

The
ALUMNUS

issue #118 JUL-SEP 2019

"Flexible work arrangements are becoming the norm, and hence workers have come to expect this when evaluating prospective employers."

MR ALVIN LOW, HEAD, STRATEGIC RELATIONS AND PLANNING, NUS CENTRE FOR FUTURE-READY GRADUATES.

**THRIVING IN
THE CORPORATE
JUNGLE:
WHAT DOES
IT TAKE?**

ALUMNI SHARE THEIR
VIEWS ON KEEPING UP
WITH THE RAT-RACE

**THE ROAD FROM
WASTEFULNESS
TO ZERO WASTE**

MR BU FAN
(DESIGN AND
ENVIRONMENT '07)

**The Journey to
a Life of Art**

MR SHABIR HUSSAIN MUSTAFA
(ARTS AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES + USP '07)



**THE GREAT WORK-LIFE
BALANCING ACT**

HOW ALUMNI ARE COPING WITH
THE REALITIES OF THE NEW ECONOMY.



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FIRST WORD

Dear alumni and friends,

I am happy to share with all of you that in my first *UM-NUS Inter-University Tunku Chancellor Golf Tournament* as Captain, Team NUS did us proud by bringing back the Tunku Chancellor Cup.

Over two rounds of golf, we rekindled old friendships, built new ones and continued to enhance the strong ties between our two universities. Another highlight was our first *Alumni Weekends* event, held in conjunction with the closure of The Terrace Canteen for renovations. The canteen served several cohorts of students from the Business School, the School of Computing and previously the Law School, and many alumni returned with their families for a "last meal" to reminisce old times and fond memories.

Our re-launched *U@live* forum on "Education – Still a Social Leveller?" was a great success, bringing together alumni, students and staff of the University to discuss and generate new ideas on how the education system in Singapore might be improved. If you would like to watch a recording of the forum or participate in the upcoming one on Islamophobia, please visit our website at alumnet.events/UALIVE.

Over the past few weeks, our University has been addressing the issue of sexual misconduct on campus, with the aim of making NUS a safer living and learning environment for everyone. NUS Management kept our alumni updated through circulars and held three engagement sessions for alumni to gather thoughts and feedback. We are indeed grateful for the wealth of feedback, constructive criticism and thoughtful suggestions from alumni. It clearly demonstrates alumni's concern and care for our alma mater.

It is Commencement season once again. Please join me in warmly welcoming the newest batch of graduates into the NUS Alumni family. Congratulations, Class of 2019! We look forward to seeing you at some of our many alumni events. Just around the corner are the *Kent Ridge Alumni Family Day* on 17 August and the *NUS Day of Service* on 7 September.

The cover story (page 16) for this issue is on work-life balance – specially dedicated to the graduating Class of 2019. With so many fundamental and significant changes in the workplace today, we believe many of you will find useful takeaways as well. For the many of you who are joining the world of work upon your graduation, we wish you a fulfilling and successful career.

Please enjoy this issue, and Stay Connected with your alma mater.

Warmest wishes,
Mr Bernard Toh
(Architecture '84)

Director, Alumni Relations



READ THE ALUMNUS ONLINE!



Check out nus.edu.sg/alumnet/TheAlumNUS for more exclusive alumni contributed online articles under:

- ➔ Lifelong Learner,
- ➔ Book Corner, and
- ➔ Stories About You

For more information or to read *The AlumNUS* online, please visit nus.edu.sg/alumnet/TheAlumNUS.

STAY CONNECTED:

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The ALUMNUS

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A group photo before the games began.

FORGING FRIENDSHIPS ON THE FAIRWAYS

Cementing bonds during the 51st edition of the UM-NUS Inter-University Tunku Chancellors Golf Tournament.



NUS golfers brought home the winning prize.

NUS AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA (UM)

reaffirmed their close and longstanding ties at the 51st edition of the *UM-NUS Inter-University Tunku Chancellors Golf Tournament*, held from 23 to 24 April. The two-day event saw faculty members, staff and alumni from both universities teeing off at the Warren Golf and Country Club, as well as the Keppel Club, taking the opportunity to renew old bonds and strike up new friendships.

An official dinner reception was held in conjunction with the tournament, hosted by Madam Halimah Yacob (Law '78), President of the Republic of Singapore and NUS Chancellor, with UM Chancellor, His Royal Highness (HRH) Sultan Dr Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, the Sultan of the State of Perak, in attendance. At dinner, attendees were treated to a music performance by

NUS Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music alumni from the NUS Alumni Orchestra.

Speaking at the reception, NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85) said that the annual golf tournament celebrates the shared heritage and close relationship between both universities. He added, "The ties between UM and NUS are multi-layered and can perhaps be described to be like a *kueh lapis*. Delicious, familiar, yet not so easy to perfect. UM and NUS continue to be strong partners in seven networks and alliances, including the ASEAN University Network... Most recently, NUS Enterprise has been working closely with UM to promote closer cooperation between the incubators of both universities."

Prof Tan also welcomed UM participation in a NUS Fellows Programme specifically for Southeast Asia that the University will be launching. Under the scheme, young or would-be faculty members from universities in the region will have the opportunity to be attached to NUS faculty members for up to a year, allowing them access to the research infrastructure and academic environment



President Halimah Yacob (centre), with (from left) NUS Chairman Mr Hsieh Fu Hua, Mr Po'ad Mattar, HRH Sultan Dr Nazrin Shah and Prof Tan.

The ties between UM and NUS are multi-layered and can perhaps be described to be like a *kueh lapis*. Delicious, familiar, yet not so easy to perfect.

Professor Tan Eng Chye, NUS President

at the University. While at NUS, Fellows will be able to build up their network of connections and bring these connections back to their home campuses.

Mooted with the aim of fostering goodwill between NUS and UM, the first edition of the Tournament was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in 1968. The tournament is hosted alternately by UM and NUS, with this year's edition taking place in Singapore.

Golfers representing NUS this year included Mr Po'ad Mattar (Accountancy '71), NUS Pro-Chancellor; Mr Zainul Abidin Rasheed (Arts and Social Sciences '71), Singapore's Ambassador to Kuwait; Mr Johnny Tan (Science '82), NUS Alumni Advisory Board Co-Chairman; and Mr Bernard Toh (Architecture '84), Director of NUS Alumni Relations and NUS Golf Captain. About 100 golfers took part, with NUS emerging the winner of the Tournament.



This article was first published on 25 April in *NUS News* under the title of "NUS and UM celebrate close ties" at news.nus.edu.sg/highlights/nus-um-celebrate-close-ties, and has been edited for *The Alumnus*.

LIFELONG LEARNERS HIGHLIGHT

THE COMPASSIONATE FAMILY PHYSICIAN

Dr Galih Kunarso (Science '06, Duke-NUS '13, Medicine '18) shares on his spirit of continuous learning in his pursuit to improve lives as a doctor.

How have you upgraded yourself since you graduated from Duke-NUS?

After getting my MD degree from Duke-NUS, I've gone on to complete the Graduate Diploma in Family Medicine (GDFM). This was in addition to the various courses that SingHealth Polyclinics regularly sent me — along with other new doctors — to, covering everything from dermatology to women's health.



Dr Galih Kunarso believes that it is vital for doctors to keep updated on new developments in the medical field.

Why did you take the initiative? How has it helped you on your job?

I discovered that I enjoyed Family Medicine while working in the polyclinic in 2015. I signed up for the programme as I realised that the knowledge I gained from medical school and previous hospital postings could be enhanced when it came to managing the complex conditions of our polyclinic patients. The structured course has taught me skills related to diagnosing, treating and following up on various common conditions. The end goal is to deliver better care to my patients and help them to improve their health.

What is your outlook on continuous learning, especially in the field of medicine?

The field of medicine is constantly progressing. There are always new developments, medications and treatment options. I believe that as good clinicians, we have to be active lifelong learners to better serve our patients. I'm planning to further upgrade myself by enrolling in the Master of Medicine (Family Medicine) Programme.

For more information about studying at Duke-NUS Medical School, please visit duke-nus.edu.sg/admissions/duke-nus-medicine-programmes/how-to-apply.

The Champions of Excellence and Innovation

Acknowledging the efforts of respected individuals in furthering the advancement of knowledge in various fields.

NUS CELEBRATED THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS of eight outstanding educators, researchers and professionals at the NUS University Awards 2019 on 28 May. The annual event recognises individuals for their remarkable contributions in the areas of education, research and service to the University, Singapore and the global community.

The prestigious Outstanding Service Award was conferred on former NUS President Professor Tan Chorh Chuan (Medicine '83), Executive Director of the Office for Healthcare Transformation and Chief Health Scientist at the Ministry of Health (MOH); and Ms Yong Ying-I, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Communications and Information.

Prof Tan served as NUS President from 2008 to 2017, during which time the University's reputation as a leading global university with an Asian perspective

soared. NUS made remarkable progress in the areas of education, research and entrepreneurship under Prof Tan's stewardship, from adopting new models of teaching and learning such as University Town and Yale-NUS College, to accelerating the pace of multidisciplinary research and entrepreneurship initiatives.

Expressing his gratitude for the award, Prof Tan said, "What I find most fulfilling is that NUS has developed a talented community and environment which encourages and enables individuals to excel and create real impact."

Fellow awardee Ms Yong has impacted both NUS and Singapore significantly. Placing great value in the collaboration between government, industry and universities, she has spent much of her distinguished career leading and supporting such initiatives. NUS' Corporate Laboratories with Keppel, Wilmar and Singtel have benefited from her foresight in diverse areas ranging from deep water technology, food-tech and sustainable biotechnology, to cybersecurity. Ms Yong also played an instrumental role in the creation of AI Singapore (AI.SG), which is led by NUS.

NUS is an immensely important institution that encourages the exploration of new ideas, and creates new solutions to improve people's lives.

Ms Yong Ying-I, Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Communications and Information.



The eight award winners (from left): Assoc Prof Yan Ning, Assoc Prof Andrew Hui, Assoc Prof Nga Min En, Prof Tan Chorh Chuan, Ms Yong Ying-I, Prof Markus R Wenk, Asst Prof Hans Tan and Assoc Prof Vincent Tan.



NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye interacting with guests at the event.

"NUS is an immensely important institution that encourages the exploration of new ideas, and creates new solutions to improve people's lives. I am grateful for the many opportunities that NUS has given me to meet some of the best minds in the world, where the stimulating discussions have so often sparked off fresh insights," said Ms Yong.

Six exemplary educators and researchers were also honoured for their accomplishments. Associate Professor Nga Min En (Medicine '98) from the NUS Yong Loo Lin School

of Medicine's Department of Pathology and Assistant Professor Hans Tan (Design and Environment '05) from the NUS Design & Environment's Division of Industrial Design received the Outstanding Educator Award in recognition of their innovative teaching methods and dedication to helping students improve their creative capacity, respectively.

Professor Markus R Wenk from NUS Medicine's Department of Biochemistry was presented with the University Research Recognition Award for his work in establishing and developing the Singapore Lipidomics Incubator and his contribution to lipids research.

The Young Researcher Award was given to Associate Professor Andrew Hui from Yale-NUS's Division of Humanities for his work in cultural philology; Dean's Chair Associate Professor Vincent Tan from NUS Electrical and Computer Engineering and NUS Mathematics for his studies into information theory; and Associate Professor Yan Ning from NUS Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, who researches catalytic transformation in renewable resources.

This article was first published on 28 May in [NUS News](#) under the title of "Striving for excellence and innovation" at [news.nus.edu.sg/highlights/striving-excellence-and-innovation](#), and has been edited for *The AlumNUS*.

U@live: Lifting Thought Leadership seeks to position NUS as a global thought leader and ideas factory that generates revolutionary solutions to address global issues that are significant to Singapore and beyond. The U@live forum will feature a policy maker, global thought leader, academic leader and the essay competition winner.

Save the date to join us at the coming U@live forum!



U@live
LIFTING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

STAY
TUNED!

THEME

Islamophobia

KEY PANELLIST



**Mr K Shanmugam
(Law '84)**

Minister for Home Affairs
and Minister for Law

30 October 2019 (Wednesday), 7.30pm

Auditorium, Shaw Foundation Alumni House

Essay Competition

Don't miss out!

Opens:

19 August – 15 September

You are invited to submit a 1,000-word essay articulating your views related to Islamophobia.

Win attractive prizes and a chance to join the panellists on stage.

Join the essay competition:
[alumnet.events/UALIVE-ESSAY](#)

→ Reserve your seats: [alumnet.events/UALIVE](#)

Look out for the details of the essay competition that will be launched on 19 August.



Office of
Alumni Relations

COLLAPSING THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN ART AND SCIENCE

Nobel Prize-winning physicist Professor Sir Konstantin Novoselov enjoys taking a creative approach to work in his lab at NUS' Centre for Advanced 2D Materials.



Professor
Sir Konstantin
Novoselov

PHOTO: THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

ON 22 OCTOBER 2004, Professor Sir Konstantin Novoselov along with other colleagues, including his former PhD supervisor Professor Sir Andre Geim, published one of the most revolutionary scientific papers of the 21st century.

In it, they described the isolation of the world's first two-dimensional (2D) material. This atomically-thin sheet was graphene — the strongest, most stretchable, most conductive, material ever discovered — and the

two colleagues later shared the 2010 Nobel Prize in Physics for their ground-breaking accomplishment.

While a Nobel prize win is often seen as the crowning achievement of any scientist's career, Prof Novoselov remains grounded and modest about the award. "Of course winning a Nobel Prize is special in the career of any scientist, but honestly, I'm the same person as before," he says. "Being a prize-winner doesn't make you 100 times smarter, but people certainly listen to you for a change," he jokes.

This humble attitude also translates into how Prof Novoselov conducts his research and works with his students. "I tend to work in small teams," he says. "But of course, what is most important is the community. I find it much more stimulating if you collaborate. So, my task now is to create this sense of community in my lab at NUS."

Prof Novoselov's research at NUS will be looking deeper into cutting-edge advanced materials. "People know me as the graphene researcher, but I would like to expand further. What graphene and other 2D materials taught us is that you can create artificial materials which are designed atom by atom for specific purposes," he explains. By building from the atomic level up, these advanced materials could push the boundaries of what is possible, for example by being lighter, stronger, and more conductive than ever before.

Naturally, working with these atomically-thin materials calls for a skilled and patient researcher. The intricate manipulations involved often require a steady hand —

I find it much more stimulating if you collaborate. So, my task now is to create this sense of community in my lab at NUS.

something which Prof Novoselov claims he did not always have. "I like to work with my hands, but 20 years ago as a PhD student, I saw that my professors were much more adept at handling materials than me," he says. "So, as a form of training, I bought a cutthroat razor to shave with. After much practice, my hands became steadier and I was able to perform the skillful actions required. I still shave with a cutthroat razor today," he declares.

These days, Prof Novoselov admits that he has fewer opportunities for hands-on research, as he encourages his team to perform many of the practical elements of lab work. So in order to continue working with his hands — and to keep his dexterity keen — he has taken to more artistic

pursuits and paints regularly. "I was lucky enough to be trained in traditional Chinese painting by a prominent Chinese artist," he says. After painting customary objects like bamboo, orchids, lotuses, and cherry blossoms, Prof Novoselov now uses Chinese brushes and techniques to paint anything that he likes — even using graphene ink in some paintings. "Graphene ink is not as black as Chinese ink; it has a silver sheen which I can use for the aesthetic quality," he adds.

He continues, "But also, it's possible to paint with Chinese and graphene ink in combination so that the graphene ink cannot be seen with the naked eye. In fact, the only way to observe the brushstrokes would be with a spectrometer. In this way, I can encode secret characters and meanings in my paintings using graphene." However, unfortunately, Prof Novoselov is staying tight-lipped on where to look, and how to decipher these codes.

Whether scientific or artistic, Prof Novoselov's work is always interesting and innovative — and as such, his upcoming projects at NUS will certainly be ones to look out for in future.

 This article was first published on 24 May in **NUS News** under the title of "Prof Konstantin Novoselov: physics and fine art" at news.nus.edu.sg/research/prof-konstantin-novoselov-physics-and-fine-art, and has been edited for **The AlumNUS**.

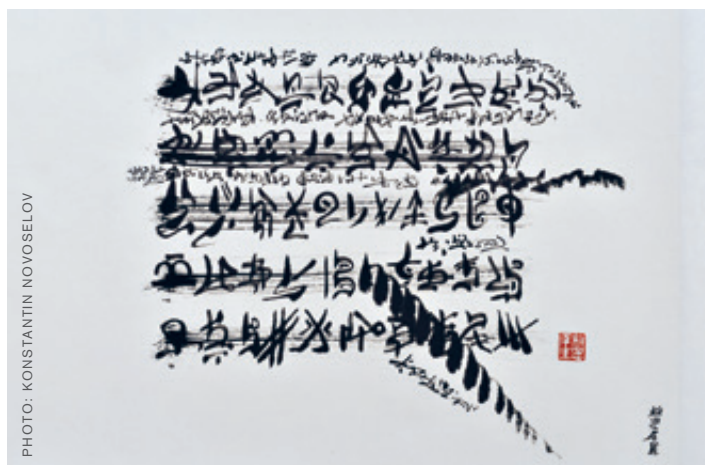


PHOTO: KONSTANTIN NOVOSELOV

Professor Sir Konstantin Novoselov often paints with a combination of graphene ink and Chinese ink to encode secret characters within his paintings. These can only be revealed with a spectrometer and such methods can be used to authenticate the work.

Access to Library e-Resources

Enjoy access to selected e-resources both on and off campus, brought to you by NUS Libraries in partnership with publishers.



j.mp/alum_resources

NEW

A SALUTE TO DESERVING STARS

Recognising contributions made by distinguished FASS alumni to society as well as the University.

NUS ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES honoured five of their eminent alumni for their outstanding service to the faculty, the University and Singapore, at the annual FASS STARS Awards on 5 April.

Affiliate alumna and Associate Professorial Fellow at NUS Social Work Mrs Ann Elizabeth Wee was among the five alumni who were conferred the Distinguished Arts and Social Sciences Alumni Award, for her pioneering efforts and unparalleled contributions to Singapore's social service sector.

Regarded as the 'Founding Mother of Social Work in Singapore', Mrs Wee has dedicated over 60 years of her life to social work. Mrs Wee began teaching full-time at NUS Social Work in 1957 and subsequently assumed the role of Department Head in 1967, a post she held until her retirement in 1986. During her stint as the Department Head, Mrs Wee was the driving force behind the University's decision to upgrade its two-year diploma course to a full-fledged

Honours Degree programme, paving the way for social workers to be recognised as professionals, enjoy better career prospects, and gain access to policymaking.

Mrs Wee's contributions extend beyond the academic sphere. She served on several boards and committees including volunteering on the Advisory Panel to the Juvenile Court for close to four decades, and acting as an advisor for women's and girl's issues with the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The Distinguished Arts and Social Sciences Alumni Award was also conferred on four other outstanding alumni, who have contributed to the betterment of society and the promotion of the arts and social sciences:

- ▶ Mr S. Chandra Das ('65), former Member of Parliament and Singapore's Non-Resident High Commissioner to The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
- ▶ Ambassador Barry Desker ('70), Member of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights and Singapore's Non-Resident Ambassador to the Holy See and the Kingdom of Spain
- ▶ Mr Wong Kan Seng ('70), former Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore and Chairman of Ascendas-Singbridge as well as United Overseas Bank
- ▶ Ms Janet Lim ('75), former Assistant High Commissioner at the United Nations Refugees Agency

"These distinguished alumni are not only making an impact on Singapore society in their respective fields, but are also flying the Singapore flag high on the global stage. Their achievements will continue to inspire the faculty and our students to reach for greater heights," said NUS Arts and Social Sciences Dean Professor Robbie Goh ('88).

68 other awards were presented to faculty and staff for their achievements and dedication in areas of research, teaching and service.

(From left)
Prof Robbie Goh,
Ms Janet Lim,
Mrs Ann Elizabeth
Wee, NUS President
Prof Tan Eng Chye,
Mr Wong Kan Seng,
Ambassador Barry Desker,
Mr S. Chandra Das,
Prof Brenda Yeo (Director,
Humanities & Social
Sciences Research),
and Prof Andrew Wee
(Vice President, University
and Global Relations).

FASS STARS AWARDS

DISTINGUISHED ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES ALUMNI AWARDS



This article was first published on 9 April in [NUS News](#) under the title of "Recognising contributions in arts and social sciences" at [news.nus.edu.sg/highlights/recognising-arts-social-sciences-contributions](#), and has been edited for The *AlumNUS*.



Mexican Film Festival

FOLLOWING THE SUCCESS of last year's inaugural *Mexican Film Festival*, this year's Festival attracted close to 900 alumni and guests, and was graced by Mr Enrique Escamilla, Chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of Mexico in Singapore (photo above); His Excellency Manuel Hernando Solano, Ambassador of the Republic of Colombia to Singapore; Mr Alade Akinremi Bolaji, Acting High Commissioner of Nigeria to Singapore; and Mr John Wilton, NUS Deputy President (Administration and Finance).

Jointly presented by the Embassy of Mexico in Singapore, The Projector and NUS Alumni Relations, the Festival opened with acclaimed film *Museum* on 4 June, with a special introduction and sharing session by *Museum's* producer and scriptwriter, Mr Manuel Alcala. At the sharing session moderated by Mr Ellery Ngiam (Scriptwriter, Media Entrepreneur and Founder of EN Films), Mr Alcala shared with audience how his background as a journalist provided him with the inspiration for this film, as well as his experiences in making the film.

Producer/
scriptwriter
Mr Manuel Alcala
(right) sharing his
experiences after
the screening
of *Museum*.



Three other Mexican films were screened during the Festival from 10 to 12 June: *Eddie Reynolds* and *The Iron Angels*, *Tigers Are Not Afraid*, and *Single and Fabulous In Her Thirties*. Each night, lucky draw prizes sponsored by Maison Du Whisky, Tono Cevicheria and Vatos were also given out to some lucky members of the audience.

INDIAN FILM FESTIVAL

FOUR ACCLAIMED INDIAN FILMS – *Manikarnika*:

The Queen of Jhansi, *Naal*, *Raazi* and *Anandi Gopal* – were presented at the annual *Indian Film Festival* held from 12 to 15 March at the Shaw Foundation Alumni House.

Close to 1,000 alumni and guests attended the event, including the Ambassadors of Peru, Italy and Nigeria. In addition to being treated to a good film each night, one lucky member of the audience also went home with air tickets sponsored by IndiGo, Jet Airways and Air India.

The Festival was jointly presented by the High Commission of India in Singapore and NUS Alumni Relations.



His Excellency
Javed Ashraf,
High Commissioner
of India to
Singapore gave the
opening address.



Guests came dressed in beautiful traditional Indian dress.

UPCOMING EVENT

China Film Festival

▶ 11-13 Sep, 7.30pm

Register at [alumnet.events/CNFF19](#)



The panel discussion featured (from left) ophthalmologist and philanthropist Dr Rupesh Agrawal; Year 2 NUS Sociology student Mr Jason Lee, who created and directed *The Buddy*, one of the films from *15 Shorts*; Ms Kari Tamura; consultant Mr Alan Ng; and moderator Ms Corrine Ong (Business '94), NUS Student Affairs' Deputy Director of Community Engagement.

PLANTING SEEDS OF GOOD

A new community development learning programme seeks to engage NUS students in social causes.



Mr Hsieh addressing students, staff and alumni at the launch of the Seeds of Good initiative.

ON 20 MARCH, NUS Student Affairs and NUS Alumni Relations jointly launched *Seeds of Good*, a new community development learning programme that seeks to empower NUS students to collaborate with the community, social service organisations and corporations to promote social causes or address issues faced by communities both within NUS and beyond.

The launch at the Shaw Foundation Alumni House featured various inspiring elements to spur students and alumni to begin their own projects to serve communities in need, such as exhibitions, film screenings and a panel discussion.

To kick off the event, Guest-of-Honour NUS Chairman Mr Hsieh Fu Hua (Business '74) shared his thoughts and perspectives on serving the less-privileged. Speaking to a packed auditorium of students, alumni and staff, Mr Hsieh commended the event's aim of exposing students to ongoing projects,

saying, "The heart has to be touched, so by seeing, by modelling, by sharing when your heart is touched, the seed will germinate. And the germination leads you then to make a very clear, conscious commitment. So this whole question of doing good is not a flash in the pan – it shouldn't be."

Four short films from the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre's *15 Shorts* project were screened to raise awareness for the issues faced by the autism, migrant worker, homeless and prison communities in Singapore.

Ongoing projects by members of the NUS community that serve various groups in need were featured in a gallery at the event. The event showcased the ground-up migrant worker's campaign *Sama Sama*, founded by Ms Kari Tamura (Business '12), which displayed a unique immersive exhibit combining art and technology to allow the public to personally experience five different stories of migrant workers; and *NUS Day of Service*, which will be held on 7 September this year. Register at nus.edu.sg/alumnnet/DOS.

At a panel discussion on "The Art of Seeding Good", Ms Tamura offered this piece of advice to the students in attendance who may want to get started on community projects, "Don't just do it once. Do it a number of times and you would get the hang of it after a while, and you will learn where you need to improve... We have experienced thinking, 'What are we even doing? Is this even worth it?' It takes years sometimes to refine the methodology of what you plan to do. So keep doing and keep learning."

The heart has to be touched, so by seeing, by modelling, by sharing when your heart is touched, the seed will germinate.

Mr Hsieh Fu Hua, NUS Chairman



Mr Hsieh hearing from members of the NUS Community Service Club about their food distribution drive Project C.A.N.

LUNCH DIALOGUES

HOW TO ~~COPE~~ THRIVE



A SPECIAL EDITION of *Lunch Dialogues* was held on 26 April at NUSS' (NUS Society) Mandalay Guild House featuring Dr Jade Kua (Medicine '03), and moderated by Dr Kelvin Chua (Dentistry '11).

Dr Kua is a peditiatric emergency specialist at KK Women's and Children's Hospital, programme director for DARE (Dispatcher-Assisted First Responder), blogger, author, and mother of six who also provides a home for rescued dogs. Despite her multiple roles as a mother, a wife and a career woman – with heavy responsibilities both at work and at home – Dr Kua shared candidly with alumni and friends during the session how she stays happy and healthy, and thrives. Read more about Dr Kua's life and health tips at A Doctor's Note (drjadekua.com).

TIPS ↓

1

MAINTAIN GOOD MENTAL HYGIENE (HEALTH).

2

TRIAGE THE TASKS AND KNOW YOUR PRIORITIES.

3

FIND (OR CREATE!) JOY AT WORK.



NUSS
The Graduate Club



Office of Alumni Relations

Mrs Bernadette Giam

(Arts and Social Sciences '09)
Director, Creative Eateries

The Only Constant is Change - From a Corporate Career to Entrepreneurship

Breakfast Dialogues



26 July 2019 (Friday), 7.30am, NUSS Suntec City Guild House, 3 Temasek Boulevard (Tower 5), #02- 401/402 Suntec City Mall, Singapore 038983

Registration fee:
\$10 (Alumnus, Student, Staff)
\$15 (Guest)

Register at:
alumnet.events/BDjul19



PROGRAMME

7.30am Light Breakfast & Networking
8.00am Sharing by Mrs Bernadette Giam
8.30am Q&A Session
9.00am End

Mrs Bernadette Giam started her career with the Singapore civil service in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and after several years, joined her family business, Creative Eateries, for a taste of entrepreneurship. She is currently the Director of Corporate Affairs and Human Resources.

She has spent the last seven years working on different aspects of the Food and Beverage company in an effort to navigate the challenging climate of a manpower-intensive business in fast-paced Singapore. Having made the switch to entrepreneurship from her corporate career, she attributes the challenges of business to her personal growth and self-knowledge.

Join us for this insightful breakfast session to hear the various takeaways she has gained through this endeavour.



SKILLSFUTURE ADVICE WORKSHOP

Data-Driven Strategies for Human Resource Management

HUMAN RESOURCE (HR) MANAGEMENT

is applicable to all organisations, and advances in technological advancement have provided HR practitioners with useful data analytic tools.

At this workshop conducted by Mr David Hufton, Adjunct Lecturer, Institute of Systems Science at NUS, more than 100 alumni learned how data analytic tools can help them to gain insights into important HR processes such as recruitment; employee engagement; productivity; appraisal and development; and retention.

This series of workshops is organised by NUS Alumni Relations in partnership with NUS School of Continuing and Lifelong Education and SkillsFuture Engage Office.

UPCOMING EVENT

SkillsFuture For Businesses
SkillsFuture Advice Workshop

► 16 Jul, 7.30pm

Register at alumnet.events/SFjul19

TECH TALK

HOW CONVERSATIONAL AI TRANSFORMS THE WAY WE WORK



HAVE YOU EVER ASKED QUESTIONS on an online chat, say, on a banking or shopping website? If you have, you have probably experienced Artificial Intelligence (AI) if the 'person' you were chatting with was a Chatbot.

Mr Wong Hong Ting (Science '10), Founder and Director of Botbot.AI and an expert at productisation, fundraising, software consultancy and business strategy shared with more than 100 alumni who attended the workshop, on how the workforce can focus on high-cognition

tasks that have more value and impact with AI taking over low value, menial, repetitive and transactional tasks. Attendees also learned the key considerations in building more effective, reliable and service-oriented Chatbots.

UPCOMING EVENT

Creating Machines That Can See
Tech Talk

► 21 Aug, 7.30pm

Register at alumnet.events/TSaug19

HEALTH & WELLNESS

HEART CONDITIONS AND THEIR TREATMENTS

ONE OUT OF THREE DEATHS IN SINGAPORE is due to heart diseases or stroke – according to the Ministry of Health. Taking good care of our heart is vital, not just for seniors but for people of all ages. In this session, Dr William Kristanto (Medicine '10) shared with alumni the common heart diseases that plague Singaporeans, and the various evaluation methods and treatments.



UPCOMING EVENT

Health & Wellness

► 20 Sep, 7.30pm

Register at alumnet.events/HWsep19

THIRSTY THURSDAYS



CLOSE TO 100 ALUMNI were treated to a fascinating show of iPad magic performed by award-winning iPad magician Mr Alexander Yuen (Arts and Social Sciences '12) at *Thirsty Thursdays* held on 6 June at Typhoon Café, Plaza Singapura.

In addition to chilling out with old friends and getting to know new ones, alumni were amazed by Mr Yuen's performance that combined technology and magic.



READ MORE ABOUT
MR YUEN AND HIS
JOURNEY INTO THE
WORLD OF MAGIC
ON PAGE 48.



Speaker:

Dr Tian Jing

Lecturer & Consultant, Artificial Intelligence Practice
Institute of Systems Science, NUS

21 August 2019 (Wednesday)
7.30pm

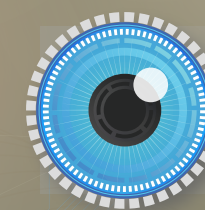
Coriander, Shaw Foundation Alumni House

Register at alumnet.events/TSaug19



Creating Machines That Can See

Computer vision is a prominent subset of artificial intelligence that deals with the **science of making machines see**, enabling them to **analyse, understand and make sense of the unstructured data from images and video footages**. Today, their usage extends widely in various sectors, including identifying fouls in football matches, isolating defective products in manufacturing lines and recognising criminal behaviour in surveillance cameras. If you are curious to know more about this technology's untapped potentials and its impact to workforce and society, this talk is for you. The speaker will also discuss case studies and demonstrate how these machines work.





CALENDAR OF ALUMNI EVENTS

JUL.AUG.SEP

JULY



A Garden Party

Bukit Timah Homecoming

Enjoy the serene and lush greenery of the beautiful Bukit Timah Campus as you take a trip down memory lane and catch up with friends at this annual homecoming reunion.

6 JUL

Lower Quadrangle, Bukit Timah Campus, Sat, 4pm

Registration is now closed.
alumnet.events/BT19
Contact: Ms Josephine Chng
jochng@nus.edu.sg

SkillsFuture for Businesses

SkillsFuture Advice Workshop

In partnership with SkillsFuture Singapore, learn about the various programmes and initiatives available to businesses in Singapore to support people strategies.

16 JUL

Shaw Foundation Alumni House, Tue, 7.30pm

Register: alumnet.events/SFjul19
Contact: Mr Ng Shan Jun
ngshanjun@nus.edu.sg

➔ nus.edu.sg/alumnet/events



17
AUG

FIESTA ON THE GREEN

Kent Ridge Alumni Family Day

The annual NUS homecoming welcomes the entire NUS community (alumni, students and staff, as well as families and friends) back to campus, for a fun-filled evening of entertainment engagement/networking and a movie screening of *Smallfoot* (PG).



17 Aug, Sat

NUS University Town, 5pm

Register: alumnet.events/KR19
Contact: Mr Samuel Tan
samuel.tan@nus.edu.sg

Creed II (PG13)

Movies On The House

In 1985, Russian boxer Ivan Drago killed former U.S. champion Apollo Creed in a tragic match that stunned the world. Against the wishes of trainer Rocky Balboa, Apollo's son and current champ Adonis Creed accepts a challenge from Drago's son, another dangerous fighter. Now, Creed and Balboa must confront their shared legacy as the past comes back to haunt each man.

25 JUL

Shaw Foundation Alumni House, Thu, 7.30pm

Register: alumnet.events/MMjul19
Contact: Mr Edmond Kwek
edmond_kwek@nus.edu.sg

The Only Constant is Change – From a Corporate Career to Entrepreneurship

Breakfast Dialogues

Speaker: Mrs Bernadette Giam (Arts and Social Sciences '09), Director, Creative Eateries

26 JUL

NUSS Suntec City Guild House, Fri, 7.30am

Ticket Price: \$10 (Alumnus/Student/Staff), \$15 (Guest)

Register: alumnet.events/BDjul19
Contact: Mr Edmond Kwek
edmond_kwek@nus.edu.sg



AUGUST

Creating Machines That Can See

Tech Talk

Speaker: Dr Tian Jing, Lecturer & Consultant, Artificial Intelligence Practice, Institute of Systems Science, NUS



Learn about computer vision – a prominent subset of Artificial Intelligence that deals with the science of making machines see and analyse data – and its untapped potential, and impact on the workforce and society.

21 AUG

Shaw Foundation Alumni House, Wed, 7.30pm

Register: alumnet.events/TSaug19
Contact: Ms Gabriella Nyam
gabriella@nus.edu.sg

The Big Day (PG)

Feature Films

From overbearing in-laws, to oppressive loansharks, to a jealous best friend, to a house on fire and a funeral on the wedding day itself, Su Yu's and Nuo Yan's love for each other is tested by family, foes and fate. Will their wedding be the event that brings them closer or tears them apart? Starring Mr Desmond Tan (Design and Environment '11).

29 AUG

Shaw Foundation Alumni House, Thu, 7.30pm

Register: alumnet.events/FFaug19
Contact: Mr Ng Shan Jun
ngshanjun@nus.edu.sg



SEPTEMBER

Speakeasy Night Thirsty Thursdays

A popular event for young alumni to catch up and network with one another over drinks and snacks.

5 SEP

The Horse's Mouth Bar, 583 Orchard Road #B1-39 Forum The Shopping Mall Singapore 238884 Thu, 6.30pm

Ticket Price: \$10

Register: alumnet.events/TTsep19

Contact: Ms Cassandra Lua
cassandrualuay@nus.edu.sg

NUS Day of Service 2019

Volunteer registration is now open! Check out our website to find out how you can champion a community activity or participate in one. Together we can make a difference!

7 SEP

Various locations and timings, Sat

Register: nus.edu.sg/alumnet/DOS

Contact: Ms Josephine Chng
jochng@nus.edu.sg



China Film Festival

Back by popular demand, join us to enjoy acclaimed Chinese films jointly brought to you by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, Singapore China Friendship Association and NUS Alumni Relations. (Movie titles to be announced nearer to date)

11-13 SEP

Shaw Foundation Alumni House, Wed-Fri, 7.30pm

Register: alumnet.events/CNFF19
Contact: Ms Cassandra Lua
cassandrualuay@nus.edu.sg



Health and Wellness

A series of talks by specialists to help alumni better understand common medical conditions. Unravel medical jargon and debunk myths behind seemingly complicated diseases at these talks.

20 SEP

Shaw Foundation Alumni House, Fri, 7.30pm

Register: alumnet.events/HWsep19

Contact: Mr Roystonn Loh
roystonn.loh@nus.edu.sg

Shazam (PG13)

Movies On The House

We all have a superhero inside us and it just takes a bit of magic to bring it out. In Billy Batson's case, by shouting out one word, "SHAZAM", this streetwise 14-year-old kid can turn into the adult Superhero Shazam.

26 SEP

Shaw Foundation Alumni House, Thu, 7.30pm

Register: alumnet.events/MMsep19

Contact: Mr Edmond Kwek
edmond_kwek@nus.edu.sg



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NAVIGATING THE NEW AGE OF WORK

TEXT BY WANDA TAN

In today's tech-enabled economy, the nature of work is changing — and with it, the perennial debate about work-life balance. This issue is far from clear-cut for NUS graduates, as *The Alumnus* finds out.

A '996' WORK SCHEDULE — 9AM TO 9PM, SIX DAYS A WEEK — may be *de rigueur* in China's fiercely competitive tech industry, but it is not most people's idea of fun. On the contrary, the thought of a 72-hour workweek might cause many of us to break out in a cold sweat. So when Jack Ma, co-founder of Chinese e-commerce juggernaut Alibaba Group, endorsed the '996' work culture and called it a "huge bliss" according to an April 2019 post on Alibaba's official Weibo account, it was unsurprisingly decried by critics from all over the world.

There is broad consensus that working long hours has negative health consequences. In the last two years alone, the *European Heart Journal*, *Journal of Happiness Studies* and Mayo Clinic staff, among others, have reported that overworked employees experience high levels of stress or burnout, which can manifest in a

variety of physical and mental health problems such as fatigue, constant headaches, insomnia, heart disease, anxiety and depression. This raises the likelihood of employees being less productive or committing errors at work, to say nothing of the higher healthcare spending and turnover costs borne by employers.

In an ideal world, everyone will be able to strike a good balance between their career and personal life, and employers in turn would reap the benefits of a healthy, happy workforce. But if '996' isn't the answer, what is? Why is it probably easier said than done? It is worthwhile to examine how well (or not) NUS alumni have fared in achieving work-life balance, and how their experiences — as well as the advice of NUS career experts — can help fellow alumni, including NUS' freshly-minted graduates who are about to join the workforce.

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES



WORK-LIFE
INTEGRATION

tip
#2

Build up financial literacy as early as possible. Learn how to invest in stocks to earn a passive income stream and reach financial stability. This will give you the freedom to leave an unsatisfying job and do something you are passionate about.

Dr Ryan Chaw, External
Technology Acquisition —
APAC Lead,
The Coca-Cola Company



WORK-LIFE
INTEGRATION

tip
#1

Set clear boundaries for yourself. Identify what you are willing to tolerate as far as time management, workload and work hours are concerned, and stick to those boundaries.

Mr Daryl Boey, Senior Talent
Acquisition Manager,
APAC, Essence



BLURRED BOUNDARIES

Let's get one thing straight: there is no such thing as work-life balance anymore — at least from a binary, either-or perspective. Technological advances such as powerful mobile devices, high-speed WiFi hotspots, video conferencing tools, instant messaging apps and document collaboration software allow people to work at any time and from anywhere, causing work to spill over into home life and vice versa. This has brought about a slew of non-traditional flexible work arrangements (FWAs) including telecommuting, hot-desking, co-working spaces, staggered hours and compressed (four-day) workweeks.

Companies are by and large moving in this direction to attract and retain employees. More women — who tend to shoulder the child-rearing burden — are entering (or re-entering) the workforce; family caregiving responsibilities are growing due to our ageing population; and job-hopping and freelance work are becoming more prevalent in the

new 'gig' economy — all amounting to louder calls for FWAs and other work-life balance policies.

In this context, the more apt term 'work-life integration' (or 'work-life harmony') has caught on. It mirrors real-life situations like checking work emails at home or on vacation, paying bills online during office hours and socialising with colleagues outside the workplace. "To me, work-life balance means the integration of my professional and personal lives in a way that helps achieve my goals in both realms in a meaningful manner," says Mr Daryl Boey (Arts and Social Sciences '12), Senior Talent Acquisition Manager for Asia-Pacific at media agency Essence.

Mr Boey, 32, adds that work-life integration is subjective, as it depends on the extent to which the individual is willing to make sacrifices in the work or non-work sphere. Someone intent on getting ahead in their career would readily devote more time at work, whereas another person might arrange to leave work earlier on certain days to attend hobby-

WORK-LIFE
INTEGRATIONtip
#3

Identity is multi-faceted: career is just one part of it. Don't focus solely on building your career. Discover your passion and what excites you outside of work. Be open to new experiences to find out what you like and don't like.

Ms Shamantha Yan,
Co-Founder,
Growthbeans



related classes. "Manage your time to accomplish your professional and personal goals in a way that is most comfortable for you. It is a work in progress, so be prepared to adjust accordingly when it makes sense to, at different junctures in your life," he asserts.

The notion that work-life integration is continually evolving is something Dr Ryan Chaw (Engineering '02), a career-minded person-turned-family man, can relate to. "When I was in my 20s and just starting out in my career, I was focused on getting more work experience and growing my professional capabilities. Work took higher priority," says Dr Chaw, 41, who has two sons aged 10 and eight. "Things started to shift in my 30s, after I got married and had kids. As I've grown older, my perspective on life has changed. Chasing a career is not as important to me as spending time with my family."

Nonetheless, there have been some bumps along the way. When Dr Chaw, a former materials research scientist, joined The Coca-Cola Company in 2015 as the External Technology Acquisition Lead for Asia-Pacific, it took a while for him to get settled. "During my first few months at Coca-Cola, I struggled with the 'always-on' work mindset. Because I was still new to the role, I felt like I had to respond immediately to work calls, even after office hours and on weekends," says Dr Chaw. "Once I got the hang of my job and learned how to prioritise work tasks, things became more manageable."

THE MILLENNIAL FORCE

Singaporeans are giving greater priority to the work-life interface, as revealed by recent surveys. In Randstad's *Employer Brand Research 2018: Singapore Report*, the employment agency noted that, next to salary and benefits (55 per cent), work-life balance (53 per cent) was the top reason Singapore employees — especially women — gave for staying in their present jobs. A separate survey by recruitment firm Robert Half found that one in four Singaporeans would leave their current organisation for a better work-life balance, valuing it just above better financial rewards (24 per cent).

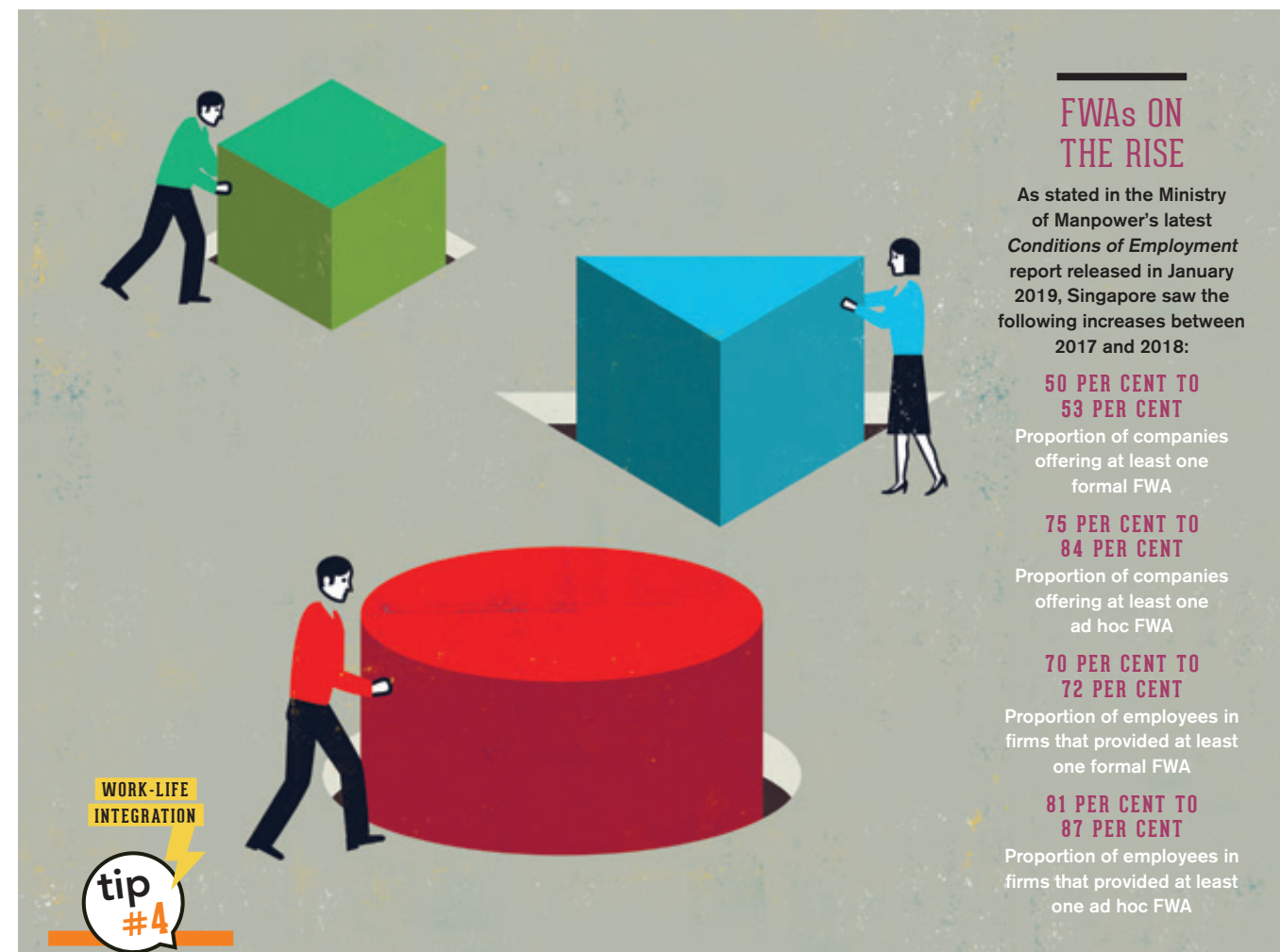
These results are consistent with a LinkedIn survey that was conducted in 2018 with respondents across nine Asia-Pacific countries. The study showed that nearly half (40 per cent) of all respondents regarded work-life balance as the ultimate job aspiration, particularly those from the developed economies of Singapore (48 per cent) and Australia (46 per cent). Interestingly, the growing influence of millennials on the job market — and their preference for purposeful work over higher pay — was posited as a major factor behind this trend.

Millennial twins Ms Shamantha Yan (Arts and Social Sciences '08) and Ms Shane Yan (Arts and Social Sciences '08), 33, acknowledge that the search for purpose has been a key consideration in their working lives. Both of them used to work long hours in their corporate jobs — Shamantha at Singapore Airlines, and Shane at human resource consulting firm Mercer — before they linked up in 2015 as co-founders of Growthbeans, a social enterprise aimed at helping people form connections with others (through 'Sharing Circles') to facilitate career and personal development.

"The weekly 'Sharing Circle' sessions serve as a safe space for participants to share their thoughts and views to non-judgmental listening ears, find their sense of identity beyond their job titles, and build meaningful relationships with others," says Shamantha. This work is aligned with the duo's passion to help people gain self-awareness to lead happier, more fulfilling lives, as they themselves have realised. Shamantha explains, "At some point, you have to stop seeing work and life as two separate things. What matters more is that you enjoy what you are doing in all areas of your life."

Shane opines that millennials' increased desire for work-life balance may be the by-product of greater financial security. "In the past, people operated in survival mode — they needed to work hard to provide for their families. By comparison, our generation has not faced such hardships. Living standards have improved, and most millennials can receive financial support from their parents." Referencing Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs' theory, Shane says, "We are able to move on from the basic physiological needs to higher-level needs like self-actualisation, or seeking personal growth to give meaning to our lives."

ILLUSTRATIONS: GETTY IMAGES



Reflect on your priorities and what is important to you. Practise time management: know when to hit the 'stop', 'start' and 'pause' buttons. Have the self-discipline to avoid getting bogged down by minor details, and let go of perfectionism.

Ms Shane Yan, Co-Founder,
Growthbeans



As employers, the Yans are strong advocates of work-life balance. They are currently based at the co-working space Social Collider, but all four Growthbeans staff (including the two sisters) can work from anywhere and have the flexibility to manage their own time. Likewise, Dr Chaw is leasing a space at the Action Community for Entrepreneurship (ACE) Co-working Zone in one-north, which puts him closer to potential external partners for "open innovation" opportunities. Coca-Cola's Flexible Work Schedule Policy also provides employees with the means to organise their working lives to suit personal needs in improving productive time and reinforcing work-life balance.

"FWAs are increasingly becoming the norm, and hence workers have come to expect this when evaluating prospective employers," says Mr Alvin Low, Head of Strategic Relations and Planning at NUS Centre for Future-ready Graduates (CFG). "Among the employers we have interviewed for CFG's *Future-ready Reports*, fostering work-life harmony was a prominent theme. We also highlighted that workplace culture factors like Purpose, Growth, Challenge,

Trust, Autonomy, Collaboration and Well-being were key motivators for millennial talents beyond hygiene factors such as salary."

REALITY BITES

Despite the increased attention to work-life harmony by employees and employers, it continues to elude vast swathes of people. Stories of advertising executives, auditors, lawyers and medical residents clocking excessive hours are legion. For every happy, productive tech employee like Ms Anuprita Bhomick [see 'In The Driver's Seat' on the following page], there is a disgruntled, burned-out counterpart in China due to the gruelling '996' system. For every individual who makes use of FWAs to lead a well-balanced life, there is another who feels compelled to be in 'always-on' work mode because of the ability to work anytime, anywhere.

Japan and South Korea may be infamous for their 'death from overwork' problem, but the fact is that Singaporeans put in one of the longest working hours in the world. Under Singapore's Employment Act, employees are allowed to work up to 44 hours a week, which is within the 48-hour standard set by the International Labour Organization. They are also



IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT



A 2018 Universum global talent survey ranked Google as the most attractive employer for Business, Engineering, IT and Arts students in Singapore universities (including NUS). Moreover, work-life balance was the most-selected career goal upon graduation for the students surveyed, across all fields of study. Ms Anuprita Bhomick (Business '03), 45, Global Head of Partner Programmes at Google, who is also an Adjunct Lecturer at NUS Business School, shares how she has sought to integrate work and life throughout her tech career.

"From my experience at companies like Dell, Hewlett-Packard and now Google, I can say that the tech sector has a long history of flexible working hours, telecommuting, sabbaticals, generous paid parental leave, as well as other employee benefits and perks such as on-site gyms and subsidised or free food. This is not the case across all industries, some of which still have time cards or measure productivity by the time spent in office.

I have had my fair share of hard lessons when it comes to work-life balance. Previously, financial security – paying off my mortgage, affording my Master's degree, and saving up for retirement and for my kids' education – was uppermost in my mind. There were times when I felt like I was doing too much at work,

and I have missed important family occasions. I tried hard to live up to my bosses' and co-workers' expectations of me. Then it started to take a toll on my health. I had a difficult pregnancy with my second child [now four years old]. I had to turn inwards to figure out what was right for me.

Now that I am in my 40s, I feel more centred and relaxed. Work-life integration to me has four components – doing more in my career, being more present for my family, giving back to the community, and investing in self-growth. You can do all this and push for four-way wins, if you have clarity on what makes you happy. At the end of the day, you are in the driver's seat of your own life and happiness. Don't drown out your own voice; do what is right for you."



Have courage. Believe that you are not being judged based on the number of hours you put in at work, or on the societal labels others may pin on you. Be upfront about whether you find more fulfilment through work or outside of work.

Mr Daniel Chia, Head of Human Resources, Samsung Asia



not allowed to work more than 12 hours a day, or over 72 hours of overtime a month. However, most Singaporeans appear to be exceeding this limit.

The Ministry of Manpower reported that Singapore employees worked an average of 44.8 paid hours a week (equivalent to nearly nine hours a day for a five-day workweek) in 2018, down slightly from 46.3 paid hours a week in 2008. However, these statistics exclude unpaid overtime and so there may be systematic under-estimation of working hours. Looking specifically at the millennial cohort, a 2016 survey by global recruitment agency ManpowerGroup found that millennials in Singapore worked 48 hours a week – trailing only behind their peers in India at 52 hours, and on par with China and Mexico.

Naturally, this struggle over work is affecting the well-being of Singaporeans. According to a recent survey by health service company Cigna, 92 per cent of Singaporean respondents were stressed from work – higher than the global average of 84 per cent, and making Singaporeans among the most stressed at work globally. Of this group, 13 per cent considered their stress unmanageable, causing sleep deprivation.

NUS Business School's Undergraduate Career Advisory Team suggests that Singapore's *kiasu* (fear of losing out) culture may be partially at fault: "Due to our education system and upbringing, the majority

of the workforce aim to stay globally competitive with lucrative salary packages and simultaneously achieve a healthy work-life balance. However, more often than not, with the advent of evolving technology, employees are working even longer hours outside of the stipulated office hours via emails and mobile app messages."

Mr Daniel Chia (Science '03), Head of Human Resources at Samsung Asia, agrees with them. "Unfortunately, Singaporeans still have a penchant for labelling people by their material wealth or possessions, which is driving a competitive 'race to the top'. I don't think this will change anytime soon," he admits.

Within Samsung, Mr Chia, 42, discloses that there is a formal telecommuting policy in place, yet the staff take-up rate is low. "Most employees dare not work from home,

probably because they are worried of being perceived as skiving by their bosses." Thus, he says, work-life integration requires a "two-pronged" approach. "An organisation can have the right infrastructure to promote work-life integration – for example, offering FWAs and recreational facilities such as a gym or foosball table – but it is up to the individual to utilise it, as well as the people manager to embrace it."

NO SUBSTITUTE FOR HARD WORK

The best way for undergraduates to prepare themselves for the rigours of the workplace, and be exposed to the work-life harmony typically offered in a particular industry, is by taking internships. "As an intern, the student could infer and decide if the work climate

WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION



Try reframing the issue. Instead of viewing work-life balance and professional success as an 'either-or' dilemma, approach it with a 'both-and' mindset.



Mr Jasbir Singh, Head of Learning and Development, CFG

complements the lifestyle which they are comfortable with. This could be done by observing seniors who have been working in the company for the past one or two years," say NUS Business School's career advisors.

CFG also provides career advisory services for students in various NUS faculties. Mrs Camilla Tam, a Faculty of Science Career Advisor at CFG, notes that students often bring up the topic of work-life balance during career coaching sessions. "We try to educate the students that employers want people who are willing to work hard to learn and develop fast, so it's important to have an open conversation on expectations early on," says Mrs Tam. "Undoubtedly fresh graduates will face a steep learning curve when embarking on their first jobs, so they need to be prepared for an element of occasional overtime at the start to build up their proficiency [even if it is not explicitly stated in the job scope]."

Mr Jasbir Singh, Head of Learning and Development at CFG, reiterates: "In the spirit of conscious growth and learning, I think the first year or two after graduation can be the time to allow the balance to tilt heavily in favour of work. But maybe not in perpetuity. The key word here is *conscious* – deciding that you choose to work longer hours than you are paid for so that you can learn as much as possible, build credibility and grow your professional network."

Patience and resilience are therefore required for those just starting out in their careers. On some level, then, even though FWAs and other provisions for work-life harmony are now widely available in the workplace, the best recourse for fresh graduates may be to adopt the mindset that such provisions should be earned rather than expected. Proving one's worth in the workplace is the first step towards accelerating a fledgling career and, ultimately, achieving work-life integration. **A**



The Career Advisors from NUS Business School are (front row, left to right) Ms Julynn Liang and Ms Theresa Ong; and (back row, left to right) Mr Kenneth Lam, Mr Eddie Phua and Mr Clarence Ong.

CULTIVATING FUTURE-READY GRADUATES

To equip NUS students with essential soft skills that are applicable across all life domains, including work, CFG has launched two new initiatives during the Academic Year 2018/19. The first is the **Career Accelerator** workshop series, where CFG trainers and reputed industry professionals conduct 'Lunch and Learn' workshops to teach important soft skills like empathy, resilience, productivity and relationship-building in the context of the workplace environment.

The second initiative is **Roots & Wings 2.0**, an updated, more interactive version of the Roots & Wings programme introduced in 2016. Delivered in partnership with the Department of Psychology, Roots & Wings 2.0 comprises a series of bite-sized modules, each focusing on a specific soft skill (such as resilience, self-awareness and collaboration) to enhance personal and interpersonal effectiveness. Each module carries one modular credit and runs across three face-to-face experiential workshops of three hours each.



➔ **LABOUR PAINS**

When it comes to affluence, Singaporeans are firmly entrenched in the First World, but how evolved are we when it comes to our corporate culture? What are the strategies for getting ahead at work these days — and do the old rules still apply?

SURVIVING THE CORPORATE JUNGLE:

OUR PANEL

MR TAI XU HONG
(ENGINEERING '10), 35
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
IN A START-UP SOCIAL
ENTERPRISE



MS HAI PHAM
(PUBLIC POLICY '10), 29
SENIOR POLICY SPECIALIST
AT GOOGLE



MR LIONEL LEO
(LAW '07), 37
PARTNER,
WONGPARTNERSHIP LLP



MR GALVEN TAN
(DESIGN AND
ENVIRONMENT '04), 40
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AT AN
INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY
CONSULTANCY



MS JOLIN CHEN
(LAW '17), 25
LEGAL COUNSEL FOR
AN MNC

WHAT DOES IT TAKE?

Five NUS alumni in different stages of their career share their insights on the rat-race, navigating office politics, the importance of work-life balance and more.

How far do degrees get us in the workplace?

XU HONG: I have spent most of my time in start-ups doing work unrelated to my field of study. However, my time at NUS did teach me how to approach matters and break down problems.

GALVEN: The degree was important when I started out, as it was a requirement at that point and the company only hired Real Estate graduates. However, our company has grown extensively in terms of product lines, so when we run graduate trainee programmes now, we get applicants from across universities and faculties. While the easiest way to get a real estate license is to be a Real Estate graduate, the specialised degree only offers a slight advantage these days.

LIONEL: For the legal industry, grades are seeing a resurgence in their importance. Book smarts used to matter less because there used to be an under-supply of graduates. Once you got yourself into a firm, you would have to rely on other skills to prove that you are a good lawyer, especially in litigation. You could be smart but awkward and not have the confidence to stand up and speak in front of the judge or even instil confidence in your client, and the lack of lawyers then would generally still allow you to find a role somewhere. However, these days there is a larger supply of Law graduates so grades have become more important in terms of helping graduates differentiate themselves from others.

JOLIN: I was one of those who got a Second Lower, and only landed a job after sending out 66 applications! As a millennial who didn't do well in school, I knew I had to bump up my street smarts. Now, a year into my job, my employers have stopped looking at my grades and instead assess me by my work skills, such as how I deal with a diverse range of clients.

We often hear of companies where the bosses favour those from certain universities. Have you observed such practices?

LIONEL: Recruiters sometimes have their own biases, but such biases can work both ways. For instance, a recruiter might actually favour applicants from more humble backgrounds as he feels that they are more down-to-earth and willing to fight so this bias may level the playing field somewhat. In our firm — where there is an emphasis on diversity — we assess each individual based on his or her merits and abilities, so factors like the alma mater don't really factor into the decision-making.

GALVEN: This is probably more common in industries where the companies tend to be smaller in scale. In a larger organisation where there are many roles to fill, a company cannot afford to hire within their "circle" based on the bosses' own background.

HAI PHAM: Google is very unique in that we have a policy on diversity, and discrimination is greatly frowned upon. The company will of course look at your educational background and work experience — those are what will get you through the front door — but once you are in, what matters are your work performance and how well you work with others.

How important is managing relations with your co-workers?

HAI PHAM: You never know who you might be working with in the next project, or who you might have to call upon for a favour. What I do know is that there



What I do know is that there is nothing that I can do in isolation, so it is important to maintain good working relations with everybody. – MS HAI PHAM

is nothing that I can do in isolation, so it is important to maintain good working relations with everybody.

XU HONG: The ability to connect with people does matter, and when I hire these days, I find it difficult to find youths who want to connect sincerely and authentically.

JOLIN: I bring my whole self to work and am very open. This is especially important because I want people to be comfortable about coming to me with their questions and problems, knowing that I will not judge them. If they don't dare to come to me and end up doing something non-compliant, that would be worse! We need each other at work and so it is important to keep that human connection.

LIONEL: Being genuine and sincere is important, be it in dealing with associates, colleagues or clients. However,

while my associates and I often connect over drinks after a case, there is still a need to set boundaries. You can't be friends with everybody — and I learnt that the hard way. Friends expect to be treated a certain way and might take things personally when being reprimanded.

Are some kinds of work experience that are more valuable than others (e.g. an overseas stint)?

GALVEN: You can classify experience into two big categories: those specific to your job, and general experiences that shape you as a person. For example, real estate is a localised business, so how would my 15 years' experience in Singapore be relevant if I want to go to China? This is when the soft skills that moulded you come into play. A diverse experience makes you more rounded and teaches you to approach things in different ways.

JOLIN: It is all about how you frame your experience. I personally regard bad experiences as the best opportunities for personal growth.

LIONEL: Yes, you have to know how to frame your work and life experiences to showcase something about yourself.



TOIL TALES 2,345.2

The average number of hours worked per year by Singapore residents, according to a 2017 Ministry of Manpower report – more than people in all the other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.

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A 2019 STUDY
BY OCBC BANK
FOUND THAT

45%

OF SINGAPOREAN
MILLENNIALS
WOULD CONSIDER
FREELANCING IN THE
GIG ECONOMY.

Say, if you took a year off to go skiing – depending on how you frame it, you could be seen as a bum, or somebody who is super passionate.

Is it important to trumpet your achievements/ draw attention to yourself in order to get ahead? Or can your work speak for itself?

JOLIN: As a member of the Lean In Singapore Chapter and Women in Law Singapore, I observe that many women in the legal industry do not dare step up to be seen. Some might be extremely talented but because they are so humble they get passed up. However, it is not anybody's responsibility to pick you up as a diamond in the rough. You don't have to brag or fight for opportunities, you just need to step up to take bigger challenges.

GALVEN: You can put up your hand or let your job do the talking – it is about how you want to approach your career. However, in a large organisation, if you don't ask, you don't get. I've noticed that certain expats tend to be more aggressive in voicing what they want to do or what they think they deserve. And to be honest, some employers manage so many people that it helps to speak up for yourself.

HAI PHAM: In every job, you have to sell yourself to a certain extent but it is about what your

objective is. At Google, it is unnecessary to do that to get recognition, but it is okay to highlight your achievements for the purpose of getting the next big project. I have noticed that some of our foreign colleagues might put themselves out as a project lead rather than just a team member. It is not about them being arrogant but how to brand and speak for themselves. So I learnt from them that my little contributions matter too.

JOLIN: I have a colleague from India who was already managing her own team at age 25. I learnt from her how to position how I want to be seen, how to frame my case for a pay raise and the route to take to get it. This has helped me with my own negotiation skills and I now know how to position myself to recruiters.

LIONEL: Singaporeans are not so comfortable talking about our achievements, but it makes a difference. That said, humility is still very much valued. Some bosses might feel like you are undermining their abilities to evaluate their team member if you say that you deserve a raise or ask to take on a high-profile project. I think it is okay to present your case, but with humility, and not as an ambitious backstabber!

XU HONG: The world is overloaded with information – so much so that it is easy to not get noticed unless you speak up. In my case I might trumpet past achievements, but it is with the intention of building credibility and getting a deal. Yet there are many people out there talking a lot about their achievements and not delivering. You need to know how high to raise your hand, and know your own limits in terms of what you can deliver.

Ethics at work – what happens when push comes to shove? Is doing the 'right thing' always the best decision in the corporate world?

XU HONG: Business is cut-throat, and you've got to go for the kill. If I happen to know another company's bid, I would work it to my advantage. But I wouldn't try to get a deal by downplaying a competitor's abilities or credibility.

GALVEN: Paying for confidential information is a clear no. But in business, you get all sorts of information through official and unofficial feedback all the time. If you run your operations professionally, you will be able to make a judgment call on how to use this information responsibly – and also consider the potential consequences that arise from it.

HAI PHAM: I chose not to go into tobacco or arms companies so that I would not put myself in a situation where my work challenges my ethical values.

What is your view on office politics and how do you deal with it?

JOLIN: I have my personal rules. The first is that the only thing I can control is myself. The second is to always protect myself against attacks. The third is



We have to curb our natural biases, because toxic offices are often managed by bosses who allow themselves to be swayed by staff who try to cosy up to them. – MR LIONEL LEO

to attack the problem and not the person. The fourth is to set boundaries and not retaliate.

GALVEN: I don't think politics is healthy for any organisation, but it is everywhere and knowing how to maintain objectivity and not take sides is critical.

XU HONG: We fired a person who was stirring office politics despite being given warnings to stop. As management, you have to take a hard stand against office politics – otherwise it will spread like cancer and swing the business off-course.

LIONEL: If you are at the lower level, there is very little you can control. The main thing is to not badmouth anybody because it poisons the relationship – and will always come back to bite you. If you are a boss, maintain fairness and promote by results, then nobody would need to play the game. Personally, I am wary of not favouring anybody, regardless of whether I play golf or drink kopi with them. There is a distinction between liking you as a person and how I evaluate you as a staff. We have to curb our natural biases, because toxic offices are often managed by bosses who allow themselves to be swayed by staff who try to cosy up to them.

Managing workplace stress – what is your strategy?

LIONEL: My dad taught me that there are only two types of problems: those you can solve and those you can't fix. If you can't

fix it, move on. I am very carefree because of this. If I can't meet a deadline despite giving my best shot, I would say so. Worrying about it won't help me meet an unrealistic deadline, so my workload does not stress me out. Also, I find my work challenging and fun, and I am happy with my work environment – I respect my bosses and like my colleagues. All these help me to cope with the demands of work. Another strategy is to be very compartmentalised. If I am on holiday, I set half an hour before the day starts to look at work mail. And then I switch to 'husband mode' and don't think about work.

JOLIN: You have to know your own life priorities. I tried litigation for six months and lost 8kg! So I decided to become an in-house legal counsel. I have a very demanding social life and it is something that I want to enjoy – having something to look forward to outside of work is important to me.

XU HONG: My philosophy is to be the best of yourself and be happy with it. If it is your choice to check your emails outside of work, then don't be unhappy about it. Know the challenges of the career that you choose, and come to terms with them. I find that the younger generation are easily stressed because they seek professional growth but also demand work-life balance – but there are points in one's career where you need to be stretched in order to grow. It is not realistic to want it all, but then be unwilling to put in the effort.

LIONEL: As part of a generation privileged to choose the life we want, I accept that many young people don't want the stresses of being a lawyer in a top-tier firm. It doesn't give them the satisfaction that the job gives me and so I see more millennials leaving the profession earlier. I feel that if you want the prestige of being a lawyer in a big firm, then you have to put in the sacrifices, at least in the short term. If you improve every day, you will do your work more efficiently and you will eventually have better work-life balance. It is important to be realistic about your expectations.

JOLIN: I am a millennial and from my perspective, it is not that we are quitting early. Rather, it is not a life we want. Some of my friends work until 3 to 4am every day, many of them have lost relationships, some have been told that they can forget about becoming a mother. Some of them stay in their jobs because they do not want to settle for a lower pay, but this is not a struggle I want. There are also many other options for us, such as joining start-ups.

GALVEN: The younger generation has different expectations: they want the perks of corporate life but also work-life balance. I wouldn't necessarily give any advice to them – hopefully they will observe the work environment they are in and mould themselves to be more adaptive. ▲

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

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

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HERE'S THE GRIM TRUTH: Despite what the naysayers may claim, the evidence points to the unequivocal fact that climate change is very real — and we in Singapore are feeling the heat,

literally. In recent months we've flocked to the comfort of air-conditioned spaces as the country experienced yet another prolonged bout of hot weather. According to the Meteorological Service Singapore (MSS) of the National Environment Agency (NEA), May 2019's mean monthly temperature was among the highest since temperature records began in 1929. This was actually predicted by Dr Muhammad Eeqmal Hassim, senior research scientist with the MSS Centre for Climate Research Singapore, as reported by the local media earlier this year. Climate change and the El Niño effect were cited as the main reasons.

But instead of sweating in silence, why don't we do something to remedy the situation instead? After all, Singapore designated 2018 as the Year of Climate Action in order to raise public awareness on the need to take collective action to reduce our carbon footprint. There were many government-organised and ground-up activities that sought to reach out to the public and inspire change. Yet, as I observed among my friends and colleagues, many of us were not aware of these at all.

Following Climate Action, the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (MEWR) designated 2019 as the Year Towards Zero Waste — a mounting issue that needs tackling. That's because the amount of waste disposed in Singapore has increased seven-fold over the past 40 years. In 2017, 7.7 million tonnes of waste was generated, and more than 2,000 tonnes of incineration ash and non-incinerable waste is sent to our only landfill at Semakau Island daily. At the current rate of waste growth, the Semakau site will run out of space by 2035. This is an unacceptable scenario in land-scarce Singapore.

FIRST-WORLD FRIVOLITY

Call it the curse of progress, but the reality is this: as a nation, we achieved prosperity not so long ago, and this has brought about issues of its own. Our parents



MARK OF SHAME

According to the Global Footprint Network, Singapore was ranked

23rd

in the world in 2019 as of ecological footprint per capita. If everyone in the world were to live like Singaporeans,

3.47

EARTHS would be needed.



ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

The Road from Wastefulness to Zero Waste

Just what is required of us in the bid to reduce our carbon footprint, so as to ensure a sustainable future? **Mr Bu Fan (Design and Environment '07)** looks at how far we still have to go in order to make this a reality.

and grandparents grew up frugally. Today, given our affluence, we consume excessively and dispose of unwanted items without sparing a second thought. A glance into almost any waste or recycling bin of any size provides evidence. On one occasion, I passed by a warehouse-like facility in an industrial building. Scattered about the space were large numbers of used items ranging from furniture to home appliances. A staff from an adjacent unit told me those were unwanted household items, mainly collected and then brought in by logistics service providers after being discarded by people who had relocated or had decided to redecorate their homes. What particularly surprised this staff, a young Malaysian man, was the fact that the majority of these items were fully functional and still looked new, and yet their Singaporean owners saw it fit to discard them.

Another example is our love of plastic bags — and for that matter, paper bags and other packaging materials from our shopping experiences. Plastic bags indeed play a role in our daily life, but we take or are given far too many, far too generously. If we don't drastically change our mindset and behaviour, the journey towards zero waste will be a very, very long one.

Despite not really contributing to waste volume and landfill, energy and water wastages are other areas in which we are guilty as charged. Generating energy and clean water means consuming fuels and pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, resulting in climate change. Our national water agency PUB has been communicating to the public via different channels to lower our water consumption from 143 litres in 2017 to 130 litres per person per day by 2030. The government also introduced a carbon tax effective from 1 January 2019. Hopefully, these measures will see more of us taking smarter showers and turning off lights and air-conditioners when not in use.

SOWING THE SEEDS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Back at the NUS campus, various environmental sustainability initiatives have been introduced in a bid to cement the University's position as an architect of change on this front. On the academic side, there is the Master of Science (Environmental Management) (MEM) programme, a multi-disciplinary integrated programme jointly conducted by nine faculties and schools and hosted by the School of Design and Environment (SDE) that was inaugurated in 2001. The Bachelor of Environmental Studies — a course jointly hosted by the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences — has been offered since 2011. In addition, there is the Bachelor of Environmental Engineering.

Today, given our affluence, we consume excessively and dispose of unwanted items without sparing a thought.

On the administration side, the University has an Office of Environmental Sustainability (OES). OES organised the NUS Climate Action Month in 2018. This year, it started the 'sustainABLE NUS Staff Challenge' campaign from 1 January 2019. On their part, NUS students have formed more than a dozen groups that focus on different environmental topics, such as NUS SAVE, or Students Against Violation of the Earth. SDE officially launched Singapore's first new-build net-zero energy building, named SDE4, in January 2019. In NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye's (Science '85) words, SDE4 is "a testament to the University's continuous efforts to incorporate sustainability in various aspects of campus life — from operations, planning, construction, research and education."

As an institution, NUS is at the forefront of environmental sustainability. But how will all the messages be embraced by the NUS community and beyond, and drive behavioural changes that will lessen our environmental footprint? It is not an easy task, especially when it means trading some time and convenience in the face of our ever-quicken pace of life. The Sustainable Singapore Blueprint 2015 movement launched by MEWR outlines our national vision and plans for a more liveable and sustainable Singapore. This blueprint is a plan for action and provides everyone a unique opportunity to work together to create a better home, environment and future that we can all be proud of. We need continuous efforts by all sectors of our society, in terms of policymaking, awareness-building, role model-setting and many more.

In his article 'The Singapore Paradox: Going Forward and Standing Still - All at Once' published by *The AlumNUS*, Professor Kishore Mahbubani (Arts and Social Sciences '71) wrote, 'Amazingly, despite our well-educated population, we do not lead the pack when it comes to global citizenship in the environmental realm.' He ended the article with the line 'Let us become the most enlightened citizens of Southeast Asia.' So let us then aim to go further, and become the most environmentally-enlightened citizens on planet Earth. **A**

Mr Bu Fan graduated from the Master of Science (Environmental Management) (MEM) programme in 2007, and currently chairs the NUS MEM Alumni Group. Mr Bu works at Mitsubishi Electric Asia's Environmental Strategy Department as a Deputy General Manager. Prior to that, he worked as the Sustainability Manager for IKEA Alexandra.



➤ To get in touch with the MEM Alumni Group, please email nusmem@u.nus.edu.

SOME INDIVIDUALS HAVE an indelible effect on the people whom they encounter — whether it is by making them laugh, inspiring them or putting them at ease. Ms Gwendolyn Thong, 32, has a habit of elevating the lives of others wherever she goes. In 2017, she organised a fundraising concert and dinner for the annual *NUS Day of Service* as a Champion for Babes Pregnancy Crisis Support Ltd (Babes), an organisation that helps newborns and pregnant teenagers — an endeavour she continued the year after, and one in which she is still involved in. At Changkat Changi Secondary School, where she teaches, Ms Thong created Changkat's Got Talent, a programme to groom students in some areas of performing arts, since the school does not offer CCAs such as choir. The programme also offers mentorships with the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts and LASALLE College to students gifted in music and dance. Outside of that, Ms Thong has also founded Roots of Catholicism in 2015, which conducts tours of Singapore's Catholic churches and organises choral performances. A trained singer, Ms Thong regularly performs at charity concerts as well.

This passion to give back to various communities was sparked by Ms Thong's first experience of doing community work at NUS. She speaks to *The AlumNUS* about what drives her to change the world around her for the better, and to inspire others to do likewise.

How did your journey as a volunteer begin?

I have been volunteering since I joined NUS. I remember going with some friends from NUS' and NTU's Taekwondo Clubs to clean up one-room flats in Toa Payoh. The cleaning session took place on my birthday, and it was the best present I could have received: the knowledge that I could be a blessing to someone else rather than a passive recipient of society's resources.

How did your volunteering career develop from there?

In 2014, I was at the National Institute of Education (NIE) as a trainee teacher. For our GESL (Group Endeavours in Service Learning) project, we gave out daily necessities to, and met the elderly at Kreta Ayer Senior Activity Centre to inform them of their entitlements under the Pioneer Generation scheme.

Driven to Give

The experience of giving back during her undergraduate days inspired **Ms Gwendolyn Thong (Arts and Social Sciences '10)** to make volunteerism an integral part of her life.



I helped to look after the welfare of the teacher volunteers. The organisation I started in 2015, Roots Of Catholicism, also began as an assignment I had at NIE to design a package for a learning journey. I later turned it into a tour for the public. We have the support of the Catholic Church in Singapore and will soon publish a children's book about the tour. I have also helped raise funds for REACH and Grace Orchard School — REACH Youth Powerhouse is a school where disadvantaged youths get to learn music and the culinary arts for free. Grace Orchard School is a school for students with Mild Intellectual Disability and those with mild ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder). We converted our annual student recitals into charity concerts and raised \$30,000 each year in 2018 and 2019.

You were a Champion for NUS Day of Service in 2017 and 2018, and plan to be one again in 2020. What value do you see in giving back to your alma mater in this way?

I studied at Sciences Po (the Paris Institute of Political Studies) in France as part of my Honours year in European Studies, where there is a culture of holding ourselves to the highest standards. Our professors spoke to us as the future leaders of our nations. They often challenged us: "If not you, then who?" This has stuck. I realised that if we all shrugged off our social responsibilities, no one is going to step up.

At the end of the day, "All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us", to quote Frodo Baggins from *The Lord Of The Rings*.

NUS Day of Service is a structured platform that offers NUS alumni opportunities to meet up on an annual basis to give back to society. As alumni of NUS, we are viewed by society as its intelligentsia. Therefore, when we gather around a common purpose, backed by the banner of our University, we are able to rally others in society to move as well.



Ms Thong on stage during the Day of Service Concert.



STRONG IN SPIRIT, KIND OF HEART

Ms Thong was a Champion for NUS Day of Service, 2017 and 2018.

She raised funds for Babes, a helpline for pregnant teens, through charity concerts held in both years.

As an NUS Class Ambassador for the European Studies Programme since 2010, she galvanises former students to stay involved in NUS alumni events and uphold the alumni spirit.

She is the lead organiser and founder of Roots Of Catholicism in 2015.

This is an organisation that offers a yearly chorale performance and a tour of Singapore's Catholic landmarks.

When an NUS alumnus chooses to identify as one, and do good as one, it bridges a gap between academia and society. I had many friends from NUS who wanted to help me. Naturally, the connection to NUS helped us all unite to serve a common cause. The value that emerges from *NUS Day of Service* is that we as a university re-centre ourselves around our core purpose, which is to make Singapore a better place, through the pursuit and the use of knowledge.

Tell us about Babes and the support you give it through NUS Day of Service.

Babes was set up in 2005 as a programme under Beyond Social Services to support teenagers undergoing unplanned pregnancies. Babes' vision is for an inclusive society where every pregnant teenager needing support will not feel estranged or marginalised. I am inspired to help pregnant women — especially those who became pregnant under unfavourable circumstances — give their children a future.

In 2017, I met fellow alumni, Josephine Ng (Arts and Social Sciences '92), the owner of the former New Rasa Singapura. She too holds dear the cause of single mothers, which inspired her to set up Haute Alteration, a social enterprise that employs vulnerable women. I asked her if she would like to hold a charity concert in support of Babes at her restaurant. She agreed. The concert was a success, thanks to the performers who contributed their time and money. That year, we raised \$5,000 for Babes. In 2018, we held the Day of Service concert at NUS Shaw Foundation Alumni House Auditorium. That year, I was also invited to Babes Day, an annual event to celebrate the achievements and encourage the beneficiaries of Babes. I helped to babysit some of the babies so that their parents could eat, and I was inspired to continue serving Babes so that more babies can be born to enjoy the wonderful things that this world has to offer.

What drives you to be a changemaker in so many different areas?

My faith has guided me; I am happy to offer up my small talents to serve because, as in the Biblical parable of the five loaves and two fish, "no gift is ever too small". I have a very close relationship with my son who joins me in my volunteering. **A**

You look like a Champion!



Do you feel passionately about the welfare of the underprivileged, our environment, the arts and heritage, and other important causes? Organise an activity to support a cause that is close to your heart with the NUS community!

➔ Visit nus.edu.sg/alumnus/DOS for more information.



MUCH HAS HAPPENED FOR one-half of comedic duo Ms Munah Bagharib since the MunahHirziOfficial YouTube channel closed more than a year ago. Launched in 2007 — when they were both polytechnic course-mates — the channel racked up some 32 million views and boasted more than 142,000 subscribers. The series of funny parodies concluded with fanfare in January last year at the Capitol Theatre, where the tight friends treated their fans to a live performance aptly titled *Munah & Hirzi Live: Curtain Call*.

Since then, Ms Bagharib — who majored in Communications and New Media and minored in Theatre Studies at NUS — has kept busy. She has been cast in several theatre productions, impressing one of Singapore's established arts companies Teater Ekamatra enough to invite her on-board as one of its five resident associate artists. Ms Bagharib is also a familiar face on Mediacorp's Malay-language channel Suria, and the vivacious 31-year-old recently hosted CNA's travel show *This Weekend*, where she went on a race car adventure in Perth, Australia.

Like many up-and-coming stars of her generation, Ms Bagharib connects with her fans and keeps them updated on her shenanigans on Instagram, where she has more than 76,000 followers — enough in the Internet world to earn her the title of “influencer”. Naturally, brands from various industries — from beauty and wellness to food & beverage — have approached her for tie-ups and sponsored posts. These are opportunities that Ms Bagharib happily takes up as long as they give her creative freedom.

If the weight of her fast-moving career is tiring her out, Ms Bagharib does not show it. Coming straight from her full-day theatre rehearsal, the third of four siblings bounces into this interview with aplomb and many hearty laughs.

On to the Next Stage

Former YouTuber, now actress and host **Ms Munah Bagharib (Arts and Social Sciences '10)** on unapologetically owning her “social media influencer” status and what keeps her hustling.



Don't do it for the 'likes', the popularity and the free stuff. Find your purpose, because only then will you be willing to put in the time and work — and it is a lot of work!

rehearsing a dramatised reading titled *A Piece of Cake*, in which I am starring alongside Karen Tan. At the same time, I'm working on TV dramas that I am not allowed to talk about just yet. So yes, I've been busy and I often need a reminder to rest and pace myself!

Sounds like you have no time to miss the MunahHirziOfficial YouTube channel!

I do miss it! Hirzi and I have a great working chemistry, so it was strange at first to not have my friend by my side at work. But I think ‘the end’ was necessary as we both needed to be able to pursue our individual passions.

Having been a YouTube content creator for a decade, do you think the app has evolved over time?

Definitely. When we first started on YouTube, it was just a tool for us to share videos with friends. As more videos got uploaded, it became another source of entertainment; another channel to watch stuff on. I remember we thought it was so bizarre when strangers started watching our content and encouraging us to post more videos. Over time, as we amassed more subscribers and views, brands and organisations started seeing it as a platform to advertise and promote through video content. And now, more and more people have jumped on YouTube as a viable business opportunity.

Would you call yourself a social media influencer? Any tips on how to be an online star?

I know many people cringe at the word, but hey, I say, own it!

My advice: Don't do it for the ‘likes’, the popularity and the free stuff. Find your purpose, because only then will you be willing to put in the time and work — and it is a lot of work! With the YouTube channel, at first of course we had no purpose. A netizen commented that our content was slapstick and lacking in substance. And we took that feedback as a challenge. We started to use comedy to talk about issues that were relevant to the society or the community. For examples, we covered MRT breakdowns, the General Election, and advocated for the rights of foreign workers, which we felt very strongly for. Suddenly, there was meaning to what we were creating. We decided then that that was the direction we

wanted our channel to take. I think the shift made us more visible, relevant and appealing, as we were creating content that mattered to people, but with humour. Another important advice: Be resilient, thick-skinned, humble and open to criticism and haters.

As a newcomer in the theatre scene, what do you make of the industry?

It is very nurturing — a safe space that enables me to learn. It's a potentially scary prospect for a new person coming into a roomful of theatre veterans. But everyone has been so patient and generous. They are very giving and willing to teach, so the industry is great for new blood to get into and pick up the ropes.

Do you recall what it was like being a student at NUS?

The bidding process to get our preferred modules was very challenging! My fondest memory was joining Radio Pulze — the University's internet radio station — as a core-curricular activity. It was so enjoyable because I like talking and presenting. I also met some of my best friends, whom I am still in touch with, there. When I first got into NUS, I told myself I was not going to make any friends; that I was there only for the paper. But my experience at Radio Pulze threw a spanner in the plan! It was also through Radio Pulze that I got into hosting as they had a hosting wing, which I auditioned for. I had a good time!

Has your time at NUS helped you in your career today?

Yes. I went into NUS laser-focused on pursuing journalism, but after taking some Theatre Studies modules, which were mostly taught by industry practitioners, I fell in love with theatre. It suddenly became something I wanted to pursue instead. The teachers also opened the doors for me into professional theatre. The Artistic Director of Cake Theatrical Productions, Natalie Hennedige, who was teaching a module I took, asked me to audition for a role in a production she was directing for the 2012 Singapore Arts Festival. So I did, and got the part! It was an experimental physical theatre piece called *Dream Country*, and nothing I was familiar with, so it was very exciting to be thrown into that. Lecturer and playwright Dr Robin Loon was the one who hooked me up with Teater Ekamatra. And although I had to turn

down the first opportunity that came because it clashed with the examination period, they called me up again for another production down the road. So in a way — and I'm just realising this as I say it out loud — NUS had much to do with where I am now! **A**

DIVERSITY IN THE ARTS

Teater Ekamatra prides itself in spotlighting artists of diverse ethnicities and staging works that address current socio-political issues. Their most recent production, *Mat Champion*, out in July and starring Ms Bagharib, centres on the overarching theme of putting aside differences to preserve a collective identity. **For more information, go to ekamatra.org.sg.**



SPECIAL THANKS TO THE AFFOGATO BAR; POSTER COURTESY OF TEATER EKAMATRA.

How has going solo been like?

It's been interesting! I've been up to a lot; a lot of involvement in theatre especially, which is something I've been wanting to pursue properly. There's something about being part of a theatre production — this “live” element that makes each show different — that gives me a surge of fulfilment like no other. There's also the strong bond forged with the cast and crew during each production that makes me so sad every time a show wraps.

I'm also learning to be a theatre producer because as much as I love performing, I want to get a more holistic experience of the process. I'm currently being mentored by Ekamatra's Company Director Shaza Isyak, who I really look up to. I've co-produced three shows with her so far, the first being *Tiger of Malaya* — a play by Alfian Sa'at. It was crazy! So much work and effort was involved, and there was no stopping the pace. But I'm passionate enough to want to do better in it. I've also been

➔ WHO IS HE?

Mr Shabbir Hussain Mustafa is a Senior Curator at National Gallery Singapore. He curated artist Charles Lim's work *Sea State*, representing Singapore at the 2015 Venice Biennale. He also received the prestigious 2017 Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) International Scholarship For Artists in Berlin, Germany.

The Journey to a Life of Art

Mr Shabbir Hussain Mustafa (Arts and Social Sciences + USP '07) talks about his journey to becoming one of the most notable museum curators in the region.

TO HEAR MR SHABBIR HUSSAIN MUSTAFA tell the tale of how he went from a teenage undergraduate to senior curator at the National Gallery of Singapore, one is very likely to think that the native Sri Lankan has extraordinary luck. Even the soft-spoken 35-year-old seems somewhat surprised at his own meteoric rise in the curatorial world. But while serendipity might have played a part, his success is largely the result of his hard work, innate curiosity and openness to explore possibilities.

Mr Mustafa arrived in Singapore on 15 July 2003 and was enrolled in the Political Science department at NUS' Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. "I grew up in Sri Lanka," says the son of a polyglot Gujarati businessman father and a homemaker mother who used to be a linguist. "It's a beautiful place, it has history and aesthetics, and there was also the civil war. The war affected us in ways that I didn't fully realise at the time — I was doing Business Studies for the 'A' Levels when our teacher migrated overseas. It was eight months to exams! Since I had access to the textbook and past-year papers, I began to read the book on my own, and self-study. I was English-educated, motivated — I could do this." Sure enough, he scored As. He chose to continue his studies in Singapore because the country's work ethic and pragmatism appealed to him.

In his first semester, Mr Mustafa took two classes in South Asian Studies under Professor Gyanesh Kudaisya, who suggested Mr Mustafa interview with his wife Dr Medha Kudaisya, for the University Scholars Programme. Mr Mustafa credits his father for teaching him to think. "We'd drive around Colombo with my sister, listening to the radio. He'd talk about culture, moving freely from the Beatles to Buddhism to price of rice. My upbringing made me ready for USP," he reflects, as the programme was suited to his penchant for asking the right questions, analysis and research.

In 2007, with an Honours in Political Science under his belt, he embarked on his MA in History and South Asian Studies. During his undergraduate years, he had served as Prof Kudaisya's research assistant: "I wanted to continue working under his supervision." In his third year, Mr Mustafa "accidentally" joined the NUS Museum, which focuses on Asian regional art and culture. "My friend Wang Zineng (Arts and Social Sciences '07) — who was also in



USP — and I were sitting in the USP 'Chatterbox', a place for reading, meeting and talking. Zineng said 'Do you want to make some cash?' He brought me to the NUS Museum and there I met Ahmad Mashadi (Arts and Social Sciences '91), the head of NUS Museum. He showed me a series of photographs. One set of family portraits done by the Dutch-Indonesian artist Tino Djumini titled "Relatives" or *Kerabat*. The second set was of people's homes. Their "interiors" or *Dalam*, by the Malaysian photographer Simryn Gill. Ahmad said, 'if you were tasked to write about these images, how would you approach it?' Surprisingly I did not freeze! I talked about how remembering the past is always linked to an image — every image is a delicacy and danger. I got commissioned to write the essay and was paid \$300!"

That was the first of many assignments and the start of Mr Mustafa's sojourn into the curatorial world. He spent much time reading and talking to Mr Mashadi, eventually curating his first exhibition with ceramic artist Donald Eric Lim. "Ahmad showed me the power of juxtaposition — what happens when objects are placed next to each other," he says.

WORKING THE GROUND

When Mr Mustafa graduated, Mr Mashadi offered him a job at NUS Museum. "I came to work every day for five years, and it was like attending a masterclass! This generosity I experienced from both Prof Kudaisya and Ahmad continues to this day," he says. "Through my work, I began to meet these incredible artists

and thinkers. Imagine you're getting paid to think about the world and its manifold realities!" Mr Mustafa was on the team that developed Prep-Room, an experimental space where the audience observes the exhibition-making process. In 2016, Prep-Room won the NUS Museum the University Museums and Collections Award from the International Council of Museums.

Little did Mr Mustafa know that Prep-Room would lead him to the next level of his career. "When the naturalist Dr Lim Chuan Fong approached Ahmad to say he was in possession of a seashell collection of great significance to Singapore, we went to meet him," he explains. "His house was filled with seashells! What also caught my eye was a photograph from the 1950s — of the Raffles Lighthouse in Pulau Satumu, Singapore's southernmost territorial marker." That photograph became the trigger for the inaugural Prep-Room project. Mr Mustafa roped in Ms Fiona Tan (Arts and Social Sciences '12), then a History undergraduate — and who now works at the

Through my work, I began to meet these incredible artists and thinkers. Imagine you're getting paid to think about the world and its manifold realities!



SIGNIFICANT CURATORIAL WORKS



SIAPA NAMA KAMU?

A multi-year project that features over 400 works of art that surveys art in Singapore from the 19th century to the present.

BETWEEN DECLARATIONS AND DREAMS: ART OF SOUTHEAST ASIA SINCE THE 19TH CENTURY

A multi-year project that traces the story of contemporary art in Southeast Asia and its engagement with global artistic concerns.

LATIFF MOHIDIN: PAGO PAGO (1960-1969)

Held at Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Pompidou, Paris, it traces a formative period in the artist's practice. It then travelled to ILHAM Gallery, Kuala Lumpur in 2018 and has been accompanied by public symposiums featuring Southeast Asia's leading thinkers.

National Archives of Singapore — who began to research the Raffles Lighthouse, which by that point had all but disappeared from public knowledge. Later, Mr Mashadi suggested the artist and former Olympic sailor Mr Charles Lim Yi Yong as possible collaborator. The two hit it off — even getting on a boat to check out the lighthouse — and their three-year collaboration resulted in *In Search Of Raffles' Light — An Art Project with Charles Lim* an experimental exhibition at the NUS Museum in 2013.

That same year, Mr Mustafa moved on to the National Gallery, where he oversaw the team that inaugurated the DBS Singapore Gallery in 2015, a long-term exhibition dedicated to the survey of Singapore art from the 19th century to the present. That exhibition too bears a curious title — *Siapa Nama Kamu? (What is Your Name?)* as he observes "artworks are always willing to tell us stories. My role was to develop a space that could allow for this to happen". Currently he oversees the UOB Southeast Asia Galleries — a multi-year-long project where he builds the story of art from ASEAN part by part.

BORDERLESS AMBITIONS

In 2015, as a Senior Curator, Mr Mustafa again worked with Mr Lim, representing Singapore at the Venice Biennale. "In Venice, we presented selections from Charles' *Sea State*, a 10-part multimedia work that began in 2005, that captured Singapore's complex relationship with the sea through land reclamation. The exhibition received rave reviews from the international art world. "I was told by the National Arts Council that the Singapore pavilion did very well in terms of marketing dollars too," he adds.

Recently, Mr Mustafa, whose partner is Iranian designer and artist Ms Leila Shirazi, has been curating projects outside Singapore, notably leading Malaysian artist Latiff Mohidin's *Pago Pago (1960-1969)*, a joint exhibition last year by Centre Pompidou in France and National Gallery Singapore. Mr Mohidin was the first Southeast Asian artist to be featured at the Pompidou. It was also the National Gallery's first travelling exhibition. Next up is an exhibition by the artist Ahmad Fuad Osman at the National Art Gallery of Malaysia, which will open in October. He is also developing a "dream" project, a large-scale exhibition that compares artists from Southeast Asia and Latin America across the 20th century. "Ever wondered how Frida Kahlo is connected to Southeast Asia? Well, you must come and see it," he says. "It will be the first of its kind in the world!"

Although his career has moved from one milestone to the next, Mr Mustafa is hesitant about the concept of excellence. "I don't think 'achieving' is a very productive way of looking at excellence. Perhaps excellence is the difference between what you know and what you think you know — I come to work thinking I can bridge that," he says, adding, "but I'll never bridge that." But that doesn't stop him from aspiring, and sharing with audiences. "We must engage the public from the perspective of narration, be storytellers," he explains, adding that he enjoys giving talks at the Gallery. "I just grab a stool, sometimes with an artist, and we sit and talk to people. It's important to bridge what we know and what we think we know." **A**



MASTERING THE MECHANICS OF BIOLOGY

Internationally-renowned researcher **Professor Li Rong** takes over as director of the NUS Mechanobiology Institute — and looks to employ novel approaches to make further advances in our understanding of cellular dynamics.

IMAGINE A WORLD WHERE cancer is a thing of the past, where scientists can grow new lungs for you, from your own cells, should you need a transplant. These scenarios could one day become a reality, all thanks to advances made in a field known as mechanobiology. With its focus on the physical and mechanical aspects of biological functions, mechanobiology is a relatively new term. And if you were to do a Google search on it, the top results would be for the website of NUS Mechanobiology Institute (MBI) — which is appropriate given that this institution was ahead of its time when it was founded in 2009. Ten years on, mechanobiology remains at the frontier of interdisciplinary science.

According to MBI, innovation in biological research arises from bringing new approaches

and technologies to old questions about how biological systems work. MBI has tried to do this by combining the expertise of physicists, engineers and biologists in an environment where they have access to the latest nano- and micro-fabrication facilities. They also have access to the latest light microscope technologies to answer fundamental questions about biological systems. The best science requires the best instruments and infrastructure. Just think about the recent imaging of a black hole that made headlines worldwide, made possible by advances in telescope technology.

It should go without saying, then, that the function of any scientific endeavour is to probe the physical world and to ask relevant questions. Here are a few of the questions that drive the work at MBI: How does the mechanical

What I'm intrigued about is the robustness of biological systems and evolvability. How can a biological system be stable and yet also be able to change?

— PROF LI RONG

environment influence embryo development and pattern formation? Can mechanical cues be exploited in the next generation of tissue engineering technologies?

These questions relate to the ongoing challenge of understanding how cells organise themselves into specific patterns, eventually resulting in complex structures such as organs and bones. If we can understand these processes, it may be possible to engineer solutions to cancer, and the creation of new organs, as mentioned at the start.

These are profound questions, and anyone coming to the table is going to add other interesting scenarios to explore. As MBI welcomes its new director, Professor Li Rong, it will certainly be exploring even more interesting questions. "What I'm intrigued about is the robustness of biological systems and evolvability," says Prof Li. "How can a biological system be stable and yet also be able to change?"

THE ART OF THE CELL

Prof Li is a distinguished scientist, and a leader in the study of cellular dynamics and mechanics. MBI prides itself on enabling and encouraging interdisciplinary interaction, and Prof Li has embraced this approach throughout her career. Her work in examining cellular dynamics has employed integrated approaches encompassing biochemistry, genetics, quantitative imaging and fluorescence spectroscopy, mathematical modelling, quantitative genomics and proteomics (large-scale study of proteins).

Under Prof Li's leadership, MBI will expand its ongoing research into new areas and continue to be a vibrant hub of international collaboration. Its overarching goal is to achieve a deeper understanding of growth, development and ageing, and to explore new approaches for the treatment of human diseases. Practically speaking, these all relate

to cellular engineering, which is an area that MBI strongly focuses on, according to Prof Li.

Her colleagues at MBI expand on this point, noting that asymmetry at the cellular level forms a foundation to establish the blueprint for patterning tissues and organs along the body axes (e.g. head-to-toe and left-to-right) during development. Cellular asymmetry is also critical for organ/tissue homeostasis and prevention of tumorigenesis throughout postnatal life. And what does it all mean for the man in the street? Simply put, a better understanding in this process will not only aid in improving our basic understanding, but will also be a stepping stone towards designing treatments against developmental disorders and advanced tumours. "What we want to do at MBI is find out how we can build tissues, and how we can regenerate tissues. To do this, we will have to induce asymmetry at the cellular level. If we start with stem cells, embryonic stem cells or even intestinal stem cells, for example, they don't begin with asymmetry. At some point there is a symmetry-breaking process, which gives rise to different progeny and functions. Establishing asymmetry in the right pattern — that leads to correct tissue organisation — is what we want to do," explains Prof Li.

This is all part of the work that Prof Li will be continuing at MBI, taking over from her predecessor Professor Michael Sheetz, founding director of MBI. "I really admire the work of Prof Sheetz in making MBI a world leader. He has assembled a great team of principal investigators to build a world-class infrastructure here. So, to be the next director will be a really easy job!" says Prof Li, in light-hearted praise of Prof Sheetz's efforts. She hopes to have continued resources to recruit scientists from a worldwide pool, to really enhance existing strengths at MBI. "Singapore is so international... you know we do science all over the world, not just in one country. Also, as Singapore is a young country, there is less of a chance for existing traditions to stifle innovation. Besides funding and infrastructure, it is really the scientists who make the difference, who come up with big ideas. The government has a vision to build great science, and to bring in the right talents. MBI is already very visible as a leader in this relatively new field. Singapore is really the perfect place for bringing creative talents together and building collaborations," Prof Li adds. **A**



ABOUT PROF LI RONG

Prof Li Rong joins MBI from Johns Hopkins University, where she was Bloomberg Distinguished Professor at the School of Medicine and the Whiting School of Engineering. She was also the director of the Center for Cell Dynamics at the School of Medicine's Institute for Basic Biomedical Sciences.

Prof Li is a globally-respected leader in the study of cellular dynamics and mechanics. She has made seminal discoveries in the regulation of cell division, cell polarity, the actin cytoskeleton (microfilaments that maintain the shape of cells), aneuploidy (presence of abnormal numbers of genetic materials in cells) and proteostasis (steady state regulation of proteins in the body). The insights gained from her research have contributed to the fundamental understanding of cancer and age-related diseases.

Prof Li has had over 125 papers published in peer-reviewed journals, with many appearing in top-tier publications such as *Cell*, *Nature* and *Science*. Her work has received more than 14,000 citations. Prof Li has served on the editorial boards of *Molecular Biology of the Cell*, *Development*, *Biophysical Journal*, and *BMC-Cell Biology*. A little-known fact about Prof Li is that in addition to doing a combined degree in Biophysics and Biochemistry, she also studied fine art. Prof Li studied painting and sculpture, but had to drop fine arts as the university did not allow her to do a triple major.





TALKING IT OUT

Unlike the previous series, which featured a single speaker delivering an address, the new format of U@live sees a panel discussion featuring subject matter experts who are able to contribute diverse views and perspectives on a particular topic of global significance.

CAN EDUCATION MAKE SINGAPORE EQUAL AGAIN?

The first installment of NUS' newly-revived forum series played host to a passionate debate about an issue that is close to the hearts of many.

TAKE TWO HOT BUTTON ISSUES, add in a dash of the Education Minister's insights, and stir in more than 400 engaged NUS undergraduates and alumni. What do you get? A U@live forum that over-ran by an hour as people kept coming up to the microphones to share views, ask questions and offer suggestions. Among the ideas: Nationalise all kindergartens; have smaller student-teacher ratios; cap fees at preschools. The suggestions came fast and furious at the forum on whether education is still a social leveller today. It was organised by NUS Alumni Relations, and held at the University Cultural Centre on 27 March. The forum's panellists were Education Minister Mr Ong Ye Kung; Mr Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD); Yale-NUS College President Professor Tan Tai Yong; and Yale-NUS Year 4 student Mr Ng Qi Siang.

Prof Tan noted that in the 1960s, education was a social leveller and Singapore was then a "classless society". However, over time, society has become more stratified and there is less social mobility now. "Singapore's education system has become too differentiated," he said, in that it now sorts students by abilities, aptitudes and performance. But these aptitudes are not entirely free from



SCHOOL RULES!

As of 2018, **55.8%** of Singapore residents aged 25 and above had post-secondary qualifications.

In 2017, some **18,537** students graduated from the country's universities.

Source: www.singstat.gov.sg

socioeconomic factors, and so as a result, "performance is not determined entirely by an individual's natural and inherent abilities, but is, to a large extent, a function of socioeconomic and environmental conditions," Prof Tan elaborated. He described Singapore society as consisting of people moving upwards by riding different escalators, all moving at varying speeds. "This will create a widening effect. Is it easy to cross these escalators? Not impossible but, I think, quite difficult. And we must recognise that there are people who feel that they are not even on the escalators, but having to negotiate flat roads, manually."

Mr Ong's observation was that Singapore has managed to lift many families out of the lower-income bracket, but that those who have been left behind appear to be in a more dire state than before — in comparison to those who have been moved up. To him, education is still a social leveller in Singapore today. His point was this: "We'll do a simple test. Tomorrow, let's close down all schools, fire all the teachers... Does inequality get better? Definitely, no." What can be done, said Mr Ong, is to improve the system. He pointed to the recent announcement to do away with streaming in secondary schools, as well as the removal of the 20 per cent weight that had been given to O-level examinations results, when polytechnic graduates apply for local universities. The Uplift programme that provides an annual scholarship for lower-income pupils studying in independent schools, was another example brought up by Mr Ong. In counterpoint to Prof Tan, Mr Ong said that the education system should be more differentiated so that different kinds of talent could be nurtured.

ON ELITISM AND EQUITABILITY

Mr Schleicher gave an overview of the situation in the



U@live
LIFTING THOUGHT LEADERSHIP
Education – Still a Social Leveller?

Q&A

From left: Prof Tan Tai Yong, Minister Ong Ye Kung, Mr Viswa Sadasivan, Mr Andreas Schleicher and Mr Ng Qi Siang



Attendees got a chance to meet Mr Ong up close and share their thoughts with him.

Reducing class sizes was another hot topic with many questioning the current class size of 40 students to a teacher. Mr Ong pointed out that while class size remains at 40, the teacher-student ratio is actually lower. In primary schools, it is 1:15 in terms of the overall numbers of teachers and students. In secondary school, it is about 1:12 or 1:13 and while the ratio in junior colleges was 1:11. "Why is the class size still 40?... It is because the

extra resources are (there) to pull out weaker students to teach them, sometimes four-to-one, eight-to-one, one-to-one." He said if the Government did the popular thing and announced that the class size would be 20, the resources available to help weaker students would disappear. "This is something I am extremely reluctant to do," he said.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Among the attendees at the event was Mr Yeo Keng Joon (MBA '95), a managing partner of Global Biotech, an investment firm and consultancy. He said the forum's topic was well selected and the panellists well chosen. He also observed that the quality of the questions asked was also very good. Ms Chang Meiping (Science '03), a former teacher who now works for the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Singapore, felt that the forum managed to cover the views of people across the spectrum though a deeper dialogue on more focused themes would be needed to tackle the issues. She also enjoyed the networking session that followed. "I had conversations with individuals who shared their own experiences and challenges. Fundamentally, regardless of the social strata one is in, there is always the nagging fear that one is never good enough, which is a symptom of a materialistic and competitive culture," she said. Mr Chandra Mohan K Nair (Law '76), a partner at Tan Rajah & Cheah, said of the event. "Overall it was a very good session for all of us — students teachers, parents and alumni. I really enjoyed it and it was quite insightful." A

THE WRITE STUFF



The winning entry for the essay competition was titled *DreamFund: Enabling Life-long Dreams for All Singaporeans*.

It was co-authored by a team that comprised:

Mr Ng Qi Siang
Yale-NUS Year 4

Mr Ng Yi Ming
Yale-NUS Year 2

Ms Heather Cheng
Hoi Yeuk

Yale-NUS Year 1

.....

The Runners-up:

Mr Brandon Yip
Arts and Social Sciences '18

Mr Isaac Neo Chong Yi
Arts and Social Sciences Year 4



"Imagine the government says, 'No, you cannot [invest in your children] because it's unequal.' Do you know how unreasonable that can sound? I believe, instead in 'Let's try our best not to cap the top but do our best to lift the bottom.'" – MINISTER ONG YE KUNG

UPCOMING EVENT

Islamophobia

30 Oct, 7.30pm

alumnet.events/UALIVE



Stall operators took some time out to take fun shots at the photo booth.



Alumni returned to spend a relaxing Saturday morning with family and friends at The Terrace canteen.

NUS ALUMNI WEEKENDS

CLOSE TO 400 ALUMNI and their families and friends came back to campus for the inaugural *NUS Alumni Weekends* event on 4 May. The activity-filled programme started at The Terrace canteen, which will be closed for renovation after serving the NUS community for more than 30 years. Many alumni came back with their families to have breakfast or lunch, and bid goodbye to the stall operators – especially those who had been around since they were students.

In the afternoon, attendees also gained valuable insights from alumni and staff at workshops on career transitions, regional trends and personalising news to receive on digital platforms. Alumni, including those with young children, enjoyed a concert by the NUS Alumni Orchestra. The concert included an interactive segment where children had the opportunity to be introduced to, and play with, musical instruments.

The event ended with a screening of the blockbuster movie *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*.



SAVE THE DATE!

The Kent Ridge Alumni Family Day will take place on 17 August 2019 at University Town.

Register at alumnet.events/KR19.



Welcome to Alumni Weekends!



Children of all ages had fun learning to play trumpets and violins at the "musical petting zoo".



“NEXT PLEASE!”

The famous words of Mr Edward at the Western food stall. Equally famous is his amazing memory for taking a long string of orders!



Say THE TERRACE! A final group photo with the stall operators and staff from NUS Alumni Relations, NUS Campus Amenities and NUS Society.



Ms Kho Su Yian (Arts and Social Sciences '99) from NUS Libraries shared with alumni how to personalise their news from different sources and channel them into a single place for easy reference.



Business alumni Ms Jocelyn Chng ('12) (left) and Ms Noor Quek ('72) (centre), shared their stories on career transitions, with Mr Alvin Low Mingzhong from the Centre for Future-ready Graduates as moderator.



NUS Alumni Orchestra performed pieces well-loved by the young and the young-at-heart.



Our Human Libraries: Mr Lee Jun Xian (Business '08) and Mr Ng Chee Chiu (Computing '04) provided alumni with insights into regional trends.

SDE50 PULAU UBIN KAMPONG TOUR



Above: Ms Ivy Choo, who was a resident at Pulau Ubin, shared on growing up on Pulau Ubin.
Left: Group photo at Ah Ma Drink Stall.

Participants of the tour also donated to the SDE Development Fund, which was created in conjunction with SDE's 50th anniversary celebrations in 2019. The SDE Development Fund will further SDE's efforts to create a resilient future through funding the upcoming SDE precinct, as well as advancing the development of SDE staff and students.

UPCOMING EVENT

SDE50 Gala Dinner

2 Oct 2019, Wed,
6pm to 10pm

Resorts World Sentosa, Central and West Ballrooms

Bookmark SDE's 50th anniversary microsite sde.nus.edu.sg/SDE50 for updates!

➔ **Alumni, staff and students** from NUS School of Design and Environment (SDE) took a short escapade from mainland Singapore to join the SDE50 Pulau Ubin Kampong Tour on 30 March.

Led by Associate Professor Tan Beng Kiang ('83), Associate Professor Johannes Widodo and student guides from Department of Architecture, the group of 21 visited Chinese and Malay *kampong* houses, the Ah Ma Drink Stall, an abandoned quarry and a prawn pond.

The 21 attendees were able to re-live stories of what life was like on

elderly lady was able to continue her independent lifestyle on Pulau Ubin, at the drink stall that was designed and built by NUS Architecture students.

The group also visited the traditional Malay *kampong* houses at Kampong Sungei Durian that were documented by NUS Architecture students in an elective module led by Assistant Professor Imran Bin Tajudeen ('04).

"The tour was very informative and educational, we enjoyed it very much. It gave us a deeper understanding of the history and transformation of this little island, and life on the island was brought to life with the sharing of real life stories from the residents there," said Ms Ngo Sie Yin ('04).

Pulau Ubin. During the visit to the Ah Ma Drink Stall, they learned how an

✉ sdelink@nus.edu.sg
f facebook.com/sde.nus
i instagram.com/sde.nus

➔ **Have it featured on The AlumNUS!**

Submit online at
nus.edu.sg/alumnet/TheAlumNUS/AHSubmit.



DVC Dinner with Alumni cum "Last Lecture"

"To prepare well, but have low expectations" – this was the philosophy of happiness that was shared by Professor Lee Chuen Neng (Medicine '75) with staff, alumni and guests of the Department of Pharmacy at the inaugural lecture of the "Last Lecture" series at a dinner with the Department Visiting Committee (DVC), held on 23 May.

Guests were inspired by Prof Lee's light-hearted sharing where he used his travel stories as an allegory of life. Besides the lecture, guests were also treated to an evening of good food and music; and rich conversations with old and new friends.



🌐 pharmacy.nus.edu.sg
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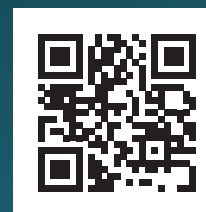
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Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Republic of Singapore

新加坡—中国(新中)友好协会
Singapore China Friendship Association

NUS
National University of Singapore

Office of Alumni Relations

第八届中国电影节 China Film Festival 2019



Dates | 11 – 13 September 2019

Time | 7.30pm

Venue | Auditorium, Shaw Foundation Alumni House

Please register online at alumnet.events/CNFF19.

MBA ALUMNI

NUS Advancement Fund and Networking Dinner 2019

MBA Alumni held its signature annual networking dinner on 20 March, with an added fundraising component this year.

More than 110 alumni attended the MBA Alumni – NUS Advancement Fund and Networking Dinner 2019, which aimed to raise funds to support needy students taking part in overseas exchange programmes.

Providing undergraduates with a Global, Experiential and Industry-relevant education has been a key objective for NUS Business School. Since 2017, it has been mandatory for all

students to gain international exposure. Students will be able to meaningfully expand their horizons and graduate as globally-minded, culturally-aware individuals. This may be a semester abroad, an overseas



President Mr Joseph Tan ('11) (4th from right) of MBA Alumni - NUS and the committee of MBA Alumni - NUS Advancement Fund and Networking Dinner 2019 presented the mock cheque to Vice Dean, Undergraduate Studies, Prof Chng Chee Kiong (4th from left).

UPCOMING EVENT

Reunion Golf Challenge 2019

20 Aug 2019, Tue

Orchid Country Club

internship or a study trip, to allow students to be better prepared for the global economy.

This requirement would put a strain on financially-needy students. While there is financial aid provided to needy students, this does not cover expenses for overseas experience. Students are required to budget up to around \$8,000 for an overseas stint. Students working part-time to finance their studies would also lose the opportunity to earn additional income while overseas. Through this initiative, MBA Alumni hopes to help realise students' potential, as this is pivotal to ensure social equality and mobility.

mbaalumni.admin@nus.edu.sg

DEPARTMENT OF PHARMACY



MOVIE NIGHT



Staff and students of the Department of Pharmacy spent an evening together on 1 March with around 40 alumni from the graduating classes of '90 to '18 at their inaugural Movie Screening event, organised by the Department and Pharmacy Alumni Group. It was a cozy night of catching up with old friends and past students, as well as making new friends, over a delicious spread of cocktails, wine and cheese, before the movie *The Greatest Showman*.

pharmacy.nus.edu.sg

phabox12@nus.edu.sg

facebook.com/NUSPharmacyDept

NUSS
The Graduate Club



Office of
Alumni Relations

28th NUS
ALUMNI & FRIENDS
GOLF TOURNAMENT

10 October 2019, Thursday
1.00pm Shotgun
Keppel Club

Alumni/Friends \$150 | Keppel Club Members \$100 | Students \$80



Register at
alumnet.events/ANF19



25 JUL (PG13)

© 2018 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures Inc.
and Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.



26 SEPT (PG13)

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TM & © DC Comics



THURSDAY, 7.30PM
AUDITORIUM,
SHAW FOUNDATION ALUMNI HOUSE



Register at:
alumnet.events/upcoming

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

Proud to be an
AlumNUS



Office of
Alumni Relations

FST Charity Golf 2019



The FST (Food Science and Technology) Charity Golf event held at

Orchid Country Club on 26 March was the key activity to raise funds for the FST Alumni Endowment Fund and it was a great success, with a total of \$431,000 raised.

NUS alumni, staff and friends showed their strong support for the event by participating in the event and donating generously. After the golf game, about 260 golfers and guests attended a sumptuous dinner and were entertained by student band "1920".

Deputy Dean of NUS Science Professor Peter Ho attended the dinner and witnessed the cheque presentation



by the Chairman of the event and Chairperson of NUS Food Science & Technology Programme Alumni, Mr Daniel Chia (Science '03), to FST Director Professor Zhou Weibiao.

Nine awards were established from this fundraising event, including the Ong Bee Lian-Department of Biological Sciences Award, which was established together with the department. Dr Ong Bee Lian was an exemplary and dedicated educator who was well-liked by her students and colleagues at Department of Biological Sciences and FST. Her demise was felt by many, and this award was established in remembrance of her.

All the awards under FST Alumni Endowment Fund are for bursaries, to help underprivileged students pursue their studies and reach their full potential without financial hurdles.



From left: Mr Wong Jin Kok (NUS Alumni Students Advancement Committee (ASAC) member and Tournament Director), Prof Peter Ho, Mr Seah Cheng San (ASAC Chairman and FST Charity Golf Advisor), Mr Daniel Chia, Mr Edwin Seow (FST Charity Golf Advisor), Ms Lee Chooi Lan (Scientific Manager), Mr Johnny Tan (NUS Alumni Advisory Board Co-Chairman, Mr Bernard Toh (NUS Alumni Relations Director), and Prof Zhou.

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



THE BIG DAY (PG)

★Starring:



29 August 2019
Thursday, 7.30pm

Auditorium,
Shaw Foundation Alumni House



To reserve your seat, please register at
alumnet.events/FFAug19

Thirsty THURSDAYS

NUS YOUNG ALUMNI MEETUP

5 SEPTEMBER 2019
6.30PM-9.00PM

SPEAKEASY NIGHT



Registration fee: \$10

Horse's Mouth, 583 Orchard Road,
Forum The Shopping Mall,
#B1-39 Singapore 238884

Register at: alumnet.events/TTsep19

Look Out for

the Black Door

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

8TARTS N PASTRIES

10% off non-promotional items.

15% off non-promotional items during birthday month.

facebook.com/8tarts



FINES WINES

10% off wine classes.

10% off selected wines and accessories.

finewines.com.sg



FOODLINE

Promotion A: \$30 Cash Rewards with minimum spending of \$300, applies to all catering orders.

Promotion B: \$10 Cash Rewards on all cakes with minimum spending of \$50.

foodline.sg



SOETAMJIAK

15% discount off total bill.

facebook.com/SOETAMJIAK



NOBIRO IZAKAYA

20% discount on all menu items.

nobiros.com.sg



WINGS OF TIME

30% off Wings of Time (Standard Seat).

1fabergroup.com/NUS



FASHION AND RETAIL

NANYANG OPTICAL

10% off final bill.

nanyang.com.sg



RED DOT BESPOKE

10% off all clothing.

facebook.com/Reddotbespoke



HOME & LIVING

ANGEL BABYBOX

Enjoy 10% off.

angel-babybox.com



MEWTANTS & WOOFs

Enjoy 10% off.

1 **FREE** Spa cum Jacuzzi (dogs) or Mud Spa (cats)*.

* Applicable for **FIRST FULL** Grooming only.

facebook.com/Mwpetgrooming



NOEL GIFTS

Enjoy 10% off regular-priced flowers and gifts.

noelgifts.com



SENTOSA MERLION

30% off Sentosa Merlion.

1fabergroup.com/NUS



BEAUTY AND WELLNESS

EARTH ELEMENTS

- Express Manicure at **\$10** (Usual Price: \$12).
- Express Pedicure at **\$14** (Usual Price: \$15).
- Classic Manicure at **\$24** (Usual Price: \$26).
- Classic Pedicure at **\$30** (Usual Price: \$36).
- Express Gel Manicure and Pedicure at **\$27** each (Usual Price: \$30 each).
- Classic Gel Manicure at **\$38** (Usual Price: \$48).
- Classic Gel Pedicure at **\$48** (Usual Price: \$58).
- Signature Spa Manicure and Pedicure at **\$58** each (Usual Price: \$68 each).
- Signature Spa Gel Manicure and Pedicure at **\$78** (Usual Price: \$88 each).
- Foot Care Treatment at **\$48** (Usual Price: \$68).

facebook.com/pg/Earthelementsnailspa



ATOS WELLNESS

Promotion 1:

- Refresh, Recharge and Rejuvenate with one of the following Wellness Treats at **\$38**:
 - Purifying Face Therapy (A 60-minute face therapy worth \$180).
 - Signature Body Therapy (A 45-minute body therapy worth \$180).
 - Contouring Lymph Therapy (A 40-minute body therapy worth \$180).

• **Gift with Purchase:**

- o 1 session of Nutrition Consultation (worth \$120).

Promotion 2:

- Millennial Facial at **\$18** (A 60-minute wellness treat worth \$180).

atoswellness.com.sg



ROYCE DENTAL

- \$88** Dental Wellness Package.
- \$3,388** Braces Package.
- \$3,388** Dental Implant Package (Korean Implant).
- \$5,588** Invisalign Package.
- \$358** Home Whitening Package.

roycedental.com.sg



HEALTHCARE

OCEAN DENTAL

- **Waiver** of consultation fee* (Usual Price: \$15-\$50).
- Scaling and Polishing at **\$68** for Students and **\$75** for Alumni and Staff (Usual Price: \$75-\$120).
- Fluoride Treatment at **\$15** (Usual Price: \$25).
- X-Ray OPG Full Mouth at **\$50** (Usual Price: \$70).
- X-Ray Bitewing / PA at **\$15** for Students and **\$20** for Alumni and Staff (Usual Price: \$25).
- All other treatments**: **20%** off for Students and **10%** off for Alumni and Staff.

* Only applicable when treatment is completed on the same visit, except in the event of long consultation of more than 10 minutes.

** Excluding root canal treatment, surgery, braces or any other specialist treatment(s).

oceandental.com.sg



FDC DENTAL

- Metal Braces Package @ **\$4,000** nett.
- Ceramic Braces Package @ **\$4,800** nett.
- Invisalign (Invisible Braces) Package from **\$5,136**.

fdc.sg



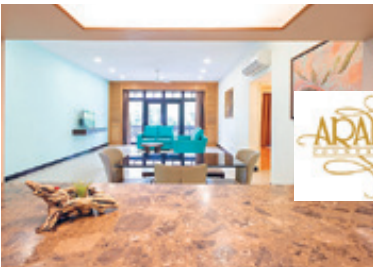
TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION

ARANDA COUNTRY CLUB

Exclusive rates for booking of Executive suites.

- **\$180** per night during off peak period.
- **\$320** per night during peak period.
- **\$340** per night during super peak period.
- **Complimentary** use of 1 BBQ pit.
- **1 complimentary** vehicle decal.
- **4 complimentary** passes for the use of Club's sporting and recreational facilities.

arandaclub.org.sg



EDUCATION AND SELF-ENRICHMENT

THE VOCAL STUDIO

10% off for the first package booked (or package gift voucher).

TheVocalStudio.sg



LIFESTYLE

FITTA ACTIVE

Enjoy **10%** off regular-priced apparels.

fittaactive.com



Proud to be an
AlumNUS

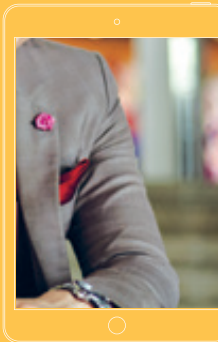


Office of
Alumni Relations

THE MASTER OF ILLUSION

Combining his programming skills with theatrical finesse, **Mr Alexander Yuen's (Arts and Social Sciences '12)** iPad magic performances have taken him around the world.

BY FAIROZA MANSOR



showed him a card trick. "The card I held in my hand changed to a different one — it was mind-blowing," says the now-32-year-old, who then proceeded to borrow as many books on magic as he could from the library. He became good enough to conduct shows for children, and by his final year at NUS, had teamed up with co-founder of honestbee Mr Jonathan Low (Engineering '13) to set up Meta Illusions, a company of magicians for hire. "We were then already dabbling with iPads as tools in our performances," Mr Yuen lets on. "When Jonathan departed to focus on honestbee, I had to learn how to programme from scratch."

His efforts paid off. Mr Yuen's iPad magic performances, which comprise on-screen animations that come alive, have taken him to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Australia, India and more. He counts the Singapore Tourism Board, Chopard and Louis Vuitton among his clients. But the work is not all glitz and glamour. "A 30-minute customised performance could take me up to two months to programme and rehearse," Mr Yuen explains.

These days, Mr Yuen leads a team of five other aspiring iPad magicians who he mentors. "Magic is often an egotistical artform, and many magicians don't see the point of training protégés," he says. "But for me, it is my way of having a say about how magic will be for the next generation." **A**

↓
"Eventually, I'd like to run my own theatre space so I can do magic in a conducive environment, where people are not just there to be amazed and 'tricked', but to be moved by the narratives that magic can bring. I want to inspire hope and imagination."

Co-founder of Meta Illusions and iPad magician Mr Alexander Yuen

ONE MIGHT NOT IMMEDIATELY

equate 'magician' as the preferred career for Psychology students, but that's exactly the path Mr Alexander Yuen embarked on immediately after he received his Masters in 2015. He received his bachelor's degree in 2012. "I was studying emotions for my Masters, and I enjoyed it, but I realised I love magic more," says Mr Yuen, who more precisely is an iPad magician. "Basically, I merge sleight-of-hand together with technology via the use of the iPad to add another layer of amazement to the audience."

The fascination with magic began when Mr Yuen was 15, when a friend



To find out more about Mr Yuen's magic or to book a customised performance for your corporate events, go to ipadmagician.org.



NUS
Day of Service

CHAMPIONS AND PARTICIPANTS NEEDED

The NUS Day of Service is a day when the entire NUS family of alumni, students and staff come together to serve and give back to the community. Spend a few hours of your Saturday to champion or participate in a community activity in one of these areas:

- Animal welfare
- Arts and heritage
- Children and youth
- Community
- Education
- Elderly aid
- Environment
- Health
- Special needs
- Sports



Save the date!

7 September 2019

PHOTOS: MARK LEE



Organised by:
Office of Alumni Relations

NUS Partners:
Centre For the Arts
Office of Campus Amenities
Office of Campus Security
Office of Environmental Sustainability
Office of Facilities Management
Sports and UTown Management Unit

FIESTA ON THE GREEN

17 August 2019 (Saturday)

5.00pm – 9.30pm

NUS University Town



MOVIE SCREENING

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ALUMNI & STUDENTS
PERFORMANCES



PERFORMANCE BY
INDIAN INSTRUMENTAL
ENSEMBLE



Student Life Fair



ALUMNI NETWORKING
BOOTHs



CELEBRITY EMCEE

BUNZ
(ARTS & SOCIAL
SCIENCES '14)

MUSIC PRODUCER,
SENTANG ENTERTAINMENT
ACTOR, AH BOYS TO MEN 3



Register with your family and friends at alumnet.events/KR19

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