

The

ALUMNUS

issue #123 — OCT-DEC 2020

"Doing good should begin from the heart, but it has to be further developed by applying the mind and the will."

MR HSIEH FU HUA (BUSINESS '74), CHAIRMAN, NUS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

A GOLDEN DREAM COMES TRUE

SENIOR ALUMNI PLAY A KEY ROLE IN AN INITIATIVE ON ASSISTED LIVING FOR THE ELDERLY

THE MAKER MAKES HIS MARK

MR VEERAPPAN SWAMINATHAN (ENGINEERING + USP '11)

A GRACIOUS SOCIETY: ARE WE THERE YET?

A DISCUSSION ON JUST HOW 'STATE OF THE HEART' SINGAPORE IS

COMING TOGETHER FOR GOOD

THE NUS FAMILY RETHINKS ITS APPROACH TO CONTRIBUTING TO THE COMMUNITY IN A COVID-19 WORLD

Panellists:



Ms Grace Fu
(Business '85)

Minister for Sustainability
and the Environment



Mr Abhas Jha

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



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

Dean of Students, NUS



Ms Feng Yuan

Student Winner of
Essay Competition



Mr Viswa Sadasivan
(Arts and Social Sciences '83)

Former NMP,
U@live Moderator and Chairman

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

The climate change and sustainable development debate is very much defined by the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report. The key thrust of the Report is about the dilemma of "meet[ing] the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

The spirit of this Report lives on in the latest supranational climate change agreements and agendas, including the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Yet, adaptation and mitigation to climate change are highly costly endeavours. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates that adapting to climate change would cost \$500 billion per year, by 2050. These costs will pose a financial strain for countries the world over. This is especially so for countries that are just emerging from the clasp of poverty, and beginning to see improvement in their population's quality of life.

Can countries, and the world, find that critical balance – in the climate change debate – between addressing today's realities and the needs of tomorrow? This means taking into account issues of parity, ethics and accountability to future generations.

**30 October 2020
Friday, 7.30PM**



Register at:
alumnet.events/UALIVE



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AWARD OF EXCELLENCE
Magazines, Journals & Tabloids +32PP

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

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NUS PRO-CHANCELLOR PROFESSOR S JAYAKUMAR (LAW '63) headed this year's National Day Awards, receiving the country's highest civilian award – the Order of Temasek (With High Distinction) – for his sustained and invaluable contributions to the nation.

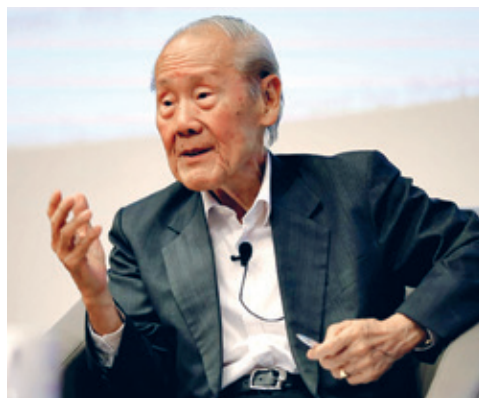
Prof Jayakumar's illustrious public service career spans decades. He was Singapore's Permanent Representative to the United Nations and High Commissioner to Canada from 1971 to 1974. From 1980, he held many portfolios including Minister for Law, Home Affairs, Labour, and Foreign Affairs, and also served as Deputy Prime Minister, Senior Minister, and Coordinating Minister for National Security,



The Order of Temasek (With High Distinction) went to NUS Pro-Chancellor Professor S Jayakumar.

ALUMNI RECOGNISED FOR LONGSTANDING SERVICE TO SINGAPORE

Several distinguished individuals with strong ties to NUS were honoured at this year's National Day Awards ceremony.



University Professor Wang Gungwu received the Distinguished Service Order.

until retiring from politics in 2011. He is now Senior Legal Advisor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. In these roles, he has helped the country tackle complicated diplomatic issues, defending Singapore's legal interests while maintaining good relations with other countries.

Professor Wang Gungwu (Arts '53), University Professor and a faculty member of NUS Arts and Social Sciences, was conferred the Distinguished Service Order. Prof Wang was the founding Chairman of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at NUS, and the former Chairman of the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute and NUS East Asian Institute. He played a key role in building up the three institutes and strengthening their research capabilities to foster a strong culture of excellence. Under his leadership, the three institutes have grown into internationally reputable research institutes and think-tanks, strengthening Singapore's position

as an independent base for leading research on China and East Asia, and enhancing research and academic exchanges between Singaporean and overseas scholars.

"I have enjoyed all the work I have been able to do and learnt a great deal while doing it. This is an honour I share with my wife Margaret, whose deep feelings for Singapore have made my work here all the more satisfying," said Prof Wang on 7 August. Prof Wang's wife, Mrs Margaret Wang, passed away later that day. The University extends its deepest condolences to Prof Wang and his family.

Associate Professor Benjamin Ong (Medicine '81), NUS Senior Vice President (Health Education & Resources) and Immediate Past Director of Medical Services at the Ministry of Health, was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal.



Associate Professor Benjamin Ong, NUS Senior Vice President (Health Education & Resources) and Immediate Past Director of Medical Services at the Ministry of Health, was conferred the Meritorious Service Medal (Photo: Singapore Medical Council).

Assoc Prof Ong had been the Chief Executive of the National University Health System. He made significant contributions in the areas of electronic health records, patient safety, quality, and care models. He developed the NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health and nurtured nursing, medical, and allied health professionals.

Assoc Prof Ong then served as Director of Medical Services in the Ministry of Health from 2014 to 2020. He put in place a system to better manage capacity across the public healthcare system, developed roadmaps for the long-term transformation of care models to meet the

needs of an ageing population, and enhanced postgraduate medical training. He oversaw the formation and expansion of the Agency for Care Effectiveness, and pushed for treatments that are both clinically and cost-effective. During his tenure, the Ministry established regulatory sandboxes to enable new and innovative healthcare models and services.

 This article was first published on 10 August in NUS News at news.nus.edu.sg/highlights/recognised-longstanding-service-singapore.

NUS alumni comprise almost half of 14th Singapore Parliament



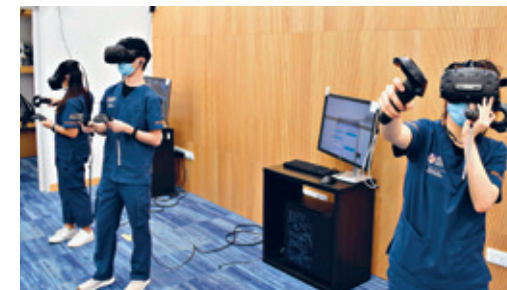
FOLLOWING SINGAPORE'S GENERAL ELECTION, the 14th Singapore Parliament saw 45 NUS alumni among 95 Members of Parliament (MPs) and Non-constituency Members of Parliament (NCMPs). Singapore's Parliament is tasked with making laws, taking up a critical role to check on the actions and policies of the Government, and scrutinising the State's finances. In these uncertain

times, it is expected to steer the country through the COVID-19 crisis and shape Singapore's future. The MPs and NCMPs were sworn in at the first parliamentary session on 24 August.

"NUS is proud of the achievements of our notable alumni who have gone on to enter Parliament. We thank them for their service and hard work in taking our country forward," said NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85).

 This article was first published on 28 July in NUS News at news.nus.edu.sg/highlights/nus-alumni-comprise-almost-half-14th-singapore-parliament.

NOT PLAYING GAMES: VR FOR MEDICAL TRAINING



Third-year medical students experiencing immersive, experiential learning through PASS-IT.

MEDICAL STUDENTS FROM THE NUS YONG LOO LIN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE are experiencing the process of patient safety and immersion in operating theatre procedures – all through the magic of virtual reality (VR).

Drawn into a simulated world through VR headsets and hand-held controllers, the students are able to learn about the entire flow of the peri-operative setting: from dental clearance to anaesthesia evaluation, to the handling of sharps during surgery and the safe conduct of operations. The system, called PATient Safety aS Inter-Professional Training (PASS-IT), is a digital gamified environment that allows students to learn about hands-on techniques in the operating theatre.

Due to COVID-19, access to the operating theatre is restricted, which means medical educators must balance practical learning experiences while ensuring the safety of their students. The VR environment enhances the teaching and learning of situational patient management, letting students observe the role that each healthcare worker performs and allowing them to gain a greater appreciation of each role.

To enter the virtual training world, medical students don VR headsets and wield hand-held controllers to interact with one another in real time. Their physical movements and actions are also tracked and displayed in real time for visualisation and evaluation. "With the COVID-19 situation, students have been removed from practical learning settings due to the risk of exposure to aerosol-generating procedures. This VR system is a good tool to help the students consolidate their learning despite increased clinical restrictions," said Associate Professor Alfred Kow (Medicine '03), Assistant Dean (Education) of NUS Medicine, who is one of the educators spearheading the initiative.

 This article was first published on 11 August in NUS News at news.nus.edu.sg/highlights/not-playing-games-vr-medical-training.

AN ENGAGING E-REUNION

Not to be undone in this era of social distancing, this year's **Bukit Timah Homecoming** harnessed the power of technology to reunite alumni virtually.

IN LIGHT OF THE ONGOING PANDEMIC, BUKIT TIMAH

HOMECOMING 2020 took to cyberspace to bring alumni together in a brand-new reunion format themed "Blast from the Past". Co-hosted by the Faculty of Law and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, the *Bukit Timah Homecoming* on 4 July celebrated the 115th Anniversary of NUS and the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, 65th Anniversary of the Faculty of Engineering, 55th Anniversary of the NUS Business School, and 50th Anniversary of the Class of 1970.

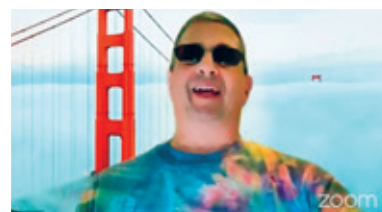
Kicking off the virtual celebrations was a plethora of activities such as "Memories@BTC" – where alumni shared stories and photos of their student life at the cherished campus and relived memories of their campus days and of fellow alumni – and "On This Day", which was a collection of historical events that shaped each day leading up to celebration day. Other activities on the *Bukit Timah Homecoming* sub-site included "SG Memories", a series of videos that led viewers on a walk down memory lane with scenes of Singapore from the past; and an Online Quiz covering the history of Bukit Timah Campus and NUS. Special thanks goes to Mr Thomas Tham Kwok Onn (Science '67), who sponsored a Bukit Timah Homecoming 2020-themed souvenir that was mailed to all attendees.

The day of celebrations began with a message from the Guest-of-Honour, President Halimah Yacob (Law '78), NUS Chancellor, alongside greeting messages from Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85), NUS President; Mr Bernard Toh (Architecture '84), Director, Alumni Relations; Professor Simon Chesterman, Dean, Faculty of Law; and Professor Danny Quah, Dean, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. Participants were taken through a brief glimpse of Bukit Timah Campus and highlights of past Bukit Timah Homecomings through a series of videos.

Another highlight of the day was the screening of a "Senior vs Young" video, where four alumni from



NUS President Prof Tan Eng Chye (centre) welcoming alumni to the e-Toast Ceremony with Mr Johnny Tan (far left), Co-Chairman of the NUS Alumni Advisory Board; representatives of the Class of 1970, Ms Chan Mee Leen (Science '70) and Mr Yeo Hock Chye Philip (Arts and Social Sciences '70) (centre left and right); and Mr Bernard Toh (far right), Director of Alumni Relations.



NUS Business School's Dean, Prof Andrew Rose, embracing the theme of "Blast from the Past" at the e-Toast.



Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Prof Danny Quah, addressing attendees.



Dean of NUS Faculty of Law, Prof Simon Chesterman, greeting everyone at the e-Toast.



Dean of NUS Faculty of Engineering, Prof Aaron Thean, addressing attendees who celebrated the faculty's 65th Anniversary.



Celebrating the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine's 115th Anniversary with its Dean, Prof Chong Yap Seng.



Check out alumnet.events/BT20 for the activities and recordings of the day's celebrations!



NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85) with volunteers from the NUS Office of University Communications at the Willing Hearts soup kitchen.

NUS DAY OF SERVICE 2020

WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ONGOING, the fifth *NUS Day of Service* went back to its fundamentals, and encouraged the NUS community to give back whenever and however they can. While making sure to observe safe distancing measures, alumni, students, and staff came together on 5 September to do their part this year.



In Bangladesh, the LKYSPP Alumni Bangladesh Chapter donated face masks to rickshaw-pullers.



NUS Alumni in Yangon donated food and other essentials to Buddhist monasteries in Mingaladon Township.



The NUS Alumni Xiamen Chapter visited an orphanage in Yong Chun County.



Wondering where to start and what you can do? Visit nus.edu.sg/alumnet/events/DOS/find-an-opportunity and find an opportunity today!



NUS Provost Professor Ho Teck Hua (Engineering '85) joined past NUS Students' Union Presidents to pack bags of staples for those in need.



Mr Bernard Toh (Architecture '84) (right), Director of NUS Alumni Relations, preparing meals at Willing Hearts.



Engineering Alumni Singapore worked with Man Fut Tong Welfare Society to gift dry rations to beneficiaries.

CELEBRATIONS GO 'CYBER'

With myriad engaging and interactive activities available online throughout the day, this year's **Kent Ridge Alumni Family Day** put a **Twist** on the annual homecoming Tradition.

INSTEAD OF PERFORMANCES AND BOOTHS AROUND UNIVERSITY TOWN, alumni, students, and staff were treated to a full day of fun programming that took place on the NUS Alumni Relations' website, Zoom, and Facebook Live. With the event moving to an online platform, over 7,000 participants were able to tune in and enjoy the day's activities and reconnect with their alma mater.

Various performances and workshops were broadcast 'live' throughout the day. These included a swing jazz performance by The Rhythmakers, live art sessions by NUS Giving, and performances by alumni band @Project and the NUS Alumni Indian Ensemble. The



Emcees Ms Elizabeth Boon (Arts and Social Sciences '16) and Mr Roystonn Loh (Arts and Social Sciences '13) took the audience through the day's programme.

programme included demonstrations by NUS Boxing Club, NUS Silat, and NUS Volleyball Club, and a Korean martial arts showcase by alumnus Mr Lai Han Seng (Computing '00) and his students. Viewers could also work



Dr Amy Khor's address set the tone for a session on sustainable farming.



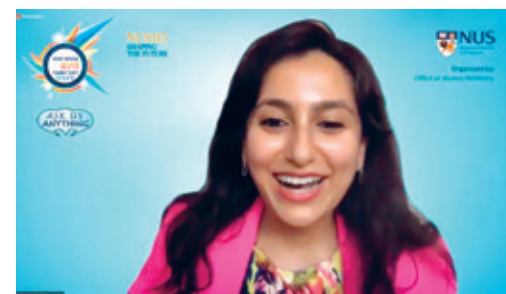
Staying fit with NUS Boxing Club!

out at home with the University Health Centre and NUS Aerobics Club.

Lifelong learning was also a focus of the day's programme – there were workshops and talks on topics ranging from data privacy and protection, research skills, AI-powered resumé reviews and how to maximise the marketing value of webinars to 3D animation, engineering innovations, drone photography, and even an introduction to Kagoshima Prefecture in Japan! The Faculty of Science also organised a variety of informative and well-attended talks under the theme of "Everyday Science".



Alumnus Mr Kennard Xu (Arts and Social Sciences '08) sharing on the attractions of Kagoshima!



Moderator of 'Ask Us Anything', Ms Akanksha Batura, chatting with NUS Senior Management.

Senior Minister of State for Sustainability and the Environment, and Transport, Dr Amy Khor (Design and Environment '81) also gave the Opening Address at a session on sustainable urban farming that was co-organised by NUS Environmental Sustainability and featured Citiponics co-founder Ms Danielle Chan (Arts and Social Sciences '18).

The full day's programme closed with an 'Ask Us Anything' session where alumni had the opportunity to get their queries answered by NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85), NUS Senior Deputy President and Provost Professor Ho Teck Hua (Engineering '85), and NUS Vice-Provost (Masters' Programmes & Lifelong Education) Professor Susanna Leong (Law '89). The lively session was moderated by Ms Akanksha Batura (Business + USP '12).



Missed out on the fun? All recordings are available at alumnet.events/KR20 or facebook.com/NUSoar!

CELEBRATIONS WITH PHARMACY ALUMNI GROUP

Although they were not able to gather physically for this year's **Kent Ridge Alumni Family Day**, the NUS Department of Pharmacy held a Facebook Live session to celebrate the occasion. To begin, Mr Michael Ker ('01) presented a live demonstration of *popiah*-skin making and wrapping while explaining the origins and culture behind the local delicacy. Thereafter was a "Kopi-talk" with Mr Sean Ang ('10), who started a series of *kopi*-talkshows called "Life, Love & Lipidemia" during the Circuit Breaker.



NUS President Prof Tan Eng Chye answering questions from alumni.



NUS Alumni Indian Ensemble performing for the audience.



Viewers were treated to choreographed routines by NUS Silat and other NUS sports groups.



Dancing to some swing tunes with The Rhythmakers!



@Project – a band formed by alumni Ms Teresa Teng (Arts and Social Sciences '13), Mr Soo Jun Hao and Ms Alina Mak (both Arts and Social Sciences '17) – serenading the virtual crowd.

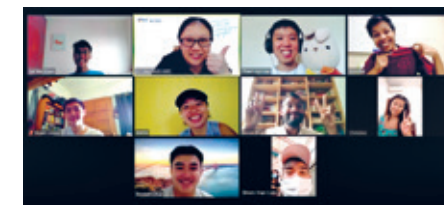


Head of the NUS Department of Physics Professor Sow Chong Haur engaging his audience with interesting physics experiments.



Learning more about drone photography with Mr John Tan from the NUS School of Computing.

USP CLASS OF 2018 E-GATHERING



The University Scholars Programme (USP) Class of 2018 had a mini e-gathering over Zoom during the USP e-Homecoming 2020 instead of the usual physical gathering. Though it was a short one-hour catch-up session, the group managed to learn more about how everyone was coping, had an online drawing game, and collaboratively drew a doodle "art piece" which they dedicated to USP Director and Cinnamon College Master Associate Professor Kang Hway Chuan.

ORIGINALLY PLANNED TO COINCIDE WITH International Women's Day in March, *WoW: In Conversation* moved online due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. On 24 June, women and men alike tuned in via Zoom to hear from the esteemed alumni panellists – Executive Chairman of The Straits Trading Company and NUS Board of Trustees member, Ms Chew Gek Khim (Law '84); and Group Executive Director of Methodist Welfare Services, Ms Junie Foo (Arts and Social Sciences '90).

The brainchild of Dr Intan Azura Mokhtar (Science '98, Public Policy '08), Member of the NUS Alumni Advisory Board, *WoW: In Conversation* gives female alumni a platform to distinguish themselves and contribute back to NUS, while creating opportunities for current students and alumni to interact with, and be inspired by, established female alumni. Dr Intan moderated the evening's dialogue, during which she explained that 'WoW' stands for Women of W – wonder, wisdom, and other words of empowerment that start with 'w'.

CELEBRATING WOMEN AND THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS

Over 300 alumni, students, and staff attended the inaugural *WoW: In Conversation* to hear from female alumni leaders as they discussed their leadership challenges and experiences and how to effect impactful change in society.



Singapore's President and NUS Chancellor, Madam Halimah Yacob (Law '78) – who is the Republic's first female Head of State – opened the event with a speech that reminded attendees how both women and men have a role to play in shaping a gender-equal world, and that gender parity is very much still a work in progress. She noted NUS' commitment to nurture successful women leaders, and encouraged

more female alumni to step up and take the lead.

During the discussion, which was themed 'Women Leading in Times of Crisis', the panellists candidly shared their own experiences starting out in their careers, and brought up various issues such as the impact of COVID-19 on businesses and how to make effective decisions. Ms Chew emphasised the importance of looking for and learning from mentors, while Ms Foo underscored the crucial roles that adaptability and learning from one's mistakes play in the workplace – especially for young female alumni.

Also in attendance that evening were guests such as NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85), NUS Alumni Advisory Board Member Ms Janet Ang (Business '82), and United Women Singapore President Ms Georgette Tan Adamopoulos (Arts and Social Sciences '82).



(From top) Panellists Ms Junie Foo, Ms Chew Gek Khim and moderator Dr Intan Azura Mokhtar steered the dialogue and shared their own experiences as women in the workplace.

I also encourage more women to step up, take the lead, and inspire others. It is through inclusivity and the diversity of expertise and experiences that we can learn from one another. The road ahead may seem uncertain, especially in the context of COVID-19, but take heart that we are not alone. Many others have paved the way to ensure that we now have the resources and opportunities. So, let's support one another on this important journey.

Excerpt from President Halimah Yacob's Opening Remarks



After the session, the panellists took on more questions via e-mail:

What advice would you give your younger self regarding charting your career progress – are there areas you wish you had focused more on? What can companies do to support the development of younger staff?

MS CHEW: I was very lucky, in that I was in the right place at the right time. I learnt about corporate finance when it was nascent in Singapore's economic development. I think that young people today should learn about developments in the world around us, particularly in science. They should learn to understand how finance, politics, and technology work and how they are changing our lives. We should also be mindful of the fast-changing geopolitical environment that we live in.

Companies should invest in training, and the reality is most companies do. The challenge for companies is how to ensure that the training is effective, and to set up structures whereby there is good feedback between subordinate and supervisor so that one can learn both formally and informally.

Do you have advice for women who want to grow their family and have a successful career? What should women do to ensure that they can rise in the workforce but not have to sacrifice their time with their family?

MS FOO: As Chair of BoardAgender, I remember that we collaborated

with the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) a number of years back and interviewed 25 successful women. We found that organisations can enable women to carve out a successful career. Apart from family support, organisations that intentionally groom talent, provide flexi-work arrangements, or are more accommodating can help on this front. There will be times where a woman has to spend more time at work because of her job requirements but she must also be disciplined to take a step back when the family requires attention. Another important point is to share caregiving duties with the spouse. The woman does not always have to ferry the children to classes or take them to the doctor.

Leading a company is a highly stressful endeavour – what do you do to relax, and to remain energised and focused throughout the day?

MS CHEW: The truth is I do not remain energised and focused throughout the day! The idea of a CEO who is never tired and stays energetic 24/7, 365 days a year is nonsense. We all need to recharge, and I do so by walking, reading, meeting up with friends, attending plays and concerts (before the circuit breaker), and exercising. **MS FOO:** When I know I am getting too stressed, I will hit the pause button. I paint and listen to music. Be still and reflect.



For the full Q&A feature, please go to nus.edu.sg/alumnus/thealumnus/issue-123/community/oar-highlights.

THE FUTURE OF ALUMNI RELATIONS

Fortuitously themed “Alumni Relations in the Age of Disruption”, this year’s *NUS Alumni Leaders Forum (ALF)* was held on 18 July and saw over 100 alumni leaders come together virtually to discuss and explore how to shape Alumni Relations for the decade ahead.



Alumni leaders at ALF 2020.

TRADITIONALLY, THE BIENNIAL ALF BRINGS TOGETHER ALUMNI LEADERS AND VOLUNTEERS to share and brainstorm new ideas and best practices in alumni relations and volunteer engagement. This year’s discussions centred around three key areas – Alumni Relations, Disruptions in Technology, and Lifelong Learning. Attendees had breakout discussions on issues such as

succession planning practices, the needs of NUS alumni, digital transformation during and beyond COVID-19, and lifelong learning goals. The need for alumni to unite anew as a social compact, particularly in this trying time, was also keenly felt by attendees. As NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85) highlighted in his keynote address, “In a time when complexities and the pressures of new demands threaten to tear us



NUS President Prof Tan Eng Chye delivering his keynote address to alumni leaders.

apart, it is not enough to be one thread thick – we must deepen to two if not three threads deep. In order to thrive in a complex and uncertain future, we must look at how we can effectively transform ourselves into a social compact.”

Overall, it was a morning of fruitful and meaningful conversations. Just before the closing plenary, NUS Senior Deputy President and Provost Professor Ho Teck Hua (Engineering '85) launched the new *AlumAPP* – a mobile application to help the NUS alumni community remain engaged, connected, and informed.



FUTURE-READY WORKSHOPS

TIPS TO BEING A HIGH-PERFORMING REMOTE EMPLOYEE



HELD IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NUS CENTRE FOR FUTURE-READY GRADUATES (CFG), the second iteration of *Future-ready Workshops* on 14 July was oversubscribed and well-received by alumni. Mr Jasbir Singh of CFG walked attendees through tips for setting up a home workstation, productivity hacks to help create a positive work-from-home experience, and how to continue building relationships with co-workers despite working remotely. In an interactive and engaging session, attendees interacted with Mr Singh over a Q&A session and participated actively via polls.



Mr Jasbir Singh, Senior Manager, NUS Centre for Future-ready Graduates

VIRTUAL NETWORKING: BUILDING BRIDGES TO OPPORTUNITIES



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

Networking is the key that opens doors to hidden career opportunities. The best part? Networking skills can be learnt by anyone, whether you’re an introvert or extrovert. Join this session to learn the fundamentals of networking online, whether you are currently looking for a new job, or planning ahead.

This session will cover:

1. Creating a networking plan to expand your job search
2. Building your brand online to make a great impression
3. Putting your plan into action to make professional connections
4. Expanding your industry knowledge and network via informational interviewing



DATE : 13 OCTOBER 2020, TUESDAY

TIME : 7.30PM

PLATFORM : ZOOM



Join us online at:
alumnet.events/FRoct20

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Understanding and Managing Obstructive Sleep Apnea



Dr Paul Mok, Senior Consultant and Medical Director, My ENT Specialist Clinic at Farrer Park Medical Centre

ON 23 JULY, IN A SESSION ORGANISED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FARRER PARK HOSPITAL, Dr Paul Mok (Medicine '91) delivered an informative talk on Obstructive Sleep Apnea – what it is and how to manage it. Dr Mok, who is a Senior Consultant and Medical Director of My ENT Specialist Clinic at Farrer Park Medical Centre, actively addressed numerous inquiries and concerns posted by participants via the Q&A feature on Zoom. Overall, participants were better able to understand the main causes and possible treatments and solutions to resolve Obstructive Sleep Apnea.



TECH TALK

WINNING IN THE WORLD OF DIGITAL BANKING AND DIGITAL PAYMENTS



Ms Huong Tran, Executive Director of Payments and Platforms, DBS Consumer Banking Group

IN THIS FAST-CHANGING DIGITAL LANDSCAPE, and especially with the changes brought about by COVID-19, scaling up digital capabilities has become a matter of survival. In this talk on 18 August by Ms Huong Tran (Business '07), Executive Director of Payments and Platforms at DBS Consumer Banking Group, attendees gained insights into DBS' digital transformation journey. Ms Huong used three case studies – smart buddy innovation, DBS PayLah!, and open banking – to demonstrate how DBS has leveraged on technologies to boost customer engagement and stay at the forefront of the banking industry.

THIRSTY THURSDAYS [ONLINE]

Casual Conversations – Why Save Mother Earth?

THIRSTY THURSDAYS RETURNED WITH A NEW VIRTUAL FORMAT!

The session on 3 September featured two young alumni from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences – Ms Audrey Tan ('13), Environment Correspondent for *The Straits Times*, and Mr Choo Ruizhi ('17), Senior Analyst from the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies. They shared insights on the relevance of environmental history and the alarming environmental damage caused by human activities on Earth. The session closed with ice-breaker games and a Virtual Toast. To all young alumni – mark your calendars for the next online run on 3 December!



Ms Audrey Tan, Environment Correspondent, The Straits Times



Mr Choo Ruizhi, Senior Analyst, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies

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

Dietary Practice and Your Gut – Keeping GI Symptoms Away



Abdominal bloating, flatulence and irregular bowel habits are common symptoms of gastrointestinal (GI) problems. A simple dietary change can affect your bowel and change your gut microflora. Learn how your dietary patterns can affect your bowel and ways to keep your gut healthy.



Dr Loh Poh Yen
(Medicine '07)

Specialist in Gastroenterology & Internal Medicine,
Farrer Park Hospital,
Gutcare Digestive.Liver.Endoscopy Associates



22 October 2020 (Thursday)
7.30pm - 9.00pm

Register at
alumnet.events/HWOct20



via Zoom Webinar
JOIN US ONLINE!



Speakers:
Mr Ng Sey Ming (Law '99)
Deputy Head, Banking & Finance,
Rajah & Tann Singapore LLP
Partner, Christopher & Lee Ong



Associate Professor Keith Carter
NUS School of Computing
Co-Director, CRYSTAL Centre
Director, NUS Fintech Lab

17 November 2020 (Tuesday)
7.30pm

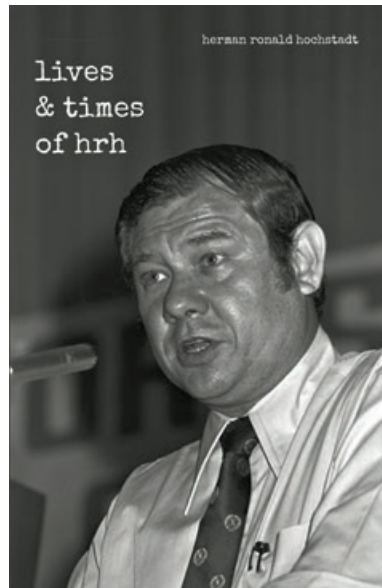
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The Hype Versus Reality of the Impact of FinTech on Law

With rapid digitalisation, many financial institutions have gained competitive advantages through the adoption of Financial Technology (FinTech). Now is the time for lawyers, judges, and regulators to leverage technology for efficiency and globalisation and take small steps to make important changes.

At this talk, our speakers will discuss how the legal profession could engage FinTech to improve standard functions like conveyance and contracts, as well as what regulators should be thinking about.



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LIVES & TIMES OF HRH

By Herman Ronald Hochstadt

"The strain, PM ... too much!" I replied. "What strain?" he immediately demanded, "If anyone around here has strain, it's me! But we have to carry on, not just give up like that. It's for our very survival ... and that of Singapore!"

lives & times of hrh is the memoir of Mr Herman Ronald Hochstadt, better known as hrh. It is a witty, personal account of his life with a focus on his long public service career, when he worked alongside pioneer leaders like Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Dr Goh Keng Swee and others. hrh had an unusual ability

to inspire those working for him, and his signature wit and charm are on display here, in the ways he weaves together stories of his career and some of the key moments in Singapore's development.

All proceeds from the sale of the book go towards the Hochstadt NUS Bursary Endowment Fund, which provides financial assistance to deserving undergraduate students at the National University of Singapore.



LIFELONG LEARNERS HIGHLIGHT

A HEART FOR LEARNING

Find out how cardiologist Dr Natalie Koh (Medicine '09) is benefitting from an Executive MBA education.

On the decision to sign up for the NUS Executive MBA programme...

Besides being a cardiologist, I am also a medical advisor to WhiteCoat, one of the first telemedicine providers to work within the Ministry of Health Regulatory Sandbox back in 2018. Since then, we have seen dramatic changes in the healthcare landscape due to COVID-19. I believe an Executive MBA will equip me with the tools to create sustainable healthcare solutions in a post-pandemic, digitally-integrated world.

On applying the new knowledge to her work...

While we have only been through the first segment, we have covered Marketing Strategy, Microeconomics, and Leadership, and I have loved learning about them all. Coming from a healthcare background, the new knowledge and diversity of thought have really lent a multifaceted lens to my practice, which involves the intersection of healthcare, technology, and business.

On learning from classmates who work in different industries...

Interacting with many talented people across industries gives me fresh perspectives on how the world runs, how problems can be solved, and even potential creative collaborations. Each of us has our unique experiences and a lot to bring to the table. I am sure the relationships we're forging will endure long after we have graduated.

On the importance of lifelong learning...

Lifelong learning is as essential as breathing, if one wants to continue to grow and stay relevant in a fast-evolving world. Whether learning happens in a



Dr Natalie Koh

formal setting, or simply through conversations, reading, or attending a course, we should seek to continue to refine our knowledge. This will allow us to ask the right questions, think of sustainable solutions, and voice our thoughts, especially when it counts towards making constructive changes in tackling real problems that we witness every day.



第九届中国电影节 China Film Festival 2020

ONLINE

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Time | 7.30pm



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THE GIVING KIND

Does the worst of times really bring out the best in people? In the wake of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, individuals and organisations alike are pondering this question and taking a second look at their own contributions to society. NUS is no exception.

TEXT BY WANDA TAN



LIKE SO MUCH ELSE IN THE COVID-19 ERA, NUS' ANNUAL DAY OF SERVICE (DOS), which took place on 5 September 2020, looked different this year. DOS was inaugurated in 2016 as a day when NUS alumni, students, and staff around the world – together with their families and friends – give back to society through a variety of community activities. But how could they do so when the pandemic meant that volunteering *en masse* was out of the question?

Yet, ironically, the significance of DOS has arguably never mattered more. COVID-19 has affected countless lives and businesses. Marginalised and vulnerable groups, such as lonely seniors and low-income households, have been disproportionately affected; in Singapore, migrant workers have borne the brunt of the pandemic. So while COVID-19 may have complicated things for DOS organisers, it simply stiffened their resolve to come up with new and inventive ways to help those in need. It also offered a timely reminder of the true intention behind DOS: to inject the spirit of giving into the NUS community and encourage its members to do something beneficial for the wider society, not just on this one day, but all year round. This is an ideal that the University has always strived towards, whether in peacetime or during a pandemic.

CHANNELLING AWARENESS INTO ACTION

COVID-19 has disrupted global economic activity and everyday life, effectively knocking the world off its axis. As each of us scrambles to adjust to the impact of the coronavirus on our own lives, it can be easy to forget that others

are also going through a difficult time, if not more so. "Even before COVID-19, there were many out there who needed help. The crisis just created an additional hurdle to help these groups, and it has also driven more people into similar circumstances," says Mr Jeremy Ee (Engineering '05), an NUS Alumni Advisory Board member and founding Chairperson of DOS. "There are always people in need. Even amid the crisis and its safety rules, we can still give back."

To keep everyone safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19, DOS 2020 featured a scaled-down list of volunteering opportunities. Instead of letting individuals plan and implement their own community activities, efforts were directed towards supporting existing organisations that had approval to continue operating under COVID-19 restrictions such as maintaining safe distancing, wearing masks, and keeping to groups of five or fewer. "Our focus this year was to promote local causes by various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that had activities with measures in place to reduce the chances of infection, and that do good for the community and rely on volunteers to be operational," says Mr Ee.

For example, on 5 September, small groups of volunteers helped out at Willing Hearts' soup kitchen, donated blood to the Singapore Red Cross, or headed over to The Food Bank Singapore to pack bags of staple food items for disadvantaged families. Moreover, activities were not confined to just one day – some even took place digitally. These included a months-long online fundraiser by NUS Students' Community



Mr Ee volunteering at the Willing Hearts soup kitchen during the inaugural DOS in 2016.

There are always people in need. Even amid the crisis and its safety rules, we can still give back.

Mr Jeremy Ee, NUS Alumni Advisory Board member and founding Chairperson of DOS



Doing good should begin from the heart – with a cause that resonates with you – but it has to be further developed by applying the mind and the will.

Mr Hsieh Fu Hua,
Chairman, NUS Board
of Trustees

Service Club to help low-income families struggling to get through the pandemic, and to also provide care packs to healthcare workers in appreciation of their efforts during this period; a Zoom storytelling session on 4 September for underprivileged children from Beyond Social Services; and a virtual run for RunNUS (from 13 July to 27 September), with proceeds channelled to the Singapore Disability Sports Council and Disabled People's Association.

In another departure from previous DOS installments, the personal stories of NUS alumni, students, and staff doing their part to uplift the community during the COVID-19 crisis were shared on the DOS website and on social media. The organising committee hoped that by spreading the word about these acts of kindness – such as making fun science kits for needy children and launching a neighbourhood buddy system to support vulnerable families and seniors – others in the NUS community would be inspired to make a difference.

SERVING THE UNDERSERVED

NUS' commitment to creating a more caring and gracious society received a shot in the arm last year through the Seeds of Good (SOG) initiative. Jointly launched by the Office of Student Affairs and the Office of Alumni Relations on 20 March 2019, SOG is a community development programme that empowers NUS students to collaborate with the community and engage in social causes. Students work in teams to initiate, plan, and execute projects with a community partner of their choice, so as to enhance community well-being.

Below: An SOG student team conducting an IT workshop for youths from AWWA Family Services.



Student volunteers from NUS Students' Union (NUSSU) and NUS Students' Community Service Club (CSC) carrying donated T-shirts, which were delivered to migrant workers at CRF @ PGPR.

The structure that SOG brings to acts of giving harnesses students' sense of empathy and develops their "focus and clarity of purpose" – which are required to get projects off the ground and make a positive impact in society, notes Mr Hsieh Fu Hua (Business '74), Chairman of the NUS Board of Trustees and former President of the National Council of Social Service. "Doing good should begin from the heart – with a cause that resonates with you – but it has to be further developed by applying the mind and the will."

More than 60 community projects have been seeded to date under SOG. In one completed project, a team of students conducted IT workshops for children and youths from AWWA Family Services during the December 2019 school holidays, to equip them with basic IT skills that will be useful for their studies and future careers. In a more recent project, another student team joined forces with Yew Tee Community Club to prepare and distribute homemade hand sanitisers – along with instructions on how to make them – to Yew Tee residents, especially the elderly and stay-at-home parents. This helped alleviate the shortage of hand sanitisers in local stores after COVID-19 broke out.

The whole University also came together to help those most affected by the pandemic. From May to



Above: A migrant worker from Myanmar writing "Thank You" in Burmese on the CRF @ PGPR Appreciation Wall. Left: Migrant workers at CRF @ PGPR getting a complimentary haircut from volunteer barbers.

July, Prince George's Park Residences (PGPR) was converted into a Community Recovery Facility (CRF) to house and isolate migrant workers recovering from COVID-19. To make their stay at PGPR as comfortable and as enriching as possible, NUS faculty and students developed a specially-curated mix of online 'classes', exercise activities, and entertainment options for the workers, beyond simply quarantining them. As Associate Professor Ho Han Kiat (Science '00), NUS' Vice Dean of Students, told *The Straits Times*: "We want to give the migrant workers a good experience, and what NUS does best is education. We want to treat them like they are our guest students."

Based in part on feedback from the workers themselves, bite-sized e-courses were offered on topics that were relevant and of interest to them, such as how to plan their finances, avoid phone scams, prevent back injuries, and manage mental health. The NUS sports community produced workout videos for migrant workers to follow. Singing, dancing, and drawing contests were organised to help them pass the time. Students and professors who were fluent in the migrant workers' native languages, such as Bengali or Burmese, provided translations and voice-overs.

On and off campus, NUS students lent a hand wherever they could to ease the hardship felt by migrant workers. Some donated T-shirts to those staying at PGPR, or contributed their IT skills to create and maintain the CRF @ NUS website where migrant workers accessed the online lessons and programmes. Others acted as translators to bridge the language gap in cases such as doctor-patient consultations, or used their artistic talents to raise funds for COVID-19 community relief efforts targeted at migrant workers.

A lot of these initiatives were led by students from the College of Alice & Peter Tan (CAPT), who already had experience reaching out to migrant workers before COVID-19 hit. Community engagement has always been a core part of CAPT's curriculum; for example, CAPT students visit migrant worker dormitories every semester, and the College has also hosted workers for meals, carnivals, and sports events on campus. The COVID-19 crisis was thus, for CAPTians, another opportunity to interact with this underserved segment of the community. "COVID-19 has shown us that community engagement includes but goes way beyond altruism. It has shown us that society has to invest resources in caring for the marginalised and uplifting them, so that they can better cope with health or other challenges. When they don't, we – the mainstream – pay a high



Students from Taiwan serving their peers delicacies from home at the Yale-NUS Diversity Week Night Market.



Students from India at the Yale-NUS Diversity Week Showcase sharing traditional forms of dance.



COME ONE, COME ALL

A defining feature of Yale-NUS College is its diverse community, with a current student body of 1,018 students from 69 countries. Their differences are celebrated each year during the Yale-NUS Diversity Week, which seeks to "bring the community together in uplifting ways and engage them in topics related to identity, diversity, and inclusion", says Ms Sahar Kazemini, Senior Programme Manager (Intercultural Engagement) at the College's Dean of Students Office.

Launched in 2018, Yale-NUS Diversity Week comprises a week-long programme of activities that explore multiple facets of identity including but not limited to race, sexuality, gender, spirituality and religion, ability status, and mental health. The signature Night Market and Showcase – where students present a taste of home through food delicacies and cultural performances – sits alongside more serious fare such as theatre plays and panel discussions centred on social justice issues. This strengthens the sense of belonging within the College community, and also promotes respect for diversity outside of it. To push forward the diversity and inclusion agenda, Ms Kazemini's office also runs regular workshops, inter-group dialogues and other initiatives for students. Talking openly and sensitively about identity, inequity, difference, and power "provides a platform for people to grow and learn in spaces that feel welcoming, supportive, and constructive", she says. Over time, these conversations enable students to "unlearn unhelpful paradigms and move towards a shared understanding".

→ BUSINESS WITH A CONSCIENCE

"I see volunteerism as a growing trend in Singapore, though it fluctuates at times. People are becoming more actively involved in understanding social and environmental sustainability issues, how these impact everyone's lives, and what we want for our children's lives in the future," says Mr Nicholas Ooi (Computing '18).

As the co-founder and CEO of bantu, a social enterprise which empowers non-profit organisations to recruit, manage, and retain volunteers using its proprietary tech platform, the 30-year-old himself has been influential in growing the volunteer movement. bantu was founded in 2017 by Mr Ooi and three other University mates from the NUS Overseas Colleges (NOC)

programme, with NUS Enterprise providing funding support.

Creating a socially-conscious start-up while still studying was risky, but it was a risk they were willing to take. "At NUS, we tackled real-world problems in class, such as improving recycling through technology. This made me realise that building technology alone will not improve lives; we also need to persuade people to volunteer more," he explains.

bantu does just that – its bantu.life portal currently has a network of more than 23,000 volunteers in Singapore and neighbouring countries who give their time across different causes, while its bantu Workspace volunteer management system has been used by more than 100 social and environmental purpose organisations to date.



Mr Nicholas Ooi
(Computing '18),
social entrepreneur

cost,” says Associate Professor Tan Lai Yong (Medicine ’85), Director for Outreach and Community Engagement at CAPT. He coordinated the curriculum for the guest students at PGPR, together with CAPT student-residents. “Going forward, we need to hold high the needs of the marginalised for the sake of the larger good.”

SHAPING POLICIES, IMPROVING LIVES

Working for the greater good is also something that NUS’ research institutes have in common. As a leading higher education institution in Asia, NUS and its research community have the best interests of not just Singaporeans, but also people across the region, at heart. At the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP), for instance, experts take on key global policy issues and social challenges relevant to Asia, while also educating current and future generations of Asian leaders and policymakers to improve governance standards. For example, LKYSPP Dean and Li Ka Shing Professor in Economics Professor Danny Quah explores income inequality and social mobility in his research. According to him, this is part-academic achievement, part-real-world change-making: “I want these ideas to help advance research thinking, change our teaching narrative, and raise people’s wellbeing in an enduring, sustainable way,” he says.

One of NUS’ newest think tanks is the Centre for Technology, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence & the Law (TRAIL), which was launched on 5 December 2019. TRAIL aims to explore the relationship between technology and law, especially as modern developments in IT and biotechnology revolutionise the way humans live, work, and play. “These advancements mean that our laws — as rules that preserve fairness, equality, and justice in human



➤ An initial sum of **\$220,000** was raised through the NUS Students Solidarity Fund, which benefitted nearly **700** of the University’s neediest undergraduates.

I want these ideas to help advance research thinking, change our teaching narrative, and raise people’s wellbeing in an enduring, sustainable way.

Prof Danny Quah, Dean, LKYSPP and Li Ka Shing Professor in Economics

society — must keep up to curb the ills of technology while promoting its best facets. The law cannot remain an outdated artefact divorced from the needs of a technologically-inclined and rapidly-changing society that it seeks to govern,” explains Associate Professor Daniel Seng (Law ’92), Director of TRAIL. For starters, TRAIL plans to conduct empirical research to develop insights into topical legal issues such as intellectual property and technology, privacy and data protection, and cryptocurrencies and virtual property. TRAIL has also organised seminars and talks to get feedback from, and share its research with, the legal community, including a July webinar entitled “COVID-19 and Data Privacy in Asia: Finding the Balance between Public Health and Data Protection” (co-hosted with NUS Centre for Asian Legal Studies).

Speaking of the pandemic, NUS’ Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health (SSHSPH) and the Mind Science Centre (MSC) have made several notable contributions during this time. To help seniors and their caregivers cope with the prolonged isolation and increased anxiety, MSC collaborated with community and educational partners to launch free online resources on mindfulness intervention. SSHSPH researchers used mathematical models to better understand the characteristics and transmission dynamics of the virus, and also prepared weekly briefs for policymakers that synthesised global evidence on

diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines, population control measures, and exit strategies.

“Policymakers need to be regularly updated with the latest scientific evidence in order to put in place the appropriate policies that are most helpful to containing the situation,” says SSHSPH Dean Professor Teo Yik Ying on the importance of a strong partnership between academia and policymakers amid the outbreak. But even in normal times, both SSHSPH and MSC conduct crucial research to combat public health challenges faced by Asian populations, such as diabetes and dementia.

Though not a think tank per se, NUS’ Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Centre (CTPCLC) has established itself as a thought leader in community leadership and improving the lives of Singaporeans. A full-fledged independent Centre since 2017, CTPCLC aims to nurture Singapore’s next generation of community leaders. Students admitted to CTPCLC receive strong academic grounding and practical experience in community development. They also partner local social service organisations on ground-up initiatives to tackle social issues such as poverty, ageing, the reintegration of ex-offenders into society, and mental health.

“We are the first in Singapore — and I think the world — to have a comprehensive minor degree curriculum in Community Development and Leadership,” says Associate Professor Chng Huang Hoon (Arts and Social Sciences ’87), Director of CTPCLC, who hopes to one day launch a major degree programme as well. “Community development and leadership is envisaged to be a need as our society ages and requires more distributed resources on the ground. We at NUS

are in a position, as a University with excellent standing, to provide the scholarly expertise to develop talent in this niche.”

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD

Going to university allows students to not only identify and develop their niche talents but also expand their knowledge, meet new people, and boost their odds of career success. Unfortunately, access to higher education is nowhere near as equitable as it ought to be, with a large swath of the population unable to afford the cost of an undergraduate degree. COVID-19 and the ensuing economic slowdown has exacerbated this problem. According to NUS’ Office of Financial Aid, financial aid applications received in August 2020 were 15 per cent higher compared to the same time last year.

To provide immediate support and relief to financially-disadvantaged students, NUS announced several measures this past year, on top of its existing financial aid schemes. In April, the University set up an NUS Students Solidarity Fund, which raised an initial sum of \$220,000 from alumni benefactors to help needy students during this period. It also suspended loan repayments for the NUS Student Assistance Loan and, like other local universities, froze tuition fee hikes for Singaporean students enrolled in the 2020 intake.

The NUS Students Solidarity Fund aside, NUS alumni have also shown their generosity in other ways. For example, the Alumni Student Advancement Committee (ASAC) has continued to receive donations for its Alumni Bursary Fund Campaign. “Because our traditional event-based fundraisers such as charity golf events and class reunions are not possible, we’ve shifted to raising money virtually,” says Mr Seah Cheng San (Engineering ’82), an NUS Alumni Advisory Board member and Chairman of ASAC. “Education is a social leveller for poorer students. With the bursary funds, they don’t have to take up, or take up less, part-time work while studying and can therefore enjoy half life, participate in co-curricular activities, and go on overseas exchange programmes.”

As the COVID-19 pandemic drags on, more people will inevitably fall on hard times. How well we bounce back from this crisis depends on our willingness to help one another. Giving back to society — by providing financial assistance to needy students and their families, or volunteering one’s time and skills to benefit the community at large — has been a fundamental principle of NUS for as long as the University has been around. Amid this unprecedented moment in history, the stakes have probably never been higher. **A**



MILLENNIAL MEMBERS

In July 2020, the NUS Alumni Advisory Board welcomed three new members who are in their 30s. They were appointed not by the NUS President, but as the result of a first-time open nomination process to make the Board more inclusive. Representing the younger generation of alumni, they each have fresh ideas to widen the reach to the alumni community and serve their diverse needs.

➤ “I come from a lower-middle socioeconomic background, and from neighbourhood schools where getting into junior colleges and universities was a rarity. As a Board member and with my background in entrepreneurship, I hope to represent women and lower-middle income groups climbing the ladder of meritocracy to address the evolving needs of our community.” Ms Goh Yiping (Design and Environment ’05), Partner, Quest Ventures



➤ “My motivation for joining the Board is to champion stronger coordination with NUS faculties and offices as well as student groups. From my prior involvement in the NUS Students’ Union (NUSSU), the earlier the University establishes a strong connection with existing students, the more likely they will become active alumni eager to contribute to the NUS community.” Mr Ho Jun Yi (Law & Public Policy ’11), Associate, Reed Smith LLP



➤ “Many brilliant ideas emerged from the NUS Alumni Leaders Forum 2020, which I had the privilege of participating in. Fellow alumni traded ideas on transforming alumni activities in the digital age. This year’s Bukit Timah Homecoming was one example of what we can expect in this new normal. I aspire to be part of the driving force behind this digital transformation.” Mr Ow Tai Zhi (Business ’11), Co-Founder and Chief Investment Officer, AutoWealth



AGENT OF CHANGE

To date, some 250 NUS undergraduates have gone through the Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Centre (CTPCLC) curriculum. One of them, Ms Raudhah Bte Razali (Arts and Social Sciences ’20), 23, tells The AlumNUS how it has shaped her career aspirations.

“Joining CTPCLC and collaborating on social research projects with community partners — namely, Fei Yue Community Services and the Ministry of Health’s Office for Healthcare Transformation (MOHT) — made me realise the importance of understanding the community’s experiences in creating solutions that can improve their well-being. It encouraged me to identify the community not as beneficiaries,

but as empowered people who have various skillsets and strengths which can be tapped on.

My experience at CTPCLC showed me that it is possible to be a community leader in a corporate environment, by understanding the perspectives of the ‘client’ or ‘beneficiary’ in question. Now that I have started my new job as a Communications Executive at MOHT, I hope to work closely with communities rather than for them. I aim to remain close to the ground to understand the community’s voices, and translate these insights into solutions that can empower them to take charge of their own health and well-being.”



Ms Raudhah Bte Razali (Arts and Social Sciences ’20), aspiring community leader

CALENDAR OF ALUMNI EVENTS OCT. NOV. DEC

OCTOBER



Peruvian Film Festival [Online]



In celebration of 40 Years of Peru-Singapore relations, the Embassy of the Republic of Peru in Singapore and NUS Alumni Relations are proud to present the inaugural *Peruvian Film Festival*. Come experience and learn about Peruvian culture through award-winning films.

7 Oct (Wed): *Magallanes* NC16

8 Oct (Thu): *Siete Semillas* (Seven Seeds) PG

9 Oct (Fri): *La Teta Asustada* (The Milk of Sorrow) NC16

All films in Spanish with English subtitles.

7-9 OCT Wed - Fri, 7.30pm
Register: Join us at alumnet.events/PVFF20

Contact: Ms Claudia Ng
claudia.ng@nus.edu.sg



nus.edu.sg/alumnet/events

FILM FESTIVALS [ONLINE]

Calling all movie buffs! Join us for a trio of Film Festivals – Peruvian, China, and Canadian – from October to December and learn more about these cultures through the camera's lens, from the comfort of your home.



7-9 Oct
(Wed - Fri)



11-13 Nov
(Wed - Fri)



18-22 Dec
(Fri - Tue)



Virtual Networking: Building Bridges to Opportunities

Future-ready Workshops [Online]

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



Networking is the key that opens doors to hidden career opportunities. The best part? Networking skills can be learnt by anyone, whether you're an introvert or extrovert. Learn the fundamentals of networking online, whether you are currently looking for a new job, or planning ahead.

13 OCT Tue, 7.30pm
Register: Join us at alumnet.events/FRoct20

Contact: Mr Kenneth Phang
kphang@nus.edu.sg



Dietary Practice and Your Gut – Keeping GI Symptoms Away

Health & Wellness [Online]

Speaker: Dr Loh Poh Yen
(Medicine '07), Specialist in
Gastroenterology & Internal
Medicine, Gutcare Singapore,
Farrer Park Hospital



Abdominal bloating, flatulence, and irregular bowels are common symptoms of gastrointestinal (GI) problems. A simple dietary change can affect your bowel and change your gut microflora. Learn how your dietary patterns can affect your bowel, as well as ways to keep your gut healthy.

22 OCT Thu, 7.30pm
Register: Join us at alumnet.events/HWoct20

Contact: Ms Tan Li Hui
lhtan@nus.edu.sg



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

U@live: Lifting Thought Leadership [Online]



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

Panellists:

Ms Grace Fu
(Business '85)
Minister for Sustainability
and the Environment



Mr Abhas Jha
Practice Manager,
Urban and Disaster
Risk Management,
East Asia and the Pacific,
World Bank Group



**Associate Professor
Leong Ching**
(Arts and Social
Sciences '92)
NUS Dean of Students



Moderator:
Mr Viswa Sadasivan
(Arts and Social
Sciences '83)
Former NMP and
U@live Chairman



30 OCT Fri, 7.30pm
Register: Join us at alumnet.event/UALIVE

Contact: Mr Ng Shan Jun
ngshanjun@nus.edu.sg



NOVEMBER



China Film Festival [Online]



Jointly presented by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China, Singapore China Friendship Association, and NUS Alumni Relations, and back by popular demand, join us to enjoy acclaimed Chinese films.

11-13 NOV Wed - Fri, 7.30pm
Register: Join us at alumnet.events/CNFF20

Contact: Mr Ng Shan Jun
ngshanjun@nus.edu.sg



The Hype versus Reality of the Impact of FinTech on Law

Tech Talk [Online]

Speakers:
Mr Ng Sey Ming (Law '99),
Deputy Head, Banking
& Finance, Rajah & Tann
Singapore LLP; Partner,
Christopher & Lee Ong



Associate Professor
Keith Carter, NUS School
of Computing; Co-Director,
CRYSTAL Centre; Director,
NUS Fintech Lab



Find out how the legal profession can engage Financial Technology (FinTech) to improve standard functions like conveyance and contracts, as well as what regulators should be thinking about.

17 NOV Tue, 7.30pm
Register: Join us at alumnet.events/TSnov20

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

DECEMBER



Thirsty Thursdays [Online]: Casual Conversations



Get ready for a night of fun ice-breaker games, lively networking with fellow young alumni and frank conversations on trending topics that concern you!

3 DEC Thu, 7.30pm
Register: Join us at alumnet.events/TTdec20

Contact: Ms Tan Li Hui
lhtan@nus.edu.sg



Canadian Film Festival [Online]



After a two-year hiatus, the High Commission of Canada and NUS Alumni Relations have come together once again to present the *Canadian Film Festival 2020*. Join us online to enjoy some of the best of Canadian films.

18-22 DEC Fri - Tue, All Day
Register: Join us at alumnet.events/CF20

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

Lifting the Veil of Silence on Family Violence

Often hidden from view, abuse within households is an issue that bears more attention. **Ms Kristine Lam (Arts and Social Sciences '12)**, Lead Social Worker at Project StART, Care Corner Singapore Ltd, looks at the characteristics of this phenomenon, and how the community can support victims.



"I NEVER THOUGHT THIS COULD HAPPEN TO ME," shared Ms Y as she recounted the violent incidents. Ms Y and her husband, Mr X, have been married for almost a decade and the couple have a daughter. To outsiders, the family appeared perfectly put together. Mr X would often wait to drive Ms Y home after work, and occasionally ordered flowers and gifts to be sent to her office. No one knew what was going on behind closed doors until Ms Y applied for a Personal Protection Order for herself and her daughter. "When he made threats to kill me, I knew I should no longer try to convince myself that everything was going to be alright," she revealed.

Most of us might find it hard to associate individuals who are successful in their careers with instances of family violence. However, no one is exempt from the possibility of experiencing such abuse. Victims and perpetrators who approach our agency come from all walks of life. Factors such as financial conditions, education level, social status, and even religious background do not exclude individuals from being a perpetrator or a victim of family violence.

IT'S NOT PART OF THE NEW NORMAL

"Each time he used violence on me, I would think to myself, 'Was it me? Was there something else I could have said or done so that our marriage could be better, and the violence

wouldn't happen again?'" Ms Y shared about how she attempted time and time again to manage the situation on her own. Victims might think that such situations are simply a normal part of married life. Some victims even blame themselves and perceive that it is their inability to manage "marital differences" which causes the perpetrator to be so angry to the point that they respond with violence. Initially, Ms Y thought that if she could provide an extra dose of acceptance and unconditional love, her abuser would one day see her contribution to the relationship and things would be fine again. "I thought he was just stressed at work and the little things at home got to him, causing him to scream insults at me," shared Ms Y about her bid to make sense of the emotional violence. While she felt insulted and hurt by what Mr X said to her, she reasoned to herself that things were still alright since there were no physical injuries. Also, the abuse did not happen frequently, and Mr X would either apologise or treat her nicely the next day.

AN ESCALATING PATTERN

Like many victims, Ms Y found herself lowering her expectations of Mr X in the relationship: from being a caring gentleman who would love and protect her, to feeling that she could continue accepting the relationship as long as things did not turn physical. Hurling vulgarities, threatening

to leave the relationship, and insulting her and her family members became "acceptable" and were described as "ways of expressing anger".

Family violence usually starts off with the perpetrator devaluing or disregarding the well-being of the other party. After violence occurs, the abuser tends to apologise and attempt a reconciliation, fearful that the victim might leave them or disclose the incident to others. From this point, there is a chance that the abuser will use violence again when conflicts arise, and the cycle will repeat in this fashion. And when left unchecked, the violence tends to increase in lethality, such as threats to kill, or physical injuries which could result in permanent disability or even death.

THE BARRIERS TO EXIT

Given the very real danger of escalation, why then do victims choose to stay? For many of the victims I work with, it is commonly shared that stepping forward to seek help is a difficult decision to make. Unlike many other acts of violence, family violence is caused by a person whom the victim loves, trusts, and/or is dependent upon. Stepping out to protect themselves may cause some victims to feel that they are harming their loved ones. Other victims may feel that they are 'washing dirty linen in public' or bringing shame to their family. In addition — particularly for victims of psychological and emotional violence — there tends to be a concern about whether others would believe them, and thus they might not be willing to come forth about the

incidence of violence. Then there are those who may have been systematically isolated by the perpetrator and have limited access to resources such as accommodation and finances, which increase the challenges these victims would face if they were to leave the relationship. When the fear and cost of leaving continue to be high, victims may prefer staying in the abusive relationship to stepping out to seek help.

MORE THAN A 'COUPLE' ISSUE

Family violence is, unfortunately, not limited to cases of spousal abuse. Mdm B, 50, had been suffering at the hands of her mother-in-law for five years. She was given very little food each day and was hit a few times each week. Neighbours filed multiple reports with the police but because Mdm B herself denied all incidents of violence, there was little the authorities could do. Our agency visited Mdm B monthly for about a year, sharing with her the possibility of regaining safety as well as the resources available to her if she consented to receiving help. Mdm B repeatedly rejected the offer for assistance, as her family threatened not to let her see her children again should she disclose the violence.

Over time, neighbours found it difficult to accept her decision to continue to stay with her family, especially

when the physical abuse affected Mdm B's eyesight and caused her nasal bridge to be broken. Despite that, they did not grow weary in supporting her. They continued to make police reports each time they heard Mdm B's screams when she was beaten. Three years later, an extremely violent incident eventually led Mdm B to leave with the police to go to the hospital. When we spoke with her again, Mdm B shared that while she was in the ambulance, what kept replaying in her mind were the words of people who had cared for her — the social workers who told her that she did not deserve such abuse, the police officers who repeatedly promised her protection even though she is not a Singaporean, and neighbours who would knock on her door when they heard her screams. While she took some time to reach out, it was the persistence of the community that convinced her to receive help.

WE ARE IN IT TOGETHER

For Mdm B, it was the consistent community support which eventually led her to decide that she could leave the abusive relationship. Victims need to know that people believe their stories and society will not turn a blind eye to their suffering. While our society prohibits the act of violence by one person on another, most of us are unsure of what to do when it happens in our own families or those of friends. This is especially so if we are taught not to meddle in other people's domestic affairs and that we may not know enough to pass judgement. Questions such as whether we may be deemed as 'busybodies', or have the right to interfere in another person's family matters, or doubts about whether the person has an actual need for help, would likely run through our minds and cause us to hesitate about taking further steps.

I would advocate for society to view family violence as a societal issue and not just a domestic one. That way, each of us, as a member of society, would no longer feel inhibited when wanting to show care and support to victims. Doing our part can involve smaller efforts like knocking on our neighbours' doors to check in on them when we hear loud noises, or providing a listening ear to our friends or family who reveal that they are experiencing family violence. While we may not know what can be done in their situation, checking in with victims and encouraging them to seek help can go a long way in providing them with the support that they need at that moment. Together, we can stop abusive relationships. **A**



PAINFUL TRUTHS

According to a 2019 survey by global market research agency Ipsos and non-profit organisation United Women Singapore,

30%

of Singaporeans say they have suffered abuse at the hands of a loved one.

Source: The Straits Times, 10 December 2019

6 in 10 victims

of physical violence suffer repeat victimisation.

Source: AWARE, Violence Against Women Fact Sheet, 2020

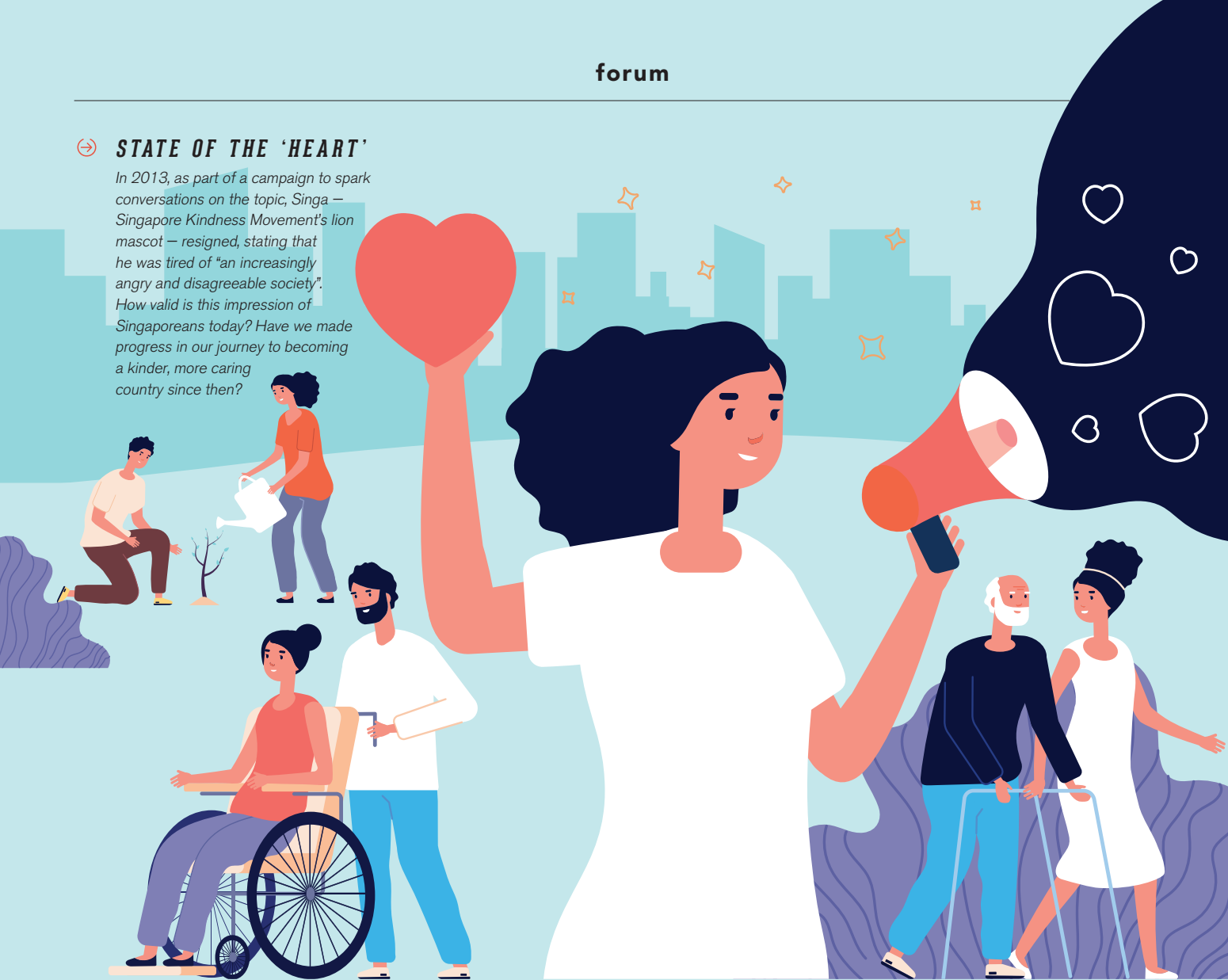


Ms Kristine Lam graduated from the National University of Singapore with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Social Work. She joined Care Corner Singapore Ltd in 2012 and decided to specialise in Family Protection work in 2013. In 2017, she was awarded the Promising Social Worker Award by President Halimah Yacob (Law '78). Ms Lam is currently the Lead Social Worker at Care Corner Project StART, a family violence specialist centre in Singapore. Besides leading the team at Project StART, she also regularly conducts family violence training for social service practitioners.



➡ STATE OF THE 'HEART'

In 2013, as part of a campaign to spark conversations on the topic, Singa — Singapore Kindness Movement's lion mascot — resigned, stating that he was tired of "an increasingly angry and disagreeable society". How valid is this impression of Singaporeans today? Have we made progress in our journey to becoming a kinder, more caring country since then?



GOODNESS GRACIOUS WE!

While Singapore strives for the top spot in areas such as economic performance and technological advancement, where do we stand as a gracious society? Our senior and younger alumni from various fields share their perspectives.

What, in your opinion, is a gracious society?

MUSTAFA IZZUDDIN: It is human nature to be selfish, so a gracious society would be one where individuals can surmount that and take care of one another, realising that everyone has a part to play. It is the spirit of *gotong-royong* (neighbourly cooperation) — and while we don't really have physical *kampungs* any more, that spirit remains its core. A gracious society is one which looks after, and spares a thought for, the vulnerable.

IVY TSE: Graciousness to me is a way of living, and a gracious society is one that practises kindness and compassion, and adopts the other mindsets associated with these acts naturally. It is something that is in all of us — and for those who might have forgotten, it's just about tapping into our inherent nature and regaining the "muscle memory".

LEE LAY BENG: It's a society wherein we develop not just as individuals, but as a community that cares about its members. We have focused so much on competitiveness and on training our survival instincts. But our humanity

has a part to play in the development of a nation too. The COVID-19 pandemic has awakened us to the importance of living not just for ourselves, but also the community that we are part of. That said, we have a lot to catch up on — and new role models to seek.

MICHELLE LAU: I agree with Lay Beng. In a gracious society, nobody is made to feel like a stranger, and empathy and kindness are shown to all, regardless of language or cultural background. Singapore's competitive, fast-paced environment drives us to pursue academic and career excellence — and we might have lost the 'human touch' in the process. My hope is that while we strive to be number one in finance and everything else, we can also strive to be number one in graciousness.

Is building a competitive nation at odds with nurturing a gracious society?

IVY: The economic development of our country is something that we should appreciate and treasure, but we do need to be able to code-switch [from a competitive mode in the corporate world to a gentler way of living outside of it]. And it is possible: I left the private sector for the social service sector. But that doesn't mean that everyone has to go down that same path! A person working in a sector for good, but who doesn't actually care about the people around him or her, isn't gracious either.

MUSTAFA: They are not mutually exclusive. Riding on globalisation and racing to the top might have made us forget about the 'human' side of what we do. But to even just think about it is recognising the importance of being gracious. In fact, we see acts of graciousness in all sectors these days, from private-sector companies becoming more socially responsible to the public sector putting more effort into building an inclusive society. Things are changing — and I expect it to happen more quickly now, given the wave of social movements around the world. While Singaporean society is unique, we are not immune to global trends, and these events can motivate us to build a better society.

LAY BENG: Striving for excellence and being compassionate can co-exist, but I feel that we need graciousness in our leadership to build a gracious society. I see our youths doing volunteer work to build

Graciousness to me is a way of living, and a gracious society is one that practises kindness and compassion, and adopts the other mindsets associated with these acts naturally. — MS IVY TSE

OUR PANEL



DR MUSTAFA IZZUDDIN
(ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
+ USP '05),
ADJUNCT SENIOR LECTURER,
UNIVERSITY SCHOLARS
PROGRAMME (USP)



MS MICHELLE LAU
(ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES '18),
CO-FOUNDER,
KAMPUNGKAKIS



MS LEE LAY BENG
(ARTS AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES '81),
RETIREE; EX-PRINCIPAL
MEDICAL SOCIAL WORKER,
TAN TOCK SENG HOSPITAL;
2003 OUTSTANDING SOCIAL
WORKER AWARD RECIPIENT



MS IVY TSE
(ENGINEERING &
BUSINESS '11),
CEO, HALOGEN
FOUNDATION
SINGAPORE

their academic portfolios — but does our education system impart important values and ethics? Or are we treating graciousness as a subject?

Has our system conditioned youths to see "doing good" as a checklist item to give their CVs an edge?

MICHELLE: Our education system and government have been trying to put more emphasis on promoting graciousness through small initiatives. And we do observe youths being enthusiastic about helping others. KampungKakis, a buddy system that matches volunteers with neighbours-in-need — with a focus on elderly and vulnerable residents who may be increasingly isolated due to social distancing measures, has seen an overwhelming number of volunteers. However, we found that the youths did not know how they could help or get the ball rolling — this is an aspect that we can improve on.

MUSTAFA: As an academic, I find it hard to teach graciousness. It is not something that stops when you leave school. Values are inculcated through action. The delight derived from doing something that makes you feel like you have made a difference in the lives of others — or even just putting a smile on someone's face — will spur you to want to do more in a spontaneous and organic way. Youths doing good work can also have a cascading effect — there is no need to force it upon them. Doing 30 years of youth development work has also taught me that young people will find their own niche and understanding if you give them the freedom and space to grow. If you provide them with bottom-up, youth-inspired opportunities, and let them take ownership, they will learn. At the same time, we need to give ourselves a bit more credit: we have a burgeoning NGO sector and incredibly active young people. They can be idealistic, and so need support and guidance from mentors to help them improve on what they are doing.

IVY: Peer influence really works. And while I am deeply appreciative of the conversations about Gen Z and Millennials, I feel that labelling persons by their age group ("Oh, you are a Gen Z, so you behave this way") or shaming their behaviour ("If you don't give up your seat you are a bad person") doesn't help. I believe that everybody wants to be kind and gracious, and positive narratives that highlight those who do good can awaken that innate quality.

LAY BENG: I respect my children and grandchildren as unique individuals. Rather than force values upon them, I try to communicate clearly why I do certain things in a certain way. For example, rather than get upset by those who might do things more slowly, I take it as an opportunity to train my patience, and I will share this



GIVE AND LET LIVE

In 2020, the *World Giving Index* report published by the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) in the United Kingdom examined the trend of giving around the world over the last 10 years. Singapore ranked

46TH

in a list of 143 countries.

The CAF polled more than

1.3 million

people globally and looked at three aspects of giving behaviour. Respondents were asked whether they had done any of the following in the past month:

- Helped a stranger, or someone you didn't know who needed help?
- Donated money to a charity?
- Volunteered your time to an organisation?

Source:
www.cafonline.org

Being gracious is about building a community that respects individual differences. By doing so, we create a forgiving environment that enables one to acknowledge their problems and weaknesses. –MS LEE LAY BENG



with the young. The experiences that my peers and I had growing up also helped us to be more gracious. I belong to the last year of the Merdeka Generation, and back then, everybody was pulled into the same class in school, whether you were rich or poor, or even physically disabled or mentally challenged. Our teachers made an effort to treat everybody with respect and genuine care and concern, and it taught us to be accommodating of differences. But as we become more structured and systematic, we have forgotten this basic graciousness.

IVY: I catch myself wondering at times about our work with youths. Volunteer work might be structured, but it is important because of the exposure it gives. Without that exposure, I would not have changed my career trajectory. Yet what is more important is the sense-making aspect of it: guidance to understand the intrinsic value of doing social work. I am often amazed by how some of my peers think and talk

about society, and I have come to realise that they developed this perspective from a young age. While there is nothing wrong with a systematic way of promoting graciousness, the best way to teach it is to live it. So, while we think about youths, we also need to work on ourselves (in order to inculcate positive values).

Does building a gracious society start in the family?

MICHELLE: Graciousness starts from how you treat your own family. If you aren't empathetic to your own family members, it's not congruent for you to behave in such a way in public.

LAY BENG: We need to respect differences in families just as we respect differences in individuals. Rather than impose certain "correct" ways of doing things, we need to see where each family and individual is in their stage of growth in life. Being gracious is about building a community that respects individual differences. By doing so, we create a forgiving environment that enables one to acknowledge their problems and weaknesses. Only through such awareness can we have acceptance, understanding, and compassion.

IVY: It's a bit tricky when it comes to family. Every family is



Our diversity is our strength. Asian values that have been localised – such as *gotong-royong*, and the idea of solving problems together as a community – add to that. – DR MUSTAFA IZZUDDIN

different, and we express emotions differently and have different beliefs. The way I see it, we are trying to move the 'big picture needle' slowly, without making any value-judgement or imposing an idea of how things should be. This is not about everybody moving uniformly like a marching army, but about creating a collective awareness of the importance of graciousness.

What is your view of the behaviour of "Ugly Singaporeans" that we see on social media?

MUSTAFA: Ugliness is not new; it's just amplified by social media these days, and often we as viewers don't even try to understand the reasons behind the person's actions. That said, "Ugly Singaporeans" will always be there – and you can see that side of society in any country. It's just part and parcel of society. I wouldn't arrive at any judgement about what Singapore is like solely because of them. What's important is to rise above the ugliness that is being perpetuated and bring out the goodness instead.

IVY: Do our youths have any consciousness of what they consume on social media? If they only read one part of it, it would skew their perspectives and take them deeper down a certain path. In recent months we've seen a lot of people stepping up for minorities or the disadvantaged. However, I feel that the way it has been done created a lot of 'You vs Me'. We must be very careful with the messaging, because a gracious society should be one that brings people together, not divides them further.

MUSTAFA: Sometimes, you need loud voices to get people talking about the issues – we need a bit of messiness in society. That said, one should still be mindful and tactful. The way things are done on social media can be worrying, but instead of avoiding it, we should think about how to use it for the right purposes and how to bring graciousness into the way we use it.

Does Singapore society have any unique attributes that might help us in our journey towards becoming a truly gracious nation?

IVY: We are very driven and meritocratic – so if we want something bad enough, we will get there! The knowledge and skills that we have acquired to build the nation

into what it is today can be applied to this domain, and I do see some degree of that transfer in this area. Some might look at us from the outside and question things like our Courtesy Campaign – but that's just our modality. I don't see it as an indication of how "Third World" we are. Certainly, we could be more innovative, but I wouldn't be so hard on our structure. A lot of what we discussed today has been about how to structure things, and teach this and that. That's just how we are – we are just really good at structuring things! It's instinctive in Singaporeans.

MICHELLE: Our multicultural, multilingual make-up – and added to that, the huge presence of foreigners in our labour force – stands us apart from many other countries. This diversity does help us to be more embracing of differences. We are making good progress, but there is still much to learn. The pandemic has ignited the flame for helping those in need, but we can do a lot more as a collective society. I hope Singaporeans will maintain this sense of curiosity about those different from us and around us, starting from our own neighbourhoods. Also, graciousness is not a one-way street. We often think of doing good as the privileged giving to the needy. But it is even more empowering when we enable those who are less fortunate and get them to a position where they can even help others. For example, we have seen seniors who benefitted from the KampungKakis matching system stepping up to give to neighbours in the same situation as them, even in small ways such as sharing food. I find that very inspiring.

LAY BENG: The COVID-19 situation has given us an appreciation of the different struggles that many people have, and I have observed strong community spirit and a lot of very good initiatives throughout this pandemic. My hope is that we will never lose what we have learnt and that we will push on in growing socially, emotionally and psychologically.

MUSTAFA: Our diversity is our strength. Asian values that have been localised – such as *gotong-royong*, which I mentioned earlier, and the idea of solving problems together as a community – add to that. To do a bit of forecasting, I think we have acts of kindness and compassion in our society in abundance, and we should be proud of what we have achieved, despite the instances where we see ungraciousness. The litmus test going forward will be how we minimise such unsavoury incidents through education and other means. Hopefully, we will be able to move from having the glass half-full, to three-quarters full. **A**

➤ If you'd like to join our Forum panel, do write to us at OARconnect@nus.edu.sg to express your interest.

➔ WHO HE IS

Mr Veerappan Swaminathan (Engineering + USP '11) is the founder and director of Sustainable Living Lab (SL2), a consultancy which helps organisations innovate for environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Recognised as a leader of the maker movement in Singapore and Southeast Asia, Mr Veerappan is also the CEO and director of edm8ker, which trains teachers to impart "maker education" to youths. He was awarded the NUS Outstanding Young Alumni Award in 2019, and the 2018 Joseph Jaworski Next Generation Foresight Asia Special Award.

I T WAS GETTING "VERY TERRIBLE GRADES" IN HIS FIRST SEMESTER at NUS' Faculty of Engineering that made Mr Veerappan Swaminathan give up aiming to top his cohort, and instead direct his energies elsewhere. The world might thank

him for it. Today, the 34-year-old is the founder and director of Sustainable Living Lab (SL2), a consultancy that custom-designs innovative solutions for organisations that want to grow sustainably, often using disruptive technology. SL2 has created such solutions for government agencies like the Housing and Development Board and the National Environment Agency, as well as commercial companies such as Nippon Closures and Sodexo.

"I decided to take advantage of the University's global opportunities," he says, recalling his strategy for getting the most out of his NUS education. "I embraced every opportunity NUS offered to take part in competitions and so on. I spent a lot of my time doing 'extracurriculars', as opposed to actual core subjects." Mr Veerappan, who was on the University Scholars Programme (USP), understood early on that "you're either top or you're not". "The logical strategy is to differentiate yourself, and if you're average academically, then you should find non-academic ways to do it."

BLAZING HIS OWN PATH

In 2007, Mr Veerappan signed up for a Sino-Singapore exchange programme where he travelled to China with students from other Singapore universities. "Most people did not bother with this programme because they thought it wasn't 'cool' at all, but I signed up because I was trying to gather as much experience as I could, since the academic route was not going to work for me." He took part in competitions like the UNESCO-Daimler Mondialogo Challenge, which required him to form a team with students from other universities to come up with solutions to address global issues — in this case, high suicide rates among farmers in India due to poor sales of their perishable goods.

The Maker Makes His Mark

Mr Veerappan Swaminathan (Engineering + USP '11) made a pivotal decision in his first year at NUS that led to his career creating a maker culture in Singapore and bringing innovation to sustainability.

He approached Professor Arun Mujumdar, then with the NUS Department of Mechanical Engineering, who connected Mr Veerappan to his alma mater in India. Mr Veerappan's team came up with the winning idea of enabling the farmers to process and preserve fruits using a low-cost, solar-powered machine — this extended the shelf-life of their harvests and earned them more income. The Solar Dryer Project still exists today and has grown into a much larger project, overseen by his former project partners from India. The prize money for their Mondialogo win was \$42,000 — the first of many wins. Mr Veerappan and two of his classmates opened a joint account and put all their winnings in it: they won seven out of 11 competitions they took part in.

SL2 began life as a student club within USP. "We started in Chatterbox at Block ADM," Mr Veerappan remembers. "There was an empty office space, and we asked Professor John Richardson, who was the then director of USP, for permission to use it. He and the current director Professor Kang Hway Chuan allowed us to set up our own prototyping studio."

Upon graduating in 2011, the trio started SL2. By 2014, the founders reached a point where they had to decide whether to transform to become a non-profit organisation or remain a for-profit social enterprise. This led to them parting ways, with Mr Veerappan taking over SL2 as a business.



MAKER CULTURE DEFINED

In its simplest terms, maker culture is one that seeks to promote the artisan spirit. It pulls individuals from different fields or skill levels into making something with their own hands, from calligraphy to furniture to technology. Collaboration and a DIY ethic are hallmarks of maker culture, and its creations are often pitched as alternatives to 'soulless' mass-produced goods.

SEEDING A CULTURE

Mr Veerappan, who is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Intellectual Property Management, is recognised as being among those who introduced the maker movement to Singapore: creating a culture that enables people to develop skills to create, evaluate, and analyse — the higher levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (a hierarchical classification of educational objectives), as he puts it. In 2014, he co-founded One Maker Group, with SL2 being the majority investor, and later sold his stake in 2017. From 2015 to 2017, he was also a director of the Singapore Makers Association. In 2016, he founded edm8ker, an educational extension of the maker movement that builds competencies in problem-solving, communication, and resilience. Starting with a handful of schools in Singapore, Mr Veerappan sparked off the creation of maker spaces that now exist in many primary and secondary schools. Today, edm8ker works with educational organisations and school districts in the United States and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region.

Repair Kopitiam is another initiative he started to promote the habit of repairing items and combat today's 'buy-and-throw' culture. "*Repair Kopitiam* has been very successful in terms of giving repair a prominent role in the zero-waste strategy of Singapore," he notes. "Before this, e-waste repair was considered marginal. So with this, we have shifted understanding on the ground and among agencies, and it's one of our bigger contributions towards sustainability."

"My chosen field of work is one worth doing — we want to work on things that are real issues, not invented needs," says Mr Veerappan, who credits his critical thinking abilities and desire to solve problems to his parents: his father, a former financier now managing an old folks' home; and his mother, a retired school teacher.

THE ART OF PIVOTING

SL2 approaches sustainability solutions from an innovation standpoint, occupying a unique space next to other sustainable companies that may focus on environmental and sustainability governance, for example. "If anyone wants to do corporate innovation, for example, we will approach it from the angle of sustainable design," Mr Veerappan explains. "Our innovation work centres around technology, which is why we are occupied with things like

My chosen field of work is one worth doing — we want to work on things that are real issues, not invented needs.

robotics and artificial intelligence. We try to stay a little bit ahead of the curve, so that we can bring value to customers, and also because these things sometimes can reframe the entire problem space." Being in such a business requires a flexible mindset. SL2 initially intended to develop its own products, but being unable to be physically present in the countries these products would serve, it focused on offering services instead. Now that the company has labs in India and Indonesia, it has started developing in-house products.

While COVID-19 has cost SL2 some of its regular business, such as in-person corporate programmes in Cambodia and Thailand, Mr Veerappan says its skills-development projects are seeing an uptick in demand. edm8ker is also experiencing growth, training teachers to teach maker skills to children across the globe, as the world transitions to virtual learning.

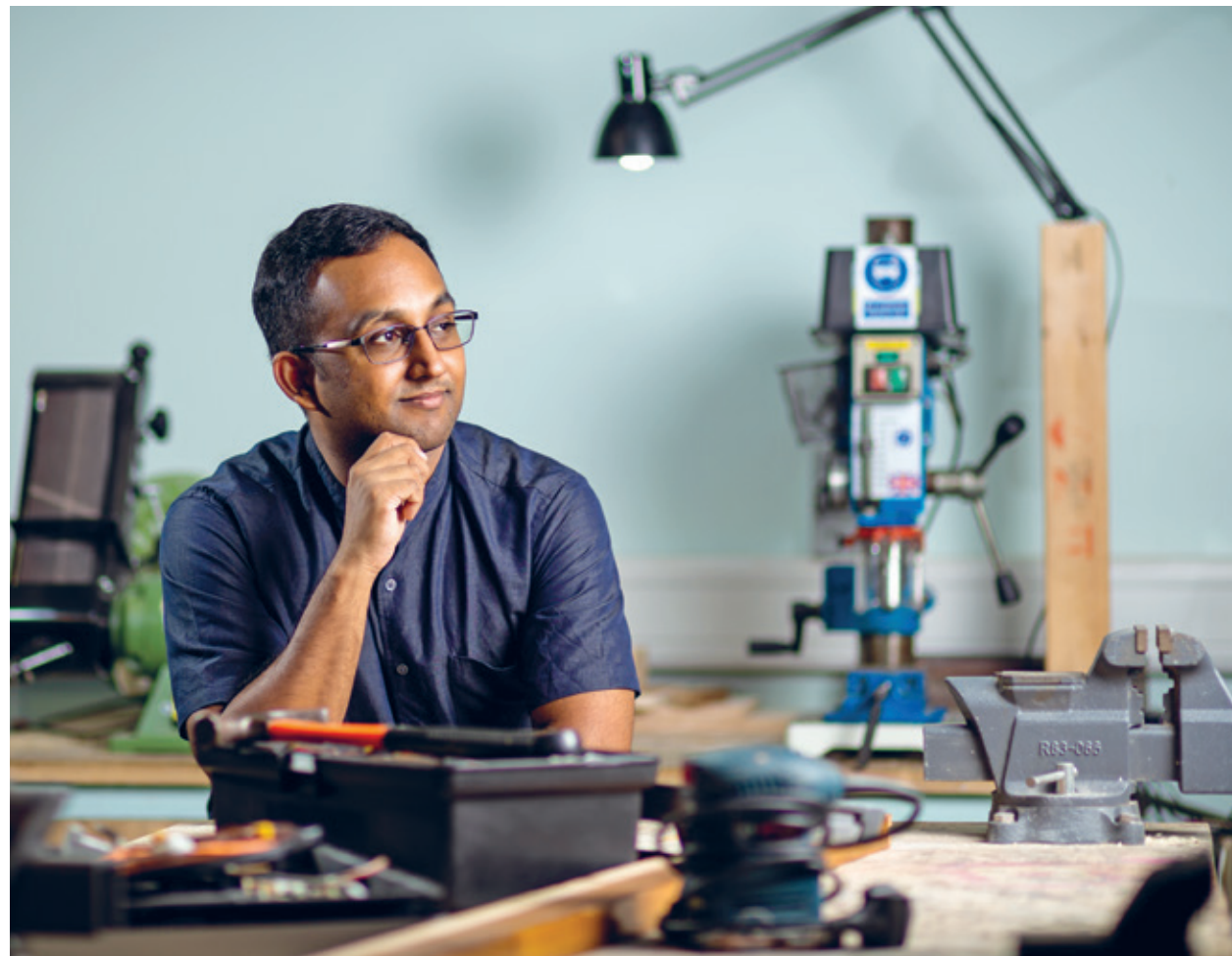
Having pivoted from a strictly academic pursuit to a university education that granted him experience, exposure, and room to create, evaluate and analyse, Mr Veerappan has, on his own terms, created a fulfilling life and career. "Excellence is really a personal standard," says the married father of an 18-month-old girl. "You must know your own standards and live up to them, not other people's standards. 'Is it good enough?' is a question only you can answer. In life, we all start differently, so don't compare yourself with others." **A**



Encouraging people to give old items a new lease of life during a *Repair Kopitiam* workshop session.



SL2's Solar Dryer Project proved to be a lifeline for Indian farmers.



➔ WHO SHE IS

Ms Eileen Chai (Science '01) is the co-founder of 3AM Music Collective and Strings For Kindness, which seeks to harness the power of music to spread awareness and acceptance of mental health conditions in society. A former national gymnast, diver, and hurdler, she is also a best-selling author.

Healing the Mind Through Music

Ms Eileen Chai (Science '01) drew from her own struggles to create a unique movement that seeks to bring about greater empathy and understanding of mental health concerns.



“MY PURPOSE IN LIFE IS TO GIVE THROUGH MUSIC,” said Ms Eileen Chai to her audience last December at a TEDx Youth event at Ngee Ann Polytechnic. And it would be no exaggeration to say that hers has been a most extraordinary life. On the surface,

Ms Chai is a textbook overachiever: she remains the youngest Singaporean athlete to compete at the Southeast Asian (SEA) Games, having done so at the age of seven; is an accomplished violinist; a Ministry of Education-certified physical education and music teacher; the author of a best-selling book; and co-founder of 3AM Music Collective, a music project that offers hope and empathy to troubled minds.

What most people may not have seen, however, are the bouts of crippling low self-esteem, anxiety, and depression that plagued her for most of her life. Though her parents did not place pressure on her to excel, Ms Chai was naturally gifted in gymnastics, art, ballet, Chinese dance, violin, piano, and swimming, having started some of these pursuits at the age of four. “It was only when I was approaching seven, when I was selected to represent Singapore at the 1985 SEA Games, that I stopped everything but gymnastics and ballet,” she explains. At age nine, she chose for herself what few would have done at the time: to travel to China regularly for gymnastics training. She became very good at her sport, but it took a toll on her body and emotions: she sustained injuries constantly, and being on the road so much with no family or friends left her with a sense of “deafening” loneliness.

It came to a point where her mind and body could go no further. She walked away from the sport, with little idea at the time of the psychological damage that those years had inflicted on her.

THE POWER OF MUSIC

Ms Chai initially thought little of the inexplicable anxiety she experienced when she entered the National University of Singapore's Faculty of Science. “I was elected Vice-President of the Microbiology Students' Society,” she says. “But I was afraid of meeting my committee members outside of lectures; I would always avoid them. It got to a point where I was anxious of *being anxious* about the fact that I was anxious of meeting friends!” She did not understand why she felt like that — “I thought it was just me being useless.”

One day, she walked past a rehearsal room managed by the NUS Centre For the Arts. She looked in and saw members of the NUS Symphony Orchestra laughing, and felt a rush of happiness — particularly upon spotting her favourite instrument, the violin. “Once I discovered the NUS Symphony Orchestra, music took precedence over microbiology!” she admits. “Our conductor, Mr Lim Soon Lee, is a wonderful

educator. We always had fun during rehearsals. It was particularly great for me because for the first time in my life, I felt like I belonged to a place, to a group, and didn't feel anxious about being around people. I could bring my beloved violin out of the house and play it along with my friends.” An average student by her own admission, Ms Chai nevertheless has some good memories from her time in Microbiology. “We'd go to the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve with Professor Peter Ng, walking through the swamp,” she recalls. “He would share with us non-textbook-style information and knowledge — all the things we learnt during lectures came alive!”

CHANGING HERSELF, CHANGING SOCIETY

Upon graduation, Ms Chai joined the Singapore Youth Orchestra where she played the viola, and spent a year studying at the Chicago College of Performing Arts before returning to Singapore. Her penchant for lifelong learning saw her obtaining credentials in several fields: she is a Ministry of Education-certified teacher, an international judge in gymnastics and diving, and an international coach in track and field, among other things. She returned to competitive sports in 2004 as a national diver and hurdler, and participated in speaker workshops and trainings as a Team Singapore athlete. She was also on the Youth Olympic Games' organising committee in 2009.

But while on the outside things seemed to be picking up, Ms Chai was experiencing increasing mental stress. “My brain was always in tight knots — I could not rest my mind,” she describes. She found herself constantly picking fights with her husband, Mr Ben Kranen. In 2015, she reached her breaking point. “One day, I slammed my hand into a sharp kitchen knife and blood splattered all over the kitchen,” she recalls. “It was like a crime scene.”

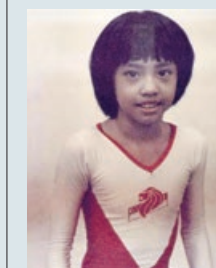
Mr Kranen recognised at that point that his wife needed serious intervention, but it would take a near-death incident in 2016 for her to seek professional help. With the encouragement and support of her husband, Ms Chai saw a psychiatrist, Dr Ken Ung, who diagnosed her with social anxiety disorder. Embarking on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy with Dr Ung helped her to systematically reflect on her thought processes. She also found a regular Christian Fellowship Ministry to attend. The ‘brain pain’, however, continued until one day in 2017, when — at the end of a nature walk with her husband in Taiwan, and away from work and social media — she realised she could not feel the knots in her head for the first time in her life. Nature walks have now become a regular Sunday activity. Ms Chai came to the realisation that “there was no one solution to fix [her] mental health issue; it was a process that [she] had to go through to experience and understand the healing.”



THE WRITE STUFF

In 2014, Ms Chai wrote *Teach A Life, For Life*. “It's a self-help book featuring life lessons I learned through sports and music. I share my story — my mistakes, my thoughts, and the lessons I learned — and pose questions to lead readers to reflect on their own lives, and how they can make their lives better,” she says. The bestseller became a must-read on the topic of resilience for students, and the publicity around it earned Ms Chai many musical and public speaking engagements.

Below: A young Ms Chai one year after the 1985 SEA Games. Below, right: Performing at the 28th SEA Games. (Photo: Chin KK)



Ms Chai and Mr Kranen during a performance at the National Museum.

Many people with mental health issues are afraid to speak up because they fear being judged and being seen as weak or ‘freaks’. These are the kind of prejudices and taboos that they face — as if the psychological conditions weren't bad enough.

SONGS THAT HEAL

Today, Ms Chai is passionate about creating awareness for mental health, and she does so through 3AM Music Collective and her violin initiative, Strings For Kindness. 3AM is a unique initiative — it builds on a 10-song cycle that educates the listener on what someone with depression and anxiety experiences as he or she progresses from hurt to healing. In this collaboration, songs are penned and performed by artistes and musicians of various genres such as Jack And Rai, Beverly Morata Grafton, Kevin Mathews, Ng Yu-Ying and Mr Kranen. These songs have been powerful in connecting with those who are going through mental health issues and, like her, are looking to understand themselves. The 10-song cycle was featured at this year's Beyond the Label Festival, organised by the National Council of Social Service (NCSS).

Meanwhile, through working with Dr Ung, Ms Chai discovered that she has a high Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) score. She finally understood that she suffered post-traumatic stress disorder from her years in China. Now that she has identified her life goal as “to give through music”, Ms Chai hopes that she can effect a lasting change in society's attitudes towards mental health issues. “Many people with mental health issues are afraid to speak up because they fear being judged and being seen as weak or ‘freaks’. These are the kind of prejudices and taboos that they face — as if the psychological conditions weren't bad enough,” she notes. Turning to the present, she adds that people may be more vulnerable to stress, anxiety, and interpersonal tension and conflict given the COVID-19 pandemic. “Let's be less judgemental, show more empathy, and shower unconditional love on ourselves and the people around us.” **A**

➔ **WHO SHE IS**

One of Singapore's most famous club DJs, Ms Jade Rasif (Arts and Social Sciences '18) is also an actress, model, and talk-show host. Having been in the public eye since 2013, she is also a popular social media influencer, with over 360,000 followers on Instagram currently.

FOR MANY, LOCAL DJ, MODEL, AND ACTRESS MS JADE RASIF NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION.

The 26-year-old's career in the limelight began when she came in second in the *New Paper New Face* pageant in 2013. Ms Rasif, who today is an NUS Psychology graduate, quickly rose to fame as Singapore's highest-paid DJ, amassing more than 360,000 followers on her Instagram account. She also appeared on Mediacorp Channel 5's longest-running drama series *Tanglin*, where she played Sheila Oh for three seasons. The mother of a two-year-old son, Ms Rasif has also been actively giving back to the community since the start of the Circuit Breaker period in April.

How did you end up becoming one of the most successful DJs in Singapore?

I got into DJ-ing during my first year at NUS. My ex-boyfriend, then a DJ, got me interested. It wasn't a passion, but rather a way to pay for my university fees. In the beginning, I was playing up to seven hours for \$120 at most. I think luck played a huge role in my success. I also had people who helped me along the way, whom I appreciate greatly.

What does being on the podium feel like?

I love the feeling of performing; I get such a rush. My favourite moment was performing at the Jakarta Warehouse Project – South East Asia's biggest festival for the last 10 years. The organisers typically invite prominent DJs, including Martin Garrix and Calvin Harris. Being a regional DJ, I was assigned a really early time slot on a small side-stage. But I was so touched



THE JADE OF ALL TRADES

One of Asia's biggest club DJs and multi-hyphenated influencer, **Ms Jade Rasif (Arts and Social Sciences '18)** proves that a woman can, in fact, do it all.

While in NUS, I took Business electives, and learnt how to diversify my portfolio...Now with the pandemic stopping clubs from opening, I'm thanking my lucky stars and my ability to adapt to different circumstances.

that many Singaporeans flew to Indonesia for the festival to watch my set. When I looked into the audience, I saw pockets of people who had brought Singapore flags to wave at me. The support and love I get from Singaporeans really warms my heart. I also enjoy the travelling that comes with the job. I've been blessed with trips to the United States, New Zealand, Japan, Hungary, and Italy. I love meeting people and witnessing the nightlife in cities all around the world.

What has been your biggest challenge in juggling the responsibilities of being a mother, DJ, actor, and model?

Being a mother has its unique challenges. Just two weeks after giving birth, I was in Kuala Lumpur playing a show. I had to pump breastmilk every four hours and get the hotel staff to help me store it in the freezer. A gig scored is not something you can simply cancel or postpone. In the six years I've DJ-ed, I've only ever cancelled once. I've endured bad cramps while boarding a plane, passing through immigration, conducting sound checks, fulfilling extra promotional work, getting through hair and makeup, and giving my 100 per cent to the show. I can't say that my experience is any harder than someone else's job or life, though. We all have our challenges.

How have you been spending your time these days, since clubs are currently closed due to the pandemic?

I still pick songs when I'm in the car, if that counts! On a serious note, however, I've been blessed. While in NUS, I took Business electives, and learnt how to diversify my portfolio. So aside from DJ-ing, I tried to generate income through blogging, acting, and hosting. People used to criticise me for it, accusing me of not being a "real DJ" because I was doing all these other things. Now with the pandemic stopping clubs from opening, I'm thanking my lucky stars and my ability to adapt to different circumstances.

What made you want to volunteer with the Singapore Healthcare Corps, and how has the experience been? Would you encourage others to play their part?

I'm happy to serve and be of use. I enjoy the work a lot and feel so proud of my job and country every day. In the events/clubbing scene, things are planned weeks, if not months, in advance. But for healthcare workers on the frontline, entirely new departments and teams can be up and running within days. People can be mobilised in the morning and get ready to work by night. I was eager to get out of the house and do something during the Circuit Breaker. It was by chance that an opportunity to volunteer with the Singapore Healthcare Corps came along. Plus, it seemed like they were short-handed at the time. I would neither encourage nor discourage people when it comes to volunteering. Honestly, you are already doing your part by just observing infection control directives.

In the midst of your successful career, you also decided to go back to NUS to complete your degree – why?

Completing my degree made my mother happy. Initially, I was driven by passion; I wanted to become a psychologist after seeing my sister suffer from childhood depression. However, the more I delved

into the subject, the more I realised I could not cope with the emotional demands. I felt myself inching towards an existential crisis, and I decided not to take any more Psychology modules. But now I have so much respect for people who go into counselling.

How would you describe your NUS years?

On top of studying, I was working 12 hours a day, and had very little sleep. I lost a lot of weight; it is not a lifestyle I'd recommend. I don't regret the work I put in then, but I'm happy things have slowed down for me. I also met some great friends and stayed at Eusoff Hall for a semester, which was incredibly exciting because I wasn't allowed to have sleepovers as a child.

I also loved that we have the best food of any university campus. Sin Kee Chicken Rice at the Faculty of Law is in the Michelin Guide! The Starbucks at University Town is good for lattes and a deep-dish beef pie, and Waa Cowl has great sous vide beef bowls. A milk tea outlet on campus would've made the NUS foodie experience complete! But it wasn't all good; I recall how parts of the campus would get flooded during the monsoon seasons.

What is your advice to young people wanting to pursue a less 'mainstream' career path, as you have done?

I'm not qualified to give advice, but from my own experience, a career in media and the arts, while exciting, is not the most stable. If you crave security, this may not be the best path for you. Write down your long-term goals, be aware of your appetite for risk, do research on the industries you want to enter before career planning – and do it early! **A**



Ms Rasif amid throngs of fans after a DJ set.

➔ NATURE'S STEWARD

Prominent scientist Professor Koh Lian Pin (Science '01) returned to Singapore this year to assume the appointment of Professor of Conservation Science, Technology and Policy at the NUS School of Biological Sciences. As the head of the newly-established Centre for Nature-Based Climate Solutions, he will lead efforts in growing competencies and evidence-based science to fight climate change.

A CHANGE IN THE AIR

The new NUS Centre for Nature-Based Climate Solutions is looking at novel responses to the tough problems of climate change.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE SINGAPORE IN PRE-INDUSTRIAL TIMES. Mangrove swamps, fishing villages, and tropical jungles might be all we can conjure up in our minds, given how modernity has almost completely swallowed up this past. Greenery is certainly a distinctive feature of Singapore, though one may attribute it to the careful work of landscaping. But more creative solutions than landscaping — ones that harness the power of nature itself — are on the way, with the establishment of the NUS Centre for Nature-Based Climate Solutions. Professor Koh Lian Pin (Science '01), 43, recently returned to Singapore from the United States to lead this new Centre.

The Centre, which aims to find ways of harnessing nature to handle the challenges of climate change, will be up and running by the end of the year. Prof Koh is only the sixth Singaporean to return home under the National Research Foundation's Returning Singaporean Scientists Scheme since its introduction in 2013. "What ultimately drew me to return was my desire to make a long-lasting difference and impact on the conservation of our natural environment in Singapore and the region,"



Prof Koh leading the charge against climate change on the frontlines.



says Prof Koh. His return comes at a pivotal time. "Fortunately, climate denialism and scepticism are much less of a problem now than 10 or 15 years ago, possibly because the impacts of climate change on both natural and human systems are so ubiquitous and visceral today," he adds. "Also, I find that the government and corporate leadership in Singapore and the region are generally more enlightened and less influenced by anti-climate lobby groups than elsewhere."

"There is now a groundswell in Singapore to invest in more sustainable models of development, especially in the context of addressing climate change. This is perhaps one of the most critical challenges we will face as a nation."

The Centre's mission is to produce policy-relevant science on nature-based climate solutions — in other words, better protecting and managing natural ecosystems to effectively deal with climate change. The five broad research areas the Centre focuses on are understanding impacts, identifying solutions, overcoming barriers, prioritising actions, and leveraging technology (see side column).

One common theme across the different areas is carbon capture or sequestration. In May this year, the Global Carbon Project (GCP — a global organisation that supports policy debate and action to curb greenhouse gas emissions) reported an astonishing

Every society will need to prioritise competing land uses by internalising and taking full account of the costs and benefits of decisions with regard to climate mitigation and adaptation.

finding. It found that daily carbon dioxide emissions reached their peak decline on 7 April 2020 — something that could be attributed to the global lockdown due to COVID-19. However, although the amount of carbon dioxide emissions was 17 per cent less than the mean levels in 2019, it would not make a significant impact. Prof Koh notes that this is because the extended influence of carbon emissions lasts decades, not mere years. "Rather than be distracted by the COVID-19 crisis or bank our hopes and future on any green economic stimulus, my colleagues and I at the Centre will focus on our mission to produce the much-needed science to inform the development and implementation of long-term solutions to protect, restore, and better manage natural ecosystems for climate mitigation."

PARTNERING NATURE

A recently-published report highlights the importance of the work the Centre hopes to accomplish. Prof Koh and his team found that focusing on the reforestation of 121 million hectares of land to mitigate climate change in Southeast Asia is a theoretically viable option. This area would absorb carbon dioxide at a rate of 3.4 gigatonnes annually — one gigatonne is roughly equivalent to the weight of 10,000 US

Navy aircraft carriers. However, the downside of this is that food security and the livelihood of local farmers would be threatened. "Every society will need to prioritise competing land uses by internalising and taking full account of the costs and benefits of decisions with regard to climate mitigation and adaptation," says Prof Koh. The Centre's work also considers practical matters such as protecting livelihoods, maintaining food security, and keeping the air and water supply clean.

Prof Koh stresses that nature can be a great contributor in achieving ambitious long-term goals. He adds that nature has already done the "research and development, proof of concept, and even implementation at scale of carbon capture." Over hundreds of millions of years of evolution, trees and other similar organisms have developed the ability to convert carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to biomass through photosynthesis. Rainforests, mangroves, and other natural vegetation are the products of that process.

STEERING SUSTAINABILITY

Researchers at the Centre will draw upon recent significant advances in climate science, which include working models that provide a glimpse into possible futures. Under Prof Koh's leadership, the Centre will build on past work to better advise government and business leaders on the potential benefits and limitations of nature-based climate change solutions.

In addition, the Centre is developing evidence-based approaches to prioritise the greatest return on investments. This involves getting the private sector involved in exploring potential new economic opportunities. Of course, these might involve human-engineered carbon capture and storage technologies, such as that used by the Bill Gates-funded company Carbon Engineering that made the news last year. The work of just one of these facilities can remove the same amount of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as 40 million trees.

As exciting as things are, it is a challenge to produce visible results while aiming to meet given timelines. Prof Koh tackles this issue with pure realism. "Although the outcomes of our current actions to address climate change may not be observable until many years down the road, the outcomes of anthropogenic (the result of human activities) carbon emissions from the use of fossil fuels and the destruction of natural ecosystems since the Industrial Revolution are unfortunately painfully observable." **A**

THE CENTRE FOR NATURE-BASED CLIMATE SOLUTIONS' FIVE RESEARCH AREAS

- **UNDERSTANDING IMPACTS**
Understanding the impact of climate change on natural and human systems in the Asia-Pacific region is of critical importance for clarifying risks, and developing strategies to safeguard and future-proof Singapore against any resulting perturbations.
- **IDENTIFYING SOLUTIONS**
The Centre will quantify the potential and limits of nature-based climate solutions (NCS) for increasing carbon capture and reducing CO₂ emissions in the Asia-Pacific region. Quantifying the cost-effectiveness and viability of NCS to inform land-use and climate policies in Singapore and across the region will help achieve climate mitigation and adaptation goals.
- **OVERCOMING BARRIERS**
Working in close collaboration with public- and private-sector partners, the Centre will identify the trade-offs and opportunity costs of NCS, as well as other economic, social, and political considerations. This is to ensure the effective, collaborative, and equitable implementation of climate solutions across the region.
- **PRIORITISING ACTIONS**
Emphasis will be put on the best return on investment measures. Criteria include comparative cost-effectiveness of solutions, scientific (un)certainities of their outcomes, and the vulnerability of communities to climate change impacts.
- **LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY**
The Centre is well-positioned to develop, integrate, and adopt new technologies for the implementation of NCS. These include existing real-time monitoring and warning systems for forest fires and other catastrophes. Additionally, the Centre will explore the use of technologies such as blockchain and distributed ledgers to improve the transparency and accountability of climate mitigation efforts in both the public and private sectors.



IT TAKES MORE THAN GUTS AND PERSEVERANCE TO fight for something for decades. It might require a measure of something like sagacity, which is not a word that gets used very often. It certainly also takes insight to recognise a problem long before it becomes widely discussed, and sheer initiative to get started on solutions.

Earlier this year, assisted living for seniors in Singapore made the news with fresh measures announced in Parliament. "Assisted Living" enables seniors to continue to live in the community, but with some help, so that they need not go prematurely into nursing homes. This announcement might have been unsurprising to some, especially those who followed the news that specific recommendations had been made in January last year. What might be revelatory is that this development has been more than 20 years in the making — and more interestingly, it was NUS senior alumni who got the ball rolling.

In 2009, Dr Rosemary Khoo (Arts and Social Sciences '65) established her monthly Tea & Chat sessions for senior alumni in the (then) newly-built Shaw Foundation

Alumni House. This would later evolve into the NUS Senior Alumni in 2011, with Dr Khoo as its founding President (a position she held until recently). Among the attendees in the early Tea & Chat days was Dr Chiang Hai Ding (Arts and Social Sciences '59), who happened to have been advocating for senior citizen housing solutions since at least 1997. They joined Dr Philbert Chin (Medicine '59), Founding President of RSVP Singapore (The Organisation of Senior Volunteers), and gathered 20 peers who came forward to help produce a report on the matter of senior housing in the public sector. In 2010, this report was presented to then-Minister Mr Lim Boon Heng (who had spoken on "Housing Senior Singaporeans" at a public forum held at NUS in 1997) as well as the Housing and Development Board (HDB). It did not produce any immediate results, but the proposals seemed eventually to form the basis for a new type of senior housing, called "assisted living", in Bukit Batok. The pilot project was announced in 2019, and was scheduled to launch in May 2020, only to be postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to published reports this year in Singapore's dailies, this facility is the sort of "vertical *kampong*" first advocated by RSVP in 2010, and then re-presented by the Senior Alumni in May 2013 — when Dr Khoo chaired the Senior Alumni's "Our Singapore Conversation" with its Chairman and now-Deputy Prime Minister Mr Heng Swee Keat, that was held at Eusoff Hall. Dr Khoo and Dr Chiang tell The *AlumNUS* that the four pillars that the Senior Alumni advocated for were healthcare, housing, lifelong learning, and volunteering. Presenting the idea of "senior housing" were architect Andrew Tan, Dr Chin, and Dr Chiang.

THE HIGH LIFE

The vertical *kampong* concept works with all four of those ideas, allowing a shared residential space and the chance for seniors to build a community. The original RSVP proposal from 2010 envisioned a "housing plus care" lifestyle, with HDB taking



Dr Rosemary Khoo, then-President of NUS Senior Alumni, with "Our Singapore Conversation" Chairman and now-Deputy Prime Minister Mr Heng Swee Keat in 2013.



Dr Chiang Hai Ding sharing his ideas on senior housing.

care of the housing and the Ministry of Health providing the attendant care package. Reading from the announcement of assisted living flats, Dr Chiang notes, "The 160 Assisted-Living flats in Bukit Batok...will come with a mandatory package of services, including 24/7 emergency response, and an on-site community manager to facilitate social interaction and referral to care services." In other words, 'housing plus care' for seniors — not very dissimilar to the RSVP proposal that NUS Senior Alumni supported!"

Dr Khoo and Dr Chiang are quick to point out that many other stakeholders also made their contributions in the area of eldercare, including senior housing. In the 10 years that have passed since the original RSVP proposal, the Pioneer Generation Package (2013) and the Merdeka Generation Package (2019) were introduced. On the housing front, HDB launched Kampong Admiralty (2017), with 100 units designated for seniors. These are served by a range of social, healthcare and community services, along with an active-ageing hub.

The private sector followed suit in 2018 with the Saint Bernadette Lifestyle Village, an assisted-living facility run by the husband-and-wife team of Dr Joseph Lee



An NUS Senior Alumni group feedback session with Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat in 2013.

and Dr Belinda Wee. When Dr Wee launched the Assisted Living Facilities Association (ALFA) Good Practice Guide, Dr Chiang spoke in support and the NUS Senior Alumni Committee attended.

It should be noted that the Henderson Home in Bukit Merah has been operating as a home for seniors since the 1970s; it is more of an assisted living-style facility than a nursing home, according to press reports. It is managed by NTUC Health, and Dr Chiang is a member of the Home's Advisory Council.

Playing an active role in advocating for senior housing since its launch in 2013 is the PAP Seniors Group (PAP.SG), which is helmed by Speaker of Parliament, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin (Public Policy '08). It submitted to Government a proposal titled *Empowering Us to Live with Purpose and Dignity in Our Senior Years* in early 2019 that made the case for healthcare, lifelong learning, and housing for elders, among other key points. Dr Chiang, a former Member-of-Parliament for Ulu Pandan, is a member of the Group, which also consulted widely with stakeholders when preparing its proposal.

A LABOUR OF LOVE

Both Dr Khoo and Dr Chiang are modest about their contributions in this process, noting that they and other seniors simply want to make the most of their golden years. Dr Khoo says that this was why the topics discussed during the Senior Alumni's 2013 "Our Singapore Conversation" session included volunteering — senior citizens want to do meaningful work as long as they are able. "We can also be useful," remarks Dr Khoo. This echoes the sentiments of the PAP.SG in its 2019 proposal, with the executive summary noting that senior citizens could continue to learn new things and contribute meaningfully, if they so wished.

Dr Khoo and Dr Chiang note that their own efforts, and the various proposals they have been a part of, will likely benefit generations beyond their own. After all, the 2019 proposal is called *Empowering Us to Live with Purpose and Dignity in Our Senior Years* — it does not put any limit on who the 'Us' in the title refers to. **A**



Fulfilling a Golden Dream

Seniors looking for assisted-living options got a boost this year, and it is thanks in part to the long-term efforts of NUS Senior Alumni.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY ZOOM GRADUATION EVENT



A group of five Sociology students came together to organise a virtual celebration on 13 June for the graduating Sociology cohort. As the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible for the graduands to celebrate in person, they had wanted to find another way to commemorate this significant milestone with their peers.

Graduating in a pandemic after many years of hard work can be a discouraging experience. Holding this celebration was the cohort's way of reminding themselves that there is strength in solidarity. It was also a way for them to become comfortable – together – with the intersection of a past once so familiar, a present so unpredictable, and a future so uncertain.

USP Alumni COVID-time Storytelling



A random conversation during the Circuit Breaker between three University Scholars Programme (USP) alumni from different classes led to a question – What has emerged in these “COVID-times” that wasn't possible before? Ms Kay Chew Lin (Arts and Social Sciences + USP '06), Ms Kia Jie Hui (Business + USP '11) and Ms Madhumitha Ardhanari (Arts and Social Sciences + USP '14) felt that this question would elicit a good USP-style discussion and proposed holding a meeting for the USP alumni community to do just that.

The first session was held on 20 June, when Phase 2 was announced, with around 20 attendees. It was a fruitful discussion that went on for two hours, and everyone shared about how COVID-19 has changed their lives, both for the better and for worse. Seeing the good response, the organising trio decided to convert it into a monthly “Storytelling” series – an open space for USP alumni to share their COVID-related stories and struggles. Subsequent Storytelling sessions were held in July, August, and September.

What a Difference a Year Makes!

The first e-sing-along session by NUS Alumni Sing-Along (ASA) kicked off in July with a talk on

'An Introduction to Choral Training' by homegrown and internationally-trained soprano and vocal trainer, Ms Felicia Teo. The second half of the session saw some ASA members leading the group in singing popular songs. Even though singing karaoke live over the Zoom video conferencing app was not ideal because of sound latency, the members' enthusiasm was not dampened.

Each year, ASA also celebrates Singapore's National Day in August with a huge spread of delectable local food and boisterous singing, ukulele-playing and line dancing. Although the food component was absent this year, the singing and fun continued unabated.

The second session of 'An Introduction to Choral Training' was held in August and saw members engaging in a breath-control activity. Following the talk, members sang popular National Day Parade songs like 'We are Singapore' and 'Singapura', led by fellow ASA members. In addition, the ASA ukelele players are now jamming twice a month – after completing almost two months of fingerstyle training sessions!



Checking in with Raffles Hall Association!

On 4 July, Raffles Hall Association

(RHA) held its first online community event, Homecoming@RH.

RHA Vice-Presidents, Ms Lim Swee Kim (Computing '88) and Mr Dixon Tioh (Computing '14) began the event with a warm welcome to all attendees – including VIPs, Emeritus Professor Dr Lee Soo Ann (Arts and Social Sciences '60) and Associate Professor Ho Chee Kong. RHA President Mr Sonny Yuen (Business '85) thanked Dr Ho, who was RH Master from 2010 to 2020 and established RHA during his term. Dr Ho recently handed over the mantle to the new Master, Associate

Professor Stella Tan (Science '98), who is the first female Master of Raffles Hall.

RHA also congratulated Dr Lee Soo Ann, who was conferred the honorary title of Emeritus Professor of Economics for his distinguished service to NUS since the 1950s. On behalf of their RH brothers, Mr Rishyakaran (Engineering '75), Mr Teo Eng Leong (Law '77), and Mr Jeffrey Chan (Law '73) expressed their gratitude for Dr Lee's friendship and stewardship when Dr Lee was their Hall Master from 1970 to 1973.

In August, RHA also launched Raffles Hall Alumni Learning. During the launch on 1 August, RHA President Mr Yuen invited guest-of-honour NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science '85) to officially launch RH Alumni Learning.

The RH Alumni Learning project, the brainchild of Ms Weilee Cheong (Law '87), is a regular programme that



NUS President Prof Tan Eng Chye giving his welcome address.



RH alumnus Dr Lai speaking at the launch of RH Alumni Learning.

covers diverse topics to ensure that there is something for everyone and to reflect that learning occurs in many facets of our lives.

The first learning session at the launch, titled “PIVOT”, featured alumni Dr Lai Kok Fung (Engineering '88) and guest speaker Mr Harley Young from Amazon, with both sharing ideas on how to change and innovate in this current time of uncertainty.



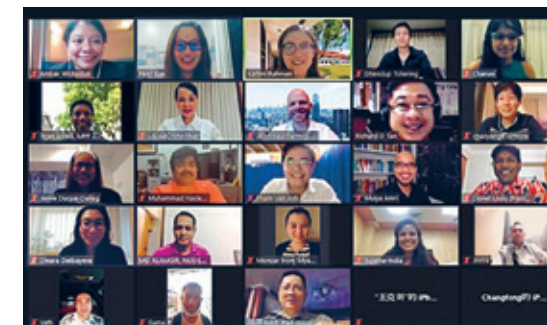
The Inaugural LKYSPP Alumni Chapter Presidents' E-Summit

On 25 July, 18 Presidents and Vice-Presidents from

17 Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) alumni chapters across the world connected on Zoom at 8pm (Singapore time) for the inaugural LKYSPP Alumni Chapter Presidents' e-Summit. The Presidents of NUS Alumni Manila Chapter and Toronto Chapter

– who are also LKYSPP alumni – attended the e-summit as well.

Organised by the School's Alumni Relations team, this biannual e-summit serves as a source of inspiration and new ideas for chapter leaders, as well as a platform for them to seek updates and clarifications from the School.



The AlumNUS thanks all contributors for the articles and photos in Alumni Happenings, showcasing our vibrant alumni community. For the full stories, please go to nus.edu.sg/alumnus/TheAlumNUS/issue-123/community/alumni-happenings.

PRIVILEGES ON CAMPUS

BAR BAR BLACK SHEEP

20% off North Indian, Thai and Western à la carte food menu.
bbbs.com.sg



LEE KONG CHIAN NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

10% discount on single-entry tickets as well as for both Individual and Family memberships.
lkcnhm.nus.edu.sg



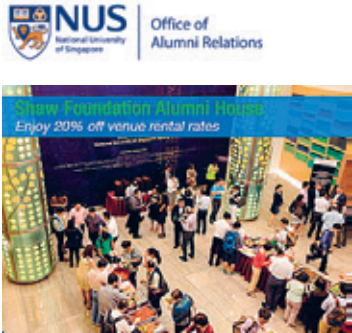
NUS MUSEUM

20% discount on all NUS Museum's publications and catalogues.
\$20 for NUS Museum guided tour of 20 pax maximum per group (Usual Price: \$50).
museum.nus.edu.sg



SHAW FOUNDATION ALUMNI HOUSE

20% off venue rental.
nus.edu.sg/alumnnet



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libportal.nus.edu.sg



PRIVILEGES & OFFERS

The newly launched AlumAPP is available for download to all NUS alumni. Now, you can gain access to alumni-dedicated news, be notified about events and enjoy special deals at popular retail outlets and service providers.



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

We welcome alumni business owners to come on board as our merchant partners. Drop us a note at alumnuscard@nus.edu.sg and make an exceptional offer to fellow alumni.

FASHION AND RETAIL

EARNEST AND COLLECTIVE

20% off all regular-priced shoes and belts.
earnestcollective.com



FOOD AND BEVERAGE

HORSE'S MOUTH BAR

15% off total bill.
horsesmouthbar.com



SOFITEL SINGAPORE CITY CENTRE

15% off Racines' à la carte menu.
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IT PAYS TO PIVOT

BY MIN EE MAO

Being agile and adaptable is one way to rise above today's life uncertainties, especially for those in the travel sector, says entrepreneur **Mr Andrew Chai (Science '92)**.



↓

For those of you [in the aviation industry and elsewhere] whose lives have been impacted by this pandemic, take it as a forced change. Changes – despite their short- and mid-term inconveniences – are always good in the long term. Be highly adaptable to new ways of doing things.

Mr Andrew Chai,
founder of **Sass Atlantic** and **Scanmicron**

AT THE HEIGHT OF THE SARS OUTBREAK in early 2003, Mr Andrew Chai founded Sass Atlantic – arguably the world's first manpower outsourcing consultancy for the aviation industry – when he saw a gap in the provision of this service for airlines. "My goals were simple – to provide the best people and teams based on a variable costing structure to any client who wanted the best representatives for their brand," says the 52-year-old, citing Emirates as one of his clients then. In April this year, Mr Chai founded Scanmicron, an integrated solution for the containment and prevention of COVID-19 spread at

workplaces, shopping malls, government buildings, and residences. He also sits on the boards of three organisations, which handle robotics, e-commerce logistics, and biotechnology respectively.

It is no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic has paralysed the travel industry. "Even the most innovative players have been affected as travel comes to a standstill," says Mr Chai, the father of an 18-year-old son. He predicts that the travel sector will likely take three to five years for it to fully recover to pre-pandemic days, seeing that it took one year for airlines to bounce back from the SARS epidemic, which lasted about six months. "The long-term impact on commerce and economies will be detrimental to everyone, big or small," he says.

And when travel eventually resumes, it is likely to be a different experience. "Most of us will travel only for essential matters, at least for the first three years, while leisure travel will depend on how governments work together to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, as well as the reliability and efficacy of a vaccine," says Mr Chai. He also forecasts a significant increase in airline ticket prices as a result of social distancing requirements. In addition, Mr Chai recommends that cabin crew should don personal protective equipment when providing in-flight service.

This greater emphasis on hygiene and safety moving forward has inspired Mr Chai to pivot into his latest venture, while leveraging on his industry experience. "There are technologies out there – related to air purification that filter out sub-micron particles, as well as surface coating using nanocomposites to prevent cross-contamination – that can prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the aircraft," he says. "A combination of these technologies and regular surface testing is the only way to make travelling viable again." A

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