Leaders of the Pack

THE DISTINGUISHED RECIPIENTS OF NTU CHAIR PROFESSORSHIPS ON WHAT DRIVES THEM EVER-FORWARD

WINNER 2018 APEX AWARDS FOR PUBLICATION EXCELLENCE

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Not enough can be said about the role that education plays in the advancement of society. The Singapore Story is a case in point, with our knowledge-based economy contributing immeasurably in our transition from Third World to the First in a relatively short space of time. Our pioneering leaders recognised the value of education, echoing the words of another great Founding Father (in this case, that of the United States) Benjamin Franklin, who once said that “an investment in knowledge pays the best interest.”

Fast forward to the present, and the need for investment in knowledge is more vital than ever, in an age of technological disruption, where strides in research offer prospects for a better future for humanity. This can be seen in our feature (pages 16-21) on the newly-minted chair professors at NTU, who are spearheading the quest for knowledge in their various fields. Thus, every contribution — regardless of size and the motivation behind it — makes a difference. And that’s because lives are changed by it.

This underpins the theme of our current issue, which showcases the many dimensions of giving, and the benefits of doing so. It’s a point stressed by NTU Development Office’s Executive Director Liza Boffen-Yordanov (pages 36-37) who also talks about the little touches that make donors feel more connected to the institutions that they support.

Fortunately, many of the University alumni readily acknowledge the importance of giving, and have put their money where their mouth is (pages 42-43). Nor are alumni NTU’s only benefactors. Our feature on Legacy Giving (pages 28-31) highlights individuals who have bequeathed part of their estate to the provision of bursaries and scholarships for needy undergraduates.

Indeed, as a society, it is the duty of individuals who have succeeded in life to nurture the next generation — as seen by the socially-impactful projects made possible by the Kwek Leng Joo Community Service Fund (pages 44-48) named in honour of the late business leader. It is also something that NTU Professor Koh Tai Ann, once a scholarship recipient herself, has done with the establishment of an academic Gold Medal in her name (pages 38-41). This issue looks at her story, as well as some the lives who have been touched by her generosity. Beyond lives, the impact of giving can be seen in literally brick-and-mortar endeavours, such as the NTU Library (pages 12-15), which aims to be an all-around space for bonding, working and even relaxing.

Let us then be inspired by these initiatives geared toward the greater good, and ask ourselves how we can help in the advancement of knowledge, the benefit of society and the future of our young.

The Continuum Team
A JOURNEY OF LEARNING AND DISCOVERY

Participants of the Digital Economy Innovation Immersion Programme (China Chapter) visited leading corporations in China as part of their learning experience.

NTU alumni keen on embracing the digital economy had the opportunity to better understand its rapid development through a learning trip to China from 2 to 7 December 2018. Jointly organised by the Nanyang Technopreneurship Center (NTC) and NTU Alumni Affairs Office, the Digital Economy Innovation Immersion Programme (China Chapter) featured visits to Chinese companies that are supporting Singapore’s Smart Nation initiative. These visits provided alumni participants with insights into the companies’ successful business models and strategies.

As part of the programme activity, alumni participants also attended the Entrepreneur China Annual Conference 2018 in Beijing. Themed “Break & Change”, the conference covered topics such as artificial intelligence and fintech as well as the future of healthcare and consumer experience.

KEAY TAKEAWAYS

Alumni participants found the trip meaningful as they were able to gain deep insights that would benefit their operations and work cultures. They also learnt through the sharing of experiences. “What motivated me to enrol in this immersion trip was the programme outline that focused on experiential learning through onsite visits to established companies in China. Instead of just learning about them in a classroom setting, we saw the companies first-hand and interacted with key executives,” said Mr Jerome Lau (NBS/2001), Managing Director of Splash Productions Pte Ltd.

Mr Ken Toh (WWSI/2014), CEO and Director of Thinking Notes Pte Ltd, concurred. “It has been an eye-opening trip, understanding the way China’s tech companies strategies, operate and function on a day-to-day basis. The deep appreciation they have for human capital are core factors we can learn for our business and professional development,” he said.

Mr Joseph Situwali (EEE/2008), Director of Mega Indah Cargo said: “I highly recommend this learning trip if one is keen to see how China has evolved and matured into an online consumption behemoth that is easily available to the people and communities. In addition to the knowledge gained, I have made valuable friendships with fellow participants.”
HOME AGAIN!
NTU alumni returned to campus for the 2018 NTU Alumni Homecoming.

Many alumni look forward to the annual NTU Alumni Homecoming event where they get to revisit the campus with their families and get reacquainted with old friends. Last year’s homecoming saw some 1,200 alumni spending a pleasant day on campus grounds. The 2018 NTU Alumni Homecoming was also held in conjunction with the inaugural Learning Technologies Festival, which aims to inspire NTU alumni to experience the latest technology trends and innovation.

FULL DAY AHEAD
The NTU Alumni Homecoming commenced with campus tour, micro-seminars and sharing sessions, as well as a “Health is Wealth” forum conducted in Mandarin. Speaking at the “Health is Wealth” forum were Dr Goh Chye Teo, Director of NTU Chinese Medicine Clinic and Physician Neo Min Jun, a TCM physician and Assistant Manager from the NTU Chinese Medicine Clinic. They provided insights on the relationship between wellbeing and health, and how people with different physical conditions can take good care of their health.

The 8 new mobile-learning courses add to the 65 existing Industry 4.0 courses under the SkillsFuture initiative offered by NTU. In total, NTU offers 185 SkillsFuture courses.

LEADING THE WAY

Dato’ Sri Dr Tahir, the Founder of the Mayapada Group that has interests in the banking, healthcare and real estate sectors, has received numerous accolades over the course of his career. He was recently conferred the prestigious Bintang Mahapatra Naryana medal by Indonesian President Joko Widodo, and was the first Chinese recipient of this medal. Through the Tahir Foundation, the Commerce graduate from the former Nanyang University has made generous gifts towards initiatives in healthcare, education and national reform. Dato’ Sri Dr Tahir attributes his achievements to foresight, prudence and self-discipline. Even in the face of improbability, he believes that it is never too late to take on new challenges, regardless of age or experience.

Nanyang Business School alumni Mr Lim Chow Kiat is the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of GIC, which manages Singapore’s foreign reserves with well over US$1 trillion in assets. Always keen to contribute to his alma mater, Mr Lim has since 2015, served on the NTU Board of Trustees. He is also the Chairman of the Board of Governors of NTU’s Wealth Management Institute. Through the opportunities opened by his education he were never lost on Mr Lim. He is grateful for his NTU education which allowed him to acquire knowledge, both in depth and breadth, from majors in accounting, to studying law, statistics, communication, IT and Organisational Behaviour.

Also a Nanyang Business School alumni and a member of the NTU Board of Trustees, Adjunct Professor Tan Ching Hoo is the first Alumni to be appointed Chief Executive Officer for the Asia-Pacific region for global commodities giant Trafigura Group. Formerly a Managing Director at American multi-strategy hedge fund Amaranth Advisors, Prof Tan had humble beginnings, growing up in a one-room flat in Tao Pek Chai. A strong believer in paying it forward, Prof Tan started a group with some friends to distribute necessities to those living in one-bedroom flats. He also had more than 40 members at one point and helped to set up a mentoring programme at the Charter Financial Analyst (CFA) Society Singapore.

ROLL OF HONOUR
Outstanding alumni were lauded for their achievements and contributions at the 2018 Nanyang Alumni Awards ceremony.

Thirty-seven alumni received the 2018 Nanyang Alumni Awards from Minister for Health Mr Gan Kim Yong and NTU President Professor Subra Suresh during the NTU Alumni Night on 13 October 2018. Held at NTU’s iconic sports hall, The Wave, the presentation was witnessed by some 1,200 alumni, faculty, staff and guests.

Receiving the Nanyang Distinguished Alumni Award – the highest honour bestowed upon NTU alumni—were entrepreneur and philanthropist Dato’ Sri Dr Tahir (Commerce/1976), Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of GIC Mr Lim Chow Kiat (NBS/1993), and global investor-turned-CEO Adjunct Professor Tan Chin Hoo (NBS/1995). The recipients were recognised for their enterprising leadership and illustrious achievements that have impacted the University and society on a local and global scale.

NANYANG ALUMNI AWARDS 2018 RECIPIENTS

Nanyang Distinguished Alumni Award
Dato’ Sri Dr Tahir
Mr Lim Chow Kiat
Adjunct Prof Tan Chin Hoo
Nanyang Alumni Achievement Award
Mr Lin Cheng Eng
Tan Sri Dato’ Lim Kuang Sia
Er Chong Khee Sen
Mr Yeo Guat Kwang
Ms Tan Ai Nia
Mr Shafie Bin Shamaruddin
Dr Han Fangming
Nanyang Outstanding Young Alumni Award
Ms Taula Taulua Bte Mohd Paser
Dr Ong Ching Yaw Tommy
Aast Prof Zhang Yi
Mr Li Jiping
Ms Ma Thi Aih Tjiwe
Ms Zhang Yahying Intert
Ms Low Ser En
Ms Nur Syahidah Bte Aik
Mr Wu Tian Sheng
Mr Liu
Ms Yasmin Bte Ahmad Murid
Nanyang Alumni Service Award
Mr Charlie Wern Yuan
Mr Foo Hee Kiang
Mr Chang Weng Hoe
Ms Gillian Ang Lay Tin
Mr Tang Tiebao
Mr Caisong
Mr Chu Sui-Lung
Mr Shan Gardin
Mr Ng Kah Meng
Mr Tan Yong An
Ms Lee Hai Min
Mr Leong Kiek Hau
Mr Siew Kwong Ting Stanwan
Mr Xiong Junsheng
Mr Sander Broekxensen
Ms Chan Sook Ching Yean
IN THE CIRCLE

EXPANDING THE NTU NETWORK

The NTU Alumni Association launched new chapters in Japan and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

NTU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (JAPAN)
In 1999, Mr Ryotaka Goto and Mr Yusuke Okada graduated from the Nanyang Business School (NBS), as NTU’s first Japanese MBA students. Two decades on, both alumni were finally able to witness the launch of the NTU Alumni Association (AA) in their home country. Led by Mr Tomoyuki Suzuki (NBS/2018), the AA was formed in March 2018.

Joining them and some 60 NTU alumni living in Japan for the launch ceremony on 3 November 2018 at Hyatt Regency Tokyo were Mr Ethan Chua Sheng Wei, Deputy Chief of Mission and Counsellor, Embassy of Singapore in Tokyo Japan; Mr Tomoyuki Suzuki (NBS/2018), President of the NTU Alumni Association (Japan); Mr Ethan Chua Sheng Wei, Deputy Chief of Mission and Counsellor, Embassy of Singapore in Tokyo Japan; Professor Alan Chan, NTU Vice President (Alumni & Advancement); and Professor Guido Gianasso, Associate Dean (Corporate Engagement and Relations), College of Business.

The guests celebrated the special moment with the Kagami-biraki, a Japanese traditional ceremony that involves opening a big sake barrel by breaking its lid with wooden hammers. The lid-breaking action signified the start of the journey and the opening of the history for NTU AA Japan.

NTU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (GCC)
NTU alumni based in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which includes Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman, now have an official platform to contact their alma mater.

The NTU AA (GCC) was launched on 19 October 2018 at the Royal Le Méridien Abu Dhabi. Gracing the ceremony was His Excellency Mr Samuel Tan Chi Tse, Ambassador of the Republic of Singapore to the United Arab Emirates; Mr Low Pit Chen, Consul-General of the Republic of Singapore in Dubai; Professor Alan Chan, NTU Vice President (Alumni and Advancement); and over 40 alumni and guests.

Following a speech by H.E. Mr Samuel Tan, Prof Chan and NTU AA (GCC) President Ms Rasiah Raslyn Agatha (WKWSCI/2010) sounded a gong together to officially launch the NTU AA (GCC).

AN ARTISTIC VOYAGE

Alumni spent time relaxing and learning about European art on their cruise holiday.

More than 30 alumni and their families enjoyed a unique cruise vacation on the luxurious Italian cruise liner Costa Fortuna. Organised by the NTU Alumni Affairs Office, the NTU Alumni 5D4N Interactive Cruise Tour from 18 to 22 November 2018 featured over 5,000 Italian and European masterpieces and antiques on board. Participants had the opportunity to learn more about these artworks, as well as the history of Renaissance Art, through an exclusive walking art tour led by Programme Director, Mr Ettore Costa. Other art-inspired activities included an “Amazing Art Hunt” and a tote bag-painting workshop where alumni could bring home their personalised masterpieces.

Alumni and their families having a good time together onboard the magnificent cruise liner Costa Fortuna during the NTU Alumni 5D4N Interactive Cruise Tour.

NTU alumni and their families having a good time together onboard the magnificent cruise liner Costa Fortuna during the NTU Alumni 5D4N Interactive Cruise Tour.

NTU Vice-President (Alumni & Advancement) Prof Alan Chan (left) presenting the NTU flag to NTUAA (Japan) President Mr Tomoyuki Suzuki (NBS/2018) during the AA’s official launch ceremony.

NTU Vice-President (Alumni & Advancement) Prof Alan Chan (left) presenting the NTU flag to NTUAA (Japan) President Mr Tomoyuki Suzuki (NBS/2018) during the AA’s official launch ceremony.
IN THE
CIRCLE

GIVING BACK WITH HEART

The NTU Buddhist Society Alumni celebrated triple anniversaries with a new study award fund.

2018 was a momentous year for the NTU Buddhist Society Alumni (NTUBSA) — it marked the 35th anniversary of the NTU Buddhist Society (NTUBS), the 25th anniversary of NTUBS Alumni Study Fund, and the 15th anniversary of the Little Bodhi Student Care Centre (LBSCC), a non-profit volunteer welfare organisation that was established by NTUBSA.

To commemorate these milestones, the NTU Buddhist Society Alumni Study Fund was set up to support financially-needy NTU undergraduate students in perpetuity. In the spirit of giving back, student recipients will be volunteering for a day with the LBSCC (See addendum for more information on LBSCC).

CELEBRATING A COMMON BOND

A fundraising campaign for the NTUBSA Study Award was launched at the celebration dinner to commemorate the triple anniversaries. Held on 3 November 2018 at Quality Hotel Marlise’s Lotus Vegetarian Restaurant, some 150 alumni and guests attended the gathering, which provided an opportunity for classmates to reunite and make new friends.

One event highlight was the “Remembering and Rejoicing” segment which brought together the first and current Presidents of the three sister organisations. Led by founder and pro tem President of NTUBS Mr Peter Chung, six other past and current presidents carried the Buddha statue — which was gifted to the society 35 years ago by the late Ven Hoon Choon of Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery — into the hall. The dinner included a flash mob dance by NTUBS members and a musical performance by NTUBS alumni Ah Hoz and Ywie, who played the guitar and led guests on sing-alongs of their original Buddhist song compositions.

As a kick-off, NTUFS aims to raise $250,000 for the endowed NTUFS Study Award. The sum will be matched by the Singapore Government. The award, with a value of up to $12,000, will be given in perpetuity to 1 student recipient each year, starting from 2020.

$172,670 has been raised as at 31 December 2018.

CENTRE OF CARE

CREATE A CARING AND NURTURING ENVIRONMENT FOR EVERY CHILD

Established by NTUBSA in 2003, Little Bodhi Student Care Centre (LBSCC) is open to all students from seven to 13 years old, regardless of race, religion or family background. To focus on the needs of lower-income families, the centre makes its services affordable without compromising on the quality of care. LBSCC also provides opportunities for students to develop their interests and potential. Each year, LBSCC gives out various bursaries and good performance awards to help and encourage students to strive for excellence. Currently, about 20 per cent of its students receive subsidies. The centre also accepts volunteers who give their time to conduct lessons such as reading classes and computer literacy programmes.

Little Bodhi Student Care Centre is located at 88 1/2 Woodlands Street 13, #01-163, Singapore 730163. For more information on the centre and how you can volunteer, visit https://littlebodhi.sg/

CELEBRATING GIVING

The 2019 Faculty & Staff Campaign kicked off with a Chinese New Year lo hei and a renewed commitment to support students in their education journey.

This year’s launch of the Faculty & Staff Campaign took on a celebratory note, as NTU staff, students and guests gathered at the School of Biological Sciences Lobby on 28 January 2019 for a Chinese New Year (CNY)-themed kick-off. The guests enjoyed various festive activities, including Chinese palm reading, Chinese fan calligraphy and a flash mob dance by NTUBS students.

There were also stalls serving the popular kachang puteh dragon beard candy and lo hei, a vegetarian yu sheng. Guests then tucked into a buffet lunch and witnessed the award presentation as well as a flash mob and lion dance performance that welcomed the year of the pig.

Another tangible example of progress highlighted by Prof Suresh was the increasing positive way which NTU was perceived by the rest of the world. “Take, for example, as a result of the University’s prominence in the global arena, two overseas donors — The Wallenberg Foundation from Sweden and an individual from India — chose to support NTU in 2018 without any prior engagement with the University,” said Prof Suresh. He expressed his hope that the NTU community would continue to support the Faculty & Staff Giving initiative in the new year. “In 2018, 46.4% of faculty and staff contributed in some significant way to NTU. We would like to make that 100%!”

Another highlight of this year’s launch was the announcement of the 2019 Faculty & Staff Giving leader board. The honours were received by Prof Suresh, Prof Alan Chan, and NTU Development Office Executive Director Ms Liza Boffen-Yordanov. The event also accepted volunteers who give their time to support students.

With the support of all races, attendees of all ages joined in the tossing of a vegetarian yu sheng. Guests then tucked into a buffet lunch and witnessed the presentation of the donor gift as well as the lucky draw.
WHEN IDEAS COME TO LIFE
An entrepreneurship competition sponsored by Mapletree Investments gave youths the opportunity to bring their business concepts to fruition.

This year’s River Hongbao was not just a dazzling affair of fireworks and lantern displays, but also a platform for budding youth entrepreneurs to turn their business dreams to reality. More than 50 students, who took part in the inaugural Mapletree Investments-sponsored River Hongbao 2019 Hackathon (RHBHacks), were asked to create products that would compel people to buy them. The participants, representing 15 teams from various tertiary institutions, were then tasked to present their business proposals to a panel of judges on 4 January 2019.

Three winning ideas were selected and given $4,800 seed money to road-test their ideas by setting up stalls at the River Hongbao Bicentennial Edition, which ran from 3 to 10 February 2019 at The Float @ Marina Bay. Each winning team also received $2,000 in prize money.

It proved a fruitful day on the fairways on 31 July 2018, as 12 flights of golfers took part in the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Business & Community Partners (BCP) Golf Challenge to catch up with old friends, network and most importantly give back to a worthy cause. Gracing the occasion was Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, Mr Masagos Zulkifli. He led the golf challenge by playing in the Guest-of-Honour flight at Seletar Country Club. Other attendees were NTU Professor Alan Chan, Vice-President (Alumni & Advancement), Mr Robin Chua, Director (Advancement & Communication), and Mr Simon Lee, Chairman of the BCP Committee.

In its third year, the fundraising event brought together NTU’s philanthropic business partners to help deserving NTU students in financial need. Organised by the BCP Committee and the NTU Development Office, the BCP Golf Challenge raised over $400,000 for the Lee Sing Kong Endowment Fund. This fund supports the Lee Sing Kong Professors in Early Childhood Education at the National Institute of Education (NIE) and the Lee Sing Kong Bursary Award to help needy students pursue a quality education at NTU. After a great day on the green, the event ended with a dinner attended by 150 NTU business and community partners, as well as a charity auction of a scarf donated by Minister Masagos and a wine chiller.

For more than 25 years, the BCP Programme has brought together over 650 corporations and community leaders to make an impact on the lives of deserving NTU students in need of financial aid. The Programme has raised more than $8 million since its inception. “When we help these students, they will be better-placed to join the workforce, and this will help them to provide for their families,” said Chairman of Sri Krishnan Temple, Mr Sooaram, a Platinum donor of this programme. “The generations after us will reap the harvest of the seeds we plant today.”

WINNING THREE
The three ideas that impressed the RHBHacks judges were:

• Balloons with LED lights by NTU
• Customised terrariums by Republic Polytechnic
• Denim apparel with customised designs by Singapore Polytechnic

WITH OPEN HEARTS
The winning teams of RHBHacks contributed 70% of their earnings to appointed charities.

FUNDRAISING CORPORATE CAPTAINS
Golfers raised over $400,000 in a series of games geared towards the greater good.

AWARDS AND APPRECIATION FOR BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS
In appreciation of the unstinting support from NTU’s business and community partners, the annual BCP Awards and Appreciation Dinner was held at Carlton Hotel Singapore on 25 October 2018. Professor Alan Chan and Mr Simon Lee presented the awards to the Platinum, Gold and Palladium donors, which included Advisors Alliance Group, Malayan Banking Berhad and the family of late Professor Lee Sing Kong. The dinner also showcased amazing performances by the Mentalist, Mr Ferris Yeo and NTU Cultural Activities Club Jazz & Blues.

THE BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS PROGRAMME
Set up in 2011, the BCP Programme has brought together over 650 corporations and community leaders to make an impact on the lives of deserving NTU students in need of financial aid. The Programme has raised more than $8 million since its inception. “When we help these students, they will be better-placed to join the workforce, and this will help them to provide for their families,” said Chairman of Sri Krishnan Temple, Mr Sooaram, a Platinum donor of this programme. “The generations after us will reap the harvest of the seeds we plant today.”
A WORLD BEYOND BOOKS

NTU LIBRARY IS TRANSFORMING BEFORE OUR VERY EYES TO BETTER SERVE THE UNIVERSITY’S STAKEHOLDERS.

first-timers to the Lee Wee Nam (LWN) Library — NTU’s flagship library and one of seven libraries that collectively make up NTU Library — are often surprised that it looks more like a spacious hangout spot than a building filled with books. Named in recognition of a generous donation made in 2001 by the family of the late Mr Lee Wee Nam, an entrepreneur and philanthropist, the LWN Library houses the Engineering and Science collections. Yet this fact barely scratches the surface of what visitors can do here — be it studying alone or working in groups, perusing rows of books or accessing electronic resources, participating in a computer workshop or even taking a nap!

Indeed, NTU Library as a whole looks nothing like it did during its early days following the establishment of NTU’s predecessor institution, Nanyang Technological Institute, in 1981. These changes largely mirror the way higher education teaching and learning practices have evolved over the years, and more exciting changes for NTU Library are on the horizon.

“A THIRD SPACE”
No one disputes the function of public libraries in instilling a love of reading among the general population and keeping the community well-informed. Academic libraries, which are attached to higher education institutions, serve a narrower target audience but their role is no less important: to support the university’s curriculum as well as the research activities of its faculty and students.

NTU Library’s mission is “to enable staff and students in NTU to engage optimally with the ever-changing information ecosystem in a third space.”

WE WANT TO CULTIVATE THE FEELING AMONG GRADUATES THAT THE LIBRARY WAS, AND STILL IS, A SPECIAL PLACE FOR THEM.

Professor Schubert Foo, Deputy Associate Provost (Information & Knowledge), NTU
COLLABORATION BOOTHS PROVIDE A SEMI-ENCLOSED SPACE FOR GROUP DISCUSSIONS.

• State-of-the-art technologies — such that students will think of the library as a third space encompassing physical space — in addition to online resources.

Deputy Associate Provost (Information & Knowledge). “Today, possible for library users,” says Professor Schubert Foo, NTU's

with

, and to keep up student-centric

researchers and administrators.

including undergraduates, postgraduates, alumni, faculty, researchers and administrators.

The two main drivers of transformation have been to make NTU Library more student-centric, and to keep up with technologies that make things as easy or efficient as possible for library users,” says Professor Schubert Foo, NTU’s

 Deputy Associate Provost (Information & Knowledge). “Today, students come to the library not just to read quietly but to also collaborate, reflect, relax, etc. Our aim is to offer an all-encompassing physical space — in addition to online resources — such that students will think of the library as a third space from home, outside their classrooms and halls of residence.”

Over the years, NTU Library has undergone many changes. Here are some highlights:

• Seven libraries have been established to date, each covering a different discipline of study. Revamps of LWL Library and Business Library have led to more collaborative spaces, called the Learning Commons. Areas include an event space with ampitheatre-style seating for informal talks, an exhibition space for users to showcase their projects, and learning pods for group discussions.

• State-of-the-art technologies have improved library management systems as well as the user experience, such as self-check kiosks, radio-frequency identification, multi-monitor computer workstations, interactive whiteboards, touchscreen displays and audio-visual recording equipment.

• Electronic databases for the various disciplines have been launched, as have the online institutional archives Digital Repository-NTU (Open Access) and, in 2017, DR-NTU (Data).

Online tools like OneSearch and Full Text @ NTU Library have made it easier for users to locate relevant publications.

• Digital Scholarship workshops and seminars are now regularly organised by NTU Library. For example, participants can learn how to use Python programming language, or increase the visibility of their research.

• Librarians have completed NTU’s MSc in Information Studies programme to upgrade their information research skills. They have also stepped up their engagement with students through workshops, talks and exhibitions. Some even conduct their own research and attend library conferences overseas.

• NTU Library is experimenting with ways to provide an all-encompassing space for students. Recent initiatives at the LWL Library include the NTU Library Blocks Contest, where students played with giant building blocks to create interesting structures; and a rest pod for students to take a quick power nap between study sessions.

LIBRARIES OF THE FUTURE

2019 will see NTU Library continuing to promote the library as an ideal venue for social interaction and group learning. One such project is the upcoming ‘Social Kitchen’, a student-run space providing healthy snacks at the Learning Commons in the LWL Library. It is intended that this space will raise the awareness of the importance of healthy eating, and provide opportunities for students to practise values like responsibility and giving. The LWL Library event space is also set to host health-related talks by faculty members who are experts in food science.

Prof Foo adds, “We are in the process of turning NTU Library into a Smart Library, in line with the University’s Smart Campus vision.” This means harnessing the power of technology to support better learning and living experiences, effective knowledge discovery and sustainable use of resources. For instance, visitors at the LWL Library can now hop on a ‘greenbike’ (implemented in collaboration with Energy Research Institute @ NTU, or ERI@N), plug in their smartphone or laptop, and start pedalling to generate renewable energy and charge their device, while at the same time benefitting from the physical exercise.

Other technologies that may be piloted at the LWL Library in the near future include a robotic air purifier (in collaboration with ERI@N) that will move around the library to improve the indoor air quality, a sensor-based system to show seat availability in the library. These tech-enabled solutions form part of NTU Library’s comprehensive approach to sustainability, such as installing solar panels, placing plants inside the library to absorb harmful air pollutants, inviting speakers to talk about sustainability issues and launching a recycling campaign.

Looking further down the line, NTU Library hopes to consolidate the existing libraries at NTU’s main campus into two hubs — the LWL Library at the North Spines and a new one at the South Spine, to be supported by endowed funds — within the next five years. Plans are also underway to increase engagement with both prospective and former students, for instance by organising library tours for junior college students and bringing alumni back to hold sharing sessions on their industrial experience.

“Compared to the rest of NTU, where buildings are dedicated to specific disciplines, the library is a space that binds the entire NTU community and catalyses a sense of belonging,” says Prof Foo. “We want the library to be seen as a place that cares about the different needs of users — to study, learn and grow — not just when they are at NTU, but even before they study here and also after they graduate. We want to cultivate the feeling among graduates that the library was, and still is, a special place for them.”

Playing with Blocks

HELD FROM 29 AUGUST TO 14 SEPTEMBER 2018, THE NTU LIBRARY BLOCKS CONTEST

ATTRACTION A LARGE NUMBER OF CREATIVE SUBMISSIONS FROM STUDENTS. PRIZES WERE GIVEN TO THE TOP 3 WINNING ENTRIES, WHO BUILT A CHICKEN AND THE SINGAPORE FLAG (FIRST PLACE), A FAMILY (SECOND PLACE), AND TWO WORKING DESKS (THIRD PLACE).

To achieve its goal of becoming a Smart Library, and to also build a second, brand-new library, NTU Library is seeking donations from generous stakeholders. With your gift, NTU Library can further consolidate the existing libraries at NTU’s main campus into two hubs — the LWL Library at the North Spines and a new one at the South Spine, to be supported by endowed funds — within the next five years. Plans are also underway to increase engagement with both prospective and former students, for instance by organising library tours for junior college students and bringing alumni back to hold sharing sessions on their industrial experience. Looking further down the line, NTU Library hopes to consolidate the existing libraries at NTU’s main campus into two hubs — the LWL Library at the North Spines and a new one at the South Spine, to be supported by endowed funds — within the next five years. Plans are also underway to increase engagement with both prospective and former students, for instance by organising library tours for junior college students and bringing alumni back to hold sharing sessions on their industrial experience. "Compared to the rest of NTU, where buildings are dedicated to specific disciplines, the library is a space that binds the entire NTU community and catalyses a sense of belonging," says Prof Foo. "We want the library to be seen as a place that cares about the different needs of users — to study, learn and grow — not just when they are at NTU, but even before they study here and also after they graduate. We want to cultivate the feeling among graduates that the library was, and still is, a special place for them."
When the scenic Mount Ontake located on the Japanese island of Honshu erupted without warning in 2014, 58 hikers died. Bereaved families of five victims have since filed a lawsuit against the local government for its failure to sound the alarm. Tragedies like these are what fuel Associate Prof Fidel Costa’s work. A principal investigator with the Volcano group at the Earth Observatory of Singapore (EOS), he is an igneous petrologist and geochemist whose work revolves around understanding volcanoes to create more timely, accurate forecasting capabilities — and reduce eruption fatalities.

Growing up with a love for nature, hiking and mountains, Assoc Prof Costa’s work has taken him to various active volcanoes in South America, Europe and South East Asia. But while occupational hazards are very real in his line of work, the real challenge is the technical complexity of building volcano forecasting models, given the unpredictable nature of volcanoes itself as well as multiple parameters which interact non-linearly.

As such, data is a key influencing factor in his work — Assoc Prof Costa is leading the ongoing development of the World Organization of Volcano Observatories (WOVO), Database of Volcanic Unrest (WOVOdat), a global database hosted by EOS that contains information on volcanic unrest from across the globe. With a set of standardised data formats and database architectures, it is now, for the first time, much easier for researchers such as Assoc Prof Costa to do comparative studies of volcanic unrest in order to reduce future volcano hazards.

It is not a simple undertaking, however. More data is needed to create as comprehensive a database as possible, but getting information on volcanic eruptions from international stakeholders and government counterparts is fraught with political fault lines and other sensitivities which may bring legal repercussions. In the face of growing populations in Asia resulting in greater volcanic threat, Assoc Prof Costa’s work has never been more important — and urgent.

We speak to some of the recently-named chair professors at NTU on their work in the creation and advancement of knowledge.

BUILDING HI-TECH WARNING BELLS

In August 2018, NTU announced the creation of 50 new named faculty chair professorships as part of an initiative to recognise outstanding achievement at early, mid-career and senior faculty levels. The chair professorships aim to attract, nurture and retain world-class faculty at the university. NTU Continuum profiles six of them here, all trailblazers in their own right working to solve some of our biggest problems today while contributing to the building of tomorrow’s generation of innovators and problem-solvers.
How did you decide what field to study and area to major in before zeroing in on material science area of development since lighting consumes so much energy.

Tell us more about some of the more exciting projects you’re working on. We have many ongoing projects aimed at addressing fundamental problems affecting the well-being of seniors, such as predictive analysis of dementia and Parkinson’s Disease; and gamified rehabilitation following stroke or knee replacement surgery. These projects are undertaken in partnership with healthcare providers and the industry. In one such project, we are working towards the early detection and intervention of dementia. Partnering with Tan Tock Seng Hospital, we have designed ADL+, a digital toolkit for cognitive assessment and intervention. Packaged as engaging iPad games for seniors, these are gamified cognitive tests that can help predict the risk of them developing dementia and assess the impact of dementia on their daily lives. In another project, we are carrying out research on predictive analytics of daily activities in ageing-in-place environments for the early detection of frailty. Through games designed to encourage physical exercise, seniors can enjoy a guided Tochi session using body motion sensors (e.g. Kinect) or participate in a virtual driving game by using an exercise bike.

What motivates the work that you do? Age-friendly technologies enable the creation of innovative solutions for active, independent and dignified ageing; and may even help the elderly to continue contributing to their communities after retirement. Fellow citizens will view seniors as a significant national asset.

How do you feel about being awarded the President’s Chair in Computer Science? My greatest satisfaction comes from seeing how people are benefiting from the outcomes of my research work. I am humbled and honoured to be named as President’s Chair Professor in Computer Science.

Can you share some of the most exciting potential applications of perovskite photovoltaics? Can you share some of the most exciting potential applications of perovskite photovoltaics? From a technological development point of view, we are looking at scaling up the solar cells to be integrated into windows as this is especially critical for cities like Singapore where areas for installing solar cells is limited. We are also studying perovskites for lighting applications as well – an interesting integrated into windows as this is especially critical for cities like Singapore where areas for installing solar cells is limited. We are also studying perovskites for lighting applications as well – an interesting area of development since lighting consumes so much energy.

How did you decide what field to study and area to major in before zeroing in on material science and engineering? It seemed to be the area that would enable me to blend my interest in science with the practicality of engineering. Materials really are so fundamentally important in enabling a wide variety of technologies.

You are also the owner/author of several patents; what habits, aspects of your upbringing, or natural inclinations would you attribute your creativity and innovative mindset? Well, research is mostly about creativity. We are always trying to attack difficult problems from a new angle or look at how we can best utilise a material’s property that we discovered. I guess I am helped by my “greed” for all knowledge (even seemingly trivial), and my efforts to mentally map connections between them. Trying to look for connections between unrelated concepts always results in something new.

What do you enjoy most about your work? Everything except the mind-numbing paperwork! I enjoy the opportunity to pursue interesting ideas, the discussions with students… the whole creative process.

As an engineer and inventor, what keeps you up at night? The survival of human race in the face of myopic thinking.

The survival of human race in the face of myopic thinking.
2018 was the year the Hollywood hit movie Crazy Rich Asians came out. It was also the year another bestseller was launched, tackling a topic squarely at the other end of the social spectrum — poverty and inequality in Singapore. Written by Nanyang Technological University Head of Sociology Associate Professor Teo You Yenn, This Is What Inequality Looks Like is a collection of essays confronting the realities of life for the “invisible” poor of Singapore, and how systemic bias, policy gaps and individual action across class lines perpetuate the cycle of poverty for them.

A scholar at heart with a passion for social justice, Prof Teo has been a regular contributor to public debate for the past decade, but it wasn’t until the book was launched that she became a household name. Drawn from three years (2013 – 2016) of conversations, observations and in-depth interviews with people living on tight incomes as well as a decade of research on family, social welfare, gender and public policy in Singapore, TIWILL is both an easy and a hard read — easy because it is written for non-academic audiences, and hard because it challenges us to confront our own blind spots, fears and biases.

The book has sold 29,000 copies in the 17 months since it launched, but more importantly, kindled dialogue on a topic that does not make for easy conversation. It is what you get when you combine the rigours of academic research and critical thinking with unapologetic storytelling. As such, the chair professorship is an encouraging win for her. “It’s a signal that Singapore scholarship is important, and hopefully more young scholars will continue doing serious work on Singapore, as well as write not just for their peers, but also for non-academic audiences. There is a lot of work we can, and need, to do because it is only when we act collectively that we can figure out what we want as a society.”

An accomplished Earth scientist and academic leader at the University of Cambridge in UK, Professor Simon Redfern joins NTU as its new Dean of the College of Science in 2019. Below is a first-person introduction from him.

“I am delighted to join NTU as Dean of the College of Science, and am looking forward to getting to know all of my new colleagues in the College. NTU has leapt from strength to strength in the last decade and it will be exciting to see that rapid growth and maturity develop further in Science in the coming years. My aim will be to help support and build an environment where every member of the College has the opportunity to develop and achieve their scientific ambitions. I am also looking forward to helping build cooperative networks within the College and beyond. Addressing some of the biggest challenges that science must tackle in the coming years will depend upon bringing together complementary disciplines. Science today is at a tipping point, with a step change in the volume and types of data available. This offers a key route for tackling unprecedented challenges which affect us all: security of food supply, sustainable development of society, a shared understanding of our cultural heritage, the challenge of global climate change, and fundamentally of providing shelter, work, food, water, energy and resources for everyone. The sciences will continue to offer key answers to some of the most difficult problems. I feel honoured to be awarded one of the President’s Chairs in Earth Sciences. I am also delighted that I join three other colleagues in the Asian School of the Environment to be conferred this title. This points to the growing strength of NTU in Earth and Environmental Sciences. Like others of the schools in the College, ASE is very young. This summer I leave Cambridge University, which celebrated its 800th anniversary, and is almost 30 times older than NTU. I am moving from (arguably) the best old university in the world, to the best young university in the world — it’s exciting!”
As NTU continues to push the boundaries of excellence in education, research and service to society, its ability to recruit and retain talented faculty comes into sharp focus. The endowed and term chair professorships are some of the most prestigious and visible honours the University bestows on its faculty members. Made possible by gifts, the professorships reflect the donor’s passion and belief in intellectual values and social responsibility, and provide direct intellectual leadership to the faculty holder in his or her domain. More significantly, the professorships attract leading scholars to NTU to accomplish the extraordinary, and to also inspire similar feats in their students, creating an exponential impact on Singapore and the world.

Two recently-appointed endowed chair professors at NTU’s Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine (LKCMedicine), Professor George Augustine and Professor Bernhard Boehm, aim to live up to that promise. Both at LKCMedicine since 2013, they are undertaking groundbreaking research projects to better the world we live in while boosting the University’s reputation for academic excellence.

LEADING FROM THE CHAIR

Eminent NTU academics talk about their efforts to produce impactful research and propel the medical field forward.

DEMystIFYING DEMENTIA

Prof George Augustine was named the inaugural Irene Tan Liang Kheng Chair Professor in Neuroscience on 13 August 2018, the same day NTU held a formal signing ceremony to set up the Irene Tan Liang Kheng Memorial Fund. The role sees him spearheading LKCMedicine’s research thrust in neurodegenerative and psychiatric disorders, with the goal of better understanding the causes of mental health conditions and developing effective treatments.

A foremost name in the field of neuroscience with a wealth of research experience, Prof Augustine is one of LKC Medicine’s pioneer faculty members and serves as Professor of Neuroscience and Mental Health. He is well-known for his studies on brain synaptic connections, which allow very rapid signalling between nerve cells and act as conduits for information processing and storage in the brain. Having made dementia research a top priority in the past few years, the American scientist is currently examining brain molecular changes associated with dementia.

Dementia is a timely topic for Singapore and other developed nations grappling with a rapidly-ageing population. Studies show that about one in 10 people in Singapore aged 60 and above suffers from the illness, and this ratio will surely rise in the coming decades. “If we can figure out what goes wrong with the basic mechanisms of the brain, as well as the neural circuits involved in information processing, we may be able to revolutionise the way people think about dementia — and ultimately try to prevent it,” says Prof Augustine.

Last year, he won a Ministry of Education Tier 3 Type B five-year grant of over $19 million for dementia research, which is being used to obtain and maintain genetically-engineered mice in his laboratory. The endowed chair professorship will provide further financial support for his research. Prof Augustine is also considering tapping into the professorship award to help three or four of his PhD students in procuring modern, high-tech equipment for their research projects.

Another aspiration of Prof Augustine’s is to grow the neuroscience community. Besides organising faculty meetings and monthly seminars among neuroscientists within LKCMedicine, he co-leads the interdisciplinary Strategy Working Group in Neuroscience, Cognitive Science and the Science of Learning — convened by NTU President Prof Subra Suresh — alongside the National Institute of Education’s Director, Prof Christine Goh. “Our initial focus will be on NTU. We eventually hope to connect all of the neuroscientists in Singapore,” says Prof Augustine.
ABOUT THE FUND

The Irene Tan Liang Kheng Chair Professorship in Neuroscience and the Ong Tiang Tat Chair Professorship in Diabetes Research were established as part of NTU’s Irene Tan Liang Kheng Memorial Fund in August 2018. The endowment fund was made possible through a generous gift of $11 million from the Estate of Irene Tan Liang Kheng to advance medical education and research at LKCMedicine. Both chair professorships will support outstanding faculty performing research into major diseases such as diabetes and mental illness, so as to transform healthcare and improve population health.

THE WAY WE TREAT DIABETES HAS CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY. WE DON’T JUST BRING DOWN THE GLUCOSE IN BLOOD. WE ALSO NEED TO TACKLE BLOOD LIPIDS, CHOLESTEROL AND BLOOD PRESSURE. DIABETES HAS DEVELOPED NEW COMPLICATIONS — IT’S NOT A GLUCOSE-CENTRIC DISEASE ANYMORE BUT A MULTI-FACETED ONE.

Professor Bernhard Boehm

A DIABETES ‘WARRIOR’

Like Prof Augustine, Prof Bernhard Boehm is a founding faculty member of LKCMedicine. But that is not all the two have in common — in January 2019, the latter was conferred the title of Ong Tiang Tat Chair Professor in Diabetes Research, the second chair professorship established by the Irene Tan Liang Kheng Memorial Fund. It will enable LKCMedicine to strengthen research on diabetes and other metabolic disorders, in line with the Singapore Government’s call for a ‘War on Diabetes’. Prof Boehm’s interest in diabetes began during his early clinical training in his native Germany, where he saw how his then-mentor Prof Karl Schoeffling developed a novel medication for diabetes that is still widely used today. He subsequently specialised in endocrinology and gained renown for his research in hormone-related diseases, especially diabetes. His seminal contributions include pioneering work on autoimmune diabetes in children, and classical and atypical autoimmune diabetes forms in adults; population-based cohort studies to analyse diabetes development in children and adults; and in-depth characterisation of the risk factors related to vascular complications of diabetes.

Being appointed as the inaugural title holder gives Prof Boehm — who is Professor of Metabolic Medicine, Scientific Director of the Metabolic Disorders Research Programme, and Principal Investigator of the Immuno-Metabolism Laboratory at LKCMedicine — an opportunity to further his research. Since joining the School, he has initiated studies on the cross-talk between immune cells and insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas, as well as late-onset autoimmune diabetes. His next area of focus is on the development of type 2 diabetes among different ethnic groups in Asia.

“There has been a dramatic rise in type 2 diabetes in the 18 to 40 year-old age group, particularly in Singapore. It’s not just an elderly disease anymore,” says Prof Boehm. The Ministry of Health estimates that one in nine Singaporeans has diabetes, while one in three has a lifetime risk of getting the chronic disease. At this rate, the number of Singaporeans with diabetes will reach one million by 2050.

Diabetes is caused by a combination of genetic and environmental risk factors, including poor dietary habits and stress. Prof Boehm’s team is looking deeper into the co-relationship between age, ethnicity and lifestyle in diabetic patients from the region. Their findings will hopefully yield treatment methods that correspond with these co-factors.

“The way we treat diabetes has changed significantly. We don’t just bring down the glucose in blood. We also need to tackle blood lipids, cholesterol and blood pressure,” says Prof Boehm. “Diabetes has developed new complications — it’s not a glucose-centric disease anymore but a multi-faceted one.”

A DIABETES ‘WARRIOR’

Like Prof Augustine, Prof Bernhard Boehm is leading the charge in the fight against one of Singapore’s biggest public health threats.

A PLATFORM FOR THE NEUROSCIENCE COMMUNITY IN SINGAPORE TO NETWORK AND SHARE THEIR RESEARCH.

ABOUT THE FUND

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Although still new, the NTU China Alumni Campaign is already forging closer ties between NTU and its China alumni, as well as benefitting society.

SPANNING 30 ALUMNI ASSOCIATIONS AND comprising over 27,000 individuals in total, NTU’s alumni in China easily form the largest contingent of its overseas-based former students. Imagine the possibilities they present for the University — deepening understanding of the world’s second-largest economy, enhancing collaboration in research and education with key Chinese partners, and creating more internship and start-up opportunities for students and faculty. To forge stronger ties with the Chinese alumni and make these possibilities real, NTU initiated the NTU China Alumni Campaign.

“Alumni giving is an important philanthropic pillar of NTU since we became an autonomous university in 2006, and the response of our alumni to the inaugural NTU China Alumni Campaign has been wonderfully warm and supportive,” says NTU Vice President (Alumni and Advancement), Professor Alan Chan. “The Campaign has provided us with great opportunities to meet and engage our China alumni, who are exemplary agents of positive change, working closely together to strengthen ties between Singapore and China, and reflecting the spirit of NTU, towards a better future for humanity through education and research.”

WAYS TO SUPPORT
The NTU China Alumni Campaign supports the following initiatives:

★ NAMED PROFESSORSHIP IN CHINA STUDIES
To attract top global minds who will augment NTU’s expertise on China Studies through their research, teaching, publications and other activities.

★ NTU CHINA ALUMNI BURSARY FUND
To offset the tuition fees for deserving full-time NTU undergraduates of Chinese nationality from financially-disadvantaged backgrounds.

★ NTU CHINA ALUMNI ADVANCEMENT FUND
To support continuing education and lifelong learning activities that promote the personal and professional development of alumni.

★ NTU INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL IN CHINA
To allow needy NTU students to enrol in this programme, through which they can gain overseas exposure, build their confidence and improve their career prospects.

★ OTHER FORMS OF SUPPORT
Scholarships, fellowships, visiting professorships and facilities, whether China-related or beyond.

Response to the campaign by the Chinese alumni has been especially encouraging as, according to Prof Chan, philanthropic support is still at a nascent stage in China. In addition to the Chinese alumni who are in China, others in countries such as the US, Canada and Australia have contributed to this campaign.

STAYING CONNECTED
NTU’s relationship with its China-based alumni has grown by leaps and bounds since the first NTU alumni chapter in China, NTU Alumni Association (Shanghai), was founded in 2006. There are now 30 alumni associations across China — the biggest groups in Beijing and Guangdong have close to 3,000 members each — all aimed at enhancing fellowship among alumni, as well as strengthening their bond with NTU. Chapter activities run the gamut, such as the organizing of talks and recreational events, advancing the social and economic development of their local communities, and keeping members abreast of NTU happenings.

Supporters of the Campaign

Through my support, I hope I am living out NTU’s goal of nurturing compassionate, responsible and learned individuals. There is a Chinese saying that aptly sums it up: ’A virtuous family enjoys prosperity for generations to come.’

Mr. Xu Zhengqi, Deputy Secretary-General of NTU Alumni Association (Jiangsu); Master of Science Technopreneurship and Innovation Programme (Chinese) (Class of 2015)

Dr. Sun Xia, President of NTU Alumni Association (Beijing); Nanyang Executive MBA (Chinese) (Class of 2006)
Generosity in Practice

A good example of legacy giving can be seen in the donations by the Estate of Madam Irene Tan Liang Kheng to NTU. The estate donated a total of $15 million to the university in two tranches in 2018. In August, the estate donated $11 million to NTU’s Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine. Three months later, it donated another $4 million to the National Institute of Education. With the Singapore government matching the donations, the total endowment was $30 million. In recognition of the generous gift, NTU has named the auditorium at the school’s Clinical Sciences Building in its Novena campus after the late Madam Tan and her husband Ong Tiong Tat, an investment trader, who is also deceased. The Ong Tiong Tat and Irene Tan Liang Kheng Auditorium was unveiled in August by NTU President Subra Suresh.

The $11 million gift was used to set up the Irene Tan Liang Kheng Memorial Fund to provide scholarships to medical students at NTU as well as to fund two chair professorships at LKCMedicine. The Chair Professorship in Neuroscience will be a boost to the School’s research ambitions in neuroscience and mental health, for the better understanding of the causes and potential treatments of these diseases. The Ong Tiong Tat Chair Professorship in Diabetes Research will meanwhile spur LKCMedicine’s research into diabetes and other metabolic disorders, in line with the Singapore government’s call for a war on diabetes in 2016. Part of the donation will also be channelled to research into serious games that aim to improve population health and provide patient-centric care.

At the auditorium’s unveiling ceremony, Prof Suresh said: “NTU deeply appreciates this gift from the Estate of Irene Tan Liang Kheng which will go towards research and education. This is an investment in the future of young minds and the betterment of the human condition that will see ever-growing returns for the state of humanity for years to come.”

The executor of the Estate is Mr Tan Hsuan Heng, nephew and executor of the Estate of the late Mrs Irene Tan, sharing with participants about the vital impact the gift will play in LKCMedicine.

How Good Names Live On

A look at legacy giving as a way of leaving an lasting impact, spotlighting notable individuals who embarked on this altruistic path through their contributions to NTU.

There are various things one can do to make a difference in the world — such as shaping historical events, undertaking ground-breaking discoveries or creating world-changing inventions. Yet, there are other ways of making one’s mark that are no less lofty, in a manner that serves to preserve one’s name for posterity. One way is to leave an impact on future generations — particularly by improving the prospects of the less fortunate in society. This can be done by donating to an educational institution through what is known as a legacy gift.

A legacy gift is one that is realised in the future after the donor passes on. This is usually done by making a bequest through a will. One advantage of a legacy gift is it allows people to bequeath a larger amount than they would have been able to do during their lifetime. A donor would be able to bequeath his home for example. Apart from property, legacy gifts can come in different forms such as cash, marketable securities and artwork.

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problems, including diabetes. Mental health is important to me; my mother had dementia. I would like the two chair professors to concentrate on mental research." The Estate’s $4 million gift in November will be used for scholarships for master’s degrees and grants for trainee teachers at NIE. The scholarships will be named after the couple. The funds from the Estate come from the $41 million sale proceeds of the couple’s two-storey bungalow in King Albert Park that sits on a 40,000 sq ft plot of land. It was sold after Madam Tan died in 2016 at the age of 73. (Mr Ong died three years earlier at the age of 74.) Mr Tan said his aunt was a very caring person who looked after both her own mother for over two decades, as well as a friend of the family. Mr Koh Choon Joo, also known as CJ Koh, then 68 years of age, had no kin in Singapore. And care for her they did for 33 years, staying close by, till her very last breath. She was almost 101 when she died in her home. Born and raised in Holland, Mrs Williams moved to Indonesia in her adolescence. She was, however, unfortunately caught up in the Japanese occupation of much of the region during World War II, and was interned in a prisoner-of-war camp. After the war’s end, she settled in Singapore, where she became a citizen. Here, she opened and managed several hair salons under the brand Salon Margueretta, the first of which was located on Orchard Road. Many would agree that it was a career that suited her — a woman who took pride in her beauty, and who was meticulous in her pruning regime. After she died in April last year of old age, those close to her discovered that Mrs Williams had donated much of her estate to tertiary institutions — with at least $1 million to NTU to establish the Margaretta Williams Education Fund — as well as five charities which include hospitals. The decision wasn’t too shocking to those who knew her. After all, leaving a lasting legacy to be appreciated by generations to come was in consonance with her desire to be remembered. Upon her wishes, Mrs Williams’ ashes will be personally delivered by Mr and Mrs Filises to the United States, where these will be spread and laid to rest over her late husband’s burial site in Texas. Her memory continues to live on through the legacy she leaves to current and future under-privileged NTU students in pursuit of their higher education.

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A LIFE LED WITH A STRONG SENSE OF CIVIC DUTY
Johanna Frederika Makkink, or Yoka as she was fondly called by family and friends (15 July 1951 – 22 August 2016), nurtured a deep love for her adopted homeland, Singapore. Together with her late husband, Otto Geert Smith (23 October 1949 – 10 October 1999), Yoka spent most of her life outside of the Netherlands. Upon marriage, the couple went to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, to work with a Dutch development organisation. In Dar es Salaam, she worked as a chemical technician between 1972 and 1998. They returned to the Netherlands where Yoka did her Engineering degree at Wageningen University. In 1984 the couple left for New Zealand where Otto had a job at Royal Dutch Shell. Yoka worked in a project involving water sanitation efforts in swampy areas. The couple eventually settled in Singapore in 1988 because of Otto’s Shell posting. In Singapore Yoka started her own company and also served as a consultant for Damore & Moore, investigating soil pollution on land and at sea for industrial companies. In 1997, the couple were set to embark on a new start in Brunei (where Otto had been posted to) when Otto was killed in a car accident. Yoka decided remain in Singapore due to her career as well as the ties she had forged here.

Indeed, Yoka loved her life in Singapore. She made many friends through her work and the activists that she did as a member of the Singapore Club Aquanaut diving club, Nature Society (Singapore), a cycling group and later as part of Hash House Harriers, Singapore. She had a rich social life, going to concerts and theatre performances as well as attending art exhibitions with friends. Set on living to the fullest, she was happy to give anything a try, from exotic food and cultural experiences to new workout routines. Not forgetting her roots, she would go back to the Netherlands every year to visit family and friends.

Yoka became a Singapore Permanent Resident around 2003, and her desire to do good was most admirable. A huge advocate of conservation, she exchanged owning a car and opted to travel by public transport. She always carried a bag for her groceries, long before supermarkets cut down on the use of plastic bags. When on nature walks or hash runs, Yoka would pick up trash along the way. And while she herself did not have children, she cared for children of her friends and was generous in her donations to assist youngsters from disadvantaged backgrounds. She would often do as much volunteer work as she could, religiously ending each by year writing cheques to different charities.

When Yoka was diagnosed with lung cancer, she became very interested in alternative healing methods and thought a lot about the importance of having good nursing homes. When going through her Last Will and Testament and Estate Planning before her death, Yoka was very determined to help the less fortunate, especially children. Among these was a contribution to the endowment fund for the NTU Community herb garden — which offers a therapeutic space for cancer patients, and where one of the eight zones will be named in her honour. She is dearly missed by all those who knew her, and will always be fondly remembered for her very generous acts of giving.

When it comes to legacy giving, you can essentially give what you have the legal title to. This means, however, that you cannot make a legacy gift of money held in trust. Giving property, or the proceeds from a property sale, can have a big impact because real estate in Singapore is a significant asset. However, whether the property is held in joint tenancy or as tenancy in common makes a difference to how or whether it can be bequeathed. CPF monies can also be given away but CPF money is not part of the estate covered by one’s will so an individual would need to make a CPF nomination in order to give the money away.

Given these complications, getting legal advice before planning a legacy gift is a good idea. In addition, before making a legacy gift, donors should also get advice from the beneficiary. This is to prevent a situation where the donor makes a bequest based on conditions that an institution cannot fulfil.
STUDYING AND WORKING ABROAD delivers invaluable experiences for people. Unfortunately, not every student has the financial means to pursue this opportunity — and this is precisely the support that the Ng Bok Eng Scholarship seeks to provide. Open to financially-needy NTU undergraduates, it helps students to defray their expenditure for their overseas exchange programmes. For a first-hand account of how enriching such programmes can be, three recipients of the Ng Bok Eng Scholarship share their stories.

Wong Seng Wee (School of Computer Science and Engineering)
A die-hard Manchester City fan, Seng Wee, 24, counts watching soccer and reading among his interests.

What are you studying, and why did you choose to pursue this course?
I am a third-year Computer Science major. During my secondary school years, I was a nerd who often stayed home to play video games. I thought studying Computer Science would give me an edge over others if I knew the mechanics of the games better. It wasn’t always the case, but I am now glad that I chose Computer Science. The content which I study is always so stimulating.

What was it about the Ng Bok Eng (NBE) Scholarship that appealed to you?
The NBE Scholarship helped me to defray part of my living expenses in Beijing, where I did a work-study programme in 2018. My friends and I decided against staying in the hostel, and rented a place near my company and Peking University. Also, without the NBE Scholarship, I would not have been able to fork out money to travel to other parts of China during our break.

Was your internship the first time you worked outside Singapore? Was it also your first experience studying outside the country?
Yes, to both. It was an eye-opening experience to interact with my Chinese colleagues and understand the way they think and arrive at solutions. I would say that the Chinese are generally very organised and objective-focused, and they always strive to meet deadlines. They treated me very well and would provide guidance and help whenever necessary. As a Software Engineering intern at the Chinese ride-hailing company Didi Chuxing, I was required to understand the tasks given in Chinese and write the code accordingly. It took me a while to translate the technical terms from Chinese to English even though I am fluent in conversational Mandarin.

The study portion was enriching because I delved deeply into China’s major reforms over the past 30 years in a course called On the Road to China. It was insightful for me as an engineering student. My class comprised mainly of Stanford University and Oxford University students, and they were all very talented people. Their knowledge of the subject matter varied in depth and breadth since there were Masters as well as undergraduate students in the class. I think I benefited from the class as it made me cognisant of China’s current affairs as well as how the country’s governing body operates to fulfil its political objectives.

SHANGHAI INSIDER

Ong Jing Yi (School of Humanities)
A Linguistics and Multilingual Studies major, Ong Jing Yi is a middle child who is passionate about the outdoors and hiking.

If you were to create a risk profile for Jing Yi, the key words would be ‘calculated’ and ‘careful’. “I like to try different things but I wouldn’t consider myself very adventurous,” says the 26-year-old Linguistics and Multilingual studies major. Despite this, she did step out of her comfort zone and embark on an adventure of sorts when she went to China under the auspices of the Ng Bok Eng Scholarship. “Learning over there was nothing like what you get in Singapore, as most of the coursework was in Chinese!” enthuses Jing Yi. She elaborates that her three-week stint at Jiao Tong University in Shanghai was one replete with a strong local flavour, ranging from Chinese political history to the nuances of cultural communication. “Learning everything in my mother tongue was an experience indeed.”

This contrasted strongly with her 20-week internship at Shanghai Daily, the city’s sole English-language newspaper targeted mainly at expatriates. The first story which she worked on was about Singapore’s “Working at the paper taught me to see things from the reader’s perspective. It also helped me to know Shanghai better because I had to work as if I was a Shanghai insider.” Her colleagues were all locals, and most of the interviews and such were in Chinese. It made me want to work harder to improve both my Chinese and English proficiency!”

Making both the study and work portions happen was no small feat for Jing Yi, who knew that her gig at Shanghai Daily would not be able to cover her expenses in China. This was where the benefits of the NBE Scholarship kicked in. “It can support students who want to go on overseas exchanges,” she says. “The financial part was a big concern, and the scholarship really helped me to focus on my development during the six months of the exchange rather than worrying about costs.”

A CHINESE Odyssey
THREE NG BOK ENG SCHOLARS SHARE THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON WORKING AND STUDYING IN CHINA.
Matthew Tan Chen Jun  
(School of Chemical And Biomolecular Engineering)

Matthew is a final-year student and the eldest child in his family; his younger sister recently graduated from NTU. He is an avid hockey player, a die-hard Manchester United fan and a comic book nerd — Spider-Man is his favourite superhero.

I study Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering because I am particularly interested in learning about the processes and controls at chemical plants that deal with oil and gas. The Ng Bok Eng (NBE) scholarship was a great help to me financially, and it granted me a valuable opportunity to learn and work overseas. This has been my goal since I entered university.

My experience in China was challenging yet exciting. My internship was with Evonik Industries, a multinational chemical firm in Shanghai between March and August last year. Living and working there required me to converse in Chinese, which sometimes proved tough due to my mediocre command of the language.

My internship exposed me to the zealous and enterprising work culture of the Chinese, who are highly driven to achieve excellence and efficiency in all that they do. I was also able to familiarise myself with how the Chinese deal with business.

A major challenge for me was the accommodation, which was inconvenient and required some adjustments on my part. Communal living was common in Shanghai and I had to share the apartment with different people. Still, I appreciated the opportunity to interact with people of different cultures and backgrounds, and better understand the diversity which China has to offer in the process.

A CHAMPION OF EDUCATION

Known as the King of Cloves, NG BOK ENG was a prominent businessman and philanthropist who passed away in 2008 at the age of 92. Although phenomenally successful in his business ventures, Ng reportedly regretted his lack of formal education and therefore sought to help others in this pursuit of learning. His son told the press that his father helped friends and strangers alike when they could not afford their children’s school fees.

Ng was 12 years old when he left his hometown in China. He eventually settled in Singapore in 1947, and founded the Bia Bee Company which dealt mainly in cloves, coffee and pepper. In 1969, he started Ng Bok Eng Holdings, a property and securities investment firm. Through it all, integrity was a value he held close to his heart. Four years before his death, he donated $5 million to NTU to establish a variety of educational programmes, presenting students with the opportunities that he missed out on when growing up.

A PEEK INTO CHINESE WORK CULTURE

Matthew Tan Chen Jun  
(School of Chemical And Biomolecular Engineering)

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Ms Liza Boffen-Yordanov, NTU’s new Executive Director of the Development Office, shares her passion for philanthropy and reveals her plans — large and small — for fundraising at the University.

When it comes to making donors feel appreciated, small, thoughtful gestures can go a long way. Ms Liza Boffen-Yordanov understands the alchemy of small touches and sets out to do just that in her new role as the Executive Director of NTU’s Development Office. “Little things like me signing a letter aren’t that big of a deal in the grand scheme of things. But to somebody who has made a $100 donation to four different organisations and gets three e-mail notices and a letter, that has an impact,” she explains. “We have the opportunity to really change the direction of fundraising here by being as personal as possible.”

Her immediate goal is to combine this personal approach with getting her team “out there” and making their presence felt even more — not just in Singapore but overseas too. The development team, she says, has been successful in looking for fundraising opportunities here, but the time has come to venture beyond. Ms Boffen-Yordanov, who joined the University in September 2018, elaborates: “We want people to know that NTU students are in demand; that our researchers and staff are incredible, and are doing fundamental research that could potentially change the world. These are the stories that we’re not telling to the fullest of our ability at present, and a lot of that is because we’re not out there as much as other (institutions).” By creating better awareness about NTU, she hopes to enhance the university’s connection with it, which, in turn, would be a major transformation in fundraising at the University in time to come. “We want everybody to feel that they are our closest allies and that they are part of the NTU family forever,” she says. “So it doesn’t matter if you make a $2-million gift or a $2 gift, we want you to have that feeling and connection with NTU. That’s what I think will be — when we look back two years from now — the biggest difference and change you’ll see.”

Going global
The merits of reaching out beyond one’s immediate circle are well-known to Ms Boffen-Yordanov, who began her career in 1998 working in alumni operations for five years at her alma mater, Trinity University in Washington DC. Since then, she has enjoyed a fulfilling career in university advancement in areas such as alumni operations, stewardship and fundraising across various institutions in the U.S, Switzerland, India, and yes, Singapore.

No stranger to the Lion City, Ms Boffen-Yordanov moved here to work at the National University of Singapore from 2007 to 2009, where she started its Phonathon program, built a team and looked at branding for the annual giving campaign. Following a stint as Dean for a U.S. undergraduate programme at the Center for American Education, she took a contract with Singapore Universal, setting up development operations at the healthcare group’s central office. It remains her only foray outside of university advancement, and she soon decided that she preferred to be working in educational fundraising.

That’s when she returned to the U.S. — and to alumni engagement — taking a position at George Washington University in Washington D.C, where she turned its three international alumni chapters into 32 within three years. Her last role before NTU was as the founding Chief Development Officer at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay and the first Chief Executive Officer of the IIT Bombay Foundation. There, she oversaw an advancement team of 20 working on alumni relations and philanthropic engagement at one of the world’s most prestigious tech institutions. It was rewarding yet tiring, challenging work; by the end of two years, Ms Boffen-Yordanov decided to take a career break.

Little did she expect to receive a call in July 2018, during her last week at work at IIT, about a role at NTU. Despite her best-laid plans to take two months to “stay in bed and do self-care”, she jumped at the opportunity. She attributes a key factor for joining to “amazing colleagues on the senior leadership team” who understand the opportunities for NTU in the current global environment.

Celebrating the past, changing the future
As she looks forward to “upping the stewardship game” at NTU, Ms Boffen-Yordanov’s goal is to boost the fundraising target from S$46 million in 2018 — their best year in five years — to S$100 million in five or six years. To take the University to this next level of fundraising, it will be her job to build on the skills of her team. Over the next few months, her team will be conducting a benchmarking exercise to study the fundraising practices of 15 other global universities. They will also be sent for training and attend overseas conferences to expand their knowledge set and network outside of the “Singapore bubble”, as she puts it.

Moving ahead, she also wants the Development Office to better capitalise on the University’s rich Chinese heritage and to celebrate the successes of the Nantah alumni. This means ensuring almost all communications from the Office will be in English and Chinese to better connect with Chinese-speaking alumni.

Underpinning these plans is her philosophy that having access to tertiary education can change lives. “We do a disservice when students can’t come to NTU because they can’t afford it. They can’t afford the bus fare to come from home to school classes. They can’t afford to come to school because they don’t have a lunch pad to bring food from home. And it happens.”

It’s a viewpoint based on personal experience. Says Ms Boffen-Yordanov: “I’m the first person in my family to go to college, to have a professional job. The fact that education, and access to education, has allowed me to be where I am today only makes my argument for supporting universities that much stronger.” She says. “Education can be a life-changer, not just for that person, but for an entire family. I’ve seen students and families whose lives are changed because of the opportunities of coming to university. So for me, it’s about access to education. That’s why I’m passionate about philanthropy and I take ethical fundraising very seriously.”

"We want people to know that NTU students are in demand; that our researchers and staff are incredible, and are doing research that could potentially change the world.”

Viewpoint
COMMITTED

REPEATEDLY PUT AT A DISADVANTAGE IN THE PAST AS A RESULT OF HER DECISION TO STUDY ENGLISH LITERATURE, PROFESSOR KOH TAI ANN IS NOW ENSURING THAT COMMITTED YOUNG ACADEMIC LITERARY TALENT FROM NTU IS PROMOTED AND NURTURED.

“...A good reason is to pay it forward, in gratitude for what one has received.”

Academic medals are usually simply awards that recognise students for their scholastic excellence. But there is a different dimension to the Koh Tai Ann Gold Medal. Established by the NTU English Division in 2008 to celebrate the graduation of the first cohort of Honours students in English Literature in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, it does not simply look at academic results. “I decided that the main aim of the Gold Medal was not merely to recognise and reward the top student,” says Professor Koh Tai Ann whom the award is named after. “Rather, I’d like to encourage our best and most committed English Literature graduates to continue their studies and return to be the future Singaporean literary scholars, teachers and promoters of English Literature at the University, in schools and the community.” Thus, the award’s selection committee—chaired by the Head of English, and consisting of one other English staff member and Prof Koh herself—also looks at qualities such as leadership and creativity in cultural activities and seeks out those who can potentially contribute to the Gold Medal’s over-arching objective of developing a Singaporean “core” in the teaching of English Literature.

The idea of establishing the medal came from Professor Neil Murphy, current Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education, who was then Head of the English Division. “The idea to establish the medal arose due to the (then) relatively recent establishment of English Literature as a major discipline in NTU,” shares Prof Murphy. “As I wanted English at NTU to have strong foundations on many levels, I asked Tai Ann (a Professor of English and then-Dean of Students at NTU) if she would be willing to make a contribution. This wasn’t just a matter of money. It was very important to me that someone of Tai Ann’s stellar reputation be officially associated with the very foundations and support structure for English at NTU.”

Indeed, Prof Koh, hitherto Dean of Arts and Dean (Academic) at NIE, had been tasked by then-President Su Guaning to set up the new Division of English at NTU.

FROM RECEIVER TO GIVER

For Prof Koh, the Division’s request to name a gold medal after her was a touching recognition of her contributions. But she was also aware of the challenges of funding such an award. Moreover, the University that very year had increased the requisite sum for a gold medal from $15,000 to $30,000. However, through a strange twist of fate, Prof Koh found herself with the ability to donate the sum. “Some months after I had assumed my Deanship at NTU (in 2003), I was diagnosed with colorectal cancer. I had a successful major operation, which was mostly paid by NTU under its medical benefits scheme and MediShield.” In gratitude both for the honour the Division was conferring on her by naming the medal after her, and for being a cancer survivor who did not have to worry about her medical expenses, she offered to donate $70,000 from her insurance pay-out, and topped it up with an additional $5,000, to fund the gold medal. The distributable income from the endowment supports up to two Koh Tai Ann Gold Medal awards annually in perpetuity.

“Contributions like this — that go towards scholarships, gold medals and cash awards — are meaningful in that the benefits are long-term with a potential for ripple effects both in inspiring as well as benefiting others,” says Prof Koh. “Donations could also be directed towards achieving the donor’s ideals and hopes or fill a gap. A good reason is to pay it forward, in gratitude for what one has received.”

Prof Koh herself has benefitted from the generosity of others. She received her first scholarship, the Tan Jiax Kim Coronation Year Scholarship, while in primary school. Subsequently, she was awarded a University of Singapore Enterprise Scholarship for being one of three top students admitted to the Arts Faculty, the Senior Scholarship for being one of three who topped the first-year exams, a Hainanese clan association scholarship and a university Research Scholarship. The scholarships and a teaching bursary enabled her to stay in a university hostel and participate actively in campus life — which she greatly appreciated, for her family home in Aljunied was a very basic space, “where water had to be carried from a public standpipe and the electric generator was switched off at midnight.”

Despite being an outstanding student, Prof Koh found herself at a disadvantage in getting major scholarships — simply because of her choice to major in English Literature. “I had obtained distinctions in English Literature and Economics but wished to pursue her passion in the former.” During the interview for the Yang di-Pertuan Negara (President’s) Scholarship which she was nominated for, she was told: “Why do English Literature…it’s only good for teaching!”

Then again, when it was her turn to become a graduate student under the university’s Overseas Training Scheme (OTS) to do a PhD at an overseas university — it was a government-backed university scheme at the time to groom local Master’s degree graduates to be future lecturers — she discovered that the scholarship would no longer be offered to Singaporeans in the...
English Department as it was not considered a subject of value to the economy. “This was extremely disappointing because I had earlier rejected a scholarship to Brandeis which the Doan had nominated me for, as the top student in my year. My English Professor had advised me against an American degree—the assumption being that I was going to Cambridge University in England under the OTS,” recalls Prof Koh. So she did her PhD locally, supervised by her former British lecturer who did not have a PhD. Despite that, she has never regretted choosing Literature over Economics. “It is important to choose what one is not only good at, but also which is enjoyable and, like Literature, instills in one a sense of mission.”

**MICHELLE CHIANG HUI LING (2009 RECIPIENT)**

The first recipient of the award in 2009, Michelle is now an Assistant Professor with the Division of English, School of Humanities at NTU. She received her PhD from the University of Leeds, UK, and completed her postdoctoral research at the Department of English, University of Pennsylvania.

“The Koh Tai Ann Gold Medal was my first academic award, and it gave me the confidence to apply for the postdoctoral scholarships that got me through graduate school. To me, the award recognises a student’s passion for the discipline and boosts her or his confidence to chase after literary study’s ever-expanding horizon of knowledge. More importantly, as a local award, it is an encouraging pat on the back for a Singaporean student, one that says that our work is valued here. This sense of being valued here is one of the reasons I was determined to return to Singapore after the completion of my doctoral studies overseas.

Through my teaching experiences here and abroad, I discovered that our students share very similar standards with students in the United Kingdom. Yet, there are more academic awards available there to recognise good academic achievement in the study of English Literature than there are here. It would be great if there could be more awards like the Koh Tai Ann Gold Medal in Singapore to recognise the discipline’s contribution to developing creative and critical thinkers.”

**LEE WEI LING, CHERYL JULIA (2014 RECIPIENT)**

She might have learnt about the Koh Tai Ann Gold Medal only upon being invited for the selection interview, but for Cheryl, the award has definite impact. “Practically speaking, being able to include the award in my graduate school applications was useful and the cash prize helped to offset the cost of doing my Masters abroad,” says Cheryl, who is also a recipient of the Lee Kuan Yew Gold Medal. Yet its significance goes beyond that: it is also a recognition of one’s efforts toward academic excellence and contributions to the arts. “This helps to battle against the very significant forces of self-doubt and all-round anxiety that plague most professionals, including academics… It says that there is a path here to take and it is a worthy path; and your journey on it will be of value to yourself and to the people around you, perhaps even to the world at large.”

Currently working on her PhD at Durham University, funded by the HASS International PhD Scholarship, Cheryl will return to NTU to teach upon completion of her degree. “If our English departments are filled with dedicated, passionate, capable and trained individuals, we would be in a position to better support the flourishing arts scene in Singapore,” she says.

**TIARA BINTE M HAMARIA (2018 RECIPIENT)**

I hadn’t put much expectations on winning the award especially since I was aware of the outstanding calibre of my peers. Being awarded the Koh Tai Ann Gold Medal gave me a sense of validation about my choice of pursuing English Literature, and signalled to me that important figures in the literary scene cared immensely about grooming and recognising the efforts of students of Literature.

Most English Literature students might concur that the most difficult part about being in this field is justifying this unconventional but extremely fulfilling path. Is studying Literature really worth it? How much difference will this make in society? Is it really possible to do something I love for a living? Winning this award has inspired me to be true to myself and be brave about sticking to the path that I believe in—that is to speak my truths, create a safe space for others to speak their truths, to engage millennials in public discourse, and to contribute actively in academia.

Having a prominent figure in the literary scene like Professor Koh Tai Ann award students with this Gold Medal encourages students to claim ownership of and responsibility for the future of English Literature in Singapore. I certainly feel empowered to actively contribute to the literary scene in Singapore and hope to elevate the standards of homegrown Literature. There is much about it for the world to see and appreciate.

I intend to pursue my postgraduate studies in English Literature in the next two years or so. In the meantime, I am working full-time as an instructional assistant at an international school. While I have not yet decided on a specific research topic for postgraduate studies, I do know that I’d like to delve into literary works within the parameters of children’s education. These are two areas of discipline that I am most passionate about.

**WEE TING HAN, SAMUEL (2016 RECIPIENT)**

A recipient of the HASS International PhD Scholarship, Samuel is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of British Columbia and will return to teach at NTU.

By learning about it in 2016 when the English department emailed to inform me that I was eligible to apply for it. Winning it was a tremendous honour: Professor Koh is a massively influential figure for English Literature in Singapore, so to receive the award from her meant a lot.

What significance does the Koh Tai Ann Gold Medal have in promoting standards of English Literature in Singapore?

It’s tremendously important. It sends out a strong message that Literature is a worthwhile pursuit, a mark of a mature society, and a valid intellectual expression like any other. Specific to the English department at NTU—which supports the most vibrant and exciting creative writing programme in Singapore—it also affirms that academic research and creative expression can go hand-in-hand.

**BUILDING A LITERATE SOCIETY**

Prof Koh’s passion for Literature goes beyond her appreciation of it as a subject, she sees it as a pillar of a thinking society. “Literature has everything to do with life, and development, including the expression of cultural and national identity. To her, the study of Literature as a discipline and as an art form develops critical and analytic thinking, aesthetic appreciation, moral insight and empathy, while its fictional worlds educate the imagination. “It is therefore such a pity that while English Language is still a compulsory subject in secondary schools, its companion, English Literature, is only compulsory up to the second year,” she laments. “If well taught through well-chosen texts, it will continue to educate, illuminate and be a source of solace and pleasure throughout one’s reading life. A literate society, in the highest sense of the word, can only be for the good.”

The recipients of the Koh Tai Ann Gold Medal are shining examples of how an education in Literature can mould a person. Several Medal winners have gone on to postgraduate studies at top universities abroad, with a few returning as faculty members at NTU, and others awarded Ministry of Education graduate scholarships or employed in key ministries such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

While Prof Koh is personally involved in the interviewing and selection of these recipients, and even attends their convocation ceremony to meet their parents, she does not try to offer them any advice. “I only hope from them fidelity to their passion, and if teachers, whether at university or in schools, a keen interest in their students’ development; that as academics and intellectuals, they will always speak truth to power, are open-minded, and despite lack of recognition and appreciation, to keep in mind that ‘virtue is its own reward’.”

**PAST AND CURRENT RECIPIENTS OF THE KOH TAI ANN GOLD MEDAL TALK ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED BY THEIR WIN, AND HOW FAR THEY HAVE COME SINCE THEN.**

**WINGS TO FLY**

They have come since then.
I have benefited from the tertiary education I received at NTU, and since I have now built a stable career for myself, I would like to give back to society — and especially to NTU.

MR ALFRED LEE

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Having worked in several technology-related roles before earning her Master of Science in Knowledge Management in 2009 at NTU, Threat Intelligence Analyst Ms Angela Wu Peihui noticed a distinct lack of women among her colleagues and peers. Wanting to see more females in the STEM fields — the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics — the 36-year-old alumna started a term bursary called the Wu Peihui Bursary as a form of financial support for female students at the School of Computer Science and Engineering.

“…I redirected some of my scholarship allowance money to those students who were clearly more in need of financial aid than I was,” says Ms Wu. “I hope that this bursary will encourage more women to pursue STEM courses, especially when they realise that there’s added financial support that they can tap on.” The $8,000 bursary award was first given out in December 2018. Ms Wu is committed to supporting one female student per year with an $8,000 award. The first installment of the Bursary was made in December 2018.

PAYING IT FORWARD

As a scholarship recipient when she was at NTU’s School of Biological Sciences, Ms Nai Rui Si received an allowance in addition to the full subsidy of her university tuition fees. After learning that about one in five students in NTU was in financial need, Ms Nai decided to do her part. “I redirected some of my scholarship allowance money to those students who were clearly more in need of financial aid than I was,” says the 25-year-old. “It was a spur-of-the-moment decision, but I have no regrets.”

Even after her graduation in 2016, Ms Nai, who now works as a laboratory technologist at the Singapore-MIT Alliance for Research and Technology, is still contributing a monthly gift of $50 to the NTU Bursary Fund. “I was fortunate enough to never have to worry about finances or be in debt, but I know of a few people who are or were in that situation,” says Ms Nai. “I just think that everyone should have the opportunity for higher education, particularly those among the financially disadvantaged who are perfectly qualified and willing otherwise.”

Ms Nai, whose parents did not attend university — her father works in retail and her mother is a real estate agent — remembers a peaceful university life, surrounded by friendly classmates and helpful professors. She encourages her fellow alumni to chip in as well. She says, "If you feel positively about your alma mater and would like to help current students achieve the kind of education you have had the privilege of receiving, then consider contributing to pay it forward.”

I have benefited from the tertiary education I received at NTU, and since I have now built a stable career for myself, I would like to give back to society — and especially to NTU.

MR ALFRED LEE

I hope that this bursary will encourage more women to pursue STEM courses, especially when they realise that there is added financial support that they can tap on.

MS ANGELA WU PEIHUI

I redirected some of my scholarship allowance money to those students who were clearly more in need of financial aid than I was.

MS NAI RUI SI
The fruits of generosity often manifest in myriad ways, empowering the beneficiaries to change their lives. Gifted by the late philanthropist and prominent business leader Mr Kwek Leng Joo, the Colab4Good Fund is one example which supports NTU student-initiated projects, making a positive and meaningful impact on the community. Started in 2016, the fund aims to instill in students a heart for giving back and build their capacity for learning and leadership. It also supports student groups to bring their social campaigns to fruition. Here, four student groups share their Final Year Projects and their invaluable takeaways in 2018.

FOOD UNFILTERED
TEAM MEMBERS: Yasira Yusoff, 23, Jerlin Huang, 24, Ernest Chin, 25, and Arazyd Mano, 25, from the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information

Food Unfiltered was a campaign to reduce food wastage as a result of cosmetic filtering and discarding of perfectly edible food that appears ‘ugly’ or less than perfect. Why did the group decide to focus on this issue?

We felt there was a need for an environmental campaign on food waste. Almost 40 per cent of food around the world never makes it from farm to table due to imperfect appearances. 68.1 per cent of Singaporeans whom we surveyed were unwilling to purchase ‘ugly food’, with many erroneously believing that ugly food is less fresh, poses health risks, has lower nutritional content or is less tasty.

What were some challenges involved in running the campaign?

Tackling a huge environmental issue was challenging, especially when the people whom we talked to were not very environmentally-conscious. The preconceived notions about ugly food made things tougher — many could not help but look at the food as unsafe for consumption, or they would rather choose something more perfect-looking to get their money’s worth.

Could you share an anecdote about the campaign that made it so memorable for the team?

Bringing us through your campaign strategy.

Our target audience was quite varied, so we used different communication tools to spread the campaign message. For the younger audience, we took to Facebook and Instagram to create bite-sized educational content on the importance of not dumping ugly food. For the older audience, we partnered with various events like EGO Day Out 2018, organised by the South West Community Development Council, to spread the word. To reach out to the general public, we created in-store signages to remind them of the correct ways to treat fresh produce and educate them that ‘ugly’ food is not unsafe. These were displayed at Shiang supermarkets.

Full-time NTU students and registered NTU Student Organisations can apply for the following project grants under the fund:

Community-Based Project Grant: Funds students up to $1,500 for a community-based service initiative. Projects must be led by at least two students. For projects that are led together with non-NTU students, more than 50 per cent of the project team must be NTU students.

Collaborative Project Grant: Funds up to $5,000 for a community-based project in which two or more NTU student organisations collaborate together to address a social issue.

We looked all over but could not find them. Eventually, we rushed to get them reprinted. This taught us to always be prepared. To this day, we still do not know what happened to our missing boards.

What did the team learn from the campaign?

Communication is a powerful tool for changing ideas and mindsets. And being able to make a difference to the world, no matter how small, felt amazing. We were also inspired by many individuals whom we met, who had pioneered their own environmental initiatives. This showed us that, with passion and hard work, every individual has the power to make positive changes to society.

What were some challenges which the team faced in the campaign?

It was challenging to convince young women to turn up for the vaccination. The vaccination is not cheap; it ranges from $300 to $800 depending on which product you choose and where you get it from (hence our emphasis on the MediSave claim). Many young women expressed interest in the vaccine and wanted to find out more. However, this interest did not translate fully to action. Only about 43% who expressed interest made appointments with our partner clinics to take the vaccination.

Bring us through your campaign strategy.

With a short three-month campaign period, we focused on the group who needed the vaccination most urgently, namely women in their early 20s (the recommended vaccination age is from nine to 26). Our overall aim was to simplify the vaccination process for women. On social media, we created shareable infographics and video clips of interviews with doctors. These sought to explain medical jargon as well as provide tips on how women could claim for the vaccination by using their MediSave, and what to look out for before and after taking the vaccination.

On-ground, we organised outreach events on university campuses where we spoke to young women about the vaccination. We also reached out to the campus clinics to increase the accessibility of the vaccination to young women. By the end of the campaign, we had convinced 121 women to take action and receive the HPV vaccination.

Could you share an anecdote about the campaign that made it so memorable for the team?

Although this was a gradable project, we learnt to look less on the greater purpose for this campaign. While we only made a small dent on this issue, we hope that its learnings will be beneficial to larger initiatives to come.
RED AF – REVEALING THE COLOURS OF ASIAN FLUSH
TEAM MEMBERS: Dorothy Wong, 23, Lisbeth Lee, 24, Michael Chan, 25, and Rachel Lim, 23, from the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information

RED AF – Revealing the Colours of Asian Flush was a health communications campaign, aimed at fostering a healthier and safer drinking culture in Singapore by raising awareness of high-risk drinking among people with ‘Asian Flush’. Why did the group decide to focus on this issue? A few of us in the group are actually Asian Flushers ourselves. In Singapore, we usually only get a couple of comments here and there about the redness on our faces, but when we went on an exchange programme to France and Sweden, the Asian Flush was especially pronounced among our non-flushing Caucasian friends. This resulted in quite a bit of embarrassment for us.

While brainstorming ideas, we chanced upon an online health article that was shared by a friend. We thought that the topic was something close to our hearts, but not talked about much in the media landscape. Most of us used to have the misconception that Asian Flush was about good blood circulation or drunkenness, so we were especially vested in correcting this perspective for our friends as well.

Bring us through your campaign strategy. To speak to our health-literate yet sceptical target audience, our campaign messages could not have a top-down, authoritative tone of voice. We needed a ‘plain folks’ appeal. So we created the kind of content that we ourselves as university students like to consume to get through the day – which employed humour. We adapted various memes to convey our health messages, and were careful not to ‘force’ the issue. We also adopted a humorous and light-hearted tone for our edutainment video, and we simplified scientific jargon into easy-to-understand concepts. An example would be the comparison of an Asian Flusher’s inability to process alcohol to that of an individual with lactose intolerance.

Another key activity was the interactive textual narrative game “Fair Game”, which was inspired by the recent trend of online narrative adventure games. It takes the player through a series of decisions that uniquely shapes the narrative’s development, mirroring the effects of one’s chosen route in a social drinking situation.

For the roadshows at our school, we introduced the game of beerless pong. No beer was involved, but players had to wear the Drunk Buster Goggles. The eyewear simulated the effects of drunkenness, including visual distortion, alteration of depth and reduction of peripheral vision. And when players scored a goal, they were tested on an alcohol-related health question.

What did you learn from the campaign? It was about having the confidence in our ideas and the willingness to take risks. Choosing an under-researched topic such as the Asian Flush was a huge risk. But just because something is new, it does not mean that we should not try it. Even the ‘RED AF’ name was a risk (it is an Internet slang acronym that stands for ‘as f***’). The textual narrative game was another leap of faith too. It was not as well-received as the other tactics, but we did not have enough money to pay for an influencer to increase our video’s reach. We were quite nervous about it because it was a big investment, so we were especially vested in getting our message out. Originally, we even contemplated engaging professionals for help.

Could you share an anecdote that made the campaign so memorable for the team? It must have been how well-received our video was. We were quite nervous about it because it was an important part of getting our message out. Originally, we even contemplated engaging an influencer to increase our video’s reach, but we did not have enough money to pay for one. The result was beyond our imagination! We never thought the number of views and shares could climb to the thousands and eventually exceed 100,000.

What did you learn from the campaign? It was about having the confidence in our ideas and the willingness to take risks. Choosing an under-researched topic such as the Asian Flush was a huge risk. But just because something is new, it does not mean that we should not try it. Even the ‘RED AF’ name was a risk (it is an Internet slang acronym that stands for ‘as f***’). The textual narrative game was another leap of faith too. It was not as well-received as the other tactics, but we did not have enough money to pay for an influencer to increase our video’s reach. We were quite nervous about it because it was a big investment, so we were especially vested in getting our message out. Originally, we even contemplated engaging professionals for help.

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BREAKING MIRRORS — YOU’RE MORE THAN WHAT YOU SEE
TEAM MEMBERS: Rashyr Perez Ramanathan, 26, Charlene Yan, 22, Margaret Mahony, 22, and Aakanksha Sinha, 24, from the Wee Kim Wee School of Information and Communication

Breaking Mirrors — You’re More Than What You See was an eating disorder prevention campaign. When did the group decide to focus on this issue?

This issue was mooted at our brainstorming sessions, and we decided to go ahead with the topic after we learnt of the severity of eating disorders in Singapore. I (Rashyr) did not bring up that I myself had suffered from eating disorders, until the team was sure this was the topic which we wanted to focus on. I did not want my personal bias to affect how we would run the campaign. (Rashyr had battled with anorexia and bulimia and overcame these conditions after receiving professional help).

Bring us through your campaign strategy.

The campaign’s overarching message was “You’re More Than What You See.” This was propped up by three supporting messages:

• Eating disorders can happen to anyone. Young female students like yourself are at a high risk of developing one.
• Thin body idealisation and body dissatisfaction can lead to the development of anorexia and bulimia.
• Don’t judge your self-worth based on your physical appearance and society’s narrow and superficial standards of what beauty is.

The campaign strategy included a video series featuring stories of eating disorder survivors and interviews with medical experts; pop-up booths at universities; a screening of To the Bone, a movie about battling anorexia; as well as pitching to media for their coverage.

What were some challenges which the team faced in the campaign?

There is still a strong stigma on mental health issues, so we had to think sensitively about how to get the message across to our target audience. We also faced challenges when getting eating disorder survivors to speak up.

Could you share an anecdote about the campaign that made it so memorable for the team?

After we had launched our social media pages, people reached out to us to tell us how much they loved the campaign and how much they needed a campaign like this. A few eating disorder survivors also wanted to share their stories. We had a mother of an eating disorder patient who asked if we could talk to her daughter. It was touching to realise that we were making an impact.

What did the team learn from the campaign?

No matter how hard the entire campaign process was, our focus was always on staying true and being authentic to the message. We wanted to make sure that the voices and stories of the eating disorder survivors — our interviewees — were heard.
HIGHER DEGREE PROGRAMMES

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