

The ALUMNUS

issue #121 — APR-JUN 2020

"Being Singaporean, Asian and global puts the University in a particularly relevant position in today's interconnected world."

MS OVIDIA LIM-RAJARAM (ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES '89), CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER, NUS

A MAESTRO'S JOURNEY

MR KAHCHUN WONG
(MUSIC '11)

THE PAPER CHASE: WAS IT ALL WORTH IT?

ALUMNI DISCUSS
THE TRUE VALUE OF
A DEGREE TODAY

HOW NUS IS
PUTTING ITS
STAMP ACROSS
THE GLOBE,
WITH ONE EYE
FIXED ON
ASIA

'ROCKING THE BOAT' FOR GOOD

MS LYN LEE
(ARTS AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES '89)

THE GAMEPLAN FOR A GLOBAL UNIVERSITY



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in Singapore



Office of Alumni Relations

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(NC16)

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AWARD OF EXCELLENCE
Magazine, Journals & Tabloids – Design and Layout

AWARD OF EXCELLENCE
Magazine, Journals & Tabloids – Print +32pp



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BICENTENARIO
PERÚ 2021



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ALUMNUS

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DRIVING SINGAPORE'S EXCELLENCE IN AI

An NUS-based programme leads the way in the country's pursuit of innovation in this field.

SINGAPORE HAS BEEN HIGHLIGHTED AS A CENTRE of excellence in artificial intelligence (AI), with the NUS-based AI Singapore playing a key role in the Republic's strong standing in a recent industry report.

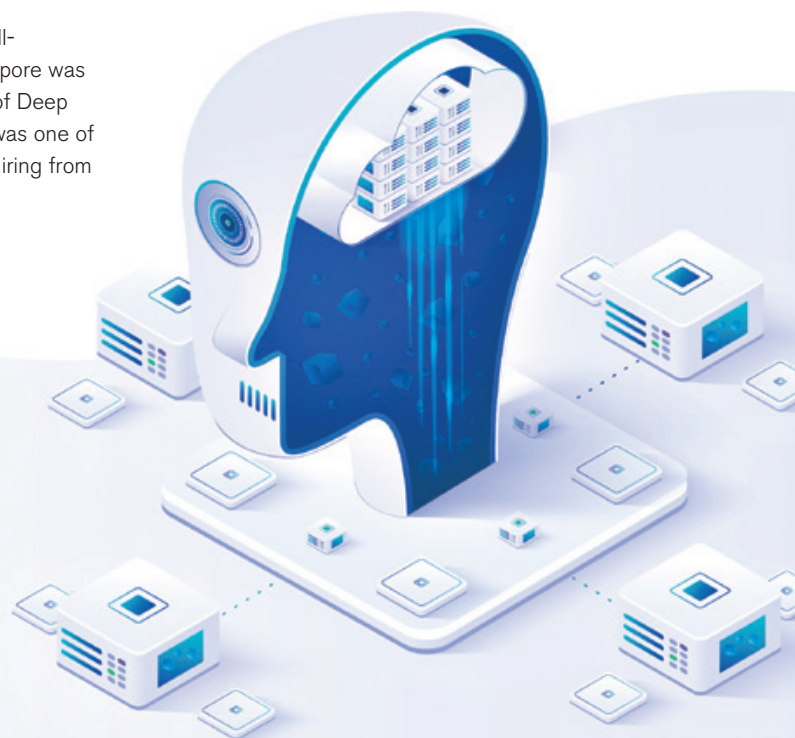
"AI Singapore is the national programme established in May 2017 to harness AI throughout the country," noted the *AI Index Report* by Stanford University's Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence Institute. "Today, AI Singapore is Singapore's premier national research and innovation programme in AI."

The report is published annually and consolidates data relating to AI across the world. It aims to provide accessible, unbiased and comprehensive data for policymakers, researchers, journalists, executives and the general public to develop a deeper understanding of the complex field of AI.

The report highlighted the increasing emergence of local centres of AI excellence, identifying Singapore as one of these, thanks to its well-organised government support for AI. Singapore was also featured for its relatively high number of Deep Learning papers published per capita, and was one of the countries with the fastest growth in AI hiring from 2015 to 2019.

Singapore was also recognised as one of the most competitive countries in AI proficiency. This is one of AI Singapore's core activities — equipping leaders, industry and the future workforce with the necessary AI competencies to enable them to be effective decision-makers, adopters and smart end-users of AI technologies — through the AI Apprenticeship, AI for Industry and AI for Everyone programmes.

AI Singapore's Executive Chairman is NUS Senior Deputy President and Provost Professor Ho Teck Hua (Engineering '85). It was launched in May 2017 by the Singapore government with \$150 million in funding to catalyse, synergise and boost Singapore's AI capabilities.



AI Singapore, based in NUS' i4.0 building (pictured), was a key factor in propelling Singapore into being named a centre of excellence in AI in the latest edition of the AI Index Report.



From left: NUS Bizad Charity Run Student Project Director Mr Darren Tan; NUSBSA Founding President Mr Yeo Keng Joon; Prof Tan, Mdm Halimah; NUS Business Dean Distinguished Professor Andrew Rose; and NUS Bizad Charity Run Chairman and NUSBSA Vice President Mr Chua Hung Meng cutting a cake to mark the start of the NUS115 celebrations.

SHAPING THE FUTURE

NUS flags off its 115th anniversary celebrations at the Bizad Charity Run event.

THE UNIVERSITY LAUNCHED NUS115 — a year-long celebration of its 115th year of its founding — on 11 January, in conjunction with the annual NUS Bizad Charity Run. The event was graced by Singapore President and NUS Chancellor Mdm Halimah Yacob (Law '78).

"One hundred and fifteen years ago, NUS was founded by the community, for the community. One hundred and fifteen years on, we will continue to embody that indomitable spirit of giving and tradition of excellence in all that we do, as we seek to serve society and innovate for a brighter future for Singapore and beyond," said NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85).

Themed "Shaping the Future", NUS115 celebrates the University's transformative impact over 115 years and its continual efforts in shaping the future for a better world. A series of signature events and initiatives have been planned throughout 2020 to mark this special milestone, including the NUS115 Distinguished Speaker Series. The quarterly event will see compelling speakers sharing their unique perspectives on pressing issues of the future with the NUS community.

2020 also marks a significant year for the NUS Bizad Charity Run, which is in its 10th edition, and its

organiser, the NUS Business School Alumni Association (NUSBSA), which celebrates its 20th anniversary. To date, the NUS Bizad Charity Run has raised over \$1.7 million in support of a wide range of causes.

More than 1,300 participants took part in this year's run, which raised a record sum of over \$400,000 for TOUCH Community Services as well as financially-needy NUS Business students through the NUSBSA Bursary Fund; NUS Business Student Support Fund; Lim Chin Memorial Fund; and the NUS Malaysian Community Bursary Fund.



Participants of the 10km competitive run starting their race.

A LEGACY OF EXCELLENCE

Remembering the late Dr Yong Pung How:
A judicial leader, transformative benefactor
and great friend of NUS.

FORMER CHIEF JUSTICE OF SINGAPORE DR YONG PUNG HOW (LAW '01) passed away on 9 January 2020 at the age of 93.

Dr Yong, who received an Honorary Doctor of Laws from the University in 2001, was the Trustee of the Yong Loo Lin Trust and a strong supporter of NUS.

"NUS is deeply saddened by the passing of Dr Yong Pung How, a trusted friend and generous benefactor of the University. Dr Yong was an outstanding public servant and a man of many talents. As Singapore's former Chief Justice, he introduced sweeping reforms to reorganise and improve the judiciary, laying a strong foundation for a responsive and efficient judicial system that has served the nation and Singaporeans well," said NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85).

In his 16-year career as Singapore's top judge, Dr Yong's innovative legal reforms included streamlining procedures and harnessing technology.

Dr Yong began his legal career with Messrs Shook Lin & Bok in Kuala Lumpur, primarily in criminal work. He later became a senior partner, and under his leadership the firm expanded rapidly in corporate and commercial practice. In 1964, when Dr Yong was admitted to the Singapore Bar, he moved to the Republic and set up the Singapore branch of the firm.

"Dr Yong Pung How was a towering figure in the law. Respected as Chief Justice — and occasionally feared — the sweeping reforms that he introduced helped establish Singapore's reputation as a legal hub with a world-class judiciary. His legacy includes the enduring respect for the rule of law within Singapore,



Dr Yong was a heavyweight in the legal arena and a strong supporter of NUS.

as well as the Republic's international standing as a fair, impartial, and efficient centre for dispute resolution," recounted Dean of NUS Law Professor Simon Chesterman.

"Dr Yong Pung How has left a legacy of public service in Singapore's legal and financial landscape that is both profound and far-reaching. Many of the nation's institutions now taken for granted have the form they do because of Dr Yong's engagement and contribution. At our School, the generosity and goodwill that his name attracted allowed us to set up an endowed Professorship in Dr Yong's honour, that we can continue to advance the teaching and research mission of the School," said Professor Danny Quah, Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. The School set up the endowed Professorship in 2008.

"As Trustee of the Yong Loo Lin Trust, Dr Yong was an ardent champion of education. The transformative gifts from the Trust to NUS have enabled the University to advance and deepen our teaching and research in areas including medicine, music, law and public policy, which are critical to the growth and development of the country. Singapore has lost an eminent Chief Justice, one who served the nation with great integrity and dedication. We send our deepest condolences to Mrs Yong and Ms Yong Ying-I. The NUS community mourns the loss of an illustrious alumnus," said NUS President Prof Tan.

This article was first published on 9 January in NUS News at news.nus.edu.sg/highlights/judicial-leader-transformative-benefactor-and-great-friend-memory-dr-yong-pung-how and has been edited for The AlumNUS.

Dr Yong Pung How has left a legacy of public service in Singapore's legal and financial landscape that is both profound and far-reaching.

Professor Danny Quah, Dean, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy



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NEGOTIATION QUOTIENT: OPENING THE DOOR TO A SUCCESSFUL DEAL

By Mr Anuj Jagannathan
(Business '16), Chairperson of
NUS Alumni San Francisco Chapter

The topic of negotiation is one of the most commonly-used skills in everyday life and is a critical skill for everybody to enhance. Anuj introduces the "The Balance of Negotiation" highlighting the three phases of negotiation – planning, engaging and closing – as well as the key behaviours and techniques that are essential to achieving a desirable end-result.



Available on [Amazon.com](#), [Amazon.in](#), [Walmart.com](#), [barnesandnoble.com](#) and [Flipkart.com](#).

Reach out to Anuj at anujjagannathan.com/contact for an author-signed copy.



LIFELONG LEARNERS HIGHLIGHT

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Klo'e Ng (Design and Environment '13), 29, Urban Planner and Entrepreneur, shares how an Entrepreneurial Marketing course gave her startups a leg up.

"I WAS LOOKING at the catalogue of offerings from NUS for lifelong learning when I came across the course on Entrepreneurial Marketing.

Having graduated from the School of Design and Environment, I had never taken any class related to entrepreneurship. And at that point (2017), I had co-founded two startups. I thought it was an opportune time to go back to school and receive some formal education on the topic, so that I could apply the lessons to my businesses.

The 13-week course was the same as the one offered to NUS Business School students, except it was conducted at night, which was perfect for my work schedule.

Currently, I'm into my third startup and some of the lessons,

such as market segmentation and strategic planning, turned out to be very useful. I also benefited from group work. All the students who took the course had varying degrees of entrepreneurial aspirations – we shared information about the different businesses we were working on and gave each other valuable feedback.

In this age of technological disruption, it's not enough to just be good at one thing, but the skill of learning and unlearning things quickly, as well as the ability to learn things across different domains and apply cross-domain knowledge, are important. As a separate bonus, lifelong learning helps to keep the mind active as we age."

➔ Visit scale.nus.edu.sg for lifelong learning programmes and news.



Ms Ng graduated from NUS with a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Real Estate in 2013 and a Master of Urban Planning in 2015.

FUTURE-READY WORKSHOPS

COLLABORATION – THE NEW BUZZWORD!



Mr Jasbir Singh
engaging the audience.



THIS BRAND NEW SERIES BY NUS ALUMNI RELATIONS in partnership with the Centre for Future-ready Graduates (CFG) aims to support young alumni in their career development amid a rapidly-changing world. The inaugural workshop on 14 January with speaker Mr Jasbir Singh, Head of Learning & Development at CFG, was an engaging session with 35 alumni in attendance. In addition to learning about multidisciplinary solutions as well as the tools and technologies that facilitate collaboration, attendees also got the chance to participate in interactive and stimulating collaborative activities.



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AROUND THE WORLD AND BACK AGAIN

Now counted among the world's top universities, NUS is contemplating its next move as a globally-oriented institution. The University has set its sights closer than you might think: on neighbouring Asian countries.

TEXT BY WANDA TAN



DID YOU KNOW? ↓

Every year, some **2,000 NUS STUDENTS** embark on the Student Exchange Programme and about **2,000 INCOMING STUDENTS** are also received from partner universities.

OVER THE PAST HALF-CENTURY, GLOBALISATION HAS HAD A PROFOUND POSITIVE IMPACT ON OUR LIVES. The free movement of people, goods and ideas across borders has

increased access to consumer products and services, technology, healthcare and education, lifting millions out of poverty and improving general living standards. Recent times, however, have seen globalisation come under fire as governments enact protectionist policies, the global wealth gap widens, and worries loom over the possibility of a financial crisis or epidemic spreading quickly around the world — as has come to pass with the COVID-19 outbreak.

Amid this turmoil, the higher education sector occupies a unique space. To ensure students receive a well-rounded education and are prepared for the workforce, universities are inherently global in nature (or at least aspire to be). This is evident in all aspects of the university experience, from the faculty and students who come from different countries and interact both on and off campus, to those who go on study, internship or research stints abroad, as well as the alumni diaspora who live and work all over the world.

Such is the case at NUS, which has adopted an ambitious Vision to become “a leading global university shaping the future”. But what exactly does this mean for a University that has long prided itself on being a globally-oriented institution? In today's contentious climate, where does NUS see itself in relation to the wider world and what role does it seek to play? The answer, as one might expect, is multifaceted.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO ASIA

There's no denying that NUS has achieved a lot on the world stage since the turn of the millennium under the past NUS Presidents, Professor Shih Choon Fong and Professor Tan Chorh Chuan (Medicine '83). The University further strengthened its education and research pillars and advanced enterprise, both at home and overseas. Collaborations such as Duke-NUS Medical School and Yale-NUS College were cemented. Curricular and co-curricular offerings were infused with a global perspective. And the international academic community steadily grew.

Now ranked among the top universities in Asia, NUS is highly spoken of on a global level. Mirroring Singapore's evolution as a ‘global city’, the University regularly attracts

IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES

international students and staff as well as world-class researchers. A milestone was reached in 2019 with the arrival of Nobel Prize-winning physicist Professor Sir Konstantin Novoselov at the NUS Department of Materials Science and Engineering, making him the first Nobel laureate to join a Singaporean university.

Pondering the question of “where to next?” for the University, its current President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85) tells *The AlumNUS* that to stay relevant, NUS' strategic plan should reflect the international scene. The University's Mission — “to educate, inspire and transform” — is focused on peoples and nations where it can have the biggest impact. Increasingly, that looks to be in Asia, particularly the developing countries of Southeast Asia.

Whichever way one spins it, global economic power is shifting to Asia. Fuelled by its large and growing population and its swelling middle class, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is projected to become the world's fourth-largest economy by 2030, behind the United States, China and the European Union. Management consulting firm



11th
WORLDWIDE

No. 1
IN ASIA



NUS' spot in the
Quacquarelli Symonds
(QS) World University
Rankings 2020
(tied with Nanyang
Technological
University)

The fact that NUS is a leading university situated in Asia gives us a unique vantage point. We want to see the region do well in the years ahead because that will bring greater opportunities to our community, and to Singapore.

Prof Tan Eng Chye, NUS President

Q&A
WITH

THE NUS PRESIDENT



What are your thoughts on the projected dominance of Asia?

Prof Tan: The “Asian Century” is well underway. This is a shift of immense economic, political and cultural significance not seen since the arrival of Western colonialism and the onset of industrialisation more than 200 years ago. Recent events, such as the US–China trade disputes and the ongoing COVID-19 health outbreak, have introduced near-term uncertainty, but the long-term trends remain robust.

What role can NUS play within this sphere?

Prof Tan: The fact that NUS is a leading university situated in Asia gives us a unique vantage point. We want to see the region do well in the years ahead because that will bring greater opportunities to our community, and to Singapore. Singapore's “brand value” as a dynamic, future-focused country, coupled with NUS' global reputation as an innovator and valued partner, has helped in entering new markets and building new partnerships.

How can NUS alumni support the University's initiatives in Asia?

Prof Tan: Adopt and practise lifelong learning. This could mean specifically learning about Southeast Asia and China, or more generally updating your skills and knowledge to put you in good stead when opportunities come along. The world is so interconnected now, that one good opportunity could easily lead to another. Alumni can also participate in our network of 19 Overseas Chapters, a good number of which are located in Asia; or share their knowledge and experiences, especially with the younger generation.

McKinsey forecasts that by 2040, Asia will generate more than 50 per cent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP) and account for 40 per cent of global consumption.

It is thus a very opportune moment to be in Singapore, at the crossroads of Asia and a central node within Southeast Asia. NUS is well-placed to serve in a leadership capacity and support the overall advancement of the region, as commented on by NUS' Chief Communications Officer Ms Ovidia Lim-Rajaram (Arts and Social Sciences '89): “A global university, to me, is about a whole-of-university approach, consciousness and culture. At NUS, there is a strong sense of self, of our national flagship role and rootedness in multicultural Singapore. Being Singaporean, Asian and global puts the University in a particularly relevant position in today's interconnected world.”

BROADENING HORIZONS

A smorgasbord of options is available to encourage NUS students to venture outside Singapore at some point during their undergraduate years. NUS faculties and schools offer joint degree programmes, where students alternate between studying at NUS and the partner university. The Centre for Future-ready Graduates (CFG) runs the NUS Global Internship Programme to help students gain valuable overseas work experience. NUS Enterprise's NUS Overseas Colleges (NOC) programme also allows entrepreneurial-minded students to serve as interns while taking classes at 11 different start-up hubs worldwide, including one within Southeast Asia (NOC SE Asia).

By far, NUS' largest and most established global programme is the Global Relations Office's (GRO) flagship Student Exchange Programme (SEP), with a network of more than 300 partner universities in over 40 countries. NUS undergraduates keen on spending a semester abroad can choose from any of these destinations, while reciprocally the University also welcomes students from foreign peer institutions to come to Singapore and study at NUS. GRO also offers shorter summer and winter programmes, international research attachments, as well as Study Trips for Engagement and EnRichment (STEER).

Through these initiatives, GRO hopes to nurture “future-ready, globally-adept graduates”, says its Associate Vice President, Professor Victor Shim (Engineering '82). It also complements the Singapore Government's target — as recently announced in the Budget 2020 speech — to give 70 per cent of local graduates from Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs) an overseas experience to build their cross-cultural skills, with most of the exposure to be in Southeast Asia, China or India. For NUS, Prof Tan reveals that the goal is to go one step further and give “100 per cent overseas exposure for our students”.

PACK YOUR BAGS!

Whether enhancing their academic knowledge, immersing themselves in the culture and lifestyle of another country, or simply making new friends, these ‘NUSers’ have great things to say about their overseas experiences.



“The summer programme was absolutely amazing and worthwhile. I experienced a side of Indonesia that tourists typically don't get to experience, and learned about the biggest economy in ASEAN.”

Mr Jeremy Koo (right), a final-year NUS Law student who attended a summer programme at Padjadjaran University, Indonesia



↑ “The programme allowed me to learn about the political climate of China in comparison to other countries, both from the local professors and through group discussions with my peers from around the world.” Ms Teo Hui Yuh (Science '19), who attended a summer programme at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China



“Having to live in a new environment alongside ‘exchangers’ from different parts of the world, I initially struggled to communicate with my peers. But by organising simple gatherings, speaking with emotions and even just smiling in each other's company, we gradually found ways to improve the way we conversed.”

Mr Tan Jun Hong (Arts and Social Sciences '19), who attended an SEP at Chulalongkorn University, Thailand

GRO is seeking to increase semester-long student exchange and short-term programmes in Asian destinations, and establishing funding schemes to encourage and enable NUS students to embark on them.

Prof Victor Shim, Associate Vice President, Global Relations Office, NUS

To align with NUS' strategic direction eastward, Prof Shim discloses that “GRO is seeking to increase semester-long student exchange and short-term programmes in Asian destinations, and establishing funding schemes to encourage and enable NUS students to embark on them.” For example:

- ➊ Seven summer programmes are being offered this year in partnership with the University of Indonesia, Airlangga University and Padjadjaran University (all in Indonesia), and with Mahidol University in Thailand. More summer programme destinations in Southeast Asia are in the pipeline.
- ➋ In January 2020, GRO launched the Southeast Asia Experience Award (SEA) and India Experience Award (IEA), which provide financial support to undergraduate students participating in summer or winter programmes in these countries.

- ➌ A new Service Leadership event will be introduced in August 2020 to the Temasek Foundation Leadership Enrichment and Regional Networking (TF-LEaRN) Programme @ NUS. Open to incoming and outgoing students, TF-LEaRN grooms the next generation of Asian leaders through cultural exchange, networking, community engagement and leadership development opportunities. The event will bring together TF-LEaRN scholars from all over Asia, as they hear and learn from prominent persons in Singapore who have left a positive impact on society.

Prof Shim acknowledges that some degree of mindset change is required on the part of students, to accord Asia a higher priority as a destination for an overseas educational experience. “Southeast Asia is often perceived as a region for tourism and leisure, hence not many students

consider it for academic pursuits. Many students still desire to go farther away, to places such as Europe or North America," he explains. "We need to help them appreciate that a stint in Southeast Asia, China or India can provide an equally rich and beneficial experience, as well as impact."

Getting Peer Advising Leaders (PALs) – NUS students who have returned from an SEP – to share their SEP journeys in Southeast Asia on platforms such as Instagram might help, says Prof Shim. Through their accounts of how the experience has benefited their personal and professional development, student awareness and interest in Southeast Asia will hopefully grow.

THE CULTURAL QUOTIENT

Although strongly encouraged, travelling abroad is not the only means by which NUS students can develop into global citizens – they can do so right here in Singapore. Knowledge and understanding of global issues is front and centre in many NUS curricula, from the Global Studies major offered by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, to the Master in International Affairs programme at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, to the 13 different languages taught at the Centre for Language Studies.

NUS' diverse student population – with its mix of local and international students – also provides plenty of opportunities for cross-cultural interactions and learning, and for deep friendships and social networks to form. Having a heterogeneous student body not only adds to the vibrancy of campus life, but creates a training ground where students can practise the skills necessary to get ahead in today's globalised workplace.

"Due to globalisation, employers increasingly expect talents to have an inclusive mindset and to be equipped with the cultural intelligence and competency to work with people across diverse backgrounds," says Ms Corrine Ong (Business '94), Deputy Director (Community Engagement) of the NUS Office of Student Affairs (OSA). "We adopt a multi-pronged approach to seed an inclusive mindset and culture among students through policies, training, programmes and funding, to foster intentional mixing of students across diverse backgrounds. This can be seen through residential living, classroom discussions, project groupwork and co-curricular activities (CCAs)."

Local and international students are free to mingle outside the classroom by joining CCAs which cater to all manner of interests, from performing arts and sports to faith and community service. One student club, NUS iCARE, specifically sets out to connect local and international students by organising cross-cultural appreciation events and social activities. Its SG Kaki Student Buddy Programme pairs incoming international students with local seniors to help them settle into their new surroundings. Cultural immersion programmes



Above and top: NUS iCARE student volunteers introducing international students to Singapore's unique culture during a 'Singlish & Food Hunt' event.

We adopt a multi-pronged approach to seed an inclusive mindset and culture among students through policies, training, programmes and funding, to foster intentional mixing of students across diverse backgrounds.

Ms Corrine Ong, Deputy Director (Community Engagement), Office of Student Affairs, NUS

and events, such as 'Singlish' workshops, food tours and the International Games Fiesta, provide further opportunities for interaction.

For local students who wish to go overseas for volunteer work, the Youth Expedition Project (YEP) provides such an outlet. YEP is a service-learning programme by the National Youth Council that involves communities in Asia, with a focus on ASEAN, China and India. Like-minded NUS students can, as a team, apply for funding to embark on their projects and thus make a difference in those communities.

STUDENTS FOR LIFE

Insofar as NUS is a public university and has a broad mandate to advance national development, the bulk of the University's undergraduate population is local. It has been reported that in all six of Singapore's public universities, foreign students comprise only about 10 per cent of total undergraduate intake. However, there is much more leeway for NUS to step up its global student recruitment efforts in the postgraduate space.

Below and bottom: Local students signing up for NUS iCARE's SG Kaki Student Buddy programme to befriend international students.



Professor Susanna Leong (Law '89), Vice Provost (Masters' Programmes and Lifelong Education) of NUS, elaborates: "Because of the national imperative to educate our people, our undergraduate population is mostly local. Our Master's programmes can therefore serve as a platform to attract international students and build a more diverse student population. Should some of them go on to become very influential or illustrious alumni, this will then extend our sphere of influence globally."

Considerable resources are being deployed to reach out to postgraduate candidates from Asia and all over the world. NUS staff attend overseas postgraduate fairs to meet prospective students, in addition to disseminating information through various social media platforms. "Singapore is known for its rigorous standards of education, and our NUS brand is very strong internationally. This should help us attract good students as we seek to get the best brains here," says Prof Leong.

It was certainly a pull factor for Mr Siddharth Krishnan, who left his home country of India in 2018 to take up the Master of Engineering programme at NUS. "The fact that NUS is one of the best universities globally with regard to intensive research was a big reason why I was interested to pursue my graduate studies here," he says. Currently finishing up his degree, the President of the NUS Graduate Students' Society hopes to stay on at NUS for his PhD and continue his research in Materials Science. Beyond the advanced Master's and PhD programmes traditionally offered by universities, a relatively new area that has emerged in the global higher education sector is lifelong learning. This concept arose out of the need for the workforce to continuously refresh and expand their skillsets in today's Fourth Industrial Revolution, where disruption is the norm and the half-life of skills is rapidly shrinking. In response to this trend, the University has unveiled a raft of lifelong learning initiatives in recent years, most notably its NUS Lifelong Learners (NUS L³) programme.

Launched in 2018, NUS L³ automatically enrolls present and future students for 20 years and grants seamless access to a comprehensive, curated catalogue of Continuing Education and Training (CET) courses. "We welcome students to come back to NUS any time after they have graduated, for as long as they need the University. We embrace them as students for life – not just for four years, but 20 years," says Prof Leong. The University has also rolled out a NUS CET500 programme for the general public, so that they, too, can acquire industry-relevant skills and stay competitive in the workplace.

JUMP-STARTING START-UPS

Many of NUS' newly-launched postgraduate programmes have something in common: they are focused squarely on innovation and entrepreneurship (I&E). In fact, a key priority for the University is to develop a bustling I&E ecosystem that spans across Southeast Asia, by fostering closer international collaboration among academia, governments and industries. Doing so will make it easier for entrepreneurially-inclined students, alumni and researchers to co-create and commercialise ideas and solutions, which could potentially benefit the entire ASEAN population of 650 million.

As Professor Freddy Boey (Engineering '87), Deputy President (Innovation & Enterprise) of NUS, previously said in an interview with *The AlumNUS*: "By enabling linkages between Singapore and Southeast Asia, and also with China, NUS can produce a high concentration of talented people moving around the region... We need to encourage Singaporeans to expand their companies overseas, as well as draw foreign talent to NUS and create



FINDING FACULTY

To cultivate global citizenship in students, their educators must be globally-minded as well. NUS utilises various measures to attract and develop such faculty, from providing grant schemes for aspiring and junior local academics, to tapping on the Returning Singaporean Scientists Scheme. International faculty members are also sought after, bringing greater diversity to the academic community. Among them is Professor Itty Abraham, Head of the NUS Department of Southeast Asian Studies. Having initially moved from the US in 2012 to take up a research fellowship at the NUS Asia Research Institute, Prof Abraham hopes the University-wide focus on Asia will persuade students to see the "large possibilities" the region has to offer: "Southeast Asia is a very exciting place to do research.

Especially in developing countries, things are constantly changing and new transformations are happening. We can see the future more clearly here and engage in forward-looking research, as opposed to historical research or looking backwards to explain what has happened."



an outpost for them here. That way, they can go back and use the technologies developed at NUS to transform their home countries."

Some recent moves that have been made in this area include:

- **Expansion of NOC SE Asia.** Launched in 2018, NOC SE Asia initially covered the Indonesian cities of Jakarta and Yogyakarta. It has since expanded to also include Bandung, Indonesia and Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.
- **Expansion of BLOCK71.** The eighth and newest member of this tech ecosystem builder and global connector is BLOCK71 Vietnam, which was set up last November. Other BLOCK71 facilities include three in Indonesia (Jakarta, Bandung and Yogyakarta); two in Suzhou, China; San Francisco, USA; and Singapore.
- **Launch of MSc in Venture Creation.** This immersive programme targets aspiring entrepreneurs from Southeast Asia by providing the guidance, skillsets and opportunities to transform ideas into viable businesses. The first cohort is set to commence in August 2020.
- **Opening up of NUS Graduate Research Innovation Programme (GRIP).** Launched in 2018, NUS GRIP enables NUS postgraduate students and researchers to start their own deep tech companies. A similar programme for business and tech executives (including NUS and non-NUS alumni) kicked off in February 2020.
- **Establishment of overseas research institutes.** NUS has set up three overseas research institutes to date in China (Suzhou, Tianjin and Guangzhou); a fourth, in Chongqing, is slated to open later this year. These institutes aim to accelerate research translation and build a regional R&D talent pipeline.

GLOBAL PROBLEMS REQUIRE GLOBAL SOLUTIONS

And that brings us to the current state of affairs where, as of the time of writing, the COVID-19 virus has spread to more than 80 countries. It has thrown things into disarray, and NUS has also been affected. Some student exchange and NOC programmes have been suspended. Lectures are being delivered online instead of on campus grounds. Mass events have been cancelled or postponed.

However, the NUS community is not sitting idly by. For example, Professor Paul Tambyah (Medicine '88) from the NUS Department of Medicine — and Senior Consultant at National University Hospital's Division of Infectious Diseases — is collaborating with

local universities and hospitals on a research project to determine how exactly the SARS-CoV-2 virus spreads in the environment. "Healthcare workers have chosen a career in taking care of people who are ill. They deserve the best protection for themselves, and the best way to protect them is to understand the science behind the virus so that the appropriate personal protective equipment can be used," says Prof Tambyah.

Elsewhere, NUS Executive MBA (Chinese) students, alumni and teachers banded together to raise funds for relief efforts in China. "In our globalised society, this is not just a severe challenge faced by our friends in China, but a grand challenge faced by the international society. Every one of us has a role to play. We should shoulder the responsibilities and obligations together to do what we can within our abilities to fight against the coronavirus," says Mr Sun Xiushun (EMBA-C '12), President of NUS Business School Mandarin Alumni. He is the President of Winning International Group, which donated RMB10 million to the cause.

Such solidarity is also shown at the very top by Prof Tan. Besides creating a \$500,000 Resilience Fund to cover staff and student expenses incurred by the outbreak, such as cancelled flights or return



flights home for SEP and NOC students, Prof Tan also penned a message of support to China alumni that was posted on various Chinese online and social media platforms in February. In his letter, he expressed concern for their wellbeing and revealed that NUS professors and senior staff had pooled together donations to set up a NUSupportsHubeiFund, with the money going to the Hubei branch of the Red Cross Society of China.

In good times and bad, then, the University is committed to maintaining a global outlook. Socio-political, economic and cultural headwinds will no doubt recur, but that is all the more reason why NUS should stay connected to the wider world — to do otherwise would mean turning its back on its own community, and passing up the chance to make a meaningful, positive impact. **A**



Above: Mr Ding (left) with fellow NOC Alumni members. Left: Mr Suwanto (standing, right) at an NUS EMBA Forum & Networking dinner in Jakarta in August 2019. Below: Mr Hai (third from right) with Prof Boey (fourth from right) and his team after the MOU signing ceremony for BLOCK71 Vietnam in November 2019.



OPENING NEW DOORS

Sometimes it's not what you know that matters, but who you know. That is the message shared by these three alumni who are, each in their own way, contributing to NUS' widening I&E ecosystem.

"I'd like our Chapter to be that helping hand that gives an edge to alumni growing their businesses, to professionals and civil servants hoping to advance their careers, to alumni expats wanting to make their stay in Indonesia more comfortable, to graduates finding jobs, and to NUS students looking for internships here."

Mr David Suwanto (Business '08), Chairperson of NUS Alumni Jakarta Chapter

"For years, I had wanted to have a proper, hassle-free platform to connect alumni and become a business and social community. Knowing that NUS owned a reputable start-up ecosystem brand name globally in BLOCK71, I supported the initiative from NUS and brought it to the right partner in Vietnam."

Mr Huynh Quang Hai (Business '99), Chairperson of NUS Business School Alumni Ho Chi Minh City Chapter, who facilitated the establishment of BLOCK71 Vietnam

"Within our 3,500-strong NOC alumni network, some have ventured into markets like Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam. They can serve as super-connectors for other NUS alumni, as they have already worked through the challenges. Their 'war stories' can inspire many aspiring entrepreneurs."

Mr David Ding (Engineering '10), Chairperson of NOC Alumni

➔ **MAKING THE GRADE**

There was a time when a university degree guaranteed career and social advancement. But with today's changing socio-economic realities, there appear to be other paths to success. Is it time to 're-qualify' the value of qualifications — especially with rising graduate numbers — or do age-old beliefs about the power of academic credentials still hold true?

THE PAPER CHASE:**WAS IT ALL WORTH IT?**

A ticket to employment. A safety net. A social leveller. Just what is the value of a degree today? Five of our alumni discuss.

**300
MILLION**

THE EXPECTED
NUMBER OF
YOUNG PEOPLE
AGED 24 TO 34
COMPLETING
A TERTIARY
DEGREE ACROSS
OECD AND G20
COUNTRIES
BY 2030,
UP FROM
137 MILLION
IN 2013.

Source:
"Benchmarking Higher
Education System
Performance"
report, OECD

How relevant has a degree proven to your career?

CHERIE TAN: What I did in university has no relevance to my career as a national bowler. (Ed: Ms Tan was named World Bowling Athlete of the Year 2019 by the World Bowling Association, the first Singaporean to receive this honour) I started bowling when I was about 10 and have always been passionate about it. So, why did I choose to do a degree? Well, this is Singapore! I needed a fall-back plan in case bowling didn't work out. I chose a degree in Material Science because it has some relevance to the sport I play — I can make bowling balls (*laughs*)! I was fortunate that NUS has a flexible scheme that allowed me to juggle both sporting and academic commitments — I got to defer a few semesters and graduated two years later than my peers, and my professors would even give me one-on-one lessons to help me catch up.

XEO LYE: I was previously in wealth management, writing books and giving talks on the topic. One of my Malaysian clients wanted to start investment clubs in the universities, and asked us to create a boardgame for them — that was the beginning of our game design and development studio (*Capital Gains Studio, which specialises in finance-themed games*). My marketing training at NUS Business School helped [in the business development for my own company], but as undergraduates, we were trained to come up with marketing plans for big companies with big budgets. It is a different challenge when you are a small start-up promoting an unknown brand.

AYUSHI BAINWALA: People in finance have a saying: "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." My Master of Economics degree from NUS is especially valuable to me since I always knew I wanted to work in finance. While the Bachelor's degree programme I did [in India] was largely theory-based, my Master's course on Applied Economics was more hands-on with seminars, presentations and project work. I had the opportunity to be exposed to different areas of specialisation during the course, trying my hand at asset management, research, trade finance... all through on- and off-campus projects. I could also take courses from other schools, such as Big Data Analytics, and this expanded my field of knowledge. The classes being held in the evenings also meant that I could work a few days per week. Though that meant that college life was a crazy, hectic rollercoaster, I wanted to seize all the learning opportunities I could get during this time of exploration.

JEFFREY NAH: When I took my EMBA eight years ago, at the age of 57, the professor asked me why



Think about education not just as a means to a job, but an opportunity to develop your competence and skills to the fullest, so that you will be able to navigate the uncertainties of the future. — MR JEFFREY NAH

I wanted to do the course. The average age of my coursemates was 40 — and the youngest was only 30 years old. In fact, most of the professors were younger than me! But I am a banker-turned-entrepreneur, and at that point, I was switching again to become an investor — and the finance knowledge I had was from 30 years ago. I needed to continue learning to switch to different sides of the industry.

DENNIS KWA: I do work in the same field as my area of study, but what I find more valuable than the knowledge gained during the course, are things like independence and lifelong learning skills. When I was on a student exchange in Stuttgart, Germany, I experienced a different education system where — while one needed to register to download course materials — the lectures are free to the public. Everyone and anyone is free to listen in, and even sign up for exams! That made me think about my own style of learning. Upon returning to NUS, I started to attend lectures for a course that I didn't enrol in, and the professor was happy to have me too. Though I eventually burned out because it was just too taxing on my schedule, the experience made me learn not to simply do what is "popular", but focus on things that are important to my areas of interest.

What then, to you, is the true "value" of your degree?

AYUSHI: One's perception of the value of a degree changes with time. When you get your first job upon

OUR PANEL

MS CHERIE TAN
(ENGINEERING '12), 31,
NATIONAL BOWLER



MR XEO LYE
(BUSINESS '03), 41,
BOARDGAME PRODUCER



MS AYUSHI BAINWALA
(ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES '18),
25, FINANCIAL ANALYST



MR JEFFREY NAH
(EMBA '15), 65,
VENTURE CAPITALIST



MR DENNIS KWA
(ENGINEERING '13), 31,
ELECTRICAL ENGINEER

graduation, you are super-thankful for the degree, for you see it as what has gotten you employed. But as you progress in your career, you will rely less and less on your qualifications and more on your different skill sets. Thus, your perceived value of the degree might diminish. However, this doesn't mean that what you learned in university is less important, for the experiences gained during project work, and the life skills that you developed in the course of your study, all make you who you are today.

CHERIE: For me, the value of my education at NUS lies more in the life skills learned: discipline, time management, and learning how to prioritise my tasks.

XEO: When my company was expanding beyond Singapore, I also had to figure out a lot of things — from negotiation techniques in different cultures, and licensing and copyright matters to even writing press releases — that are not taught in the textbooks. That said, the network of people I knew through studying in nus — those specialising in logistics, brand management and communications — proved an invaluable resource. I tapped into their respective expertise to help myself and my company grow.

JEFFREY: The EMBA was a joint UCLA-NUS EMBA programme and networking with the UCLA alumni was very profitable for me — over the years, I have formed numerous business partnerships with members of the alumni. But what is the true value of higher education? It is to develop the soft skills of communicating, assimilating, adapting, aggregating and to be agile. This is especially important in these volatile times, and when the world is becoming smaller — I have lived and worked in seven different countries and can tell you that industry knowledge and intelligence is not enough. So, I encourage all current students to reframe and retrain their mind: to think about education not just as a means to a job, but an opportunity to develop your competencies and skills to the fullest, so that you will be able to navigate the uncertainties of the future.

Do you agree that a degree today doesn't guarantee you a job?

DENNIS: We all have peers who did not manage to find work. But sometimes it's also about the person's expectations. Indeed, one is considered the top 20 per cent of the population if one has a degree, and that could lead to high expectations: some of my younger peers even expect a \$5K starting pay!

XEO: Junior college students still pick university courses based on what jobs pay the best at the point of enrolment. Naturally they will graduate with certain expectations.

AYUSHI: That you are certified in a certain course serves as an indication of your minimum industry

Make use not just of the opportunities your university presents you, but also the resources provided by the school – from mentorship and guidance, to facilities and even grants to start a business. – MR XEO LYE

knowledge to others – and a degree is a globally-recognised qualification that can open doors. However, prospective employers will only understand you as a person when they interact with you, and so, how you put yourself out there becomes very important too. Also, a lot of times these days, one needs job experience to even apply for a job. So, you need to be quick with getting your internships before graduating and gain relevant work experience to give you an edge. A lot of my juniors are also confused as to what they should pursue, and I tell them that they should think three to five years ahead. Yet that is challenging because you cannot predict what the market wants at the point of your graduation.

JEFFREY: The McKinsey Global Institute predicted that 800 million jobs will be lost globally by 2030 (and be replaced by robotic automation) – the future is a big uncertainty to navigate, and to be *kiasu* and *kiasi* (conservative because of a fear of risks and failure) is completely contrarian to these times. That degree-holders are not finding jobs – and this is a global issue – could be a supply-and-demand problem. But it could also be the result of a disconnect between the academic institutions and the market. Academia has traditionally operated as silos – with different faculties operating independently, but the real world isn't like that. That said, I do see universities adapting and changing their approach. So they are shaping graduates to be more multi-disciplined, yet with a specialised skill. The education system has realised its function is not in just the imparting of information – for things are changing so quickly that information gets redundant and irrelevant quickly. The best thing they can impart to students are tools to help them be future-proof. Everybody needs entrepreneurial skills: you have to seize the opportunities yourself, and use your education to maximise what you want to develop.

If degrees do not guarantee jobs, do you think higher education still serves its function as a “social leveller”?

AYUSHI: I had a diverse mix of classmates in the public university

I attended in India: some lived in the city, and others had to travel two to three hours by train just to get to school. Often we think that getting into university and financing it is a challenge for those from low-income backgrounds, but our university provided equal opportunity for all: my monthly tuition fee was all of two dollars! This access to education means your success is dependent on your dedication, and how interested you are in changing your life with it – and I have many classmates who have landed good jobs, and others have gone on to do PhD programmes in the US.

DENNIS: I see university as a social leveller still, even in Singapore. At any other level of education, those who are more well-off can give themselves an edge by forking out money for tuition and enrichment classes outside of school. But in university, you have to depend on yourself – you can at best do your own studying to give yourself a headstart, but everybody starts on the same plane, especially in years Three and Four, when the subjects are completely new to all. It trains you to find your own edge based on your skills, which is important, for while the world is your playground when you graduate, you will also find the world challenging you for your job.

If you were an 18 year-old today, would you choose to do a degree course?

CHERIE: I go for what I want and don't really listen to what others say, so I might not have – especially since bowling as a career has a much longer lifespan than other sports, and one can keep at it until 50 or even 60 years of age. I tried out a lot of things while I was younger, such as different sports and music, and found bowling to be my passion: my goal has always been to win at the bowling World Championships. In fact, I was at a crossroads after graduating from Mechanical Engineering and considered pursuing further studies at Duke-NUS Medical School. Though I was accepted, I eventually still chose bowling full-time and took up the



Sport Excellence Scholarship (spexScholarship) which was introduced in 2013. Though I am not usually swayed by the opinions of others, I should also stress that my parents have always been supportive of my decisions – that really helped in my pursuit.

XEO: The more conservative parents would probably be less open to different paths, and would like their children to pursue a university education. Your family's financial situation greatly influences the risks you take.

AYUSHI: My parents are not so traditional, but they still believe in the opportunities education can present. They see it as a something that empowers you – be it to get a job or create a job. They believe in the concept of learning leading to independence.

JEFFREY: My 24 year-old son is doing his degree now, but I let him choose his own path – I did not insist that he attend university, for while a university education is helpful, it is not critical. And if you are at it, maximise the learning opportunity that it affords you: do internships, go for exchanges, go out and get dirty. Frankly, this mentality should be cultivated even earlier, in secondary schools and junior colleges.

DENNIS: Some people used to joke that ITE stands for “It's The End”, but in my company, I have bosses who went to ITE, and then worked their way towards a diploma, degree and even a PhD. Yes, scholars might

also the resources it provides – from guidance to facilities and even grants to start a business. Many big companies today were created while the founders were undergraduates, and NUS has a lot of resources that support young entrepreneurs.

JEFFREY: Cherie identified her passion and purpose, kept at it until she excelled, and then applied it to a career that the world needs, and would pay for. And this is exactly what I always emphasise: passion, purpose, and to persevere until you perform.

DENNIS: Take the analogy of a supermarket: you walk in and choose which lane you want to go – which is like picking your course. You then pick up what you need for your task, be it ingredients for cooking or tools for a DIY project – these are like the modules you choose. Your passion is the task that defines your shopping list, and if you don't focus on it, you might get distracted and buy things that are irrelevant. When you leave the supermarket with the goods, it is up to you to use the tools to achieve your goal. You might even realise that you need other things, and return to the supermarket to pick up other items which you didn't realise you needed earlier on. The point of this analogy is that what you get out of your university education is up to you, as is how you use it to meet your own goals. **A**

► If you'd like to join our Forum panel, do write to us at OARconnect@nus.edu.sg to express your interest and pick from our list of future discussion topics that you may want to be part of.



LEARN TO EARN

The median gross monthly salary among fresh graduates in full-time permanent employment was slightly higher than \$3,500 in 2018 to about

\$3,600
IN 2019

Information and Digital Technologies graduates commanded the highest median starting salaries at

\$4,400

Source:
Joint Graduate Employment
Survey 2019



Can We Benefit from Bipolarity?

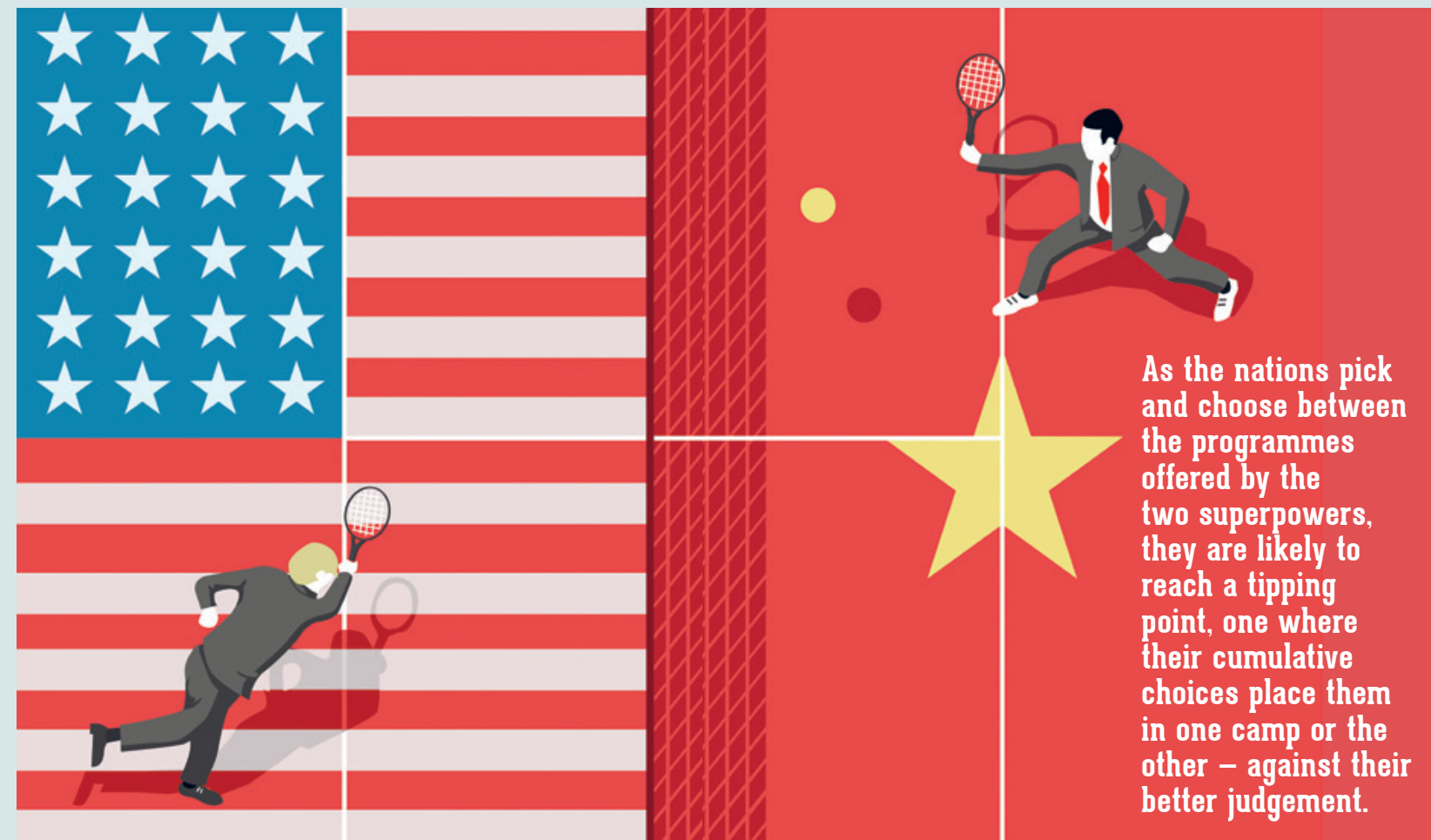
Caught between the superpowers that are China and the United States, Southeast Asian countries may feel the pressure to choose sides. What then, is a prudent course to take?

IN RECENT YEARS, ASIA HAS BECOME BIPOLAR, that is, it houses two great or 'super' powers whose comprehensive capabilities are head and shoulders above the rest in the region. The two powers are the US and China. And as international relations theory would have it, when the structure of an international or regional system is bipolar, the dominant logic is one that is characterised by serious geopolitical competition between the two main powers, not unlike the rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

A major implication of bipolarity is there is the tendency of the antagonists to view their own gains as losses for the other, and the need to corral as many allies as possible. This imperative has concerned leaders in the region about the looming pressure to choose between the two superpowers – and of making the right choice.

WHERE DOES SINGAPORE STAND?

As with most of its neighbours, Singapore would prefer to be in a position that does not necessitate the making of this choice. However, remaining good friends with both superpowers is likely to become increasingly difficult, with mounting pressure from them on Asian nations to make a choice. As evidence of this, one need only consider the pressures the two superpowers have exerted on their allies and friends to join, or avoid joining, the Trans Pacific Partnership, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Belt and Road Initiative, Huawei's 5G, and the Free and Open Indo-Pacific.



THE IMPERATIVE OF CHOOSING WISELY

Whether, how and when Singapore and its neighbours choose to align themselves with China or the US will undoubtedly have an impact on the future of their economies and societies. Choosing, or not wanting to choose, is creating so much 'strategic angst', because one lesson of the Cold War was that picking the 'correct' side greatly facilitated one's chances of becoming a 'little dragon' or 'tiger' – the literature's label for Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. In contrast, those who vacillated or chose the 'wrong' side found it much more challenging to scale the ladder of economic prosperity and political-social resilience.

A CONTINUING CONUNDRUM – WITH A WORD OF CAUTION

Countries in Asia – particularly those in Southeast Asia – are likely to continue to face strong pressures from the two superpowers to choose between them. For some, China has the economic momentum and geographical advantage; for others, the US, as a multi-dimensional power, seems to be more attractive and formidable. One thing to watch out for in the ensuing years is which superpower will be more successful in coming up with political, economic and

strategic initiatives that command the "buy in" of the ASEAN states.

While the Asian tigers and little dragon chose well in the past, we caution against assuming that previous success in choosing guarantees future success. That is why it seems worthwhile and important to drill deeply into understanding the anatomy of choice.

AN AD-HOC APPROACH TO DECISION-MAKING

To dissect this political conundrum, we need to examine four key questions. What does it mean to choose between the US and China? How can we track the shifts in movements or choices of Southeast Asian nations over time? What explains their alignment choices? And, finally, what are the implications for Singapore, the superpowers, and the region?

It may seem at first instance that states choose by deliberating on and summing up their strategic, economic, and values-based interests, and that – when push comes to shove – simply aligning with the superpower that best meets their needs. While



THE ASEAN REGION IS HOME TO

649.1 MILLION PEOPLE

(as of end-2018) whose combined GDP that year was approximately

US\$3 TRILLION

making it the world's 5th-largest economy

Source: www.aseanstats.org

this may seem to be the way for survival, we suspect this is unlikely to be feasible. Instead, we propose that things are likely to proceed in a more piecemeal or ad hoc fashion – that is, Southeast Asian nations will decide whether to support and join discrete programmes and initiatives offered by the two superpowers.

Following that, we raise the second hypothesis: As the nations pick and choose between the programmes offered by the two superpowers, they are likely to reach a tipping point, one where their cumulative choices place them in one camp or the other – against their better judgement.

By clarifying the meaning of choice of the first hypothesis and theorising about the process by which alignment choices are made based on the second, we are in a stronger position to measure and track a nation's shifts in alignment over time. Our work uses three sets of variables to track the movements: those that measure the strength of bilateral political-diplomatic, economic and military relations; those that measure a country's involvement in multilateral initiatives on offer by the two superpowers; and the discursive actions (or "speech-acts") of Southeast Asian leaders and cabinet-level officials.

We are measuring their positions over three-year time spans from 1985 to 2022, which will yield more than 12 data points for each country. We will then examine four drivers in particular: domestic politics, perceptions of economic opportunities, assessments of the US' staying power, and threat perception. To validate the findings, the relevance and importance of these factors will be investigated via historical analysis of all 10 ASEAN countries' relationships with the US and China.

Fieldwork – by which we mean going out to the 'field' to tap elite perceptions by interviewing policymakers, analysing their speeches and statements, and examining media portrayals of the US and China – will also be part of the research strategy. Through these efforts, we seek to further understand how the ASEAN countries make their geopolitical decisions on which power to align closer to.

Professor Khong Yuen Foong is Li Ka Shing Professor in Political Science at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at NUS. He was formerly Professor of International Relations at Nuffield College, Oxford University. His research interests include US foreign policy, international relations of the Asia Pacific, and cognitive approaches to international relations. His recent publications cover the American tributary system and the US response to China's rise.



This article was written by Professor Khong Yuen Foong and first published on 23 January in *NUS News* at news.nus.edu.sg/research/looking-2020-southeast-asian-countries-choose-between-us-and-china and has been edited for *The Alumnus*.



CALENDAR OF ALUMNI EVENTS

APR. MAY. JUN

APRIL

POSTPONED

U@live

LIFTING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Climate Change: Are Tomorrow's Needs more Important than Today's Reality?

U@live

Can countries, and the world, find that critical balance – in the climate change debate – between addressing today's realities and the needs of tomorrow?

Panellists:

Mr Masagos Zulkifli

(Engineering '88)

Minister for the Environment and Water Resources

Associate Professor

Leong Ching

(Arts and Social

Sciences '92)

NUS Dean of Students

Mr Abhas Jha

Practice Manager for

Urban and Disaster

Risk Management,

The World Bank

Moderator:

Mr Viswa Sadasivan

(Arts and Social

Sciences '83)

Former NMP and

U@live Chairman

14
APR

Shaw Foundation
Alumni House, Tue, 7.30pm

Register: alumnet.events/UALIVE

Contact: Mr Ng Shan Jun

ngshanjun@nus.edu.sg

Please refer to
alumnet.events/UALIVE
for updates.

nus.edu.sg/alumnet/events

La Teta Asustada

10-12
JUN

PERUVIAN FILM FESTIVAL



In celebration of 40 Years of Peru-Singapore relations, the Embassy of the Republic of Peru in Singapore and NUS Alumni Relations are proud to present the inaugural Peruvian Film Festival.

Come, experience and learn about Peru's intriguing culture through award-winning films.

All films in Spanish with English subtitles.

10 – 12 Jun (Wed - Fri)

Shaw Foundation
Alumni House, 7.30pm

Register: alumnet.events/PVFF20

Contact: Mr Samuel Tan
samuel.tan@nus.edu.sg

10 June (Wed): Magallanes (NC16)

11 June (Thu): Siete Semillas /

Seven Seeds (PG)

12 June (Fri): La Teta Asustada /
The Milk of Sorrow (NC16)

Building a Network that Works for You Future-ready Workshops

Speaker: Ms Camilla Tessa Tam,
Career Advisor,
Learning and Development
Manager, NUS Centre for
Future-ready Graduates

Effective networking
is developing relationships with
people that matter, through small,

purposeful actions. This workshop
will introduce strategies to create
meaningful relationships that can
create career opportunities for
yourself and others.

22
APR

Shaw Foundation
Alumni House, Wed, 7.30pm

Register: alumnet.events/FRapr20

Contact: Mr Kenneth Phang

kphang@nus.edu.sg



Keeping Your Eyes & Gut Healthy

Health & Wellness

Dietary Practice and
Your Gut – Keeping
GI Symptoms Away
by Dr Loh Poh Yen
(Medicine '07)

Learn from Dr Loh how your
dietary pattern can affect
your bowel and ways to keep
your gut healthy.

What You Have Always
Wanted to Ask
Your Eye Doctor
by Dr Joy Chan
(Medicine '04)

Dr Chan will address
common eye questions,
such as how to reduce myopia
progression in children and the
effect of blue light on the eye.

23
APR

Shaw Foundation
Alumni House, Thu, 7.30pm

Register: alumnet.events/HWapr20

Contact: Mr Samuel Tan

samuel.tan@nus.edu.sg



MAY

How AI is Changing Cybersecurity

Tech Talk

Speaker: Ms Angela Huang
(Science '85), Principal
Lecturer and Consultant,
Digital Strategy and
Leadership Practice, Institute
of Systems Science, NUS



Discover more about emerging
technological breakthroughs and how
they can impact or disrupt our lives.
This talk will provide food for thought
in the areas of security of AI systems,
AI-powered attacks and the use
of AI in cybersecurity.

19
MAY

Tue, 7.30pm

Register: Join us online at
alumnet.events/TSmay20

Contact: Ms Gabriella Nyam
gabriella@nus.edu.sg

*Due to the COVID-19 health situation,
this event was postponed from February and
will now be held online.



Joker (NC16)

Movies On The House

Todd Phillips helms a gritty origin
story starring Joaquin Phoenix and
Robert De Niro that centres around
the iconic comic book character in an
original, standalone story not seen
before on screen. Phillips' exploration
of Arthur Fleck, a man disregarded
by society, is not only a harsh
character study, but also a broader
cautionary tale.

28
MAY

Shaw Foundation
Alumni House, Thu, 7.30pm

Register: alumnet.events/MMmay20

Contact: Mr Kenneth Phang

kphang@nus.edu.sg



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& © DC Comics.

JUNE

The Brest Fortress

Movies On The House
Goes Russian

A war drama set during the Nazi
invasion of the Soviet Union in
June 1941, in which Soviet troops
held on to a border stronghold
for nine days.

25
JUN

Shaw Foundation
Alumni House,
Thu, 7.30pm

Register: alumnet.events/MMjun20

Contact: Mr Kenneth Phang

kphang@nus.edu.sg



➔ WHO SHE IS

Ms Lyn Lee is the Chief Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Officer at energy company Royal Dutch Shell – the first Asian female to ever hold this position. Working with teams in Shell offices across the globe, she strives to accelerate the progress of gender balance in senior leadership and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) roles and is committed to driving workplace inclusion for various under-represented groups.

Rocking the Boat for Good

Shaking up the status quo is at times necessary in order to level the playing field for all people; it has also been a lifelong calling for Royal Dutch Shell's Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer **Ms Lyn Lee** (Arts and Social Sciences '89).



GROWING UP, MS LYN LEE noticed that her parents often made a conscious effort to care for those who were under-represented, including hiring workers with disabilities to run their business. "I remember we had two staff who were on the autism spectrum, although I'm sure nobody in my family knew the official terms back then," says the 52 year-old. "Beyond just offering them respectable jobs with decent salaries, my mum also took care of their well-being, offering extra money when their family members were unwell."

Ms Lee also recounts how her grandfather, a landowner in Punggol, would generously welcome other families to build houses on his land, without charging them. "My parents and grandparents were my role models in that sense; they raised me to look out for those who are often marginalised or not as privileged as my family," she says. Those childhood

observations certainly influenced how Ms Lee would navigate her own life, and eventually, her career. "That's why I believe in leading by example – if you truly care and are committed, others will see the impact of your actions and will also want to be a part of it."

These days, Ms Lee – a single mother to two daughters aged 23 and 19 – champions gender balance, promotes the destigmatising of mental illness and drives workplace inclusion of People with Disabilities (PwD) and different sexual orientation (LGBT+) as the Chief Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Officer at energy company Royal Dutch Shell. As the first person out of Europe to fill this global role, Ms Lee feels privileged. "For a European multinational to pick an Asian female for the position speaks volumes about what the company stands for," she says. "I am honoured and happy to be able to give [the role] a new perspective."

BRINGING ONE'S WHOLE SELF TO WORK

A diverse workforce, in Ms Lee's view, is one where there are "different genders, ethnicities, generations – anything and everything that creates a diversity of viewpoints so we are not all thinking the same." The irony when there is diversity, however, is that some groups get included and others excluded, she points out. "So my team's job is to create a culture where it is safe for different people to have different points of view, and – in spite of those differences – are still able work in harmony," says Ms Lee. "Psychological safety is crucial."

One of Ms Lee's priorities is to get more females in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), and C-suite roles. At present, 26.4 per cent of senior leadership roles in Shell are filled by women; the aim is to get to 30 per cent in the short term, she lets on. "And yes, the plan is to accelerate and get to 50 per cent eventually, but progress takes time and work, so gender balance will continue to remain our goal here," says Ms Lee. She notes also that employees of this era gravitate towards companies with values that align with their own. As such, initiatives such as Being Yourself at Shell promote the ability to bring one's whole self to work and encourages everyone to feel free to speak up. "No longer should we perpetuate the idea that employees should hide or leave their personal challenges at home; we acknowledge these challenges, in fact, we create structures so that in spite of those challenges, employees can still be productive and perform at their best," Ms Lee explains, citing staff with physical disabilities or mental illnesses as examples.

THE COURAGE TO SPUR CHANGE

Similarly, beyond the workplace, Ms Lee says that Singapore has what it takes to be a more gracious and inclusive society. "Many of us are aware and want to do the right thing, but what's stopping us is the reliance on the Government to take the lead on certain laws or policies before we act," she explains. "We are not willing to challenge the status quo for fear of rocking the boat."

That being said, there has been more of a "groundswell" lately with younger people speaking up for under-represented and marginalised groups and starting social enterprises, she observes. "The time is ripe; changes happen when more people speak up," says Ms Lee, citing the recent update in the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP), which makes it unnecessary for employers to ask job applicants to declare personal information such as their mental health condition unless there is a job-related requirement. "That's a huge step in the right direction,



SOME WAY TO GO, SINGAPORE

A 2019 poll by Kantar – a data, insights and consulting firm – on workplace D&I practices surveyed

18,000
PEOPLE

in 14 countries

44%

of Singapore workers said they are affected by "stress and anxiety" at work, above the **GLOBAL AVERAGE OF 39%.**

Canada topped the overall inclusion index, with more than

40%

of senior roles occupied by women.

ABOUT 6 IN 10

of US workers also believed their employers were actively trying to be more inclusive and diverse, although **17%** of them said they were bullied.

which took years and many people voicing up and strongly advocating for change," says Ms Lee, who has persistently spoken up on the issue herself through the heartfelt sharing of her own struggles with bipolar disorder – a condition she has since managed.

She was, in fact, one of the plenary speakers at the *Together Against Stigma* conference, organised by the Institute of Mental Health and the National Council of Social Services, in October last year. In its ninth year, the conference brought together more than 500 delegates from 24 countries to discuss the issue of stigma against people with mental health conditions. "We must not be afraid to challenge the norm to benefit the whole society. Don't be resigned and say there's nothing to be done because the law says so. Sometimes the law and policy simply needs updating. Speak up with the right intention and be part of the movement to change things for the better." In particular, more must be done for PwD, Ms Lee stresses. Hiring them should not be about having a token representation in the workplace, but more about recognising the value they bring – and acknowledging the fact that work can be done differently if accommodated, and that it is society that has put them at a disadvantage. "As a PwD in Singapore, they have to circumvent many barriers that you and I don't, so if we just take those obstacles away, they can use that effort to be productive and contribute value to the economy."

FROM DREAMER TO ROLE MODEL

Part of the pioneer batch of Psychology students at NUS when the department was first launched in 1986, Ms Lee quips that her peers then would not have imagined being on the path she is on today. "I was such a 'blur sotong' in my student years, always daydreaming and in a daze," she says. "But stumbling into Psychology piqued my interest as to why people behave the way they do be it through social, cultural and other factors."

After graduation, Ms Lee pursued her interest in the human psyche, and took a Masters in the same subject at the New York University, before interning and eventually working full-time in the United States. "It was then that I experienced micro-inequities, which as a Chinese Singaporean I would have not experienced back home," she says. "Everything fell into place in my 30s – I found my passion and discovered my skills in organisational effectiveness and organisational development, and grew my career from there."

Both of Ms Lee's daughters are becoming "change agents" in their own right. Her elder child is a welfare officer and care champion in her college, trained to intervene should a peer experience distress or be going through a difficult time, Ms Lee says, beaming. And her younger daughter, who is studying broadcast media, initiates video projects highlighting social imbalance, income gaps and under-represented groups in Singapore. "I'm really proud of them," says Ms Lee. "I have my role models, and they do as well; so having leaders who are inclusive and visible in their actions and passionate certainly makes an impact." **A**

Sometimes the law and policy simply needs updating. Speak up with the right intention and be part of the movement to change things for the better.

➔ WHO SHE IS

Ms Cynthia Chua is the founder and CEO of the Spa Esprit Group, a leading lifestyle business. Since 1996, the group has developed beauty, spa and F&B brands that operate in more than 100 locations globally. She is also an advocate of urban farming in Singapore.

GIVEN THAT SHE RUNS A LIFESTYLE EMPIRE WITH 16 BUSINESSES, and a staff strength of 1,000 globally, one might think it would be hard to get hold of Ms Cynthia Chua. But just as she has been since the days of the original Spa Esprit at Holland Village, this celebrated entrepreneur is meticulous about making time for things. She apologises for not replying sooner than four days because, at the time of this interview, the COVID-19 situation was causing organisations to activate business continuity plans.

This sense of responsibility is just one attribute that characterises the woman who has been called “the maverick” of lifestyle businesses, a moniker that resonates with her. “I think I am first a maverick, then a visionary,” she says. “When I have an idea, I don’t really listen to many people who say the idea doesn’t work. I am independent-minded, and will follow with thinking about how it can become [reality].”

If one studies the milestones of Ms Chua’s career, one will see that her ideas have often, if not always, been ahead of their time. In 1996, after a stint working in a bank and discovering it was “not [her] cuppa tea”, she started Spa Esprit, one of the earliest homegrown urban spa brands, with a friend. “I felt that there was a gap then that modern working women did not have an urban

spa where they could go to relax. What was in the market then were long retreats and spa getaways. Urban spas that offered an hour or two of spa therapy were rare.”

She didn’t think too hard about taking the plunge. “An opportunity was presented to me to go into a joint venture,” she explains. “It was also a spa that I was going to, so that was a great platform to start. There wasn’t any opposition to my decision — I didn’t really ask around. I just felt that I wanted to do it and was excited about the new beginning.”

THE EMPIRE BUILDER

Spa Esprit quickly took off, becoming the go-to urban spa for working women, the first sign of Ms Chua’s sharp instincts for expansion. One of the first entrepreneurs to promote



The Journey Of A Lifestyle Maverick

Ms Cynthia Chua (Arts and Social Sciences '93) began with one spa in 1996. Today, Spa Esprit Group is a \$100 million-dollar global beauty and F&B lifestyle business.



A MANY-FEATHERED CAP

- 2009
Prestige – Power List
/ ELLE Singapore –
The Hot List:
The Trail Blazers
- 2011
The Straits Times –
Power List “Beauty
Queen Takes on Food”
- 2011-2015
Singapore Tatler –
The 300 List
- 2012
Singapore Tourism
Board – S’pore
Experience Awards:
Tourism Entrepreneur
of the Year /
The Straits Times –
Power List “Queen
of the F&B Empire” /
LianHe ZaoBao –
Outstanding People
- 2013
The Straits Times –
Power List “From Food
to Beauty outlets”
- 2015
Epicure – Excellence
Awards / Her World –
Asia Power Women List

Being surrounded with love keeps me on a high vibration and level of positivity; with that, I see all things beautiful and have a thirst to learn.

wellness as a mind-body concept, Ms Chua followed up with Qi Mantra, a concept service of stress-relief and mood elevation drawing from *taichi* and *qigong* techniques. Today, the two businesses have merged.

Her process of diversification is both linear and lateral, and builds on existing strengths. As she progressed, Ms Chua’s boldness began to show itself. Her Brazilian waxing salon STRIP, founded in 2004, was a big gamble — Singaporeans may consider themselves cosmopolitan but talking about removing pubic hair was taboo enough, to say nothing of actually going to a salon to have it done. Today, STRIP and its counterpart Browhaus (which primarily grooms eyebrows for both men and women) are global brands. More recently, she launched TWO L(I)PS, a range of luxury intimate care products including a vulva mask, inspired by requests from STRIP customers.

Entering the food and beverage business seemed like a natural progression. In 2007, part of the old Tanglin Barracks was converted by Ms Chua into a multi-concept spa and restaurant called House, which featured treatment rooms that overlooked verdant greenery, as well as a café serving innovative creations such as alcoholic drinks in tiffin carriers. This move into F&B included The Tippling Club in 2008, which was at the forefront of cocktail culture. “A lot of the brands are born out of a gap I see in the market. Forty Hands came about when I encountered the Melbourne hole-in-the-wall coffee culture. I felt it would be wonderful to have this in Singapore. The idea was seeded and things just slowly fell into place when I met the right people to put the pieces together.”

Forty Hands was founded in 2010 and since then, Ms Chua has expanded her F&B portfolio to include Tiong Bahru Bakery; Common Man Coffee Roasters, a specialty coffee roaster, wholesaler, café and barista academy; Chinese restaurant Ding Dong; and Argentinian *cocina* Bochinche. Ms Chua rocked the scene again in 2015 when she launched Open Farm Community in Dempsey Hill, a concept aligned with the recent global farm-to-table trend. Her love for homegrown edibles has parlayed itself into Farm To Beauty, a move to create rooftop gardens in buildings such as Wheelock Place and Raffles City. Plants like calendula and aloe are grown for use in Browhaus and STRIP products. Her latest venture is Noka (which means “farmhouse”), a Japanese restaurant that uses produce from another rooftop garden at Funan Mall.

Ms Chua defines the pursuit of excellence as “passion, creativity and tenacity.” It is these values that have driven her to grow her brands beyond Singapore. Both the STRIP and Browhaus concepts caught on worldwide, from Singapore and Shanghai to New York and London. And even if you don’t live in any of these cities, you can still have a piece of Spa Esprit through beautyemporium.shop, a beauty website offering Ms Chua’s own line of products as well as a curated

selection of her favourite beauty buys; and twolips.vip, where you can purchase vulva masks. In 2016, Ms Chua opened The Beauty Block in Chelsea, London, which houses Ministry of Wax (as STRIP is called in London), Browhaus in London and a canteen called A Wanted Man. “Almost all the concepts are a reflection of my state of mind and how I want to live,” she says. “I am curious and love travelling and reading. I surround myself with beautiful things — and this, coupled with a love of innovation, has given me the blessings and success in the evolution of my businesses.”

INFLUENCES AND INSPIRATIONS

Ms Chua — who turns 49 this year — majored in Economics and Statistics at NUS, and remembers having “a great time” with classmates in the Arts canteen, the library and Eusoff Hall. “I feel that being in FASS influenced my free-spiritedness. There was time for imagination, play and interaction — the flexibility of the classes, the people who surrounded me, the general energy of it. They all contributed a lot to my positivity.” And despite her global outlook, there is always a space in her heart for home. “My family has influenced me a lot,” she says. “I recall the math sums my mother would throw at me, which trained my brain to work, especially in problem-solving. My father is most generous in spirit and a great force in supporting me and my ideas. This has set a good backdrop for my endeavours, so that I am fearless.”

But despite conquering many heights, her journey has not been completely devoid of lows: “Those would be when I fell out with my initial partners, and when I had to close my vintage fashion store Potion, and Skinny Pizza.” Yet, it is the wisdom to boost what works and trim away what doesn’t that makes Ms Chua the business juggernaut she is. She is now at a point where she can take time to dream. “I think my greatest value to the company is my vision and ideas, so making sure I have time for these has become a conscious effort.” This journey to carve out more time began 10 years ago, when she wanted to have more time in NYC and London as she has shops there and she wanted to connect with different cultures and gain new insights. It took her another four years to put in place “a good management team to allow [her] to do that.”

Always a hands-on boss, Ms Chua got involved in the New York and London operations actively in 2014, but had personal reasons for spending time abroad as well. “My boyfriend, Benjamin Darnaud, is French. He is a travelling chef and TV host. That’s when I started visiting Paris and London more,” she explains. “I am based for six months in Singapore and six months in different parts of Europe and America. That has a lot of influence on my ideas.” Ms Chua credits her success to her ability to dream. “Being surrounded with love keeps me on a high vibration and level of positivity; with that, I see all things beautiful and have a thirst to learn.” **A**

➡ **WHO HE IS**

As chief conductor of the world-famous Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra, Kahchun Wong is one of the youngest Asians in such a role. The winner of the 2016 Mahler International Conducting Competition, and 2017 Young Artist Award by the National Arts Council, he is also the youngest ever to conduct the New York Philharmonic, the oldest major symphony orchestra in the US.

A

SK MR KAHCHUN WONG WHAT HE RECALLS

about his four years at NUS and he will tell you that he wishes “[he] could return to those carefree, simple and uncomplicated days”.

The Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music (YSTCM) undergraduate programme alumnus remembers attending concerts, catching the last bus back to the Prince George's Park residence and snacking on “reliable waffles” at campus café Supersnacks. He also studied German at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, something that has since helped him a lot in his career. After all, in 2017, Mr Wong became the chief conductor of the world-famous Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra at the mere age of 31. This made him one of the few Asian faces to lead a top-tier orchestra on the Western classical music scene — and also one of the youngest.

Mr Wong also enjoys the accolade of being the youngest-ever to conduct the New York Philharmonic, the oldest major symphony orchestra in the US.

Now 33, he travels often across the US, the UK and Europe for work which has him playing to audiences of 1,000 to 65,000 people at venues that include the Klassik Open Air in Germany, Europe's largest outdoor classical music concert. It is a far cry from the world of his growing-up years. As a child from a heartland estate, Mr Wong — who is now managed by Columbia

All The World's His Stage

Mr Kahchun Wong (Music '11)

tells us how hard work and a nurturing school environment let him morph from an NUS undergrad to a globally-acclaimed maestro.

**AND THE AWARD GOES TO...**

Mr Wong is also the recipient of prestigious awards. These include the Order of Merit, which was awarded last year by the Federal President of Germany for his contributions to Singaporean-German cultural relations and the advancement of German music culture overseas. He is the youngest and first Singaporean artist to receive it. Last year, Mr Wong was also one of the recipients of the Singapore Youth Award, the nation's highest accolade for youths.

Artists Management — probably didn't imagine he would one day stand on the world stage, literally. Born to non-musician parents — his father was a warrant officer in the army and his mother was a childcare teacher — he picked up his first musical instrument, a cornet, when he joined the school band in primary school. It quickly resonated with him. “Sometime in Primary Six, I decided to be a musician. My journey through secondary school and junior college continued to support that dream and it was inevitable that I would study music in university,” he says.

Thankfully, his parents supported his decision, something that he is grateful for until today. He had two options back then: audition in Europe, which would require a bank loan, or study at NUS on a full scholarship. “The decision was easy to make. I came out a complete artist because of the world-class education I received at YSTCM.”

A NURTURING SPACE

Mr Wong shares that just like undergraduates in other disciplines, a student at YSTCM would have a number of group lectures to attend. But the most important lesson of the week would be the principal study class. This was a one-on-one session with each student's major teacher and while it took one hour, it would require about 20 hours of prep work throughout the week. Preparation would mean practising on their chosen instruments or, in Mr Wong's case, composing music in his hostel room.

He also lets on that all YSTCM undergraduates were offered a single hostel room at Prince George's Park, something that he appreciated because it meant saving three hours of commuting time to and from his home in Jurong. He also enjoyed learning to live independently, which comes in useful now that he travels often

for work. Also, because there weren't hostel activities at Prince George's Park, he could focus on his studies. A typical day would start at 7.30am, with concerts to attend either in school or at the Esplanade, and end late into the night, when he would try to catch the last campus bus back to his hall. “My days at NUS provided me with a routine on how to condition myself physically and mentally for my profession. YSTCM was an essential part of my musical journey. It gave me a safe space with world-class software and hardware and equipped me with the right tools to leave the nest and rub shoulders with the best in my field.” This was thanks to the many concerts and masterclasses that his school put together.



Also, guest conductors and soloists in town to perform with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra would visit the conservatory. And in addition to the hectic weekday line-up, there would be overseas competitions and auditions.

Mr Wong is also thankful for having found a mentor figure in Professor Bernard Lanskey, the dean at YSTCM. In the first week of orientation, he wrote a letter to the latter to ask for advice as he had wanted to study conducting, which isn't offered at the undergraduate level. “It was the beginning of a very long nurturing relationship, of him always setting aside precious time to speak with me, and inspiring me to explore music.”

INSPIRING THROUGH ACTION

While Mr Wong could have done his studies overseas, he says YSTCM allowed him to bide his time “quietly in a corner of the world”. As a result, he was able to remain “undistracted and totally focused” in a supportive environment. He shares that like athletes, it is important for musicians like himself to devote their entire time, even on their off days, to practising and honing their craft.

Even now, Mr Wong — whose advice to young musicians is to work much harder than others — wakes up a little after 4am almost every day. He takes the time to prepare scores for rehearsals, answer emails, make work calls and study music. In fact, he may sometimes take hundreds of hours to research music, after which he has to rehearse for three to four hours a day, over one to three days, before a performance.

And in spite of his busy days in school, Mr Wong found time to compose with and conduct the Singapore Chinese Orchestra as part of a collaboration with the YSTCM Composition Studio. He also started YSTCM Sinfonia in 2008 to give first-year students the opportunity to perform in an orchestral setting. It has now become an annual event held during orientation for freshmen to get to know one another by playing music together.

In spite of his career milestones, Mr Wong sees music as something more. He believes that it can inspire imagination and enrich lives. “When we listen to something incredibly tender and beautiful, we think of a newborn baby... or that moment years ago when someone close passed away. It provides emotional catharsis, allowing us to experience honest and intense feelings that we may not be able to express ourselves.” **A**

PASSING ON HIS PASSION

In 2016, Mr Wong co-founded Project Infinitude, a grassroots project, with Ms Marina Mahler, granddaughter of Austrian composer Gustav Mahler. With this, Mr Wong hopes to pass on his love of music and knowledge to the next generation as he believes that music inculcates cognitive and psychological life skills in children. He works with non-profit agency Child at Street 11 in Singapore, where children below 12 and from all walks of life attend Singapore Symphony Orchestra concerts, ask him questions about musical instruments over lunch, watch videos on music and participate in creative processes like recording the sounds of falling rain at the Singapore Botanic Gardens. This year, the children will be joining the chorus at a performance that Mr Wong is preparing for at the Esplanade Concert Hall which will see musicians from ASEAN and the European Union coming together to perform.

Left: Mr Wong (in black) composing lyrics with Member of Parliament Mr Henry Kwek, storyteller Ms Rosemarie Somaiah, and songwriter Falling Feathers for Project Infinitude.



➔ WHO SHE IS

A three-time Straits Times Life! Theatre Awards nominee, Ms Claire Wong is a Singapore-Malaysian actor, director, producer and filmmaker. She is the co-founder and Joint Artistic Director and Producer of Checkpoint Theatre.

Beyond the Bright Lights

A curiosity about the human condition and a passion for storytelling are the driving factors behind multi-hyphenate theatre practitioner **Ms Claire Wong's (Law '88)** pursuit of this performance art form.

THE CO-FOUNDER AND JOINT ARTISTIC DIRECTOR-PRODUCER OF CHECKPOINT THEATRE, Ms Claire Wong, was passionate about theatre long before her professional stage debut in 1988 as Ivy, a small-town girl from Malaysia, in Michael Chiang and Dick Lee's *Beauty World* — now regarded as a quintessential Singaporean musical. "I always knew that theatre would be an important part of my life," says the NUS alumnus, who graduated with a Law degree. "From the time I was in primary school, I was involved in drama."

In her time at NUS, the Penang-born Singapore Permanent Resident counted directors Mr Ong Keng Sen (Law '88) and Mr Ivan Heng (Law '88); and Members of Parliament Ms Sylvia Lim (Law '88) and Mr Lim Biow Chuan (Law '88) among her classmates. "I had a great time in Law school. Our class was very close and we even created a show to have fun and mark the end of our time together," says the 56-year-old. "We started a tradition and since then; every graduating Law IV class creates and performs a production."

While Ms Wong has never lost her love for the law — she even went on to successfully practise it — she could not stay away from theatre, and pursued a Master's of Fine Arts in Theatre Arts at Columbia University in New York City. Since graduating from the prestigious programme in 2001, she has acted in a slew of productions on both sides of the Causeway. Her performances in works by playwright Huzir Sulaiman — her husband, with whom she runs Checkpoint Theatre — such as *Occupation* and *Atomic Jaya*, has earned her nominations for Best Actress at the Life! Theatre Awards. Ms Wong has also directed and produced numerous well-received plays. "There is something very special about being in a live performance, where the performers and audience breathe the same air, where the words of the play arc through space, igniting emotions and ideas, and connect everyone in the room through our shared humanity," she says. "Theatre as an art

form has the unique power to bring people together and make us feel a little less alone."

How did you become interested in theatre?

My elder sister June likes to take credit for introducing me to the magic of theatre when she took me to watch her act in a play. So I certainly give credit to her, together with the several others I have met in my journey as a theatre-maker — from the inspiring drama teachers to the wonderful people who make productions possible today. Because of them, I have been able to witness how great theatre has the power to imprint itself permanently within people.

When I act onstage, the connection with the audience is palpable — there is an understanding, and we entrust our imagination and our potential to each other. I have had strangers come up to me to talk about a performance of mine that they saw more than 20 years ago, which is a very humbling experience. As a director, it is wonderful to be able to sit in the audience and to feel them being transported and moved deeply.

How does Checkpoint Theatre seek to distinguish itself from other theatre companies in Singapore?

Checkpoint Theatre is home to new Singapore playwriting and our vision is to craft and nurture original stories for the stage. We are about championing a diversity of voices and nurturing the next generation of theatre-makers. We also invest an inordinate amount of care in every part



Theatre connects us on a primal level. Humans make sense of life and find meaning through storytelling. Theatre and theatre-making can change hearts and minds, rich or poor.

of the process — and as a result of this meticulous commitment, we are known and respected for our intensive script development and dramaturgy.

Checkpoint Theatre has always strived to be an open and generous space for collaboration. Collaboration matters greatly to us because we want everyone we work with to be challenged, to deepen their practice, and to surprise themselves and each other. Through this process, we hope to uncover new depths, textures and nuances in our plays, and to create a work of art that resonates with our audience.

What's the biggest difference between the theatre scene in Singapore and Malaysia?

One big difference is the infrastructural support that Singapore has built up over the last several decades. Apart from physical facilities, fiscal incentives such as the Cultural Matching Fund and tax rebates for donors have helped the development of the theatre industry. In Malaysia, such support is not as widespread or consistent, and theatre groups rely more on private arts patrons or the public. This means, as well, that the theatre landscape in Malaysia is less manicured and there are more organic, ground-up initiatives.

What, in your view, is the biggest challenge the Singapore theatre scene currently faces?

The high cost of theatre-making is one of our biggest challenges. There is a need for a wider and more affordable range of small- and medium-sized performance venues. The steep costs mean that theatre-makers have to spend a disproportionate amount of time managing the financial risks of a project, which may mean making safer — and possibly less interesting — artistic choices. This encourages formulaic theatre-making with productions that are predictably popular, which is not necessarily a bad thing provided that we also safeguard the space for artistic risk-taking. Ultimately, we want room for nuanced and exquisite theatre, and to nurture original and innovative processes that deepen the art and craft of theatre-making.

Which is the production you are most proud of?

There are so many that are very special to

me. One example is *Normal* by Faith Ng, which I directed and produced. It examines the streaming system in our schools, and the play's 2017 staging involved post-show discussions with more than 3,000 audience members, including teachers, students and parents. Education Minister Ong Ye Kung was one of the four Cabinet ministers present as well. In the years since the performance, Minister Ong announced the abolishment of the very academic streaming system that *Normal* shed light on. To see the play possibly having an impact on national policy change has been monumental. Checkpoint Theatre continues to present the play at schools through dramatised readings, followed by dialogues with the artists. It has become a modern Singapore classic and we're excited to bring it to even more people with our upcoming production of the play in October 2020.

Do you reckon being a student at NUS has benefited you in your career today?

I lived on campus throughout my four years at NUS. As such, I made lifelong friends from "hall life", as well as from Law school. I was very active and represented my hall — not just in drama but also in several sporting activities. I often juggled school assignments and deadlines with my drama rehearsals, sports training and other responsibilities. After I graduated, I went on to practise law while also embarking on my creative journey as an actress, and later as a director. Looking back, my time at NUS showed me that I could pursue my many interests, and live life as fully as possible.

What do you say to the notion that theatre is only for the privileged to practise and consume?

This is an understandable perception as theatre-making is an expensive endeavour. Artists and arts administrators often help to sponsor the costs by being underpaid. A theatre ticket also typically costs more than, say, a movie ticket. Hence, only the privileged can afford to be a patron while artists and administrators find other ways to support themselves. That said, theatre connects us on a primal level. Humans make sense of life and find meaning through storytelling. Theatre and theatre-making can change hearts and minds, rich or poor. We should therefore make it accessible to everyone. Checkpoint Theatre does this by working with educators to offer dramatised readings of our plays at schools, as well as providing internship opportunities to students. We also offer student discounts to our shows and regularly host free public talks and programmes. **A**

UPCOMING: AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

Checkpoint Theatre's upcoming play *The Heart Comes to Mind*, directed by Ms Wong, will be performed at the Esplanade Theatre Studio from 23 to 26 April. This poignant and poetic piece explores the relationship between an ageing father and his daughter, following the passing of his wife. The production aims to fully immerse the audience through a combination of multisensory elements such as original live music. For more information, go to checkpoint-theatre.org.



➔ PRESCRIBED BY MATH

A term first coined by IBM in 2010, prescriptive analytics is a hot topic today. Considered the final stage in the analytics evolutionary path, it aims to optimise decision-making by analysing past data and predicting unknowns to determine the best course of action forward. A research programme spearheaded by the Institute of Operations Research and Analytics at NUS seeks to advance this process further.

Finding That One in a Million

Geared at advancing prescriptive analytics, a new research programme by NUS' Institute of Operations Research and Analytics (IORA) might make it possible to pinpoint 'perfect' solutions to everyday problems.



“While predictive analytics tells you if it might rain tomorrow, prescriptive analytics tells you to bring an umbrella.”

doing now, and how they might react. This is scenario planning. However, scenario planning is often just a thought exercise with scenarios constructed in a very ad hoc manner. Our challenge is in replicating that thought process, and making it better by anticipating the millions of scenarios and how they will each pan out, based on the internal and external reactions,” explains Prof Teo, who was recently named a fellow of The Institute for Operations Research and Management Sciences (INFORMS) for his stellar contributions in optimising business processes. He is the only fellow named from an Asian institution in the organisation's history. “The objective of the research is to come up with a systematic model that can be applied by decision-makers in different fields,” he says.

THE A-TEAM

This ambitious five-year research programme is a multi-disciplinary effort. Apart from Prof Teo and Prof Toh, other PIs include Professor Melvyn Sim (Engineering '95), Professor and Provost's Chair at the Department of Analytics & Operations, NUS Business School; and Professor Andrew Lim Leong Chye, who heads the Department of Industrial Systems Engineering and Management, Faculty of Engineering. Highly respected in their own fields, the four form the core of a 10-person operation for this multi-disciplinary programme.

Yet, this is a project that takes more than 10 persons to realise. “Most of our research is tested with partner companies where our data comes from,” says Prof Teo, who reveals that these range from regional corporations to Singapore-based enterprises. “While ours is an academic research, our tools still need to be tested. So we use what we develop to solve real-world problems – such as helping a car-sharing service optimise their vehicle deployment, and at the same time demonstrate how our model adds value.” He adds that in this respect, conducting this research programme in Singapore has its advantages: “With the Smart Nation initiative, companies are more receptive to sharing data and there is a willingness to participate. Our country already has the infrastructure for such collaborations.” And while the funding is for a five-year programme, their vision for it goes way beyond. “Right now, only researchers in the community are applying the science of prescriptive analytics. The challenge is to push it into the classrooms, the business schools and engineering schools, and we hope to do this by demonstrating its usefulness,” says Prof Teo. “If our body of work can be integrated into classroom teaching, our students can then go out to deploy some of these models in the public sector.”

One thing is certain: this goal will take diligence and patience to achieve, thus the team is actively pursuing partners who can help realise this long-term vision. “For the programme to have tangible, visible impact, it will take at least 10 years. But we see this as integral to developing Singapore as a smart nation,” says Prof Teo. “A nation isn't smart because it has smart technology, but because it has smart people. And we are trying to make people smarter.” **A**

➔ A STRATEGIC INITIATIVE

Formed in 2016 by current NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85) and then-Deputy President (Research & Technology) and now-Provost and Senior Deputy President Professor Ho Teck Hua (Engineering '85), IORA is part of NUS' Smart Nation Research Cluster to support and complement Singapore's Smart Nation Initiative. It leverages on NUS' strengths in diverse disciplines to create integrated capabilities in modelling and computation and to conduct translational research on business models and practices. IORA also offers a multi-disciplinary PhD programme targeted at the brightest talents within and beyond Singapore, through international collaborations and scholarships.

(Left to right) Professor Andrew Lim Leong Chye; Assistant Professor Li Xiaobo; Assistant Professor Napat Rujeerapaiboon; Professor Teo Chung Piau; IORA Director Professor Melvyn Sim; Head of Department for Department of Analytics & Operations, NUS Business School, Assistant Professor Cheung Wang Chi; IORA Research Director and Deputy Head for Research & Graduate Programmes, Department of Mathematics, Professor Toh Kim Chuan; and IORA PhD Programme Director Professor Andrew Lim Ee Beng

“INTelligence consists not only in knowledge, but also in the ability to apply knowledge in practice.” The Greek philosopher Aristotle might have lived 2,000 years before the age of big data, but his words ring especially true today. Data-mining technology has placed a wealth of information at the fingertips of many – from corporations and individuals to policymakers and business leaders. But what does one do with all that knowledge?

Enter prescriptive analytics. To trace its roots, one might have to go back to 1950, when the ANIAC computer generated the first weather forecast models. By the 1980s, Decision Support Systems that gather and analyse data were already being applied to operations, financial management and strategic decision-making at multiple levels. Fast forward to 2020, and analytics has evolved beyond the descriptive – seen as the first step, which focuses on using historical data to provide a context for understanding information and numbers – and

predictive, which uses current and past data to project possible outcomes of the unknown. “Prescriptive analytics goes a step beyond,” says Professor Teo Chung Piau (Science '90), Director of IORA, and the lead principal investigator (PI) for the new project that has just been granted the Ministry of Education Academic Research Funding, which supports large-scale, multi-disciplinary research. “While predictive analytics tells you if it might rain tomorrow, prescriptive analytics tells you to bring an umbrella.”

TAKING ON COMPLEX PROBLEMS

While prescriptive analytics has been around for some years, it is a field of constant change: “It is an extension of the current movements to make better use of the data – it is an evolution,” explains Prof Teo.



ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES; PHOTO: KELVIN CHIA

And this new research project is advancing that evolution.

Professor Toh Kim Chuan (Science '89), Professor in Science at the Department of Mathematics and recipient of the 2019 President's Science Award – also a lead PI of the project in charge of creating the solver technology to tackle complex problems – elaborates further. He explains that the research takes prescriptive analytics beyond the current tools that largely leverage on linear programming models. Such models are better suited to prescriptive problems where the variables are directly correlated – such as, the relationship between number of man-hours required and the total production cost of a commodity. It also goes beyond model-free approaches that exploit the advancements in machine learning to crunch big data and better understand the trade-offs. Instead, it leverages on IORA's expertise in solving large-scale conic programming, mathematical optimisation and operations research problems to develop state-of-the-art solutions for complex problems.

The project takes a three-pronged approach: developing new algorithms/solver technology; creating platforms for the implementation of the technology; and finally, applying it to real-life problems, which Prof Toh describes as challenges “with millions of scenarios to consider, and where the relationship between different variables is not linear.” “Real-life problems have many unknowns – and decision-making goes beyond a probability theory,” says Prof Teo. He illustrates this with the example of an army going to war: “The commander decides on the course of action to take based on the intelligence gathered on the enemy: what they are



BIG DATA, BIG NUMBERS

According to a November 2019 forecast by market research and advisory company Allied Market Research, the prescriptive analytics market size was valued at **US\$1.96 BILLION** in 2018, and is projected to reach **US\$12.35 BILLION** by 2026, with Asia-Pacific projected to see the highest growth.

Source: alliedmarketresearch.com



Between the lions, from left: NUS Alumni Relations Director Mr Bernard Toh (Architecture '84), NUS Pro Chancellor Mr Po'ad Mattar (Accountancy '71), Prof Tan, NUS Pro Chancellor Dr Chan Sek Keong (Law '61) and University Professor Prof Lim Pin.



Mr Toh exchanging New Year greetings with Ms Chang Hong (Music '07), co-founder of Hitmaker Global Academy.



The arrival of the lions!

RINGING IN THE NEW

Alumni and friends got together to usher in the Year of the Rat at Shaw Foundation Alumni House.

MORE THAN 120 ALUMNI LEADERS, VOLUNTEERS, PARTNERS AND STAFF gathered at the Shaw Foundation Alumni House on 31 January for the annual Chinese New Year Appreciation Dinner hosted by NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85) and NUS Alumni Relations. The atmosphere was joyous and boisterous as guests greeted and caught up with one another. An energetic lion dance performance by the NUS Lion Dance kicked off the celebration followed by a sumptuous dinner at NUS Society's Kent Ridge Guild House. With a theme of 'thanksgiving', Prof Tan shared three things about NUS alumni that he is thankful for: our alumni's stalwart support towards the University's long-established tradition of service and giving back to our community, our alumni's meaningful and significant contributions to society, and our alumni's continual quest for lifelong learning.



Ms Florence Neo (Arts and Social Sciences '93), Director & Head of Alumni Communications and Engagement (on the left) with Ms Noor Quek (Business '72).



Guests with mascots of representing the God of Wealth (extreme right) and this year's Zodiac animal (extreme left).



Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music Dean Prof Bernard Lanskey and NUS Alumni Advisory Board member Ms Janet Ang (Business '82).



Lo hei time! With (from left) NUS Society President Mr Eddie Lee (Law '81), Mr Toh, High Commissioner of Canada Her Excellency Lynn McDonald, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines His Excellency Joseph Del Mar Yap, Dr Chan and spouse Mrs Elisabeth Chan (Law '64), Prof Tan, Mr Mattar (partially blocked) and Deputy High Commissioner of India Mr Ninad Satishchandra Deshpande.



→
A traditional 'face-changing' performance.



Performance by Amos (Arts and Social Sciences '16) and Yohannis (Arts and Social Sciences '14).

Durian Party by BEMA

The Building and Estate Management Alumni (BEMA) Executive Committee hosted a networking session with the staff of NUS School of Design and Environment (SDE) on 18 December 2019. It was an early Christmas gathering but not with the typical treat to turkey and log cake. The king of fruits was the highlight on the dining table, supplemented with an assortment of local *kuehs*, lychees and fresh coconut juice for variety.

The food was good; the company was better. For many, it was a wonderful opportunity to catch up with old friends and lecturers, many of whom they have not seen for years – and what better place to gather than at Singapore's first net-zero energy building, SDE4! Attendees indulged in Mao Shan Wang durians at the Open Plaza on the third level. It was al fresco dining at its best with casual dreamy lighting and the occasional night breeze.



"We continue to maintain a strong link between the alumni and the School, through networking sessions such as this and other fund-raising efforts to support the BEMA Bursary for needy students, the setting up of the SDE Development Fund and support for the SDE 50th Anniversary the year before," shared Dr Teo Ho Pin (Building '85), President of BEMA.

bema.org.sg
[facebook.com/BEMANUS](https://www.facebook.com/BEMANUS)

NUS Geography Majors Tea 2020



Mr Singh chatting with Geography undergraduates.

Mr Alexius Yeo ('10) and Mr Sarabjeet Singh ('11) were special guests at the NUS Geography Majors Tea 2020 on 14 February to talk to students about their career achievements and to inspire them to follow their dreams.

Mr Singh was recently at the Istana where Singapore President Mdm Halimah Yacob (Law '78) presented him a gift for being a nominee of The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year 2019, in recognition of his work at building bridges between people of different ethnic groups in the community as President of the Young Sikh Association in Singapore.

Mr Yeo's dream when he was a student was to plant more fruit



Mr Yeo teaching undergraduates how to make Valentine's Day rosettes from pandan leaves..

trees and vegetables in Singapore. He is now a permaculture practitioner and educator, and also the founder of Project 33, a project aimed at encouraging community gardeners to give away a third of their harvest.

Mr Singh summed up the event perfectly when he called it a "sweet and fruitful homecoming".



Todd Phillips helms a gritty origin story starring Joaquin Phoenix and Robert De Niro that centers around the iconic arch nemesis in an original, standalone story not seen before on screen. Phillips' exploration of Arthur Fleck, a man disregarded by society, is not only a harsh character study, but also a broader cautionary tale.



28 MAY (THU), 7.30PM

AUDITORIUM,
SHAW FOUNDATION ALUMNI HOUSE



Register at:
alumnet.events/MM-may20

NUS Alumni Relations organises regular movie screenings for members of the NUS community, ranging from all-time classics to family favourites. Join us for Movies On The House, friends and family members are welcome too!

Keeping Your *Eyes* and *Gut* Healthy



What You Have Always Wanted to Ask Your *Eye* Doctor

Dr Joy Chan (Medicine '04)
Medical Director & Senior Consultant
International Eye Cataract Retina Centre



Dietary Practice and Your *Gut* – Keeping GI Symptoms Away

Dr Loh Poh Yen (Medicine '07)
Specialist in Gastroenterology and Internal Medicine



Find out how you can keep your eyes and gut healthy with expert advice by specialists from Farrer Park Medical Centre

23 April 2020 (Thu), 7.30pm
Coriander, Shaw Foundation Alumni House
Register at alumnet.events/HWapr2020



"NUS WONDERFUL NIGHT" – NEW YEAR PARTY



A joyful "NUS Wonderful Night"

New Year party was held in Shanghai on the evening of 28 December 2019. Over 120 NUS alumni from East China attended the event and came dressed in "the most in", "the most fashionable" and "the most ingenious" costumes.

The event was jointly held by the NUS Alumni Shanghai Chapter and the NUS Business School East China Alumni Association. Leaders and representatives from Shanghai Overseas Returned Scholars Association, NUS Business School, Global Contact Singapore, and the

Shanghai Branch of Singapore Chamber of Commerce in China were also present.

During their welcome addresses, Chairperson of the NUS Alumni Shanghai Chapter Dr Geng Jing (Public Policy '11) and President of the NUS Business School East China Alumni Association Mr Zhang Runbin (Business '03) shared with attendees the achievements of NUS alumni in the past year and their hope that alumni will embrace lifelong learning and make continuous progress in the new year.

The event was also attended by NUS Vice Provost Professor Susanna Leong (Law '89), who discussed the latest developments at the University with attendees.

NUS Alumni Shanghai Chapter Celebrated 30th Anniversary of Sino-Singapore Diplomatic Relations

The NUS Alumni Shanghai Chapter was invited to attend the annual Open House and Charity Fair of the Singapore Consulate General in Shanghai on 11 January. Dr Geng Jing (Public Policy '11), Chairperson of the Chapter, attended the event with about 50 alumni.

This year's event also celebrated the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Singapore. Jointly sponsored by the Singapore Consulate General in Shanghai, SingCham Shanghai and Singapore Global Network, the event was also attended by Singapore's



Ambassador to China Mr Lui Tuck Yew and Singapore's Consul General in Shanghai Mr Loh Tuck Wai (Arts and Social Sciences '93).

The funds raised from the Charity Fair will be used to help the financially-needy in Pengshui County, Chongqing City. Members of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce in China and alumni from the Nanyang Technological University Singapore also participated in the event.



Speaker:

Ms Angela Huang (Science '85)
Principal Lecturer and Consultant,
Digital Strategy and Leadership Practice
Institute of Systems Science, NUS

19 May 2020 (Tuesday)

7.30pm

Join us [online](https://alumnet.events/TSmay20) at alumnet.events/TSmay20



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How AI is Changing Cybersecurity

"AI is the new electricity!" proclaims Andrew Ng, co-founder of Google Brain. Just as we need to know how to harness electricity safely, we also need to know how to deploy AI securely to power our businesses. In some scenarios, the security of AI systems is a matter of life and death. Hence, it is imperative that AI systems developed are robust and resilient against malice, mischance and misuse. On the flip side, cyber-adversaries can also exploit AI and we need to understand how to counter them.

This talk will provide food for thought in the areas of security of AI systems, AI-powered attacks and use of AI in cybersecurity.



In Celebration of:



Office of Alumni Relations



A war drama set during the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, in which Soviet troops held on to a border stronghold for nine days.



Goes Russian

25 JUNE (THU), 7.30PM

AUDITORIUM,
SHAW FOUNDATION ALUMNI HOUSE



Film rating will be advised on our website

Register at:
alumnet.events/MM-jun20



KENT RIDGE HALL 40TH ANNIVERSARY CARNIVAL: KRISNEYLAND

Kent Ridge Hall (KRH) celebrated its 40th Anniversary on 11 January in a jubilant fashion with a celebratory carnival graced by the Hall's Founding Master Dr Lee Soo Ann (Arts '60). Residents and alumni came together for a fun-filled day and had an opportunity to interact with Dr Lee to understand how hall life was like 40 years ago.

Alumni were excited to come back to KRH, and for some, the present location was new to them as the Hall only relocated here in 2002. Many alumni also brought their families along and it was heartwarming to see them share their hall experiences with their young children. Photographs of the old KRH building are displayed in a mini gallery called 'Memory Walk'. Alumni from Kent Ridge Dance and Rockers also took time off their busy schedules to rehearse and perform at the celebration.

The first-ever Kent Ridge Hall mascot was unveiled during the celebration and it was definitely one of the main highlights of the event. This was a project undertaken by KRH's 40th Junior Common Room Committee Public Relations Director, Mr Howe Lee. The wolf symbolises how Kent Ridgeans stick together through thick and thin, like a pack of wolves. As the saying goes "Once a Kent Ridgean, Always a Kent Ridgean".

"Initially, undertaking the task of creating a mascot for Kent Ridge Hall was a daunting one, there were so many considerations about what the mascot should represent. After many months of meticulous planning, I managed to narrow down the selections and asked residents



Hall Manager, Mr Kelvin Goh (Engineering '15), getting dunked by the daughter of the C Block Resident Fellow, Dr Ivan Low (Science '08).



Past and present Junior and Senior Common Room Committees of Kent Ridge Hall.

and alumni to poll for what best represents them. Looking back, I am very grateful for this opportunity that allowed me to work with my Kent Ridge Family to create something so historic for the hall", said Mr Lee.



The *AlumNUS* thanks all contributors for the articles and photos in Alumni Happenings, showcasing our vibrant alumni community. Please submit your articles at nus.edu.sg/alumnet/TheAlumNUS/AHSubmit.

Malay Studies Alumni Sharing Session

11 undergraduates majoring in Malay Studies and 11 young graduates from the same department met on 17 February for a sharing session on academic life and post-graduation plans.

The alumni shared their personal experiences on how to effectively apply for jobs amid the current economic climate, and how to market their training in the Malay Studies department to future employers. Coming from various sectors like academia, the media industry, public and civil service, and community advocacy, the young professionals affirmed that Malay Studies majors continue to be in demand by employers. As students of the arts, Malay Studies majors can carry their skills in research and writing across multiple industries.



The alumni also advised their juniors to start making plans on their careers early, and reminded them that they have ready access to a network of fellow students and alumni whom they can turn to for advice on university life and jobs. The alumni also shared on their experiences during overseas exchange, internships, winter and summer programmes, and study trips.

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LIFTING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

POSTPONED

Please refer to alumnet.events/UALIVE for updates.

Climate Change: Are Tomorrow's Needs more Important than Today's Reality?

14 April 2020
(Tuesday), 7.30pm
Auditorium,
Shaw Foundation
Alumni House
alumnet.events/UALIVE

Panellists:



Mr Masagos Zulkifli
(Engineering '88)

Minister for the Environment
and Water Resources



A/Prof Leong Ching
(Arts & Social Sciences '92)

Dean of Students, NUS



Mr Abhas Jha

Practice Manager,
Urban and Disaster
Risk Management,
The World Bank



**Student Winner of
Essay Competition**



Mr Viswa Sadasivan
(Arts & Social Sciences '83)

Former NMP,
U@live Moderator and
Chairman

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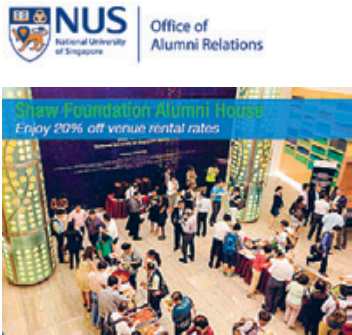
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PRIVILEGES & OFFERS

The *AlumNUS* Card is a digital identity card available to all NUS alumni, which entitles you to a host of exclusive privileges at more than 100 popular retail outlets and providers. This new digital card replaces the physical *AlumNUS* Card. Alumni will be able to download the NUS Card app from Google Play or App Store.

Terms & Conditions apply. The NUS Office of Alumni Relations and the *AlumNUS* Card merchants reserve the right to amend the terms and conditions governing the offers without prior notice. All information is correct at press time. Visit nus.edu.sg/alumnnet/alumnuscard for the latest privileges and promotions.

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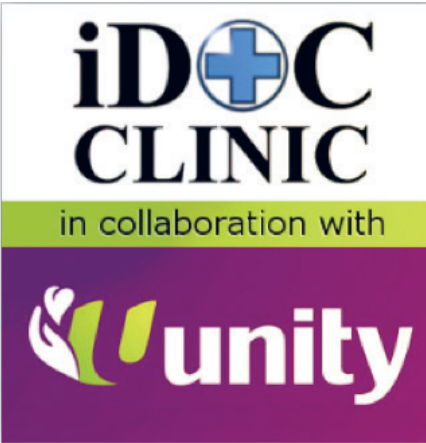


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- Animal welfare
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5 September 2020



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Disco Night



4 July 2020

5.00pm – 9.00pm

**Upper Quadrangle
Bukit Timah Campus**

Register at
alumnet.events/BT-20



We seek your understanding that should the COVID-19 situation escalate, this event may be cancelled or rescheduled. Please visit alumnet.events/BT-20 for updates.