

# **Bridging academic with practice: SMU-X**

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The scale and complexity of challenges facing the world today are unprecedented. To meet the needs of the changing economy, it is paramount that universities identify and equip students with relevant work skills. A new pedagogy, SMU-X, is a paradigm shift that focuses on learning as opposed to teaching, characterized by four principles: experiential learning working on unresolved issues faced by an organization; interdisciplinary content; active student-mentoring by faculty and industry, and creating a tripartite learning loop between the faculty, student and partner.

Since 2015, SMU successfully ran 21 courses with about 100 industry partners. The positive impact of this trail-blazing pedagogy is apparent. Students rated them favourably: >80% of the students indicated that this approach enhanced their problem-solving, analytical, reasoning and communication skills - key cognitive competencies employers look for when hiring. Students also felt that SMU-X courses helped them better understand practical constraints that corporations faced and equipped them with both technical skills and soft skills such that they are more prepared for the working world. Partner organizations are also appreciative: DFS Group piloted a course with SMU in which they obtained a solution to a business problem and fresh perspectives and new ideas through the interaction with students. Marca Stella (a Small Medium Enterprise) implemented student recommendations which enhanced engagement on their social media channels and increased traffic to their website. Faculty benefits by learning real constraints to better inform theory as well as gained rich research insights from these partnerships.