

# Academy Matters

Vol.7 No.2



**NUS**  
National University  
of Singapore



***Engaging every section of the NUS community in  
transforming the educational landscape of the university***



# Message from the Chair

“

*We at the Academy also have a mission to be thought leaders by fostering deep thinking about teaching and learning policies and practices at NUS...*



**Kumaralingam Amirthalingam**  
Faculty of Law  
Chair, NUS Teaching Academy

## A Culture of Teaching

The recently elected Executive Council (2016-2018), which has expanded from five members to seven, held its first meeting in July. Victor Tan, a long-serving member, has stepped down, and I wish to record the Academy's appreciation for his service on the Council, and his continued support as a Fellow. The new members of the Council are Soo Yuen Jien (Department of Computer Science), Seow Teck Keong (Department of Biological Sciences) and Ravi Chandran (Department of Strategy and Policy). The continuing members are Alice Christudason (Department of Real Estate), Stephen Lim (Department of Psychology), Adrian Lee (Department of Chemistry) and myself (Faculty of Law). I am privileged to continue as Chair and am delighted that Alice has agreed to continue as Vice-Chair. We look forward to taking the Academy to greater heights and to furthering the mission of entrenching a culture of teaching at NUS.

I have deliberately refrained from referring to a culture of teaching excellence, an aspirational concept that has become value-laden with

contested notions as to what constitutes excellence. It tends to distract attention from teaching by focusing more on the rubrics which measure teaching, as well as on policies pertaining to rewards, tenure and promotion. While these remain important issues that require attention, it is vital not to lose sight of the essential mission, which is teaching. Excellence can be elusive, even illusive. However, everyone can and should be an effective and dedicated teacher. This is the culture of teaching that needs to be nurtured at a research-intensive university. And this is where the Academy can play a key role – to inspire, encourage and assist every academic at NUS to innovate, experiment and improve his or her teaching; to adopt a more scientific, evidence-based approach to teaching; and as educators, to embrace teaching as a core mission.

Having said that, we at the Academy also have a mission to be thought leaders by fostering deep thinking about teaching and learning policies and practices at NUS; by engaging colleagues through roundtables and dialogues to reflect on and analyse emerging trends in education; by

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engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning; and by working on projects pertaining to specific aspects of education. Academy Fellows, who have all distinguished themselves in teaching and learning, and who are increasingly well-versed in higher education pedagogy, are well-placed to play a key role in these efforts to help the university transform its educational landscape.

The last academic year was a busy and fruitful one for the NUS Teaching Academy with activities including the Masterclass Week, Annual Dinner and Distinguished Lecture, workshops and several TLC sessions with various groups of faculty and students. The Masterclass speaker, Professor Anthony Bryk, gave a thought-provoking public lecture on improvement science and the use of networked communities to enhance problem-solving capabilities. His lecture inspired the Academy to create a network of communities across NUS so that colleagues can connect and collaborate on teaching and learning matters. The Distinguished Speaker, Professor Rick Glofcheski, gave an inspiring and highly practical lecture on how to engage students by connecting their classroom education with real world events. The various TLCs and workshops were well-attended by colleagues across NUS, signalling a keen interest in teaching and learning issues.

It goes without saying that in today's world, engagement is largely through cyberspace. To ride on this wave, the Academy is redesigning its website to make it more dynamic and user-friendly. We are adding new features to enable colleagues to share resources as well as to engage and work with one another - for example, through the "Networked Improvement Communities" virtual hub, launched in June this year. In addition, we are developing a Teaching and Learning Resources site to help colleagues search for and access useful materials on teaching and learning. Colleagues are encouraged not just to use the site but to help build it organically by contributing their thoughts and relevant resources, which the Academy will curate and make accessible to all at NUS. This is one of the ways in which the Academy seeks to encourage thoughtful and reflective teaching; this is also a great

way for each of you to take ownership of teaching and learning at NUS – by partnering the Academy in building this resource.

We have two major events planned for 2017: the Masterclass Week scheduled for September, and the Distinguished Lecture to be held at the Annual Dinner in May. The Academy will also hold a Retreat at the end of this semester to review its activities and initiatives, as well as to develop strategic plans for the next few years. We need to think of the future of tertiary education and identify new trends, opportunities and challenges. Technological advancements and the knowledge-based economy have made quantum leaps ahead, but tertiary education appears to remain trapped in a time warp. We need to think creatively and boldly about how best to deliver this education to future generations.

As always, the Academy is grateful for the support of the Provost's Office and the Centre for the Development of Teaching and Learning. Above all, I wish to thank all Fellows in the Academy who have made the last eighteen months exciting and rewarding. I look forward to working together to make greater things happen in the transformation of NUS's educational landscape.

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# Message from the Provost



**Professor Tan Eng Chye**  
Deputy President (Academic Affairs) and Provost

*The NUS Teaching Academy has the potential to contribute to transforming our institutional culture here - a transformation that will be necessary if we are to take teaching quality seriously.*

Teaching is a core mission of NUS, alongside research and contributions to different dimensions of service.

In my address at the 2016 OEA Public Lecture/ATEA Awards Ceremony held in May 2016, I drew attention to a number of trends in the current higher education landscape. One of these is the renewed focus on teaching quality. Across the world, governments are insisting that universities provide high quality education. Singapore is no exception. Consequently, in many countries, work is being carried out to try and establish what good teaching is.

Beyond doubt, teachers have a huge impact on the quality of student learning. If we want to improve education and learning, teachers have a key role to play. Ultimately what we want to see are improved learning outcomes that can demonstrably help equip students to become self-directed, lifelong learners who can deal with the increasing complexity they will face in the world today and in the future.

However, it is notoriously difficult to say what good teaching is since practices vary from discipline to discipline, and since for so long academic teachers in universities have had the tendency to think of their teaching as a private or perhaps even exclusive affair.

Yet, to improve learning, we need to document teaching and make it more public. This is why professional standards frameworks and teaching excellence frameworks are increasingly being used in order to benchmark teaching achievement. These frameworks are based on what the literature suggests about good and effective teaching practices. They establish criteria and standards of achievement as well as provide possible sources of evidence in support of claims relating to teaching achievement. Such claims and evidence need to be documented and made public in appropriate, scholarly ways in order for us to be able to verify the extent of achievement of teachers.

What are the implications of this renewed emphasis on teaching

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quality for the NUS Teaching Academy? The NUS Teaching Academy has the potential to contribute to transforming our institutional culture here - a transformation that will be necessary if we are to take teaching quality seriously. The Academy consists of Fellows who can, given their commitment to the improvement of teaching and learning, help build a culture of high-quality teaching at NUS.

- The Academy can contribute by, first of all, engaging in careful and rigorous studies of good teaching and learning practices as evident from the literature and what the learning sciences tell us about how learning works. In other words, one way that Fellows might use their regular meetings is to consider how they, as Fellows, can grow as teachers. The Academy can help build capacity in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) by using education scholarship to study their own teaching and their own students' learning in a systematic way. They can then provide feedback to one another and generate concrete, practical ideas for engaging in and disseminating scholarly investigation of their own teaching. This will help equip Fellows to contribute in rigorous, evidence-based ways to the development of teaching and learning at NUS.
- Second, the Academy can exemplify the role of scholarly teaching practitioners by themselves increasingly enacting good principles as evident from the literature. This means that Fellows of the Academy should not only study their own teaching and their students' learning, but take the next step and subject this work to peer review. This can take different forms: presentation at international conferences is one good way, but even more effective and efficient may be to share and discuss their SoTL studies with one another. Such 'going

public' is important, since without sharing good practices with one another they will remain private and therefore limited in reach and impact.

- Third, the Academy can as scholars of teaching and learning reach out to the NUS community: to colleagues in their own and other Departments. They can connect these colleagues with one another who may share similar challenges and interests. In this way they can have an impact also beyond the Academy itself as the results of their scholarly work in teaching and learning are disseminated for the benefit of the wider NUS teaching community.

Finally, one very important way in which the Academy can help build teaching quality at NUS is by coordinating its work with that being carried out by our other NUS initiatives that have the same goal of improving teaching and learning: the Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning (CDTL), the Centre for Instructional Technology (CIT), the School of Continuing and Lifelong Learning and the forthcoming Institute for the Application of Learning Science and Educational Technology. In the future, it will further be important for the Academy to align its work with our growing efforts to engage in a more thorough-going way with the learning sciences. I wish the NUS Teaching Academy all the best for their work in the coming year.



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## Executive Council

Kumaralingam Amirthalingam Chair	Alice Christudason Vice Chair	Adrian Lee Council Member	Stephen Lim Wee Hun Council Member	Ravi Chandran s/o Thiagaraj Council Member	Seow Teck Keong Council Member	Soo Yuen Jien Council Member
Bernard Tan Cheng Yian Vice Provost (Undergraduate Education & Student Life) Ex-Officio Member			Johan Geertsema Director, CDTL Ex-Officio Member			

## Fellows

Susan Ang Wan Ling	Lee Kooi Cheng	Kenneth Paul Tan
Chan Wai Meng	Erle Lim Chuen Hian	Victor Tan
Sandy Cook	Lim Lum Peng	Willie Tan
Aaron Danner	Chris McMorran	Paulin Tay Straughan
Teofilo C Daquila	Nga Min En	Teo Chiang Juay
Heng Cheng Suang	Joseph Ooi Thian Leong	Peter Alan Todd
Ho Han Kiat	Bryan Edward Penprase	Silke Vogel
Swati Suryakant Jhaveri	Damith C Rajapakse	Grace Wong Khei Mie
Ashwin M Khambadkone	Lakshminarayanan Samavedham	Wong Nyuk Hien
Gerald Koh Choon Huat	Seah Kar Heng	Yap Von Bing
Alfred Kow Wei Chieh	Farooq Shamsuzzaman	Zhou Weibiao
	Sow Chorng Haur	

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# Members of the 6<sup>th</sup> Executive Council share their thoughts...



I am indeed honoured to be re-elected as Vice Chair of the Teaching Academy to continue with the Academy's Mission to play a key role to improve the quality of learning and teaching at NUS. I very much look forward to working closely with the Exco and Fellows under Kumar's leadership. We hope to bring to fruition various initiatives that will help bring the teaching community together. The aim is to achieve our common goal of enhancing the NUS educational landscape.

**Alice Christudason**  
Vice Chair

Teaching at universities has often been seen as an amateur sport. Students rightly expect a high quality education especially at a time when the cost of a university education has risen to unheard-of levels. Recent efforts to improve the quality of both teaching and learning have focused on the use of technology. Teaching strategies using technology are beginning to be seen as a normal part of the educational furniture in NUS. The normalisation of such strategies followed taking a scholarly approach to teaching and learning and it is in this approach that the delivery of education is becoming more professional. The Teaching Academy is providing the insight into the changing global educational landscape and the kind of thought leadership to support the professionalisation of university teaching. It is a pleasure and an honour to be a part of the Executive Committee at such a time.



**Adrian Lee**  
Council Member



I am deeply privileged to earn my Fellow colleagues' trust and be re-appointed to the Academy's Executive Council. I look forward to serving the NUS community alongside the Academy, and contributing meaningfully towards advancing our university's educational landscape.

**Stephen Lim Wee Hun**  
Council Member

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# Members of the 6<sup>th</sup> Executive Council share their thoughts...



While I have been a Fellow of the Teaching Academy in the past and have been involved in several committees, I now look forward to serving in the Executive Council of the Academy. It is indeed an honour to be given this opportunity. On the whole, I hope the Teaching Academy will be able to play an even bigger role in the development of educational policies in the University in the years to come.

**Ravi Chandran s/o Thiagaraj**  
Council Member

When I was inducted as a Fellow of the Teaching Academy, I expressed my hope that the Academy would be the main driving force for NUS to be a thought-leader in teaching and learning. Now that I have been elected into the Executive Council, I am looking forward to working, together with the other Council members and the Academy Fellows, towards the fulfilment of the hope that I had expressed.

**Seow Teck Keong**  
Council Member



I am honored to have met so many accomplished and thoughtful teachers in NUS Teaching Academy. Our light-hearted yet thought-provoking chit-chat and meetings have been the bright spot of my campus life. I will take this opportunity to give back to the Academy.

**Soo Yuen Jien**  
Council Member

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# Our New Fellows Speak

The Academy welcomes the seven new Fellows who were inducted at the University Awards ceremony on 29 April 2016. They are: Swati Suryakant Jhaveri, Gerald Koh Choon Huat, Alfred Kow Wei Chieh, Chris McMorran, Bryan Edward Penprase, Paulin Tay Straughan and Silke Vogel. They share here their teaching aspirations and wishes for the Academy.



**Swati Suryakant Jhaveri**  
Faculty of Law

**A**s a relatively new member of the Faculty and University, I will continue to contribute to teaching and learning innovation in the courses that I teach on. This push for innovation mirrors the Mission Statement and Vision of the NUS Teaching Academy. I look forward to the opportunities for scholarly exchange on teaching and learning provided by the Academy. In particular, I look forward to exploring further modes of interaction in larger class settings (including lectures which are one of the mainstream ways of delivering courses at University). It is a privilege to be a part of the Academy.



**Bryan Edward Penprase**  
Yale-NUS College

**I**am extremely grateful and excited to be part of the Teaching Academy, and to join this rich “community of practice” at NUS. The breadth and depth of scholarship within the group gives it a unique reach in having a transformative effect on teaching across the university, and bringing together disciplinary expertise from across the university to create new ideas. I look forward to learning from my colleagues in the Teaching Academy and bringing our Yale-NUS Community closer to NUS in the process.

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# Our New Fellows Speak



**Gerald Koh Choon Huat**  
Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health  
Recipient of the Outstanding Educator Award (OEA) 2016

The success of a teacher pivots on the success of his students, and this in turn moulds the future of nations, the world and potentially mankind. I believe that teaching is not only a calling, a privilege and an honour, but also a great responsibility. I also believe a great leader is a teacher par excellence and echo Mr Lim Siong Guan's (the former Head of Civil Service and currently Adjunct Professor at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy) words: "If a leader sees his role as not just to lead well for today but to build for the future, his best contribution then is as a teacher: identifying potential, recognizing effort, encouraging ideas and pursuing excellence with a continuous drive for the organization to be the best it can be and the people to be the best they can be. A leader's best role is therefore to be a teacher par excellence, whose concern is first and foremost the success of his or her people." Hence, to be a leader in medicine and public health, I aim to teach the next generation of doctors and public health professionals well and my teaching philosophy reflects the educational missions of the NUS Schools of Public Health and Medicine: to (1) "train the next generation of future-ready public health leaders", and (2) "nurture servant leaders who will change the practice of medicine for the better", respectively. Both professions govern themselves so doctors and public health professionals must also adhere to high moral and ethical standards. As health science is constantly progressing, doctors and public health professionals must

also keep abreast of the latest developments in their fields so that they can perform their roles in healthcare to the best of their abilities. To achieve these educational goals, I constantly try to nurture and develop skills and values such as critical thinking, inquisitiveness, logical reasoning, passion, compassion, integrity and professionalism in my students. Although both SSHSPH and NUSMed are fortunate to receive some of the best students from each cohort, we still encounter students who experience difficulty coping with the course. Such weaker students need closer supervision and mentoring, although it is easier and aligned with our research goals to pay more attention to bright students who can help in our research and help us academics gain recognition for their achievements. In my past 10 years in NUS, I have also had the privilege to teach dental, nursing, social work, audiology, speech therapy and engineering students at both undergraduate and post-graduate levels and this has also shaped my personal teaching philosophy. Thus, to summarize my teaching philosophy in medical and public health education, it would be to:

- Nurture inquisitiveness, critical thinking and logical reasoning;
- Help bright students achieve greater excellence;
- Help weak students cope better;
- Foster passion, compassion, integrity and professionalism by being a role model;
- Foster inter-professional education to develop teamwork skills.

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**Paulin Tay Straughan**  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences  
Recipient of the Outstanding Educator Award (OEA) 2016

**M**on empowering students to be knowledge-centric and emotionally connected to emerging social issues. When students see the relevance of what they study to their own lives, it keeps them interested, engaged and empowers them to believe that they can make a difference.

I expect that my students, as NUS graduates, must be concerned

about the world we live in, and they must be confident that they can make a difference especially if they are guided by collective wisdom. This expectation guides how I frame my role as educator.

In my teaching, I try to design a syllabus that is relevant to current and emerging social issues, invoke methodologies that will engage the students, instruct them on sociological theories and methodologies that will empower them to deconstruct their observations independently, and infuse them with the enthusiasm to be curious about the world we live in.

To empower students to see social relevance in their actions, I always highlight sociological theories that showcase social agency in the courses I teach. One of my favourite is Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's Social Construction of Reality which tells of the subjective reality that governs our everyday life. The treatise reminds us that we are not constrained by objective structures. Rather, we can shape and influence our social reality collectively.

I remind my students that they will need to invoke the collective wisdom of others to solve real world challenges, and one of the most important life skills they must learn is the cultivation of good interpersonal relations. That is why I always include a group work component in my assessments. It is so rewarding to see my students learn to appreciate each other and encourage each other to rise to their potential.



**Silke Vogel**  
Duke-NUS Medical School

**A** new thrust of education programmes now extends to the working professional. In my instance, I am currently involved in the development of programmes that will provide strong, competency-based education for professionals in the regulatory field in both private and public sectors. To date, there is a dearth of systematic and structured approaches towards professional development in this

area as well as in many other areas. It is well-recognized that education programmes for working professionals have their own challenges and among other factors need to take into account access, varied competency levels and the working professional's difficulty in attending weekly face-to-face classes due to time commitments in their professional lives. Furthermore, working professions benefit most when content is closely aligned and applicable to their professional work. To address these unique challenges, educational frameworks need to be adapted and revised. Often, the rationale is that online content will allow the working professional to complete coursework at his/her own time and pace. But how much content should be delivered via online educational technology and how will competency levels be assessed? Further, what are best practices for integrating face-to-face classes into a curriculum for working professionals? This also leads to the lingering questions of how does one assess the effectiveness of the training? Specifically, how do we evaluate whether the professional integrates the new knowledge into his/her daily work? Thus, it is an opportune time to identify and formulate educational approaches that are geared specifically toward professional development programmes.

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# Our New Fellows Speak



**Chris McMorran**  
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

As a member of the Teaching Academy I have two specific goals. The first is to work with individuals on the Educator Track preparing for promotion. The Scheme represents a forward-thinking effort by the University to provide a path for a rewarding career on the Educator Track. However, questions remain about the practical considerations of promotion: When is one ready for promotion? What do the required documents look like (e.g. an excellent Teaching Portfolio)? How does one identify internal and external reviewers? I hope to help organise workshops that help faculty 1) identify and address gaps in their packages early, 2) work with Department Heads and committee members to answer inevitable questions, 3) recognize and prepare the documents and contacts necessary for promotion, and 4) understand how to make their best case for promotion.

Secondly, I would like to set up a SoTL Incubator – a regular informal meeting that provides colleagues an opportunity to brainstorm research and publication opportunities. For faculty who have never published outside their discipline, conducting research on teaching and learning (e.g. their assessments, classroom dynamics, innovative pedagogies) may seem foreign. A SoTL Incubator at NUS could provide the impetus for faculty to turn their rough ideas into more systematic research projects that may lead to valuable innovations not only for their own teaching, but also for a wider international audience through peer-reviewed publication.



**Alfred Kow Wei Chieh**  
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine

When we review the learning experience of students and notice that the patient safety curriculum needs to be enhanced further, there was a big move to use technology to fill in the gap. I pioneered the creation of an innovative iPad game called PASSED (PATient Safety in Surgical EDucation) which is a teaching module using interactive iPad game to teach medical students on aspects of patient safety.

Different from the simulation modules in Medicine which require large simulation machines that occupy big spaces and expensive equipment, using mobile devices to teach reaps the benefits of portability and easy reproducibility. This opens up a great potential to develop new learning pedagogy and experience that will drive learning in a new dimension. While conventional teaching methods are crucial (especially in medicine, where clinical medicine cannot be taught effectively without bedside learning), technologies can fill in the gaps of learning when constraints are faced at crowded teaching hospitals in Singapore. I truly believe that technologies that are evolving rapidly should be employed to drive education to greater levels.

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**Professor Rick Glofcheski**  
Faculty of Law  
University of Hong Kong

# NUS Teaching Academy's Inaugural Distinguished Lecture and Annual Dinner

The NUS Teaching Academy held our Inaugural Distinguished Lecture for Academy Fellows on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2016 at the University Hall Auditorium. Our distinguished speaker, Professor Rick Glofcheski, delivered a lecture on “Life Long Learning: Can Universities Contribute?”, which was followed by dinner at the Nexus.

On 20<sup>th</sup> May 2016, Professor Glofcheski conducted a workshop on “Authentic Learning and Task-Based Self-Directed Learning” for the NUS Teaching Community.

We are pleased to share with you about this lecture and workshop. A recording of the lecture can be found [here](#).



# Distinguished Lecture on Life-Long Learning: Can Universities Contribute?

“How are we to balance the aspirations for career with the possibility of stopping, and thinking, and developing the intellect, curiosity and new ways of thinking?” That was the challenge that the NUS Teaching Academy’s Distinguished Speaker, Professor Richard Glofcheski, posed to attendees of the Distinguished Lecture on 19th May 2016. Attended by NUS President, Professor Tan Chorh Chuan, who was the Guest-of-Honour, Past and Present Academy Fellows and invited guests, the Lecture examined curriculum design for life-long learning.

Prof Glofcheski pointed out the many pedagogical terms associated with life-long learning, such as independent learning, experiential learning, discovery-based learning, reflective learning and collaborative learning, among others. Although these are indeed necessary for curricula aimed at developing life-long learning, he queried whether a nuanced understanding of these concepts is sometimes lacking. For example, experiential learning can sometimes be operationalized as extended

apprenticeships which take away students’ time and space to reflect and debate, even though these activities are critical for students’ intellectual development. Similarly, when discovery-based learning directs students towards ‘discoveries’ which have already been pre-framed and decided on, students might lose motivation, curiosity and their sense of awe over hitherto unknown perspectives and new-found skills.

To truly develop the habit of life-long learning, Prof Glofcheski posited that a “wholesale re-design and re-structuring of curriculum” may be necessary, and that it should “begin[] with assessment ... aligned with learning activities and learning outcomes [focused on] life-long learning skills and habits”. Presenting the startling and unexpected revelation that some of the best learning takes place with the worst teachers, Prof Glofcheski explained that students in such situations can feel compelled to work things out on their own, and as a result, acquire learning habits that are self-directed and transferable.

Such a learning process can be reliably constructed for all students, as Prof Glofcheski showed with some assessment tasks that nurtured habits of intuitive discovery, and aided in the cultivation of instinctive professional practice. These included the “tort walk” photo essay assignment where students had to take photographs of situations which might give rise to injury or wrong and then do an analysis of the situation with regard to tort law and how liability was to be assessed. Another assignment sent students into the field to catalogue and examine trees that were potentially dangerous due to disease. The process of observation, discovery and problem-solving in real-world situations gave students both the impetus to understand their learning materials better, and increased sensitivity to how their learning could be applied in genuine contexts. As a result, these habits of life-long learning eventually can become assets to their professional development. The real challenge then would be to spread the good practices of authentic learning widely across the educational landscape.

Article by Ng Cheng Cheng  
Manager, NUS Teaching Academy



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# Photo Gallery

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Guest of Honour, Professor Tan Chor Chuan



Teaching Academy Chair, Kumaralingam Amirthalingam



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# Take-home lessons from the Distinguished Lecture

## Fellows share their thoughts



**Farooq Shamsuzzaman**  
Faculty of Engineering

“

We learn everyday by living life through our mistakes, failures, successes and achievements in professional, societal and personal engagements, even without actively planning for it. How is this natural process different from University education as an enabler for “Life-long learning”? The divide is sub-conscious versus conscious, learning in retrospect versus designing and executing own learning for planned outcomes. To help prepare for that, our role is to consciously unsettle and disrupt the minds of our audience to spur curiosity and questions, and empower them to independently analyze and arrive at answers. The lecture advocates synergizing authentic and discovery learning as a powerful enabler for life-long learning.



**Sandy Cook**  
Duke-NUS Medical School

”

Dr. Glofcheski’s presentation on life-long learning resonated with me and the type of learning activities that we at Duke-NUS strive to do. The heart and soul of student learning is NOT about how a teacher transmits content – but how a learner is inspired to use and apply content, nay, even see the world through a different lens. His law examples of having students see the world through the eyes of potential litigation – and the use of real life newspaper stories to debate how such cases would/could be managed showed his passion and enthusiasm for student lifelong learning – not teaching.

”

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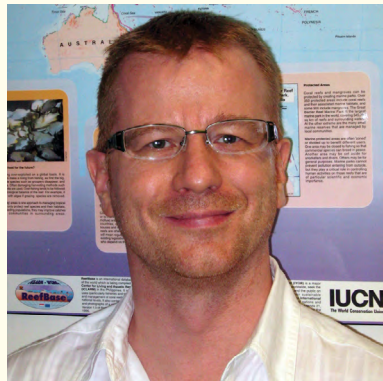
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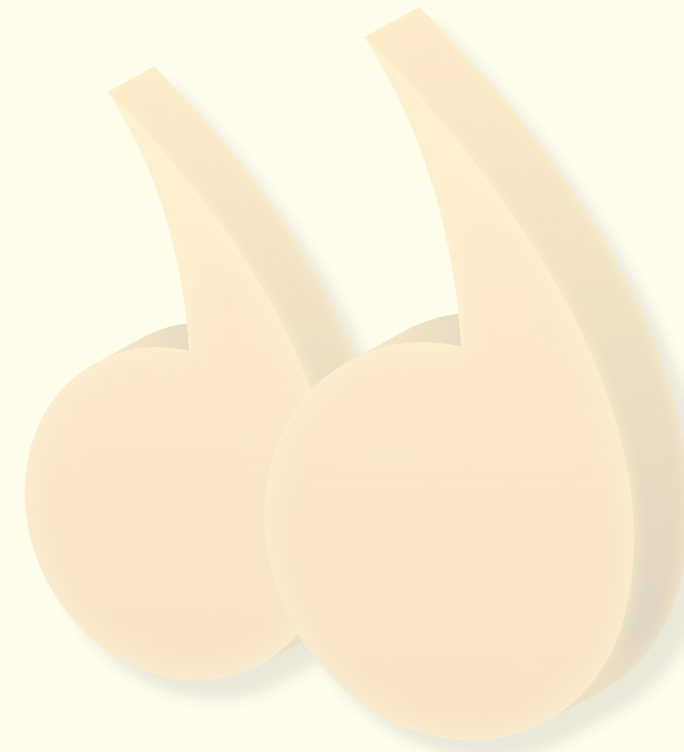
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**Peter Alan Todd**  
Faculty of Science

Prof Rick Glofcheski delivered a highly entertaining and enlightening lecture on life-long learning. He immediately engaged the audience by raising the fundamental questions “what exactly is life-long learning?” and “how can universities contribute to life-long learning?” and encouraged us to reflect on many aspects of our teaching including assessment, curriculum design, and learning outcomes. He discussed the benefits of independent, authentic, discovery-based, self-directed, and collaborative learning before sharing some of his own experiences, illustrated with examples of his innovative teaching techniques. Delivered with wit, grace and style, the lecture was in fact a highly engaging critical-thinking exercise that underlined how creativity and the willingness to try new ideas can lead to a much richer student learning experience.



**Grace Wong**  
School of Design and Environment

The lecture has provided some interesting and novel ideas on teaching a large class of more than 100 students. For example, student interactions among themselves and with the lecturer are encouraged and have been smoothly facilitated such that knowledge content could still be conveyed while impromptu student feedback and comments could be included as additional learning and insights. The participatory nature of the lecture session makes the learning process more active rather than passive.

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# Authentic Learning and Task-based Self-directed Learning



Prof Glofcheski at the workshop

On 20th May 2016, Professor Rick Glofcheski began the well-subscribed workshop with the exhortation to carefully consider if there is an important connection between teaching/learning and assessment that is sometimes overlooked - he challenged participants to critically evaluate the following questions:

- Do current assessment practices serve learning goals very well?
- Does assessment have post-assessment learning value? Does it bear much relation to what graduates do in their careers?
- Can assessment be used more strategically to achieve more meaningful and sustainable learning?
- Can it be done in large classes with existing resources?

Rather than seeing assessments as purely formative or summative, he suggested seeing assessments as learning opportunities – grades counted towards final but still pushing students to continue to learn.

Rick argues that not only must learning and assessment be aligned with the skills and attributes required in real-life settings (i.e. have constructive alignment), there is also urgent need to “strive towards authenticity in assessments”, as hypothetical situations designed by teachers tend not to motivate students. In addition to being exaggerated and unlikely, hypothetical problems are often unrealistically complete, leaving students with a riddle-solving situation where they try to guess what the teachers’ expected answer is, rather than think deeply about real problems. In the case of Law, students may become distanced from real problems and real social policy contexts, as they are unused to thinking through real problems. Real problems are often more ambiguous and ill-defined, and usually require deep thinking not just about case laws but also about the relevance of policy and resources allocation to public services such as the police departments or the fire services.

Bearing in mind that “students learn what they think they will be tested on” (Biggs and Tang 2011), and that students remember much more when they have to work things out for themselves, Rick’s tort law course now uses the following assessment activities:

- a) News reports as learning and assessment tools – realistic, authentic, relevant to community, factually incomplete and complex, requiring multiple perspectives in analysis.

Implementation: Consistent usage of news articles in tutorials, learning assignments, tests and examinations. [see below]

Effect on students: Students learn how to apply the law to real-life events.

- b) Reflective Media Diary – 30% of the final course grade. Uses current news material.

Implementation: Students independently identify tort law-related events in news reports, and write brief reflections and analyses, which are emailed to themselves and central depository. At the end of the diary

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period of 5 months, they select 3 items and write full legal analyses with reference to all case laws, legal authorities etc. and the work goes through turn-it-in.

Effect on students: Students end up reading about their own community and become engaged in independent learning and reflection. They learn new concepts on their own and develop the habit of spotting tort law issues in unflagged situations.

c) Tort Walk – a photographic equivalent of the reflective media diary

d) Video Documentary Group Project – similar to the reflective media diary and Tort Walk except presented in a documentary form. An optional project worth 20% which allows students to take a shorter final examination worth 30% (usually worth 50%) of their final grade.

e) Real-time Collaborative Feedback

Implementation: students discuss answers with and receive feedback from the examiners (for an hour after their mid-term tests and for 1 week in online discussion groups after their final examination)

Rick showed participants many examples of these assessments and also students' feedback on them. He also outlined some of the challenges faced in setting up such assessments, such as the subjectivity of grading, and gave practical advice to keep such assessment practice sustainable e.g. in ways that are not labour-intensive. Given the learning advantages produced by such practices, they can certainly contribute in a meaningful way to the development of the habit of learning, setting students on course for life-long learning.

A recording of this workshop can be found [here](#).

Article by Ng Cheng Cheng  
Manager, NUS Teaching Academy



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Adrian Lee in discussion with a participant



Group Discussions



## Workshop on “How Can We Improve Teaching and Learning with Scholarship?”

“What is good teaching?” and “How to improve teaching?” are questions that teachers frequently ponder. On 22nd February 2016, 41 colleagues from various NUS departments sat down at the Faculty of Science Active Learning Room to discuss this matter through a series of questions—questions such as what is good teaching, what is scholarly teaching, what is the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) and how it differs from education research.

Led by Dr Adrian Lee, a Fellow and Executive Committee member of the NUS Teaching Academy, colleagues’ discussions over these questions helped clarify what scholarship meant in this context. Colleagues also became more aware of SoTL taxonomy and how it can be used to frame research questions. This led naturally to a discussion of the principles underpinning good SoTL practice; SoTL inquiry is focused on student learning, is grounded in context and methodologically

sound, is conducted in partnership with students and is made appropriately public. Many also felt that scholarship requires peer review which is most likely to be found in publication.

It was clear that there is a thirst for such discussion to be taken further, to help colleagues engage in SoTL in a manner that meets the criteria for good practice. The Academy is actively working with CDTL to help bring this about. Participants were also eager to read or hear from colleagues who have experience of SoTL and who are willing to share their successes and failures. Participants greatly acknowledged the opportunity the workshop provided to interact with colleagues from different departments, to share experience and ideas, and to network. Out of this experience, participants suggested the creation of a virtual community, where they could discuss these matters on a regular basis. The Teaching Academy is committed to elevating this conversation and ensuring that the community is heard.

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