

Among the graduands yesterday were Madam Tio Guat Kuan (right), who graduated with a Master of Gerontology, and Ms Nur Riduan, who graduated top of her bachelor's degree programme in early childhood education with management. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO



SUSS to weave social impact into all courses

It will introduce a compulsory social science module for 13,000 part-time students

Amelia Teng

The Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) will expand its offerings in social sciences and weave elements of community and social impact into all its courses.

Singapore's sixth autonomous university will introduce a compulsory module on social sciences for its 13,000 part-time students in the next one to two years.

Speaking to the media at the university's first convocation ceremony yesterday, SUSS president Cheong Hee Kiat said that even students in programmes such as business and design will need to think about the social impact of what they are studying.

For instance, they could be asked to design a mobile phone for the poor or elderly, or consider the impact of trends in the finance industry – like the bitcoin currency and fintech, or financial technology – on segments of the population.

Addressing nearly 500 graduands from the schools of graduate studies and human development and social services, Prof Cheong said: "In the future, while technology, big data, smart urbanisation, (and) digital transformations make digital inroads into our work and lives, it is... how these will impact individuals and the community that will demand attention."

The graduands are part of the first batch of the 2,137-strong class of 2017 to be conferred SUSS degrees yesterday and today.

SUSS, previously known as SIM University, officially became an autonomous university in July. It provides an applied education approach that targets fresh school leavers and working adults with a focus on social sciences.

Speaker of Parliament Tan Chuan-Jin, who was the guest of honour at yesterday's ceremony, encouraged graduands to contribute to Singapore in both their personal and professional capacities.

"The social sector really represents an opportunity for us to participate as citizens, to be able to look beyond self, to give of ourselves to others," he said.

While the Government and organisations can work towards making volunteerism more accessible for people, "ultimately the last mile is walked by individuals", he added.

Madam Tio Guat Kuan, 53, was among those who graduated yesterday. The Master of Gerontology graduate spent close to 30 years in the finance and accounting industry before making the switch to be a volunteer in community work three years ago.

"Turning 50 was a trigger. As I got older, I became more introspective and I didn't want to let life pass by without doing anything meaningful," said the mother of three, who took up the SUSS course to learn more about the eldercare sector. She does work like befriending patients in a hospice and conducting home visits for seniors living alone.

Another graduate who found her life's calling is Ms Nur Riduan who graduated top of her bachelor's degree programme in early childhood education with management.

"As a pre-school teacher, we don't just sit in the office; we get to interact with the children... see their progress," said the 30-year-old senior teacher. The degree helped to boost her skills in areas such as leadership, communication and interpersonal relationships. She said: "I also learnt how to better tailor lessons to children in line with their development."

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CHANCE TO HELP OTHERS

The social sector really represents an opportunity for us to participate as citizens, to be able to look beyond self, to give of ourselves to others, and perhaps that's the way change is going to happen.



SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT TAN CHUAN-JIN, encouraging graduands to contribute to Singapore.

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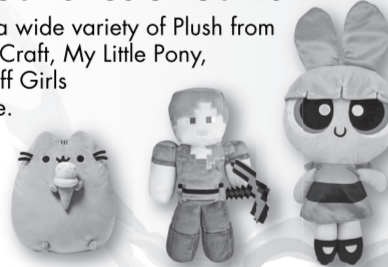
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