AN EDUCATION REIMAGINED FOR THE FUTURE

Yale-NUS College, Singapore’s first liberal arts college, opened its doors in August 2013. Professor Pericles Lewis, founding President and Professor of Humanities at Yale-NUS, talks about the College’s distinctive approach to a liberal arts education, the diverse student body, the role of philanthropy in the College’s success and plans for the future.

What is a liberal arts education?
The word “liberal” refers historically to what was most important for an educated person, free of other responsibilities, to study. So, the liberal arts are closely aligned with freedom – the freedom to pursue intellectual questions wherever scholarship takes us and the freedom to debate issues of current concern. The goals of a liberal arts education have long been to teach students to analyse carefully, to communicate effectively, and to make wise and humane decisions. The word “arts” refers historically not just to the visual or performing arts but to the whole range of human knowledge, from music to physics and beyond.

What is distinctive about a Yale-NUS liberal arts education?
Yale-NUS will offer a liberal arts and science education that is updated for the 21st century. That means giving students the breadth of knowledge to expand their minds and to be able to ask important questions in any field of endeavour, as well as the rigorous training in one field that teaches them how to pursue a subject in depth. I expect our students to master a body of knowledge and techniques,

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EMPOWERING THROUGH EDUCATION

The Kaiwalam Channal Group, a family-owned group of companies, made a gift to Yale-NUS to establish the Kaiwalam Channal Scholarship. Here, Mr N G Channal, Group CEO, explains why the Group chose to support students at the College.

What inspired the Kaiwalam Channal Group to make a gift to Yale-NUS?

Our gift is part of the ongoing philanthropic activities of the Kaiwalam Channal Group. We have always supported education because we believe it is an important driver of social and economic development. Yale-NUS represents the best of the East and West educational systems, offering opportunities to students from around the world. This is an aspect of education which resonates with our policy to contribute to the nurturing of future leaders and entrepreneurs who will help to grow the societies and economies of tomorrow.

Why support the liberal arts?

A liberal arts education is a broad-based education that cultivates intuition, inspires innovation, and equips capacity to build and learn with the development of critical thinking and creativity. It encourages active learning and the study of culture and society, besides other related liberal arts subjects.

The Kaiwalam Channal Scholarship gives priority to female students. Why did the Group decide to do this?

We hope that our contribution and preference will give women an equal opportunity in education and provide them with tools they need for self-help and empowerment. They form approximately 50 to 55 percent of the population, so engaging them is important. Shirin Ebadi, a 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner and leading campaigner for the rights of women and children has this to say: "Knowledge is a window to freedom. An educated woman will not put up with oppression.

Please share some of the Group’s thoughts on giving back through philanthropic support.

Philanthropy has always been at the core of our ethos. We have been mindful that the benefits of our success should be shared with the local communities where our businesses operate and flourish. We have engaged in social work primarily in health care and education programmes. Our philanthropic efforts are aimed at helping to empower the less fortunate. The initiatives are well thought out, targeted, measurable and evaluated to ensure the highest efficacy.

Do you think that philanthropy is crucial to the advancement of education?

Yes, philanthropy is very important because it contributes to the financial resources to ensure continued access to education for the underprivileged in society. It facilitates the creation of new and greater opportunities for learning to meet the needs of the community.

Do you have any advice for the recipients of the Kaiwalam Channal Scholarship?

This is the beginning of a new and exciting learning journey that will help energise and shape your life. We hope this new endeavour will stimulate your curiosity, enhance your capacity to develop new skills and deepen your capacity for connectivity, to help you solve problems that humanity faces. We encourage you to seize the opportunity to make an impact on society. May you be successful in sharing what you have learned and giving back to society what you have received.

The Kaiwalam Channal Scholarship, how does it do that?

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Inaugural Tan Chin Tuan Professor of Chinese Studies, Professor Scott Cook, talks about his new role and his hopes and dreams for Yale-NUS College and its students.

How did you feel about your appointment?

It was a tremendous honour. With its vast and generous contributions to the social welfare and sustained development of Singapore and Malaysia, the Tan Chin Tuan Professorship is an organisation of tremendous renown, and its establishment of a programme for Chinese studies at Yale-NUS which will foster academic conferences or workshops related to the fields of expertise of our Chinese studies faculty.

If you had one great hope for your students, what would it be?

That, like Confucius himself, they be inspired to pursue a lifetime of educational learning. So long as they have that, everything else is possible.
Since its opening in August 2013, Yale-NUS College has offered over 20 percent of its pioneering cohort scholarships and study awards so that students can pursue their ambitions and achieve their potential with peace of mind. Four students share how these scholarships and study awards have transformed their lives and their Yale-NUS experience.

**Sylvia Gan**  
**Prima Scholarship recipient**  
"I like the idea of a residential college and a small cohort. These make for a great learning environment, where learning is intimate and transmends classroom boundaries. Also, I think a broad-based curriculum that combines ideas from both Eastern and Western societies is very interesting.

"Before I found out that I had made it into the College, I was still deliberating whether or not to even consider Yale-NUS (although I wanted to come here) as I was not sure if my family could afford it. The Prima Scholarship really played a part from both Eastern and Western societies is

"The Prima Scholarship recipient Sylvia Gan

"Before I found out that I had made it into the College, I was still deliberating whether or not to even consider Yale-NUS (although I wanted to come here) as I was not sure if my family could afford it. The Prima Scholarship really played a part in influencing my decision. I am really thankful for the opportunities that Yale-NUS and this Scholarship have given me."

**Evan Asava-Are**  
**JV Pillay Study Award recipient**  
"I hope that a liberal arts education will be an enlightening experience that will inspire us to think out of the box, participate in discussions close to our hearts, and act on ideas we feel most strongly about. I also hope that it will help us see the connection between our education in the world, and enable us to apply what we learn in the classroom to the many things around us.

"The JV Pillay Study Award has made the decision making process (in choosing a college) a much easier one - it significantly decreased the costs of joining Yale-NUS. The Study Award also further motivated me to make the most of my College experience, knowing that I’ve been given the opportunity to do so.

**Andrea Lee**  
**Sharon Ann Erawthy Scholarship recipient**  
"The three weeks I spent in New Haven were truly the time of my life. From the heated debates in seminar sessions to passionate discussions about our ideals for liberal student societies to arguments over the best pizza in New Haven, I knew that this College was the perfect place for me. I am constantly being drawn into intellectual exchanges between students and faculty and inspired by the great ideas that spontaneously sprout up. I have always desired a liberal arts and science education because it would finally give me the opportunity to learn for learning’s sake.

"Coming from a family of five children, the financial burden on my parents was enormous. This Scholarship covers my tuition fees, releasing a substantial load off my parents’ backs. I do not have to worry about being burdened by hefty student loans or about not being able to secure a place in this school due to the inability to pay.

"The Sharon Ann Erawthy Scholarship recipient Andrea Lee

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**INVESTING IN THE POTENTIAL OF A LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION**

Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple, one of Singapore’s oldest Buddhist temples, has given generously to Singapore’s first liberal arts college.

The Temple’s gift has enabled Yale-NUS College to establish the Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple Study Award, which will support up to eight students per Academic Year at a steady state, beginning August 2014, with preference given to Singaporean students. Study awards enable Yale-NUS to admit and provide opportunities to the best and brightest students from Singapore and around the world.

The College has also been able to recognise teaching excellence and attract some of the brightest minds from around the world to be part of its inaugural faculty through the Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple Professorship in Humanities.

Dr Tan Choon Kim (66), Chairman, Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple, says, “The Temple shares the values behind Yale-NUS’ mission to equip young people with a form of education that will enable them to become leaders as well as engaged citizens who will be able to contribute to the advancement of society. We want to give bright, highly motivated and articulate students, regardless of financial background, a chance to benefit from a Yale-NUS education and to learn from excellent teachers who are leaders in their fields.”

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**PHILOSOPHER JOINS YALE-NUS AS KWAN IM THONG HOOD CHO TEMPLE PROFESSOR**

Professor Jay Garfield, the inaugural Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple Professor of Humanities at Yale-NUS College, and a leading scholar of philosophy, found his academic calling half by chance and half by circumstance.

Trained in Western philosophical thought, Professor Jay Garfield admits having had little awareness of non-Western philosophy when he was a student. All of that changed when he became an Assistant Professor at Hampshire College, a liberal arts college in the US. On day one at work, his very first student walked into his office and wanted him to chair his senior thesis on ‘Indo-Tibetan Madhyamaka and the Social Contract Tradition.’ Seven years later, the College introduced a strong multi-cultural requirement that demanded that all teachers introduce a non-Western element to their disciplines.

Prof Garfield has not looked back since then, having devoted his career to advancing the idea that philosophy is a cross-cultural enterprise, and that it is morally and intellectually imperative to read and to work across cultural boundaries. He says, “It is a real honour to be associated with a major Buddhist temple dedicated to care and benevolence. I am thrilled to join Yale-NUS, and am excited by the opportunity to help to build a college and a curriculum committed to academic excellence, genuine interdisciplinarity and to a truly global academic vision.”

Having both studied and worked in a liberal arts environment for most of his academic career, Prof Garfield has had the privilege of learning and teaching in an interdisciplinary environment and alongside psychologists, computer scientists, linguists, legal theorists, mathematicians, physicists, media studies scholars and others. This increased his commitment to interdisciplinary studies, to collaborative teaching and learning and to the importance of a hands-on approach to undergraduate education.

He says, “Liberal arts is essentially an education for a free person, both in the sense of personal freedom and one living in a free society. It is an education in what one should know in order to take an active part in civic life and to lead a fulfilling life, eventually passing on this knowledge to future generations. This Professorship has given me the opportunity of a lifetime - working with motivated, creative and talented students and colleagues and working in a community committed to building something entirely new, an Asian liberal arts college with a truly global curriculum.”
Yale-NUS education will shape their lives for the 21st century brings the span of human knowledge together and allows students to develop their capacities to the fullest by encouraging active learning.

At Yale-NUS, we will provide a cosmopolitan education, in which students explore not only their own cultural backgrounds, but also the great contributions of cultures from around the world. The College, through its curriculum, its programmes, and its community, will contribute to deeper understanding between Singapore and the United States, and more broadly between Asia and the West, at a time when such understanding is going to be crucial to all forms of progress.

The residential model we are building at Yale-NUS will enhance the educational experience. Indeed, we are creating an environment where the lines between learning and living blur, where the intentional learning in the seminar room or the lab will be amplified and augmented by the greater learning opportunities outside the classroom during Week 7.

**What role has private giving played, and will it play, in the success of Yale-NUS?**

The College has been fortunate to have a number of programmes established due to the generosity of individuals, foundations and corporations representing the Yale-NUS community. This has given us the opportunity to start programmes that have a direct impact on curriculum development, attracting talented faculty, as well as providing scholarships and study awards to ensure that no deserving students are denied an education at Yale-NUS because of financial difficulties.

Philanthropy will play an important role in the success of Yale-NUS and of our students. It will allow us to continue to develop and deliver impactful programmes for our students especially when we reach a steady state of 1,000 students.

**What are your fundraising priorities and why?**

Yale-NUS is focused on raising funds for a number of priorities including academic and student support, teaching excellence as well as educational programmes. These broad areas enable the College to provide support for students, support professorships and fellowships as well as educational programmes that prepare leaders of tomorrow with a global outlook and an appreciation for diversity and the ability to communicate and lead effectively.

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**Chen Family Supports Art at Yale-NUS**

“One cannot find a better place than Singapore and Yale-NUS College to study Asian art. Yale-NUS, with its excellent resources and ideal location in a region with a burgeoning arts scene, is a solid platform for students who wish to pursue their passion, and potentially a career in art,” says Mr Tan Wee Lee, the eldest son of late Singaporean artist Mr Chen Chong Swee. And that was what prompted the Chen family to set up the Chen Chong Swee Asian Art Programme at Yale-NUS.

The Programme was set up in honour of their late father, Mr Chen Chong Swee, who was a pioneer of the Nanyang painting style that is unique to Singapore. He also co-founded the Singapore Water Colour Society as well as the Salon Art Society, now known as the Singapore Society of Chinese Artists.

The Chen Chong Swee Asian Art Programme will support various academic programmes at Yale-NUS that promote the appreciation of local and regional art among students. The Chen Chong Swee Art Scholarship has also been set up and will go towards helping a Yale-NUS graduate pursue postgraduate studies in fine arts.

And already, the Programme has benefitted students through Week 7: Learning across boundaries, a Yale-NUS initiative that brings learning out of the classroom. From studying butterfly diversity to analysing global fashion, students chose from a wide range of subjects and interests both locally and abroad. At the end of Week 7, students and faculty came together to share the insights and knowledge they had gained.

Two of the projects, Placemaking at RC4* and Art, Identity & the Meaning of Things, were funded by the Chen Chong Swee Asian Art Programme. Placemaking at RC4 aimed to familiarise students with concepts such as the philosophy of place and neighbourliness, the social science of the neighbourhood, and urban design and community development principles of placemaking. Tiffany Sin, one of the participants, says, “One thing I learnt from this module is that no matter how much a designer or architect plans a space, it’s all about the interactions that happen when users come in and shape its ‘desire lines’.”

Daniel Soo, who took part in Art, Identity & the Meaning of Things, says, “The module opened my mind to a whole bunch of questions that I did not even previously consider. These questions are difficult to answer and are sometimes very personal, and I am appreciative that these questions stay with me even after the course. It was a great learning experience!”

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In celebration of their father Dr Chew Beng Keng’s (’58) 80th birthday, and to honour his strong belief in supporting deserving undergraduate students in their medical education, Ms Chew Gek Khim (’84), Ms Chew Gek Hiang (’86) and Mr Chew Kwee San have made a gift in their personal capacity to establish the Chew Beng Keng Medical Scholarship at the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (YLLSoM).

Dr Chew is an alumnus of the University of Malaya, NUS’ predecessor institution, and having received financial support himself during his university days in the form of a state scholarship, understands the financial difficulties that some students go through. The doctor has given to various causes at NUS – he established the Chew Beng Keng Bursary and also set up the Gordon Arthur Ransome Medal and Prizes in Internal Medicine in the memory of his teacher, Dr Gordon Arthur Ransome.

“Through this gift, we want to honour and remember the achievements of our father. Our father strongly believes in a good education and in the importance of showing appreciation to teachers who have made a difference. Likewise, we hope that our gift can be used as an example to inspire other individuals and children to come together to remember their parents, teachers, and mentors,” Ms Chew Gek Khim says.

Dr Sunlin Chou, who never studied at NUS, also recalls how his father, the late Professor Kai Ren Chou, often spoke fondly of the Economics students he used to lecture in the early 1960s at the University of Malaya. Professor Chou forsook business pursuits to become an educator as he believed that it was a better way to serve society. As a tribute to his father, Dr Chou established the K R Chou PhD Scholarship in Economics at the Department of Economics at NUS’ Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

“I hope that recipients of this Scholarship will also help others to gain the benefits of education, by being teachers or supporters of educational institutions and students,” he says.

Many other individuals have also given to NUS to enable their parents’ legacy to live on. Mrs Lee Ju Song (’73) and her family set up the Lee Kiat Chew and Tan Luan Keng Bursary at YLLSoM to commemorate their parents’ selflessness and humanity, while Tay brothers Mr Tay Wei Lien and Dr Tay Wei Ming (’65) established the Tay Teck Eng Dental Bursary in the memory of their late father, who was a strong believer in philanthropy and giving back, particularly to education.