to legal education. Yeah, so, diversity, competition and natural development. I told my colleagues, I say, if I look at it the proposal is compelling enough, but whether we'll get it or not, it's about 50-50, yeah.

Patricia Meyer: What was the process for recruiting students? How did that go?

Low Kee Yang: Well, recruiting students again you've got to give the talk. We had to go to junior colleges to talk, alright, and that's quite challenging. So again you got to tell these prospective students what it is about SMU law which would be better than NUS law, or different, at least. And again that was not easy, because, you know, NUS was in existence for 50 years, you know, so we are new, we're totally new so, yeah, so we have to explain the distinctive. And the distinctives would be the holistic curriculum, because there's this significant portion of non-law which we believe is actually very important. And indeed it is, it is because when you graduate and go out and practise, you find that the learning curve is very steep. You're trying to advise your client on a particular thing, let's say a financial transaction. To properly structure it and document it you've got to understand the financial structure. So we were very sure that the context of law was very important. Yeah and that was one of the attractions of our programme. We also included compulsory law courses which NUS did not have as compulsory, but which we thought were important to give a law graduate the skills and knowledge to excel in practice.

Patricia Meyer: When SMU was getting started there was a close collaboration with Wharton. Was there any particular school that, as the law school was getting started that it was inspired by, or liaised with?

Low Kee Yang: Actually we just worked on our own. And you just reminded me of something. When we were planning our curriculum we came up with certain distinctives, distinctive features of our curriculum. And interestingly enough, a few weeks later, Harvard Law School, the Harvard Law School, announced changes to the curriculum. And they came up with three changes. Two of them were what we had included, and third one we were considering. So I thought it's not bad, that on our own effort we came up with a programme which included things that number one in US also thought were important.

Patricia Meyer: Can you tell us about the internships that the law school students take up?

Low Kee Yang: Alright. In keeping with SMU philosophy of having internships, I think as a preparation for work, SMU law students also have to go for internships. So they typically spend a period of time either with a law firm or as, with the legal department of a company, or even with the legal service, such as the courts, et cetera. So during this period of time they just get exposure to law. And the internship has been very valuable. From time to time when I meet lawyers I ask them, "So how do you find SMU students?" So actually I've got very good reports from them. They find our students to be very responsive, responsible. Yeah, so it is very valuable thing.

I just want to add something about the SMU programme. That one of the things that we made compulsory was the study mission, so every law student goes through a study mission. I mean, I think that study mission's a very valuable experience for SMU students, alright. You go to another country, you visit companies, listen to what the people from the profession industry, the government, and you do some project and report on something. So, we thought that the study mission is, was a very good thing. So that is one of the

compulsory aspects of SMU's law programme.

Patricia Meyer: What types of jobs do you see your graduates being able to take?

Low Kee Yang: We felt that the commercial practice was much more important. We felt that Singapore's growing as an international commercial centre, and that was where the demand was. So we thought what's more important was to train lawyers who could work in the region. Alright, so that was the primary focus. So we were not that interested in other areas of practice like conveyancing, family law, et cetera. We thought the most important was to service the international needs of Singapore.

Patricia Meyer: And can you just briefly comment on the new J.D. [Juris Doctor] programme that's started?

Low Kee Yang: I think it's the first J.D. programme in Singapore, yeah. Right. The J.D. we're now having our second batch of J.D. The J.D. programme, just to step back a bit, J.D. is the American concept whereby law is studied as a second degree. So you study another degree, and then you study law. J.D. was a natural thing to add to our programme. So because there're people who took a first degree in another discipline, and later on decided that they're very interested in law, including, in fact, many of our SMU students. Alright, so it was a natural thing to do, to offer this facility for people to switch into law, or maybe adding to their expertise, you know. Alright, so and it was not difficult to do, because we've got a programme that's 70% law 30% non-law. So basically, take out the 30% non-law and do the 70% law, so that essentially is the J.D. programme.

Patricia Meyer: I want to just look back now over the whole time that you've been associated with the new university effort. What do you see as the significant milestones for SMU?

Low Kee Yang: Before the start of SMU, I think the, I think the tie-up with Wharton was significant milestone, because we were trying to bring in American education into Singapore, so that's very important. Getting the approval for city campus was very significant as well. Being able to start in Evans Road was very important to us, to start in year 2000 that was extremely important. And after that the move to the city campus was a big move as well. And over the years so many things were added. You know, first with the accountancy school, economics school, social sciences, law, yeah. So there are so many milestones...yeah. So I think there'll be more milestones along the way, yeah.

Patricia Meyer: How do you see SMU contributing to development or changes in tertiary education in Singapore?

Low Kee Yang: I think it's very important for Singapore's university scene because for one thing, if I take

Yang: an example, faculty recruitment. This whole idea of a job talk is extremely important and it's taken on, you know, adopted in NUS and NTU, which is a very good thing, because I think it makes sense that for academics, they should have a say as to who joins them. So I think it's a very important change. And then other aspects like interviews. I think NUS and NTU are using interviews more, so and they're also more holistic in their admissions process. I believe that almost everything different we do, they take a look at it, right, and those things that they think are useful they will adopt and adapt. And that itself is a very positive thing for the university scene in Singapore, because now it's actually quite different from before.

Patricia Meyer: If you look ahead, what do you see as the challenges for SMU say, in the coming decades?

Low Kee Yang: I think one thing is to maintain quality, because it's difficult to start, but it's also difficult to sustain a successful thing. I mean, SMU has been very successful, so I do not take it for granted that success is a given. So we've got to continue working at what makes SMU distinctive. So for example like curriculum, you know, holistic curriculum. You got to look at it, and the university is looking at it now. So you got to look at the things that makes SMU different and good, and keep at that. And I suppose we also have to see how we should continue to grow in ways like postgraduate education, whether there's any other school to add to SMU, but that is constrained by the amount of resources. I'm talking about land resources, whether the government thinks that SMU should be allowed to start another school or two. Alright, so I think that, I mean, we've gone through the baby stages and now we're moving on. And we just have to built, build on what has taken on, taken place before. And I think it gets more difficult because it's more competitive. As NUS and NTU are aware of what we're doing, you know, it gets more competitive. And then you've got the new university, Singapore University of Design and Technology that also adds further competition. But on the whole, it's extremely good. It seems to have brought the Singapore legal scene to a higher level than before. So I think that viewed from many angles, the SMU development is an extremely good one for Singapore.

Patricia Meyer: And for you personally, how has being part of SMU changed you or affected you?

Low Kee Yang: I think it was very exciting to be involved in the start of a new university and to know the highs and lows you go through, because there will be and to see how an organisation changes. So, it was very exciting being involved in SMU, and also very exciting being involved in the start of the law school. So I think I was involved in a lot of university administration in my career. Too much, if you are thinking more in terms of your research and things like that. But it's inevitable that once you do administration, something else gives, yeah.

Patricia Meyer: Any advice for SMU students?

Low Kee
Yang:

I am actually very impressed by SMU students, and I see that our students are, in a way, they have some attributes that we our faculty do not have, because they have gone through this system which we didn't go through. So actually we don't realise it but they're actually quite different from us and in some area, some ways, better than us. I mean, I'm impressed by their degree of enterprise and the daring to do new things. I mean I meet some of my students during the long vacation in May, June. I talk to them after they've come back, and the typical student has gone to two different countries, to do attachment, to do community project, et cetera. And you know they are so plugged in to life and new things. And I'm also very impressed by the fact that many of them are considering business ventures, something that is not commonly seen in Singapore. So many of them, even fresh out of university, some before going out of university. I mean, I have a friend whose son is in the business school and he runs a limousine service. He's got this big limousine. (some laughter) And he's a business student in his, now I think, third year. That's quite incredible.

My advice to SMU students is to just do more of what they've been doing. I also know that their university life is very hectic. You know, the typical term schedule is very tight, you got presentations, you got assignments. And some of them, the day before the assignment they don't sleep. Alright, so it is hectic, it is stressful, but it is also very interesting to hear the response. I was just talking to a friend who's a lawyer and he told me that the daughter is in SMU's law school, second year. I asked, "How is it?" He said, "She says it's very good, it's very hectic but she loves it." So I am quite fascinated. It'll be good to analyse why on earth they like the SMU experience, yeah. And I believe that the education they go through in SMU is very valuable and it puts them in very good stead to survive and to excel in the world out there.

End of Interview

Acronyms List

	Acronym	Definition
1.	SMU	Singapore Management University
2.	NTU	Nanyang Technological University
3.	NUS	National University of Singapore
4.	AGC	Attorney General's Chambers
5.	CEO	Chief Executive Officer
6.	DPM	Deputy Prime Minister
7.	MOE	Ministry of Education
8.	QAFU	Quality Assurance Framework for Universities
9.	US	United States
10.	JD	Juris Doctor
11.	EQ	Emotional Quotient