

**WELCOME REMARKS BY PROFESSOR CHEONG HEE KIAT, PRESIDENT, SINGAPORE UNIVERSITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES (SUSS), AT THE LEARNING ENTERPRISE ALLIANCE AWARD CEREMONY 2021 ON 19 NOV 2021, 7.10pm, AT FAIRMONT SINGAPORE**

Minister Chan Chun Sing, Minister of Education,

Mr. Tan Kok Yam, Chief Executive of SkillsFuture Singapore and Chairman of IAL Council,

Professor Lee Wing On, Executive Director of IAL,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- 1 Good evening! I am happy to join you for the Learning Enterprise Alliance Award Ceremony 2021. My heartiest congratulations to the awardees. Welcome aboard!
- 2 Let me begin with two observations that I gleaned from reading:
  - Barack Obama insisted on spending an hour reading every day when he was in the White House.
  - Warren Buffett dedicates his time to reading 500 pages per day.
- 3 It is not likely they have a lot of time on their hands. My strong hunch is: both believe that learning is the single best investment of their time. Indeed, in his 2019 interview with Yahoo Finance editor-in-chief, Warren Buffett explained that "By far the best investment you can make is in yourself." It is their learning that gives them the competitive edge.

**THE CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING (CET) LANDSCAPE AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

- 4 In Singapore, we believe likewise Lifelong learning is a critical lever to drive Singapore's progression and competitive edge. It supports Singapore in creating a workforce that is future-ready, which for some can be an existential matter.
- 5 SUSS is also doing its part in developing human capital, and providing learning and industry exposure opportunities for its graduates – we have been doing this for 16 years now. We help link our graduates with companies and organisations to secure jobs. In the

present uncertain economic climate, and to prepare graduates to be versatile and nimble, we have developed various measures to boost their competencies and employability.

- 6 For example, we launched the Venture Builder Programme and Intensive Gig Economy Workshop to equip graduates with an entrepreneurial mindset and skills to start their own businesses, instead of merely depending on job opportunities in the market.
- 7 We incentivise them to keep learning through our Alumni Continuing Education Plus (ACE+) scheme, and take on internships through our Resilience 2020 programme so they can take advantage of the recovery and growth of the job market.
- 8 And, we have rolled out compact applied learning modules which are stackable towards larger or more intense collections of skills and knowledge, and qualifications. With IAL, we will advance our andragogy and the application of the science of adult learning to make lifelong learning more effective and impactful.

## **POST PANDEMIC: THE ROLE OF ENTERPRISES IN CONTINUOUS EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

- 9 But, all of that is mostly at the individual level. Where are the enterprises in this whole endeavour? We must engage them. As our economy re-structures and businesses innovate and chase productivity, the demand for upskilling and re-skilling workers will also increase. Therefore, the workplace has to be a major site of learning, where employees are given opportunities to continuously develop themselves throughout their careers, and through life. And, the enterprises need to be enabled to do this well.
- 10 Though the term 'Workplace learning' may sound daunting, simply put, it is about enabling employees to learn while at work. All of us would have had some form of workplace learning at our jobs, unaware, unwittingly – it can be on-the-job training, coaching, mentoring, or learning from our colleagues during team meetings.
- 11 We need to raise its usefulness, increase its impact and organise it effectively, and ultimately, get it accepted as a norm for companies to grow. The fact is, through the Skillsfuture movement and these two years of disruption, many employees themselves have never been more ready to embrace learning, without being prodded.

12 According to two separate workplace learning reports by LinkedIn, 68% of employees prefer to learn at work – and 94% would stay with the organisation if leaders invested in helping them learn and grow.

13 Enterprises should seize the opportunity – they can do it on their own, but why not learn from one another instead?

## **THE VALUE OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING: COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AND SPEAKERS' SERIES**

14 To this end, the Learning Enterprise Alliance (LEA) is purposed, to get enterprises to form a Community of Practice (COP).

15 In the same way that individuals can benefit from CoPs, enterprises, too, can have two-way knowledge exchanges in the area of workplace learning and innovation, through initiatives such as enterprise sharing. To date, we have had about 80 enterprises in the LEA community. The goal is, in due course, a rich and sought-after culture of in-company training and innovation is fostered among the enterprises, not just in the LEA companies but in many other like-minded companies.

16 Tonight, two enterprises will be sharing their success story with us – examples of a CoP in practice that I expect you will benefit from.

17 Another IAL CoP initiative, the Speakers' Series, can similarly help facilitate collaborative learning, with business leaders and representatives sharing informative and inspirational success stories. I am pleased to share that the Centre for Workplace Learning and Performance at IAL will be hosting its first inaugural Speakers' Series session in the upcoming months.

18 The key takeaway that I would like to leave with you as I conclude is this: when we engage in a culture of collaborative learning, such as in LEA, it enables us to broaden our thinking and allows us to innovate solutions by tapping and improving on the ideas of others. This creates an endless cycle of improvement, and enables us to be future-proof and ready for challenges that come our way. For our workers, for our enterprises, for our society, for our country.

19 Thank you and I wish you joy in learning.