LEARNING AS A WAY OF LIFE

NTU’s entrepreneurship and continuing education programmes prepare students for the workplace of the future.

In today’s fast-paced, technology-driven world, learning no longer stops the moment students receive their degrees on graduation day. To stay relevant, employees and entrepreneurs must stay up-to-date with new developments in their fields, and sometimes even branch out to learn new skills.

Well aware of these challenges, NTU has established institutes aimed at preparing students, alumni and the public for the workplace of the future.

Founded in 2001, the Nanyang Technopreneurship Center (NTC) offers degree programmes and courses on entrepreneurship, with a focus on technology as an enabling tool. And in 2016, NTU’s College of Professional and Continuing Education (PaCE) was established to offer adult education and professional development courses that will help working adults stay competitive in the face of relentless technological change.

In addition, the NTU Alumni Club has launched an initiative, led by Mr Lee Eng Kian (NBS/1995), to help alumni professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs) network, gain industry knowledge and further their careers.

“We believe in alumni helping alumni,” said Mr Lee. “We would like to build a network that every alumni member can tap into, which will in turn benefit everyone else within the network.”

To find out more about the importance of lifelong learning, read on for NTUlink’s interviews with NTC Director Associate Professor Hooi Den Huan and PaCE Dean Professor Ting Seng Kiong.

ENTERPRISING FOR LIFE

Entrepreneurship is about so much more than just making a profit, says Nanyang Technopreneurship Center Director Associate Professor Hooi Den Huan.

What is NTC’s mission?

Assoc Prof Hooi Den Huan — Our mission statement is ‘making a meaningful difference to humanity through entrepreneurship education’. A good entrepreneurship education can help a person develop an enterprising mindset, and this is an asset for life.

We love to see our students becoming successful business entrepreneurs, but we also emphasise that entrepreneurship education is for any career, for anything you want to do, whether you work in government, in a charity, for a big MNC or for an SME. If you have an enterprising mindset you can really make a difference to any organisation.

What constitutes an enterprising mindset?

Prof Hooi — The definition of an entrepreneur is someone who can identify and seize opportunities, manage resources and, at the end of the day, create value. This is applicable whether a person is a business entrepreneur or an intrapreneur within an organisation.

For me, perhaps the best example is Singapore’s founding Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew. Singapore in the 1960s was like a resource-poor start-up; today, some 52 years on, we are like a huge conglomerate. To build that, you need someone who is not only capable, but who also has a very good enterprising mindset.

What is technopreneurship?

Prof Hooi — A technopreneur is an entrepreneur who leverages technology. A technopreneur doesn’t need to have an engineering or science background—for us, the best class for our programmes is multidisciplinary.

Technopreneurship can involve a highly technical product, but not necessarily. Another way is to make use of technology as a platform, like Uber or Grab. Even if you run a restaurant but you use iPads to take orders, you are leveraging technology to make your processes more efficient.

What is special about NTC’s programmes?

Prof Hooi — We don’t see ourselves as offering just a degree. That’s shortsighted. Instead, we see ourselves as offering a transformational journey. The best measure is whether you feel meaningfully transformed after you leave the programme—do you look at things in a different way, with an enterprising mindset?

We don’t want the best teachers; we want the best inspirers. I don’t see myself as a teacher. I’m doing you the biggest injustice if I only teach you what I know, because I only know this much. But if you are inspired, there is no limit to what you can learn.

What is your advice for alumni who are interested in entrepreneurship?

Prof Hooi — I would encourage alumni to pay attention to what I call the four Ps of entrepreneurship.

First, purpose. The primary reason for setting up a business is not just to make a profit. That’s important, but your primary reason should also be to fulfill a purpose.

Second, if you have a purpose, you’ll have greater passion, where you don’t see your job as just a job.

Third, with greater passion, you are likely to have deeper perseverance. Life is not easy, and you will encounter obstacles. But if you believe in what you do—this comes from having a purpose—you will be able to meet the challenge.

Finally, you must have principles. Many people say you need to know how to cheat to be a successful businessman, but I say that trust is most important.

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