

Furthering studies in public policy and health

Text by Daryl Yang | Image by Weave for Yale-NUS College

While some students plan to enter the workforce upon graduation, others will be continuing their education in graduate schools. At Yale-NUS College, students have the opportunity to pursue a Masters programme with partner institutions to deepen their knowledge and skills in a specific field and engage in advanced scholarship, through the concurrent degree programmes.

One of these programmes is the Concurrent Degree Programme with Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP). The programme aims to develop versatile graduates who can address pressing public policy issues in an increasingly complex world.

Benjamin Leong, who is majoring in Philosophy, Politics and Economics, is one of the students in the inaugural class for this programme. "I was interested in a career in the civil service and had taken up an internship at a government ministry. Policymaking was also an area of personal interest for me," he shared.

Benjamin started taking classes at LKYSPP in Academic Year 2016/2017 when he was in his senior year, and will graduate in 2018 with a Bachelors of Arts with

Honours from Yale-NUS College as well as a Masters in Public Policy from LKYSPP.

Another student on the same programme is Li Nanlan, who is majoring in History. "I decided to apply for my CDP with Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy because I wanted to equip myself with sufficient skills and understanding to work in the social or public sector," she shared.

The multidisciplinary curriculum at Yale-NUS helps students prepare for the challenges of an interdisciplinary education at the graduate school level.

For Benjamin, what helped him prepare most for his classes from his Yale-NUS experience has been the Common Curriculum. "Understanding that the first few courses lay the foundation for what's to come help with understanding the direction of the course," he explained.

For Nanlan, it was the exposure that her Yale-NUS education has offered that enabled her to understand her interests better in deciding to pursue a Masters in Public Policy while her major in History has also equipped her with valuable research skills.

"My training in history

prompted me to think more about how one policy decision may impact individual lives in many different ways. While policy analysis tends to look at data, my background in qualitative research highlighted to me the significance of looking at the data in different contexts," she shared.

Another programme offered is a five-year programme with the Yale School of Public Health (YSPH). Students spend the first semester of their fourth year as well as the fifth year in Yale, attending classes at YSPH.

Designed to provide the students with rigorous education and training in public health, the programme offers a unique sequencing of courses, community-based practice activities, and field or laboratory research. One of the students on this programme is Jocelyn Lim, who just spent her first semester at YSPH taking various introductory classes to public health.

A Global Affairs major, Jocelyn's decision to apply for the programme with YSPH was closely connected with an earlier class she took at Yale-NUS, titled 'Globalisation: Past, Present, and Future'. Taught by Head of Studies (Acting) of Global Affairs

& Senior Lecturer in Social Sciences (Political Science) Nancy Gleason, the course enabled Jocelyn to conduct independent research throughout the semester on an issue that globalisation could solve.

The field of women's health rights is an area that Jocelyn knew that she wants to contribute to after graduation. "I am considering a few different paths at the moment. I would love, for example, to find a way to contribute through the research that I began at Yale-NUS and have been continuing at YSPH. I also find myself increasingly drawn to the idea of eventually entering law or policy."

While Benjamin is considering joining the Singapore civil service, he is also open to new possibilities after graduation. "One benefit from this course is a better understanding of government operation and what possibilities there are for individuals and for future change," he shared.

Nanlan similarly is still open as to what the future holds though her main interest lies in ageing, which has been increasingly become a significant policy challenge to many developed countries, including Singapore.

Presenting on cyber security in Vienna

Text by Daryl Yang | Image provided by Hrishi Olickel

Bitcoin may be a familiar name to some, but not many may have heard of blockchain. While Bitcoin is a form of cryptocurrency, blockchain is the technology that keeps it safe and secure.

It was on this new innovation that Hrishi Olickel (Class of 2018) and Assistant Professor of Science (Computational Sciences) Aquinas Hobor presented a paper at the 23rd Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Conference on Computer and Communications Security held at the famous Hofburg Palace in Vienna, Austria in October 2016. The annual conference

Luu. Together with the NUS researchers, Hrishi and Dr Aquinas published a paper titled 'Making Smart Contracts Smarter'. The paper sought to investigate the security of running smart contracts based on Ethereum, another popular cryptocurrency, in an open distributed network.

The research involved an analysis of Smart Contracts launched on Ethereum and a security tool. The issues the team found "stemmed from systemic gaps in understanding how smart contracts function and how they are

research module on blockchains with Dr Aquinas... he then put me in touch with the blockchain research group at NUS that he was working with, and the paper came after," explained Hrishi. At Yale-NUS, students regularly initiate their own classes with professors on specific areas of interest that they are interested in.

Though Hrishi felt nervous initially at the conference since it was his first time presenting at a major conference, he found the experience "an exciting and humbling one."

called Gruber, a resource-sharing platform that maintains itself on blockchain and is open to 'rewrites' through consensus from the community.

"While it was a hackathon project that did not last longer than the day it was built, it prompted some discussion online that made me wonder about the possibilities of a truly peer-to-peer organisation. Smart contracts would allow such an entity to live on the blockchain, arbitrating exchanges of money and resources where the code would be the final, neutral arbiter," Hrishi reflected in a separate article published on Medium to release the team's findings in light of recent events.

It was not the first time that Hrishi had worked with Dr Aquinas, who was also his instructor for the Integrated Science course.

"Taking Integrated Science with Dr Aquinas was certainly a fun ride – from Wargames-style AIs and tail recursive generators to sumo bots – and moving to research followed as a progressive step from the gruelling but certainly enjoyable seminars. Working with him has helped me better understand the intricacies of developing for research. He has done much to prepare me for what comes after [graduation], be it graduate school or a career in production," shared Hrishi.



Hrishi Olickel (first from left), together with NUS researchers at the 23rd ACM Conference on Computer and Communications Security at Hofburg Palace, Vienna, Austria.

is the flagship of the Special Interest Group on Security, Audit and Control (SIGSAC) of ACM.

The project also involved researchers from the National University of Singapore (NUS) included Assistant Professor in Computer Science Prateek Saxena, Post-doctoral Research Fellow Duc-Hiep Chu and PhD student Loi

fundamentally different from traditional programmes that are not executed on a decentralised network." The paper presented detailed information on the bugs that were discovered, as well as potential solutions.

For Hrishi, the experience has been a fulfilling one. "I first became involved when I was planning a 2MC independent

"The presentation went rather well despite it being a nervous affair. To discuss the bleeding edge of computational security with researchers and developers from around the world was an experience that has certainly fuelled my passion for this field," he shared. Hrishi first became interested in smart contracts through a venture

P&G Asia CEO Challenge 2016

Text by Melissa Wang | Image provided by Alex Pont

In the last quarter of 2016, two Yale-NUS students brought home the top honours in the prestigious Procter & Gamble (P&G) Asia CEO Challenge. A business case competition and intensive training workshop, participants of the Challenge took on the role of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a leading fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) brand, to learn more about the challenges in the business world and how to solve them.

Alex Pont and Damian Lee (Class of 2018) joined hands with four students from Singapore Management University and Nanyang Technological University to compete in both the Singapore Regional and Asia rounds of the Challenge.

On 3-5 October, their team went up against four other teams in the Singapore Regional round. They had to identify problems in the sales of a consumer household good, and develop a growth strategy to turn around declining sales. Alex and Damian's team won this round, and were successfully able to proceed to the Asia Round, held on 14 – 15 November. This time, they represented Singapore to compete with teams from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Philippines and Indonesia.

Again, the duo's team triumphed against their strong competitors, and

emerged victorious.

"The Asia Round was less quantitative and required more creativity," Alex and Damian shared. "We were tasked to develop a marketing plan for a premium skincare brand, and make the brand attractive to the young millennial consumer."

The team had to develop an understanding of the target group before designing an innovative communication

of Personal Leadership, Strategy Development, the role of Multi-Functional Teams, Brand Management and Product Supply, among others."

Being selected to participate in the highly competitive programme was no mean feat in itself. Alex and Damian went through a rigorous application process, which the Centre for International & Professional Experience (CIPE) at Yale-NUS helped prepare

people, including the President of P&G Asia Pacific Magesvaran Suranjan, giving them insights to the organisation and the industry.

Their liberal arts experience at Yale-NUS also allowed Alex and Damian to come up with the innovative solutions that helped them to impress the judges and achieve their success in the P&G Asia CEO Challenge.

"A broad-based education

"I think the liberal arts education that Yale-NUS offers, with its emphasis on interdisciplinary and critical thinking, really prepares one for the kind of problems that people working in P&G might face on a daily basis."

idea, as well as end-to-end marketing and sales plan across multiple consumer touch points. Eventually, their proposal won over the judges with their creativity and feasibility.

"I've learnt about the intricacies of the FMCG business and how to craft winning strategies based on deep consumer insights," Damian revealed.

Alex echoed his thoughts: "This was much more than a case competition. The CEO Challenge included a series of hands-on workshops and lectures by the top P&G Management that enabled us to develop an understanding

them for. CIPE assisted the duo in improving on their resumes and cover letters before they applied, and also guided them through the process.

Not only did the team win the grand prize of USD\$10,000, their participation in the Challenge will also be helpful in their job hunts in the future. All CEO Challenge participants were given priority for an interview slot for P&G Summer Internship Program. In addition, they had the opportunity to learn about the different departments and functions in P&G, as well as to network with P&G leadership and

has enabled me to analyse quantitative data, as well as solve problems in a creative manner," Damian noted.

Alex concurred and elaborated: "I think the liberal arts education that Yale-NUS offers, with its emphasis on interdisciplinary and critical thinking, really prepares one for the kind of problems that people working at P&G might face on a daily basis. Such problems require deep quantitative analysis, yet require innovative and creative solutions. Cracking the numbers alone won't do it, you also need to be able to think outside the box and be innovative."



Students launch undergraduate research journal

Text by Wen Kin Lim | Image by Yasunari Watanabe

On 18 November 2016, the Yale-NUS College Society for Academic Research (YNSAR) launched the inaugural Yale-NUS Undergraduate Journal, featuring the best undergraduate research across multiple academic disciplines at the College.

Patrick Wu (2019), President of YNSAR, said the Journal's main objectives are to provide a forum for the best undergraduate research and to become a leading platform for undergraduate researchers to publish their work. In doing so, the Journal grants students a unique opportunity to learn and judge the qualities of good academic writing, an essential skill for those considering a career in academia.

"We offer students a forum that encourages them to write papers and think about issues beyond the confines of the classroom, and thereby to develop their own expertise," Patrick explained.

The first edition features contributions from eight Yale-NUS students, covering fields that range from literature and philosophy to urban studies. As a result of the multidisciplinary curriculum at Yale-NUS, students are encouraged to go in depth into a particular discipline through research and substantiate their ideas in a rigorous manner.

"The range of subjects covered in the Journal is reflective of the complexity

of the Yale-NUS curriculum," said Founding President of Yale-NUS, Professor Pericles Lewis at the launch event.

While YNSAR currently features research from Yale-NUS undergraduate students, Jerald Lim (Class of 2019), a member of the executive committee, said he hopes they will receive submissions from undergraduate students at other universities in

more opportunities for students to improve and increasingly recognises outstanding undergraduate student work.

Professor of Social Sciences Terry Nardin, the faculty advisor for YNSAR, remarked on the benefits of pursuing academic research as undergraduates, as it "develops intellectual self-confidence and, from time

A challenge that YNSAR faced when organising this journal was that there were not many existing high quality undergraduate journals to serve as examples to draw on. At the launch, Rebecca Huang (Class of 2019), who is part of the YNSAR executive committee, thanked the professors who "kindly helped to guide us on the right track". The final papers were

"The journal offers a new way for students to share what they've learned, and to package it to be intelligible and interesting to readers with different interest."

Singapore and the region. As the journal grows in size, they aim to develop an international audience and become a well-known publication for undergraduate research in the region.

Undergraduate research is often overlooked due to the general perception that undergraduate students lack the in-depth specialisation and knowledge to publish meaningful work. Yet, research at the undergraduate level can be vital for sharpening the abilities of students and providing experience for those considering a route in academia. By publishing the Journal, YNSAR cultivates

to time, brings you the satisfaction of discovering something new, solving a tough problem, or expressing yourself well".

He said: "The journal offers a new way for students to share what they've learned, and to package it to be intelligible and interesting to readers with different interests."

Lim Chu Hsien (2019), whose research paper 'New Urbanism' is published in the Journal, said exposure to research at such an early stage helped her learn the art and skill of addressing interesting questions in a logical and sequential manner.

selected and edited by a team composed of both faculty professors and students.

Regarding the Journal's tangible impact on campus, YNSAR hopes publishing student papers will bring in meaningful academic conversations to dining tables and thereby bring the community together on an intellectual level.

YNSAR is also planning to organise an undergraduate research symposium in the near future, with the Journal being the first step to bring closer the undergraduate academic community in Singapore.

The relevance of a liberal arts education

Text by Wen Kin Lim | Image by Weave for Yale-NUS College

On 9 January 2017, Valerie Smith, President of Swarthmore College – one of the top liberal arts colleges in the United States – was at Yale-NUS College to give a talk to students on the relevance of a liberal arts education.

President Valerie Smith is a distinguished scholar of African American literature and culture. Before taking on her role at Swarthmore, she was the Dean of the College at Princeton University and was the founding director of African American studies centre at Princeton.

The talk was held at the Student Commons at Elm Residential College, and the venue provided an informal and relaxed setting for students to engage the speaker and ask questions.

President Smith spoke about the value of a liberal arts education, drawing on her own experience studying liberal arts at Bates College, and the place of social justice within higher education. She also highlighted three key ways that a residential liberal arts college prepares students for the future.

Firstly, she said a liberal arts education teaches students “to think critically, to sort out fact from fiction and truth from facetious claims”, an increasingly important skill given the rise of deceitful news in social media.

Dean’s Fellow Salman Safir is a recent graduate from

Swarthmore College, and studied there under President Smith’s leadership.

He said: “The liberal arts prepares and expects you to innovate. By providing you a broad based curriculum, you are exposed to a wide variety of cross connections that help you see individual issues in different perspectives. You are exposed to truths made visible only through the interconnected view of

Environmental Sustainability Fellow programme which allows students to conduct research in a range of fields to improve the Swarthmore campus. As part of the programme, students utilise their learning in multiple fields such as behavioural economics and environmental studies in waste assessment.

“By forging interdisciplinary collaboration and independent research, these

problems we are facing and will continue to face, so we need leaders of President Smith’s nature to continue to emphasise their value.”

On the third benefit of liberal arts, President Smith said that “a liberal arts education develops productive and responsible citizens through providing opportunities for personal, professional and intellectual growth”.

Through living on campus, being involved in extracurricular opportunities and experiencing the wide diversity of nationalities and cultures, residential liberal arts colleges like Swarthmore and Yale-NUS provide rare opportunities to work, play and live with people different from oneself, she said.

On the unique position of Yale-NUS College as the first fully residential, liberal arts college in Singapore, President Smith said students and faculty at Yale-NUS have an extraordinary opportunity to invent traditions and build an institution from the ground up.

President Smith said: “You are writing your history in a moment... Both locally and globally, the eyes of the world will be on what you are doing so I hope you are able to embrace the excitement of the project you are doing.”

“You are writing your history in a moment...Both locally and globally, the eyes of the world will be on what you are doing...”

the world; and therefore, the solutions that you create are by necessity, innovative.”

The second way the liberal arts can benefit students is that it can “prepare students for the unexpected in contrast to a more vocational or technical education”, according to President Smith. She added that it also offers students a less targeted and more expansive preparation that expands their intellectual horizons.

To put this pedagogy into practice, Swarthmore College initiated the President’s

students are exposed to the breadth of skills needed to advance sustainability,” said President Smith.

As world issues become increasingly complex, President Smith argued that a liberal arts model is a powerful way to educate young people because many of the solutions needed in these areas can only be found in bringing together divergent disciplines.

Safir concurred, and added: “The innovation that liberal arts creates is essential to many, if not all social



For Dr Jean Liu, love is an open door

Text by Daryl Yang | Image by Weave for Yale-NUS College

In *The Effect* by Lucy Prebble, a doctor sought to discover whether two people could be made to fall in love using a love drug.

This was precisely what Assistant Professor of Social Sciences (Psychology) Jean Liu did in her PhD research.

“My research was focused on giving oxytocin to people and see if they may find strangers more attractive and create the possibility of falling in love. Unfortunately, what we found was that the effect was very subtle,” Dr Liu shared.

Widely referred to as the love hormone, oxytocin is a hormone and was made into a drug in recent years.

“The promise of a love drug is much smaller than what you would have hoped for,” she surmised.

Since then, her research has focused primarily on either love or food.

“Both are natural rewards and things that make people happy,” she explained.

“Furthermore, there are many things in common between the two on a neurobiological level.

Dr Liu is especially interested in the modern environmental influence on both love and food.

In particular, some of her recent studies have focused on how social media use influences both of these types of behaviour in people.

At Yale-NUS College, Dr Liu runs the Social Neuro-Endocrinology Research Group, also known as the Synergy Lab. Working with a number of students, she regularly conducts research on social neuroscience and its implications for models of health.

One such study was on ‘phubbing’, or phone snubbing.

A phenomenon referring to how people now rather text than engage in social interactions with people around them, Dr Liu was interested in examining the effects of ‘phubbing’ from a psychological perspective.

“It is interesting to consider how the modern technological environment influences us on a neurobiological level,” she shared.

Dr Liu is currently writing a paper based on her findings on this study on how texting in the presence of another person produces the same neurobiological response in the other person as if they were deliberately being ostracised.

The Lab has offered many research opportunities to Yale-NUS students interested in psychology.

One such student is Celine Khoo (Class of 2019), who will be running her own research experiments from conceptualisation to implementation in the Lab under Dr Liu’s guidance.

For Dr Liu, joining Yale-NUS was a clear choice, given that her other major research interest is the role of psychology in public policy.

In fact, she has been an active role model for the liberal arts herself, having sat in as a student in a philosophy class on love and friendship taught by fellow faculty member, Assistant Professor of Humanities (Philosophy) Matthew Walker.

This semester, Dr Liu is teaching a class on psychology and public policy and is also working on a major survey project with several Psychology majors on the issue of organ donation in Singapore.

“The study aims to look at how the [organ donation] policy is made, given that Singapore’s system is the only opt-out system in Asia. We want to study how to boost rates of organ donation while still making people feel comfortable and willing,” she explained.

True to the spirit of the liberal arts, this interdisciplinary project is a collaborative one with several medical researchers, including her husband, an anaesthetist.

To Dr Liu, love is not simply an academic interest; it has also played a significant role in her professional life.

She made the decision to remain in Australia to complete her PhD research in part because her husband was completing medical

studies there at that time.

Her own relationship also helped to shape some of the research she has embarked on.

“A lot of time, the research I decide to conduct is based on some phenomenon that I observe in my own marriage or other people’s relationships,” she shared.

Due to her research, Prof Liu has helped to consult for dating companies such as Paktor and was also invited to speak on radio talk shows on how the psychology of love can help offer evidence-based techniques to improve the chances for singletons looking for love.

When asked what advice she has for students and those hoping to find a soul mate, Dr Liu quipped that the most robust studies in the psychology of love have shown that one is more likely to find love when one’s heart rate is racing.

“So make sure to head to the gyms and rollercoasters if you are looking for a partner,” she laughed.

“From my research, here is some motherly advice: get more sleep. Our research found that sleep makes you more attractive and when someone does not get enough sleep, they become physically less attractive.”

Yale-NUS College: A place like no other

Text by Daryl Yang | Images by Weave for Yale-NUS College

On 5 August 2016, Assistant Professor of Social Sciences (Sociology and Public Policy) Anju Paul was the first faculty member to be nominated by the Orientation Committee to address the matriculating Class of 2020 at the First Year Assembly, an annual event held on campus as a ceremonial welcome for new students.

Dr Paul is an international migration scholar with a research focus on migration to, from, and within Asia. She graduated from the University of Michigan in 2012 with a joint PhD in Sociology and Public Policy.

When asked why the Orientation Committee had decided to nominate Dr Paul, Dominic Choa (Class of 2018) explained, “We chose the theme of “Full House” for Orientation this year, because it was the first time that Yale-NUS College was at full capacity.

When it came to thinking of who could best represent that at the First Year Assembly, we could not think of a better person to represent how Yale-NUS College means home to us than Dr Paul.”

When she found out that she had been nominated, the well-loved professor wanted to use the opportunity to get the Class of 2020 excited about being here and embarking on their journey in college.

“I was incredibly honoured to be nominated to speak to

the Class of 2020, especially because this batch was finally going to complete our college. I wanted to focus on what it meant to be in a living and learning community like Yale-NUS and how unique we are as a college. There truly is nothing quite like Yale-NUS in the whole world.”

“For me, the college vision is something I hold very dear and I wanted to break it down for these new members of our community. Why learning as a verb? Why a community? What does it mean to be founded by two great universities? As I thought about it that way, it came very organically to me that I should end with asking the students to repeat it as a pledge,” Dr Paul explained.

She was referring to the vision that was crafted at the inception of the College:

*A community of learning,
Founded by two great
universities, In Asia, for the
World.*

“We are not Yale in Asia, and we are not NUS-lite. We are Yale-NUS and we are more than comfortable in our liberal-arts-college-in-Singapore skin. In fact, we relish being different. Not better (necessarily), but certainly one-of-a-kind. In our difference and diversity, we find freedom and richness. In our intimacy, we find the opportunity to learn from one another,” Dr Paul remarked in her speech.

What Dr Paul shared

resonated strongly with both students and staff, with many coming up to her after she spoke to share how much what she said had meant to them.

“People emailed me to ask for the transcript of my speech because they wanted to keep it for themselves to read again. This wasn’t a speech that I had written just for the Class of 2020, but also the whole community to remind ourselves after our short but hectic past three years as a college.”

One reason that led Dr Paul to join Yale-NUS College was the location.

Singapore is almost a second home to Dr Paul who had spent some years here attending Victoria Junior College before studying at the National University of Singapore and then working at Singapore Airlines on a scholarship.

“I have many connections with Singapore, as well as many friends and happy memories. When I heard about the recruitment for the inaugural faculty, I was very excited to join the College to be a part of this project.”

“One reason why I wanted to join Yale-NUS was also because I would have loved if there was such a college in Singapore back when I was studying here. I wanted to be a part of the project to bring liberal arts to Singapore. The fact that my husband also got the job as Vice Rector made

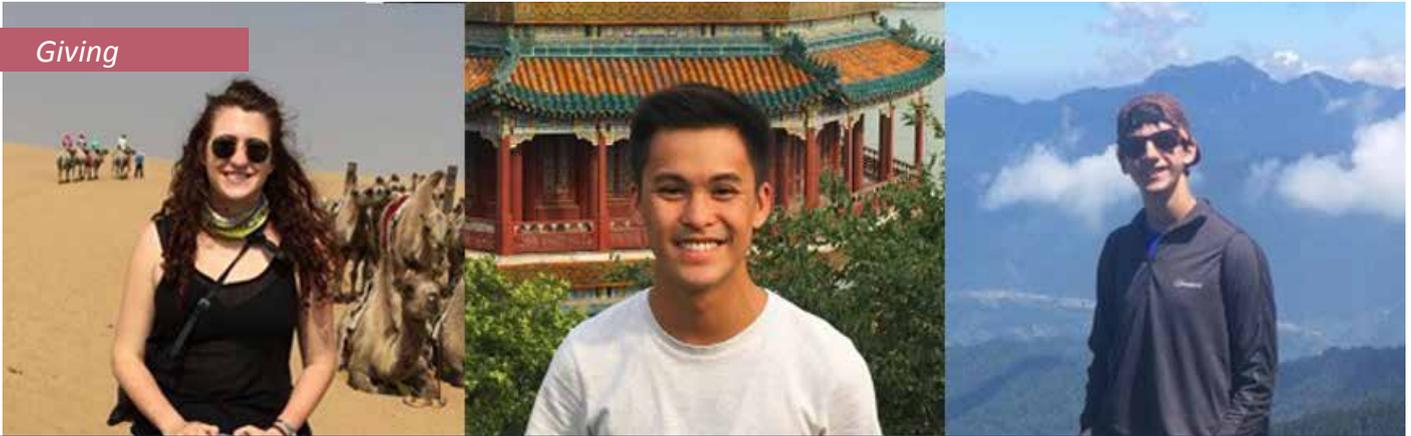
it an even easier decision to make,” she shared.

Dr Paul is married to the Vice Rector Eduardo Lage-Otero of Saga College, and together, they play an important role in the residential living component of students at Yale-NUS.

She added: “I was very excited to have my family spend time in Asia and immerse themselves in its culture, as well as introduce that side of their heritage to our children. Neither my husband nor our children have lived in Asia, and only ever visited India once before we moved to Singapore.”

Having previously completed her PhD research on the migration patterns of Filipino migrant workers in Singapore, Dr Paul has since expanded her research focus now to focus on other national groups such as Indonesian domestic workers.

She has also been working on a new book, *Multinational Maids*, which will be published next year, and will be embarking on a new project examining the migration patterns of Asian scientists and the impact on the scientific community in Asia.



Looking at the world from a different window

Text by Melissa Wang | Images by Keith Ng, Lauren Hollge & Yonatan Gazit

“To learn a language is to have one more window from which to look at the world”. This Chinese proverb clearly resonates with students who dedicate numerous hours to learning languages from all over the world. With support from the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation, 11 Yale-NUS students stepped up their language learning efforts last summer. They did so by embarking on immersive programmes at language schools in various Chinese-speaking countries under the Chinese Language Scholarship. Despite starting out with varying levels of language proficiency, all of them had similar goals – to learn the Chinese language and further develop their appreciation for Chinese culture and history.

First established in 2012, the Scholarship is part of the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation’s Chinese Culture & Civilisation Programme, which aims to support the advancement of Chinese studies at the College by providing funding for students on Chinese language summer immersion programmes.

One of the recipients, Keith Ng (Class of 2019), attended the Inter-University Programme (IUP) for Chinese Language Studies at Tsinghua University in Beijing for eight weeks. Keith chose the intensive programme for its small class size, personalised teaching and the chance to study at and experience the

culture of one of Asia’s top universities. While he is no stranger to the language, the programme helped to further strengthen Keith’s language competency over the two-month period, and gave him opportunities to explore his academic interests at the same time.

As an aspiring Economics major, Keith was able to maximise his learning and glean new perspectives on various developmental issues in China by spending time interacting with the locals. He also visited many of Beijing’s cultural and historical attractions as well as economic activity hubs.

“China’s development is especially important to economics and urban studies as it is the world’s second largest economy and arguably also the fastest urbanising country. I was able to see first-hand the speed of its development, but I also saw the consequences and problems associated with it. Such a perspective is difficult to attain if you do not visit the country,” he said.

Beijing was also where Lauren Hollge (Class of 2018) spent her summer, learning Chinese at the Harvard Beijing Academy (HBA). A first-time visitor to China, she was especially keen to be immersed and grounded in its culture while learning the language. However, one of the biggest challenges she faced came in the form of the

language pledge she made as part of the programme, allowing her to speak only in Mandarin.

“This was hard, especially in the beginning when it was impossible for me to even communicate what food I wanted or where I wanted to go, but I slowly found myself discussing topics varying from politics to metaphysics in Chinese,” Lauren said. “By the end of my time there, I felt empowered to communicate anything I wanted. Now, I am not only able to survive casual chats with locals in Mandarin, but I can also express myself even in complex discussions, be it about global warming, urbanisation or cultural values.”

Lauren also spent a week in Inner Mongolia conducting research and applying her Mandarin-speaking skills outside the classroom. During the trip, she was invited to stay in a yurt with her Mongolian friends. She also had the chance to eat snails, listen to Mongolian rap and try alcohol made from horse milk.

Meanwhile, Yonatan Gazit (Class of 2018) spent nine weeks in Taipei as part of the National Taiwan University’s International Chinese Learning Programme (ICLP). Being completely new to the language when he first entered Yale-NUS, he completed two semesters of elementary Chinese classes

before deciding to apply for an immersive programme to help him “nail down the basics of the language” and become more confident in its everyday use.

Although the language barrier initially caused him to feel a sense of isolation, Yonatan’s experience eventually surpassed his expectations. With the help of his ICLP teachers, he quickly overcame the language challenge by spending more time and effort on improving his Chinese.

Yonatan was grateful for the opportunity to learn a new language and to immerse himself in a completely different environment and culture. He added that learning a new language exposes an individual to more career paths and greater possibilities. “The Chinese Language Scholarship has given me a newfound appreciation for just how rich the Chinese culture is and the possibilities that come from learning Chinese,” he said.

Each year, the Chinese Language Scholarship presents students with various opportunities to learn and strengthen their Chinese with programmes that immerse them in a fully Chinese-speaking environment, building their language as well as appreciation for the Chinese culture.