

issue #134 JUL-SEP 2023

The ALUMNUS

"Our renewed leadership demonstrates NUS' commitment to have top talent at the helm to propel the University to greater heights."

PROFESSOR TAN ENG CHYE [SCIENCE '85], NUS PRESIDENT

CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE — AND CHOOSE WELL

DR ADRIAN W J KUAH,
ON THE MINDSET NEEDED TO
NAVIGATE A 'VUCA' WORLD

WHEN IDEAS BEAR FRUIT

DR BAO SHENGJIE
(SCIENCE '17)



AS ITS LATEST BATCH OF STUDENTS BEGIN THE NEXT CHAPTER
OF THEIR LIVES, NUS ITSELF IS EXPERIENCING A RENEWAL

New Beginnings



Welcome, alumni!

At this year's NUS Commencement, close to 15,000 graduates will be joining our ever-growing global family of close to 350,000 alumni. To the Class of 2023, I urge you to savour this moment, but also remember that the privilege of your university education comes with the innate and lifelong responsibility of making things better — a better self, a better community, a better world.

If this is your first time reading *The AlumNUS*, thank you for joining us. If we've been privileged to have had you as a long-time reader, we send our deepest appreciation for your support. My colleagues and I at the Office of Alumni Relations will strive to continue to bring you news and stories about your alma mater and your fellow alumni.

In this edition, we're excited to shed more light on the new things taking place at NUS: the refreshed senior leadership team led by NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85), the Class of 2023, and a new alumni leader (that's me).

There is much to do and share, so I hope that you'll stay connected with NUS by signing up for our activities and following us on our NUS Alumni social media channels.

I look forward to connecting with you in the time ahead.

Ovidia Lim-Rajaram
(Arts and Social Sciences '89)
Chief Alumni Officer



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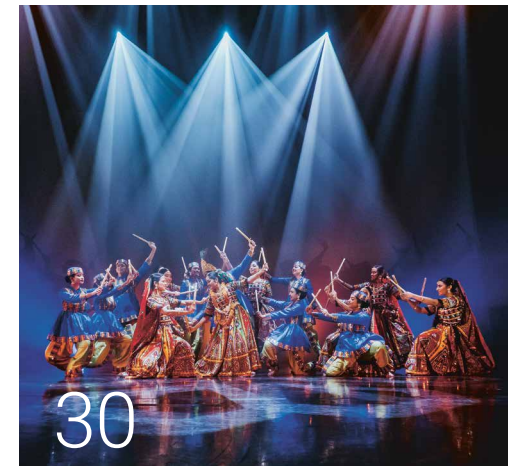
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Mr Bernard Toh (Architecture '84)

The *AlumNUS* clinched the
following award at APEX 2022:

GRAND AWARD
Magazines, Journals and Tabloids
— Custom Published



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



OFFICE OF ALUMNI RELATIONS
11 Kent Ridge Drive
#05-01 Shaw Foundation Alumni House
Singapore 119244
Tel: (65) 6516-5775

Advisor **MS OVIDIA LIM-RAJARAM** (Arts and Social Sciences '89)
Editors **MS JACQUELINE YONG & MS WONG SHER MAINE**
Production Advisor **MS NOREEN KWAN**
Publishing Consultant **MEDIACORP PTE LTD**

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(From Left) 2022 Distinguished Arts and Social Sciences Alumni Awards recipients Mrs Elizabeth Sam, Mr Othman Bin Haron Eusofe, Dr S Vasoo, Mr Benny Lim and Mr T Sasitharan.

A Tribute to the Trailblazers

NUS FASS honours alumni for their profound impact on community and nation.

THE NUS FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (FASS) paid tribute to five outstanding alumni for their service and contributions in various capacities towards Singapore's nation-building, and the growth of the University and Faculty, at the recent 2022 Distinguished Arts and Social Sciences Alumni Awards (DASSAA) dinner.

The DASSAA was established in 2015 to recognise individuals who have made significant contributions to the nation and community, and dedicated their lives to the betterment and promotion of the arts and social

sciences. Each of them has played important roles in many areas, whether it was in shaping domestic and international policies, the business landscape, the creative environment, or in improving the lives of those around them.

This year's honourees are Mrs Elizabeth Sam (Arts '62), a prominent banker; Mr Othman Bin Haron Eusofe (Arts '64), an influential unionist; Dr S Vasoo (Arts and Social Sciences '69), a passionate social worker; Mr Benny Lim (Arts and Social Sciences '81), a dedicated civil servant and policymaker; and

Mr T Sasitharan (Arts and Social Sciences '87), a celebrated actor and respected voice in arts and culture — all of whom have dedicated their careers and lives to service and community in different ways.

Speaking at the awards ceremony, NUS Provost Professor Aaron Thean said, "The Faculty has honoured many alumni who have played important roles in many areas, be it in the shaping of local and international policies, the business landscape, the creative environment, or in improving the lives of NUS FASS students and beyond. The achievements of its graduates are one of the best testimonies to the work done by the Faculty."

"The five outstanding FASS alumni who have been presented with the Distinguished Arts and Social Sciences Alumni Awards 2022 have excelled in their respective fields in public service, politics, finance, education and the arts. Their contributions to Singapore and their continued passion for what they do serves as an inspiration to many of us, especially

to the FASS students who will follow in their footsteps and create their own legacies," he added.

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF FASS STUDENTS

Mrs Elizabeth Sam is one of Singapore's best-known female bankers. Her career spanned over 40 years, with the first half of it in the public sector where she played a key role in the growth of Singapore as a global financial centre. In 1996, Mrs Sam was awarded the Public Service Star (BBM), Republic of Singapore, for her contributions to the nation's development as a global financial centre. The following year, she was recognised as one of the top 50 outstanding women globally in finance by *Euromoney*.

Currently a member of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, Mr Othman Bin Haron Eusofe graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) from the then University of Singapore in 1964. He was a Founder Member of Yayasan Mendaki which

was established in October 1982 to introduce programmes to help Malay students to improve in their educational performance. He continues to serve on the Mendaki Council. Mr Othman was also a key member of the NTUC team on the National Wages Council, and served on several Statutory Boards, including the Public Utilities Board and the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore.

Dr S Vasoo, Emeritus Professor in the NUS FASS Department of Social Work, has authored several monographs on social issues and has published various such articles both internationally and locally. He recently co-edited a book, *Singapore Ageing: Issues and Challenges Ahead*. He was awarded the Honorary Life Member of the Singapore Association of Social Workers for his outstanding contributions to social work in Singapore.

Mr Benny Lim is Chairman of the National Parks Board and the Chairperson of the Housing & Development Board. He is also Special Advisor to the Centre for Liveable

Cities as well as Special Advisor to the National Security Studies Programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) at the Nanyang Technological University. He is also concurrently Chairman of Temasek Foundation CLG and Chairman of Temasek Lifesciences Laboratory IPC. Mr Lim started his career in the public service as a police officer, and went on to develop an illustrious career in the public sector, holding prominent roles in the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of National Development and the Prime Minister's Office, among others.

Mr T Sasitharan, or more fondly known as Sasi to the arts community in Singapore, is widely acknowledged as one of the foremost thinkers and contributors to the development of the local arts scene. A former Philosophy teacher and arts journalist, Mr Sasitharan is a respected voice in discourses on arts and culture. His essays, commentaries and reviews, on the place of the arts in society, the value of culture, actor training, arts education, theatre criticism, aesthetics and creativity, have been published internationally while his speaking engagements have been at universities, conferences and arts forums around the world.

Congratulating the 2022 DASSAA recipients for their achievements, FASS Dean Professor Lionel Wee said, "Your achievements and your journey inspire the next generation of students who will follow in your footsteps. You have paved the way for them to build on your successes, to take risks, and to innovate in ways that will help make our world a better place. I want to congratulate each of the FASS Distinguished Alumni Award recipients. You have made your mark on the world, and you have done so with integrity, compassion and a commitment to excellence."

The five outstanding FASS alumni who were presented with the Distinguished Arts and Social Sciences Alumni Awards 2022 have excelled in their respective fields in public service, politics, finance, education and the arts. **NUS Provost Professor Aaron Thean**



2022 DASSAA recipients at the awards presentation ceremony on 5 May 2023 with NUS FASS Dean Professor Lionel Wee (third from left), NUS Provost Professor Aaron Thean (fifth from left) and NUS Alumni Relations Director Mr Bernard Toh (Architecture '84) (far right).

 This article was first published on 10 May 2023 on NUS News at news.nus.edu.sg.

ANOTHER GIANT LEAP INTO SPACE

The *Lumelite-4* microsatellite will test the VDES technology for potential maritime applications, such as real-time maritime traffic and asset tracking for better predictive analysis, as well as secured and reliable ship-to-ship or ship-to-port communication.

A MICROSATELLITE FOR MARITIME COMMUNICATIONS – DEVELOPED

by the Satellite Technology And Research Centre (STAR) under the National University of Singapore's College of Design and Engineering (NUS CDE), and A*STAR's Institute for Infocomm Research (I²R) — was successfully launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota, India, on 22 April 2023 at 4.50pm (Singapore time).

NUS STAR designed and built the *Lumelite-4* microsatellite using the University's patented modular and scalable satellite's bus system with fault tolerant features, while A*STAR's I²R developed the experimental satellite-based communication

hardware. This collaboration between NUS and A*STAR signifies the pioneering effort by Singapore researchers to develop a satellite-based high-performance VHF Data Exchange System (VDES), which will significantly improve maritime communications as well as traffic management and analytics. This is also the first demonstration of a satellite-based VDES for maritime applications in Southeast Asia.

Currently, international voyaging ships are fitted with the Automatic Identification System (AIS), which is an automatic tracking system that uses transceivers on ships for collision avoidance by allowing the maritime authorities to track and monitor

vessel movements using broadcast information on identification, location, course and speed.

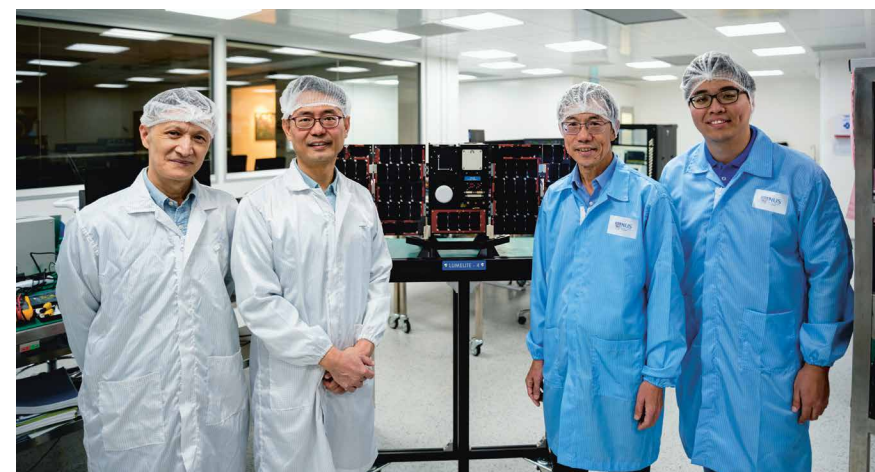
The VDES payload which *Lumelite-4* is carrying has several advantages over the current AIS system, such as greater bandwidth, range, accuracy, capacity, security, flexibility and global coverage. This makes it an attractive solution for maritime operators seeking to enhance communication and operational efficiency. The successful launch will allow A*STAR's I²R to demonstrate the satellite VDES technology, and validate potential applications of VDES, including real-time maritime traffic and asset tracking as well as two-way messaging, in contrast to the one-way reporting supported by AIS. Designed by A*STAR's I²R, the VDES payload can reduce signal interference and increase tracking capability in an anticipated dense environment and low-complexity radio resource management.

A*STAR's I²R and ST Engineering had previously developed the VDES Mobile Station, which can achieve a data rate of up to 32 times higher than the current AIS system. Supported by terrestrial VDES, the VDES Mobile Station enables higher data throughput as well as higher-quality data delivery among ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore two-way communications.

The latest satellite VDES complements the terrestrial VDES to enable a more robust maritime

The successful launch of *Lumelite-4* marks a new chapter in NUS' journey into space, and STAR is excited to leverage our knowledge and expertise in satellite technologies in this collaboration with A*STAR's I²R.

Prof Low Kay Soon



This collaboration between NUS and A*STAR is the first demonstration of satellite-based VDES for maritime applications in Southeast Asia.

communications service, allowing the tracking of vessels not just in coastal areas but also in high seas and in areas without a terrestrial network.

The NUS and A*STAR team started working on the *Lumelite-4* project in December 2018, and recently completed the design, assembly, integration and testing of *Lumelite-4* with VDES payload.

The Singapore microsatellite, *Lumelite-4*, was deployed by the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) of the Indian Space Research Organisation, and it is flying at 586 kilometres above sea level on an orbital plane known as the near-equatorial orbit. This is the third satellite from NUS that has been successfully delivered to space – the first two satellites, namely *Galassia* and *Kent Ridge 1*, were launched in 2015.

Lumelite-4 weighs 16 kilograms, has a compact size of about 20 centimetres in length and breadth, and is 30 centimetres tall (similar to the size of a laser printer). This is one of four microsatellites that STAR is developing.

Professor Low Kay Soon (Engineering '85), Director of STAR, said, "The successful launch of

Lumelite-4 marks a new chapter in NUS' journey into space, and STAR is excited to leverage our knowledge and expertise in satellite technologies in this collaboration with A*STAR's I²R. Over the next few months, the team aims to demonstrate the space-based implementation of a high-performance VDES on a small satellite for maritime applications. The success of this mission will further strengthen Singapore's position as an innovative space technology hub for small satellites."

"With the *Lumelite-4* launch, we are closing the gap to showcase the full operational capability of the VHF Data Exchange System (VDES) with both terrestrial and satellite components, advancing from our earlier development of the VDES Mobile Station," said Dr Sun Sumei (Engineering '07), Acting Executive Director of A*STAR's I²R. "The experimental microsatellite in orbit will allow A*STAR to test and validate key technologies of the VDES satellite mode, which includes helping maritime operators to monitor and analyse real-time traffic, thus enhancing navigational safety and port

We look forward to exploring further applications of A*STAR's technology with NUS and our partners in the ecosystem, to better support the maritime industry.

Dr Sun Sumei

efficiencies, even in areas without a terrestrial network. We look forward to exploring further applications of A*STAR's technology with NUS and our partners in the ecosystem, to better support the maritime industry."

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF SATELLITE CAPABILITIES IN NUS AND A*STAR

Under STAR's satellite road map until 2027, the NUS satellite team is working on a series of small satellites for distributed space system comprising a number of small satellites flying in tandem for formation and constellation mission that would be useful for environmental monitoring, and more timely maritime and aviation traffic management.

Following the successful launch of the *Lumelite-4*, A*STAR's I²R will carry out extensive in-orbit testing of the satellite's payload with its VDES Mobile Station on ground to demonstrate the two-way data communication and vessel tracking capability, coupled with maritime traffic analytics, modelling and optimisation capabilities by A*STAR's Institute of High Performance Computing (IHPC).

A*STAR's I²R will continue to leverage capabilities in radio frequency and antenna designs to meet the requirements for compact satellite payloads and ground terminals. Through close partnerships with local and global ecosystem partners, A*STAR's I²R will develop further



Prof Low Kay Soon (right), Director of Satellite Technology And Research Centre (STAR) at NUS, and Dr Francois Chin (left), Division Head, Satellite, Aviation & Maritime, A*STAR's Institute for Infocomm Research, with a model of *Lumelite-4*.

applications and integrated capabilities to improve e-navigation, port efficiency and shipping operations for maritime safety.

NURTURING TALENT FOR THE SPACE SECTOR

The *Lumelite-4* project also offered invaluable learning opportunities for students to put engineering concepts into practice. Twelve students from the NUS CDE worked closely with four research staff at STAR to develop the microsatellite, under the mentorship of Prof Low. "I am very heartened that many of our undergraduate students, who had participated enthusiastically in this highly challenging project, have chosen to continue to work in STAR

as full-time research engineers upon graduation," added Prof Low.

One of these students is Mr Kelvin Ng, who joined STAR in 2019 after completing his Bachelor of Engineering (Computer Engineering) degree programme and is now a Research Associate. "I pursued my interest and participated in a satellite programme as my Final Year Project," he said. "The practical hands-on experience gave me greater confidence to tackle real-world problems with my engineering training. It is a great achievement to see our satellite successfully placed in orbit."

Another student is Mr Marcus Tay, who graduated with a Mechanical Engineering degree and has been a Research Engineer with STAR



Students from NUS College of Design and Engineering worked closely with research staff at STAR to develop Lumelite-4.

since 2022. "Being involved in this project has been an eye-opener," he said. "It's simply exhilarating to witness our satellite being deployed in space. Being able to apply my knowledge and skills in a real-world product and make a tangible impact is every engineer's dream come true."

This article was first published on 22 April 2023 on NUS News at news.nus.edu.sg.



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NUS Sustainable and Green Finance Institute celebrates its official launch

THE SUSTAINABLE AND GREEN FINANCE INSTITUTE (SGFIN), a research institute established by the National University of Singapore (NUS) with the support of the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS), was officially launched by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Mr Lawrence Wong on 20 April 2023.

SGFIN was set up to develop deep research and capabilities in the area of green finance and sustainability, and provide thought leadership as well as shape sustainability outcomes and policymaking across the real economy and financial sectors. SGFIN is committed to advancing the sustainability sector by focusing on four areas — education, data-driven sustainable finance research, impact measurement and outreach.

SGFIN, which began operations in December 2021, collaborates



Speaking at the launch of SGFIN, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Mr Lawrence Wong shared Singapore's refreshed "Finance for Net Zero Action Plan", which sets out MAS' plans to expand its focus from pure green finance to include transition finance to catalyse Asia's net-zero transition.



(From left) Chairman of NUS Board of Trustees Mr Hsieh Fu Hua (Business '74), Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Mr Lawrence Wong, NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye and Professor Sumit Agarwal officiating the launch of SGFIN.

with industry partners on research initiatives to support the development of frameworks for more transparent and standardised measurement of companies' environmental and social performance, and for benchmarking to best practices across industries.

"SGFIN will play an important role in helping Singapore develop strong capabilities in green finance and in strengthening Singapore's position as a global financial hub," said NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85). "The Institute's emphasis

on education and data-driven research approach will drive the development of innovative and progressive financial solutions for sustainable development in Asia and the world. We thank our partners and collaborators who are working together with us to shape financial services for a more sustainable future."

In sharing MAS' "Finance for Net Zero Action Plan" during the launch, Minister Lawrence Wong said that Singapore needs robust research to support the development of green

SGFIN will play an important role in helping Singapore develop strong capabilities in green finance and in strengthening Singapore's position as a global financial hub. *Prof Tan Eng Chye*



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Mr Lawrence Wong (centre), together with Chairman of NUS Board of Trustees Mr Hsieh Fu Hua, NUS President Prof Tan Eng Chye, members of the NUS Board of Trustees, and SGFIN faculty and industry partners.

and transition finance and to support businesses in formulating new green products and solutions. "This is why MAS has helped to set up three Centres of Excellence including SGFIN," he added. "Our COEs have been producing quality research, such as SGFIN's research on a Sustainability Impact Measurement and Assessment Framework for corporates in Singapore and Asia."

SCHOLARSHIPS TO BOOST DEMAND FOR TALENT

To grow the capacity and talent pool in this area to meet the demand for leadership in sustainable financing in Singapore and beyond, SGFIN announced new scholarships for its Master of Science in Sustainable and Green Finance programme offered in collaboration with NUS Business School. Up to four scholarships will be awarded at the next intake in August 2023, and more scholarships will be available in the following years.

The MSc in Sustainable and Green Finance is the first programme of its

kind in Asia. It is designed to enhance students' impact on investment and business decisions through experiential learning and exposure to the financial and corporate sectors in the region.

Ms Jorgina Chieng, who is part of the programme's first cohort that started in August 2022, said that it provides students from various backgrounds a unique opportunity to gain specialised financial expertise and competencies required to help companies transition from conventional to greener and more sustainable financial models. "What has impressed me the most about the programme are the opportunities to engage in practical work with real-life case studies and projects, specially designed to focus on the Asian and local context," she added. "Additionally, our professors are equally committed to the cause and very enthusiastic about helping us apply the principles that they taught. We have just started working on our capstone project with an external organisation to help it

with a real-life sustainability problem, and I can already see the practical application of the theories and concepts learned in class."

Ms Chieng, who has more than 15 years of experience in the banking and financial services sector, is confident that the MSc in Sustainable and Green Finance programme offers professionals like herself an opportunity to keep their skills relevant so that they can support companies in making a more positive impact on the community and the environment.

SGFIN Managing Director Professor Sumit Agarwal said that as Singapore looks to position itself as a green finance hub in the region, there is a dire need to nurture a deep pipeline of talent and leadership in this area. "SGFIN is contributing to this cause with a calibrated approach in its education efforts," said Prof Agarwal. "The development of relevant expertise and innovative solutions to drive transformation across corporate and financial sectors through SGFIN will advance the understanding and adoption of best sustainable and green financing practices."



Prof Sumit Agarwal, Managing Director of SGFIN, said it aims to be a knowledge hub of evidence-based sustainable practices that supports companies in the integration of sustainability into their business strategies and provides green finance talents with a strong focus on Asia.

NUS RESEARCHERS INVENT NOVEL INGESTIBLE CAPSULE X-RAY DOSIMETER FOR REAL-TIME RADIOTHERAPY MONITORING

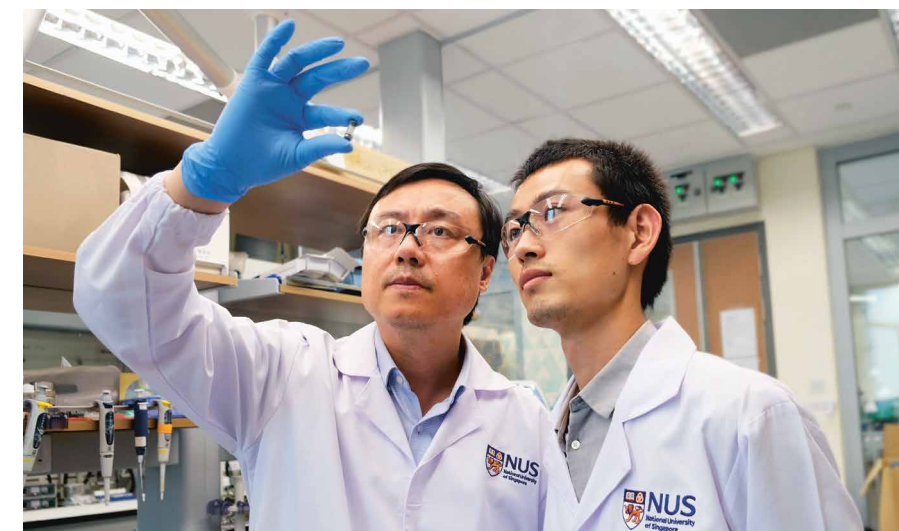
This affordable and ingestible capsule monitors radiation dose, pH and temperature in the gastrointestinal tract in real time, and could benefit gastric cancer patients undergoing radiotherapy.

GASTRIC CANCER IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON CANCERS WORLDWIDE.

A new invention by researchers from the National University of Singapore (NUS) could help improve the treatment of this cancer by enhancing the precision of radiotherapy, which is commonly used in combination with treatment options such as surgery, chemotherapy or immunotherapy.

In the field of modern radiotherapy, precision in targeting tumour tissue while minimising damage to healthy tissue is crucial. However, low efficacy and variable outcomes remain a challenge due to patient diversity, treatment uncertainty and differences in delivery types. Monitoring the dose of radiation delivered and absorbed in real time — particularly in the gastrointestinal tract — could enhance the precision of radiotherapy to improve its effectiveness, but it is difficult to achieve. Additionally, existing methods used for monitoring biochemical indicators, such as pH and temperature, are inadequate for the comprehensive evaluation of radiotherapy.

To address this challenge, a research team led by Professor Liu Xiaogang (Affiliate Alumnus '19) from the Department of Chemistry



Prof Liu Xiaogang (left) and Dr Hou Bo from the NUS Department of Chemistry were key members of the team that developed the novel capsule dosimeter.

under the NUS Faculty of Science — in collaboration with researchers from NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, Tsinghua University and the Shenzhen Institute of Advanced Technology — has developed an ingestible X-ray dosimeter that detects radiation dose in real time. Combining its novel capsule design and a neural network-based regression model, which calculates radiation dose from the information captured by the capsule, the team found that it could provide approximately five times more accurate monitoring of the dose delivered than current standard methods.

This technological breakthrough was published in the journal *Nature Biomedical Engineering* on 13 April 2023.

LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT TECHNOLOGIES

Clinical dosimeters, such as metal-oxide-semiconductor field-effect transistors, thermoluminescence sensors and optically excited films, are commonly placed directly on or near the patient's skin to estimate the radiation dose absorbed in the target area. While such dosimetry with electronic portal imaging devices has been explored for treatment verification, these devices can be expensive and, furthermore, absorb radiation and decrease the intended dose of radiation for the patient. Ingestible sensors are limited to pH and pressure monitoring, and there is a need for an inexpensive swallowable sensor that



The components of the dosimeter fit into an 18mm by 7mm capsule, a common size for many supplements and medicines.

can simultaneously track biochemical indicators and X-ray dose absorption during gastrointestinal radiotherapy.

AN INGESTIBLE CAPSULE THAT CAN DETECT DOSE, pH AND TEMPERATURE IN REAL TIME

To address these limitations, Prof Liu and his team developed a novel ingestible X-ray dosimeter capsule capable of measuring the dose of radiation, and physiological changes in pH and temperature in real time during gastrointestinal radiotherapy. Key components of the capsule include a flexible optical fibre encapsulated with nanoscintillators that illuminate in the presence of radiation; a pH-responsive film; a fluidic module with multiple inlets for dynamic gastric fluid sampling; two sensors for dose and pH measurements; a microcontroller circuit board that processes photoelectric signals to be transmitted to a mobile application; and a button-sized silver oxide battery powering the capsule.

When the capsule is ingested and reaches the gastrointestinal tract, the nanoscintillators will exhibit heightened luminescence in the presence of increased X-ray radiation. A sensor within the capsule measures the

glow from the nanoscintillators to determine the radiation delivered to the targeted area.

At the same time, the fluidic module allows gastric fluid to be collected for pH detection by a film, which changes colour according to pH. This change in colour is captured by a second sensor within the capsule. In addition, the two sensors are able to detect temperature, which could give an indication of any negative reactions to radiotherapy treatment, such as allergies.

The photoelectric signals from the two sensors are processed by a microcontroller circuit board, which sends information via Bluetooth technology and an antenna to a mobile phone app. Using a neural network-based regression model, the mobile app processes the raw data to display information, such as the radiotherapy

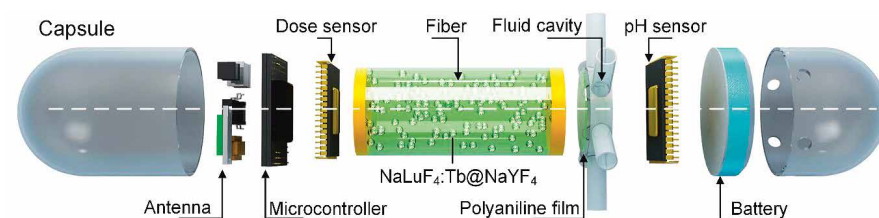
dose as well as the temperature and pH of the tissues undergoing radiotherapy.

"Our novel capsule is a game-changer in providing affordable and effective monitoring of the effectiveness of radiotherapy treatment," said Prof Liu. "It has the potential to provide quality assurance that the right dose of radiation will reach patients."

The capsule dosimeter measures 18 millimetres in length and 7 millimetres in width — a common size used for supplements and medicines — and costs \$50 to produce. Currently designed to monitor radiotherapy doses for gastric cancer, it could also be used to monitor treatment for different malignancies with further customisations of the capsule's size. For example, making the capsule smaller could allow it to be placed in the rectum for prostate cancer brachytherapy or in the upper nasal cavity for real-time measurement of the absorbed dose in nasopharyngeal or brain tumours, minimising radiation damage to surrounding structures.

NEXT STEPS

The research team is working to bring its innovation towards clinical application. Further research includes identifying the capsule's position and posture after ingestion, developing a robust positioning system to anchor the capsule at the intended target site, and further calibrating the accuracy of the ingestible dosimeters for safe and effective clinical use.



The components within the capsule dosimeter. Image credit: Nature Biomedical Engineering, 2023

NUS scores double awards for efforts in promoting mental well-being

THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE (NUS) WAS RECOGNISED WITH TWO ACCOLADES AT THE INAUGURAL WORKWELL LEADERS AWARDS AND GALA DINNER HELD ON 31 MARCH 2023. The University bagged the overall Wellbeing Organisation of the Year Award for its efforts towards prioritising mental well-being in the workplace. NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85) was also conferred the Wellbeing Leader Award 2023, for setting the tone and culture for building a mentally healthy workplace.

Organised by WorkWell Leaders, a community of chief executive officers and leaders championing workplace mental health and well-being as a strategic priority and board agenda, the Awards recognise Singapore-based organisations and individuals who strive to create a mentally healthy and thriving workplace.



NUS Chairman Mr Hsieh Fu Hua (Business '74) (left) received the Wellbeing Organisation of the Year Award on NUS' behalf. In the photo are Guest of Honour President Halimah Yacob (Law '78) (centre) and Ms Anthea Ong, founder of charity WorkWell Leaders.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Prof Tan set up the NUS Health and Wellbeing Unit (HWB), under the Office of the President, to look into strategies to promote health and wellness. He also

goes on daily morning walks where he checks in with staff and shares his own mental health journey with them.

The HWB team facilitates the mental, physical and social well-being of NUS students and staff. To better support and care for the University community, it has in place a series of initiatives ranging from counselling, interactive activities, various programmes and self-help resources to help individuals better manage and take charge of their personal well-being. Its latest initiative, (kind)mind, seeks to build a safe space within NUS to discuss and seek support for mental health; inculcate a culture of compassion; and build a blueprint for other institutions and organisations to follow.



A celebratory moment at the event shared by Deputy President (Administration) Mr Clarence Ti (back row, third from left), Director of NUS Health & Wellbeing (HWB) Dr Andrew Tay (Medicine '05) (back row, second from left), and colleagues from HWB and the Office of Human Resources.

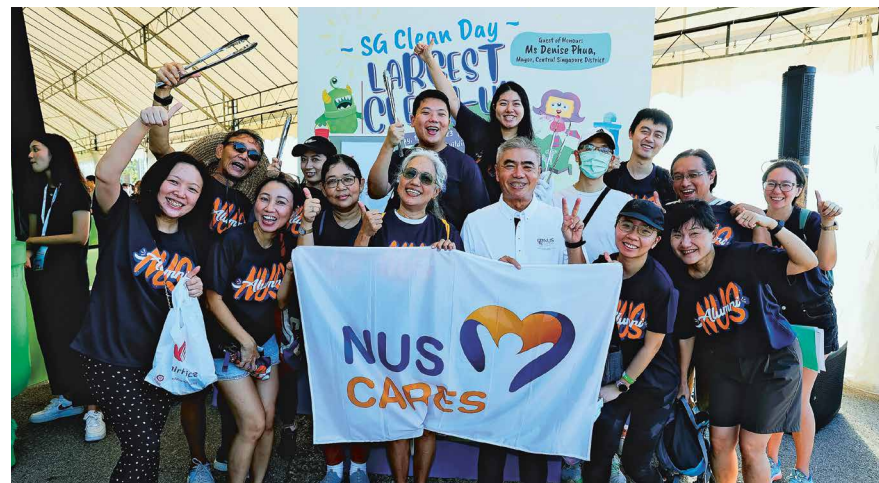
MAKING HISTORY IN SINGAPORE'S LARGEST CLEAN-UP EFFORT



Volunteers, big and small, lending a hand.

CLOSE TO 80 TIRELESS VOLUNTEERS FROM THE NUS COMMUNITY JOINED THOUSANDS OF OTHERS IN A RECORD-BREAKING SG CLEAN DAY ON 13 MAY 2023. Amid the sweltering heat, they showed their commitment to the environment as they collected tissues, wrappers and other litter at the F1 Pit Building. Chairman of the NUS Cares Steering Committee, Mr Ho Jun Yi (Law & Public Policy '11), highlighted the event's significance. "It's more than picking up litter. It symbolises our wider NUS community — staff, students and alumni — being a part of this movement. That's consistent with the mission of *NUS Cares*, which is to bring the community together through service to society."

Started in April 2021, the quarterly SG Clean Day is spearheaded by the Public Hygiene Council, with partners including town councils and organisations like NUS. The recent island-wide event drew 4,801 volunteers, eclipsing previous numbers in the *Singapore Book of Records* for the



NUS volunteers, including the University's alumni, students and staff, showing their support for a cleaner, more sustainable Singapore.

Most Number of Participants in a Single-Location Clean-Up and Most Number of Participants in a Multiple-Location Clean-Up. The involvement of NUS volunteers, including alumni and their family members, showed the University's dedication to sustainability. Mr Sidarath Sharma (Business '18), an alumnus who recently started volunteering again, said: "These events give us the right values, reminding us not to take our clean city for granted and to give back to society. Volunteering brings a lot of satisfaction."

NUS Ridge View Residential College (RVRC) even organised an intertidal walk as part of its clean-up at Changi Beach on SG Clean Day to emphasise the impact of litter on marine

ecosystems. Student Rywene Ang, who picked up 52.5kg of trash in 40 minutes with her RVRC mates, said: "It was nice to join others in caring for the environment and clearing beach litter. Every effort counts!"

MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY

Be part of *NUS Cares*. Your small actions can have a big impact, which is to bring the university community together through service to society. Ignite change alongside fellow alumni and the broader NUS community. Discover diverse volunteering opportunities now.

Visit bit.ly/NUSCares for details!



Kudos to our determined RVRC staff, students and friends, who collected 52.5kg of trash in 40 minutes at Changi Beach.

Photos: Wilson Pang

Addressing the trash pollution problem might seem daunting, but many helping hands can multiply the impact. Learning about sustainability through such first-hand experiences can bring much joy and satisfaction.

Dr Eunice Ng, Fellow and Resident Fellow, NUS RVRC

STRIKING A BALANCE

Should people view generative AI tools like ChatGPT with fear or favour? **Assoc Prof Loy Hui Chieh** called for a measured response at a recent dialogue session with alumni. TEXT ROY SIM PHOTOS MARK LEE

SOCIETY NEEDS TO HAVE A BALANCED VIEW OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TOOLS, one that neither overestimates nor underestimates their power. This was a key takeaway at an NUS alumni chat, *The New AI Tools in Our Lives*, held at the Shaw Foundation Alumni House on 4 May 2023. The session was led by Associate Professor Loy Hui Chieh (Arts and Social Sciences '98), who has studied this issue extensively for work and personal interest.

Assoc Prof Loy, who is Vice Dean (Academic Affairs) at the NUS College and Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University's Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, describes himself as a "tech geek" at heart, who enjoys

exploring how new information and computational technologies can be used in education and beyond. At the same time, he is worried about the problems they could cause, something that he puts down to his background in philosophy.

A nuanced understanding of AI's potential issues is needed, given its growing prevalence. Assoc Prof Loy highlighted how generative AI tools are already changing the way we work. This applies to academia too, he shared with the audience who had attended in-person and online. Educators are hard at work thinking about how AI tools can enhance the learning process. Some are experimenting with assignments that incorporate them. Others are dreaming about the day — which is not here yet — when AI tools can help them provide initial feedback to student work.

But these advancements also come with a certain risk, as tech companies may not always be forthcoming about how their AI models are trained, raising questions about biases and misinformation.



Participants took the chance to ask Assoc Prof Loy questions on AI during the Q&A session.



Assoc Prof Loy sharing why conversations around generative AI will need to continue in society.



We shouldn't use generative AI as a crutch and short-change our learning.

Assoc Prof Loy Hui Chieh

There are also questions about how generative AI might affect young learners, Assoc Prof Loy added. He gave the example of providing a calculator to a young person before teaching them basic maths concepts. "There's a good chance (the student will) never really understand the concepts. So if you're a learner, AI may not be the best option at that stage."

Assoc Prof Loy emphasised the need for continuous discussions about AI within academia and society, so that young people will better understand the importance of using these tools while also realising their limitations. "This is a struggle we're going to have in education for a long time," he said.

That is why Assoc Prof Loy, who was part of a committee setting policies governing the use of generative AI at NUS, believes the University will not ban such tools. "That's not even doable," he said. "But we want to also remind everyone that we shouldn't use generative AI as a crutch and short-change our learning."

Assoc Prof Loy delved into generative AI's potential beyond education, including in business. Scan the QR code to watch the full session.



UP, UP AND AWAY

TEXT BY WANDA TAN

MEMBERS OF THIS YEAR'S GRADUATING COHORT HAVE WITNESSED SOME REMARKABLE CHANGES DURING THEIR TIME AT NUS. Not least of these was the COVID-19 pandemic, which shut down the world and brought tech-enhanced learning into the mainstream. The University's quest for innovation has also yielded exciting discoveries, with students themselves attempting feats like solving climate change problems and how to responsibly harness big data. What's more, they have had a front-row seat to NUS' bold push for interdisciplinary education in recent years.

As they join the workforce and enter the next stage of their lives, the University is likewise undergoing its own "Commencement" of sorts. A mostly new leadership team was appointed on 1 April 2023, and its members are currently strategising how to accelerate NUS' vision as "a leading global university shaping the future". There have also been changes at the Office of Alumni Relations. Now led by Ms Ovidia Lim-Rajaram (Arts and Social Sciences '89), who took over as Chief Alumni Officer on 1 July, the team is exploring ideas to better serve NUS graduates and help them stay closely connected to their alma mater.

THE FAMOUS FIVE

Well before Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85) became President of NUS in 2018, the institution had been on a "consistently strong and upward trajectory", he says. "We are today a research-intensive university that is consistently top-ranked, with a global reputation for quality and excellence, thanks to our exceptionally talented colleagues and trailblazing students. We have also seeded an organisational

NUS PRESIDENT'S PRIORITIES

Professor Tan Eng Chye unveils his goals for the University in his second term as NUS President:

- Infuse **interdisciplinary learning** and **blended pedagogy** across the entire curricula.
- Expand **experiential learning** opportunities both at home and abroad.
- Be a **global research leader** in key areas (e.g., health innovation, Smart Nation, materials research, sustainability and urban solutions).
- Be a key node in the global **innovation and enterprise** ecosystem.
- Seamlessly integrate **lifelong learning** with undergraduate education.

culture that embraces change, drives advancement and fosters agility."

Behind this dynamic culture, however, there must be a rock-solid management team — even when a renewal occurs. "Leadership succession planning is crucial in preparing the next generation of leaders to deliver on NUS' vision and mission," Prof Tan explains. "Our renewed leadership demonstrates NUS' commitment to have top talent at the helm to propel the University to greater heights."

The current iteration of NUS' leadership is made up of two incumbents and three new appointees. Joining Prof Tan and Mr Clarence Ti, Deputy President (Administration) of NUS since 2021, are Professor Aaron Thean, Deputy President (Academic Affairs) and Provost; Professor Chen Tsuhan,

Deputy President (Innovation & Enterprise); and Professor Liu Bin (Science (PhD) '01), Deputy President (Research & Technology). Notably, all of the new appointees are already familiar with the inner workings of the University, thus helping ensure a smooth leadership transition.

KNOCKING DOWN DISCIPLINARY WALLS

Among the NUS faculty, Professor Aaron Thean has been one of the most prominent advocates for interdisciplinarity, or the practice of leveraging and integrating knowledge from different fields. Prior to his new appointment, Prof Thean served as founding Dean of the College of Design and Engineering (CDE), which was formed through a merger between the Faculty of Engineering (FoE) and the

July marks the start of a new era for NUS in more ways than one — for its graduands, who are about to enter the "real world"; for students and faculty, who can expect innovative developments on the academic and research front under new leadership; and for its alumni, who have a new leader to rethink the way they engage with their alma mater.



**PROFESSOR
LIU BIN**
Deputy President
(Research & Technology)

**PROFESSOR
TAN ENG CHYE**
NUS President

MR CLARENCE TI
Deputy President
(Administration)

**PROFESSOR
AARON THEAN**
Deputy President
(Academic Affairs)
and Provost

**PROFESSOR
CHEN TSUHAN**
Deputy President
(Innovation & Enterprise)

Photo: Mark Lee

School of Design and Environment (SDE) in January 2022. It came on the heels of the College of Humanities and Sciences (CHS) — an enhanced undergraduate experience for students of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) and the Faculty of Science (FoS) — which admitted its inaugural cohort in August 2021.

The shift to interdisciplinary learning requires crossing traditional academic boundaries and has radically transformed the way NUS shapes its curricula. But, as Prof Thean explains, “It addresses a bigger disruption happening around the world. Technologies and disciplines are converging much faster than before, and we need to prepare students for this work environment. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach is one of the most important things we can do to make them future-ready.”

Both CHS and CDE are built on a distinctive Common Curriculum that imparts a broad range of foundational skills, such as design thinking, digital literacy, and community service and engagement. Based on their aptitude and interests, students also have the freedom to mix and match subjects across disciplines — even outside their home College — and chart their own pathways, be it specialising in a specific topic within their primary major or taking a variety of major and minor combinations.

Despite being only a couple of years into this flexible curriculum, students at the two Colleges have responded positively and are actively seeking synergy and interplay between disciplines. For example, popular



I envisage that the job market will continue to be shaped and impacted by disruptive technologies in the future, requiring our graduates to be adaptable to change.

Prof Sun Yeneng, Dean, Faculty of Science; and Co-Dean, College of Humanities and Sciences



cross-faculty combinations of majors at CHS include Data Science and Economics, and Life Sciences and Psychology. Other students are pursuing more unusual pathways to graduation, such as Physics majors who read minors in languages. Feedback from FASS and FoS alumni has been similarly positive, with many demonstrating their support by contributing to mentorship and career preparation programmes.

“The jobs of the not-too-distant future will invariably require individuals who can provide working solutions that leverage whatever information is available,” says Professor Lionel Wee (Arts and Social Sciences ’88), Dean of FASS and Co-Dean of CHS. Take the fast-growing sustainability sector, for instance — sustainability issues are very complex, and solving these requires the ability to look at the bigger picture and

The jobs of the not-too-distant future will invariably require individuals who can provide working solutions that leverage whatever information is available.

Prof Lionel Wee, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences; and Co-Dean, College of Humanities and Sciences

MIXING & MATCHING

From the CHS cohorts of 2021 and 2022, **82.8%** are pursuing either a double degree, double major or minor.

Around **50%** of CDE students are already using the flexible curriculum to attain additional qualifications.

consider not just environmental but also political, economic, social and technological factors. “We make our students comfortable with looking across different domains for relevant ideas and information, and combining these towards the best possible solutions,” Prof Wee notes.

His fellow Co-Dean, FoS’ Dean Professor Sun Yeneng, adds that interdisciplinary training lends a competitive advantage in an uncertain future of work: “Just as we are now grappling with the impact of artificial intelligence (AI), such as ChatGPT, on our work and livelihoods, I envisage that the job market will continue to be shaped and impacted by disruptive technologies in the future, requiring our graduates to be adaptable to change. CHS offers an education that prepares our students for a wide variety of career opportunities, and even for new occupations that will emerge as the job market evolves.”

Over at CDE, students have also responded warmly to the revamped curriculum. One of its most popular undergraduate offerings is the Innovation & Design Programme (iDP). Available as a second major or a minor, it equips aspiring technopreneurs with the tools and processes to create new products and

services, from ideation to prototyping. “The iDP gives students across different disciplines the opportunity to work in teams to solve real-world problems through project-based learning in areas such as healthcare, sustainable cities and urban mobility,” says Professor Teo Kie Leong (Engineering (PhD) ’97), Acting Dean and Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs & Education) of CDE. “Engineering students have learnt much from the perspectives shared by Architecture and Design teammates [and vice versa]. Such collaborative work benefits their learning journey and builds the skills needed to deal with an increasingly interconnected workforce.”

More new courses are being developed by CDE and CHS — particularly in growth industries, such as sustainability, computing, data science, health sciences, food science and technology, and the care economy — with some set to debut in the coming academic year. Looking beyond the two Colleges, NUS eventually plans to make interdisciplinarity a central feature across all faculties and schools by implementing the Common Curriculum at scale. Tech-enhanced learning will go a long way towards achieving this. For instance,





Collaborative work benefits [the students'] learning journey and builds the skills needed to deal with an increasingly interconnected workforce.

Prof Teo Kie Leong, Acting Dean and Deputy Dean (Academic Affairs & Education), College of Design and Engineering

Below: Minister for Education Mr Chan Chun Sing (centre) graced the official launch of NUS College with Prof Simon Chesterman (far right) and other NUS officials on 20 February 2023.



the CHS Common Curriculum has innovative modules that use a blend of pre-recorded lectures and “live” Zoom conversations with instructors, or combine small-group field trips to various sites in Singapore with virtual reality (VR) field trips. As Prof Thean says, it is about “finessing, fine-tuning and amplifying” the good work that has already been done.

ACADEMICS AND BEYOND

A full educational experience does not stop at attending lectures, completing assignments and sitting for exams. Other aspects — including friendships and connections, student life, and work immersion and overseas opportunities — are just as, if not more, memorable. “I believe there is a strong relationship between what students experience at university and how they ultimately turn out as graduates and successful adults,” says Prof Thean about the role of student life in education. “We need to better understand this correlation and pursue avenues for innovation in student engagement.”

Irrespective of faculty or school, all NUS students are offered experiential learning in the form of internships, overseas study

programmes and co-curricular activities. Following the greater emphasis on building and supporting mental wellness and resilience, the University set up a Health & Wellbeing team that focuses on providing counselling services as well as wellness consultancy and resources for staff and students. Different housing options have also created a vibrant student community who live on campus.

Many of those living on campus are based in UTown’s residential colleges, where students from diverse disciplines and backgrounds live and learn together through a specially curated academic curriculum. Taking this concept one step further is the new NUS College (NUSC) — the University’s first honours college with a rigorous, broad-based curriculum and a strong residential component. NUSC welcomed its first batch of close to 400 students from all over the world in August 2022, taking up six to seven per cent of the entire undergraduate cohort.

NUSC combines the best features of the former University Scholars Programme and Yale-NUS College (which will close its doors in 2025, after its current students have graduated).

Students can choose from more than 50 majors offered by other colleges, faculties and schools within NUS, while setting aside about a third of their degree requirements for the NUSC curriculum. What really sets this curriculum apart is its array of special experiential programmes that reflect NUSC’s mission to “break open the classroom”.

For example, the *Global Experience* (GEx) course enables students to go on themed visits to major cities around the world and interact with local academics, researchers, entrepreneurs, start-ups and community organisations. It takes place over one month during the summer vacation. This year, NUSC students are

We don’t know what new jobs will emerge in the next five years. But what we can do is give students the skills, perspectives, values and friends to help them confront whatever lies ahead.

Prof Simon Chesterman, Dean, NUS College; and Vice Provost (Educational Innovation)



NUS COLLEGE LIFE

Starting this August, NUSC will guarantee residency on campus for the first 3 years of a local student’s candidature, up from the current two-year stay.

International students without a home address in Singapore will be guaranteed residence at NUSC throughout all 4 years.



travelling to cities like Stockholm (under the “Environment and Sustainability” theme) and Tokyo (“City, Culture and Technology”).

Another flagship programme at NUSC is the *Impact Experience* (IEx) course, where students form interdisciplinary teams and work with community partners to co-develop solutions to pressing community problems, either in Singapore or regionally. Each team tackles a cause it is passionate about, such as environmental and cultural conservation, digital social good, food security, or healthcare and housing accessibility. The capstone course spans one to two years so that student teams have ample time to design, plan, pitch and execute their projects, hopefully culminating in sustained social impact.

“The complex problems of today, like AI, climate change and inequality, require people from diverse disciplines to work together to solve them. Success in the world — as well as solving its problems



— depends on more than just one smart person acting alone. NUSC embraces that challenge by bringing together ‘un-likeminded’ students to address real-world problems,” says Professor Simon Chesterman,

Dean of NUSC and Vice Provost (Educational Innovation) of NUS.

He adds, “The only constant these days is change. There are many ‘unknown unknowns’, and we don’t know what new jobs will emerge in the next five years. But what we can do is give students the skills, perspectives, values and friends to help them confront whatever lies ahead — the ability to see a problem from diverse viewpoints, to engage with diverse actors, and to be flexible and resilient.”

FUELLING THE INNOVATION PIPELINE

The fact that NUS has gained renown as a research-intensive university owes much to Professor Chen Tsuhan, who has been instrumental in carrying out its well-thought-out research strategy over the past five years. As the former Deputy President (Research & Technology), he oversaw all research activities across the University’s colleges, faculties and schools, research institutes and centres, as well as corporate laboratories and technology

→ FRIENDS NEAR AND FAR

Close to 15,000 students make up the Class of 2023. Meet one of them — Dr Fatima Siddiqui, 24, a newly minted doctor from NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (NUS Medicine).

Congratulations on completing your medical degree! How is work going so far?

Dr Fatima: It’s exciting but a little terrifying. The hours are long, and having patients put their trust in me is a big responsibility, but that’s what makes it so rewarding. Knowing that I have the support of my

colleagues also energises me. After I finish my housemanship, I plan to pursue postgraduate training under the specialist track, although I’m still exploring which area to specialise in.

Community service is strongly encouraged at NUS Medicine. Did you take part in any volunteer initiatives?

Dr Fatima: Yes! The one closest to my heart is Project Sothea, an overseas community service project run by NUS medical students. We collaborate with Cambodian counterparts and non-governmental organisations

to provide health screening and education to rural villages in Battambang, Cambodia. I’m proud of the effort we put in to make every small interaction special, including those with Cambodian students who became our friends. It was a transformative experience, and I’m excited to continue contributing in a different capacity, as a volunteer doctor.

How do you see yourself staying connected to the University?

Dr Fatima: The student community at NUS Medicine is very supportive, especially around exam time. Seniors — including alumni — guide juniors on what and how to study, and run mock exams; while juniors volunteer as



Dr Fatima babysitting for a local villager in Battambang.

simulated patients or create a snack corner in the library for their seniors. As an alumna, I hope to continue mentoring juniors, academically or otherwise. It’s important to pass on the kindness we’ve benefited from and to keep this culture of support intact.



ADMIN EXCELLENCE

Besides President Prof Tan, the other incumbent on NUS' senior leadership team is Deputy President (Administration), Mr Clarence Ti. He highlights three major administrative undertakings between now and 2027 to support the University's transformation:

1. Investing heavily in IT to introduce new and better services for students and staff, and build faster supercomputers to support research.

2. Building numerous practice leadership areas, such as sustainability, health and well-being, cybersecurity, and digital enablement.

3. Developing talent more systematically with leadership programmes, skills development plans, staff experience maps, and flourishing communities of practice.

consortia. These broad-based research efforts and resources have been pooled into key research clusters that meet the national agenda, most notably the Smart Nation cluster. With Prof Liu Bin taking on the role of Deputy President (Research & Technology), she will work in concert with Prof Chen, who is now Deputy President (Innovation & Enterprise), to ensure NUS remains at the forefront of research and innovation.

Prof Liu singles out three research areas that have the potential to grow and join the Smart Nation cluster as "mega clusters" in the coming years:

- 1. Sustainability:** Programmes focus on areas like agri-food technology, coastal protection, nature-based climate solutions, water management, urban heat resilience and green energy.
- 2. Materials:** NUS is designing, developing and synthesising advanced and intelligent functional materials for a wide range of smart applications.
- 3. Health innovation:** Pioneering research in health science and medicine to transform scientific insights into tangible health benefits.

Within each integrated cluster, researchers work in project teams that cut across disciplines — and collaborate with external partners in government, industry and

international institutions — to innovate and develop applicable and scalable solutions.

"NUS has visible peaks of excellence. But we need more groundbreaking and new field-opening research to lead future 'hot' areas," says Prof Liu, who most recently served as Senior Vice Provost (Faculty & Institutional Development) of NUS. She also believes there is room for improvement when translating fundamental research into practical applications. Hosting more "living labs" on campus — open innovation ecosystems where NUS researchers and students work with multiple stakeholders to co-create, testbed and scale up solutions in a realistic operational environment, refining these as they go — may hold the answer.

On the entrepreneurial side, Prof Chen says, "Innovation and entrepreneurship provide a platform to take ideas out of the lab and into the marketplace, where they can make a real impact on society. This is particularly exciting in a higher education setting because universities are often hotbeds of cutting-edge research. By connecting the dots between research and innovation, I hope to drive NUS forward in this exciting space."

Prof Chen points to the proliferation of start-ups coming out of NUS, as well as the significant external funding these have received, as a testament to the University's achievements in research commercialisation. Many companies had their beginnings in the

undergraduate-level NUS Overseas Colleges (NOC) programme, with NOC alumni subsequently founding successful start-ups like Carousell, Patsnap, ShopBack and Zopim. Another game-changer is the NUS Graduate Research Innovation Programme (GRIP), which supports postgraduate students and research staff in launching deep-tech spin-offs.

"I'm working closely with my NUS Enterprise colleagues to identify areas for enhancement and streamline initiatives along three key pillars: NUS Enterprise Academy, Ecosystem Builder, and Technology Transfer and Innovation. This will bring greater clarity to help our start-ups and stakeholders



Photo: Mark Lee

We hope to get to know [alumni] better and adopt a data-informed approach to alumni engagement, so that we can do things that will resonate with them.

Ms Ovidia Lim-Rajaram,
Chief Alumni Officer

better navigate and participate in our ecosystem," Prof Chen explains. "Singapore's Research, Innovation and Enterprise 2025 (RIE2025) plan gives impetus for us to rethink how we can bridge the gap between academia and industry to ensure that our research is translated into practical solutions that benefit society."

Of course, all this hinges on securing the right talent and infrastructure. Both professors aim to bring faculty and researchers closer into NUS' innovation and enterprise ecosystem. Being acclaimed researchers themselves — Prof Chen in AI and Prof Liu in functional materials — will certainly help, as they are intimately acquainted with the challenges involved and know exactly what is needed to bring ideas to fruition. Adds Prof Liu, "Social scientists have an important role to play in addressing complex challenges, such as climate change and sustainability. I hope to create sparks between STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) and non-STEM researchers by facilitating extensive research collaborations."

STRENGTHENING THE ALUMNI NETWORK

Taking over the reins at the NUS Office of Alumni Relations (OAR) is Ms Ovidia Lim-Rajaram (Arts and Social Sciences '89), who left her post as NUS Chief Communications Officer to take on this new challenge. Not only does that make her the first-ever Chief Alumni Officer of NUS, she is also the first female alumni leader in the University's history.

Ms Lim-Rajaram heads a refreshed team at OAR. Together, they coordinate myriad outreach and engagement programmes for the close

to 350,000-strong global alumni community. Ongoing initiatives — including the support given to Alumni Groups and Overseas Chapters, the always-popular thought leadership talks by NUS professors, and other events and activities — will carry on under the new leadership. This is in addition to the efforts taken elsewhere at NUS, such as inviting NOC and GRIP alumni back to mentor younger batches, or having alumni provide internship opportunities to students from the same faculty.

"At the same time, we're exploring more meaningful ways of engaging with our alumni, both in Singapore and overseas. We hope to get to know them better and adopt a data-informed approach to alumni engagement, so that we can do things that will resonate with them," says Ms Lim-Rajaram. While grateful for the steadfast support shown by senior alumni towards OAR's events and activities, she notes, "The profile of our alumni has been changing with every NUS Commencement. Today, more than 45 per cent of our alumni are under 40, so we're looking into how we can help them better navigate the different stages of career and life."

In today's workplace, where upskilling and interdisciplinary knowledge are essential to stay industry-relevant, the alumni-only NUS Lifelong Learners (L³) programme becomes even more important. L³ makes student enrolment valid for 20 years and beyond from the point of undergraduate or postgraduate admission. Alumni can thus enjoy discounted access to hundreds of Continuing Education and Training (CET) courses provided by NUS colleges, faculties and schools. These vary in duration and delivery mode, and cover in-demand skills required by Industry 4.0 as well as the green, digital and care economies. "Looking ahead, we could pilot new ideas to incorporate campus life into CET programmes," Prof Thean suggests.

This forward-thinking mindset, and such willingness to experiment and innovate, is the very reason behind the University's leadership renewal. "In the midst of a global environment that is constantly changing, it is crucial to be nimble," says NUS President Prof Tan. "I am confident my senior leadership colleagues can bring fresh and excellent ideas to the table to keep NUS energised and at the top of its game." **A**



NUS aims to eventually have around **3,500** NUS alumni enrol in a course each year, encouraging graduates to return at least every **5 years**.



FACING THE WORLD OUTSIDE

Members of this year's graduating cohort — along with some recent graduates, — share their aspirations, uncertainties and newly-minted nuggets of wisdom.



WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT?

"The opportunity to make a difference in the lives of my patients. I am honoured to be able to offer support and comfort during times of need. I am enthusiastic about the opportunities that lie ahead and look forward to the challenges and rewards of practicing medicine. I know that the journey will not be easy, but with the help of friends I made in NUS and the support from loved ones, I am sure I can pull through."

MELVIN LAI YONG HAO
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine

GRADUATING STUDENTS CLASS OF 2023

WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES AND PLANS NOW THAT YOU HAVE STARTED ON A NEW CHAPTER?

"With the holistic education I have received at NUS, I am looking forward to be in a pivotal role in which I can contribute to Singapore. I hope to leverage on my technical know-how in the field of environmental engineering for the betterment of society."

GOH JUN WEI
College of Design and Engineering

"I plan to complete Part B of the Singapore Bar Examinations smoothly, so that I can be called to the bar as a lawyer after completing my training contract. While doing so, I hope to still be able to do the things that I love and make me happy — such as hitting the gym and spending time with family and friends — even if work or studying gets hectic."

GAO MENGXIAO
Faculty of Law

ALUMNI

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT WORKING LIFE SINCE YOU GRADUATED?

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU HAVE FOR FRESH GRADS?

"What you learn during your time in university may not be directly applicable to your career. Rather, the soft skills you gain from group projects, report writing and critical thinking are most crucial for succeeding at your workplace."

I would say to new graduates: Prioritise work-life balance and set boundaries for yourself to ensure you don't burn out. Nurture your interests and hobbies, and invest in your relationships to remain a well-rounded individual!"

SNEHA SUNIL PILLAI
(Arts and Social Sciences '22)

"Whether you majored in Geography or Engineering, skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving and time management are just as valuable as technical expertise. Additionally, cultivating a growth mindset and seeking out new challenges can lead to personal and professional growth."

Don't let challenges in finding a job or hearing about your peers' successes discourage you. Everyone's journey is unique! Also, while still in school, it would be good to build lasting relationships, grow your network so as to create opportunities for the future."

MUHAMMAD FIRHAN BIN AZHAR
(Design and Engineering '22)

"I've learnt that everyone's experience and expectations of working life is different. I used to desire a high-paying job because I wanted the respect of my friends, but I knew I wouldn't be happy in those jobs. After a few months, I decided to do what would bring me purpose in life."

My advice is to stop comparing yourself with your peers, and have your own life goals. I can't over-emphasise the importance of setting your (short- and long-term) goals and to never lose track of them — this reduced a lot of stress for myself."

ROY FRANCIS MOHANAN
(Engineering '21)



"While technical skill sets and practices are very important, there is a need to nurture soft skills when one steps into the working world. These are not really taught in the textbooks, but are essential when engaging with higher management and colleagues."

Try your best to take up as many internships and industrial attachments as you can, as each one mirrors working life and provides valuable learning opportunities."

CHUA HUA REN
(Science '22)

UPWARDLY MOBILE

NUS graduates continued to achieve high employment rates and earned higher starting salaries in 2022, according to the Joint Autonomous Universities Graduate Employment Survey 2022.

The mean gross monthly salary of NUS fresh graduates in full-time permanent employment was **\$4,808**, higher than \$4,258 in 2021.

More than **90%** of fresh NUS graduates from courses in Arts and Social Sciences, Business, Computing, Design and Engineering, Nursing, and Science were employed within six months of completing their final exams.

Source:
news.nus.edu.sg

IF

I HAD A DOLLAR FOR EVERY
TIME I HEARD “VUCA” UTTERED
IN A KEYNOTE SPEECH OR
COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS,

or saw it in some journal article or op-ed... I, for one, struggle to find anything novel to say about this topic beyond the usual platitudes of resilience and agility and lifelong learning and so on. What I’d like to do instead is to unpack the metaphor of “navigating” a VUCA world and how it shapes your personal myths and narratives as you go out into it.

CHART A COURSE

Let’s start with the word “navigate”. It derives from the Latin *nāvigō*, which in turn comes from two roots — *nāvis*, which means “ship”; and *agō*, a verb that means “to do” or “to go”. The word “navigate” conjures imagery of oceans, ships and sailors. It suggests maps, compasses, telescopes, octants and sextants, the instruments required to navigate a ship. At its most fundamental level, “to navigate” implies intention, purpose, direction and destination.

Destination, insofar as it speaks of intention and aspiration, reflects our values. What is it about that place, that we believe we will find treasures and all things good there? Are we navigating, or are we just trying to stay afloat?

Because if we don’t know where we are headed, then we are not navigating. We are just trying not to sink.

Now, the survival imperative is not to be taken lightly. If we can’t even survive the shark-infested waters we find ourselves in, then any talk about distant horizons and treasure islands is moot. If you take the Singapore story, it is fashionable to portray it as one of survival and pragmatism. But let’s not forget that there was idealism and optimism involved. While we needed to survive the short-term risks, our predecessors had a clear idea of where they wanted to head towards.

Fast forward to our time. We are still learning to live with COVID-19. The global order seems to be fracturing. War is very much with us. There is the climate crisis, inflation, food and supply chain woes... the list goes on. Artificial intelligence is as much a source of promise as it is a cause of anxiety and distress. Amid all this, you might say that the only order of business is simply to survive. Just tread water. Don’t drown. I disagree. Existential crises, all the more, should cause us to ask existential questions. What is all this about? Why are we doing this? After all, what better motivation is there to survive, than the prospect of some worthy destination at the end of our struggle?

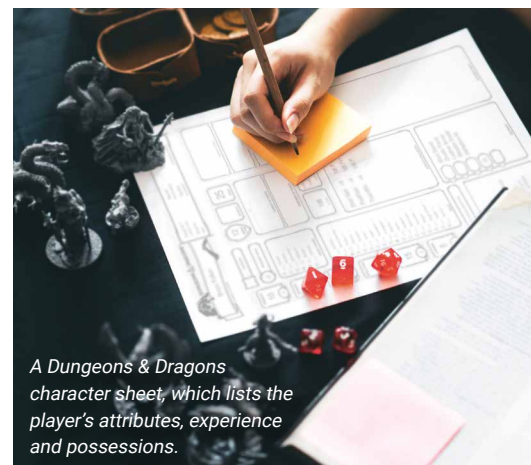
CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE — AND CHOOSE WELL

When it comes to navigating our Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) world, it is vital to reflect on our goals and values — and having a roleplaying game mindset might help too, says **Dr Adrian W J Kuah**.



REWRITE THE SCRIPT

Amid the volatility and complexity around us, I challenge you to articulate your myth and narrative afresh. While the body can survive without material success, the spirit will die without meaning and purpose. What would you say if I gave you the prompt, “Life is a <fill in the blanks>”? If life is a struggle, what are you struggling against? Is that struggle necessary? We all face difficulties in life. Many are inevitable.



A Dungeons & Dragons character sheet, which lists the player’s attributes, experience and possessions.

But do we also contrive some needless struggles ourselves? How do we cope? As the saying goes, pain is inevitable; suffering is up to you.

Some of these struggles come from the comparisons we make between ourselves and our peers, these days amplified by social media. Are you sometimes the architect of your own misery? On the other hand, what will you do if you see people around you struggling? Will you reach out to help? Or do you see a dog-eat-dog world — a chance to step over their dead bodies to get to where you want to go?

My challenge to you is this: Make your struggle a worthy one. Those of us who study economics will recall a key concept: Scarcity. There are limited resources, so we need to allocate, make trade-offs and compete for them. We are accustomed to getting the best deal. We define the wealthy as those who have the most. But in some indigenous societies, the wealthy are those who can give the most. More importantly, there is a shift in

If life is an adventure, are you adventuring alone? Or are you part of a band of adventurers? What are you in quest of?

mindset from transaction to relation. In a relational mode of thinking, there is reciprocity. A gift meaningfully made to you makes you want to reciprocate. A gift, in contrast to a resource, is shared. And when sharing occurs, community ensues.

THE QUEST IS UP TO YOU

My favourite metaphor is that life is an adventure. When you think of adventure, you think of both the journey and the destination. If life is an adventure, are you adventuring alone? Or are you part of a band of adventurers? What are you in quest of? Some of us have a grand plan, and that’s awesome. For others, life is a series of mini-adventures. Whether big or small, that quest makes you want to wake up in the morning, raring to go.

But there are questions to consider. Can you really go it alone? Does your crew have the requisite diversity? Because I used to play *Dungeons and Dragons* (the table-top, pencil-and-paper version), I learnt that if your party is entirely comprised of warriors — but without clerics who heal or bards who inspire — you’re in trouble. If it’s made up of only bards and wizards — but no fighters — you will all be clubbed to death when the ogres come.

Finally, take a look at your character sheet. See what you’re endowed with — your genetic and socio-economic inheritance — and what you earn, cultivate and accumulate. Look at the basic attributes: Strength, intelligence, dexterity, constitution, charisma and wisdom. As a society, we prize strength and intelligence. Lately, we’ve come to prioritise dexterity too, with talk about agility, flexibility and so on. We tend to take constitution, or health, for granted and regard the other stats as “dump stats”. This is reflected in the types of heroes we valorise: Strong, powerful, often exhibiting “masculine” traits.

But that’s not the only way to lead. How will you lead, especially in a fracturing world that increasingly needs healing and community-building? What skills will you develop? Much of education still comprises knowledge content accumulation. What about the meta-skills — the skills that develop more skills?

The character sheet is an accurate metaphor for our reality: The emphasis on attributes and things that can be measured — how many “gold pieces” and “magic items” you have and so on. These things still matter. But let’s not forget that it’s called a *character* sheet. Where is “character” in all of this? Character will ultimately determine the why, the how, and the where of navigation. ▲

Dr Adrian W J Kuah is the Director, Futures Office, Office of the President, at NUS.

➡ WHO HE IS

Dr Bao Shengjie is the founder, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Scientific Officer of Singrow, a local agri-genomics firm that has made a splash in the industry for developing climate-resistant strawberries. Thanks to its technology, this ruby-red fruit can now be grown in warmer climates like Singapore without the need for intensive cooling, boosting the Republic's food security and reducing the carbon footprint needed to import it.



When Ideas Bear Fruit

A childhood love for horticulture has bloomed into a successful and game-changing enterprise by **Dr Bao Shengjie (Science '17)**.

WHEN DR BAO SHENGJIE LOOKS BACK ON HIS CHILDHOOD IN ZHEJIANG, CHINA, he recalls many happy hours spent in his mother's garden, which was home to a variety of flowering plants, herbs and vegetables. "Naturally, these would attract insects and bugs. Being afraid of them, she would task me to clear them and look after the plants," recalls Dr Bao. "We also experienced different seasons

and every few months, the garden would bloom with new flowers. It was fascinating for a kid to experience."

That early exposure to horticulture has come full circle today: Dr Bao is now the Chief Executive Officer and Chief Scientific Officer at Singrow, a local agri-genomics firm that has been in the news lately for developing the world's first climate-resilient strawberry variety, grown in Singrow's farm at Science Park, which serves as its research and development hub. While strawberries usually grow in cooler climates of between 5 to 15 degrees Celsius, Singrow's variety thrives anywhere between 20 and 28 degrees Celsius — perfect for

hot locales like Singapore, and also a warming world. This was done by cross-breeding and modifying the genetics of the strawberry, creating a variety that has adapted well to warmer climate conditions. The breakthrough has great implications for food security and the world's carbon emissions, says Dr Bao. "It can be applied to many other crops in the future. We are already experimenting with crops like rice, corn, sustainable palm oil and other staple vegetables, and seeing how these can be grown in new regions to strengthen food security."

Take saffron, for example. This spice is highly favoured in Middle Eastern and South Asian cooking, but close to 95 per cent of it is grown in one country: Iran. According to Dr Bao, this makes its supply and quality unstable. "In our case, we are able to grow the saffron under a controlled environment," he says, adding this could halve the harvest time for saffron to about four months.

Singrow's breakthrough was the result of advanced genomics technology that leverages a deep understanding of plant genomes. Dr Bao cultivated this understanding throughout his time in school. "I spent most of my education studying about plants, all the way from high school." That journey culminated in an opportunity to pursue a PhD in molecular biology from NUS. "It was a chance to work with Professor Yu Hao, a renowned name in science," explains Dr Bao. Prof Yu Hao is the Provost's Chair Professor and Head of Department at the Department of Biological Sciences at the University's Faculty of Science.

PLOTTING HIS OWN PATH

Dr Bao's stellar achievements at NUS pretty much guaranteed him a promising career in academia, complete with tenure at top universities. "But to my parents' dismay, I decided that I wanted to pursue entrepreneurship instead. For Asian parents, a professorship is a very stable and honourable career path. My mother couldn't imagine why I would want to give that up, but after some time, she came around to realising the impact that entrepreneurship could make."

But to Dr Bao, it was an easy decision. He felt that entrepreneurship was one way of bringing his research to life. "I remember walking through the supermarket and being amazed by the variety of fruits and vegetables on sale here. But upon closer inspection, I found that much of the produce was actually from thousands of miles away — including strawberries, which I love to eat. That's when I realised there could be a huge market need for a greater variety of produce grown locally. Entrepreneurship was the way to meet this need."

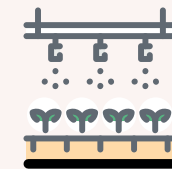
Having trained as an academic doesn't necessarily prepare one for the rigours of entrepreneurship, however. "I knew there was a huge difference between the two roles," says Dr Bao. To tackle this, he turned to NUS once again, relying on its Graduate Research Innovation Programme (GRIP) to shore up his business skills. This comprehensive programme provides participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to get a startup up and running. Support extends to industry link-ups and funding as well.

"My partner and I were in the second cohort and through the programme, we received solid training in skills like venture creation, market



Dr Bao with Mr Alvin Tan (Minister of State for the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth, and the Ministry of Trade & Industry) at Singrow's official farm opening ceremony on 11 April 2023.

We are already experimenting with crops like rice, corn, sustainable palm oil and other staple vegetables, and seeing how these can be grown in new regions to strengthen food security.



SINGROW IN NUMBERS

- It currently has **13 staff**, comprising of researchers, engineers, and indoor farm operations personnel.
- Currently working on **30 crop varieties**, including rice, palm oil, saffron, cherry tomatoes and some types of leafy vegetables.
- Singrow will work with partners to help them reduce their fertiliser use by **30 per cent** and pesticide use by **70 per cent**.
- While the Singrow farm can produce up to **500kg of strawberries** monthly, its current focus is to grow seedlings in their nursery space. Through its partner farms in Malaysia and Thailand farms, production will be increased by **100 times**.

validation and fundraising skills," he shares. "We learnt how to tell a brand story and build a business model that would appeal to investors, clients and partners." With the training and networks built through GRIP, they gained quick recognition in the field and were able to secure their first seed investments fairly swiftly. Part of Dr Bao's success also lay in his clear vision for Singrow and the need it would address. "It definitely helped to have this clear vision before we embarked on our journey," he says.

A LABOUR OF LOVE

That journey continues in earnest today. Dr Bao says that his firm's farms in Singapore can provide produce to hotels and online consumers, but to truly scale up, he is looking at the region. This means working with larger farms in neighbouring Malaysia and Thailand to ramp up supply. "We will provide outdoor farms with our crop varieties so they can grow these crops," he explains. There are also plans to work with these farms to improve their farming techniques so that fertiliser and pesticide use is greatly reduced — by 30 and 70 per cent respectively.

These successes are certainly welcome. But the one that matters most to Dr Bao is the difference his team is making in the community. "It would be very gratifying to see local communities being able to enjoy homegrown strawberries at an affordable price," he shares. Singrow's strawberries currently retail for about \$20 a pack, compared to strawberries from Japan, which are sold from \$35 to \$50 a pack. The community he is impacting includes his own young son. "When I presented my first strawberry harvest from the lab to my family, my son finished the whole box of strawberries," he told CNA earlier this year. "So I realised I'm doing something meaningful for society." **A**

➔ WHO HE IS

For evidence that kindness begets kindness, look no further than Mr Bryan Cheung. Inspired by the support he received over the years, he has given back to various groups in the community, including underprivileged students and the elderly.

Showing Gratitude Through Service

Having taken an unconventional path to arrive at where he is today, **Mr Bryan Cheung (Design and Engineering '23)** is now committed to helping those around him.

NINE-YEAR-OLD UDHAYA'S EYES LIGHT UP AS SHE UNMUTES HER MIC. "The answer is 'A,'" she says confidently. "That's right — good job!" replies Mr Bryan Cheung, who is leading this virtual tuition class. To the uninitiated, this might appear to be a typical virtual enrichment class taking place in Singapore. But it is not. Mr Cheung is actually a volunteer tutor, and his student, Udhaya, is in Sri Lanka. She dials into the weekly Sunday class to improve her English, and her parents hope these classes will help her excel in school and, eventually, break out of poverty. The classes were the

brainchild of NUS students from Raffles Hall, as part of its Overseas Community Involvement Programme (OCIP), explains Mr Cheung, who recently graduated from the University. Similar programmes are also run to help disadvantaged students in Vietnam, he adds.

Dedicating several hours every week to helping the underprivileged may be a tall order for many, but not for Mr Cheung, who was an active volunteer with the tuition programme during his time at the University. "I know what it's like to struggle through school," he shares. "So wherever I can, I'd like to help others out."

RECEIVING AND GIVING BACK

Mr Cheung's experience of struggling through school may surprise those who are recently acquainted with the 26-year-old. After all, he has just graduated from NUS and is preparing for his postgraduate studies at Imperial College London later this year, on a scholarship from transport giant SMRT Corporation. But those who know him better would understand how far Mr Cheung has come — scoring 91 in his PSLE then taking a slightly longer route to university after studying at the Institute of Technical Education and a



Left: Mr Cheung tutoring a fellow student; Right: Engaging seniors as part of Comcare Outreach efforts.



ENGINEERING FOR GOOD

During his time at NUS, Mr Cheung also served as the Vice-President of the Engineering Good: Student Chapter, which tries to improve the lives of people through sustainable engineering solutions. Projects spearheaded by the group include:

▼
A wearable communication device that helps students with difficulties in speech and mobility to communicate with others.

▼
A geotagging system that keeps students with special needs safe while at school.

polytechnic. "What I remember from that journey was the kindness of others, especially my parents," he reveals. "I am very grateful for their unconditional support. They did not pile on extra pressure, and this allowed me to go at my own pace. I feel that such kind of pressure sometimes affects children negatively."

Support came from beyond his family too, Mr Cheung adds. "There were always people willing to believe in me — from my friends and classmates, to complete strangers who were ready to take a chance on me and help me out. And I want to do that for other people too." Such support has sparked his earnest passion for helping others. Beyond his involvement in the Raffles Hall OCIP, he also volunteered as a peer tutor, helping fellow coursemates from the College of Design and Engineering. Peer tutoring was introduced in 2015 at the then Faculty of Engineering. It pairs junior students with senior tutors who had excelled in certain modules.

For Mr Cheung, those topics were Electromagnetics for Electrical Engineers, Introduction to Electrical Energy Systems, and Digital Design. "These were topics that I scored quite well in, so I was happy to lend a helping hand," he tells *The AlumNUS*. "Plus, I myself had benefited from peer tutoring when I first enrolled at NUS, so I wanted to give back."

There were always people willing to believe in me and support me — from my friends and classmates, to complete strangers who were ready to take a chance on me and help me out. And I want to do that for other people too.

BLENDING WORK AND PASSION

During his time at NUS, Mr Cheung also saw how one could combine work with community service. When it was time for his group to consider their Final Year Project last year, he used it as an opportunity to tackle a growing problem in Singapore: the well-being of seniors living alone. Through his stint as a grassroots volunteer with Siglap Community Club, he learnt about the plight of these seniors. "I came across stories of seniors who had fallen down at home and were waiting for someone to hear their cries for help," he shares. "It would have been quite traumatic and dangerous."

Banking on his experience, he led his team on a study to understand the risks faced by seniors living alone and gather their input on a solution that would help them. These interviews were made easier by some of the interdisciplinary modules Mr Cheung took during his time at NUS, particularly one from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences that researched and shed light on different demographic groups in Singapore.

Through these interviews, Mr Cheung and his group learnt that for many seniors living alone, being constantly monitored by caregivers was a luxury they could not afford. So the team designed a system that uses artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things (IoT) to detect falls. They also took into account that many seniors are wary of wearable devices and CCTV cameras. By installing a smart pressure monitoring system and implementing machine learning algorithms, his team successfully achieved the goal of detecting and reducing the false fall rate with a user-friendly dashboard system. Mr Cheung credits this achievement to the collaborative efforts of his teammates.

The system is currently in its prototyping stage, and Mr Cheung and his team are awaiting the results of a grant application to develop the system further. Assisting the elderly, meanwhile, is something he hopes to continue when he returns from his postgraduate studies in a few years. "The entire experience has been very heartwarming," he says. "I enjoy interacting with seniors a lot, so this has been a meaningful opportunity to try and help them." **A**



IN

THE BLINK OF AN EYE,
THE ANNUAL NUS ARTS
FESTIVAL 2023: SPACES
BETWEEN HAS COME

AND GONE. An enthusiastic crowd of 7,600 audience members turned up to support more than 20 live performances, films, public art, installations and dialogue sessions across three weekends in March. Close to 800 National University of Singapore (NUS) students, alumni, faculty, staff and collaborators took part — nearly twice that of 2022's figures — making *NUS Arts Festival* the largest performing arts event on campus. The lifting of pandemic restrictions resulted in greater room for creativity and experimentation, as more performers could be fielded, and different venues could be explored to offer a variety of viewing experiences.

A handful of performances took place in intimate liminal spaces, an ode to the theme, *Spaces Between*. *MOONRISE*, an immersive multisensorial musical experience, took place in the UCC Atrium. Led by NUS Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music alumna Ms Churen Li (Music '15), who goes by the stage name CHUREN, it featured a first-time collaboration with soundscape artist/music producer evanturetime and digital effects artist Prako. The visually stunning show featured CHUREN's modern interpretations of classics such as *Clair de Lune* and *Moonlight Sonata* amid found sounds and subtle beat-



NUS Arts Festival returned to pre-pandemic levels, with no restrictions on performing groups or audience sizes. The creative performances included *kSanti - Patiently Waiting* (above).

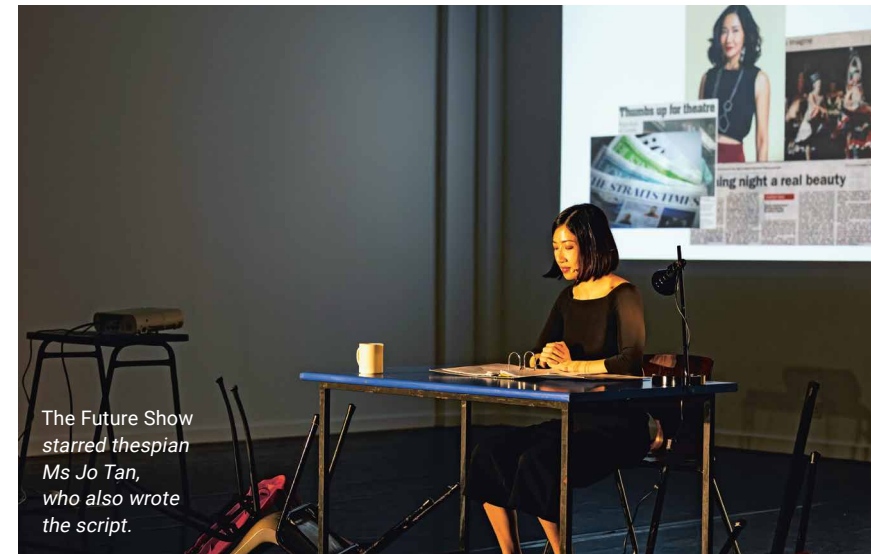
driven soundscapes, complete with digital visual design. "We explored the liminal space between three different artistic praxes: classical piano, music production and video art," CHUREN said. "We wanted to transcend the boundaries of our individual disciplines and build synergy between the realms of sound and vision. The ideal space for this project was not in a conventional arts space, but rather in the UCC atrium, to create the unexpectedness of walking into an artistic world that the audience member does not expect."



Classical contemporary pianist CHUREN conceptualised and headlined *MOONRISE*, an immersive audiovisual music showcase.

Also taking place in a liminal space was the one-woman play, *The Future Show*, headlined by Ms Jo Tan (Law '04). It is the first Singaporean version of the internationally performed concept by Canadian playwright Deborah Pearson. Marketed as a performance to be staged in a secret location, *The Future Show* took place within the frills-free CFA Studios. It welcomed only a maximum of 40 audience members per show, making it the festival's most intimate production.

CFA Studios was chosen in part due to Ms Tan's personal affinity to the space as a former student artist and resident of the neighbouring Raffles Hall. The venue was effective as a companion



The *Future Show* starred thespian Ms Jo Tan, who also wrote the script.

to Ms Tan's intense and visceral performance of her imagined life in the near and distant future, one of hope, insecurities and mortality. It has also inspired her to visit other spaces within the NUS campus to write material for the show.

"The play has allowed me to reconnect quite personally with my alma mater, NUS, as I found myself revisiting different areas of the campus so as to best predict the different possible thoughts and happenings that would arise after someone leaves our performance space and passes through the university grounds," said Ms Tan.

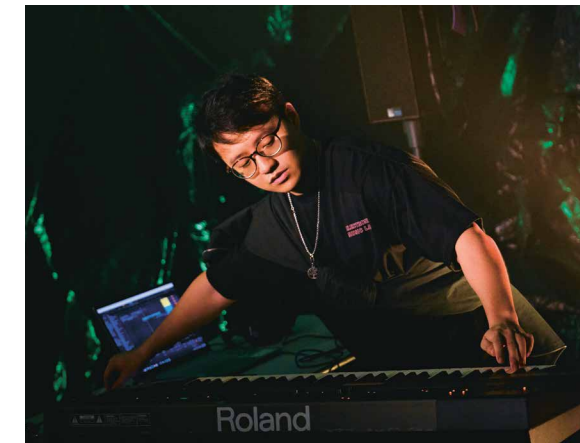
Also taking place in an unconventional space was *OmniVerse: The Fourth Dimension*, an electronic

music showcase by the NUS Electronic Music Lab, which featured 15 original music tracks in chillwave, synthwave and darksynth. It was staged at the lesser-known UCC Dance Studios, located along an alleyway on level 2. Finding the space required the help of festival volunteers, and an intentionally designed blue-lighted path.

Mr Ho Jia Wei, President of NUS Electronic Music Lab and second-year Computing student, supported the choice of the space. "This year's performance was unique as it was not a regular sit-down show where the audience would be stationary," he said. "Instead, they were able to move around during the performance and experience how space and

music can interact with each other to create a sense of liminality."

The pushing of these creative boundaries resulted in interesting collaborations and refreshing discoveries. *End of the Line* — a jukebox musical on the struggles of youth exacerbated by cyberbullying and peer pressure — stretched the



OmniVerse: The Fourth Dimension by the NUS Electronic Music Lab was staged at the lesser-known UCC Dance Studios.

abilities of the NUS Stage actors. It also brought to light the songwriting abilities of some of its talented cast, which included NUS Stage Vice-President, Ms Lim Jia Ying, a second-year Science student. "The other NUS Stage performances I've been involved in were very naturalistic and focused on acting," said Ms Lim. "*End of the Line*, however, is a collaboratively devised piece, which weaves our personal life stories and experiences into a story that highlights what is important to our generation. It also incorporates live singing, lip-syncing, dancing and acting. This also marks my first foray into lyric writing and composition."

Beyond the artistry, *NUS Arts Festival* also provided the opportunity to imbue character-building, learning moments that endure long after curtain call. Ms Abirami Senthil Kumar, a second-year Environmental Engineering student and President of NUS Indian Dance, who performed in *kSanti - Patiently Waiting*, had this to share. "*kSanti - Patiently Waiting* has helped me reflect on all the areas in life that we knowingly or unknowingly wait and be patient for. It has been such a special experience to see all the dancers apply their reflections and gain more insights as they went deeper into the topic of spaces between." ▲

A Journey Well-spent in the Spaces Between

Highlights from *NUS Arts Festival 2023*, a showcase of the possibilities for creative expression.



End of the Line featured both existing pop songs and original songs written by NUS Stage members.

TWO GIFTS TOTALLING \$8 MILLION MADE RECENTLY TO NUS BY MR LIN TAH HWA will give a big push to translational research in mental health as well as attracting and retaining top academic talent in private law.

PROMOTING VITAL RESEARCH TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH OF SINGAPOREANS

The NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (NUS Medicine) received a gift of \$6 million to enhance the work of the Mind Science Centre, an academic centre under the School. In recognition of the generous gift, the Centre has been renamed the Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre, in memory of Mr Lin's late mother.

Mr Hsieh Fu Hua (Business '74), Chairman of the NUS Board of Trustees, highlighted that the Centre has grown from strength to strength as a result of the generosity of many who had given their time and resources to building the Centre's mission. "We have been fortunate to have gathered many ardent supporters to ensure that the Centre's work would be sustainable to deliver long-term impact. Our sincere gratitude goes to Mr Lin Tah Hwa, who has made a generous gift of \$6 million to help the Centre build an endowment that will provide a tremendous springboard towards strengthening mental health resilience in Singapore," he said.

Mr Lin said, "The naming of the Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre is

(my mother's) humble gift to charity and society. It is in line with the values that she imparted to me — to always remember to help others less fortunate than ourselves, to have a sense of gratitude to the community and country when we have good fortune, and to always know the joy of giving something back to our fellow human beings when the time comes. These are the values my mother taught me during her life, and these are the values I hope, by example, to impart to others now that she is gone."

The Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre was launched on 5 May 2023, and Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security Mr Teo Chee Hean attended the event as the Guest of Honour.

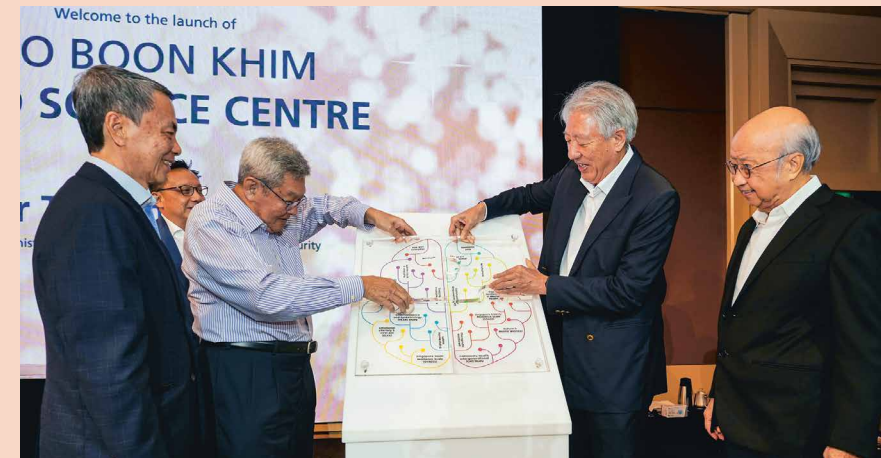
Mr Teo noted that mental health is more pressing for Singapore today than ever before, affecting all segments of our society. The incidence of age-related mental conditions will also rise in tandem with an ageing

population. "Addressing these challenges is critical, as mental health is an integral part of good health. We need all segments of society to work towards this common goal of strengthening the mental health and well-being of our people. The launch of this research centre is a major and timely one to boost our national effort," he said.

Mr Teo added, "What makes this centre stand out is its focus not just on mental health research, but also translating this research into community interventions, including early detection and preventive strategies. I look forward to the Centre's continued focus on translational research that produces outcomes of direct benefit to our community. I am confident that (its) work will continue to positively impact the mental health and well-being of Singaporeans for many years to come."

Growing Knowledge Via Generosity

NUS receives two gifts totalling \$8 million to advance mind health research and attract top talent in private law.



The Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre was launched by Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security Mr Teo Chee Hean (second from right) as the Guest of Honour. He was accompanied by NUS Chairman Mr Hsieh Fu Hua (extreme left), Mr Lin Tah Hwa (second from left), and Dr Cheong Choong Kong (Business '77) (extreme right). (Photo: NUS Medicine)

The Mind Science Centre was set up in 2016 to carry out translational research on mental health and resilience, as well as build preventive strategies and social interventions — with an emphasis on early detection — to tackle mental health risk factors in the local community. The Centre uses approaches such as brain imaging, behavioural experiments and computational modelling to research topics ranging from emotion and motivation, perception and attention, to decision-making and social cognition.

One of the Centre's notable works is the *Jurong Ageing Study*, which is a 10-year study on ageing within a cohort of elderly participants living in the western region of Singapore. Findings from this cohort study have been incorporated into the Age Well Everyday Programme and translated into tangible activities and efforts to increase socialisation and delay cognitive deterioration among seniors.

The Centre has also recently completed the *NUS Youth Epidemiology and Resilience Study* — this is Singapore's first

nationwide study on the mental health status and resilience of its youths.

In addition to research, the Centre offers training and education in mind science, including workshops, courses and seminars for students, researchers, healthcare professionals and the general public. It also hosts public events and outreach activities to promote mental health awareness and understanding.

Expressing the School's appreciation for the gift, Dean of NUS Medicine Professor Chong Yap Seng (Medicine '88) said, "We are deeply grateful to Mr Lin Tah Hwa for his generosity.

This gift will support the transformational work being carried out at the Yeo Boon Khim Mind Science Centre as it develops innovative strategies to address and boost the mental well-being of Singaporeans."

"This will be an important pillar for Singapore in the arena of psychological medicine as our country reforms its healthcare system, targeting better population health under its Healthier SG strategy," he added.

NEW LAW PROFESSORSHIP TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN TOP TALENT

Mr Lin has also made a \$2 million gift to the NUS Faculty of Law to establish the Chan Sek Keong Professorship in Private Law. Named in honour of Singapore's third Chief Justice — who is also a personal friend of Mr Lin — this new Professorship aims to help NUS Law attract and retain the finest academics in the field of private law, which includes contract law, equity, property restitution, torts and trusts.

"NUS Law is deeply grateful to Mr Lin for his selfless generosity in establishing this Professorship in honour of his friend, thus enabling us to recognise Dr Chan's far-reaching contributions to Singapore law as one of our finest legal minds. Building on his legacy, the Chair will support research and education by an esteemed academic in private law, a field that is of vital importance to Singapore's prosperity and stability," added Professor Andrew Simester, Dean of NUS Law.

Since 2009, Mr Lin and his family have also made four other professorship gifts to NUS. **A**



Thanks to the generous gift from Mr Lin Tah Hwa (centre left), the NUS Faculty of Law — represented by NUS Dean of Law Professor Andrew Simester (Affiliate Alumnus '19) (centre right) — has established the new Chan Sek Keong Professorship in Private Law. (Photo: NUS Medicine)

S TEPPIING INTO THE PROFESSIONAL REALM AFTER GRADUATION CAN BE BOTH EXCITING AND INTIMIDATING.

With the job landscape evolving at an unprecedented rate, fresh graduates must adapt quickly and continuously upskill to stay competitive. To make this transition smoother, here is some helpful advice put together in collaboration with the Centre for Future-ready Graduates (CFG), NUS' dedicated career centre.

► Remember Your Purpose, Set Realistic Goals

Amid the busyness of deadlines and targets, it is easy to lose sight of why you chose your path. But reconnecting with your initial motivations can put the spark back in your work. For example, consider reflecting on the positive impact of a past mentor or engaging in problem-solving exercises to revive your excitement for strategic

Navigating the start of your career journey

The Centre for Future-ready Graduates shares insights and strategies to thrive in a rapidly changing job market.

thinking. By intentionally recalling your passions and motivations, you can maintain enthusiasm even amid routine and stress.

Setting clear goals aligned to your purpose is equally important. Goals provide a clear direction for growth and development, and boost your motivation as you make progress. Remember, good goals are SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound.

► Lifelong Learning: A Career Constant

The end of your degree should not signify the end of your learning journey. Instead, try adopting a mindset that eagerly embraces the opportunity to learn, unlearn and relearn.

After all, in the face of rapid technological advancement and shifting work cultures, continuous learning has become a professional imperative. According to the World Economic Forum, 65 per cent of primary school children today will work in jobs that do not yet exist. This shows the dynamism of the job market and the urgent need for adaptability and lifelong learning, as the skills needed for future careers may vastly differ from those commonly taught today. Just think of the emerging technologies that are changing industries today, such as robotics capable of even more intricate manufacturing tasks, and renewable energy technologies like solar panels transforming the energy landscape.

One study by data collection platform Qualtrics reported in *The Straits Times* also found a strong link between job satisfaction in Singapore and sufficient training. This shows the importance of professional development and how workers value employers who invest in their growth.

So how do you continue learning? Stay curious, read widely, keep your finger on the pulse of industry news, attend courses and conferences, and seek mentors who can share their experiences.

If you are interested in upskilling to stay competitive, NUS SCALE (School of Continuing and Lifelong Education) offers several relevant options for alumni. One is the NUS Lifelong Learning (L³) initiative, which offers a wide array of skills-based and industry-relevant courses, as well as access to modular courses that can be stacked towards certificate programmes. Another is the NUS Resilience & Growth (R&G) Initiative, which was specially created for those who were



3 WAYS TO GROW YOUR NETWORK

1 conNectUS: Join this vibrant platform that brings together alumni, students and professionals from the NUS community. Sign up to start exchanging ideas, gaining insights and exploring exciting opportunities.
 > connectus.nus.edu.sg

2 NUS Internship-As-A-Service (IAAS): Need more hands with a project? IAAS is a two-sided gig marketplace that offers access to NUS students eager to take on short-term, well-defined projects with companies.
 > iaas.nus.edu.sg

3 Industry Insights: Share your expertise with students and mingle with other industry professionals as a speaker at this course designed to provide students with real-world industry exposure.
 > bit.ly/CFG-Insights

conferred their undergraduate degrees in 2020 or 2021. This initiative aims to future-proof fresh graduates so they are ready to seize new opportunities. Beyond these, the University also offers a rich selection of postgraduate courses for those looking to delve deeper into their fields of interest.

In addition, you might want to explore the SkillsFuture platform for exploring further upskilling opportunities, which can complement and enhance the education you received at NUS. Leveraging these resources enables alumni to future-proof their careers and adapt to evolving market trends.

► Embrace Challenges, Own Your Work

Seeing challenges as opportunities is a crucial piece of advice CFG career advisors often give to graduates. Of course, every professional journey has its share of obstacles. But it is how you respond to these hurdles that truly matters and shapes your career trajectory.

Taking ownership of your work is equally important. When you assume responsibility for your tasks, it showcases your dedication and reliability. Adopting a positive attitude and demonstrating genuine interest in contributing to your company's success can make a lasting impression.

Resilience and accountability are key factors in your career growth. So, stay open-minded, step up to challenges and maintain a positive outlook. Interestingly, a LinkedIn study revealed that 92 per cent of hiring managers prioritise soft skills like adaptability and ownership over qualifications.

► Build Your Brand and Find Your Tribe

In today's competitive job market, personal branding and networking have become pivotal elements of a successful career. This does not necessarily mean becoming an Instagram influencer, but rather aligning your work with your values, skills and strengths. By doing so, you can develop a unique personal brand that not only sets you apart but also significantly contributes to your professional success.

Apart from personal branding, having a support network that shares your values, trusts your judgement and wants to see you succeed is incredibly valuable. It can give you



In the face of rapid technological advancement and shifting work cultures, continuous learning has become a professional imperative.

professional and emotional support, making the journey less isolating and more fulfilling. Findings from a global Gallup study last year confirm this. Employees with a strong sense of belonging in the workplace are 3.5 times more productive, engaged and innovative.

► The Power of Gratitude and Paying It Forward

The benefits of cultivating a spirit of gratitude are well-documented. Other than taking pause to appreciate what you have achieved or received in your career journey, research has shown that appreciating the contributions of others you work with can enhance job satisfaction and strengthen professional relationships.

Everyone has something valuable to share from their career journey. Consider paying it forward via mentorships or perhaps returning to NUS as a speaker. You may find yourself not only contributing to the lives of others, but also gaining new skills and experiences along the way while enhancing your professional network.

Building a fulfilling and successful career involves many twists and turns along the way. Each one offers you an opportunity to learn, grow and make a difference. By remembering your motivations, embracing continuous learning, cultivating adaptability, building supportive networks and practising gratitude, you can position yourself to thrive in your career. **A**

Visit nus.edu.sg/cfg/alumni to support your career goals with CFG.

2023 Spring Equinox Dinner



18 March 2023

Members of the NUS Alumni Toronto Chapter and their spouses gathered at Lion City restaurant in Ontario to celebrate the Spring Equinox. Coming together after the pandemic restrictions, everyone was in a joyful mood.

The management at Lion City took really good care of guests with a customised menu that had everyone excited. Special thanks goes to Toronto Chapter committee members Ms Jean Lian (Arts and Social Sciences '97) and Ms Billie Lu (Arts and Social Sciences '85) for organising this event.

InSPIRxE Mentorship Programme closing ceremony



1 April 2023

The Department of Pharmacy ended the second run of its flagship alumni mentorship programme, InSPIRxE (Inspiring Students in Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Science through Interactions and Enrichment) on a high note with an in-person closing ceremony on 1 April.

In this iteration, 22 alumni mentored 38 Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Science undergraduate mentees for nine months. Mentors and mentees gathered at the Pharmacy Practice Skills Hub to celebrate their achievements and friendships formed after a journey of growth and self-development. Highlights of



the event included human bingo, testimony-sharing and card-making. It was truly heartening to see how InSPIRxE had been beneficial

to both mentors and mentees. The organisers welcome returning and new alumni mentors and mentees for the next iteration of InSPIRxE.

Chengdu Chapter Bonding Lunch



16 April 2023

The NUS Alumni Chengdu Chapter gathered for a long-awaited bonding lunch on 16 April. This was the chapter's first event after three years, and the excitement among alumni was palpable. Singapore's Consul-General in Chengdu was invited to attend the gathering, making the event even more special.

The event was a resounding success, and the feedback from alumni was overwhelmingly positive. They were glad that the gathering was organised, as it gave them an opportunity to reconnect with NUS.

The presence of the Consul-General and members



Singapore's Consul-General in Chengdu, Mr Joel Tan, delivering a speech at the event.

of Singcham at the event also provided alumni with a valuable networking opportunity.

More than five alumni volunteered to share their professional experiences and talk about their lives after returning to Chengdu. This was one of the key highlights of the lunch, as it gave alumni an opportunity to mingle. The food served was also a hit, as nothing brings back those fond memories of Singapore and NUS better than Singaporean food. Overall, the event was a great success, and the alumni left feeling reconnected with NUS and one another.



In Appreciation of Alumni and Friends



12 May 2023

On the evening of 12 May, the NUS College of Design and Engineering (CDE) hosted its inaugural Alumni and Friends Appreciation Dinner. This event brought together a diverse community, including alumni, friends, faculty and staff, to express gratitude and recognise the invaluable support of individuals who have made a lasting impact on CDE. The organisers would like to express their heartfelt thanks to the panellists who attended the event and shared their experiences and insights on giving back



to the community. Through their stories, attendees had the privilege of gaining valuable perspectives and gained a better understanding

what drives and motivates them to continue making a difference. Their commitment to service is an inspiration to us all.

Sundowner Cocktails and Send-off for Singapore Ambassador to the Philippines

16 April 2023



The NUS Alumni Manila Chapter hosted its first major in-person gathering in 2023 at the Long Bar, Raffles Hotel, Makati City, Metro Manila, on 16 April.

Twenty-five alumni were present at the gathering representing seven faculties and schools, including those from the Arts and Social Sciences, Business, Computing, Design and Environment, Public Policy, Science, and Medicine. Ambassador Mr Gerard Ho (Arts and Social Sciences '97) was accompanied by Deputy Chief of Mission and Counsellor Mr Pan Jingxuan and Second Secretary (Political) Ms Amanda Cheah.

Chapter Chairperson Mr Richard Tan (Public Policy '13)



welcomed all participants and guests, introduced the new chapter officers for the term 2023/24, and shared his short vision and plans for 2023. Each member present then gave a brief introduction of themselves. Vice Chairperson Mr Nestor Precioso (Science '06) then read the chapter's message of thanks to Ambassador Ho and initiated a toast to wish him all the best in his new role. The Ambassador then thanked everyone in attendance for their good wishes. Mr Tan

then gave the chapter's token of appreciation to the Ambassador.

Afterward, a short statement was given by Ms Ruby Liu, Area Director of the Singapore Tourism Board in the Philippines. Cocktails and networking continued until 7.30pm, with everyone enjoying the company of fellow alumni, Long Bar's Singapore Sling, and a combination of Singapore and Filipino samplers featuring chicken satay, chilli crab spring rolls, char kway teow, chicken inasal and sisig.



NUS COLLEGE

Guided Autobiography Course with Professor Philip Holden

From late January to early April, alumni members who had signed up for the Guided Autobiography course (GAB) with Professor Philip Holden were taken on a journey to "re-story" their lives. Prof Holden had set the expectation for these sessions in his introductory email to participants: "What should you bring to our meeting? Just yourself, your memories, aspirations, and an eagerness to share and listen."

And this was the beauty of the course: A space that recognised the unique stories we each carry and — more importantly — a space where participants could each give voice to their deepest hopes, fears and dreams, and be listened to. Recent years have shown just how precious social connection is, and having a place where one can feel heard and witnessed, with no judgment or censure, is a real gift.

Some participants expressed how they were sharing secrets that they had never revealed before, while others appreciated

the opportunity to excavate treasures from past events they thought they had long forgotten. The fact that all sessions were held online made this level of depth and vulnerability all the more impressive.

Indeed, this first iteration of GAB in a virtual setting proved to be a resounding success, for it was a truly global convening of USP graduates. Meeting over Zoom enabled participants based in the US, Europe, East and Southeast Asia to come together with their Singapore counterparts, and be guided by Prof Holden, who currently resides in Canada. It was just weeks earlier, that the well-respected literature professor had held the inaugural run of GAB in a face-to-face setting.

Together, participants weaved a collective online space that grew richer by the week. This involved reflecting on key incidents and themes that often led to surprising insights and revelations about themselves and one another. Several had registered for this course because they had wanted to learn how to craft



Prof Philip Holden.

a standout resume for work, but professed that they had received so much more from the weekly exercises and shares than they had initially expected.

Undoubtedly, Prof Holden's GAB has everything that a student can expect from USP/NUSC: The strength of an intimate setting, rigorous intellectual discussions, and dynamic sharing in small groups. Participants came from diverse fields and age groups, and learning was made all the richer by the mix of perspectives and life experiences. As an offering that seeks to enrich the well-being of alumni, this course is a unique and valuable opportunity to forge new friendships and strengthen connections with self and others.



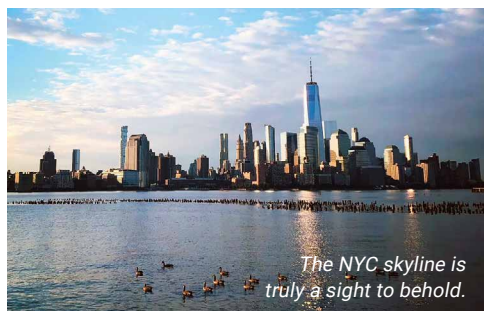
**What should you bring to our meeting?
Just yourself, your memories, aspirations,
and an eagerness to share and listen.** Prof Philip Holden

New York, New York

See Gotham through the eyes of **Mr Vikram Sivakumar (Computing '11)**, who now calls the city home.

In many ways, New York City is a world away from Singapore — quite literally, as getting there can entail travelling on the world's longest flight. But given that both cities are places where one can indulge in a love for food, art, culture and cosmopolitanism, the Big Apple and the Little Red Dot are kindred spirits. Just ask Mr Vikram Sivakumar, who moved to NYC five years ago with his wife, Ms Dhanya Balasubramanian (Engineering '13). "My wife came here to study at Columbia University, and I followed suit," explains the 34-year-old, who works for a management consulting firm. "I visited the city in 2008 when I was at NUS. Frankly, I didn't like it very much. Public transportation, for example, felt like a downgrade from Singapore. But my impressions changed when I moved here for work a decade later. I've grown to love everything about the city: Its energy, people and diversity. Someone once said, 'You can experience the cultures of the world through one city — that's NYC.' I couldn't agree more."

I love starting my mornings at one of the many cafés that dot the city. Any one will do, as long as it bakes fresh, aromatic and decadent cinnamon buns. If you're feeling health-conscious, make a beeline for one of NYC's famous parks. I love **Prospect Park** in Brooklyn. It's massive, green and in the



The NYC skyline is truly a sight to behold.



Tucking into good Indian food and dessert in New York City.



In summer, you can jet-ski on the Hudson River.

summer, hosts spectacular food trucks. A run in the crisp morning air can take your mind off things and make you forget the hustle and bustle of the big city.

Getting a taste of home is quite easy, given NYC's vibrant and diverse food scene. Our current favourites are **Semma**, a South Indian spot that just earned a Michelin star. For an affordable spice fix, we head to **Lao Ma Spicy**, which whips up dry hotpot, or **Pure Thai Cookhouse** for tangy Thai food.

A small yet mighty establishment is **Eileen's**, which has some of the best cheesecake I've ever had. It's a small outfit but I've yet to meet anyone who doesn't like the cake.

New Yorkers love to read, and the city caters to this with its many bookstores. I've been picking up "rare" prints of books (think limited-edition books published in the 1950s, or first editions of books I love). Apart from the traditional bookstore experience (**Strand** is my favourite), there are plenty of rare bookstores to check out, among them **Bauman**. But these books don't come cheap!

Soak in the city's best views at Hudson Yards. It truly has spectacular sweeping views of the city.

Shopaholics will enjoy a bargain at **Woodbury Commons**, home to outlet stores from Givenchy to Kenzo. People come in with an empty suitcase and leave with a big smile.



The best way to spend a day in New York City:

8am ➤ Stroll through **Central Park**, bagel in hand.

10am ➤ Get lost in a world-class museum — the **Museum of Modern Art** or the **American Museum of Natural History** are great picks.

12pm ➤ Savour a lunchtime pizza slice while walking down **5th Avenue**.

2pm ➤ Spend some reflective time at the **National September 11 Memorial and Museum**.

4pm ➤ Wander along the **High Line**, a 2.4km elevated park, for stunning city views.

6pm ➤ Have an early dinner at one of the city's famous homestyle Italian restaurants.

8pm ➤ Lose yourself in a **Broadway show**.

11pm ➤ Sip cocktails at a speakeasy bar, before wrapping your day at a late-night comedy show, at **Comedy Cellar**.



Cultivating a Better Tomorrow

Sowing the seeds for a sustainable future, NUS is nurturing future leaders with the Plant-it-Forward Challenge while taking on climate change — one tree at a time.

Inspired by the wisdom of an age-old Chinese proverb — "It takes ten years to grow a tree, but a hundred years to nurture a person" — the National University of Singapore (NUS) is charting a greener and more equitable course with the launch of the Plant-it-Forward Challenge. This innovative initiative intertwines the cultivation of tomorrow's leaders with environmental responsibility.

BRANCHING OUT

Back in 2018, NUS embarked on a bold mission: To plant 10,000 trees in three years. This drive — aimed at mitigating the urban heat island effect and boosting oxygen production — culminated in 2020, thanks to the University community's collective efforts. Buoyed by this success, NUS has

since ramped up its green efforts, pledging to plant an additional 90,000 trees by 2030 in support of the National Parks Board's One Million Trees initiative.

The concept of the Plant-it-Forward Challenge sprouted during a tree-planting event at the edge of Kranji Coastal Nature Park in September 2022. Led by NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85) and Co-chair of the NUS Alumni Advisory Board Mr Johnny Tan (Science '82), a dedicated group of volunteers heaved garden hoes and nestled young saplings into the soil. The day's activities sparked a transformative idea: Could the University's fight against climate change also strengthen its commitment to fostering future generations of leaders?



NUS President, Prof Tan Eng Chye, wielding a cangkul during the tree-planting event with NUS Cares volunteers at Kranji Coastal Nature Park in September 2022.



In 2022, the University introduced the Enhanced Financial Aid Scheme (EFAS) to ensure quality education opportunities are available to all students. The Scheme includes full tuition coverage, living expenses aid, and support for on-campus and overseas programmes for Singaporean undergraduates from lower-income households.

The Plant-it-Forward Challenge bolsters EFAS and also strengthens the University's environmental commitment. The key idea is simple: For every \$1,000 raised to support our undergraduates through the Challenge, a tree will be planted on campus. This allows the NUS community and friends to help our financially needy students while also contributing to a greener environment.

Our future generations deserve a world ripe with opportunity, where they can flourish despite their financial circumstances. With each tree planted and every dollar donated in support of the Plant-it-Forward Challenge, NUS is nurturing not only the earth but also our students. By intertwining these causes, the University aims to build a more sustainable and inclusive future. This initiative goes beyond planting trees — it is about cultivating minds and possibilities.



Join the Plant-it-Forward Challenge today to build a better future for students and the earth alike. Please scan the QR code to make a gift.



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NUS MUSEUM

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- museum.nus.edu.sg

NUS MUSEUM



SHAW FOUNDATION ALUMNI HOUSE

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NUS LIBRARIES

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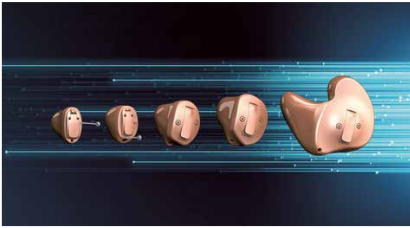
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Office of Alumni Relations

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Photo: Wilson Pang

THE NEXT CHAPTER AWAITS

As he moves into his new role, **Mr Bernard Toh (Architecture '84)**, the outgoing Director, NUS Office of Alumni Relations, looks back on challenges faced and triumphs achieved.

ANYONE WHO SUCCESSFULLY LED A TEAM DURING THE PANDEMIC can certainly claim a badge of honour. In the case of Mr Bernard Toh, this is just the latest in a long line of achievements spanning a stellar career.

As Director of the NUS Office of Alumni Relations (OAR), Mr Toh's job took him around the world as he sought to reinforce alumni ties and build NUS' stature as a leading global university. But even as this journey comes to a close, he is not about to ride off into the sunset just yet. "I will be returning to the NUS Office of the President to do special projects," he reveals. This, in fact, marks a return to his previous role and an opportunity to do more good work. "I turn 63 this year," says the father of three. "I hope to continue making meaningful contributions to NUS for another two years. My plan is to dedicate more time to 'smell the roses' once I reach 65." Read on, and you will see he means to take this statement quite literally.

How did the pandemic impact alumni relations?

In early 2020, when lockdowns became necessary, alumni relations ground to a halt temporarily. But when it became clear that the

situation was here to stay for a while, my team and I pivoted to the digital space and soon became adept at using Zoom to conduct webinars, networking sessions and even online sing-along sessions. Before COVID-19, the digital space was seen as a last resort. Now, it has become the norm, with many of our programmes in hybrid mode.

What would you consider to be your biggest achievement at OAR?

I am not sure if it is right to call it my "biggest achievement", but after taking over, I quickly got a sense of what needed strategic attention. There were two areas: Knowledge of our alumni family and how well we were engaging our alumni. The first had to do with our alumni database. We invested three years in shaping the new database system. At the same time, we discovered an instrument called "Alumni Engagement Metrics", which measures alumni engagement in four modes: Philanthropy, Volunteerism, Experiential and Communications. We added a fifth area — Lifelong Learning. Although this is still a work in progress, I am happy to have introduced a way to help gauge the effectiveness of our engagement work.

What was the most enriching aspect of your time as Director?

Alumni relations is about relationship



Honing his skills with fellow alumni golfers as NUS Golf Captain.

building — this is the most satisfying and enriching aspect of the role. I am deeply grateful to all those I have met in Singapore and across the globe. Each of them has taught and given me something. I hope I have reciprocated in some way.

What are your hopes for the NUS alumni community?

That it will grow from strength to strength. I have always believed and preached that alumni groups must be self-organising, self-sufficient and self-sustaining. I have witnessed such growth in several of our alumni groups.

Will your new role afford you more time to pursue your passions — and what would those be?

I have a new hobby — gardening. I hope to grow edible plants, and have already started to reorganise the pocket-sized garden that I am blessed with! 

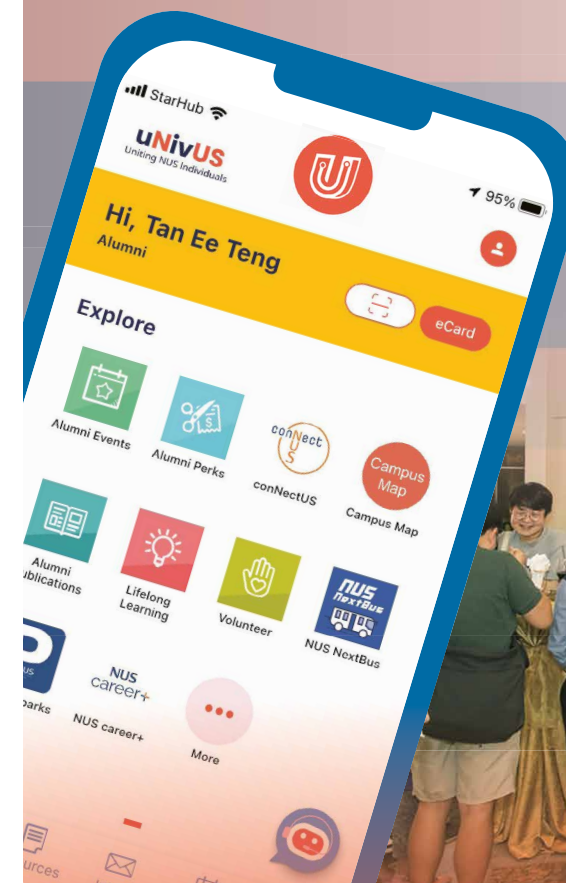
➤ Scan the QR code to read the full version of this interview:



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