On 22 – 23 August 2016, the Yale-NUS Centre for Teaching & Learning (CTL) launched its programming for the new academic year by hosting Professor Eric Mazur, Balkanski Professor of Physics, and Applied Physics and Dean of Applied Physics at Harvard University.

Professor Mazur, an expert widely known for his work on Peer Instruction, an interactive teaching method aimed at engaging students in the classroom and beyond, was invited to share the insights he gleaned from his past experiences as a university lecturer.

Professor Mazur is the author of Peer Instruction: A User’s Manual, a book published in 1997 that gives advice on how to teach large lecture classes interactively, and Principles and Practice of Physics, which was published in 2015 that offered an innovative approach for teaching introductory calculus-based physics.

"When I started teaching at Harvard, I asked myself many questions but one question I did not ask myself was the question ‘how am I going to teach my students?'" said Professor Mazur in his talk at the Yale-NUS Performance Hall, reflecting on his first experiences as an educator.

Professor Mazur explained that the conventional methods for evaluating teaching were inadequate and did not reflect how effective a teacher was.

“There are usually two ways for evaluating teaching – one, the end-of-semester evaluation and two, how well students do on final exams. When I first taught a class on physics for pre-med students, I received great evaluations on both measures and thought I was the best physics teacher in the world.”

It was only many years later that his illusion unravelled after he read a journal article that claimed that students in the United States do not actually learn much physics in college or high school based on a questionnaire that tested the physical concept of force using words, rather than equations.

He decided to administer the test on his students and during a test, one student asked, “Do I answer the questions the way you have taught us or the way I think?” It was then that he realised that something was clearly not right in the way things were being taught.

To illustrate his point, Professor Mazur asked the audience, which comprised a mix of professors and professionals from both science and non-science backgrounds, a simple thermodynamics question on the expansion of a metal plate. The hall quickly erupted into a flurry of heated discussion, proving his argument on how to actively engage students.

Professor Mazur explained that his approach works because the engagement of students meant that they became emotionally invested in the learning process, and not just the answer or the grade. By having students share and discuss their views, they moved from focusing on the answer to the reasoning and thought process instead.

“Education is not and cannot be just about transferring information or getting students to do what we can do. I want my students to stand on my shoulders to solve problems that even I cannot solve,” he concluded to rousing applause.

The talks were attended by some 140 faculty and academics leaders from Yale-NUS, NUS, Singapore University of Technology and Design, Nanyang Technological University and other tertiary institutions.

Mr Melvyn Tan, Assistant Director (Faculty Development), Teaching, Learning and Pedagogy Division of NTU said, “This series of talks by Professor Mazur is an excellent opportunity for educators to learn more about how active learning techniques and the use of meaningful assessment tasks can be used to engage learners and “reawaken” their curiosity about the world around them. We can really see how courses can be designed to encourage deep learning in addition to developing critical life skills students need for their future careers.”

CTL Director Professor Bryan Penprase was happy to see a good turnout from counterparts from other Singaporean institutions of higher learning and happy that Yale-NUS’ could help them connect and encourage further learning through such pedagogical sharing. He added that besides Professor Mazur, the Centre has plans to invite other prominent speakers to the College to share their expertise on teaching and course design.

He said: “Having Professor Mazur at Yale-NUS highlights that Yale-NUS is a cutting-edge site for science education and research. Our faculty and students really enjoyed meeting with Professor Mazur and discussing research in physics as well as his amazing advances in teaching and learning.”

Since CTL was set up in 2015, the Centre has introduced various initiatives to help faculty optimise their teaching, and promote discussions and collaboration amongst faculty in areas such as teaching, technology application and course design.
A familiar face on campus, Professor Steven Bernasek now wears a new hat – as the Dean of Faculty.

Making a smooth transition into his new role, Professor Bernasek is looking to further bolster the faculty team at Yale-NUS.

Under the leadership of inaugural Dean of Faculty, Professor Charles Bailyn, a comprehensive review of the Common Curriculum had been carried out, and the capstone projects finalised for the inaugural Class of 2017.

Taking over, Professor Bernasek will be concentrating his efforts on strengthening the tenure process and increasing the number of tenured faculty.

This will cater to the needs of many of the younger faculty members within the College who have come onboard in the last three to four years.

An academic tenure offers faculty a permanent post, as opposed to a contract position.

A common practice among universities worldwide, untenured or junior faculty members are typically considered for tenure after about six years.

The new Dean of Faculty shared that the tenure system at Yale-NUS is already in place, and his main task is "making sure that the process is done with rigour, and with attention to the standards, such that it is applied uniformly".

Apart from strengthening the faculty team from within through tenure, Professor Bernasek is also actively overseeing faculty recruitment, where he hopes to bring in more senior faculty members to build up the team further.

In the last academic year, Yale-NUS welcomed over 30 new faculty members, who brought with them diverse experiences and knowledge in their various fields of expertise.

"At Yale-NUS, it is very important that you do a great job of teaching, and that you have an active research group that will involve undergraduates," he said.

To enable faculty to better achieve their twin goals of research and undergraduate teaching, efforts are also underway to enhance the faculty support infrastructure, such as expanding opportunities for field studies and increasing the library resources needed for faculty research.

More immediately, the former Director of the Division of Science hopes to get to know current faculty members better, particularly those in the Social Sciences and Humanities divisions.

"This would help me to better understand the needs and challenges of the faculty across the three divisions," he explained.

With new priorities and time commitments due to new responsibilities, Professor Bernasek will have to set aside some other roles.

Citing his passion for teaching students with a thirst for understanding, and equipping them with knowledge to solve problems and figure out how things work through the liberal arts curriculum, Professor Bernasek remarked:

"I’m a little bit sad that I’ll not be teaching this year, and this is the first time in a long time that I would have not taught something."

Nonetheless, Professor Bernasek is excited about his new role, and looks forward to giving his best as the Dean of Faculty, and taking on new responsibilities to continue contributing to the College.

Outside of his work at Yale-NUS, Professor Bernasek is in Singapore with his wife, Sandra. He enjoys going on walks and reading. Professor Bernasek is also a licensed pilot and looks forward to flying at Seletar airport again, once his work in his new role is more settled.
On 1 September 2016, a team of Yale-NUS students received the CDL-Compact Singapore Young CSR Leaders Award 2016 at the CSR and Social Innovators Forum 2016.

The team, named Team Synergy, was made up of four students: Christina Ho (Class of 2017), Angela Ferguson (Class of 2018), Hannah James (Class of 2018), and Crystal Yong (Class of 2019).

Their winning proposal took seven months of planning and fine-tuning, including many discussions over Skype as Hannah returned to the US for summer break but continued to work tirelessly on the project with the rest of the team.

They proposed three strategies for Interface Asia, a carpet manufacturer, to "further pioneer holistic sustainability in business".

It included integrating traditional carpet weaving and commercial designs, pioneering employee-friendly factory spaces, and creating a nature-inspired, dust-repellant carpet structure.

“[The CDL-Compact Singapore Young Leaders Award 2016 is] a meaningful form of recognition,” commented Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies, Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam, who presented the awards at the Forum.

Speaking to the students, he added: “Whatever we do, just make sure that we do something that’s practical, that’s human-oriented, and if possible, sustainable. That should guide us.”

The youth case competition, which is in its sixth year running, aims to promote “thought leadership amongst our future business leaders to embrace Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) principles into a company’s business strategy and practices”.

Teams could choose to work with one of the participating organisations, which included DNV GL, DSM Singapore, Hilton Worldwide, Interface Asia, Marina Bay Sands, National Environment Agency, NatSteel Holdings, NTUC Income, Ricoh Asia Pacific and the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore.

“I wanted to find companies who were sincere about CSR because I’m quite a sceptic regarding such issues—many companies’ CSR campaigns are mostly about greenwashing and publicity instead of trying to make a true difference,” opined Christina.

“From this competition, I have learnt how to see from a company’s point-of-view and find a middle ground between profitability and sustainability – both are not mutually exclusive and, in fact, can coexist!”

Team Synergy, as one of the 10 finalist teams, also experienced a practical attachment with Interface Asia, their organisation of choice, where they were exposed to the challenges of implementing CSR practices first-hand.

“This was my first exposure to the corporate sector, and it definitely made me rethink my assumptions,” said Crystal. “I benefitted from being allowed this glimpse into that world from the status and perspective of a student... I could enter without any stakes and reputation, permitting me to fully play the role of a student and learn as much as I can.”

As each team member is interested in a different academic area, they were able to provide alternative perspectives that were useful to their discussions.

For instance, Christina, who majors in Environmental Studies, is interested in companies’ environmental footprints, a knowledge area which proved useful during the team’s visit to Interface Asia’s manufacturing plant in Thailand.

Crystal, who intends to major in Physics, was able to contribute to the feasibility of the technologically-slanted solutions in particular, while Hannah’s extensive experience in social enterprises led to fruitful discussions about social initiatives.

Meanwhile, Angela, an Urban Studies major, is interested in how built environments impact people.

“This has been one of the most eye-opening experiences of my college career,” shared Angela. “Ultimately, I came out of this experience feeling heartened – while greenwashing is still all too prevalent, there are companies doing impactful work through CSR and there is great potential for what future initiatives can achieve.”
This semester, several Yale-NUS students will be visiting Pathlight School weekly as study buddies to students there. The first autism-focused school in Singapore, Pathlight School offers Singapore’s mainstream academic curriculum and life readiness skills for children with mild to moderate severity of autism.

“We primarily focus on improving the students’ written expression for their Humanities subjects by guiding them through reading and writing practices, and providing them feedback on their writing,” explained Joceline Yong (Class of 2018) who initiated this programme as part of So/psy/ety, a Yale-NUS student organisation.

“Our role is mainly to supplement what they learn in class and offer support by reinforcing their learning and giving them more opportunities to practise their writing.”

Joceline was first interested in the idea of engaging with psychology beyond the classroom and putting the content she learnt in psychology classes into practice.

After a conversation with Assistant Professor of Social Sciences (Psychology) Jean Liu about intervention programmes for children with autism in other countries, where university students would visit them in their homes to help with their social skills and speaking abilities, she decided to set up a similar programme at Yale-NUS College.

“One of the main aims of the programme is to allow Yale-NUS students to experience interacting with students with autism – to put a humanising touch to Autism Spectrum Disorder, which is one of the many psychological conditions we learn about in class, and help volunteers better understand that people with autism or any other condition are not all that different after all,” elaborated Joceline.

Before they started volunteering, the Yale-NUS students were required to attend a training session by a teacher from Pathlight on the fundamentals of autism and specialised training on working with children with autism. This is one of the many activities that members of So/psy/ety have organised since the group started. Founded by several students majoring in psychology from the Class of 2017 including Daryl Tan and Priscilla Chia, the group aims to provide a platform for students interested in psychology to discover more about the role our minds play in our everyday lives.

“Yale-NUS’s interdisciplinary approach offers a way to see how psychology permeates through to different disciplines, from discussing the philosophy of the mind, criminal psychology in law or even how the brain responds to art and we hope the activities we organised could dispel many of the myths surrounding psychology,” shared Priscilla, a co-founder of the group.

“For instance, it’s not about people lying on couches and talking. We hope that through So/psy/ety, we can support the faculty, fellow students and even the community in the pursuit and application of the discipline of psychology.”

On why she first got involved in setting up such a group, Priscilla explained that it was the unique role that the group could play in a liberal arts setting.

She said: “Unlike psychology societies in other local universities where they cater specifically to psychology majors, we really want to pursue the study of psychology through an interdisciplinary approach, to show how it is relevant to each of us regardless of what we study, and Yale-NUS is honestly the perfect platform for such a pursuit.”

Some events that the group has organised include hosting speakers in the field of psychology, including Dr Daniel Fung, Director of the Medical Board at the Institute of Mental Health, and Dr Judith Harackiewicz, a social psychologist renowned for her work on achievement motivation.

“For example, Dr Fung talked about whether child psychiatry could die out by equipping people in the community to help children at risk of mental disorders, preventing them before they even occur.”

“This got me interested in the idea of community psychology, and how just the sense of belonging alone can improve well-being and participation,” he added.

“Looking ahead, we are hoping to have some informal sessions akin to Philosophy Cafés and to continue engaging the wider psychology community and network, as well as organise some events that involve using psychological concepts to improve one’s life, basically psychological life-hacks.”

For Joceline, her experience volunteering with the students from Pathlight has helped her better understand that people with autism or any other condition are not all that different after all.

“Having volunteered with the programme for one semester thus far, my biggest takeaway has been realising that my students are wonderful people with their own quirks, aspirations and unique qualities.”

“After their exams, they wrote a letter to tell me that their grades had improved, that they had all passed their exams, and were looking forward to seeing me again after the holidays,” she reminisced.
On 20 August 2016, the inaugural Sustainable Solutions Network (SSN) conference was organised by I’deCO, Yale-NUS’ first sustainability student organisation. The SSN aims to bring together all the stakeholders concerned with sustainability in Singapore, including students from tertiary institutions and representatives from the public, private and non-profit sectors.

There are two components to the SSN: an annual flagship conference and an online networking platform where stakeholders can engage with each other and build on their ideas for collaboration beyond the conferences.

The conference opened with an address by Guest-of-Honor, Dr Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Environment and Water Resources & Ministry of Health, who spoke on social innovation and collaboration in the environmental scene. She urged local companies to make it more rewarding for the public to go green.

“Awareness is a start but awareness will not achieve our sustainable development goals, it has to translate into actions,” said Dr Khor, “I think the government cannot do this alone and NGOs have to come in to work with community organisations to initiate recycling programmes and events, educate the people, and also to encourage them to participate.”

According to Tan Weiliang (Class of 2018), chairperson of the organising team, the initial concept for the network was developed over summer in 2015 when he travelled with Jeffrey Tong (Class of 2018) to three Scandinavian countries on a Social Impact Fellowship. This Fellowship is offered by Yale-NUS’ Centre for International & Professional Experience (CIPE), and encourages students to pursue independent or group projects that will help them learn and contribute to the community. Both Weiliang and Jeffrey are part of I’deCO, a team of Yale-NUS students with varied environmental interests who explore sustainability from a multitude of perspectives.

“We observed the factors which contributed to the strong culture of sustainability in these communities, and identified best practices they could bring back to Singapore. The spirit and culture of collaboration and innovation in the Scandinavian environmental scene was most striking,” explained Weiliang.

“Almost every environmental organisation, be it an NGO, green business or government body, was involved in projects, initiatives or cooperatives that spanned all the different stakeholders. We observed and understood how critical collaboration is to attain a strong culture of sustainability.”

After they returned, the pair and the rest of their team started engaging with a number of stakeholders to share with, learn from and collaboratively develop a plan that will work in the Singaporean context.

“We spoke to over 30 stakeholders in the environmental scene who shared with us some best practices and experiences in conferences and networks they’ve attended or were part of, that significantly helped us in shaping how the SSN would look like,” shared Chua Wan Ping (Class of 2017), a member of the team.

Apart from Wan Ping, Weiliang and Jeffrey, the SSN team also comprises students from the Classes of 2017, 2018 and 2019.

“Some parts of the conference were co-organised with our partners – LepakInSG for the keynote speech, Mother Earth Toastmasters Club (TMC) for the Networking and Elevator Pitch session. With the co-creation process, these partners bought their experience and expertise into our event.”

Every aspect of the event was also extensively deliberated, as Weiliang shared. “All the events on conference day were specially crafted after many consultations. The main highlights were the panel discussion on overcoming barriers to collaboration in addressing environmental issues and solutions brainstorming sessions.”

The solutions brainstorming sessions enabled breakout groups of participants to be matched with environmental practitioners of their choice or expertise. “Representatives of organisations drew on what they learnt in the morning session to brainstorm on potential collaborative projects to be pursued in the upcoming months,” he explained.

Wan Ping also noted that she was “especially glad to see representatives from NGOs, industry and government all actively and passionately participating in the solutions brainstorming sessions”.

Reflecting on the experience, Weiliang said that the greatest challenge in putting SSN together was getting the momentum going when they first started. While many were initially unconvinced by the concept, the I’deCO team received significant support from various departments in the College, including Student Affairs, the Environmental Studies department, and from Senior Administration.

SSN is supported by the Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources (MEWR), the International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU)’s Global University Climate Forum, and Yale-NUS College, with advising support from the Yale-NUS Environmental Studies major.
After an absence of six years, Team NUS Law marked its return to the Asia Cup Moot Court competition with stunning success.

The team, comprising Kiu Yan Yu ’18, Dana Chang ’18, Ephraim Tan ’18, Ong Chee Yeow ’18 and Charlotte Wang ’18, pulled off a clean sweep of the top prizes including the Best Overall Team, Best Memorial and Best Oralist (Dana Chang ’18).

This is only the third time in the Cup’s 19-year history that a team has managed to achieve such a feat.

The Asia Cup Moot is a regional moot court competition hosted by Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs that attracts teams from law schools all around Asia. The 2016 edition of the Cup featured 43 law schools in total, out of which 13 went on to represent their country in the oral rounds held in Tokyo.

This year’s moot problem centred on the law of the sea, involving a State’s claim of historic fishing rights in another State’s territorial sea and its EEZ.

Oralists had to present on issues such as historic fishing rights in UNCLOS, principles of good faith in international law, and the powers of the ICJ to order specific remedies.

The journey to the finals in Tokyo was an arduous one. The team first had to compete against SMU for the privilege of representing Singapore in the international rounds. There, they mooted against teams from Tokyo University and West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences in the preliminary rounds, before advancing to face regional powerhouse Ateneo Law School (the most successful law school in the history of the competition) in the finals.

After an intense final round, the NUS Law team emerged triumphant, bringing home the trophy for the first time since 2005.

Ong Chee Yeow ’18, said: “Beyond what we have accomplished in the competition, I am prouder still of what we have become – a tightly knit group that is nothing short of a family. Despite having entered the competition at a fairly late juncture, we still managed to pull through due to the hard work put in by everyone on the team. Special thanks, of course, also goes out to NUS’s moot庭 alumnus and faculty. Your input and guidance has made every difference in the outcome of this competition.”

The team would like to extend their sincere gratitude to those who have helped them throughout their journey. Their success would not have been possible without the help and guidance of:

• Team coach and mentor: Associate Professor Lim Lei Theng ’92
• Faculty members: Associate Professor Robert Beckman, Associate Professor Eleanor Wong ’85, Professor Antony Anghie, and Dr Gerardine Goh-Escolar ’02
• Practitioners: Ms Joan Lim-Casanova ’06, Mr Jordan Tan ’08, Mr Jason Chan ’02, Mr Ramesh Selvaraj ’04, Ms Koh Swee Yen ’04, Ms Mak Shinyi ’14, Mr Daniel Liu, Ms Hannah Lee ’15, Ms Deena Bajrai and Ms Yau Pui Man

• NUS mooting alumni: Chin Jincheng ’13, Victor Leong ’16, Joshua Hiew ’17, Sim Bing Wen ’15, David Isidore Tan ’16, Kelvin Chong ’15, Hairul Hakim ’16, Mehaerun Simaa ’16, Douglas Wong ’16 and Parveen Kaur ’16

[Note: Ong Chee Yeow (far left) and Charlotte Wang (second from right) are Yale-NUS students enrolled in the Double Degree Programme with Law. Chee Yeow and Charlotte are from the inaugural batch of students enrolled in the Double Degree Programme with Law, a programme offered jointly by Yale-NUS College and NUS Law.]
Over summer, Sharon Quaye, Chia Jie Lin (both Class of 2018) and Anandita Sabherwal (Class of 2019) were scattered across the globe in Asia, Africa and the Middle East undertaking vastly different academic pursuits on Yale Summer Session Abroad programmes.

While Jie Lin was in Tokyo, Japan on a course titled “Japanimation and Manga”, Sharon was shuttling between Johannesburg, South Africa and Mbabane, Swaziland where she was enrolled in “Visual Approaches to Global Health” exploring the intersections between documentary filmmaking and global health, and Anandita spent her summer in Morocco studying “Society and Politics of North Africa”.

“As my world view and intellectual interests have been vastly shaped by anime and reading manga since my childhood, this course was perfect for me,” Jie Lin shared. “It provided a great opportunity for me to return to my childhood interests in my exploration of Japanese culture in a rigorous academic setting.”

“As an anthropology major, the course’s focus on the socio-historical contexts of production and consumption, and on gender and sexuality, complemented my long-term academic interests in pursuing cultural anthropology.”

Jie Lin particularly enjoyed the opportunity to meet and engage with members of the manga and anime industries in Tokyo.

“We visited an animation museum in Tokyo, the Osamu Tezuka (creator of Astro Boy) museum in Takarazuka, met with shojo manga artist Ichinose Kaoru in Kyoto and even had a discussion session with representatives from Shogakukan, which is a publishing company highly prolific in the distribution of different manga and anime DVDs!”

For Sharon, a Life Sciences major who is interested in pursuing courses in Public Health at the graduate level, the course helped her realise the importance of humanising the issues that she was studying.

“One of the very first things our professor did at the start of our programme was to remind us that “every number has a story”. Sometimes as statisticians and public health officials, we might get too caught up in trying to reduce the HIV incidence rate or increase the percentage of women who have access to family planning that we forget that each number is linked to a person whose life story is more complex than his or her HIV status. I was constantly made aware and reminded of this truth through my interactions with the people we met on our trip.”

The main highlight of Sharon’s course was producing a documentary with her classmates.

“My group interviewed a gay man with HIV and tried to capture the different layers of his experiences living as a gay man in Swaziland. In Swaziland, acts of homosexuality are criminal offences and considered taboo so the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Intersex (LGBTI) community is particularly stigmatised in the community. Public health measures such as providing access to condoms and reproductive healthcare is therefore not an easy task and these were some of the issues we tried to cover in our documentary.”

As a Psychology major with a minor in History, it was the opportunity to immerse in a completely new culture that appealed to Anandita about the course.

“My main motive was an attempt to gain greater understanding of a completely new culture, through intimate interaction with its politics, topography, and community. My programme seemed specific enough to orientate me to Africa, a part of the world that I haven’t explored physically or academically, but also conceptually broad enough (discussing colonialism, nationalism, and the variations in the political field) to equip me with tools to analyse other postcolonial societies, including India and Singapore.”

At the same time, learning about Moroccan culture has taught Anandita many lessons in empathy and cultural engagement.

“Through this experience, I have come to realise that a cultural conversation, and emotional connections, are possible despite linguistic, religious, and political barriers. Witnessing Moroccans marvel over Bollywood while I enjoyed the traditional Tajine also made me realise that this cultural conversation is never unidirectional, that I cannot just come in and learn as much about a society, without sharing some aspects of my life back home with them.”

For Jie Lin, the most valuable aspect of the course was the opportunity to examine her personal interest from different perspectives. “The culmination of all these different and equally interesting experiences allowed us to get a glimpse of the anime and manga industry from many perspectives – that of an animator, an artist, as well as a publisher. In doing so, I have come out of this course being more well attuned to the intricacies of the anime and manga industry than I was before, being a consumer on the end of the supply chain.”

Besides Yale Summer Session Abroad programmes, Yale-NUS College’s Centre for International & Professional Experience (CIPE) also offers a wide range of enriching summer opportunities for students. Yale-NUS students can get the opportunity to acquire fluency in a foreign language or take classes otherwise not offered at Yale-NUS as they deepen knowledge through experience and application outside the classroom.
For the past few months, Crystal Yong (Class of 2019) spent a large part of her time with crickets and otters. She was involved in two scientific research projects with Yale-NUS Assistant Professor of Life Sciences Philip Johns regarding these two animal species.

“We were trying to identify an incredibly loud cricket species we found in Brunei, which had a very high likelihood of being a new species. For the otters, we were exploring the idea of getting amateur otter enthusiasts around Singapore to upload their material onto a platform that could be used to collate data from all the videos and photos. All this data could potentially be used for academic research on Singapore’s otters, which is highly interesting but sorely lacking,” Crystal explained.

Crystal’s interest in this area of research was sparked during her Week 7 experience to Brunei with Dr Johns.

“Once during the trip, Dr Johns invited me to take a walk with him to find the crickets, during which he pointed out all the interesting things about what we were observing at that moment. I was curious to learn more about these observations and decided to pursue this curiosity when offered the opportunity.”

Crystal later returned to Brunei for a research expedition over summer, this time as a student researcher working with Dr Johns, to search for more cricket samples.

“We found the cricket only on the fifth day. It was just this immense sense of relief and elation about the fact that we got at least one cricket to bring back, after a series of failures to do so due to the unpredictability of nature.”

The other student who helped catch the cricket was Nawat Bunnag (Class of 2019), who was also working as a student researcher for Dr Johns. However, instead of otters and crickets, Nawat focused on stalk-eyed flies.

“Stalk-eyed flies are a species of flies with extremely long eye stalks. They are sexually dimorphic, which means that the males have longer eye stalks than the females. The males with longer eye stalks are often more successful in finding mates and use their eye stalks to fight. My project involved setting up fights and looking at the genes that are being expressed in the flies that are fighting. The other project that I worked on with Dr Johns looked at tissue-specific gene expression, focusing on the presence and absence of genes in different tissues in the fly,” said Nawat. Nawat explained that studying the gene expression in these flies will provide researchers insights into the importance of the genes as some of them are shared with humans.

For their research, Nawat and Crystal both stayed at Kuala Belalong Field Studies Centre (KBFSC), a field centre in the middle of the jungle owned and run by Universiti Brunei Darussalam for three weeks. Crystal shared that it was a good learning experience to be able to explore different scientific disciplines to develop a multi-disciplinary approach towards scientific research and understanding.

Another student involved in scientific research is Shaun Lim (Class of 2018) who worked with Assistant Professor of Biochemistry Jan Gruber to study a nematode (worm) in relation to the mechanisms of ageing.

“Caenorhabditis elegans is a hermaphroditic worm and reproduces via self-fertilisation, essentially providing populations of identical “twins”. From our study, we know that the first twin usually dies around the 11th day while the second twin dies around the 26th day, and the big question I’m trying to answer is, why?”

“The work I am assisting Dr Gruber with is a mere droplet in the ocean of gerontological research, but it will provide a greater insight into the mechanisms of ageing, particularly healthy ageing. By investigating what intrinsic molecular mechanisms may contribute to unhealthy ageing, we may be able to develop therapies that can extend the health span of individuals,” Shaun explained.

Currently on a semester abroad, Shaun is continuing his interest in age-associated diseases by working with Professor Rudiyanto Gunawan from ETH Zurich in Switzerland, an attachment he got through Dr Gruber.

“Professor Rudi has developed a method to obtain large numbers of samples to sort the worms using a microfluidics fluorescence-based sorter, allowing me to obtain more data within a short period of time. This would not only supplement my current data, but further elucidate the system that I am investigating, given that I may now conduct assays that would have been impossible at Yale-NUS.”

Shaun shared that his greatest takeaway is learning to embrace the uncertainty that comes with doing research.

“My hypothesis and direction of my research has changed numerous times because of unexpected data - you know that the research will keep moving forward, but you never know which direction it will eventually take.”

Apart from ongoing opportunities offered to students to enhance their learning through participating in professors’ research projects, the Centre for International & Professional Experience also offers the Summer Science Research (SSR) programme, where students work in the laboratories of Yale-NUS or NUS faculty for 8 to 10 weeks during the mid-year break, conducting research activities or participating in field research.
On 25 August 2016, Yale-NUS College hosted a dinner for donors and friends of the College at its Black Box Theatre to mark the launch of the Yale-NUS Alumni Study Award. Established by various friends of the College, alumni of its parent institutions, as well as organisations such as the Singapore Tote Board, the award represents their belief in the vision of the College. It also hopes to inspire future Yale-NUS alumni to pay it forward and continue the tradition of giving back to their alma mater.

In his opening speech, President Pericles Lewis shared that Yale-NUS actively provides financial aid to all students in need as the College firmly believes that no deserving student should be deprived of a Yale-NUS education because of financial constraints.

"We are committed to providing financial support to students either through scholarships that recognise academic excellence, or through study awards that cater to needy students. Financial aid therefore remains a key fundraising priority here at Yale-NUS," he said.

Apart from the launch of the award, which was the highlight of the event, donors and friends of the College also had the opportunity to understand first-hand the impact of their gifts as recipients of various financial aid schemes spoke about their experiences at Yale-NUS thus far.

Chua Wan Ping (Class of 2017), an environmental studies major, shared how the Toh Chin Chye Study Award had given her the greatest gift of all in her journey here at the College – time.

“College is one of the golden periods in our life. We find ourselves able to spend time exploring subjects, activities and internships. However, when less privileged students have to work, it can mean sacrificing much of these activities,” she said.

Making good use of time that she might otherwise have had to spend working to finance her education, Wan Ping has seized numerous opportunities to enrich her college life, such as building I'dECO: Yale-NUS Sustainability Movement. The student group recently organised Singapore’s inaugural Sustainable Solutions Network conference, which drew about 200 participants. Wan Ping also explored areas of interest outside of her chosen major, such as attending an experiential learning trip to China under the Tan Chin Tuan Chinese Culture & Civilisation programme, where she learnt more about Chinese culture and literature.

In addition to celebrating the College’s diverse student community and sharing about the impact of gifts to the College, the dinner also highlighted the varied passions and talents of students.

Several students conceptualised, planned and executed the overall aesthetic of the Black Box Theatre, transforming the venue into an intimate and sophisticated setting, designed to showcase the growth of the College.

David Chia (Class of 2017) conceptualised the event’s overall design direction, drawing inspiration from traceries on the rain and sunscreens, which he termed as “visual representations of unseen motifs on campus”.

He also shared that the photo-chandelier installations aimed to document the impact generated by the donors in a visually appealing manner.

The evening’s programme also showcased two performing arts student groups.

The Yale-NUS Bhangra Troupe kicked off the evening with an energetic Bhangra dance performance at the Performance Hall Foyer, while The Scheduling Club serenaded guests with three lovely a cappella tunes.

Guests were enthralled by both the décor and the performances, and smiles all around bore witness to the fact that many had enjoyed an evening of good food, networking and celebrating the talents of our students, some of whom are in their senior year and are soon set to become alumni themselves.

“The dinner was well-organised, the ambience was good, and the décor and the setting was awesome. The sharing by the student beneficiaries was also inspiring and moving,” said Mr Yeo Keng Joon, a member of the NUS Alumni Student Advancement Committee.

Giving generously to the Yale-NUS Alumni Study Award, along with some of his friends and fellow alumni, Mr Yeo encourages future alumni to give back to Yale-NUS.

“I am hopeful that this study award will provide a platform for the alumni graduating each year to contribute to the college. This can then help to add on to the number of study awards to be given out each year to financially needy students at Yale-NUS,” he added.