Describe the difficulties you faced while pursuing an education.

I came to Singapore from Kuala Lumpur to study under the Asean Pre-University Scholarship at Hwa Chong Junior College and continued to study at NUS without a scholarship then. My late father was the sole breadwinner and he was a textile salesman. He started his own video rental business at about the time I went to university. His business failed miserably with the mushrooming of many such similar shops. He closed his business down and I pooled all my savings and persuaded my mother to chip in and pay off the bank loan. My mother supplemented the household income by babysitting other kids. My father took up odd jobs by fixing wooden crates and salvaging wooden packing materials. He was working out of a makeshift garage at home earning a few tens of dollars a day. I could not request money from him to fund my education and I had to find other means on my own.

What kind of help did you receive then?

I applied for the Bashir Mallal study loan which was S$5,000 per student. But I still needed to supplement my financial needs by working as a part-time waiter at the Guild House in between lessons and also giving private tuition. Times were tough. I had a law school classmate and a running buddy, Sin Boon Ann (Arts ’82, Law ’86). We ran the marathon together and participated in the University triathlon selection. He came to understand my financial background.

Law alumnus and a donor to the National University of Singapore (NUS), Mr Yap Wai Ming (Law ’86) received financial help when he was studying at the NUS Faculty of Law. Today, he is a partner at Morgan Lewis Stamford, an international law firm focusing largely on commercial business transactions. He recounts how help, which came at the right time, changed his life forever and explains how this shaped his attitude to giving.
FROM HARDSHIP TO SCHOLARSHIP

Business School student Jazmin Quek pulled through difficult times with help from former scholars.

Jazmin Quek

Eleven-year-old Jazmin Quek’s world crashed when her elder sister passed away in a motorcycle accident. Hounded by reporters, the family went through difficult times.

“My mother became depressed and both my father and elder brother had difficulty coping with my sister’s passing as well. Overnight, my family grew cold. There were no more breakfasts and no more laughter,” recounts Jazmin, of the adversity she had to face at a very young age.

Today, Jazmin is going into her third year as a student at the NUS Business School and a proud recipient of the Kwa Fong and Raymond Goh Scholarship.

“I came from a very ordinary family. While we did not too the poverty line, my family was not wealthy either. One of my fondest childhood memories is the simple activity of eating steamed buns as a family on Saturday mornings, followed by porridge with tofu and vegetables for lunch,” Jazmin reminisces fondly.

Between taking care of her family and managing household chores, Jazmin grew up fast. She also had one other thing to worry about, earning pocket money for daily expenses. The creative and enterprising young girl started making bracelets to sell to her friends, and later moved on to creating hand-drawn name bracelets to sell.

She also led a team of 18 to Cambodia to undertake volunteer work. “We raised $3,000 in a single week, and then over the course of two weeks in Cambodia, we built a bridge, conducted first aid lessons and organised Christmas parties for the children,” she shares.

The thoughtful and creative business student is constantly looking for ways to spread some kindness, from purchasing lunch and leaving encouraging notes for the homeless and construction workers, to distributing bananas to strangers. She even took the time to hand paint greetings cards for donors.

“Such an honour to meet my scholarship donor, Mr Raymond Goh. I was inspired and encouraged by his account of how he used to be poor and how he too benefitted from a scholarship when he was a student, which enabled him to be where he is today,” Jazmin says.

“I am privileged to have this opportunity to express my gratitude to him personally, as well as to hear his story. My goal is to do the same one day,” she adds.

Business School student Jazmin Quek pulled through difficult times with help from former scholars.

Jazmin’s benefactor

Mr and Mrs Raymond Goh

“I was fortunate to be a recipient of scholarships when I was an undergraduate at NUS. This is just my way of paying it back. I always cherish the opportunity to meet up with the scholarship recipients. On top of putting a face to the name, it also allows me to get to know them more intimately. Just like Jazmin, they are all well selected and invariably are smart, hardworking and passionate individuals.

“I would say to the recipients: Take full advantage of the scholarships/bursaries to free yourself from your financial worries and focus on getting as much as possible out of your university education. And one day when you are ready, help others who are similarly in need of financial aid. Pay it forward.”

Mr Raymond Goh (Business ‘89)

Dr Ng Chin Siau

Dr Ng Chin Siau is today the Founder and Group Chief Executive Officer of Singapore’s largest private dental group, Q & M Dental Group. His success, however, was no easy feat. The NUS Dentistry graduate learnt very early on in life the value of hard-earned money, and the importance of a good education, when his father fell on hard times during a financial crisis. He attributes much of his current success to the education he received at NUS, having secured a place in Dentistry, and the annual bursaries worth $5,150 that covered his hostel fees and daily expenses.

His desire to give back to the institution that has provided him with a stable and successful life led him to establish the Ng Chin Siau Dental Bursary for NUS Dentistry students in financial need. He says, “I am forever thankful to NUS for giving me a place in Dentistry. What I have gained today is a result of what I have received, and the financial aid I received throughout my undergraduate years in NUS really enabled me to get the most out of my education.” The Bursary, which has a value of $55,000, is available to one Dentistry student in financial need per year. Since its establishment in 2012, the Bursary has been awarded to four students.

He is proud to be an NUS alumnus and shares some of his fondest memories at his alma mater include meeting his wife, who was then a Pharmacy student at NUS, and being actively involved in sports and Hall activities throughout his four years as an undergraduate. Apart from holding the Sports Secretary position at the Faculty of Dentistry, he was also the volleyball captain and Sports Secretary of the Junior Common Room Committee at King Edward VII Hall, where he helped organise inter-block games and sports activities.

“Beyond excelling in school, make it your priority to be a good person. Be honest, have integrity and be nice to people around you. Compassion for others will take you far in life,” he shares.

To find out more about creating a named bursary scholarship or professorship, please contact asdkvo@nus.edu.sg or call 1-800-DEVELOP (1-800-338-3567).

“Education is so important. If you want to make your own success, be able to provide well for your family and, at the same time, contribute to the progress of society, you need a good education and professional skills.”

Dr Ng Chin Siau

Dr Ng Cheng Siau (Dentistry ‘92) has established the Ng Chin Siau Dental Bursary for NUS Dentistry students in financial need.
Ms Mak Shin Yi (Law ’14) is so grateful for past acts of kindness, she donated her first paycheck to help students who share similar backgrounds and aspirations.

“Most students from NUS Law are believers in justice; they volunteer at the courts, participate in legal clinics and support pro bono efforts. I believe that making a contribution to give someone an education is one of the many ways to make society a fairer, better place,” says Ms Mak Shin Yi, who gave back to her alma mater, right after graduation.

Called to the Singapore Bar in 2015, Ms Mak started her legal career in one of the Big Four law firms in Singapore and practised as a lawyer in the field of commercial litigation and international arbitration for two years. In 2017, she joined the United Nations through the Young Professionals Programme and is now working as an associate legal officer in the Office of Legal Affairs.

Ms Mak’s first year at law school was particularly challenging, as she was thankful that there was a Kwa Geok Choo Bursary is the first lawyer in her family. As a graduate, she became an associate legal officer in the Office of Legal Affairs. The experiences she gained in studying and working overseas became invaluable to her career.

Ms Mak believes that young alumni are, in their own way, best placed to give back to NUS. “We don’t make the most money, but as we embark on new careers, most of us are wondering: how can we do something meaningful? The good news is that we don’t have to look far to do good. Start giving back early, and that’s something we can carry on later into our lives,” she shares.

SCCCI scholars give back to benefactor and alma mater

With a history of 111 years, the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCCI) is an internationally renowned business organisation that has a membership network of more than 5,000 corporate members and 160 trade association members. It has been awarding scholarships to needy students at NUS with excellent academic records, regardless of race, since 1967. Today, SCCCI scholars are leaders in different industries in Singapore and the region. Having personally experienced the transformative power of timely financial aid, these leaders are giving back to their alma mater.

SCCCI is celebrating 50 years of awarding students with a Scholars Network, established to provide mentoring for young scholars as well as promote the spirit of giving back to society. The objective of this initiative is to amalgamate the wisdom, experiences and networks of SCCCI’s past scholars, in the hope of motivating new scholars to contribute back to society after graduation.

Two former recipients of the SCCCI Scholarship, with full bursary support, have graduated from NUS Business School with academic excellence. Mr. Sonny Yuen, who graduated in Business ’85, is now giving back to his alma mater.

Mr Sonny Yuen (Business ’85), former bursary recipient, becomes champion fundraiser.

Mr Sonny Yuen and family

“We are very proud of how far SCCCI’s past scholars are leaders in different industries in Singapore and the region. Having personally experienced the transformative power of timely financial aid, these leaders are giving back to their alma mater. Tapping on this vast wealth of experience, wisdom and industry knowledge, SCCCI is celebrating 50 years of awarding students with a Scholars Network, established to provide mentoring for young scholars as well as promote the spirit of giving back to society. The objective of this initiative is to amalgamate the wisdom, experiences and networks of SCCCI’s past scholars, in the hope of motivating new scholars to contribute back to society after graduation.”

Mr. Roland Ng, President of SCCCI, shares, “We are very proud of how far SCCCI scholars have come. By sharing a strong sense of pride and identity, they continue to come back to connect and network and benefit from being a part of this business community. With the setting up of the SCCCI Scholar Network, we hope more young scholars will benefit from, and be inspired by their seniors.”

The Power of Potential

“Receiving this Scholarship was a signal that the hard work I put in was recognised regardless of race, language and religion. The money definitely helped me, but the Scholarship was more than just money to me. It spurred me to work harder.”

Mr Suhaimi Bin Lazim (Law B’91), Miranda Law LLP

“I can never forget how people just came to help. I even had schoolmates who I do not know approach me and give me their lunch money, 10, 20 cents. It may have been little, but it meant so much to me. The collective effort of a community allowed my father to take the next step in his medical treatment and undergo that critical surgery. He lived many more years after that.” Mr. Yuen recounts gratefully.

Because his father’s surgery fell on the day of his examination, he did poorly in the Bahasa Malaysia paper and failed his O’ levels. But Mr. Yuen did not regret repeating the year as he managed to get good results eventually and became the first one from his family to go to NUS. As founding director of JDavision, an executive search firm, subsequently supported his two younger siblings’ university education in Australia.

“I am grateful for the opportunity to study at the Business School, made a lots of good friends and even met my wife at Raffles Hall,” shares Mr. Yuen, whose wife, Ms Wong Lai Ping (Accountancy ’87), majored in Accounting. The President of the Raffles Hall Association is a veteran at running fundraising golf events for student bursaries. He also took charge of the Annual Bzaid Charity Run in 2013, which raises funds for financially disadvantaged NUS Business undergraduates, as well as a selected charity every year.

A former NUSBSA Bursary recipient, Ms Julianti Ng (Business ‘84) volunteers at the annual fundraising event. “I am grateful for the financial assistance that I received back when I was a student. I am now an auditor for NUSBSA. I hope more students and young alumni could be involved and feel proud to be part of the NUSBSA.”

Today, Mr. Yuen has three children, one of whom is a medical student in NUS. So what drives this unflinching man, who is still an active managing director of his firm, a committed member of his church, has many books in his Kindle to read, and enjoys playing golf?

Mr. Yuen reveals, “I believe in an honest day’s work. That’s how I teach my children. Diligence is undervalued these days. And when I remember what others have done for me, there is no hesitation I must pass it forward.”

SCCCI scholars give back to benefactor and alma mater

Leaders in their fields, grateful SCCCI scholars return to mentor and to give.

With a history of 111 years, the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCCI) is an internationally renowned business organisation that has a membership network of more than 5,000 corporate members and 160 trade association members. It has been awarding scholarships to needy students at NUS with excellent academic records, regardless of race, since 1967. Today, SCCCI scholars are leaders in different industries in Singapore and the region. Having personally experienced the transformative power of timely financial aid, these leaders are giving back to their alma mater.

SCCCI is celebrating 50 years of awarding students with a Scholars Network, established to provide mentoring for young scholars as well as promote the spirit of giving back to society. The objective of this initiative is to amalgamate the wisdom, experiences and networks of SCCCI’s past scholars, in the hope of motivating new scholars to contribute back to society after graduation.

Mr. Roland Ng, President of SCCCI, shares, “We are very proud of how far SCCCI’s scholars have come. By sharing a strong sense of pride and identity, they continue to come back to connect and network and benefit from being a part of this business community. With the setting up of the SCCCI Scholars Network, we hope more young scholars will benefit from, and be inspired by their seniors.”

ALUMNUS LEADER EMBODIES SPIRIT OF GIVING

Mr Sonny Yuen (Business ’85), former bursary recipient, becomes champion fundraiser.

Mr Sonny Yuen and family

“We must pass it forward.”

I remember what others have done for me, there is no hesitation I must pass it forward.”

Mr Suhaimi Bin Lazim (Law B’91), Miranda Law LLP

“Not only did I receive funding to cover my school fees during difficult times, the prestige of the Scholarship was also something I could be proud of. It was a testament to my academic achievements.”

Professor Wei Kwock Koe (Science B’80), Dean of the School of Continuing and Lifelong Education (SCALE), NUS, gives back to various funds including Annual Giving.

“Receiving this Scholarship was a signal that the hard work I put in was recognised regardless of race, language and religion. The money definitely helped me, but the Scholarship was more than just money to me. It spurred me to work harder.”

Mr Suhaimi Bin Lazim (Law B’91), Miranda Law LLP

“Not only did I receive funding to cover my school fees during difficult times, the prestige of the Scholarship was also something I could be proud of. It was a testament to my academic achievements.”

Professor Wei Kwock Koe (Science B’80), Dean of the School of Continuing and Lifelong Education (SCALE), NUS, gives back to various funds including Annual Giving.

“Receiving this Scholarship was a signal that the hard work I put in was recognised regardless of race, language and religion. The money definitely helped me, but the Scholarship was more than just money to me. It spurred me to work harder.”

Mr Suhaimi Bin Lazim (Law B’91), Miranda Law LLP

“Not only did I receive funding to cover my school fees during difficult times, the prestige of the Scholarship was also something I could be proud of. It was a testament to my academic achievements.”

Professor Wei Kwock Koe (Science B’80), Dean of the School of Continuing and Lifelong Education (SCALE), NUS, gives back to various funds including Annual Giving.
Mr George Lee (Business ’76) received a bursary to study at NUS. Today, he is paying it forward with a bursary for needy students.

Mr George Lee Lap Wah, a retired banker, was raised on Christmas Island, a Commonwealth island in the Indian Ocean formerly administered by Singapore. He studied at the NUS School of Law thanks to the support of the Christmas Island Bursary. Today, he has established the Lee Hiyau Beng Family Bursary at NUS in honour of his father who supplemented his daily income by operating a sundry store in the evenings and on weekends to ensure his four children could have a tertiary education overseas in Singapore and Malaysia.

The Lee Hiyau Beng Family Bursary will support students in financial need following any course of study at the University. Prior to setting up the named fund, Mr Lee had been giving back to his alma mater for over 16 years, supporting his class prize, and Annual Giving.

Mr Lee’s last role before retirement was as Head of Global Corporate Banking for the Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited (OCBC). He then worked part-time as an advisor to OCBC Malaysia.

Today, the father of a 25-year-old daughter, enjoys a well-deserved life of golf, travel and reading.

“My father is a strong believer that education is the way to break out of the poverty gap. Despite the fact that he had only minimal education he ensured all his children were able to pursue higher learning. He worked hard to send all four children overseas for education working a second job. Despite not knowing English he learnt to read and write on his own and was able to rise within the ranks of his company through perseverance and hard work from being a labourer to supervisor,” he continues.

After graduation, and completing his National Service, Mr Lee embarked on an illustrious career in finance. “I was fortunate during those years as the financial service industry was experiencing very rapid growth in Singapore and I was able to capitalise on such opportunities to rise swiftly to the pinnacle position of the industry,” he explains. He became General Manager of a full licensed bank in Singapore in 1989 at the age of 36,” admits Mr Lee.

Mr Lee’s last role before retirement was as Head of Global Corporate Banking for the Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation Limited (OCBC). He then worked part-time as an advisor to OCBC Malaysia.

Today, the father of a 25-year-old daughter, enjoys a well-deserved life of golf, travel and reading.

“I have always felt that my ability to pursue a Bachelor of Administration degree was a privilege society had given me and it is my duty to repay society in whatever way I could. I hope this Bursary will honour my father’s view in life that no one should be deprived of opportunity to pursue education to his or her highest ability.”

Mr George Lee (left) with his family.

NUS gave me a tertiary education and it has allowed me an opportunity to embark on a fulfilling career. I met my wife at NUS too and we are blessed with a healthy and happy family. I studied law at NUS and I joined the Singapore Trade Development Board after qualifying as a lawyer. I am happy to put the well-being of others before my own. He gave his time and money generously to help students complete and succeed in their studies.

“He always believed that education was a great social leveller and that no matter what your station was in life, with hard work, success and a good life will always follow you.”

Mr Sin Boon Ann graduated from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in 1982, and Faculty of Law in 1986. He is a former MP and is currently the Deputy Managing Director of Drex & Napiers LLC.

Mr Sin Boon Ann (right) contributes to the Sin Jeok Tong Bursary—established by his friend Mr Sin Boon Ann (left) to honour his late father, who was also Mr Yap’s benefactor.

Has this experience influenced your views on philanthropy and those who give selflessly to help others?

It has definitely formed my views about giving to the needy, and I would have been what I am today if not for the help that many people provided for me along the way. The Bashir Mallal loan and Mr Sin Jeok Tong’s creative giving have certainly shaped my life and have contributed to many different charities and I now serve on five different executive organisations, largely in the health care sector.

What advice would you give to young students who have just received their own scholarship or bursary and whose education journey lies ahead of them?

Work hard and when it is your turn, please contribute back to society in your own way. I find inspiration in the Chinese saying 温故而知新, which we return with a gusting fountain in return for the drop of water that we received.

Join NUS in creating a vibrant environment. To explore how to set up a bursary or scholarship, please contact, ask questions and call 1-800-DEVELOP (1-800-338-3567).

Mr Sin Boothe graduated from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in 1982, and Faculty of Law in 1986. He is a former MP and is currently the Deputy Managing Director of Drex & Napiers LLC.

Mr Sin Boothe contributed to the Sin Jeok Tong Bursary—established by his friend Mr Sin Boon Ann (left) to honour his late father, who was also Mr Yap’s benefactor.

“The Power of Potential” — Mr Sin Boothe

Mr Yap (right) contributes to the Sin Jeok Tong Bursary—established by his friend Mr Sin Boon Ann (left) to honour his late father, who was also Mr Yap’s benefactor.

“The Power of Potential” — Mr Yap (left) to honour his late father, who was also Mr Yap’s benefactor.

Mr Yap (right) contributes to the Sin Jeok Tong Bursary—established by his friend Mr Sin Boon Ann (left) to honour his late father, who was also Mr Yap’s benefactor.

“The Power of Potential” — Mr Yap (left) to honour his late father, who was also Mr Yap’s benefactor.
LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION
BRINGING A DONOR STORY TO LIFE ON FILM

Born into a humble family, NUS alumnus Mr Lee Kok Wah (Arts ’69) completed his secondary and tertiary education thanks to a bursary and scholarship from the late banker and philanthropist Tan Sri Dr Tan Chin Tuan. After retiring from a successful career in the corporate, finance and capital markets, he set up the Mr and Mrs Lee Wai Kin Bursary at NUS in honour of his late parents. His story is brought to life on film and can be viewed at www.giving.nus.edu.sg/news-events/video-gallery.

We are very grateful to all who participated in the filming of this video, whether behind the scenes or in front of the camera. Thank you for joining us in telling a true and wonderful story of our NUS alumnus, who overcame the odds to become who he is today. We are especially thankful to Mr Lee for recognising the importance of spreading the spirit of Paying It Forward.

To find out more about creating a named bursary, scholarship or professorship, please contact askdvo@nus.edu.sg or call 1-800-DEVELOP (1-800-338-3567).

A room at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy was used to represent Mr Lee’s first office.

Student recipients Ng Jun Yi, Nabilah bte Mohamed Razalie and Au Yong Shi Sien (from left).

Photos by OHBOY! Pictures Pte Ltd and Ahmad Iskandar Photography.

The kampong house was painstakingly populated with items from the 1950s, put together by the creative props team after much research.