“Given our cosmopolitan complexion, our identity will necessarily be a layered, hybrid one, meshing together ties of ethnicity, religion, culture and nationalities.”

PROFESSOR TAN TAI YONG (ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES ’86), PRESIDENT AND PROFESSOR OF HUMANITIES, YALE-NUS COLLEGE

Making a Beeline for the Top
MR ISAAC TIMOTHY TAY (ENGINEERING ’06)
MR JONATHAN LOW (ENGINEERING ’13)

NAVIGATING THE GREAT DIVIDE
ALUMNI SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS ON INEQUALITY IN OUR COUNTRY, AND HOW TO ADDRESS IT.

WRITING THE GREAT SINGAPORE STORY

AS THE COUNTRY MARKS ITS BICENTENNIAL YEAR, WE LOOK AT THE UNIVERSITY’S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CULTURAL, SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL LANDSCAPE OF THE LION CITY.
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For more information or to read The AlumNUS online, please visit nus.edu.sg/alumnet/magazine.

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Fellow alumni and friends,

It’s going to be another exciting year for alumni relations!

If you have joined us at one of our events, you too would have likely experienced the buzz – alumni seeking to make new friends and networks, and keenly interested in keeping abreast of developments in our alma mater.

Universities know the great value and importance of their alumni. Alumni are NUS ambassadors and we have several reasons to be proud of our alma mater’s many achievements. NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science ’85) and Provost Professor Ho Teck Hua (Engineering ’85) have referred to NUS as a “$500,000 member-strong community – 300,000 of whom are alumni, and the others are students, faculty, researchers and staff. Amid many bright and talented alumni, many make a difference and strong impact on society through their work and efforts.

On this note, I am pleased to announce that we are calling for nominations for the 2019 NUS Alumni Awards. You may know of someone inspiring and deserving of this Award, who is always giving back their time, talent and treasure for the betterment of NUS and society – please visit nus.edu.sg/alumnet/AlumniAwards to nominate these deserving individuals. The University community would like to celebrate and appreciate their achievements and good work.

Across the University, NUS staff managing alumni relations reach out to and engage as many alumni as possible. Our efforts are multiplied thanks to alumni who have stepped forward as volunteer leaders. I would like to introduce once again, Mr Johnny Tan (Science ’82) who has taken on an important role as our NUS Alumni Advisory Board’s Co-Chairperson. In this newly-created role, Mr Tan will work closely with NUS President and my office as well as fellow Advisory Board members to strengthen and deepen the relationship between alma mater and alumni.

Mr Tan has long been an active alumnus. He has served in many leadership capacities including as Chairperson of the Alumni Students Advancement Committee, as well as a former President of NUS’ Management Committee. For his many contributions and unstinting service to NUS, Mr Tan was awarded the NUS Distinguished Alumni Service Award in 2009.

I would also like to take this opportunity to ask our alma mater’s community – especially those living and working overseas – to join me in welcoming our new Overseas Chapters and Circles volunteer leaders (see sidebar). Our volunteers have come together to help fellow alumni and even their families settle into their new cities, meet business contacts and connect with other alumni in the city for regular get-togethers. It is hard work that comes out of sincere goodwill and care for others. And here, I would like to thank Mr Robby Gunawan Tandra (Engineering ’81), Mr Ee Chiong Boon (Arts and Social Sciences ’84) and Dr Ang Woo Sin (Dentistry ’82) who are stepping down as Chairpersons from their respective Overseas Chapters. Thank you. Last but not least, I would like to wish you all a very happy and exciting new year. We are looking forward to meeting you at one of our many alumni events.

Warmest wishes,
Mr Bernard Toh
(Chairpersons ’84)
Director, Alumni Relations
Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (Medicine ’53) is one of the University’s most illustrious alumni.

At 93, he is still always on the go, reading, learning and sharing his insights on a wide range of issues. Tun Dr Mahathir has already achieved much in his career and life, and yet continues to serve Malaysia with distinction and verve, exemplifying service to society and country.

Prime Minister of Malaysia
Yong Amat Berhormat Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (Medicine ’53) was conferred an Honorary Doctor of Laws by NUS Chancellor and President of the Republic of Singapore Madam Halimah Yacob (Law ’78) on 13 November 2018 at a special conferment ceremony, in recognition of his outstanding leadership of Malaysia and his contributions to the longstanding bilateral relations between Singapore and Malaysia.

Tun Dr Mahathir graduated with an MBBS from NUS predecessor institution King Edward VII College of Medicine in 1953. It was also here that he met his future wife Tun Dr Siti, a fellow medical student in the same cohort. Upon graduation, Tun Dr Mahathir served at various government hospitals in Malaysia before setting up his own private medical practice. He was elected to the Malaysian Parliament in 1964.

As Prime Minister of Malaysia from 1981 to 2003, Tun Dr Mahathir oversaw the rapid modernisation and growth of the country. He also shocked informational critics by increasing government spending and pegging the Malaysian ringgit to the US dollar during the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, a bold move that enabled Malaysia to recover from the crisis faster than its neighbours.

It is for reasons such as these that Tun Dr Mahathir is often referred to as the architect of modern Malaysia.

“Tun Dr Mahathir, Malaysia’s longest-serving Prime Minister and the world’s most senior elected statesman, returned to helm his country’s government earlier this year in a stunning demonstration of his abiding love for Malaysia, and his desire to enhance growth and prosperity for his countrymen… NUS salutes his visionary excellence and exceptional leadership of one of Southeast Asia’s most vibrant countries,” said Dean (then Dean Designate) of the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine Professor Chong Yap Seng (Medicine ’86 ’06), who delivered the citation for Tun Dr Mahathir.

In his speech, NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science ’85) touched on Tun Dr Mahathir’s legendary curiosity and spirit of lifelong learning and service, which he said NUS hopes to imbue in all its students. Sharing NUS’ vision to become a leading provider of quality continuing education for professionals in Singapore and the region in preparation for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, he said that the University will look to Tun Dr Mahathir’s “zeal for learning, and his zest for life” for inspiration.

Tun Dr Mahathir said that he would value the honorary doctorate he was bestowed for as long as he lived. In his acceptance speech, he noted how the peaceful separation of Singapore and Malaysia in 1963 was an achievement and something for other countries to learn from. “Normally when nations separate there would be violence, but in the case of Malaysia and Singapore, the separation was smooth, and good relations continue. Those good relations, I believe, have led to me being conferred with this honorary degree,” he said.

Tun Dr Mahathir added that the ties between Malaysia and Singapore have resulted in many new ideas that have contributed to societies and nations across the globe. “We believe that what we do is not for ourselves alone, but for humanity at large. It is our duty to leave this world better than when we arrive. That is something that we must do if we value life itself,” he concluded.

This article was first published on 13 November 2018 in NUS News at news.nus.edu.sg/highlights/malaysias-pm-receives-top-honour-nus, and has been edited for The AlumNUS.
NUS has won the 2018 President’s Volunteerism & Philanthropy Award under the Education Institution category for excellence in encouraging the spirit of giving in NUS and Singapore. This is the first time the University has received the prestigious honour conferred by the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC).

NUS Dean of Students Associate Professor Peter Pang received the award from President of the Republic of Singapore and NUS Chancellor Madam Halimah Yacob (Law ’78) at a special awards ceremony on 24 October 2018 at Capella Singapore.

Referring to the award winners, Mdm Halimah said, “Through their selfless acts, they have shown that volunteerism can be a part of all our lives. When all of us pitch in to help those around us, we can make a greater and longer-lasting impact on society.”

Assoc Prof Pang shared how the University’s culture of service has taken root across the entire NUS community, from freshmen to senior management. Examples include the annual NUS Students’ Union Rag and Flag event; the Public Health Service initiated by students at the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine; and NUS Day of Service. Programmes such as the Asia Centre for Social Entrepreneurship & Philanthropy and the Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Centre contribute by undertaking rigorous and multidisciplinary research with the aim of making a difference to the community in sustainable ways. “In 1905, our University was founded as a small medical school by the community for the community. In these 113 years, our dedication to improving the lives of those around us and making a difference to Singapore and the world has not wavered,” said Assoc Prof Pang.

CED of NVPC Ms Melissa Kwee (EMBA ’09) said that the winners represent a microcosm of the best and beautiful elements of society. “Giving unites people and reminds us that we share a great deal in our common humanity. The winners remind us that each of us can choose to use our power and influence in private and public arenas to uplift, comfort, create and expand our imagination of what it means to do good and do well.”

SAVE THE DATE!

NUS clinched the award for a number of outstanding service projects, including the NUS Day of Service.

**In Selfless Pursuit**

NUS clinched the award for a number of outstanding service projects, including the NUS Day of Service.

Endowed fund honours former NUS President, raises $1.1 million

A fitting acknowledgement of Professor Tan Chorh Chuan’s numerous contributions to the University.

Prof Tan Eng Chye said that NUS is indebted to Prof Tan Chorh Chuan for his visionary leadership and outstanding contributions to the University. Addressing donors at the appreciation dinner, he said, “We thank you for enabling us to honour Chorh Chuan’s commitment to student welfare and advancement through this fund. This fund will perpetuate Chorh Chuan’s legacy by helping to nurture future leaders who will serve country and society, as Chorh Chuan has done impeccably in his many capacities throughout his career.” He added that he hoped their efforts would inspire more to give back to their alma mater.

**SHOW YOUR SUPPORT:**

If you would like to contribute to the endowed fund established in honour of former NUS President Prof Tan Chorh Chuan, please write to askdvo@nus.edu.sg or call +65 6516 8000.

Prof Tan Chorh Chuan has done impeccably in his visionary leadership and outstanding contributions to the University. Addressing donors at the appreciation dinner, he said, “We thank you for enabling us to honour Chorh Chuan’s commitment to student welfare and advancement through this fund. This fund will perpetuate Chorh Chuan’s legacy by helping to nurture future leaders who will serve country and society, as Chorh Chuan has done impeccably in his many capacities throughout his career.” He added that he hoped their efforts would inspire more to give back to their alma mater.

**Endowed fund honours former NUS President, raises $1.1 million**

NUS Alumni, Faculty and Friends have raised more than $1.1 million for a new endowed fund established in honour of former NUS President Professor Tan Chorh Chuan’s (Medicine ’83) dedicated service to the University and nation. Championed by the NUS Alumni Student Advancement Committee (ASAC), the fund will provide scholarships, bursaries and study awards for up to 20 deserving NUS undergraduates a year from Academic Year 2019/20.

Prof Tan Chorh Chuan served as NUS President from 2008 to 2017. In January 2018, Prof Tan Chorh Chuan was conferred the title of University Professor, NUS’ highest academic appointment.

An appreciation dinner was held on 18 October 2018 at the NUS Society Guild Hall to thank the donors for their generosity, during which the cheque was presented to current NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science ’85). “I was able to commence my studies in medicine in 1978 only because of a scholarship. I am deeply honoured and touched that now, 40 years later, there will be an endowed fund established in my honour that would give many students the same opportunity, particularly those who like myself, come from very modest family backgrounds. I am truly grateful to the many friends, alumni and colleagues who have contributed so generously to this fund. It has been a great privilege to serve the University community as NUS President, and to now receive this high honour for which I am very thankful,” said Prof Tan Chorh Chuan.

This article was first published on 10 October 2018 in NUS News at news.nus.edu.sg/highlights/selfless-pursuit, and has been edited for The AlumNUS.
Ms Melissa Kwee (EMBA ’09) wants Singaporeans to have a giving mindset.

Titled “Building a City of Good”, NUS Alumni Relations’ and NUS Society’s (NUSSS) Breakfast Dialogues session at the NUSSS Suntec City Guild House on 26 October 2018 could not have been better timed. Just two days earlier, NUS had been named the winner in the “Educational Institution” category of the President’s Volunteerism & Philanthropy Awards 2018, administered by the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC), in recognition of the University’s excellence in giving. A number of outstanding service projects helped NUS clinch the award, including the NUS Day of Service. The speaker at the dialogue was NVPC’s CEO, Ms Melissa Kwee.

Some 40 young alumni professionals and guests attended the event, which was moderated by Ms. Samantha Ng (Engineering ’10) who is a founder of a number of social enterprises in Singapore. Ms Kwee shared her ideas on how a “City of Good” can be achieved and also took part in a Q&A session with the audience.

WRITING A “NEW STORY” FOR SINGAPORE

Popular perceptions of Singapore tend to revolve around national pastimes like eating and shopping, the “Singlish” slang and, more recently, its depiction in the film Crazy Rich Asians as well as its hosting of the Trump–Kim Summit. Singaporeans are sometimes thought of as being apathetic about issues affecting the wider community, such as social inequality, or indifferent to the well-being of people beyond their immediate circle.

Hoping to influence this narrative, NVPC aims to re-imagine Singapore as a City of Good, where Singaporeans are known for volunteering their time, talent and money to make a positive impact on people’s lives. “I believe that Singaporeans are not apathetic,” said Ms Kwee. Rather, their industrious nature means that they are very busy with their day-to-day lives, leaving Singaporeans unaware of or unexposed to the plight of the less fortunate. Their general penchant for compliance, paizh-nish (fear of embarrassment) and reluctance to intrude on others’ privacy could also be mistaken for apathy or disinterest.

Ms Kwee went on to remind NUS alumni that they are particularly blessed having benefited from a good education. She thus impressed upon those alumni who were present: “What do we do with this great privilege? How can we serve in a way that uplifts not just us but those around us?”

FOSTERING THE GIVING SPIRIT

A collective effort is required to build a City of Good. Ms Kwee elaborated on NVPC’s three-pronged approach involving the public (“agents of change”); organisations, both government agencies and private companies (“the large resource holders and movers”); and leaders (“the mobilisers or galvanisers”). “A City of Good will happen when we have a trusted network of leaders who will each influence their partners [across business and government] to make a change,” she said.

Based on the guiding principle that all forms of awareness should lead to opportunities for action, NVPC runs a number of initiatives to engage all three segments of society and institutionalise giving nationwide. These include:

- Giving.sg – a one-stop portal that matches donors and volunteers with charities.
- 15 Shorts – a film project consisting of 15 short films that tell the true stories of everyday Singaporeans and local philanthropists who performed powerful acts of selflessness between the 1970s and 1990s.
- SG Cares app – an online platform where users can share news, stories, resources and information on volunteering/donating opportunities.

One question on the audience’s minds was how to make volunteering more sustainable. Referencing NVPC’s Learn-Give-Grow framework, Ms Kwee advised people to first find out what needs and opportunities are available, then choose a cause that personally resonates with them. “To inspire that ‘want to give’ feeling in others, they have to see that desire, passion and commitment in you first,” she averred. To young professionals interested in working at non-governmental and non-profit organisations, Ms Kwee recommended that they start out by volunteering: “Get some experience under your belt to decide whether it is a career you really want.”

She also pointed out that the younger generation need not enter the non-profit sector to make a difference; they can pursue a socially-impactful career in the corporate world, too. “The millennial workforce is pushing companies to be socially responsible and ‘do good’. They are changing the landscape,” said Ms Kwee.

UPCOMING EVENT

Breakfast Dialogues:
Mr Martino Tan (Public Policy ’09)
25 Jan, Fri, 7.30am to 9am
Register at alumnet.events/BDJan19

The 200th anniversary of the arrival of Stamford Raffles and William Farquhar in Singapore is an opportunity to tell anew the story of the relationship between Singapore and the United Kingdom, reflect on the major milestones through an long and eventful journey, and imagine future possibilities.

In this collection are lively and fascinating accounts of personalities and events that shaped Singapore from its establishment as an East India Company trading post to the end of the British empire, and a compassionate assessment of the legacy left behind by the British in areas as diverse as trade and commerce, language, education, housing and sports.

Exclusive to The AlumNUS, Prof Kish has shared with us why he embarked on writing 200 Years as well as his favourite sections from the book. Read the article at nus.edu.sg/alumnet/200YearsKGK/ community/bookcorner.

Available at all major bookstores.
TALL ORDER
ESM Goh Chok Tong
(Arts ’64)

Tall Order tells the extraordinary story of the life and career of Singapore’s second Prime Minister over half a century, recounting how ESM Goh Chok Tong rose through the combination of strength, wit and a political nous which many, including himself, did not know he had. In this first of two volumes, ESM Goh navigated years of a challenging apprenticeship to Mr Lee Kuan Yew, scoring numerous policy successes but also suffering political blows and humiliation.

In the hands of acclaimed author and journalist Mr Peh Shing Huei (Arts ’99), this authorised biography reveals his challenging apprenticeship to Mr Lee Kuan Yew, scoring numerous policy successes but also suffering political blows and humiliation. In the hands of acclaimed author and journalist Mr Peh Shing Huei (Arts ’99), this authorised biography reveals his challenging apprenticeship to Mr Lee Kuan Yew, scoring numerous policy successes but also suffering political blows and humiliation.

The book is available at all major bookstores including Popular, Times the Bookstore, Kinokuniya and MPH. More information can be found at: worldscientific.com/worldbooks/10.1142/11149

Golden Jubilee of UM-NUS Inter-University Tunku Chancellor Golf Tournament

Left: Prof Halmah with HRH Nazrin Muazzuddin Shah.
Yacob (Law ’78), President of the Republic of Singapore and NUS Chancellor; and His Royal Highness Sultan Nazrin Muazzuddin Shah, UM Chancellor, gracing the event.

Among those who attended the event were NUS Pro-Chancellors Mr Poh Shing Huei (Accountancy ’64) and Dr Chan Sok Keong (Law ’91), NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science ’85), and UM Vice-Chancellor Datuk Abdul Rahim Hashim.

NUS Alumni Relations would like to express our appreciation to NUS Golf Captain Mr K C Lim, who will be stepping down after eight years at the helm.

27TH NUS ALUMNI & FRIENDS GOLF TOURNAMENT

The shared roots and strong ties between the University of Malaya (UM) and NUS are once again evident at the 50th UM-NUS Inter-University Tunku Chancellor Golf Tournament held from 26 to 28 October 2018. 65 NUS golfers and 58 UM golfers met in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and after two days of golf, Team UM emerged the winner of this year’s game. The score was UM 11.5 to NUS 8.5, a very close game. Both universities were honoured to have Her Excellency Halmah and NUS Alumni Relations

25 January (Friday), 7.30am, NUS Suntec City Guild House, 3 Temasek Boulevard, #02-401, Suntec City Mall (Tower 5), Singapore 038983

Registration fee:
$10 (Alumnus) $15 (Guest)

Register at: alumnet.events/BDJan19

PROGRAMME
7.30am  Light Breakfast & Networking
8.00am  Sharing by Mr Martino Tan
8.30am  Q&A Session
9.00am  End

What are the ways to creating fun, insightful and credible online content in Singapore? We now live in an age where information, views and ideas flow more freely than ever before, because anyone with a connection to the Internet can be part of it and contribute to it.

In the era of “fake news”, Mothershipt takes a new initiative in providing a new sense of confidence in the online world. This is where the idea of “fake news” is a developing trend in the era of Singapore. By galvanising givers and changing minds the narrative on the idea completely, and the ideal response should be an opposing idea or a more attractive belief.

Mr Martino Tan is the Executive Director of MotherShip.sg. He co-founded MotherShip.sg in 2013, which went on to become one of the fastest rising news and lifestyle sites in Singapore. MotherShip.sg attracts a monthly viewership of 10 million,
China Film Festival

THE SEVENTH CHINA FILM FESTIVAL, jointly organised by the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China, Singapore China Friendship Association and NUS Alumni Relations, returned for the seventh time to Shaw Foundation Alumni House from 11 to 14 September 2018. The Festival showcased four acclaimed films – Operation Red Sea, Legend of the Demon Cat, Our Time Will Come and Battle of Memories.

Close to 200 guests attended the opening night of the Festival, including President of the Singapore China Friendship Association Professor Phua Kok Khoo; Minister Counsellor Mr Zhang Xumin and Cultural Counsellor Mr Que Xiaohua from the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Singapore and Chinese and Oriental Languages Information Processing Society (COLIPS).

More than 1,100 alumni and friends attended the Festival, and 40 members of the audience also went home with attractive lucky draw prizes, sponsored by the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in Singapore and Chinese and Oriental Languages Information Processing Society (COLIPS).

FROM INFANCY TO ADOLESCENCE

SCREEN TIME IN KIDS -

Tips ↓

Delay screen time as much as possible, till older.

Create no-screen zones.

Be positive screen time role models.

Review what your children watch.

No screen time 1.5 hours prior to bedtime.

The amount of exposure to electronic devices that children have these days is a concern for many parents. At this talk organised by NUS Alumni Relations on 21 September 2018, Dr Aishworiya Ramkumar (Medicine ‘09) shared with attendees at Shaw Foundation Alumni House as well as Facebook viewers of the live streaming of the talk, the potential positive and negative effects of screen time in children. The audience also learned about strategies to mitigate the negative effects, and gained additional insights during the Q&A session.

SKILLSFUTURE ADVICE WORKSHOP

Global Trends in Supply Chain and Logistics

TRADITIONAL SUPPLY CHAINS are being reshaped by macroeconomic trends and emerging technologies, and this in turn affects both the industry and jobs. More than 80 alumni attended this informative session held on 11 October 2018 at the Shaw Foundation Alumni House, where Associate Professor Goh Puay Guan, NUS School of Continuing and Lifelong Education (SCALE) and Department of Analytics & Operations at NUS Business School, shared on the challenges and opportunities presented by these changes.

With an overview of the various industrial revolutions and the current confluence of technologies broadly known as Industry 4.0, find out how companies and this in turn affects both the industry and jobs. More than 80 alumni attended this informative session held on 11 October 2018 at the Shaw Foundation Alumni House, where Associate Professor Goh Puay Guan, NUS School of Continuing and Lifelong Education (SCALE) and Department of Analytics & Operations at NUS Business School, shared on the challenges and opportunities presented by these changes.

INDUSTRY 4.0 -

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW AND CURRENT TRENDS

NUS Alumni Relations partners NUS School of Continuing and Lifelong Education (SCALE) and SkillsFuture Engage Office to bring to NUS alumni a workshop where you can learn more about Industry 4.0, as well as how you can reskill and upskill through the NUS Lifelong Learners (L³) programme and SkillsFuture initiatives.

With an overview of the various industrial revolutions and the current confluence of technologies broadly known as Industry 4.0, find out how companies and individuals can make sense of technological innovation through recent business history and developments.

Date: 15 January (Tuesday)
Time: 7.30pm
Venue: Coriander, Shaw Foundation Alumni House

Register at alumnet.events/SFJan19

Tips ↓

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**EDUCATION AS A SOCIAL LEVELLER?**

**U@live**

Education has always been viewed as the most effective catalyst for social mobility by equalising opportunities. This, especially when education is interfaced with meritocracy. However, this assumption is increasingly being questioned. There is growing concern that education – in its current form – is, inadvertently, contributing to social stratification, even as it helps social mobility. The argument is that it gives a distinct advantage to the privileged in society, creating an upward and downward spiral. How can we rethink and remodel education so that it remains an effective social leveller?

**PANELISTS:**
- Mr Ong Ye Kung
  - Minister for Education
- Mr Andreas Schleicher
  - Director for Education & Skills, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- Prof Tan Tai Yong
  - President, Yale-NUS College

**MODERATOR:**
Mr Viswa Sadasivan
- Arts and Social Sciences '83
- U@live Chairman

**Register/Contact:**
- campuscouples@alummail.nus.edu.sg
- delon.lim@nus.edu.sg

**Mission: Impossible - Fallout (PG13)**

**Movies On The House**

With the world at risk, Ethan Hunt and his IMF team are forced to become reluctant partners with a hard-hitting CIA agent as they race against time to stop the nuclear fallout.

**NUS' Celebration of Love & Appreciation Dinner**

The event welcomes NUS alumni couples to celebrate their love and appreciates those who have supported bursary funds for needy students in NUS.

**U@live**

Returning due to popular demand, join us to enjoy the very best of Indian films. This film festival is jointly presented by the High Commission of India in Singapore and NUS Alumni Relations. (Movie titles to be announced nearer to date)

**Register/Contact:**
- delon.lim@nus.edu.sg
- gabriella@nus.edu.sg

**Johnny English Strikes Again (PG)**

**Movies On The House**

Rowan Atkinson (“Mr. Bean”) returns as the bumbling secret agent, Johnny English, in the third installment of the beloved spy spoof franchise.

**Register/Contact:**
- delon.lim@nus.edu.sg
- cassandraluaqy@nus.edu.sg
FOCUS

SEARCHING FOR THE SINGAPOREAN IDENTITY

TEXT BY WANDA TAN

Two hundred years after Sir Stamford Raffles established a trading port here, Singaporeans are still thinking about who we really are as a country. And that — according to the NUS academics and alumni across various disciplines — may actually be what unites us. We look at their efforts to preserve, promote and draw perspectives on what makes us Singaporean.

MARK THE DATE!

1. THE FUTURE OF OUR PASTS FESTIVAL from 16 February to 17 March. Led by Yale-NUS College, the festival entails young Singaporeans exploring and reimagining diverse areas of Singapore history, covering spaces, architecture, communities, language, race, relationships and the arts. Their projects will be presented via a range of artistic mediums at various locations around the city.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG EXHIBITION AT FORT CANNING PARK. To reopen in June, the 17-year-old site will be refreshed. An updated edition of SINGAPORE: A 700-YEAR HISTORY (National Archives of Singapore, 2009), co-authored by Prof Tan Tai Yong, will be published in the second half of 2019, the re-issued hard copy will be accompanied by the launch of an interactive e-book version.

3. IPS CONFERENCE ON THE SINGAPORE BICENTENNIAL in September.

Under these circumstances, questions surrounding national identity are swirling around. What binds us together as a country? Is our collective identity strong enough to withstand a splintering of the population along ethnic and religious lines? Does the idea of ‘Singaporean-ness’ even matter, at a time of increasing globalisation and migration?

Posing these and other questions to NUS alumni and faculty, The AlumNUS uncovers their perspectives on Singapore’s history, culture and identity, and how they derive national pride.

TAKING THE LONG VIEW

Ask any five individuals why they are proud to be a Singaporean, and they likely will give different, equally valid answers. Foodies may wax lyrical about hawkers’ dishes like chilli crab and chicken rice. Nature lovers may point to the island’s rich biodiversity, with native flora and fauna found in numerous parks and nature reserves. Others may single out Singapore’s famously-efficient public transportation and infrastructure, its globally-admired economy, its commitment to racial harmony and meritocracy, or cultural oddities like Singlish.

These aspects will be explored in SBO’s year-long events and activities, planned with the support of a private-public advisory panel. Professor Tan Tai Yong (Arts and Social Sciences ’86), President and Professor of Humanities (History) at Yale-NUS College, is among those sitting on the panel. As a historian, he feels strongly about using the occasion to trace our roots further back in time — stopping not at 1819, but all the way back to the founding of the Kingdom of Singapura by the Srivijayan prince Sang Nila Utama in 1299.

“To disregard a past that precedes 1819 is to abandon a crucial link with the region around Singapore and miss out a large part of our heritage,” argues Prof Tan, noting that the intervening period between 1299 and 1819 saw Singapore develop into a major maritime hub. “We are not simply a construct of colonialism, although the legacies of British rule have shaped our society and polity in fundamental ways. Colonialism was built on a pre-colonial past. We need to see these complex layers of history, shaping Singapore over a long period of time and making it into what it is today.”

EVEN THOSE WITH A CURSORY KNOWLEDGE OF Singaporean’s history are probably familiar with the events of 29 January 1819. It was on this day 200 years ago that a British expedition led by Sir Stamford Raffles landed in Singapore. Their arrival heralded the establishment of a British trading post on the island — and given the lasting impact of this event, it is roundly agreed that this marked the birth of modern Singapore.

Interestingly, Singapore’s older past — that stretches back to the late 13th Century — has not been forgotten either. As stated by the specially-formed Singapore Bicentennial Office (SBO) in the Prime Minister’s Office: “The Bicentennial is an opportunity to reflect on 200 years of history from 1819, one of the key turning points that changed our trajectory. It will also examine the 500 years prior to 1819, as these formative years lend context to our evolution. ... It will be an opportunity for us to reflect on how our nation came to be, how far we have come, and how we can go forward together.”

Under these circumstances, questions surrounding national identity are swirling around. What binds us together as a country? Is our collective identity strong enough to withstand a splintering of the population along ethnic and religious lines? Does the idea of ‘Singaporean-ness’ even matter, at a time of increasing globalisation and migration?

Posing these and other questions to NUS alumni and faculty, The AlumNUS uncovers their perspectives on Singapore’s history, culture and identity, and how they derive national pride.

TAKING THE LONG VIEW

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This topic is also the focus of Prof Tan’s research as the NUS Institute of Policy Studies’ (IPS) S R Nathan Fellow for the Study of Singapore. "The IPS–Nathan Lectures provide an opportunity for me to elaborate on what I consider are the enduring themes shaping Singapore’s long history — our geographical location, the rise and decline of regional powers, and globalisation of commerce and migration," he explains. In his view, delving into these forces will foster greater historical consciousness among the public.

Reinforcing Prof Tan’s view is another NUS faculty member, Professor John Miksic from the Department of Southeast Asian Studies. The American archaeologist led Singapore’s first archaeological dig at Fort Canning Park in 1984. Since then, he has unearthed many artefacts in subsequent excavations at the park as well as other historically-significant sites around Singapore, ranging from a headless horseman statue made of lead in a style typical of 14th-century Javanesse art to an ancient Chinese bowl. These relics provide evidence that Singapore enjoyed close relations with other countries as early as the 14th century.

Prof Miksic theorises, “Singapore’s pre-colonial culture seems to have been dynamic and well-connected, not an isolated backwater. Raffles himself may have been influenced by the idea that Singapore already had an ancient history, and was therefore a favourable place to revive commercial activity linking India, China and neighbouring Southeast Asian countries. This may provide confidence that Singapore’s existence was not so fragile that it could easily collapse following the withdrawal of the colonial power from the island.”

It seems not that much separates pre-colonial Singapore from the independent Republic we see today. Singapore was a thriving port city long before Raffles set foot on the island. Moreover, Singapore’s main ethnic groups were already interacting with each other and living together in harmony seven centuries ago. As we now ponder the city-state’s future, the twin forces of economic sophistication and multiculturalism continue to figure prominently in perceptions of Singapore.

THE ECONOMIC ‘MIRACLE’
Singapore’s economic success was recently underlined in the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Report 2018, which ranked the nation second out of 140 economies, bested only by the United States. This is no accident or a stroke of good luck, but rather the result of hard work and ingenuity by industry veterans and young upstarts alike.

No stranger to business circles, Mr Philip Yeo (Science ’74) credits “a transparent and clean government” for Singapore’s conducive business environment. He is best known for chairing government agencies including SPRING Singapore, the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) and the Economic Development Board. It was he who spearheaded the establishment of a petrochemical cluster on Jurong Island, the Biopolis and Fusionopolis science and technology hubs, as well as Singapore’s participation in various overseas industrial parks.

Now in the private sector, Mr Yeo, 72, serves as Chairman of two companies: Economic Development Innovations Singapore, which works with other governments and investors to accelerate economic development worldwide; and Accuron Technologies, a global precision engineering and technology group. However, his core motivation remains unchanged. “My career has been focused on building up Singapore’s industries and creating jobs. In that sense, I am contributing to national development,” says Mr Yeo. He is also helping to nurture the next generation of leaders through the Philip Yeo Initiative (PYI), which focuses on hard work and ingenuity by industry veterans and young upstarts alike.

ARE WE ONE PEOPLE?
There are, however, some who debate whether 1819 is a milestone even worth celebrating. One person who takes a critical view of it is Mr Elshak Kausikan (Arts and Social Sciences ’78), a retired diplomat and Chairman of NUS Middle East Institute. He makes the case that Singapore identity was formed only after 1965: “Before Singapore became independent, it was a colony. Its people were subjects, not citizens. Those who came here were in principle serfs, not settlers. This is a significant shift from the idea of a Singaporean Chinese more than being a Chinese? Do they value their Singaporean identity more than their Hindu or Malay heritage?”

Above all, he notes, national identity is “a product of choice.” It will change and adapt as the country matures. People are bound to have differing opinions on the matter. As long as we engage with one another in common spaces, be it through open dialogue or the National Service, then there should be no need to be an exercise in nation building.

We have four official languages to represent the main ethnic groups in the country, while at the same time fully embracing the language of our colonial past. English.

Prof Arno Paik, Associate Vice President (University and Global Relations), NUS
Language loss, a current universal phenomenon in the face of globalisation, is intertwined with a loss of identity and its associated cultural elements.

Dr Nala Lee, Assistant Professor, NUS Department of English Language and Literature.

“Language loss, a current universal phenomenon in the face of globalisation, is intertwined with a loss of identity and its associated cultural elements,” says Dr Lee on the importance of conserving heritage languages. Even NUS is taking up the mantle through initiatives such as NUS Baba House, a restored townhouse on Neil Road that displays the early 20th century domestic life and culture of the Peranakan Chinese. Adds Dr Lee, “NUS Baba House is an incredible experience that gives a sense of fixed place and time. I would say that the work we do is complementary. My work focuses on language, and innately intangible culture, while NUS Baba House showcases tangible culture.”

The power of language, and of the arts in general, as an intangible marker of identity is also remarked upon by Mr Wong. “I think that as our society has achieved economic progress and attained material wealth, people now are discovering this is not enough,” he muses. “People yearn for a deeper, emotional connection – and the arts provides the space for this to develop. It goes beyond the easily-knowable and deals with things that are hard to articulate, like identity.”

Putting ‘Heart’ in the heartlands

Emotional attachment to the homeland can also be established through careful planning of the built environment. This is what 80 year-old Dr Liu Thai Ker, Singapore’s former master planner, strove for during his leadership of the Housing and Development Board (HDB) from 1969 to 1989, and later the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) from 1989 to 1992. Dubbed the “architect of modern Singapore”, he was responsible for designing the self-sufficient new towns, neighbourhoods and public housing precincts with which Singapore has become synonymous.

“Through intelligent city planning and a technocratic government, we managed to achieve four goals by 1985: eliminate slums; solve the problem of homelessness; remove ghettos by mixing people across different social classes; and get rid of ethnic enclaves by integrating the different communities,” says Dr Liu, founding Chairman of Morrow Architects & Planners Pte Ltd and an Adjunct Professor at NUS School of Design and Environment. Despite its high population density, Singapore also has flowing traffic, clean air and good infrastructure, creating the conditions for a safe and comfortable life. “The Government has created ‘vertical kampungs’ with common spaces such as void decks in HDB blocks, as well as facilities like shopping malls and playgrounds,” comments Dr Liu. “It’s up to the residents themselves to make it a real kampung. They must have the desire to interact and create a sense of community spirit, and to make the city loveable as well as liveable.”

Just as important as community cohesion, notes Dr Liu, is the preservation of our cultural heritage. “Instead of imitating Western architecture, I hope contemporary architects will create ‘historical buildings of the future’ that are not only modern but reflect Singapore’s tropical locality and multi-ethnic makeup,” he says. Bishan New Town has HDB blocks with pitched roofs and pastel hues that evoke Malay kampungs, while in Chinatown, Dr Liu has designed a shopping centre with Chinese elements on the façades.

Conservation of a different sort has been a lifelong pursuit for naturalist Professor Leo Tan (Science ‘68), Director (Special Projects) at NUS Faculty of Science and an Advisor for the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum (LKC NHM). “To me, identity stems from familiarity with my surroundings, what I want to see things that I grew up with and remember, such as the karts in my childhood home and the Tembusu heritage tree at the Singapore Botanic Gardens,” says Prof Tan, 74.

During his decade-long stint as Chairman of National Parks Board (1998–2007), Prof Tan successfully fought for Labrador Park to be gazetted as a nature reserve and championed the development of Gardens by the Bay. Since returning to his alma mater, he has led several projects to enhance appreciation for the environment and preserve Singapore’s rich natural history. Highlights include initiating the publication of the Singapore Biodiversity Encyclopedia, supporting mangrove regeneration in Pulau Semakau, conducting a comprehensive marine biodiversity survey and establishing LKC NHM.

All of this is happening side by side with Singapore’s evolution from a ‘Garden City’ to a ‘City in a Garden’ and now to a ‘Biophilic City in a Garden’. As Prof Tan explains, “There must be natural attractions to help people feel rejuvenated and improve their wellbeing, so that they will want to stay in Singapore. It’s not just about building hospitals and schools, but also having recreational spaces to unwind. This creates a sense of belonging or comfort, and of being at rest wherever you are.”

It’s up to the residents themselves to make it a real kampung. They must have the desire to interact and create a sense of community spirit, and to make the city loveable as well as liveable.
In your view, how serious is the problem of social inequality in Singapore?

THADEUS: There is an obvious social divide between the diners at my restaurant and those who serve them. But the divide is apparent even among staff — and it might create friction at times. So while I am aware of the social inequality, it is something I’ve come to accept.

HAROLD: Social and income inequality are different but related — and the latter is very glaring when I go through the audited accounts of some of the SMEs that I consult for. It is common to have a massive divide between the average wage and that of the top earners — and it is just a few on top with the lion’s share. This income inequality could then lead to social inequality.

KOK HOW: It is more prevalent now. Our country was built on meritocracy in a time when most people are on the same playing field, meritocracy creates an incentive structure to move up. However, in our current state of development, the rich will get richer — because they have the money to keep growing, and also the networks they have are of a different calibre.

SHERENE: Through my work (counselling hospital patients) I see a wide gap between the haves and have-nots. This is not just a product of income disparity, but also family dysfunctions passed down from generation to generation — such as drug abuse, mental health issues and family violence that get passed on. A really bright child growing up in an underprivileged family might not have anyone to help him to realise his potential, or have access to the same opportunities as his peers. So it is not just about closing the income gap but also creating a support system for the underprivileged to break out of their cycles.

Have you personally experienced any effects of social inequality?

HAROLD: I didn’t feel it acutely in school. You knew back then that some friends were wealthier than others and there were some disadvantaged cases. But at the same time I have never differentiated myself by saying that I would only mix with those with good grades or bigger houses. We lived in a HDB flat — and public housing is mixed-income housing: within one block you’d have people like my parents, the typical middle-class teachers, my neighbours the ‘aspirationals’ who upgraded quickly — and the serial killer Adrian Lim! National Service is a leveller, but while you might be taken aback by the brash behaviour of some from disadvantaged backgrounds, you never feel like you are more superior.

SARAVANAN: It took a few months to connect with the Singaporean students at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) — simply because I am a poly graduate and not from Raffles Junior College (RJC) or NUS. Now that we are friends, I invite them to my Deepavali parties, but I see little interaction between them and my poly mates. My poly and NS friends are just there to have a good time and enjoy the food, whereas my LKYSPP friends — many of them government scholars — are there more to network with the professors or my friends from abroad.

THADEUS: In a way, social inequality is an outcome of people stratifying themselves according to their “class” and forming their own little enclaves of wealth and network.

Speaking of “class”, what do you think is your own class position?

HAROLD: I am a classic case of the middle class, one who has moved from public housing to private housing. Property has always been an indicator of class position, but condominiums have become such a normal part of the housing landscape in Singapore that the distinction between public and private is no longer so wide.

SARAVANAN: I would say I am at the low-end because I am a job-seeker. Yet at the same time I am part of a family that is middle or upper middle class. I am a bit different in that while I graduated from LKYSPP, I came from a polytechnic background. Education is an obvious qualifier in social status, but so is overseas experience — which I gained working as a journalist in Europe for 10 years. Somehow, because of my experience I am perceived to be of ‘higher’ social standing, even though I am essentially the same person (as I was coming out of poly)! The change in how people see me is like night and day, and I think it is unfair, especially when I see a big divide between the opportunities and social mobility that my old poly friends have compared to those I know from university.

SHERENE: To be honest, those who are truly in the lowest ranks of society won’t even have the head space to be thinking about abstract things like social inequality. Their concerns are very bread and butter: “How am I going to pay for my children’s meals, or my phone bill?”

Does our education system serve as a leveller?

HAROLD: Public housing and education have been intended as tools to reduce inequality and prove that meritocracy works. However, with inherent class or family issues, you get very disparate outcomes. Is it a problem with the system? Or a bigger issue? I am not sure.

KOK HOW: The problem doesn’t lie with the school, but with society. Even though the ministry is slowly changing the evaluation system, we place so much emphasis on grades and certifications. Just take the Civil Service for example: whether or not you have a Masters degree, or a degree from a local university or an Ivy League school, all translates to different pay grades.

THADEUS: Though education is meant to level the playing field, it is very stratified — for example, the chances of you getting into the elite schools situated below Ethiopia and Afghanistan. This has sparked debates — some in agreement while others in rebuttal to the report — in Parliament, in letters to news editors, and on social media.

Navigating the Great Divide

In the wake of recent findings and public sentiment, combating social inequality has even been declared a “national priority” in Singapore. Our alumni weigh in on this hot-button issue.
The very notion of meritocracy means that rewards are linked to achievements, which means that inequality is "institutionalised" in a way. Should we therefore do away with meritocracy?

SARAVANAN: There is partial and pure meritocracy, and our system could be the next best thing. When I was living overseas, I saw that Singapore is regarded quite highly as compared to other counties in the region. Our social mobility is actually better than other countries in ASEAN. Yes, indeed, the majority of the population doesn't make it to university – do you cater to the bottom 60% or the top 20%? We cater to the 20%, because it strengthens the ultimate economic outcome and success of the country.

KOK HOW: I welcome unemployment subsidy. This is because I believe that the social security net promotes the entrepreneurship you see in Western societies. This risk-taking mentality is what we need in our current stage of development. On top of that, being risk-takers wired to be different, entrepreneurs are also less likely to care about paper qualifications, thus creating an environment that can allow people to prove their worth differently.

SHERENE: There are, indeed, family service centres and community organisations to support families in need. However, there are those who fall through the cracks because they don't fit the bill on paper. Most of the underprivileged want to rise out of their situation, but some of them are mentally trapped, thinking that if their grandfather and father were like this, this is how they will be too. They are not shown that there is something else to work towards. That said, some are very motivated and resilient, and don't feel trapped. I think it is dependent on the individual to rise above – public systems can only work to a certain point.

KOK HOW: A social safety net might sound fiscally irresponsible but with the dose system, a bigger group of people won't get trapped by financial circumstances to explore new things and, as Kok How pointed out, explore setting up their own businesses. Of course there would be those who abuse the system, but it is also an effective support system for those who seek to improve their lives.

As Thadeus mentioned, Oxfam attributed our dismal ranking this year to the introduction of a new indicator on “harmful tax practices” to its previous checklist of indicators. Should our maximum tax rate of 22 per cent be raised?

KOK HOW: I am willing to pay more if it is used to produce a social safety net. The role of a government is to internalise the externalities. There are always things that cannot be solved through market forces, and taxing the rich to provide something for the poor can help to level the playing field.

KOK HOW: Instead of taxing income, tax wealth to level out the disparity – such as taxes on second, third or fourth houses; things that the rich use to accumulate wealth.

SARAVANAN: I don’t think you should tax wealth or income more because I don’t think the onus is on the citizen to solve the problem. I am basing this on the fact that the country has the money to solve whatever issues it wants to focus on. At the same time, I am opposed to raising taxes based on my experience living in Denmark, which has one of the highest tax rates in the world. The citizens feel extremely entitled because of the huge amounts of taxes they pay. They are also very protective of their entitlements and anybody who comes from outside of the system is immediately exclude – as a foreign student I had to wait for every single Danish student to find their housing before I was allowed to get mine. Such a system does not work for a trading economy.

THADEUS: We should also realise that social inequality is a problem all societies face. This issue has only been brought up because the government sees it as an economic problem – just as how diabetes can impact our economy. So, we are approaching this problem – systemic of human nature – like a math problem, with economic outcomes as the focus. At the same time, it is more than just a matter of taxing the top to support the bottom. The social issue to address is a sense of privilege that overrides it all.

0.356
Singapore’s Gini co-efficient in 2018, after accounting for taxes and transfers.
This is a number between 0 and 1, where 0 = perfect equality (where everyone has the same income) and 1 = perfect inequality (only one person has all the income, everyone else has none).
Healthy-Eating Crusader

Having triumphed over adversity and turned the lessons learned into a business model, Ms Roslyn Teng (Yale-NUS ’19) is certainly not nuts — she just wants to sell you some.

Born of Passion
Ms Teng, the chief marketing officer, and her friend Ms Robin Lim, who is the company’s chief executive, did not set up the company to become rich. Made Real came out of a campaign by the two co-founders to raise awareness about eating disorders and the need for balanced diets back when they were 19. “We wanted to do something impactful with our time before uni started,” says Ms Teng. According to her, their campaign impacted thousands of people but the pair soon realised they needed a viable business model in order to make a sustained difference.

Close to the Bone
The pair had very personal reasons for wanting to make an impact as both had struggled with eating disorders when they were younger. As a teenager, Ms Teng had both anorexia and bulimia while Ms Lim engaged in extreme dieting. “It was a painful period both psychologically and physically,” says Ms Teng. She overcame her issues with support from friends and family and by reworking how she approached food. Living with bulimia and anorexia, then recovering from it left a deep mark on her. “Without that experience, there would be no Made Real,” she says. She is now a big believer in healthy eating and has been a vegetarian for over five years.

We were thick-skinned though. Because of that we could push through — even if we had 99 ‘nos’ and one ‘yes’, we would persist.

Going Local
Besides offering healthy snacks, the company works with independent local producers, thus trying to extend the ‘good karma’ in the production process as well. Ms Teng says her philosophy is about “maximising societal and personal benefit and minimising societal and personal cost. We’re in the business of doing good, by promoting balanced lifestyles (no extreme diets, or unrealistic body ideals) and physical and mental health.”

The Model
Today, the company focuses on B-to-B e-commerce, though they still take orders from individuals via the website. They have kitchen partners who do the food preparation, while the packaging is done in-house. A third party handles the distribution. This is a far cry from the company’s early days when the two young women even did their own deliveries.

“We started off at 19 without any work or business experience — but we were bold.” There were numerous challenges, from finding suppliers to pitching to customers to try their products. “We were thick-skinned though. Because of that we could push through — even if we had 99 ‘nos’ and one ‘yes’, we would persist.”

Double Lives
What made things doubly hard for the duo was that they had to juggle with getting Made Real off the ground with going to school. Ms Teng was studying at Yale-NUS College while Ms Lim was at Singapore Management University. Ms Teng, who majored in psychology and economics, says it was incredibly hard balancing both school and startup. “It had days where I’d wake up, and the first thing I would do was open my laptop, reply mails and take calls, then attend classes non-stop, after which I’d pass out at night, laptop still in hand.”

She had chosen Yale-NUS because she wanted to get a degree while running Made Real at the same time. Her original plan had been to do an degree in the UK but when the company started picking up steam, she decided that staying in Singapore would make more sense. “It was a question of evaluating the personal growth I could get from traditional education versus embarking on a start-up university that literally had no graduates. The answer was obvious. I also wanted international experience, beyond the bubble of the local schooling system.”
Mr Jonathan Low and Mr Isaac Timothy Tay are (together with Mr Joel Sing) the co-founders of honestbee, an online grocery and food delivery service founded in 2015, that has since branched out to include a concept service, a parcel delivery service for B2B clients and most recently a physical retail space, habitat by honestbee.

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Elected as NewGen Retail by the company, the supermarket and food hall is a trendy marketplace with a lofty ceiling, lots of natural light, and lots of Instagrammable nooks. But beyond the back-to-basics facade is a high-tech heart. You will need a QR code from the honestbee app to enter, and in this completely cashless environment, you will need to link your credit card to the app and pay through honestbee’s mobile payment wallet. To top it all, robots will scan and pack your groceries at what is touted as the world’s first fully-automated collection point.

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In contrast is 37 year-old Mr Isaac Tay, fellow co-founder and VP of Special Projects for the company. Dressed smartly in a fitted linen shirt paired with well-worn sneakers, he walks with urgency, talks in rapid-fire fashion, and is as ready to go as a round-up spring. “We are very different,” says Mr Tay with a chuckle. “In University, Jon was a very good student, whereas I had a part-time job and spent more time outside of school than in it!”

A NEW NORMAL

Mr Low’s NUS experience aside, the two men have another thing in common: both have a flair for performing. Mr Tay was a founder of local improvisational comedy troupe The Latecomers, and still does stand-up comedy these days, whereas Mr Low is a self-taught magician who appeared on a local television series M for Magic pulling coins out of an iPad screen. Funny that he should be getting everybody to be paying money through the screen of their smartphones at their latest venture habitat by honestbee.

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“A lot of our imagination comes from playing magic,” says Mr Low. “Mr Tay is a magician who appeared on a local television series M for Magic pulling coins out of an iPad screen. “We are very different,” says Mr Tay with a chuckle. “In University, Jon was a very good student, whereas I had a part-time job and spent more time outside of school than in it!”

Honest To Greatness

Co-founders of honestbee, Mr Isaac Timothy Tay (Engineering ’06) and Mr Jonathan Low (Engineering ’13), share their entrepreneurial journey and future plans, and tell us why change is the only constant in today’s economy.

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All the Numbers are a Stage
The journey from mathematics to theatre might seem unlikely, but as Mr. Kok Heng Leun (Science ’90) reveals, there’s a science to the art form.

Over the course of my career, I have employed many mathematical concepts as I structure and organise my work. I have even used the Fibonacci Sequence when representing my work! I will highlight these similarities in my address at Critical Conversations.

Tell us a bit about your journey to theatre. My interest in theatre was sparked during my time at NUS. As a member of the Chinese Language Society, I directed a staging of The Diary of Wei Wei and was later involved in other productions. I enjoyed the process so much that after I graduated, I started Drama Box as a non-profit venture in 1990. This allowed me to explore theatre while still working at MCD. But the passing of a close friend prompted me to seek something more meaningful.

Growing support for the arts also contributes to more intensive engagement with the community, allowing us to tell stories better and from more varied perspectives.

So I took up an offer at The Substation to be an arts administrator. Switching from the civil service to the arts sector wasn’t easy — I took a pay cut and couldn’t even fathom career advancement. But it was something I wanted to do for my own growth as an arts practitioner.

Some might say that today’s arts scene is a lot more welcoming to practitioners. Is this true? It definitely is, in terms of support. But competition has also grown, creating a different playing field.

Back then, we had the advantage of exploring uncharted territory, allowing us to experiment and try new things — and being rewarded for it. That’s not to say that there’s no room for growth or vibrancy in today’s scene. One aspect of the arts that I’m very excited about is cross-cultural exploration, allowing us to produce works in different languages without being constrained by the notion that some of us are “Chinese- or Tamil-language theatre companies”. This fosters a truly multicultural arts environment.

How have attitudes towards the arts changed over the years? Growing support for the arts also contributes to more intensive engagement with the community, allowing us to tell stories better and from more varied perspectives. Take BOTH SIDES, NOW, an immersive experience Drama Box has put on for the community for the past six years. It discusses the taboo topic of death and palliative care, but does so with inputs from community partners like Yishun Health (Wellness Kampung) and Montfort Care GoodLife. This level of engagement is possible because of the community’s belief in the arts.

What role has social media played in the changing attitudes? It has made art more accessible and certainly improved engagement. But the entire arts ecosystem — comprising practitioners, administrators, curators — has to ask itself what sort of engagement this is, and if important messages from the artist are getting lost. I saw Cooking The World, by Indian artist Subodh Gupta, in Frankfurt and was overwhelmed by its exploration of the rituals and symbolism of food consumption and preparation. I wonder how many people understood or absorbed these messages when they posed for photos with it at the Singapore Biennale in 2016.

What has been the most memorable Singaporean theatre piece over the past 10 years? The Book Of Living And Dying, which premiered at the Singapore Arts Festival in 2012. It was a poignant and beautiful mix of poetry, storytelling and good acting. The play tells the story of a transvestite and his adopted daughter and their attempts to reconcile. 

InsgaPore’s Arts Scene

Of the early 1990s was very different from the one we know today. NUS alumni and theatre doyen Mr. Kok Heng Leun recalls that telling people you were a full-time arts practitioner meant putting up with puzzled faces. “Like that also can ah?” they used to ask, recalls Mr. Kok, the Artistic Director of local theatre company Drama Box.

It was a path that Mr. Kok did not set out to tread. Fresh out of the University, he joined the civil service as a Community Development Officer with the then-Ministry of Community Development (MCD), which aimed to nurture a culturally-vibrant society (it has since been reorganised into two distinct ministries). Mr. Kok’s role entailed close work with the grassroots since been reorganised into two distinct ministries). But the passing of a close friend in 1992 sparked Mr. Kok to seek greater meaning from his career and to further explore his love for the stage. Over his two-year tenure, he represented the all-encompassing nature of the arts by speaking about issues as diverse as education and National Service. When asked about the experience, Mr. Kok replies with a laugh, “I’m still processing it all.”

In 2016, Mr. Kok was appointed the Arts Nominated Member of Parliament by the President of Singapore. Over his two-year tenure, he represented the all-encompassing nature of the arts by speaking about issues as diverse as education and National Service. When asked about the experience, Mr. Kok replies with a laugh, “I’m still processing it all.”
WHO IS SHE?

Ms Francesca Phoebe Wah (Arts and Social Sciences ‘14 ‘18) undertook as an undergraduate has blossomed into an organisation that caters to the underserved in Singapore.

And if you are not sure what that looks like, Ms Wah, 27, sets a good example. By day she is a primary school teacher, a job she views as a form of social work. "I have always wanted to be on the front line," she elaborates. "As a teacher, I get to interact with the children daily and can identify the children and families who need more support, and refer them to the relevant organisations." Ms Wah, who majored in Psychology, and later received a Masters in Social Work, is the Subject Head of Pastoral Care at her school. "Social work is really about human relationships and dynamics. And in fact, I’ve always believed that every profession needs to have a social worker," she says with a laugh. "My social work knowledge enables me to manage discipline cases differently," she says. "It allows me to design intervention methods — such as anger management techniques and increasing children’s motivation — with school counsellors to better provide help to the children."

Outside of work, Ms Wah is the founder of BLESS, a registered non-profit organisation whose main beneficiaries are low-income families and children residing in rental blocks. Unlike many social service organisations, it does not conduct individual casework, focusing on community interventions instead. From 35 volunteers who were undergraduates at its start in 2014, the organisation now comprises professionals as well as university students, all running the show on a pro bono basis. "To create sustainable changes in our community is the mission of BLESS, while its vision is to be a community that gives; a Singapore that lives.

REAL-LIFE APPLICATION

BLESS’s programme centre on both the beneficiary and the community. Small Soul Blessings is a novel giving programme that lets Internet users pick the “blessing” they wish to bestow upon someone in need. "It is similar to the concept of online shopping, except that in this case, it is online shopping to bless someone," Ms Wah adds. Shining Star Reads is a weekly reading programme that caters to children living in rental blocks in Singapore. The other two programmes — Values In Practice and Be A Giver Social Movement — seek to transform the society into a caring one. The former is a structured programme that teaches values to children through stories, activity books and computer games, encouraging them to put values into practice. The latter is a social movement that promotes the spirit of giving among Singaporeans.

Ms Wah shares that BLESS was born out of her NUS days. “These ideas started off as my undergraduate projects,” she says. "During one of my Social Work undergraduate modules, we conducted interviews with parents so as to understand their reasons for not sending their children for the free reading sessions at family service centres. As most reading programmes are held at libraries or social service agencies, parents have to bring their children to the venue. That translates to $1.40 for an adult bus ticket and $0.65 for a child bus ticket. A round-trip would cost at least $3.05 for 120 children. I remembered how comforted I was as a child when I had my soft toy with me, no matter what happened. So, I wanted to bless 120 children with a Minion soft toy each that Children’s Day. Being an undergraduate, I did not have the means to bless all 120 children. So, I asked my friends if they would like to contribute. And they asked their friends and so on." Within two days, she had enough to provide for a total of 364 children from four social service agencies. "This was definitely the power of community — I cannot do what I do without the support of the community." She did not have the means to bless all 120 children. So, I asked my friends if they would like to contribute. And they asked their friends and so on. Within two days, she had enough to provide for a total of 364 children from four social service agencies. "This was definitely the power of community — I cannot do what I do without the support of the community.”

Many lessons she learned during her undergraduate days continue to serve her well. "My professors emphasised that there are resources in the community," she says. "All we need is someone to mobilise and meet it."

FROM THE GROUND UP

BLESS was organically formed by a group of students. They kept the start-up cost low, paying just for the entity registration and then cobbling together everything else.

"Back then, we didn’t have many resources — no money, no office space. Yet, we were rich in skills, energy and passion! All we wanted to do is to find a need and meet it."

The road was paved with obstacles, but Ms Wah and the team soldered on. "Back then, no one really believed in us as it was hard for us to get funding," she remembers. Her void deck reading programmes proposal for instance was initially met with a string of rejections from funders, primarily because it had never been done before. In addition, the team discovered that the existing reading programmes did not serve their needs.

"Most programmes catered to children reading to gain new knowledge. However, most of the children in these rental communities are learning to read. So, we decided to curate our own curriculum for this programme and train volunteers to conduct it." The team then decided to make the effects of their work measurable, by tracking the learning outcomes of the children. "We then showed the potential funders that there were real positive results. Eventually, we gained stronger support!" In 2016, a $10,000 matching grant was launched in partnership with a number of corporations to further encourage giving efforts. For every child that the public supported through Small Soul portal, another child would receive support through the matching grant.

Fast forward to the present, and BLESS shows no signs of slowing down. It celebrated its fourth anniversary on 1 December 2018 with the launch of its new Unity Centre at Bukit Batok. Shining Star Reads continues its good work weekly, through the eight reading community groups which hold sessions on different days, "I am definitely satisfied to see the impact we have created," says Ms Wah, who adds that BLESS plans to spread their work beyond western Singapore in the next five years. "At our third anniversary celebration, children from Shining Star Reads put up a theatre performance. The parents were so touched to see how much their children had improved in their language abilities. Some came to thank us afterwards — that keeps us going!"

Putting Her BLESSed Foot Forward

What began as course projects that Ms Francesca Phoebe Wah (Arts and Social Sciences ‘14 ‘18) undertook as an undergraduate has blossomed into an organisation that caters to the underserved in Singapore.

GOOD STEWARDS OF OUR LIVES

regardless of whatever circumstances we are in and inspire the next generation to do likewise. This is both the adage that Ms Francesca Phoebe Wah lives by whatever circumstances we are in and inspire the next generation to do likewise. This is both the adage that Ms Francesca Phoebe Wah lives by.

"All we need is someone to mobilise and meet it."
Food of the Future

These scientists are cooking up a storm in the lab — all in a bid to have you eat healthier and change your mind about how healthy food tastes.

SINGAPORE’S HEALTH AUTHORITIES grapple with the challenge of fighting diseases like diabetes and obesity, its research and development (R&D) sector is also answering the call by spearheading advances in food technology. Take the recently-launched WIL@NUS Corporate Laboratory for instance. Jointly set up by Wilmar International, NUS and the National Research Foundation (NRF), this $110 million-facility will develop healthier foods through innovation in food technology and sustainable biochemic.

Noting the lab’s importance to Singapore’s public health sector, NRF Chairman and Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat said, “WIL@NUS will hopefully advance the health and wellbeing of Singaporeans and people around the world, and allow us to better understand how we can prevent and manage diabetes in Singapore in the long run, which will help us to win our ‘war’ against diabetes.”

The facility’s director, Associate Professor Matthew Chang, shares that since its inception, the lab will also look into foods, “explains Assoc Prof Chang, 43, adding that the facility’s 50 or so researchers will also look into harnessing technology to make everyday products

5 SINGAPORE’S HEALTH AUTHORITIES

BRIING HEALTHY BACK

But population health is just one major focus area for WIL@NUS. “We also want to develop healthier foods,” explains Assoc Prof Chang, 43, adding that the facility’s 50 or so researchers will also look into harnessing technology to make everyday products

DID YOU KNOW?

Getting a newly-developed food product onto supermarket shelves can take anywhere between 6 months and 5 years, depending on factors like regulatory approval as well as the ease of production and research.

SUSTAINABILITY MATTERS

Assoc Prof Chang stresses that WIL@NUS’ role will not end once a product gets out. “Improvement is a perpetual process,” he says, adding that researchers will continually look for ways to make products more efficiently. He cites the enzymes that are critical to most processes in food technology. “Currently, these are very expensive — but we can look into ways of recreating them to reduce costs, which consumers can enjoy,” he explains, referring to another focus of WIL@NUS: its goal of making food technology research more sustainable.

The lab plans to undertake research in making synthetic biology — the process of redesigning and fabricating biological systems like enzymes — a cheaper, faster, more sustainable and more systematic science. “We’ll look at quite a few different by-products from the manufacturing process,” shares Assoc Prof Chang. Some of these can be recycled and converted into something that we can use elsewhere.

SHARING THE FRUITS

Another way that WIL@NUS adds to the value chain is by providing an avenue for research results to economically translate to real-world products. Thanks to its in-depth knowledge of consumer needs and patterns. “Researchers sometimes work in silos. This means that they create a wonderful product that isn’t exactly like cooking oils healthier. While healthier oils — defined loosely by their high polyunsaturated fat content — are not unheard of, they are often more expensive than their unhealthier counterparts. Certain varieties, like olive oil, are also unsuitable for Asian cooking, given their low smoking point.

As they develop products to complement these existing ones, researchers will work closely with Dr Rebecca Lian, a Distinguished Fellow at Wilmar and one of Singapore’s top food technologists. Over the course of her nearly 40-year career, Dr Lian, 63, has overseen the production of foods like soya sauce and instant noodles for big brands like Nestlé. “When we say we’re going to develop healthier cooking oils, what we really mean is that we want to engineer an oil and change its structural formula, to perhaps include more beneficial compounds or remove some harmful ones.”

She adds that modifying the components of food is not entirely new. “In the past, food companies modified food with one thing in mind: taste. But today, they have to consider health as well, simply because consumers demand it,” she explains. But researchers cannot ignore taste, since consumers — especially food-loving Singaporeans — still value this.

WIL@NUS will also strengthen industry partnerships with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to equip them with greater knowledge as well as opportunities for growth. As Dr Lian explains, “Some of the products we create, Wilmar may not actually manufacture. So we can pass these on to have SMEs produce this.” Such partnerships will further enliven Singapore’s fast-growing R&D sector. In 2016, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced a Government investment of $19 billion into research over five years until 2020. And as WIL@NUS shows, the private sector as well as academic institutions like NUS are also committing similar resources. What do such tripartite funding and partnerships mean for researchers like Assoc Prof Chang and Dr Lian? “There has never been a better time to be in food tech,” says Dr Lian. And given her vast experience in the sector, we’re inclined to believe her.

WHAT WIL@NUS ADDS TO THE VALUE CHAIN

Food of the future: It may look, taste and smell like satay you get anywhere else — but one of WIL@NUS Corporate Laboratory’s signature products so far has been a vegetarian version of satay. Researchers say this could reduce saturated fat intake in Singaporean diets. “And it will taste just as good,” promises Assoc Prof Chang.
SHOWTIME

FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME, Hong Kong-based Spring Glory Cantonese Opera Workshop brought their marquee production Backstage to Singapore, led by the renowned Maestro Professor Yuen Siu-Fai. For one night only on 9 October 2018 at the University Cultural Centre Theatre, the audience which included NUS alumni got to experience what happens backstage at a Cantonese opera through modern storytelling. The production also included an interactive segment with the audience, and introduced a new way of appreciating Hong Kong’s traditional art with exquisite costumes, elegant body movements and spectacular martial arts routines, as well as through Nanyin, the Southern Chinese musical form.

INTERACTIVE SEGMENT

Backstage enthralled a full-house audience with a behind-the-scenes peek at a traditional Cantonese artform.

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA

Veteran Cantonese opera performing artist Professor Yuen Siu-Fai playing the er-hu with (from left) Mr April Tong Yuen-Ying, Mr Gordon Lee Chun-Lok and Mr Sung Ngok.

The General (Mr Au Kim-Ying) showing his fighting skills with (from left) dresser (Ms Siu Wing-Yee), the Monkey King (Mr Tsai Chih-Wei), and seasoned performing arts producer and Executive Director of Spring Glory Productions, Ms Barbara Tang (playing herself).

Actress (Ms Cheung Kit-Ha) (middle) showing her three-inch shoes to Ms Barbara Tang, with dresser (Ms Siu Wing-Yee) (left).

Veteran Cantonese opera performing artist Professor Yuen Siu-Fai (right) playing the er-hu with (from left) Ms April Tong Yuen-Ying, Mr Gordon Lee Chun-Lok and Mr Sung Ngok.

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NUS Business School Eminent Business Alumni Awards 2018

The prestigious NUS Business School Eminent Business Alumni Awards 2018 was held on 7 November 2018 at Conrad Centennial Singapore to honour the achievements of 12 outstanding alumni. Held biennially, the awards recognise alumni who have excelled in Singapore and beyond, and have made significant contributions to business and society. Dr Vivian Balakrishnan (Medicine ‘85 ’91), Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister-in-charge of the Smart Nation Initiative, presented the awards at the ceremony.

“Our recipients have made an impact beyond Singapore’s shores, contributed to the nation’s goal of becoming a Smart Nation, and generously donated their time to serve the community. They make us proud by continuing the legacy of what it means to be an NUS Business School graduate,” said Professor Bernard Yeung, Dean and Stephen Riady Distinguished Professor, NUS Business School.


Golfing for Good

The Sheares Hall Charity Golf held on 4 September 2018 at Sembawang Country Club raised a total of $420,060 for the DRH/Sheares Hall Alumni Endowment Fund.

The DRH/Sheares Hall Alumni Endowment Fund is the first Hall-based endowed fund with sub-naming rights. Currently, the fund stands at above $3.5 million and supports at least 50 bursaries for students in Sheares Hall.

The launch of the NUS Alumni nuSTUDIOS Network took place at the cosy Room2F @ Upper Thomson Road on 14 September 2018, where active alumni from various batches came together to touch base and re-establish ties with NUS, Centre For the Arts (CFA) and nuSTUDIOS. Light bites and drinks as well as conversations flowed between friends, both old and new. The Network aims to facilitate alumni currently active in the industry to give back to nuSTUDIOS as well as the NUS and CFA communities, and be a touch point to ease project planning and ideation for future programmes on or off campus.

To find out more about the Network, please contact Mr Low Beng Kheng at lowbengkheng@gmail.com.

NUS Alumni nuSTUDIOS Network

Food Science and Technology (FST) Programme and FST Alumni Group jointly organised an appreciation dinner on 26 September 2018 to thank alumni for their contribution to the growth and vibrancy of FST, in their capacities as Class Representatives, Class Ambassadors and FST Student Society leaders over the years. 40 alumni including six FST staff attended the event. Professor Zhou Weibao, FST Programme Director, started the event with a warm welcome speech and updated the alumni on the Programme’s development and future plans.

NUS-FST Alumni Appreciation Dinner

NUS Campus Couples Alumni Group welcomes all alumni couples to join them!

Dress Code: COLOURS OF YOUR LOVE STORY

NUS Alumni couples in their relationships of 10 years and above are invited to participate in the upcoming 20th FST Anniversary celebration, especially the Charity Golf event to be held in March 2019.

Celebration of Love and Appreciation Dinner

21 February, Thursday
NUSSS Kent Ridge Guild House

Dress Code: Happy Colours

NUS Campus Couples Alumni Group welcomes all alumni couples to join them!
Email campuscouples@alummail.nus.edu.sg for more information.
ALUMNI HAPPENINGS

EVENTS

Shanghai Alumni Chapter Enjoys “A Date with NUS President”

Alumni in Shanghai met up with NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science ‘85) on 9 September 2018, at the Blockchain Trends and Prospects Forum and a “date” with NUS President event, organised by NUS Alumni Shanghai Chapter. The Forum was a great platform for alumni across disciplines and guests from various sectors to discuss a diverse range of topics including political, economic and social matters. Prof Tan gave a talk on the impact of Blockchain technology and at a chat session with alumni shared NUS’ new Vision, Mission and Values, and discussed topics such as the development of the University, importance of a strong relationship between NUS and its alumni, and lifelong learning. Alumni from different professions also shared their expertise and insights, in areas such as Blockchain and Artificial Intelligence.

Among the more than 200 attendees were NUS alumni and students; Singapore Consul-General in Shanghai Mr Loh Tuck Wai (Arts and Social Sciences ’93) and Deputy Consul-General Ms Liew Li Lin (Arts and Social Sciences ’93); NUS Alumni Relations Director Mr Bernard Toh (Architecture ’84); as well as representatives from SORSA (Shanghai Overseas Returned Scholars Association) and Nanyang Technological University.

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LKYSPP Alumni Awards Dinner 2018

The Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) organised a dinner on 23 November 2018 to honour the recipients of LKYSPP Alumni Awards. NUS Pro-Chancellor and former Chief Justice of Singapore Dr Chan Sek Keong (Law ’61) graced the occasion as the Guest-of-Honour. In his welcome remarks, Professor Danny Quah (Dean and Li Ka Shing Professor in Economics) highlighted the importance of the School’s alumni. Despite being a young school with slightly over 3,000 alumni, the School’s vision of transforming lives was carried forward by alumni whose dedication to public service spans across various sectors and transcends international boundaries. The LKYSPP Outstanding Alumni Award was presented to Mr Jack Sim (‘13) for his work with the World Toilet Organization on improving toilet and sanitation conditions worldwide. The LKYSPP Alumni Service Award was presented to Mr Wang Kejian (‘14) for his tireless work as the President of the LKYSPP Alumni Beijing Chapter, and his commitment to fostering greater relations between Chinese alumni and the School. At the event, the School also presented copies of One World, Many Leaders – Spotlight on LKYSPP Alumni, which featured stories from LKYSPP alumni awards honourable mentions.

Read more about the Awards at lkyspp.sg/alumni-awards-18.

CRAZY RICH ASIANS (PG13)

MEET THE CAST

28 FEBRUARY
THURSDAY, 7.30PM
AUDITORIUM, SHAW FOUNDATION ALUMNUS HOUSE

Office of Alumni Relations

Office of Alumni Relations
Engineering ‘83’s 35th Anniversary Reunion Dinner

In celebration of their 35th anniversary, the Class of 1983 organised a reunion dinner on 16 November 2018. About 110 guests attended the dinner including alumni, current and former faculty members, and staff. To commemorate their 35th anniversary, the Class is also establishing a Class Scholarship to attract outstanding students to pursue their undergraduates degrees in NUS Engineering. Over $70,000 was raised during the dinner, and the fundraising effort is still ongoing to reach their target of $150,000.

Dentistry ‘72 Reunion

Alumni from the Dentistry class of 1972 celebrated their 46th anniversary and 7th reunion in a grand way – with a trip to Hong Kong and China. The last six reunions started from Singapore to Penang, Kuching, Sydney, Ipoh and Johore Bahru.

The strong ties among the alumni were once again demonstrated at this year’s reunion. Out of a class of 37 students in 1972, 26 (including spouses) attended the reunion, and visited Nanjing, Suzhou and Hangzhou, where they savoured the food, scenery and culture of each city. More importantly, they renewed their bonds and reminisced with fondness moments of yesteryear in the then-University of Singapore and King Edward Vll Hall. By Dr Loh Hong Sai

Celebrating Distinguished Engineering Alumni Awardees

About 300 alumni and guests attended the annual NUS Engineering Alumni Gala Dinner held on 19 October 2018. It was an occasion to renew ties and to celebrate the achievements and services of Mr Gan Seow Kee (’76), Chairman and Managing Director of ExxonMobil Asia Pacific Pte Ltd, and Er Lim Peng Hong (’83), Managing Director of PH Consulting Pte Ltd. Mr Gan and Er Lim received the Distinguished Engineering Alumni Award (DEAA), which are conferred on Engineering alumni who have distinguished themselves nationally or internationally by their excellent, sustained contributions and achievements in public and community service; entrepreneurship; in a profession or scholarly field.

The Alumni Gala Dinner also recognised the generosity of alumni, which resulted in the establishment of four new bursaries, two new scholarships, as well as a study trip for selected students to China. Apart from the monetary contributions, alumni also volunteered their time to mentor students in the Alumni Mentorship Programme, which was piloted in August 2018.

School of Computing 20th Anniversary

In celebration of the School of Computing’s (SoC) 20th anniversary, a series of events – including the conferment of the Outstanding Computing Alumni Awards – were held, which brought together alumni, students and staff to reconnect and build new bonds.

CHARITY FUN RUN – 22 September 2018

About 240 participants, including some 30 alumni, took part in this meaningful event to raise funds for NUS Computing’s Pay-It-Forward Bursary and the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS) Fernvale Gardens School. About $91,000 was raised, of which $65,000 came from company sponsorship.

The 6km (about 20,000 feet for 20 years of Computing) run started from the School’s current location to Faculty of Science (FoS) where SoC used to be located when it was still a department under FoS, to University Town to show alumni the ‘newer side of NUS’ that they may not have seen before and back to SoC.

GALA DINNER – 12 October 2018

300 guests, including about 170 alumni attended the Gala Dinner at NUS Society Kent Ridge Guild House. In addition to celebrating the School’s anniversary, the dinner also celebrated alumni’s achievements by conferring the Outstanding Computing Alumni Awards to Mr Ivan Ng Chuen Pin (’96), Chief Technology Officer, City Developments Limited; and Mr Arun Shenoy (’04), Founder and CEO, Arun Shenoy Music Publishing (BMI) and Narked Records. Dean of SoC, Professor Mohan Kankanhalli, presented the awards to the recipients.

Join us for Movies On The House, ranging from all-time classics to family favourites. Friends and family members are welcome too!

Register at: alumnet.events/upcoming
The NUSS Professorship Lecture with Professor Lim Chwee Teck

**MY EXPERIENCE AS A DEEP TECH ENTREPRENEUR**

The NUSS Professorship Lecture was established in 1995 to fund eminent professors from different disciplines to share their knowledge with the NUS community and general public. Professor Lim Chwee Teck (Engineering '90), from the NUS Department of Biomedical Engineering and the Principal Investigator at the Mechanobiology Institute, is the first NUS professor to be conferred the NUSS Professorship.

More than 70 NUSS members and guests attended the recent lecture moderated by Mr. Tong Hsien-Hui (Engineering '98), NUSS Vice President and NUSS Intellectual Pursuits Subcommittee Chairperson, held on 11 November 2018 at the NUSS Kent Ridge Guild House. Prof Lim, co-founder of seven technopreneurship activities!

Beyond the Score

**Launched in 2014, Beyond the Score is a music appreciation series by NUS Society and Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music (YSTCM).**

The sixth instalment of the series was held in the evening of 18 October 2018 at NUSS Suntec City Guild House. The evening was led by duodentity, a piano duet from YSTCM – Ms Adriana Chiew and Mr Gabriel Hoe.

The duo transported attendees into a melodious world of classical music with four section pieces; Le Triomphe de Bacchus: Divertissement by Claude Debussy, Paganni Variations by Lutoslawski, En Blanc et Noir (II. Lent. Sombre) by Claude Debussy and 6 Morceaux (II. Scherzo) by Rachmaninoff.

The event was attended by Professor Bernard Lanskey, Dean of Conservatory.

SDE Alumni Reunion Dinner

**300 alumni from School of Design and Environment (SDE) turned up in droves to support the SDE Alumni Reunion Dinner on 3 October 2018 at the NUS Society Kent Ridge Guild House, and had a wonderful evening reconnecting with friends and course mates, and making new friends. The group also had the chance to hear from Professor Lam Khee Poh, SDE Dean, who shared about the exciting plans for SDE’s 50th anniversary celebrations in 2019 and aspirations to move towards building a well and green Singapore.**

**NUSS-NUS mentorship programme**

Launched in 2012, the NUSS-NUS mentorship programme has been growing steadily with NUS alumni participating actively in the programme by contributing their experience and helping their juniors. In the past year, 142 new mentors and 202 mentees signed up for the programme. A dinner event was held on 17 September 2018 at the NUSS Kent Ridge Guild House to welcome the new mentors and mentees.

**DO YOU KNOW?**

SDE’s new building SDE4 is the first Net-Zero Energy Building in NUS. This means the building is designed to consume only as much energy as it produces, made possible by harvesting solar energy using more than 1,200 solar photovoltaic panels installed on the roof. SDE4 is fully operational from January 2019 and functions as a living laboratory to promote research collaboration in sustainable building design.

Check out sde.nus.edu.sg for the latest updates on SDE50 celebration activities!

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CREATING A CHARITABLE CULTURE

ERA Singapore’s chief executive Mr Jack Chua (Design and Environment ‘84), on the motivation behind his company’s contribution towards setting up the ERA Student Foundation Bursary at NUS as part of its 35th anniversary in 2017.

THE CULTURE OF GIVING IS NOT

A STURDY FOUNDATION

He studied as an NUS student — even forgone sleep to cram for his very last examination paper during his fourth and final year, recalls Mr Chua, who holds an Honours Degree in Building and a Master’s Degree in Project Management. Mr Chua’s education at NUS, by his own admission, had been instrumental to his career success.

“The knowledge I acquired in school was especially important in the kind of specialised job I took up when I entered the workforce,” he says. “The learning process provided me with the foundation I needed, and trained me in my analytical and research skills.”

Bonded for six years to PWD upon graduation, Mr Chua counted quantity survey and building maintenance for all the government buildings in Singapore as some of his main tasks at the department, before he joined ERA Singapore in 1990. Then, the company was small to say the least, with just 30 agents under its belt. “I sufficed to say, Mr Chua has seen the organisation grow exponentially to what it is today. “Once we reached a certain level of stable profitability, I knew it was time that we, as a whole company, give back to the society,” Mr Chua says.

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The spirit of corporate social responsibility runs high at ERA Singapore. On top of their contributions to Community Chest and the Singapore Association for the Deaf, staff and agents are also encouraged to donate to the Canossaville Children and Community Services. The non-profit organisation houses girls from at-risk families, and provides student care to children who are hearing-impaired or suffer from dyslexia. The company’s management matches a dollar for every dollar raised by its staff, thus boosting the combined donation towards ERA’s various beneficiaries. Staff are also encouraged to offer their time and partake in activities organised for beneficiaries such as house visits, flag days and festival celebrations.

IN GOOD COMPANY

Mr Chua is still very much in touch with several of his course mates, many of whom, like him, are in project and facilities management. “The school is small – there weren’t many of us so we were quite united then and our paths still cross these days because we are in similar industries,” he lets in. One exception was Dr Amy Khor (Design and Environment ’81), who went on to become Singapore’s Senior Minister of State in the Ministry of Health and Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources.

Their friendship, which started at NUS, has culminated in a meaningful partnership. ERA Singapore, by Dr Khor’s request, is also a regular corporate sponsor for needy residents living in Hong Kah constituency where Dr Khor serves as Member of Parliament. “She asked, and I said yes, because why not?” says Mr Chua, with a chuckle. As a corporate sponsor, ERA staff would, for example, sponsor and give out goodie bags filled with festive treats and distribute ang paos (red packets) during Chinese New Year to low-income or vulnerable residents.

Such deep ties and the invaluable knowledge he gained at NUS made Mr Chua want to give back to his alma mater. To him, the contribution to NUS made “perfect sense”. “Hopefully, the recipients of the bursary would be moved to pay it forward as well when they are in a position to do so later on in their lives,” says Mr Chua. To current students, his advice is simple: study hard. “There is no limit to acquiring knowledge, so don’t feel constrained by a particular scope,” he urges. And to fresh graduates making their foray into the working world, Mr Chua offers these words of wisdom: “Be ambitious, but not overly ambitious. Takes incremental steps to get to where you want to be – nothing happens miraculously.” A

We want to encourage and support more students to embark on a tertiary education, and help especially those without the financial means, who might otherwise have to cut short their educational journey.

For information on making a gift to NUS, contact us at 1800-DEVELOP (1800-338-3567) or email askdvo@nus.edu.sg.
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LIFE KONG CHIAN NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
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10% off booking for bus tickets, train tickets and ferry tickets.

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NUS MUSEUM
20% discount on all NUS Museum’s publications and catalogues.

ZIGGYFEET
50% off all level 1 Social Dance courses for Salsa, Bachata, and West Coast Swing.

THE WRITE CONNECTION (TWC)
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SHE’S ON A PIECE MISSION

By Fairoza Mansor

Through her creations, LEGO® designer Ms Xylvie Wong (Arts and Social Sciences ’08) hopes to pave the way for, and inspire, a new generation of brick-builders.

Ms Xylvie Wong, co-founder of a retail and part-gallery space in Bugis.

I want to provide a space for people to unleash their potential through exploration with bricks. I hope to inspire and nurture a new generation of creative kids, who will grow up to be creative adults.”

Ms Xylvie Wong’s son with her model of the National Gallery Singapore.

LEG® BRICKS may be just toys for some, but Ms Xylvie Wong has turned her passion for them into her career — and a successful one at that. Her life-sized creation of a HDB void deck scene, complete with the uniquely Singaporean, old-school stone table and a bird cage hanging from the ceiling, made entirely of LEGO® bricks received so much attention that she was invited to display it in the United States. “I did that project for fun, just because I wanted to,” the 35 year-old says. “It was surprising and rewarding to be able to exhibit my work overseas.”

More recently, she and two friends created miniature replicas of local monuments for the “Building History: Monuments In Bricks And Blocks” exhibition, initiated by the National Heritage Board. These included the Central Fire Station, former Tanjong Pagar Railway Station, Sultan Mosque and St Andrew’s Cathedral, which is their tallest model, standing at 1.1m high. The travelling exhibition debuted at the Central Public Library in June 2018, before it was showcased at other libraries across Singapore. Says Ms Wong, “It showed people that you need not work with LEGO® bricks solely based on the instruction manual. You can be as creative as you want.”

Ms Wong has been a big LEGO® fan ever since receiving her first set of the bricks from her father at age two. But work is not all fun and games. In fact, the monument assignment required the trio to fly drones over the various buildings for a complete aerial view of the structures before they could proceed. The project took seven months to complete. Luckily, a hoctic student life at NUS had equipped Ms Wong with time management skills and the ability to work under pressure. The effort, however, was worth the white and one that made perfect sense to the mother of an 8-year-old son. She says matter-of-factly, “I have this need to just create, and so I do.”

A PIONEERING LEGACY

Pioneer Sociology alumnus Mr Geoffrey Yu (Social Sciences ’69) takes a bold step in creating a lasting legacy for future Sociology students at NUS.

His bequest will enable the establishment of the Geoffrey Yu Bursary to benefit financially-needy Sociology students at FASS. It will also allow the NUS Department of Sociology to expand research work, organise conferences and support publications on the study of Singapore society.

“Singapore has the unique challenge of forging a national identity out of a complex mix of ethnicities, languages, cultures. This historical mix is now enriched by the openness of our world view and economy in the new century. I hope to encourage more students to pursue the study of sociology; not just to approach it academically, but also to ruminate on their own role in society. Additionally, I hope to facilitate the sharing of such knowledge through conferences and public lectures to spur more public discourse in this area.”

“My Little Brick Shop is conducting Singapore’s first-ever brick convention ‘Enblock’ in April 2019. The event aims to bring together the ASEAN and East Asian brick-building community to showcase their creations, and learn from one another.

If you would like to know more about making NUS a beneficiary of your CPF, or if you would like to inquire about making a legacy gift to the University, please email legacygift@nus.edu.sg, call +65 6516-6529 or visit www.giving.nus.edu.sg
NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN

The NUS Alumni Awards celebrate and honour alumni who have distinguished themselves through significant and impactful contributions to their alma mater, society and the world.

Nominees are alumni who have:
• Distinguished themselves in their chosen fields
• Rendered excellent volunteer service to NUS and/or the community

Do you know an alumnus who should be recognised for her or his outstanding achievements?

Visit nus.edu.sg/alumnet/AlumniAwards. Nominations close on 31 March.