

# THE POWER OF POTENTIAL

**02** PROF SAW SWEE HOCK: FROM STUDENT TO PHILANTHROPIST

**03** DR STEPHEN RIADY: SUPPORTING BROAD-BASED LEARNING

**04** MR CHUA THIAN POH: COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

## NEW EXPERIENCES FOR A NEW GENERATION

**NUS University Town (UTown), Singapore's first residential college experience, opened its doors in August 2011. Professor Tan Tai Yong, Vice-Provost (Student Life) talks about life at UTown and plans for the future.**

### **Has UTown lived up to expectations?**

UTown has certainly lived up to expectations as a lively, attractive hub of student activities. The Residential Colleges (RCs) have been well-subscribed and students' feedback on the College experience has been very positive. Judging by the round-the-clock popularity of places like Starbucks, the Mac Commons, Town Green and now the Stephen Riady Centre, UTown has obviously been a draw for NUS students.

### **How is living in UTown any different to living in a Hall such as Sheares Hall or Prince George's Park?**

The RCs are based on a slightly different model from the Halls and other residences. In the Halls, the emphasis is on community, built around community programmes, social activities and sports. Formal learning, in the form of an organised curriculum, is not a feature of Hall life. The RCs deliberately incorporate a formal learning curriculum into the residential requirement to emphasise academic development in a residential context. This formal curriculum is complemented by an informal environment

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



Professor Tan Tai Yong, Vice-Provost (Student Life), at Mac Commons, one of the resources that are available 24/7 to students in UTown.

**“Private giving has been instrumental in UTown's success... from financial aid... to innovative initiatives such as community leadership and social entrepreneurship programmes.”**

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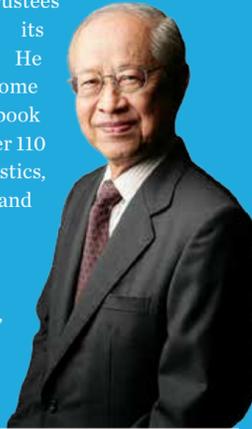
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## FROM STUDENT TO FACULTY MEMBER TO PHILANTHROPIST

Professor Saw Swee Hock ('56), an alumnus and a former faculty member of the National University of Singapore (NUS), has made it his personal mission to help generations of young people have access to tertiary education. To him, "education is the most effective way of promoting social mobility among our not-so-privileged needy students". Since 2006, the Saw Swee Hock Bursary has helped some 136 final year students across all Faculties and Schools, who were facing financial difficulties in the last year of their studies. Most of his philanthropic gifts have been channelled into areas that can uplift the quality of education and research in the University.

Department, and continues to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees and some of its Committees. He has published some 48 books, 31 book chapters and over 110 articles on statistics, demography and economics.

Besides his distinguished academic career, Professor Saw is recognised as a prominent



**"It is my wish for the new School to play a key role in helping to improve the standard of public healthcare in Singapore and the surrounding region in the years ahead."**

In 2011, Professor Saw provided a landmark philanthropic gift of S\$30 million to NUS to establish the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health under the National University Healthcare System. The first of its kind in Singapore, the School is fully dedicated to the training of public health professionals and to the undertaking of cutting-edge research on innovative models of public health and healthcare delivery. This is an area Professor Saw is particularly passionate about. He says, "It is my wish for the new School to play a key role in helping to improve the standard of public healthcare in Singapore and the surrounding region in the years ahead."

Professor Saw studied for his BA and MA at the University of Malaya in Singapore, after which he proceeded to the London School of Economics (LSE) where he received his PhD in Statistics in 1963. He was a Senior Lecturer at the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur, Founding Professor of Statistics at the University of Hong Kong, and then Professor of Statistics at the National University of Singapore. He is now the President's Honorary Professor of Statistics in the Department of Statistics and Applied Probability in NUS, and Professorial Fellow in the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. He is still very active in the University where he gives some lectures in the

philanthropist, particularly in the area of education. The impact of his generosity has been felt across many universities. Over the years, he has given selflessly to numerous causes such as gold medals, bursaries, scholarships, professorships, research centres, Schools and Faculties. ■



Professor Saw Swee Hock (second from left) with School of Public Health faculty members Professor Lee Hin Peng, Professor Saw Seang Mei, Professor David Koh and Professor Chia Kee Seng (left to right).



**"The world today is increasingly complex and fast-paced, and there is a strong need to ensure that the young in Singapore and Asia are given the opportunities to become well-rounded individuals who will understand these complexities and have the character and heart to serve society. The broad-based, experiential learning at NUS is of critical importance in preparing students for their future careers, and for the individuals they want to be."**

**– Dr Stephen Riady**  
Executive Chairman, Overseas Union Enterprise Limited

*Dr Riady made a gift to NUS in support of holistic, broad-based education. In recognition of the gift, a new multi-use complex at UTown that houses teaching and learning spaces as well as performing arts and athletic recreation facilities, was named the Stephen Riady Centre.*

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES' SUPPORT BRINGS WORLD TO UTOWN

### Students learn from politicians to playwrights

As a collective demonstration of their strong belief in, and their passionate commitment to, the University's vision for University Town (UTown), the NUS Board of Trustees, led by Chairman Mr Wong Ngit Liong, helped raise over S\$2 million for the Trustees' University Town Founding Benefactors Fund.

The Fund was set up to develop and support the academic components of Residential College learning in UTown. To date, it has helped make possible many of the informal learning programmes designed to stimulate a multi-faceted learning experience for students from different disciplines. These include the Tembusu Forums and Master's Teas at the Residential Colleges.

The brainchild of Professor Tommy Koh, Rector of Tembusu College, the Tembusu Forums bring together undergraduates and

distinguished academics and diplomats to discuss current, and often contentious, national, regional and global issues. According to Prof Koh, the Forums, which usually attract around 200 students, "have brought the world to the College and the College to the world". Speakers include Ambassador Burhan Gafoor, Chief Negotiator of Singapore for Climate Change, discussing the science and economics of climate change and His Excellency David Adelman, US Ambassador to Singapore, talking about US and China relations.

The Master's Teas give small groups of around 30 students a rare opportunity to engage with corporate leaders, ambassadors, academics and policy-makers in an informal setting. The Teas help students develop the confidence and social communications skills that will help prepare them for success in the world beyond university. Guests include

senior executives from Google and UBS; performers and writers such as Hossan Leong and Catherine Lim; as well as academics such as William C. McGrew, Emeritus Professor of Evolutionary Anthropology from the University of Cambridge. ■



Performer and composer Dick Lee (centre) at a Master's Tea with students.

## HEALING THE COMMUNITY

Andrew Sayampanathan, Second-Year student at NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, is also a Fellow of the Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Programme (CTPCLP) at University Town (UTown). Established thanks to a generous gift from Mr Chua Thian Poh, the Programme aims to groom the next generation of community leaders.

### What inspired you to apply to the Programme?

To build the next generation of community leaders, a new way of thinking is required. Today's paradigm has enabled us to help a certain limited number of people who are suffering from certain social problems. I strongly believe that tomorrow's paradigm will be able to help more communities and tackle a completely new array of societal problems. I wanted to learn this.

### Does CTPCLP complement your medical studies? If so, how?

I believe that the understanding of the many differing challenges faced by the various strata in our society via the CTPCLP helps me to better understand patients. What I've learned will place me in a position to holistically treat patients, not just based on their scientific morbidities, but also based on their own personal lifestyles as well as their socio-economic situations.



### Has CTPCLP shown you an alternate side of society?

Yes, definitely. CTPCLP brings together a diverse group of people who share the same calling: to help others. We all have various communities we intend to help, from migrant workers to the ageing population. We learn

from each other's experiences. I knew there was an alternative side to our society. But, I didn't realise that it was so vast and diverse. Our society really needs help.

### What is the most important thing you stand to gain from this Programme?

The most important thing is a heart of idealism and a mind of rationalism. We are told to empathise with people. We want an ideal world. At the same time, we are taught that we have limited resources. We cannot help everyone. A good community leader is one who appreciates both these worlds and draws the fine line between idealism and reality.

### What do you hope to do in the future?

A doctor once told me that a doctor should never be satisfied just being a doctor. Every doctor should aim to be a doctor plus, where the plus represents a part of you which you want to develop so as to benefit society. I aim to be a doctor plus. ■



“Many NUS students are involved in local and overseas community involvement programmes, but prior to the Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Programme, there was no institutionalised structure to provide them with a better grounding in social issues in Singapore. The Programme attempts to address this gap so that students can add value to the work they do.”

— Professor Albert Teo  
Director of the Chua Thian Poh Community Leadership Programme

Professor Teo (dark tie) is pictured above with Mr Chua (blue tie) and fellows of the Programme.

## NGEE ANN KONGSI: MAXIMISING STUDENTS' POTENTIAL

The Ngee Ann Kongsi, one of University Town's (UTown) Founding Benefactors, supports scholarships, bursaries and distinguished professorships. The Ngee Ann Kongsi Auditorium was named in recognition of their generosity to NUS.

### GIVING VOICE TO SINGAPORE'S BUDDING POETS

Professor Shirley Geok-lin Lim visited Cinnamon College at University Town (UTown), the home of the University Scholars Programme (USP), as the first Ngee Ann Kongsi Distinguished Professor. She taught a new USP module entitled *Chapbooks to Digital Poetry: Poetics Mash-Up* and stayed at the USP Residential College. Here, she speaks about the experience.

### What has been the highlight of your time as the Ngee Ann Kongsi Professor?

The core of my visit as Ngee Ann Kongsi Professor has been the module I taught at the University Scholars Programme. I found my USP students – all 22 of them! – multi-talented and eager to experience the living language in the great works, and in their own poems. Their chapbooks were fresh and engaging, aesthetically polished; many of their digital poems arresting; and their poems, well, they have published a collection of the poems, called *Red Pulse*, which to my mind showcases a number of Singapore poems that may well be anthologised elsewhere. It has been a privilege for me to work with these extremely bright undergraduates and I feel that this brief visiting period may have a longer effect on the poetry and voices to come out of Singapore with this generation's cohort.

### What are your thoughts about UTown and its 24/7 living and learning concept?

UTown is a brilliant concept. In a frenetic, dense yet atomising city environment like

Singapore, UTown provides a kind of socio-cultural ecology where the young spirits may co-mingle, to bond and generate self and communal identities that will persist for their life-times. In including resident fellows like me in the mix, UTown ameliorates the danger of establishing only a closed youth culture with all that may signify of unbalanced dynamics.

### What did you wish to achieve during your stay at UTown and through your Chapbooks to Digital Poetry module?

As a scholar who has studied Singapore literature, I had sometimes speculated that for such a globally connected island-nation, its English-language poetry in no way can stand comparison to the rich poetic canon that has come out of Ireland, a similarly colonised state with somewhat similar language conflicts and population density. The Ngee Ann Kongsi Professorship gave me the unexpected opportunity to do a small intervention, by allowing me to share with young student poets the poetics I've found valuable and resonant in my own reading and writing. For example, the place of voice as a living, breathing and often intensely interior, yet of course publicly formed, dynamic in the composition of poems.

I have offered similar creative writing courses with the hope of making similar interventions in the US and in Hong Kong. Perhaps as important for me is the attempt to help create a community of young poets, through Cinnamon College/UTown-based events such as readings, exhibitions, talks by Singapore poets, and the publication of their collection of poems; the student poets were able to share their works in a safe public space and in that collective and social sharing to form friendships crucial for the development of a literary culture. ■



The Ngee Ann Kongsi Auditorium in the Education Resource Centre at UTown.

“This Bursary has allowed me to pursue my passion in community involvement and active citizenship. I feel privileged to be given this opportunity. The special modules provided at the College of Alice and Peter Tan have given me great insights and enhanced my intellectual capacity. Furthermore, the unique experience as a resident of UTown has certainly brightened up my university life!”

— Chow Qun Di Charissa  
Ngee Ann Kongsi Bursary recipient



Ngee Ann Kongsi Distinguished Professor Shirley Geok-lin Lim (front row centre) with student-poets.



## NEW EXPERIENCES FOR A NEW GENERATION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1:

of intellectual engagement through talks, seminars and forums. The different approaches do not suggest that one system is preferred. The University offers a range of residential experiences to our students, who eventually choose the type that best suits their interests and inclinations.

### What role has private giving played in UTown's success to date?

Private giving has enabled the University to provide financial aid to students who otherwise would have stayed away from the programmes at UTown because of cost. We want all students, who are so inclined, to have an opportunity of experiencing the Residential College. But living in an RC entails additional costs with rental and meal plans. Private giving has been instrumental in UTown's

success because these gifts have enabled needy students, through financial aid, to take full advantage of UTown's educational opportunities. Philanthropic gifts have also enabled the Colleges to launch innovative initiatives, such as community leadership and social entrepreneurship programmes, to widen the learning experiences of our students.

### Are you looking for more private support? If so, what will it be used for?

Yes, we need more private support for financial aid to ensure that access to the programmes in UTown is essentially 'needs blind'. We want every student, regardless of their socio-

economic backgrounds, to be able to enjoy all the programmes that we have available in NUS. We also need private support to launch more special programmes for our students, especially those that are experiential in nature. Such programmes can be resource intensive, if students have to do research, field-trips and run projects, and private giving can be an important source of support.

### What plans do you have for the future?

A fourth Residential College will open soon in 2015 and 600 more students will be able to benefit from the Residential College programme. We will enhance the programmes

**“The University has become much more student-centric. There is a much greater focus on generating opportunities for students, from financial aid to exchange programmes, overseas colleges and internships.”**

in the Colleges and launch a few more, focusing on community engagement, social enterprises and the development of sporting, artistic and cultural talents.

### How do you feel UTown has benefited NUS and the NUS community?

At one level, UTown has added an important spatial dimension to the NUS campus. By drawing students from different parts of the campus to interact in a common, well-designed space, it serves as a useful location for bonding and community building. The Residential Colleges add to the variety of educational experiences for undergraduates. Its multi-disciplinary curriculum and diverse learning environment supplement well the deep disciplinary specialisation that students receive from their home Faculties.

Finally, the carefully designed places in UTown that blur the line between formal and informal learning undergird the University's commitment to providing a holistic, integrated and broad-based learning that embraces peer learning as well as social, cultural interactions.

### As an NUS alumnus, how do you feel NUS has changed since you graduated?

NUS has changed tremendously since I graduated in the mid-1980s. Then, I would say that the campus was quite functional, and student life was not a key University priority. Whatever student life we had was what we personally made of it.

Now, the University has become much more student-centric. There is a much greater focus on generating opportunities for students, from financial aid to exchange programmes, overseas colleges and internships. The space has improved tremendously. There are several student hubs, including UTown, the Forum and the Sports and Recreation Centre. ■



**THE UNIVERSITY TOWN (UTOWN) RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE PROGRAMME BLURS THE LINES BETWEEN LIVING AND LEARNING. FROM SMALL CLASSES TO INFORMAL LEARNING SESSIONS WITH LEADING MEMBERS OF SOCIETY TO MANY SPORTS, ARTS AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES, UTOWN OFFERS A HOLISTIC LEARNING ENVIRONMENT.**



Bursary and scholarship recipients at UTown's Education Resource Centre

# YONG SIEW TOH CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC CELEBRATES A DECADE OF MUSIC

10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Gala Dinner ‘Supporting Excellence’ to be held on 7 March 2014, at the Four Seasons Grand Ballroom.

To mark the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music’s 10 years at NUS, the Conservatory will hold a Gala Dinner with a fundraising element. Funds raised will be used to boost the undergraduate endowment fund, as well as to support the Masters Programme, which will be announced formally during the dinner. Lawyer and arts patron Ms Priscylla Shaw chairs the Organising Committee for the Dinner. Mr Lawrence Wong, Acting Minister for Culture, Community and Youth has agreed to attend as Special VIP guest.

The Committee is sparing no effort to ensure that it will be an evening to remember for years to come. The entertainment for the evening will naturally include performances by graduates, undergraduates and faculty. There will also be an exciting wine and holidays auction to add to an evening that simply should not be missed. Tables are priced at S\$20,000 and S\$10,000. All donations are entitled to 250% tax deduction and furthermore, all sums raised will attract government fund matching.

As tables are limited, enquiries about cash gifts in support of the Gala Dinner, purchasing seats or tables, should be made without delay to Ms Jenny Ang at the Conservatory at [6516 6189](tel:65166189) or [jenny\\_ang@nus.edu.sg](mailto:jenny_ang@nus.edu.sg).

The Conservatory, set up in 2003, was named in recognition of a gift from the family of the late Dr Yong Loo Lin. Yong Siew Toh, a music teacher and daughter of the late Dr Yong, found her greatest joy in giving music to others. The Yong family believes this gift is an apt way to remember her life and her dedication to music. Conservatory string students also benefit from the loan of rare instruments from the collection of Mr & Mrs Rin Kei Mei. Today, there are 220 students at the Conservatory, drawn from 22 countries. ■



## MS PRISCYLLA SHAW CHAIRS GALA DINNER ORGANISING COMMITTEE

A passionate advocate for arts and culture, Ms Priscylla Shaw is a member of the Governing Board of the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, a Council Member of the National Arts Council, and a member of the Advisory Committee of the Singapore Symphony Orchestra. She is a past Chairman of the Singapore National Youth Orchestra, the Asian Civilisations Museum and the Peranakan Museum. For her service to Singapore in heritage and culture, she was awarded the Public Service Medal in 2008, and the French Ordre national du Mérite in 2010. Since 2011, Ms Shaw has been President of the Home Nursing Foundation, a charity that attends to the nursing needs of patients in their own homes, regardless of their ability to pay, where many of these patients are elderly, economically challenged, and housebound or semi-housebound. ■

