WHAT IT TAKES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A DIVERSE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY AND MAKE NUS A SAFE AND INCLUSIVE PLACE FOR ALL

“D&I is more than just a checklist of programmes or policies. It involves the respectful and genuine embrace of people of different backgrounds and perspectives.”

DR ANDREW TAY (MEDICINE ’07), DIRECTOR & HEAD, HEALTH AND WELLBEING TEAM [OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT]

KEEPING DOORS OPEN
MR DARIUS CHEUNG (ENGINEERING ’04)

WHY NEW PERSPECTIVES MATTER
MS AKSHITA NANDA (SCIENCE ’00)

FACING THE FACTS ON RACE
A DISCUSSION ON IDENTITY, XENOPHOBIA AND DISCRIMINATION

STRIKING A BETTER BALANCE

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE
nus.edu.sg/alumnet/TheAlumNUS
**PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE: NUS launches postgraduate programmes in architectural conservation**

The aim is to elevate efforts to preserve the region’s heritage.

In its inaugural cohort, NUS launches postgraduate programmes in architectural conservation for the region’s heritage.

**At the event, Ms Hwang Yu-Ning (Design and Environment ‘91), Chief Planner and Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore, shared, “I appreciate the approach that the School is intending to take, that will balance not just the academic part but also the practitioner as well as the policy parts because all these need to come together to make a conservation programme work.” NUS Architecture undergraduate Ms Cardinia Gladysandra, who is part of this first cohort of MAArC students, wants to help kickstart an “ecosystem of conservation practitioners” that will help make conservation more accessible to the region. Her classmate, retired radiologist and NUS Medicine alumnus Dr Lee Peng Hui (Medicine ‘86), hopes to contribute to conserving Modernist architecture. He shared, “I think there have been a lot of people looking at the older buildings, such as the pre-Second World War buildings, and I think it’s also important to maintain significant modern heritage.” The MAArC programme has two intakes every year, in January and August. It can be done full-time in a year or taken flexibly between two and four years.

The MAArC programme is designed to provide a holistic and comprehensive education in the historic building conservation: policy and management; design in the historic urban context; and materials and technology. Students in the programme may choose one of the streams as a specialisation. Through this balanced approach, MAArC students can contribute to critical discourse, shaping the practice by providing thought leadership.

NUS Business School Alumni Association (NUSBSA) and supported by BIZAlum, the Business School Alumni Association’s alumni office and the student-led NUS Bizad Club.

To maintain significant modern heritage. He shared, “I think there have been a lot of people looking at the older buildings, such as the pre-Second World War buildings, and I think it’s also important to maintain significant modern heritage.” The MAArC programme has two intakes every year, in January and August. It can be done full-time in a year or taken flexibly between two and four years. The January 2022 intake application period for the MSc (Project Management), MSc (Integrated Sustainable Design), MA (Architectural Conservation) and Graduate Diploma in Architectural Conservation is from 15 July to 15 September 2021.

For more information on the MAArC, visit www.sde.nus.edu.sg/education/graduate-programmes/graduate-programmes-by-courserowork.
**IN MEMORIAM:**

**PROFESSOR SAW SWEE HOCK, DISTINGUISHED ACADEMIC AND GENEROUS BENEFAC'TOR**

The late academic was a fervent believer in the power of education, statistics and demography. His academic career included the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur and the University of Hong Kong before serving as a member of the NUS Board of Trustees from 2004 to 2015. His generous donations and philanthropic work were recognised in 2015 when he was conferred an Honorary Doctor of Letters by NUS.

Prof Saw saw Swiee Hock was a close friend of NUS, and we are profoundly grateful for his contributions to the University in so many ways — as an academic, an educator, a benefactor, and a member of our Board of Trustees. We are deeply saddened by his passing, and our hearts go out to his family in this difficult time,” said NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science ‘85).

We will always be indebted to Professor Saw, whose gift enabled us to set up our School. The ongoing COVID-19 crisis is a stark reminder that the major public health issues confronting us are becoming increasingly complex and require multiple levels of intervention. We are determined to carry on Professor Saw’s legacy by continuing to play a transformative role in raising the standard of public health in Singapore and the surrounding region,” said Professor Teo Yik Ying (Affiliate Alumnus ’19), Dean of the NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health.

The international community tapped on Prof Saw’s expertise in statistics and demography, as did the Singapore government. He served on the United Nations Committee on Salary Adjustments, the International Statistical Institute, and the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. Prof Saw was also the first chairman of Singapore’s National Statistical Commission — the predecessor of the Singapore Department of Statistics.

**PHILANTHROPIC WORK**

Deeply committed to education, Prof Saw was a generous donor to NUS. He had been a regular donor, making gifts annually to support various programmes at the University.

In 2002, he supported the Saw Swee Hock Professorship in Statistics. He provided an endowment in 2004 to award bursaries annually to financially-needy final-year students across all faculties to allow them to focus on their studies without the need to work part-time. In celebration of NUS’ 100th year anniversary in 2005, he supported the Saw Swee Hock Centennial Professorship in Law.

In 2011, Prof Saw made a landmark gift which was used to establish the NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health. The School educates and trains public health professionals, and undertakes cutting-edge research on innovative models of public health and healthcare delivery systems.

“We will always be indebted to Professor Saw, whose gift enabled us to set up our School. The ongoing COVID-19 crisis is a stark reminder that the major public health issues confronting us are becoming increasingly complex and require multiple levels of intervention. We are determined to carry on Professor Saw’s legacy by continuing to play a transformative role in raising the standard of public health in Singapore and the surrounding region,” said Professor Teo Yik Ying (Affiliate Alumnus ’19), Dean of the NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health.

The School should focus on making societal impact rather than just publishing academic papers. He was very glad when we had our first Singapore International Public Health Conference in 2012 where the School released its projection of the future burden of diabetes. This contributed to the launch of the War on Diabetes,” said Prof Chia. He added that Prof Saw’s generous donation has also resulted in a School that is currently helping to control the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prof Saw received the Distinguished Alumni Service Award in 2005 from NUS, as well as the Outstanding Service Award in 2007. On the national level, he was bestowed the Public Service Medal (PBM) at the 2013 National Day Awards.

This article was first published on 16 February in News.nus.edu.sg/in-memoriam-professor-saw-swee-hock-distinguished-academic-and-generous-benefactor.
Chinese New Year Appreciation Dinner

A creative approach to ushering the Year of the Ox, in light of social distancing measures.

Undaunted by the restrictions on social gatherings brought about due to the COVID-19 pandemic, over 100 alumni leaders, volunteers, partners, colleagues and students tuned in virtually on 17 February to usher in the Year of the Ox. The successful event, hosted by NUS President and NUS Alumni Relations, was meant to thank the University’s valued partners for their unwavering support and contributions towards engaging the alumni community. The theme this year was “New Beginnings” – represented by the Chinese character “chun” (春), or “Spring”; the evening of celebrations symbolised moving on to renewed hope for the future. Before the programme began, guests received a treasure trove of goodies which included the night’s dinner, lohei and some small gifts that were delivered to their doorsteps.

In spite of the virtual format, guests were still treated to a jam-packed evening of pre-recorded performances while savouring a sumptuous meal in the comfort of their homes. As they dived into their delicious bento boxes, which included Chinese dishes traditionally enjoyed during the festive season, guests were showered with blessings and good fortune with a pre-recorded lion dance performance. Guests also enjoyed a video presentation by NUS Alumni Relations titled “A Year in Reflection — 2020” and a pre-recorded performance by the Lorong Boys, formed by talented alumni from the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music. With Mr. Jonathan Shin ('15) on keyboards, Mr. Rit Xu ('15) on flute and Mr. Joachim Lim ('14) on cajon and percussion, guests tuned into the band’s melodic rendition of Gang Xi Fa Cai (恭喜发财, Gong Xi Gong Xi (恭喜恭喜) and He Xin Nian (辭舊迎新).

Every Chinese New Year is marked by the tossing of lohei, and this year was no different. To replicate the festive cheer, the host for the evening, Mr. Roystonn Loh (Arts and Social Sciences ‘13), guided guests through a virtual lohei where everyone enthusiastically proclaimed auspicious phrases and tossed the prepacked yusheng to usher in good wealth and health. To round off the celebration, everyone joined hands for three rounds of toasting led by Director of NUS Alumni Relations, Mr. Bernard Toh (Architecture ‘84) – to scale new heights, stay committed to their alma mater, and to good spirits in the year of the Metal Ox.

2020 might have ‘Zoom-ed’ past, but as NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science ‘85) reassured in his Opening Address – “we will ride through the current pandemic together and emerge stronger than before”. Happy Niu Year!
**Future-Ready Workshops**

**Successfully Navigating the World of Negotiations**

The first iteration of Future-Ready Workshops for 2021 on 12 January featured Mr. Anuj Jagannathan (Business ’16), Chairperson of the NUS Alumni San Francisco Chapter and experienced coach. Mr. Jagannathan, who is the author of Amazon bestsellers on the topic of negotiation, and who has hosted webinars and training sessions on the subject around the world, provided attendees with insights into common negotiation strategies and how to apply them effectively. Attendees learned more about the various stages of negotiation and what they can do in order to ensure their success.

**Health & Wellness**

**Smiling Your Way to Good Oral Health**

On 21 January, in a session organised in partnership with National University Hospital (NUH) and National University Centre for Oral Health Singapore (NUCOHS), Health & Wellness welcomed Dental Consultant Dr. Tay Chong Meng (Dentistry ’03) and orthodontist Dr. Wilson Lu (Dentistry ’11). Dr. Tay spoke on Taking Charge of Your Oral Health, imparting his knowledge on common oral diseases and preventive oral care to the audience. Dr. Lu subsequently gave a short talk on Orthodontics – Aligning for Better Health, taking the audience through different treatments, preventable orthodontic problems and steps to mitigate them.

**The Brest Fortress**

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

**All You Need to Know About Strokes**

STROKE, the fourth leading cause of death in Singapore, is also one of the top contributors of adult disability. With an increasingly ageing population, the danger and burden that strokes pose will continue to rise. Join Dr. Chou Ning in this illuminating talk on the different types of strokes, risk factors and ways to prevent them.

**Feature Films (Miami)**

6 May 2021 (Thursday) 7.30pm - 10.30pm

Auditorium, Shaw Foundation Alumni House

Runtime: 3 hours (in Russian with English subtitles)

Please register at alumnet.events/FFmay21

*Limited seats due to safe management measures*
HELPING BUSINESSES TRANSFORM USING IT — THE TRANSFORMATION THAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN WITHIN

THE 16 FEBRUARY SESSION OF TECH TALK featured Dr Jenson Goh (Computing ’97), Chief Information and Learning Officer at Monde Nissin, who brought alumni through an extensive presentation on the challenges faced in driving business transformation using IT, especially the importance of applying knowledge and skills acquired in class through practice. With his vast experience in strategising IT use and leading sustainability initiatives, Dr Goh patiently responded to questions from the chat, in particular pain points that leaders and teams often face in finding the right solutions to drive business transformation within the organisation.

TECH TALK

Speakers:

Dr Nicholas Ho (Engineering ’13)
Lecturer and Consultant, Artificial Intelligence Practice, Institute of Systems Science, NUS

Mr Ng Kok Keong (Computing ’99)
Senior Lecturer and Consultant, Digital Strategy and Leadership Practice, Institute of Systems Science, NUS

18 May 2021 (Tuesday)
7.30pm to 9.00pm
Register at alumnet.events/TSmay21

Catch up on all our webinars at alumnet.events/webinars

IoT & 5G Security for the Future

One of the biggest concerns with the Internet of Things (IoT) is ensuring that networks, data and devices are secure. The rise of 5G has also been projected as a catalyst in driving the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI), IoT and Robotics. Hear from our speakers who will share their insights on:

- Use cases of 5G in IoT Technology and autonomous systems; and
- Security considerations to enhance IoT security.

WOW: IN CONVERSATION [ONLINE]

Promoting Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the Workforce

Ms Lyn Lee (Arts and Social Sciences ’89), Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer of Royal Dutch Shell; Dr Vandana Ramachandran (Science (PhD) ’03), Co-founder of Singapore Women in Science; and Ms Georgette Tan (Arts and Social Sciences ’90), President of United Women Singapore. Moderated by Dr Intan Azura Mohd (Science ’98, Public Policy ’08), Member of the NUS Alumni Advisory Board, over 150 alumni, students and staff attended the virtual session held on 10 March.

Mrs Josephine Teo inaugurated the night’s events with a speech that reminded attendees how everyone has a part to play in forging gender parity — that only with inclusive behaviours and tangible action will change happen. She commended educational institutions such as NUS that are actively contributing to the dialogue on gender equality, and encouraged more alumnae to step up and embrace opportunities to inspire others. With the audience kept the panelists fully occupied, Ms Lyn Lee agreed, emphasising that women should not falter when labelled “too loud” or “too opinionated”, but instead build an innate confidence and belief in their own abilities and skills. Dr Vandana also mentioned that, with good role models, they will be a morale-booster for younger ladies to aspire towards.

As the discussion veered to what more companies could do to promote inclusion in the workplace, panelists agreed that companies should come up with family-friendly policies that addressed not only the concerns of women, but also the considerations of men. Particularly, it was important to assuage the fears of men that friendly policies that addressed not only the concerns of women, but also the concerns of men, particularly, it was important to assure the fears of men that their positions will not be replaced nor will they lose out to their peers if they choose to fulfil their parental duties.

As with the previous edition of WoW, the audience kept the panelists busy, with more panelists agreeing to take on more questions via e-mail. Stay tuned for more insights in the next issue of The AlumnUS magazine!
NEWER HEIGHTS TO SCALE

Professor Susanna Leong (Law ’89), NUS Vice Provost (Masters’ Programmes & Lifelong Education) and Dean (School of Continuing & Lifelong Education – NUS SCALE), discusses the University’s evolving approach to Lifelong Learning.

The future may be mistier, yet it presents new opportunities for growth. There is no telling when the COVID-19 pandemic will end but we are certain that it has moved us to embrace a “new normal”. Last year, we saw radical governmental policies, emerging expectations around remote working, accelerated technological adoption and the unusual consolidation of businesses within and across industries. Quite evidently, the gap between the conventional practices of yesterday and requirements of tomorrow is widening at warp speed. We must thus seize new possible opportunities for growth.

Staying ahead of the game will involve new priorities and areas of focus. Organisations find themselves operating in an environment that is in a constant flux. Traditional business models are disrupted, and often superseded by emerging technological solutions. Teams therefore need to constantly innovate and create differentiating value, and this can be done by sharpening and sustaining competitive advantages.

The only sustainable advantage is to learn faster than your competitors and stay ahead of the competition. To do new things, and create value in response to constant shifts, we will need to be highly adaptive and quick-witted. Embracing agile set-ups, nurturing a strong culture of learning, and building the fitness for change will help us to remain nimble and competitive. We must be open to stepping out of our comfort zones, engage in a process of learning and unlearning, and be prepared to become a novice many times over, throughout our professional careers.

NUS’ commitment to Lifelong Learning support for our alumni and our wider communities is firm. Accelerated investment in the upskilling and reskilling of workers could add at least $65.5 trillion to global GDP, create 5.3 million (net) new jobs by 2030 and help develop more inclusive and sustainable economies worldwide. These are the key findings from a January 2021 World Economic Forum report. At NUS, we too recognise that, in certain disciplines, one’s skills and knowledge have a much shorter shelf life today. A NUS education may begin with a first formal degree, but it does not end there. We are committed to ensuring that our graduates remain future-ready and an integral part of this involves supporting our alumni through Continuous Education and Training (CET) initiatives throughout their careers.

In June 2016, SCALE was established, as a formal commitment of the University to make CET an integral part of our education. NUS SCALE draws on the multidisciplinary expertise of all 16 of our Schools/Faculties and SCALE, and collaborates closely with the industries and government agencies such as SSG, IMDA and WSG in offering high-quality full qualification programmes and short courses for working adults (our alumni and the general public) in Singapore and beyond.

Responding with speed and innovation. The University has been strategically proactive in workforce upskilling and reskilling. From introducing innovative multidisciplinary education to modernising online learning andragogy, we seek to offer our learners a high value-adding and engaging learning experience.

As you may be aware, the University has also put in place, very quickly, various initiatives to support our graduating cohorts, alumni and the workforce, such as the NUS Resilience and Growth (R&G) and the SGUnited Skills Programme, during this difficult time.

Ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness. We are also constantly mindful that we make learning accessible for busy working adults. Other than offering classes in the evenings and weekends, we are offering Executive and Graduate Certificates for learners who would like to learn in a bite-sized, flexible manner, but may wish to stack their credentials into a postgraduate certificate. For learners who are looking at acquiring industry-relevant skills for immediate application to their jobs, they could explore NUS Professional Certificate programmes. These certificate programmes, developed by NUS faculties, span in-demand areas such as Data Science, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Marketing and many more.

Expanding NUS CET offerings to our wider communities. Working professionals who are motivated to earn their first undergraduate degree at NUS can now pursue their dream through the Advance@NUS programme, which prioritises career experiences in selecting applicants. For mid-career professionals, managers and executives who are looking to change industries, our Professional Conversion Programmes (PCPs) cater to this group, helping them to acquire the new skills needed to facilitate a career switch into sectors such as Nursing and Digital Sales.

Lifelong Learning commitment to your communities. We are strategically proactive in workforce upskilling and reskilling. From introducing innovative multidisciplinary education to modernising online learning andragogy, we seek to offer our learners a high value-adding and engaging learning experience.

As you may be aware, the University has also put in place, very quickly, various initiatives to support our graduating cohorts, alumni and the workforce, such as the NUS Resilience and Growth (R&G) and the SGUnited Skills Programme, during this difficult time.

Ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness. We are also constantly mindful that we make learning accessible for busy working adults. Other than offering classes in the evenings and weekends, we are offering Executive and Graduate Certificates for learners who would like to learn in a bite-sized, flexible manner, but may wish to stack their credentials into a postgraduate certificate. For learners who are looking at acquiring industry-relevant skills for immediate application to their jobs, they could explore NUS Professional Certificate programmes. These certificate programmes, developed by NUS faculties, span in-demand areas such as Data Science, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Marketing and many more.

Expanding NUS CET offerings to our wider communities. Working professionals who are motivated to earn their first undergraduate degree at NUS can now pursue their dream through the Advance@NUS programme, which prioritises career experiences in selecting applicants. For mid-career professionals, managers and executives who are looking to change industries, our Professional Conversion Programmes (PCPs) cater to this group, helping them to acquire the new skills needed to facilitate a career switch into sectors such as Nursing and Digital Sales.

Lifelong Learning commitment to your communities. We are strategically proactive in workforce upskilling and reskilling. From introducing innovative multidisciplinary education to modernising online learning andragogy, we seek to offer our learners a high value-adding and engaging learning experience.

As you may be aware, the University has also put in place, very quickly, various initiatives to support our graduating cohorts, alumni and the workforce, such as the NUS Resilience and Growth (R&G) and the SGUnited Skills Programme, during this difficult time.

Ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness. We are also constantly mindful that we make learning accessible for busy working adults. Other than offering classes in the evenings and weekends, we are offering Executive and Graduate Certificates for learners who would like to learn in a bite-sized, flexible manner, but may wish to stack their credentials into a postgraduate certificate. For learners who are looking at acquiring industry-relevant skills for immediate application to their jobs, they could explore NUS Professional Certificate programmes. These certificate programmes, developed by NUS faculties, span in-demand areas such as Data Science, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Marketing and many more.

Expanding NUS CET offerings to our wider communities. Working professionals who are motivated to earn their first undergraduate degree at NUS can now pursue their dream through the Advance@NUS programme, which prioritises career experiences in selecting applicants. For mid-career professionals, managers and executives who are looking to change industries, our Professional Conversion Programmes (PCPs) cater to this group, helping them to acquire the new skills needed to facilitate a career switch into sectors such as Nursing and Digital Sales.

Lifelong Learning commitment to your communities. We are strategically proactive in workforce upskilling and reskilling. From introducing innovative multidisciplinary education to modernising online learning andragogy, we seek to offer our learners a high value-adding and engaging learning experience.

As you may be aware, the University has also put in place, very quickly, various initiatives to support our graduating cohorts, alumni and the workforce, such as the NUS Resilience and Growth (R&G) and the SGUnited Skills Programme, during this difficult time.

Ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness. We are also constantly mindful that we make learning accessible for busy working adults. Other than offering classes in the evenings and weekends, we are offering Executive and Graduate Certificates for learners who would like to learn in a bite-sized, flexible manner, but may wish to stack their credentials into a postgraduate certificate. For learners who are looking at acquiring industry-relevant skills for immediate application to their jobs, they could explore NUS Professional Certificate programmes. These certificate programmes, developed by NUS faculties, span in-demand areas such as Data Science, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Marketing and many more.

Expanding NUS CET offerings to our wider communities. Working professionals who are motivated to earn their first undergraduate degree at NUS can now pursue their dream through the Advance@NUS programme, which prioritises career experiences in selecting applicants. For mid-career professionals, managers and executives who are looking to change industries, our Professional Conversion Programmes (PCPs) cater to this group, helping them to acquire the new skills needed to facilitate a career switch into sectors such as Nursing and Digital Sales.
"Diversity and inclusion" (D&I) has become a common catchphrase among governments, businesses and universities. At NUS, strong advocacy for D&I from various angles is getting the word out that our differences really are what make us stronger.

Professor Bernard Tan, NUS Senior Vice Provost (Undergraduate Education)
In line with this shift, NUS has introduced several initiatives aimed at taking in students whose path to University is outside the conventional Junior College (JC) routes. For example, a special scheme launched in time for Academic Year 2019/2020 encouraged Singapore’s five polytechnics to each nominate up to 40 students with entrepreneurial abilities for admission to NUS. Selected candidates will get to benefit from NUS’ active industry, partnerships and experiential entrepreneurial education, including the NUS Overseas Colleges programme.

Those with an aptitude or passion for the law will find NUS’ varied programmes appealing. In line with this shift, NUS has introduced several initiatives aimed at taking in students whose path to University is outside the conventional Junior College (JC) routes. For example, a special scheme launched in time for Academic Year 2019/2020 encouraged Singapore’s five polytechnics to each nominate up to 40 students with entrepreneurial abilities for admission to NUS. Selected candidates will get to benefit from NUS’ active industry, partnerships and experiential entrepreneurial education, including the NUS Overseas Colleges programme.

Those with an aptitude or passion for the law will find NUS’ varied programmes appealing. More than 100 adult learners applied to NUS under the Advance@NUS admissions pathway in 2020, including 26. The first-year Bachelor of Business Administration student tells The AlumNUS how the course has already helped him in his job as Managing Director of Kaizen Logistics.

“I pursue a degree at NUS is one of the best decisions I have made for myself. The biggest advantage is that I am able to apply whatever I learn in school to my business in almost real time. For example, one module I took was an innovation strategy. I learnt that innovation does not have to be industry-shaking; it could be something small that solves a less serious problem but still be impactful in the long run. To improve Kaizen’s operations and processes, I built a technology platform for our cross-border logistics services, which used to be handled via email. I would like to think that I contribute something to my younger course mates as well. While they read materials in lectures and tutorials, I can share my real-life experiences with them. I offer a different perspective on what it is like to be in the working world.

Having graduated from Nanyang Polytechnic with a Diploma in Business Enterprise IT in 2017, I built a technology platform for our cross-border logistics services, which used to be handled via email. I would like to think that I contribute something to my younger course mates as well. While they read materials in lectures and tutorials, I can share my real-life experiences with them. I offer a different perspective on what it is like to be in the working world.

Having graduated from Nanyang Polytechnic with a Diploma in Business Enterprise IT in 2017, I built a technology platform for our cross-border logistics services, which used to be handled via email. I would like to think that I contribute something to my younger course mates as well. While they read materials in lectures and tutorials, I can share my real-life experiences with them. I offer a different perspective on what it is like to be in the working world.

Having graduated from Nanyang Polytechnic with a Diploma in Business Enterprise IT in 2017, I built a technology platform for our cross-border logistics services, which used to be handled via email. I would like to think that I contribute something to my younger course mates as well. While they read materials in lectures and tutorials, I can share my real-life experiences with them. I offer a different perspective on what it is like to be in the working world.

Having graduated from Nanyang Polytechnic with a Diploma in Business Enterprise IT in 2017, I built a technology platform for our cross-border logistics services, which used to be handled via email. I would like to think that I contribute something to my younger course mates as well. While they read materials in lectures and tutorials, I can share my real-life experiences with them. I offer a different perspective on what it is like to be in the working world.

Having graduated from Nanyang Polytechnic with a Diploma in Business Enterprise IT in 2017, I built a technology platform for our cross-border logistics services, which used to be handled via email. I would like to think that I contribute something to my younger course mates as well. While they read materials in lectures and tutorials, I can share my real-life experiences with them. I offer a different perspective on what it is like to be in the working world.

Having graduated from Nanyang Polytechnic with a Diploma in Business Enterprise IT in 2017, I built a technology platform for our cross-border logistics services, which used to be handled via email. I would like to think that I contribute something to my younger course mates as well. While they read materials in lectures and tutorials, I can share my real-life experiences with them. I offer a different perspective on what it is like to be in the working world.

Having graduated from Nanyang Polytechnic with a Diploma in Business Enterprise IT in 2017, I built a technology platform for our cross-border logistics services, which used to be handled via email. I would like to think that I contribute something to my younger course mates as well. While they read materials in lectures and tutorials, I can share my real-life experiences with them. I offer a different perspective on what it is like to be in the working world.

Having graduated from Nanyang Polytechnic with a Diploma in Business Enterprise IT in 2017, I built a technology platform for our cross-border logistics services, which used to be handled via email. I would like to think that I contribute something to my young...
FOCUS

NEW NAME, SAME AIM
Until recently, SAU was known as the Disability Support Office. Ms Yuen explains that the name change reflects a “more progressive stance” towards supporting students with disabilities.

Students with special needs are generally very appreciative and grateful for the individualised support they receive to ensure that their specific needs are met.

Ms Agnes Yuen, Assistant Senior Manager, NUS Student Accessibility Unit

ENABLING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
Another underprivileged group all too often excluded from higher education are persons with disabilities — not because they struggle with the academic rigour, but because the system is not designed to accommodate their needs. One way NUS addresses this problem is through the Hannah’s Blessings Bursary, which supports financially-needy students with disabilities. Admitting students with diverse backgrounds to university is one half of the D&I equation; the other half is making them feel included so they feel they belong there and what they say and do matters. To make its campus a safe and welcoming place for everybody, NUS has a network of offices and units dedicated to ensuring that the needs and preferences of different student groups are met.

The NUS Student Accessibility Unit (SAU), within the Office of Student Affairs (OSA), is one of them. Together with University colleagues, SAU provides a comprehensive range of support services and resources for students with disabilities and special education needs. Examples include helping students make alternative arrangements with course instructors before the start of modules; maintaining facilities with assistive technologies (such as PitStop@ Yusof Ishak House); providing wheelchair-accessible transport to ferry mobility-impaired students to and from classes; and finding suitable on-campus housing, co-curricular activities, as well as job and internship opportunities for them. Lending a hand to this group are the student volunteers with NUS Enablers. Set up to champion disability inclusion, this student interest group offers buddy services to peers with special needs. “Alongside SAU, NUS Enablers promotes awareness for a more disability-inclusive campus culture and environment among the student community,” says Ms Agnes Yuen, Assistant Senior Manager at SAU. The Unit’s annual Inclusive Fest also brings together the entire NUS community for a series of experiential activities and sharing sessions with persons with disabilities, to help people understand how they can each do their part to build a more inclusive environment.

“Students with special needs are generally very appreciative and grateful for the individualised support they receive to ensure that their specific needs are met,” says Ms Yuen, adding that COVID-19 has not halted such support.” While students with physical disabilities appreciate not having to commute to and from school, those who thrive on interpersonal interactions may find it more daunting an adjustment to make.” For example, NUS Enablers introduced online bonding or game sessions between students with and without special needs. Some students had assistive devices delivered to their homes, while lecture captioning allows hearing-impaired students to follow the online course content.

RESPECT AND CONSENT
Since Singapore had its own MeToo moment in April 2019, when then-NUS student Ms Monica Baey (Arts and Social Sciences ’19) came forward on social media with her story as a victim of voyeurism, the issue of sexual harassment or violence is being taken more seriously. A key indicator of this was the establishment of the NUS Victim Care Unit (VCU), the first of its kind in Singapore universities. It provides a central point of contact for students affected by sexual misconduct, and offers a private and safe place for them to seek support in confidence.

“NUS is committed to zero tolerance for sexual misconduct. VCU works alongside other University units to cultivate a safe campus environment — free from sexual and gender-based harassment — where students can live, study and enjoy the best of their educational years,” says Associate Professor Sandy Lim (Arts and Social Sciences ’96) from NUS Business School, who directs the VCU. Trained professionals are available to accompany victims to the hospital, police, court and other appointments, as well as give emotional and practical support, including referral to counsellors.

VCU also conducts community engagement and outreach activities, such as talks at first-year orientation programmes and campus residences, seminars on respect and consent, and management training sessions to promote trauma-informed protocols. Currently, the Unit is expanding its services to assist staff as well as students affected by sexual misconduct, with a name change — to NUS Care Unit (NCU) — soon to come.

Grounded in the belief that “it takes students to keep students safe”, Ms Carissa Cheow and three others formed Students for a Safer NUS (safeNUS) as a strategic partner to the VCU in October 2019. It is Singapore’s first fully-student-led organisation dedicated to this cause. Co-Founding Co-President Ms Cheow asserts that they are committed to “erasing sexual violence remains consistently on our institution’s and community’s agenda and not merely a hot topic that will fade away once media cycles move on from it”. In the short time that safeNUS has been around, its 60-plus members have already initiated numerous ground-up projects. Some of these are a Warm Line and Support Group, a Sexual Assault First Responder Training course for NUS students, and a Sexual Climate Survey jointly conducted with the VCU to understand the prevalence of sexual misconduct at NUS. safeNUS is also collaborating with the Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE), Singapore’s leading gender equality advocacy group, to develop a resource to tackle image-based sexual violence.

“Sexual violence in all its forms remains an unacceptably prevalent problem throughout our campuses, workplaces, and communities,” says Ms Cheow, a survivor herself. She is pursuing a Concurrent Degree Programme in Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) and Master in Public Policy at NUS. “It is a systemic problem that affects all of society and originates squarely in deeply-unjust power structures that have enabled it to persist — until now,” she says. Since the formation of Students for a Safer NUS, can carry on from it”.

To address sexual violence, we need systemic change.
When we reconfigure the power dynamic, we allow more equal relationships built on mutual respect to emerge.

Ms Carissa Cheow, Co-Founded Co-President, Students for a Safer NUS
The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on mental health worldwide. As a result, many organizations, including NUS, have implemented various initiatives to support mental well-being. The Office of the President, in collaboration with the University's Student Wellness Unit, has launched several programs to address mental health issues among students and staff. These initiatives include the creation of a ‘Workout from Home’ video series, a mental health awareness campaign, and a ‘Work from Home’ program. By fostering an environment where innovation, resilience, and respect—both for individuals and the environment—are encouraged, NUS aims to promote mental well-being and create a supportive community. 

**ADVANCING THE D&I CONVERSATION**

The latest proof of the growing awareness around D&I came in February, when NUS revealed plans to revise its General Education (GE) curriculum. Under this pillar, NUS students will take part in community service projects designed to address issues of global and local importance, such as integrating marginalised groups into society, improving access to healthcare and education, and promoting a more equal society. The initiative is part of NUS’ ongoing efforts to train managers to overcome the 'bamboo wall' and create a more inclusive and supportive workplace culture.

**ADDRESSING MATTERS OF INEQUALITY AND MARGinality**

Dr Mathew Mathews, social scientist, believes the platform has elevated the ‘visibility’ of D&I. Among the many initiatives underway, the Office of the President has launched the NUS Alumni Advisory Board’s ‘Women @ Work: In Conversation’ series, which aims to rethink their prejudices. WoW: In Conversation, discussions on D&I-related matters, and force them to rethink their prejudices. WoW: In Conversation, for instance, is a women's empowerment platform where distinguished female alumni are celebrated and can inspire others. Its founder, NUS Alumni Advisory Board member Dr Inath Azura Mokhtar (Science ’98), believes the platform has elevated the “visibility” of women. However, she qualifies, “Although we may have progressed as a society, we are still quite patriarchal. There is still some way for women to play a more significant and dominant role in strategic decision-making and charting the course for our society.”

**GETTING TO EQUAL**

Unfortunately, Singapore’s revered reputation as a top global financial hub does not extend to the D&I sphere. A 2019 poll of 18,000 employees in 14 developed countries by Kantar, a leading data, insights and consulting company, found that Singapore was the second-worst performing country in terms of workplace D&I practices. Other similar findings show that in the case of D&I, much remains to be done (see “Singapore and D&I: Less Than Stellar”).

**LESS THAN STELLAR**

The inaugural Kantar Inclusion Index (2019) ranked Singapore as the second-lowest globally for workplace D&I. Among the Singapore workers polled:

- 24% had been bullied in the workplace in the past year
- 32% were made to “feel uncomfortable” by their employers
- 44% were affected by “stress and anxiety” at work

Only 2 Singapore companies—Singapore Airlines (31st) and Singtel (39th)—made it to the Refinitiv 2020 D&I Index, which ranks the top 100 most diverse and inclusive organisations globally.

**STELLAR**

Professor Ho Teck Hua (Engineering ’85) said in February, the enhanced GE curriculum will “grow social consciousness in our young leaders” so that they can “lead positive changes in society.”

In co-curricular endeavours as well, more and more undergraduates are joining student organisations centred on reaching out to the wider community and helping the less-privileged. Two such groups are the Developer Student Club NUS and the NUS Students’ Community Service Club, which spent last December developing an online platform to galvanise in-kind donations and painting the rental flats of low-income elderly households, respectively. Students keen on initiating a project to enhance the appreciation of marginalised communities and foster an inclusive culture can also seek funding through the OSA—administered Diversity and Inclusion Grant.

Elsewhere in the NUS community, alumni-led initiatives allow people to engage in honest, informed discussions on D&I-related matters, and force them to rethink their prejudices. WoW: In Conversation, for instance, is a women’s empowerment platform where distinguished female alumni are celebrated and can inspire others. Its founder, NUS Alumni Advisory Board member Dr Inath Azura Mokhtar (Science ’98), believes the platform has elevated the “visibility” of women. However, she qualifies, “Although we may have progressed as a society, we are still quite patriarchal. There is still some way for women to play a more significant and dominant role in strategic decision-making and charting the course for our society.”

Dr Mathew Mathews, social scientist, believes the platform has elevated the “visibility” of D&I. Among the many initiatives underway, the Office of the President has launched the NUS Alumni Advisory Board’s ‘Women @ Work: In Conversation’ series, which aims to rethink their prejudices. WoW: In Conversation, for instance, is a women’s empowerment platform where distinguished female alumni are celebrated and can inspire others. Its founder, NUS Alumni Advisory Board member Dr Inath Azura Mokhtar (Science ’98), believes the platform has elevated the “visibility” of women. However, she qualifies, “Although we may have progressed as a society, we are still quite patriarchal. There is still some way for women to play a more significant and dominant role in strategic decision-making and charting the course for our society.”

Dr Mathew Mathews, social scientist, believes the platform has elevated the “visibility” of D&I. Among the many initiatives underway, the Office of the President has launched the NUS Alumni Advisory Board’s ‘Women @ Work: In Conversation’ series, which aims to rethink their prejudices. WoW: In Conversation, for instance, is a women’s empowerment platform where distinguished female alumni are celebrated and can inspire others. Its founder, NUS Alumni Advisory Board member Dr Inath Azura Mokhtar (Science ’98), believes the platform has elevated the “visibility” of women. However, she qualifies, “Although we may have progressed as a society, we are still quite patriarchal. There is still some way for women to play a more significant and dominant role in strategic decision-making and charting the course for our society.”

Dr Mathew Mathews, social scientist, believes the platform has elevated the “visibility” of D&I. Among the many initiatives underway, the Office of the President has launched the NUS Alumni Advisory Board’s ‘Women @ Work: In Conversation’ series, which aims to rethink their prejudices. WoW: In Conversation, for instance, is a women’s empowerment platform where distinguished female alumni are celebrated and can inspire others. Its founder, NUS Alumni Advisory Board member Dr Inath Azura Mokhtar (Science ’98), believes the platform has elevated the “visibility” of women. However, she qualifies, “Although we may have progressed as a society, we are still quite patriarchal. There is still some way for women to play a more significant and dominant role in strategic decision-making and charting the course for our society.”
PUZZLE OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

It is said that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. Thus, efforts to create a society that promotes diversity need to be carefully thought out and usually this means that the infrastructure has been designed to be accessible to people with disabilities. At a broader level, policymakers have touted ‘inclusive growth’ as fair employment and the career development of minority groups. However, what counts as proper or adequate inclusion? How can we tell whether we are doing inclusion right? Only when we can choose to put all the pieces together.

If we were to say that more inclusion is better under all conditions, then we are removing our ability to exercise discretion, to make good judgment. For example, if we think of life as a puzzle, then we constrain the mobility of people in and out of them. However, if they allow people with disabilities to enter and leave, but also the non-disabled to do so, they can be a productive mode of inclusion. We should explore multiple models of inclusion to understand their viability and strengths.

SOMETHING'S TO GIVE

Inclusive initiatives, even if they do not make this explicit, always have some reference group that is the target of their efforts. Like it or not, policymakers will always be able to prioritise what group they would like to focus their inclusion on. This creates some discomfort for all involved. If we introduce quota hiring or anti-discrimination legislation, how do we decide on the protected groups. That these laws will cover — women, people with disabilities, people facing mental health issues, people with alternative sexual orientations? All of the above, or some of the above, and why? Furthermore, the more inclusive we try to be, the more challenging it is to achieve social cohesion.

The trade-off of such an approach is of course the pace of inclusion. Members of minority groups tell me that such a ‘sensible’ approach means that we might still be talking about the same issues 30 years down the road. For the mainstream, there is no urgency, but for those who are most excluded, the pace is never quick enough.

We tend to think of our lives as a race, where you compete with others to win. This metaphor fits well into the logic of organisational life and the market economy, and has insidious effects on what we value and how we behave. However, there are other ways to think and behave, by drawing from the logic of community. For example, if we think of life as a puzzle, then we would want to put all the pieces together.

The social inclusion is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle whose parts are not prefabricated to fit one another. We will not feel that our social lives are complete until every piece fits into an overall panorama. We need to commit ourselves to the idea that every group, however marginalised, would fit in somewhere.

THE JIGSAW PUZZLE OF SOCIAL INCLUSION

Inclusion has become a buzzword that lends a semblance of legitimacy to all sorts of social initiatives. Playgrounds, gyms and supermarkets have sometimes described themselves as inclusive, and usually this means that the infrastructure has been designed to be accessible to people with disabilities. At the workplace itself, companies with a ‘diversity and inclusion’ strategy commit themselves to making and implementing policies to ensure employment and the development of employees.

At a broader level, policymakers have touted ‘inclusive growth’ as an ideal for ensuring that low-income families and workers are not left behind because of economic forces. However, what counts as proper or adequate inclusion? How can we tell whether we are doing inclusion right? Only when we can clearly articulate what counts as desired inclusion can our efforts be meaningfully guided. When such an ideal is ill-defined or absent, any effort can claim to be inclusive — or worse, we may not realise that our inclusion efforts have led to unexpected and even negative consequences despite good intentions.

ARE WE DOING INCLUSION RIGHT?

It is easy to take a position of universal inclusion — that we should include as many groups as possible (women, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, etc.), under as many circumstances and contexts (education, employment, and so on) whenever possible. For example, we proudly proclaim adherence to the principles of Universal Design — which advocates that products, buildings and environments should be made accessible and usable to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, ability or other factors — even when we actually harbour private doubts about their feasibility. Such a vision is certainly laudable, but the reality is that trade-offs often must be made, and often without proper consideration. Even within a specific domain, universal inclusion already faces real challenges. A person with disability once told me that a toilet cubicle made larger for a wheelchair user’s convenience may be more disorienting for a visually-impaired person, who will need to feel around a larger space for where the fixtures are.

Research has shown that policies or services that claim to be inclusive can be patronising or even oppressive. Scholars of disability issues like Paul Miller and Berni Kelly have explained how inclusion can be oppressive. People with disabilities may feel that they are being put under the spotlight when they may prefer to avoid unwanted attention. Employers may hire not because they value the person with a disability, but use them as a marketing tool or to demonstrate how socially responsible their companies are.

Those at the receiving end of inclusion efforts may also hold unrealistic ideas of what inclusion should be. Some argue that inclusion should occur as easily as possible, wherever it is possible. For example, some think that the lack of integration of children in special schools with the mainstream leads to continued inequality, as well as the inability of children to develop life and difficulty gaining employment in the future. The argument is for as much ‘mainstreaming’ as possible because any form of enclave is considered to be segregation. Exclusive settings or enclaves are only grudgingly accepted when the persons with disability have very severe needs.

These arguments seem to have adopted an ‘inclusion-at-all-costs’ approach that focuses on a single-minded determination to get people with disabilities to be treated equally with everyone else. While much more can be done to accommodate people with disabilities, a sensibly inclusive social system is not one that simply seeks to include as much as possible, along all dimensions, across multiple contexts. In fact, inclusion — and on the fly side, exclusion is also part of the larger social mechanism of classifying, sorting and understanding people. If we were to say that more inclusion is better under all conditions, then we are simply removing our ability to exercise discretion, to make good judgment.

Having specialised services and space for people with disabilities requires a delicate balance of protection and security, although that protection can also entail the curbing of individual freedom or choice. Enclaves are problematic when they constrain the mobility of people in and out of them. However, if they allow people with disabilities to enter and leave, but also the non-disabled to do so, they can be a productive mode of inclusion. We should explore multiple models of inclusion to understand their viability and strengths.

OF PRIORITIES AND PACE

Given that the inclusion of various minority groups may sometimes threaten the existing social cohesion of the larger community, what should the sequence and pace of inclusion be? Some groups have made headway while others have not. Women’s issues — whatever one’s own assessment of their significance — have become a socially legitimate cause. The social inclusion of people with disabilities and mental health issues, however, has only more recently become regarded as deserving of national attention. But there are minorities such as the LGBTQI community whose inclusion is still hotly contested, much less the highly-marginalised minorities within already marginalised groups, like transgender sex workers.

If we worry about ‘tearing apart the social fabric’, we will tend to move carefully and in small steps. Possibly, the sequence of such a strategy would mean focusing on the ‘obvious’ minorities first and moving to more ‘challenging’ groups later on. It seems understandable that a society might choose to build inclusion from the inside out, from the centre to the periphery. But the trade-off of such an approach is of course the pace of inclusion. Members of minority groups tell me that such a ‘sensible’ approach means that we might still be talking about the same issues 30 years down the road. For the mainstream, there is no urgency, but for those who are most excluded, the pace is never quick enough.

We tend to think of our lives as a race, where you compete with others to win. This metaphor fits well into the logic of organisational life and the market economy, and has insidious effects on what we value and how we behave. However, there are other ways to think and behave, by drawing from the logic of community. For example, if we think of life as a puzzle, then we would want to put all the pieces together.

Social inclusion is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle whose parts are not prefabricated to fit one another. We will not feel that our social lives are complete until every piece fits into an overall panorama. We need to commit ourselves to the idea that every group, however marginalised, would fit in somewhere.

As a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, Dr Justin Lee is interested in issues related to disability, community development and social services. He is the creator of wiki. A citizen mapping of social needs, and co-founder of Sketch, a volunteer matching platform. Dr Lee also chairs Arthritis Collaborative, a non-profit organisation engaged in anti-racism community development.
Advancing Your Career in the Digital Era
Future-ready Workshops [Online]
Speakers:
Mr Victor Zhu (Science ‘20), Founder & CEO of Hatch.sg
Ms Charmain Tan (Science ‘12), Founder & CEO of QuickDesk

Join Dr Chou Ning in this illuminating talk on the different types of strokes, risk factors and ways to prevent them.

One of the biggest concerns with the Internet of Things (IoT) is ensuring that networks, data and devices are secure. With the rise of 5G that is projected as a catalyst in driving the adoption of Artificial Intelligence, IoT and Robotics, what are the steps that we should take to enable a secure IoT environment?

The Brest Fortress (PG13)
Feature Films (Russian)
A war drama set during the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, in which Soviet troops held on to a border stronghold for nine days. Movie will be screened in Russian with English subtitles.

The Brest Fortress
9 May
7.30pm - 10.00pm
Shaw Foundation Alumni House, Thu,
Register: alumnet.events/FFmay21
Contact: Ms Tan Li Hui
lhtan@nus.edu.sg

IoT and 5G Security for the Future
Tech Talk [Online]
Speakers:
Dr Nicholas Ho, Lecturer and Consultant, Artificial Intelligence Practice, Institute of Systems Science, NUS
Mr Ng Kok Leong, Senior Lecturer & Consultant, Digital Strategy & Leadership Practice, Institute of Systems Science, NUS

One of the biggest concerns with the Internet of Things (IoT) is ensuring that networks, data and devices are secure. With the rise of 5G that is projected as a catalyst in driving the adoption of Artificial Intelligence, IoT and Robotics, what are the steps that we should take to enable a secure IoT environment?

All You Need to Know About Strokes
Health & Wellness [Online]
Speaker:
Dr Chou Ning (Medicine ‘93), Senior Consultant, Neurosurgeon and Director, CHOU Neuroscience Clinic, Farrer Park Hospital

Learn how you can jumpstart a successful and fulfilling career, and how digital transformation can be achieved from both top-down and bottom-up.

MEXICAN FILM FESTIVAL 2021
Jointly presented by the Embassy of Mexico in Singapore and NUS Alumni Relations, the Mexican Film Festival 2021 brings to you the very best of Mexican Films. (Film titles to be announced)

MEXICAN FILM FESTIVAL 2021
30 Jun – 2 Jul
(Wed – Fri)
Shaw Foundation Alumni House, 7.30pm - 9.30pm
Register: alumnet.events/MFF21
Contact: Mr Royston Loh
lohjwr@nus.edu.sg

Change-making and Community
Lunch Dialogues [Online]
Speaker:
Ms Carrie Tan (Arts & Social Sciences ‘04), Founder & Strategic Advisor, Daughters of Tomorrow, Member of Parliament for Nee Soon GRC

Join Ms Carrie Tan as she shares why she gave up her corporate life at 30 years old before starting Daughters of Tomorrow, becoming an advocate for underprivileged women, and her commitment towards narrowing inequality. With her latest portfolio in Singapore’s Parliament, hear how she extends her community-building work, her current efforts in change-making to include mental wellness, and the roles young professionals can play to make a difference in society.
ONE UNITED PEOPLE?

While Singapore is often held up as an example of racial and religious harmony, what do these terms translate to in practice? Also, a number of talking points in recent years — migration, xenophobia, Chinese privilege and incidents of racial insensitivity — have challenged this narrative, and opened up a debate on how far we have actually come and where indeed we wish to head to as a society. Our alumni share their thoughts.

The Chinese-Malay-Indian-Others (CMIO) framework is unique to Singapore, and a powerful public policy tool. Do you think this model is still relevant today, given how Singaporean society has evolved to include more mixed-race individuals, and new citizens of different ethnicities?

JENNIFER: There is a difference between being relevant and being accurate. For somebody like me, whose father was born into two cultures and myself into four, it was never accurate — and it wouldn’t be for an increasing number of mixed-race Singaporeans. My identity card says that I am Ceylonese-Tamil, but I don’t really have any connection with my Tamil roots and am much closer to my Chinese and Malay heritage.

NAVIN: I hear Jennifer’s point on accuracy. As parents of mixed-race children, [Angelina and I] see the limitations of the CMIO system firsthand. What matters, too, are the policies that the framework translates into, such as mother tongue education and housing quotas.

SUI CHIN: I have lived in the United Kingdom and Japan, and have been out of Singapore for more than 35 years. At Nartia Airport in Tokyo, you see the categorisation of Japanese, European people, and ‘aliens’. Am I an alien? Similarly, I have issues with the term ‘Others’ — which seems very excluded and non-definable. It is almost like being marginalised. Yet in today’s context, the margin is slowly becoming a full page, because if we were to trace our ancestry, few of us would be of one pure heritage. For example, I have 25 per cent Dayak blood so am I Chinese? Why not just call ourselves Singaporeans? It doesn’t matter what race you are, but allow the national identity to dominate.

ADRIAN: In Indonesia, where my family was from, there isn’t a CMIO system, but you still see differences between Indonesian Chinese and Indonesian Malays — and the differences become a barrier to interaction. It’s not a matter of frameworks or systems, but a matter of a willingness to connect with others of different backgrounds. This interaction is what the world needs.

Should we do away with the framework altogether? Or can it be effective in promoting integration, such as through ensuring mixed-race environments in schools and public housing estates?

ADRIAN: Growing up, I didn’t really see much sharing between the different races. Racial Harmony Day in school was just a day for dressing up, rather than actually learning anything about the different cultures. There was a general lack of initiative from the kids to make friends outside of their racial group, or to learn about other races. Now that I am in the workforce, I have encountered clients who prefer to be serviced by those of their same race, as they feel that there might be a better common understanding. So while I did not feel any negative impact from the CMIO framework — being of the majority group — I did not observe how the model promoted integration.

JENNIFER: As a person who would benefit from the CMIO model being thrown out, I actually think it is still relevant. I am willing to forge the accuracy for the relevancy for others, because we can’t truly be race-blind. If we were to find a way to be accurate about who I am as a person, we would be going into finer and finer gradations — at some point it would be madness. But for those who fit into the categories squarely, the model offers a concreteness of their identity and the community that they belong to. Thus I see relevance for them, and I think that is important, which is why even though the model is problematic, it cannot completely disappear.

SUI CHIN: It is a useful measure and has its purpose of promoting racial integration, which the government put effort into after the race riots in 1964. Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law, Mr K Shanmugam (Law ’94) once mentioned how Singaporean government successful in promoting ethnic integration in our public housing estates, schools, and via National Service. The CMIO model has its purpose and value but it can also be abused — we just have to be aware of how we use it. So while the cultural integration it creates is artificial, I do see its efficacy.

ANGELINA: I see myself more as a Singaporean than a Chinese person. I see greater differences between myself and a Chinese person born in China, than with a Singaporean of another race. The common experiences we share — be it through the public education system or just growing up in the same environment — build a stronger national identity than a racial identity for me. That said, it is difficult to have true cohesion. We have housing and traditional costumes to wear — things that try to promote racial and cultural integration based on the CMIO model. But as society progresses and becomes more complex, a lot of policies will not be accepted so simply by the people. Integration is something that cannot be forced upon people: it has to start from the ground-up, rather than come from top-down directives. It is for the people themselves to examine why it is important to have cross-cultural interaction.

REGARDING ‘REGARDLESS OF RACE’

How do we build a truly integrated, multiracial and multicultural society? Should ethnicity even matter in Singapore society? Are our differences a cause for celebration or division? Our alumni tackle these questions and more.

Integration is something that cannot be forced upon people: it has to start from the ground-up, rather than come from top-down directives. It is for the people themselves to examine why it is important to have cross-cultural interaction.

Have you personally experienced or observed racial prejudice? Do you observe racial prejudice as getting better or worse within the country?

JENNIFER: As a Primary 1 student, I was very confused about what traditional costume to wear. My teacher very thoughtfully suggested that since I am ‘Eurasian’ — though I am not — I could wear Dutch Eurasian clogs. I didn’t quite understand — and brought a clock to school instead! That was just a funny episode, but it goes to illustrate that things like traditional costumes and food are only superficial cultural markers, rather than a person’s identity or what shapes them. And as Angelina said, true integration starts at home, in places where the government cannot reach. How willing are we to have this conversation among ourselves?

NAVIN: Personally, I am often spoken to in Tamil, even though I do not speak any Indian language at all. While it doesn’t bother me, I have friends who would get upset over this. The reality is, how people react is
While an acceptance of cultural differences is what we work towards, we are only at the stage of tolerance. What we can strive towards – at least on an institutional level, and in the media – is to make sure that sensitivities are not offended. This doesn’t mean taking away the cultural aspect of society altogether: if we do that, are we not going to celebrate Chinese New Year? Are we not going to have Deepavali? Racial and religious inclusiveness is something Singapore takes pride in, but it takes just one misstep to undo years of work.

ANGELINE: I do observe that the younger generation is much more open about mixing with children of different racial backgrounds. My daughter just started Primary 1 and her closest friends are a Malay girl and a Chinese boy. My daughter just started working as a lawyer; I would often find myself the only woman in a roomful of Caucasian men – and my peers would often be surprised when I expressed my opinion. Having lived the kind of ‘humiliated identity’ – even within my immediate English family – I have learnt to use humor to temper the negativity. Once you are proud and secure of your own identity, nothing can touch you. And the huge, humbling process of living abroad strengthened and made me proud of my identity, particularly as a Singaporean.

On that: do you think a strong nationalistic identity could prevent our acceptance of new citizens, and the influx of foreigners?

JENNIFER: In 2017, I was at the airport waiting for my partner when a Singaporean man besides me started shouting at a Filipino family, first saying that “This is Singapore” and that they were not allowed to hug, and then telling them to go back to their home country. I stood up to him and told him that I am Singaporean and did not approve of what he did, and wrote my thoughts on the encounter (with regards to racism, class privilege, and bigotry) and shared them on Facebook (www.facebook.com/note.php?id=10157410346331822). The post went viral and was even picked up by the local media. The best part of it was that the family found a way to contact me through the news outlet. They reached out saying that they were surprised when I expressed my opinion. Caucasian men – and my peers would often be surprised when I expressed my opinion. Having lived the kind of ‘humiliated identity’ – even within my immediate English family – I have learnt to use humor to temper the negativity. Once you are proud and secure of your own identity, nothing can touch you. And the huge, humbling process of living abroad strengthened and made me proud of my identity, particularly as a Singaporean.

On that: do you think a strong nationalistic identity could prevent our acceptance of new citizens, and the influx of foreigners?

JENNIFER: In 2017, I was at the airport waiting for my partner when a Singaporean man besides me started shouting at a Filipino family, first saying that “This is Singapore” and that they were not allowed to hug, and then telling them to go back to their home country. I stood up to him and told him that I am Singaporean and did not approve of what he did, and wrote my thoughts on the encounter (with regards to racism, class privilege, and bigotry) and shared them on Facebook (www.facebook.com/note.php?id=10157410346331822). The post went viral and was even picked up by the local media. The best part of it was that the family found a way to contact me through the news outlet. They reached out saying that they were surprised when I expressed my opinion. Caucasian men – and my peers would often be surprised when I expressed my opinion. Having lived the kind of ‘humiliated identity’ – even within my immediate English family – I have learnt to use humor to temper the negativity. Once you are proud and secure of your own identity, nothing can touch you. And the huge, humbling process of living abroad strengthened and made me proud of my identity, particularly as a Singaporean.

On that: do you think a strong nationalistic identity could prevent our acceptance of new citizens, and the influx of foreigners?

JENNIFER: In 2017, I was at the airport waiting for my partner when a Singaporean man besides me started shouting at a Filipino family, first saying that “This is Singapore” and that they were not allowed to hug, and then telling them to go back to their home country. I stood up to him and told him that I am Singaporean and did not approve of what he did, and wrote my thoughts on the encounter (with regards to racism, class privilege, and bigotry) and shared them on Facebook (www.facebook.com/note.php?id=10157410346331822). The post went viral and was even picked up by the local media. The best part of it was that the family found a way to contact me through the news outlet. They reached out saying that they were surprised when I expressed my opinion. Caucasian men – and my peers would often be surprised when I expressed my opinion. Having lived the kind of ‘humiliated identity’ – even within my immediate English family – I have learnt to use humor to temper the negativity. Once you are proud and secure of your own identity, nothing can touch you. And the huge, humbling process of living abroad strengthened and made me proud of my identity, particularly as a Singaporean.

On that: do you think a strong nationalistic identity could prevent our acceptance of new citizens, and the influx of foreigners?

JENNIFER: In 2017, I was at the airport waiting for my partner when a Singaporean man besides me started shouting at a Filipino family, first saying that “This is Singapore” and that they were not allowed to hug, and then telling them to go back to their home country. I stood up to him and told him that I am Singaporean and did not approve of what he did, and wrote my thoughts on the encounter (with regards to racism, class privilege, and bigotry) and shared them on Facebook (www.facebook.com/note.php?id=10157410346331822). The post went viral and was even picked up by the local media. The best part of it was that the family found a way to contact me through the news outlet. They reached out saying that they were surprised when I expressed my opinion. Caucasian men – and my peers would often be surprised when I expressed my opinion. Having lived the kind of ‘humiliated identity’ – even within my immediate English family – I have learnt to use humor to temper the negativity. Once you are proud and secure of your own identity, nothing can touch you. And the huge, humbling process of living abroad strengthened and made me proud of my identity, particularly as a Singaporean.

On that: do you think a strong nationalistic identity could prevent our acceptance of new citizens, and the influx of foreigners?

JENNIFER: In 2017, I was at the airport waiting for my partner when a Singaporean man besides me started shouting at a Filipino family, first saying that “This is Singapore” and that they were not allowed to hug, and then telling them to go back to their home country. I stood up to him and told him that I am Singaporean and did not approve of what he did, and wrote my thoughts on the encounter (with regards to racism, class privilege, and bigotry) and shared them on Facebook (www.facebook.com/note.php?id=10157410346331822). The post went viral and was even picked up by the local media. The best part of it was that the family found a way to contact me through the news outlet. They reached out saying that they were surprised when I expressed my opinion. Caucasian men – and my peers would often be surprised when I expressed my opinion. Having lived the kind of ‘humiliated identity’ – even within my immediate English family – I have learnt to use humor to temper the negativity. Once you are proud and secure of your own identity, nothing can touch you. And the huge, humbling process of living abroad strengthened and made me proud of my identity, particularly as a Singaporean.

On that: do you think a strong nationalistic identity could prevent our acceptance of new citizens, and the influx of foreigners?

JENNIFER: In 2017, I was at the airport waiting for my partner when a Singaporean man besides me started shouting at a Filipino family, first saying that “This is Singapore” and that they were not allowed to hug, and then telling them to go back to their home country. I stood up to him and told him that I am Singaporean and did not approve of what he did, and wrote my thoughts on the encounter (with regards to racism, class privilege, and bigotry) and shared them on Facebook (www.facebook.com/note.php?id=10157410346331822). The post went viral and was even picked up by the local media. The best part of it was that the family found a way to contact me through the news outlet. They reached out saying that they were surprised when I expressed my opinion. Caucasian men – and my peers would often be surprised when I expressed my opinion. Having lived the kind of ‘humiliated identity’ – even within my immediate English family – I have learnt to use humor to temper the negativity. Once you are proud and secure of your own identity, nothing can touch you. And the huge, humbling process of living abroad strengthened and made me proud of my identity, particularly as a Singaporean.

On that: do you think a strong nationalistic identity could prevent our acceptance of new citizens, and the influx of foreigners?

JENNIFER: In 2017, I was at the airport waiting for my partner when a Singaporean man besides me started shouting at a Filipino family, first saying that “This is Singapore” and that they were not allowed to hug, and then telling them to go back to their home country. I stood up to him and told him that I am Singaporean and did not approve of what he did, and wrote my thoughts on the encounter (with regards to racism, class privilege, and bigotry) and shared them on Facebook (www.facebook.com/note.php?id=10157410346331822). The post went viral and was even picked up by the local media. The best part of it was that the family found a way to contact me through the news outlet. They reached out saying that they were surprised when I expressed my opinion. Caucasian men – and my peers would often be surprised when I expressed my opinion. Having lived the kind of ‘humiliated identity’ – even within my immediate English family – I have learnt to use humor to temper the negativity. Once you are proud and secure of your own identity, nothing can touch you. And the huge, humbling process of living abroad strengthened and made me proud of my identity, particularly as a Singaporean.
Ms Guadalupe Lazaro is the co-founder of Ease, a startup that aims to tackle the difficulties in accessing sensitive health services — among them reproductive and sexual health matters. She is a recent graduate of Yale-NUS College, where she was the president of a student group that promotes diversity and inclusivity.

Putting Patients at Ease
How Ms Guadalupe Lazaro (Yale-NUS ’20) is using the Internet to widen access to reproductive and sexual health services.

Ms Lazaro has experienced this stigma herself — as a young woman trying to access such services, she has had to put up with unsolicited advice about her sexual health, as well as the inconvenience of long queues and waits at clinics. “Situations like these are especially difficult for people who may not be able to get time off from work to visit a clinic, but who desperately need this kind of care,” she reflects. “These experiences may also turn people off from talking about sexually-transmitted infections (STIs) and getting tested for them.”

Realising that a digital health platform would be a way of tackling some of these issues, Ms Lazaro decided to start Ease with a business partner last May. The health startup offers discreet and affordable sexual and reproductive services online, allowing its 9,000 users to teleconsult experienced doctors and refill prescriptions — all from the comfort and privacy of their homes. At-home test kits for STIs are also available. Furthermore, costs are kept low as the digital nature of Ease lowers its operating cost. These savings are passed on to users, adds Ms Lazaro. “This way, we put our users at ease and make it easier than ever for them to meet their healthcare needs,” she explains. “And because they’re at ease, we can truly walk this journey with them. From experience, we know that deeply personal matters like STI testing and contraception are best handled when the patient-doctor relationship is built on trust and comfort. These are not transactional matters and should not be handled that way.”

A DREAM COME TRUE
Being a socially-focused entrepreneur has always been an ambition for Ms Lazaro, as The AlumNUS discovered. “I have often thought about businesses that I want to start to solve society’s problems. But I never imagined doing it right after graduation; I always expected my career to start in the non-governmental organisation sector and then possibly the private sector. Only after these stints did I expect myself to start my own venture,” she admits.

When faced with the challenges young women face when trying to access services such as birth control and emergency contraceptives. “Some patients were deeply uncomfortable about discussing their sexual health with a male doctor, while others felt judged by clinic staff when they were doing that,” she adds. “And because they’re at ease, we can truly walk this journey with them. From experience, we know that deeply personal matters like STI testing and contraception are best handled when the patient-doctor relationship is built on trust and comfort. These are not transactional matters and should not be handled that way.”

Judging by Ease’s growth, it has done just that: in under a year, it has grown to hire nine staff members who oversee its business development, product management, marketing, and day-to-day operations. Ms Lazaro knew she was on the right track when she started hearing feedback from Ease’s users. “They were so grateful for the service we are providing and their words of encouragement have kept me motivated.” She adds that reception to Ease has been largely positive and that she has not faced any backlash. “That’s fortunate, given that some of the services we offer can be considered taboo by some.” When asked about her plans for its next stage of growth, Ms Lazaro does not miss a beat. “We want to continue building on our foundations, raise awareness of Ease, and take the user experience to the next level.”

FAST FACTS
9,100
PEOPLE
who have joined Ease’s platform as members since May 2020
22,000
MINUTES
of teleconsultation with experienced doctors
by users, making it the highest-rated digital health platform in Singapore

Breaking Down Barriers
Starting Ease is the latest milestone in Ms Lazaro’s life, which began in Argentina. She was born and raised in a town two hours outside of Buenos Aires. A trip to the United States when she was 15 seeded in her a desire to study abroad and she began hunting for the ideal university for her. She eventually decided on Yale-NUS after the Experience Yale-NUS Weekend in 2015. “The school had a vibrant scene, and both the faculty and student body were so passionate about what they were doing ... it was the perfect match.”

At university, she majored in Anthropology and did a minor in Global Affairs. The experience opened her eyes to the importance of dismantling social constructs. “We were encouraged to rethink concepts that many of us have just taken as fact — that’s actually how the idea for Ease came about: when we started to question what ‘accessible healthcare’ means. After all, on the surface, healthcare is very accessible in Singapore. But dig a little deeper and you’ll find the barriers that Ease is helping to bring down.”

From experience, we know that deeply personal matters like STI testing and contraception are best handled when the patient-doctor relationship is built on trust and comfort. These are not transactional matters and should not be handled that way.
Why New Perspectives Matter

Diversity and the authenticity of representation are especially important for the growth of Singapore’s literary scene, says 2020 Singapore Literature Prize-winning author Ms Akshita Nanda (Science ‘00).

I come from an expressive family: everyone sings and dances. Make-believe is one of the most interesting ways to spend one’s time, in my opinion. How does it feel to have made an impact on our literary landscape on your first try? I can’t speak for Mr Ng Yi-Sheng, my co-winner (for his novel, Lion City), but I certainly wasn’t expecting it. Nimita’s Place — which was deliberately written from the perspective of an immigrant — is not a novel that fits into the general trend of Singapore literature. Reading it may require some getting used to for the majority of Singapore readers, who are not from the same background as the character in the novel. So I was delighted about the book’s appeal despite everything going against it, in a way.

Do you think diversity is lacking in the literature that we’re generally exposed to? Many factors in the publishing industry are shaped by market forces. It doesn’t just involve the authors; it’s also about whether people are ready to receive, sell, stock and buy the books. And everybody has preferences, which are shaped by their background and the people they’ve been exposed to. Diversity and the authenticity of representation are therefore especially crucial in Singapore literature, as it continues to grow and evolve.

The truth is, we all have certain things in common. We all like savouring a nice meal, living a good life, and creating a better world for ourselves and the people who come after us. Most of the time, however, these ideas and ambitions are clothed in ethnicity, culture, and where we come from. Sometimes these ‘outer garments’ can hinder people’s efforts in getting to know one another and getting to recognise their shared similarities.

What inspired the storyline in Nimita’s Place? Marriage has always been a very fraught term to me. When one grows up as a woman, you become somebody else when you get married. Sometimes you have to change your name and move to a different house — you have to be dislocated and make major adjustments to the life that you’re used to, very much like an immigrant. And so I wanted to write about this dislocation of time and space.

What’s your writing process like? I usually start with writing by hand. Sometimes the pen just tells you where your story needs to go. Once the first draft is written, I’ll type it in the computer, and that’s actually the first edit because in transferring the words, I get to think a bit about how the story is framed. Terry Pratchett, the famous English author, once said that the first draft is you telling the story to yourself, the second draft is you telling the story to the readers — I agree.

Once the book is done, I pass it to my friends whom I really trust and they give me their honest feedback, usually over a home-cooked dinner. I can’t stress enough the importance of people around you when you’re writing. Many people have the misconception that creative work is a solo effort. But nothing we do is done by ourselves. I would be nothing if it wasn’t for the people — family and friends — supporting me.

Do you think your time at NUS has contributed to your development as a writer? Absolutely. The wonderful thing about university is that it should teach you how to be a better human being — the ability to get back up from defeat, connect with people, and manage your time and mental health. I learnt a lot about collaboration — how it took a few of us to come together to do things. Most importantly, it exposed me to new ideas and people who are different from me. At NUS I find it very difficult to read English fiction. I’ve been reading a lot about history and also Japanese novels and manga. There are a few authors who have been instrumental in helping me understand how I want to shape stories.

Terry Pratchett, for example, taught me that comedy is an excellent way to get people to start thinking about things of great importance. I also like Lois McMaster Bujold, who questions the meaning of words and the way we express ourselves. I’m also intrigued right now by authors from non-Western backgrounds such as Moni Mohsin, who is an awesome and inspiring Pakistani writer.

What or who are you reading right now, or have you loved reading? Unfortunately, because I’m writing my third book, I find it very difficult to read English fiction. I’ve been reading a lot about history and also Japanese novels and manga. There are a few authors who have been instrumental in helping me understand how I want to shape stories. Terry Pratchett, for example, taught me that comedy is an excellent way to get people to start thinking about things of great importance. I also like Lois McMaster Bujold, who questions the meaning of words and the way we express ourselves. I’m also intrigued right now by authors from non-Western backgrounds such as Moni Mohsin, who is an awesome and inspiring Pakistani writer.

A Tale of Two Nimitas

Published by Epigram Books, Nimita’s Place follows the lives of two women, both named Nimita, born two generations apart and seeking paths in two different countries — India and Singapore. The novel was the co-winner of the Singapore Literature Prize 2020 in the English Fiction category and was also shortlisted for the 2019 Singapore Book Awards.
Mr Darius Cheung is one of the local business scene’s most famous faces and is the man behind successful ventures like property portal 99.co and mobile security company tenCube. His business acumen and social impact have won him a slew of awards, among them the Singapore Youth Award (2011) and the Entrepreneur of the Year title at the 2015 IT Leader Awards. He was also listed as one of Asia’s best entrepreneurs by BusinessWeek.

Keeping Doors Open

Entrepreneur Mr Darius Cheung (Engineering ‘04) has always wanted to make a difference — whether in the tech space or when it comes to fighting discrimination in the housing market. And he has done just that.

DRIVING EVOLUTION THROUGH ENTERPRISE

Mr Cheung’s interest in tech started during his pre-university days, when he first used the AltaVista and Yahoo search engines to connect with the then-nascent Internet. “It opened my eyes to a whole new universe and I wanted Singapore to be a part of that success,” he says.

Looking back, it is easy to see that he has succeeded. While still at NUS, he partnered with two schoolmates to start tenCube, a mobile security firm. Just five years later, it was acquired by software giant McAfee for a whopping $25 million.

Mr Cheung’s next venture, 99.co, a property portal which he started in 2014, received global attention and attracted funds from the likes of Brazilian angel investor and Facebook co-founder Eduardo Saverin. When he started it, he realised that the process of finding a place to live was — back then, at least — far more tedious than it should have been. “Most property portals at that point were not user-centric at all and their user experience was quite painful,” he observes.

“Agents were also quite frustrated because there was a lack of trust in the property market. Over the years, the industry had been plagued by bad actors and a lack of transparency. I wanted to resolve that with 99.co.”

By working closely with agents and users, 99.co has since managed to set itself apart as a modern way of buying, selling and renting property. Informative articles help first-time buyers and sellers make sense of the sometimes protracted process, and nifty features like a home-to-work distance calculator have won over millennials. This ready embrace of technology has come in handy amid COVID-19, as 99.co was among the first to offer video viewings.

As I’ve gotten older, I’ve lost some of my naïve notions that I can change everything in this world. There are problems that can’t be solved in just one day.

And as Mr Cheung has realised, technology could also help the portal fight discrimination in the rental market.

REGARDLESS OF RACE

In 2016, 99.co’s quest to champion diversity and equality began. Energised by his bad experience when trying to rent a property, Mr Cheung launched the Regardless of Race campaign to curb ethnic exclusion in the local rental market. The first thing he did was recount his harrowing experience in a blog post titled “Your wife is Indian, landlord won’t rent to you.” Its no-holds-barred description of her ordeal is a hit online and quickly went viral.

But translating digital attention into concrete change proved trickier. For that, Mr Cheung decided to tap on technology: he created a “Diversity Friendly” listing option on 99.co, giving landlords who did not discriminate against tenants based on their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation, a leg-up on the portal.

“Those who clamber for more change but they don’t realise that discrimination is not often explicit. It happens only after the potential tenant makes the first move.”

Some may wonder why Mr Cheung does not just let the authorities step in to curb such practices. To this, he says that he hopes they will — and soon. But in the meantime, people should try to make a difference in whatever way they can. “I believe in doing good while doing well. And it has worked to some extent, as we have improved our overall user experience. Yes, the diversity tag only affects some five per cent of our user base, but they are an important and underserved base that we are helping — and they have responded very positively.”

However, he admits that there are landlords who remain discriminatory and have no desire to change. He is disheartened by this! “No, no. As I’ve gotten older, I’ve lost some of my naïve notions that I can change everything in this world. There are problems that can’t be solved in just one day.” Still, he is confident that he is building a better world for the next generation and believes that change will come. “You can see it for yourself — antiquated ways of thinking about race and identity will gradually give way over time. So there is hope.”
The Cyber Connector

Professor Tulika Mitra, Provost’s Chair Professor of Computer Science, is Vice Provost (Academic Affairs) at NUS. Prof Mitra is a leading expert on embedded computing systems in the Internet of Things (IoT) and has authored more than 170 articles in peer-reviewed conferences and journals. She holds multiple US patents and enjoys collaborating with industry-research partners (e.g., ARM, CSR, Facebook, Huawei, Xilinx) for real-world impact.

The internet has an edge, and there are interesting things about there. To be clear, this is not like the bleeding edge of science, but a literal edge that marks the boundary between the physical and cyber worlds. For Professor Tulika Mitra, Provost’s Chair Professor of Computer Science, and Vice Provost (Academic Affairs) at NUS, the edge of the Internet is where the action is. Besides being a leading expert in the embedded computing systems that provide the foundation for the Internet of Things (IoT), Prof Mitra is a prominent figure in a number of different areas, but the IoT area requires a bit of a primer. Broadly speaking, IoT is a network of objects — sensors and devices — equipped with software to collect data and share the same with other objects and systems in the network. It is so pervasive today that it does not make the news in the way that artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning do. Today, we perhaps feel this more than ever, in the era of the Tract Together taken (a small battery-powered Bluetooth device intended to support contact-tracing efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic in Singapore).

Working with small devices with limited power, including smartphones but also other wearables such as fitness trackers, is one of Prof Mitra’s specialties, which is one of those interesting stories taking place on the edge of the Internet. “My focus is on the device, or rather the computing system in the device. At present these are somewhat limited, in terms of the computing capability, and require access to the Internet 24/7,” says Prof Mitra. The problem here, she continues, is this can be costly, especially when you think of cameras connected to the Internet, which are sending a constant stream of footage across the system. Of course, this involves a lot of bandwidth and is not a particularly efficient way of getting things done.

This is where Prof Mitra’s work at the NUS School of Computing gets into interesting territory, because she is championing a better solution that can do most of the processing within the device itself. While that might seem at odds with the premise of IoT and the way it works with both Cloud computing and AI systems, Prof Mitra has a plan. Basically, it involves increasing the computing efficiency of devices, such that they do not need to rely on the cloud to do most of the analytics, while remaining low-powered. “You need to bring the power of a server to the tiny device using a small battery,” says Prof Mitra. “We want to make data analysis directly on the device rather than doing everything over the Internet. Believe it or not, it takes more energy to send data over the Internet for analysis than do it on the device itself.”

Software Defined by Hardware

In her High-performance Embedded Architecture and Compilation (HPEAC) 2021 keynote address, Prof Mitra noted that smartphones — a ubiquitous presence in most societies today — in particular play into the idea of bringing the power of a server to a small device. This is especially so, considering the well-publicised fact that today’s typical smartphone has more processing power than the Apollo missions to the moon had on-board the shuttles.

With regard to the smartphone, another device whose role of adoption has soared in recent years, Prof Mitra asserts that the ideal scenario would be one where the watch could do much more work independently of the smartphone. For example, when it comes to analysing data from a fitness app, the watch would process all the data itself, rather than sending it to the phone to crunch all the numbers. Of course, in very small devices like this, the limitations are in both the chip and the power supply.

Prof Mitra thinks that one way forward for such devices is software-defined hardware (SDH), or software that enables the reconfigurability of hardware. This forms part of her team’s work with the National Research Foundation (NRF) Competitive Research Programme on next-generation IoT edge computing. Edge computing here refers to “a distributed computing topology in which information processing is located close to the edge — where things and people produce or consume that information,” according to one definition of the term, by research firm Gartner. Basically, to continue with our analogy here, the smartphone fits this definition to a tee.

Obviously, despite the label ‘edge computing’, this is hardly a fringe area, with plenty of interest, both public and private. In the United States, the Department of Defense is studying SDH, in particular, under the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), famous for being Internet and virtual reality pioneers. One of the chief benefits of SDH is its efficiency and adaptability. To elaborate a little, SDH will enable any given device to adapt to resolve new problems with existing algorithms, or use new algorithms to work on existing problems. Prof Mitra also notes that SDH has the potential to lower costs, while improving performance in terms of how many operations the device can perform per watt of power.

The NUS School of Computing explores this realm under the leadership of Professor Tulika Mitra.
For Professor Simon Chesterman, Dean, NUS Faculty of Law and Co-Chair of the Better People category, the Challenge proved both surprising and personally rewarding. “I don’t think I could have possibly predicted all the ways in which our recent graduates decided that they could help our people,” he said. “From urban farming to taekwondo for wayward youth; from science kits for underprivileged children to supporting persons with disabilities entering the gig economy — using every medium from music to posters to dedicated apps — it was a pleasure to play a tiny role in giving them a start. This was very much a hand-up, rather than a hand-out.”

It looks like the pandemic and its effects may have led them to believe that now is the right time to make some positive changes — essentially, to Make Things Better, which was the thread that ran through the three challenge categories. According to the challenge website, the judging committee hoped to be presented ‘thoughtful and innovative projects that will have a clear impact for the social good; particularly in identifying and addressing issues, concerns and groups that have not received sufficient attention to date.’

In this respect, the teams did not disappoint. “The Innovation Challenge brought out what I always find most admirable in our graduates and alumni: creativity, enthusiasm and a passion for making a difference,” commented Prof Chesterman. “We consciously encouraged a diverse range of ideas — some will work, some will fail flat, but all will learn from and be encouraged by this experience. The proposals ranged from fully thought-through ventures to idealistic longshots. Our panel took the view that even those whom we did not fund should benefit from the experience of pitching to a panel of sympathetic but critical judges.”

Adding his thoughts, Co-Chair of the Better World theme Prof Goh pointed out how many of the projects tackled a very pertinent problem in society, “I was personally very pleased to see a number of projects that showed concern for the elderly. The elderly are a particularly vulnerable segment of our population, especially because of COVID-19, which has only exacerbated their isolation and made them prey to scams and dependent on others for things like food delivery and companionship.”

Co-Chair of the Better People theme, Professor Tulika Mitra, complimented the teams for developing clever solutions despite the restrictions on physical movement due to the pandemic. She cited the “Mangrove Living Shorelines”, “LOTA: Locally Optimised Toilet for All” and “Equity Lab” projects for the out-of-the-box approaches to their identified problems. “I am proud and inspired by the creativity, enterprising nature and perseverance of the NUS graduates and their passion to make the world better through cross-border, collaborative efforts. Our future is in good hands,” said Prof Mitra, who is the Provost’s Chair Professor of Computer Science and Vice-Provost (Academic Affairs) at NUS.

The Innovation Challenge brought out what I always find most admirable in our graduates and alumni: creativity, enthusiasm and a passion for making a difference.

Professor Simon Chesterman, Dean, NUS Faculty of Law

A BETTER WAY FORWARD

Besides spurring the students on, it is possible that the upheaval in Singapore’s economy and society due to the pandemic may have led them to believe that now is the right time to make some positive changes — essentially, to Make Things Better, which was the thread that ran through the three challenge categories. According to the challenge website, the judging committee hoped to be presented with ‘thoughtful and innovative projects that will have a clear impact for the social good, particularly in identifying and addressing issues, concerns and groups that have not received sufficient attention to date.’

In this respect, the teams did not disappoint. “The Innovation Challenge brought out what I always find most admirable in our graduates and alumni: creativity, enthusiasm and a passion for making a difference,” commented Prof Chesterman. “We consciously encouraged a diverse range of ideas — some will work, some will fail flat, but all will learn from and be encouraged by this experience. The proposals ranged from fully thought-through ventures to idealistic longshots. Our panel took the view that even those whom we did not fund should benefit from the experience of pitching to a panel of sympathetic but critical judges.”

Adding his thoughts, Co-Chair of the Better World theme Prof Goh pointed out how many of the projects tackled a very pertinent problem in society, “I was personally
Networking in Qingdao - NUS Alumni and Friends

On 27 February, alumni and Qingdao Ambassador, Mr David Lye (Business ‘95), jointly organised a networking dinner with friends from the Singapore Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China (SingCham in China), Mr Russell Tan and Mr Tony Leu, who are living in Qingdao City, China. Members of the Qingdao International Business Association were also invited to the dinner, which provided a great opportunity for NUS Alumni to interact with fellow Singaporeans working in the beautiful coastal city of Qingdao.

To celebrate Chinese New Year with a Singaporean flavour, guests tossed lohei (yusheng) to round off the hearty evening with great festive cheer.

Festival of Lights 2020 – A Better Tomorrow

was held in Singapore from 18 December 2020 to 3 January 2021, in support of the President’s Challenge 2020 and its 72 benefitting charitable organisations. It was also held to foster better community bonds and stronger social cohesion among Singaporeans by acknowledging the unity, determination and resilience of citizens in the ongoing battle against COVID-19, and to inspire hope for the future. The chairman of the organising committee of the Festival was Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) alumnus Mr Lim Huan Chiang (‘19).

Singapore President and NUS Chancellor Halimah Yacob (Law ‘78) lit up the lantern display at the opening ceremony. The School’s alumni from LKYSPP Alumni Singapore Chapter (Mandarin Sub-Group), together with some of the MPAM (Master in Public Administration and Management) and MPA (Master in Public Administration) students, volunteered at the Festival from 31 December 2020 to 3 January 2021 by conducting fundraising activities and ensuring that visitors observed social distancing guidelines. Their volunteerism efforts were also part of the NUS Day of Service 2020.

NUS BIZAlum – Zumba Fiesta

NUS BIZAlum kick-started the new year with the NUS BIZAlum Zumba Fiesta 2021!

On 30 January, alumni came to keep fit and healthy, with the Dean of NUS Business School, Professor Andy Rose, and his wife, Miriam, leading the way! Everyone had a good time exercising and sweating it out while maintaining a safe distance from one another.

The NUS BIZAlum Executive MBA Networking Event – Rambling in Everton Park

On 20 February, the NUS BIZAlum Executive MBA held a networking event at Everton Park, hosted by Dr Suanny Gouw (Business ’07). Ms Patricia Reed (Business ‘13), Mr Amit Patil (EMBA-C ‘22), Mr Marco Zucchet (EMBA-C ’21) and wife, Sabine; Mr Alok Singh (EMBA-C ’21) and Mr Sumesh Balakrishnan (EMBA-C ’21) visited Beano, a soya bean enterprise and met the founder and ex-banker, Mr Alan Yoon.

To end the day, alumni took the opportunity to pose with murals around the area and also visited the Art Porters Gallery, where Yip Yew Chong held his first solo art exhibition themed Something, Somewhere, Somewhen.

Left to right: Mr Sumesh Balakrishnan, Ms Patricia Reed and Mr Amit Patil.

Mr Marco Zucchet and wife, Sabine, at Yip Yew Chong’s first solo art exhibition Something, Somewhere, Somewhen.

Mr George Hang (Computing ’99), Director, NUS BIZAlum and Mr Ankur Mehra (MBA-C ’20) posing for the camera.

Dean Prof Andy Rose’s wife, Miriam (far right), and NUS BIZAlumni getting ready for the workout.

Left to right: Mr Sumesh Balakrishnan, Ms Patricia Reed and Mr Amit Patil.

Mr Marco Zucchet posing with a mural at Everton Park.
NUS Alumni Melbourne Chapter Celebrates Australia’s Favourite Day

The NUS Alumni Melbourne Chapter celebrated Australia Day on 26 January. Thanks to the support of NUS Office of Alumni Relations and Singapore Global Networks, over 50 alumni, their family members and guests attended the event. The venue was decorated with Australia Day-themed balloons, flags and tablecloths.

This was the first event of 2021, after a challenging 2020 when most of the members in Victoria had been staying at home and had not seen friends and family. The event organisers were careful to observe Victoria’s COVID-19 restrictions, and ensured that everyone had masks and access to hand sanitisers.

The main meal attraction was a Chicken and Lamb Gyros spit-roasted over a charcoal grill for five hours, and barbecue sausages, complemented with pita bread, salad, potatoes and grilled corn. There was also a touch of nostalgia with aheu lapis, brownies and watermelon for dessert! The experience was appreciated by all who were present.

NUS Alumni in Melbourne’s Lunar New Year “Metal Ox” Celebration 2021

The NUS Alumni Melbourne Chapter celebrated Chinese New Year with a grand dinner on 20 February at the MaBrown restaurant in Balwyn, which is located in an eastern suburb of Melbourne. This year’s celebration saw a gathering of 60 alumni and their spouses.

This year’s lohei was unique as guests used a mobile application with pre-recorded toasts (in Hokkien and Mandarin) to e-toast across six tables! An impromptu singing showcase by alumni in different languages brought great fun and cheer to the celebration. Demonstrating NUS’ diversity, Associate Professor Arul Earnest (Arts and Social Sciences ’92) belted out 快活才會贏 in Hokkien, Dr Raymond Wong (Architecture ’81) sang his rendition of Munnaeru Vaalibaa in Tamil and Mr Peter Koh (Science ’87) sang Dellah in English.

Both events were held in accordance with COVID-19 measures in Melbourne, Victoria.

A BEQUEST FROM A MEDICAL ALUMNA TO HER ALMA MATER

A gift from the estate of the late Dr Freda Paul Mallamalar, a respected paediatrician at the Singapore General Hospital and Associate Professor of Paediatrics at the then Faculty of Medicine, University of Singapore, will enable NUS Medicine to establish a bursary for needy female undergraduate medical students as well as a prize that will be awarded to female undergraduate medical students.

The gift will also fund a Professorship that will support an entire spectrum of translational research in the areas of paediatrics such as cancer, genetics, immunology, metabolic diseases and cardiac health, as well as studies on disease trends, health outcomes and neurocognitive development problems.

NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye said, “We are deeply appreciative of this generous gift from the late Dr Freda Paul, which will go a long way towards nurturing the next generation of female medical leaders as well as advancing the field of paediatrics. I hope this gift will also inspire more NUS alumni to impact society by supporting programmes at the university, either through lifetime gifts or a bequest as exemplified by the late Dr Paul.”
GAIN AN EDGE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

Our rapidly-changing world is demanding that we continuously educate ourselves and remain up to date. Be it keeping pace with recent developments in your field or looking for a career change, NUS graduate (coursework) programmes are geared towards providing you with a cutting edge to succeed in the contemporary world.

Explore the vast possibilities today and choose from over 100 NUS Master’s degrees.

ASIA #1, WORLD #11
2021 QS World University Rankings

Featured Master’s Degrees:

- Master of Science in INDUSTRY 4.0
- Master of Science in DATA SCIENCE AND MACHINE LEARNING
- Master of Computing
- Master of Science in VENTURE CREATION
- Master of Science in COMMUNICATION
- Master of Science in STATISTICS
- Master of Science in FORENSIC SCIENCE
- Master of Science in PHARMACEUTICAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
- Master of Science in FOOD SCIENCE AND HUMAN NUTRITION

Learning doesn’t end at graduation. What did you always want to explore outside of your major or faculty, but did not have the chance to? Make your choice among the wide range of courses that NUS offers to the lifelong learner and learn in your own time. Return to continue your journey of discovery at NUS.

Application is open from 28 April–6 June.

Apply Now
**PRIVILEGES ON CAMPUS**

**BAR BAR BLACK SHEEP**
- 20% off North Indian, Thai and Western à la carte food menu.
  [bbbs.com.sg](bbbs.com.sg)

**LEE KONG CHIAN NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM**
- 10% discount on single-entry tickets as well as for both Individual and Family memberships.
  [lkcnhm.nus.edu.sg](lkcnhm.nus.edu.sg)

**MUSEUM**
- NUS Libraries Complimentary entry to all NUS Libraries upon presenting the AlumniCard card.
  - Annual subscription fee at $135.10 (Usual Price: $331.10) or
  - 5-year membership package at $460.10 (exclusive to NUS Alumni only).
  [libportal.nus.edu.sg](libportal.nus.edu.sg)

**UNIVERSITY CULTURAL CENTRE (UCC)**
- Rental waiver for 4-10 block booking for set up/ rehearsal booking at UCC Hall and/or Theatre.
  [cfa.nus.edu.sg/venues](cfa.nus.edu.sg/venues)

**FOOD AND BEVERAGE**

**HOT STONES STEAK AND SEAFOOD**
- 20% off the total food bill with minimum spending of $80.

**BAROSSA BAR AND GRILL, VIVOCITY**
- 20% off the total food bill with minimum spending of $80.
  [barossa.com.sg](barossa.com.sg)

**FREMANTLE SEAFOOD MARKET**
- 20% off the total food bill with minimum spending of $80.
  [freemantleseafoodmarket.com.sg](freemantleseafoodmarket.com.sg)

**EDUCATION**

**METAQUEST**
- Enjoy 50% off a trial lesson and $15.50 waiver of registration fee at MetaQuest for a full term. Valid for MetaQuest’s regular science programme (Primary 3-6).
  [metaquest.com.sg](metaquest.com.sg)

**HEALTH & BEAUTY**

**ESSENTIALS PHARMACY**
- 10% off all items, excluding prescription drugs and medicine.
  [shopee.sg/essentialspca](shopee.sg/essentialspca)

**FARRER PARK HOSPITAL**
- 10% off consultation fees at Farrer Park Hospital 24/7 Emergency Clinic.
  [farrerpark.com](farrerpark.com)

**TOOFDOCTOR DENTAL SURGEONS**
- Exclusive discounts on dental treatment.
  [toofdoctor.com.sg](toofdoctor.com.sg)

**WILBY RESIDENCES**
- Exclusive rates for NUS community at Wilby Central Serviced Apartments & Wilby Residences Bukit Timah.
  [wilbyresidences.com](wilbyresidences.com)

**LIFESTYLE**

**STORHUB SELF STORAGE**
- Additional 5% off on top of current in-store discounts.
  [storhub.com.sg](storhub.com.sg)

**FLOWER ADVISOR**
- Enjoy 15% off.
  [floweradvisor.com.sg](floweradvisor.com.sg)

**TRAPPED ESCAPE ROOM**
- Enjoy 20% off the standard price.
  [trapped.sg](trapped.sg)

**FASHION AND RETAIL**

**EARNEST AND COLLECTIVE**
- 20% off all regular-priced shoes and belts.
  [earnestcollective.com](earnestcollective.com)

**REEBELO**
- Enjoy up to $30 off for online promotions.
  - Get $25 worth of Reebelo vouchers upon every buyback transaction.
  [reebelo.com](reebelo.com)

**HERITAGE TCM CLINIC**
- Exclusive discounts on TCM services.
  [shopee.sg/heritage-tcm-clinic](shopee.sg/heritage-tcm-clinic)

**HEALTHCONNECTION MEDICAL CLINIC @ FARRER PARK HOSPITAL**
- Health screening services for NUS Alumni (T&Cs apply).
  [farrerpark.com](farrerpark.com)

**HAPPYK SINGAPORE**
- 8% off all rental packages with free delivery and collection.
  [happyk.com](happyk.com)

**FASHION & OFFERS**

The AlumniAPP is available for download for all NUS alumni. Gain access to alumni-exclusive news, be notified about events, and enjoy special deals at popular retail outlets and service providers.

**NUS UNIVERSITY CULTURAL CENTRE (UCC)**
- Rental waiver for 4-10 block booking for set up/ rehearsal booking at UCC Hall and/or Theatre.
  [cfa.nus.edu.sg/venues](cfa.nus.edu.sg/venues)

**EDUCATION**

**METAQUEST**
- Enjoy 50% off a trial lesson and $15.50 waiver of registration fee at MetaQuest for a full term. Valid for MetaQuest’s regular science programme (Primary 3-6).
  [metaquest.com.sg](metaquest.com.sg)

**HEALTH & BEAUTY**

**ESSENTIALS PHARMACY**
- 10% off all items, excluding prescription drugs and medicine.
  [shopee.sg/essentialspca](shopee.sg/essentialspca)

**FARRER PARK HOSPITAL**
- 10% off consultation fees at Farrer Park Hospital 24/7 Emergency Clinic.
  [farrerpark.com](farrerpark.com)

**TOOFDOCTOR DENTAL SURGEONS**
- Exclusive discounts on dental treatment.
  [toofdoctor.com.sg](toofdoctor.com.sg)

**WILBY RESIDENCES**
- Exclusive rates for NUS community at Wilby Central Serviced Apartments & Wilby Residences Bukit Timah.
  [wilbyresidences.com](wilbyresidences.com)

**LIFESTYLE**

**STORHUB SELF STORAGE**
- Additional 5% off on top of current in-store discounts.
  [storhub.com.sg](storhub.com.sg)

**FLOWER ADVISOR**
- Enjoy 15% off.
  [floweradvisor.com.sg](floweradvisor.com.sg)

**TRAPPED ESCAPE ROOM**
- Enjoy 20% off the standard price.
  [trapped.sg](trapped.sg)

**FASHION AND RETAIL**

**EARNEST AND COLLECTIVE**
- 20% off all regular-priced shoes and belts.
  [earnestcollective.com](earnestcollective.com)

**REEBELO**
- Enjoy up to $30 off for online promotions.
  - Get $25 worth of Reebelo vouchers upon every buyback transaction.
  [reebelo.com](reebelo.com)

**HERITAGE TCM CLINIC**
- Exclusive discounts on TCM services.
  [shopee.sg/heritage-tcm-clinic](shopee.sg/heritage-tcm-clinic)

**HEALTHCONNECTION MEDICAL CLINIC @ FARRER PARK HOSPITAL**
- Health screening services for NUS Alumni (T&Cs apply).
  [farrerpark.com](farrerpark.com)

**HAPPYK SINGAPORE**
- 8% off all rental packages with free delivery and collection.
  [happyk.com](happyk.com)
THE COVID-19 CHRONICLES

WHICH ONE OF THEM HAS COVID-19?

KOFF! KOFF!

It’s OK. Just a mild cough and sore throat. Must be because of all the chips I ate yesterday.

I’ve been feeling very feverish and tired recently. I’m overworked. I just need more sleep.

Oh man! Diarrhoea for the 6th time today! That mala xiang guo I had yesterday was too powerful!

My sinus is back... I’ll just take my usual sinus pills.

Who knows? We can’t tell who has it and doesn’t have COVID-19 just by observing the symptoms. Whether they be mild or severe. Do not hesitate to visit your doctor for a swab test at the first sign of symptoms. Please do your part to prevent new clusters from forming.

Dr Dale Fisher is Professor in Infectious Disease, NUS, and Chair of the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network, WHO.

THE ALUMNUS

SPECIAL THANKS TO NUS YONG LOO LIN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Consultant Gastroenterologist and Internal Medicine Specialist, gutCARE Singapore, Farrer Park Hospital

SHAW FOUNDATION ALUMNI HOUSE

Auditorium

Benefactors’ Foyer

Seminar Rooms

Boardroom

UP TO 80% OFF LOWERED RENTAL RATES

Your venue of choice for seminars, networking sessions, meetings, reunions and other special events.

Our spacious venues allow for easy implementation of safe distancing measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Auditorium</th>
<th>Seminar Rooms</th>
<th>Boardroom</th>
<th>Open Space</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venue Duration</td>
<td></td>
<td>Basil</td>
<td>Coriander</td>
<td>Thyme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-hour block</td>
<td>$1,180</td>
<td>$360</td>
<td>$800</td>
<td>$220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8-hour block</td>
<td>$2,080</td>
<td>$640</td>
<td>$1,440</td>
<td>$360</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

sfahvenues@nus.edu.sg  nus.edu.sg/alumnet  +65 6516 7700

48 - THE ALUMNUS
Bukit Timah
HOMECOMING
2021

ROLLIN' GOOD TIMES

3 July
2021
11.00am to 5.30pm

Find out more at
alumnet.events/BT21