EMINENT ALUMNUS MESSAGE

Mr. David Ho Peng Cheong
Managing Director, Windmill International Pte Ltd

Mr. David Ho graduated with Honours in Economics in 1973. He is concurrently the CEO of AEC EDU Group and is primarily responsible for the overall management, strategic planning and business development for the AEC Group. David started his career with Citibank Singapore in 1973. In 1978, he left to start his own company, Windmill International Pte Ltd, an industrial bulk commodities trading and logistical company. Windmill was ranked 6th at the 1995 Enterprise 50 Awards.

Mr. Ho had a mentor, Mr. Peter Lim (a Student Liaison Officer at the then University of Singapore) who guided him through his University days. In gratitude, Mr. Ho created the Peter S T Lim Bursary for arts undergraduates in his name. Mr. Ho and his wife also created the Class of ’72 Jenny and David Ho Bursary (Economics) in 2010. He chairs the Class of ’72 Bursary Fund (which now stands at $1.3 million), and in 2010 received the NUS Society Outstanding Member award. He is currently the Vice-President of the Society.

My Entrepreneurial Journey

I graduated at a time when Singapore was rapidly industrializing, and developing into a regional financial hub. Jobs in the financial sector were plentiful and economics graduates were having a field day. I was no exception. I was offered jobs by DBS and Citibank. After working with Citi for 2 years, my entrepreneurial urge took me to Intraco, then a state-owned international trading firm. 5 years later, and with some solid grounding in the principles of international trade, I started my own journey of entrepreneurship. In the 80s this was uncharted territory.

My adventure in the last 30 years took me, in the early days, to Russia, Eastern Europe, North and East Africa, the Middle East, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. I was trekking, so to speak, in countries less frequented by established trading houses. In early 2002, I even travelled to Baghdad, 6 months after the Americans invaded Iraq. I was in the business of restoration after destruction. Then known as import and export trade, it is now better termed as ‘supply chain management’.

Perhaps I was more adventurous, and hence more entrepreneurial. Has an economics degree helped in any way to promote this spirit and let me out of my comfort zone in an office facing Shenton Way? I pause to wonder. I studied international trade, macro- and micro- economics, economic development, statistics and monetary policy, but nothing about risk management, country and currency risk, and fraudulent trades. More so, how to hedge against suppliers’ risk and buyers’ default, and how to deal with back-to-back
letters of credit, trade finance or shipping demurrages and cargo insurance claims. How to seal a deal and deliver?

I cannot disown the economics teachings I received from all the wonderful lecturers and tutors of my time. Fundamentally Econs 101 continues to play a pivotal role in most of my dealings. If a trader cannot appreciate the concepts of demand and supply in a possibly unequal market situation (in which one party has leverage due to monopoly power, connexions with third parties, and the like), no profitable trades are possible. Factor in the effects of time and delivery costs, and the level of profit will emerge. Nothing is more important than to appreciate inelastic demand and supply, and other effects on pricing. I have benefited immensely from an acute understanding of these principles in the days when there were no Internet, Skype, email and fax facilities. Imperfect markets with inelastic demands and supplies were a boon for astute traders and market makers.

The world has moved on, the ease of communication has created near-perfect markets, and business entry barriers have been substantially reduced. Instantaneous communication at nearly zero cost has changed the pattern of trade. Forward and backward trade integration, mega-trade-financing, and large equity market capitalization have created a new generation of savvy traders and merchants. Is our Economics programme still relevant in producing adventurous entrepreneurs? I wonder.

Today’s entrepreneurs not only need a grounding in basic economic theories, but also a thorough understanding of the fast pace of social and media communication. Knowledge is flowing at a speed that creates near-perfect market situations. Hedging, forward contracts and shipping-cost indexes have provided various mechanisms to minimize risk exposures and optimize profits. New ground rules have emerged, the invisible hand is perhaps now more visible with government and state intervention. However, entrepreneurs have to be mindful that in most underdeveloped countries currency and country risks are still hard to manage and hedge against. In a near-perfect world with speed-of-light communication, entrepreneurs still need to search for and exploit market imperfections in order to carve a niche for profits.

Thirty years ago, I travelled extensively to source for suppliers and buyers. I inspected ports, warehouses, and studied supply chain management, shipping and chartering, and banking practices. Today, traders Google websites, talk on Skype, ship via courier, and make payments via Paypal. Entrepreneurship is opening up markets via the Internet without border limitations. In seeking to excel in their chosen fields entrepreneurs now need to have a good appreciation of the speed of social and media communication and marketing. How to bring products to markets and to consumers now requires creative imagination to unlock the borderless markets and consumer demands. The traditional concepts of demand and supply have taken on a new dimension.

Econs 101 is fundamentally an important grounding tool but with the new pace of social and media communication and a heavy hand from government agencies, the field is open to those who have the creativity to innovate beyond the tenets of static demand and supply.

Panel Discussion on the Singapore Government Budget 2011

The Department’s Singapore Centre for Applied and Policy Economics (SCAPE) organized a Panel Discussion on the Singapore Government Budget on 22 February 2011, following the presentation of the Budget in Parliament by the Minister for Finance, Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam, on 18 February. This was the second year that SCAPE has held a Panel Discussion on the Budget.

The panel of experts comprised Mr. Sum Yee Loong, Tax Partner, Deloitte and Touche, Mr. Manu Bhaskaran, CEO, Centennial Asia Advisors, Singapore, and Assoc Prof Chia Ngee Choon, Deputy Head of the Department. The discussion was moderated by Professor Basant Kapur, Director of SCAPE.

Initiating the Discussion, Mr. Sum noted that the Productivity and Innovation Credit (PIC) has been generously enhanced this year. The new PIC scheme provides up to 400 per cent in tax deductions or allowances, compared to 250 per cent last year. He added that the “grouping” of the annual maximum amounts for Years of Assessment 2011 and 2012, and for Years of Assessment 2013 to 2015, will enable companies investing in or incurring larger amounts to maximise the PIC benefits. He also observed that the new pooling of foreign tax credits will enable taxpayers to maximise the effectiveness of Double Taxation Relief. Singapore’s personal income tax rates are, he noted, lower than in many other countries, and the new tax rates that are effective next year are targeted to benefit lower
and middle income groups. Taxpayers with chargeable income of $120,000 will benefit the most.

Mr. Manu Bhaskaran noted that re-distribution is a key theme of the Budget, through measures such as growth dividends skewed towards middle- and low- income Singaporeans, the Workfare Special Bonus, income tax changes, and rebates on utilities and conservancy charges. In the longer run, however, a more comprehensive approach to social and distributional concerns is in his view required, addressing issues such as the adequacy of our retirement funding framework, healthcare provision, wage stagnation at the lower end, and enhancing social mobility through improved educational facilities. He added that increases in foreign worker levies would continue to signal the need to raise productivity, but local firms, especially labour-intensive small and medium-scale enterprises, would benefit from additional support and advice in seeking to raise productivity. Fiscal policy may in future need to play a more active complementary role to exchange-rate policy in short-run macroeconomic management, and, on a longer-term basis, we also need to ask ‘how large should government savings be, and should they be managed solely by government?’

Assoc Prof Chia, noting the Government’s aim, as stated in the Budget, to raise the real wages of Singaporeans by 30 per cent in the next 10 years, corresponding to an average rate of 2.66% per year, asked ‘Will the rising tide of economic growth lift all boats?’. Based on her analysis of income growth rates between 1998 and 2008, the goal could be achieved for the 77 per cent of Singaporeans living in four-room HDB flats and bigger homes, but may not be so for the lower-income groups living in three-room or smaller HDB flats. She also observed that the changes to the CPF contribution rates and salary ceiling would benefit middle-income earners more than lower-income ones. Social mobility, she felt, would be further facilitated through increased educational support for children from lower-income families.

The Discussion was well attended, and a lively Q&A session followed the speakers’ presentations. Differing opinions were expressed regarding the increase in foreign worker levies, with some participants expressing the view that these would add to business costs and fuel inflation, and others saying that complementary productivity-enhancing support would enable firms to offer higher wages and attract more Singaporeans to take up positions currently occupied by low-skilled foreign workers. The Discussion was featured the following day in the Straits Times, Business Times and Lianhe Zaobao. On the whole it was a lively and stimulating session, and the Department, including SCAPE, would like to thank all who participated.

### SCAPE POLICY FORUMS AND PUBLIC LECTURES

<table>
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<th>Date</th>
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<td>4 November 2010</td>
<td>Policy Forum on “New Estimates of the Equilibrium Exchange Rate: The Case of the Chinese Renminbi” - Professor Kiyotaka Sato, Yokohama National University</td>
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<td>11 October 2010</td>
<td>EEP (Economics Executive Programme) Public Lecture, in conjunction with the MPA Professorship, on “Measuring Port Service Quality: From the Liners’ Perspective” - Professor Jose Tongzon, Maritime Port Authority (MPA) Visiting Senior Fellow</td>
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<td>2 September 2010</td>
<td>Policy Forum on “Losing Control: the Emerging Threats to Western Prosperity” - Mr. Stephen D King, HSBC Bank</td>
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<td>27 August 2010</td>
<td>Joint Civil Service College – SCAPE Public Lecture on “Using Economics to Evaluate Hard Policy Questions: What the Dismal Science Has to Offer” - Professor Edward P. Lazear, Stanford University</td>
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<td>16 July 2010</td>
<td>EEP Public Lecture, in conjunction with the MPA Professorship, on “The Impact of the Global Financial Crisis on the Shipping Industry: What Do We Learn from It?” - Dr. Hong-Oanh Nguyen, Maritime Port Authority (MPA) Visiting Senior Fellow</td>
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The International Maritime Organization has proposed the implementation of a carbon dioxide emission trading scheme for the industry. Two problems associated with this are that of high noncompliance rate and the need to reconcile the both IMO and UNFCCC principles. This study reports a laboratory experiment to examine two design features of the potential scheme that are related to the problems identified. Our experimental parameters approximate the possible allocation method and other features of the maritime industry. Two key findings from this study are, (1) Implementation of the dynamic enforcement model reduces both permit noncompliance and report noncompliance relative to the static enforcement model, and (2) The initial allocation of permits, which provides a solution to reconcile the two conflicting principles, impacts on the efficiency of the scheme.

The European Union has proposed a Directive to include aviation activities in the Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) in 2012. The allowance allocation method which will be put in place is relatively easy to implement with low administrative cost. However, careful scrutiny suggests that the allocation method does not favour airlines with high energy efficiency. This study proposes an alternative allowance allocation method which is fairer in that it rewards energy efficient airlines. Further, the new method is easy to implement with low administrative cost. The Cournot model serves as the theoretical foundation upon which the experiments are designed to simulate the aviation industry under the ETS. The equilibrium is calculated for each allowance allocation method. Results from experiments suggest consistency with theoretical predictions.

The link between mental stress and cancer is still a belief, not a well-established scientific fact. Scientists have relied largely on opinions of cancer-stricken patients to establish a link between stress and cancer. Such opinion surveys tend to produce contradictory statistical inferences. Although it is difficult to conduct scientific experiments on humans similar to those on animals, human history is replete with “experiments” that have caused enormous stress on some human populations. The objective of this exercise is to draw evidence from one such massive experiment, the Cultural Revolution in China. Cancer data from Shanghai analyzed through an age-period-cohort technique show very strong evidence in support of the hypothesis that mental stress causes cancer.

The SAET, which publishes the highly-regarded journal Economic Theory, has held its conference biennially in Europe since 1993. With the rapid increase in the number of academic economists in the Asia-Pacific region, Economic Theory has become a popular forum for the exchange of ideas involving economists in this region as well. In response, the SAET has decided to host its conference every year alternately in Europe and in the Asia-Pacific region in the future. The Department of Economics
The Department of Economics organised the 1st Asia Summer Institute in Behavioural Economics, held at the National University of Singapore from 26 July to 6 August 2010.

The purpose of the Summer Institute was to introduce graduate students and new faculty in economics, business, and related disciplines to the findings and methods of behavioural economics. The programme included sessions in which students were introduced to the psychological foundations of various economic topics, experimental testing of theories, and field applications in finance.

The co-organizers of the Summer Institute were Professors Chew Soo Hong, Teck-Hua Ho, Matthew Rabin and Sun Yeneng (Coordinator). The teaching faculty were Professors Vince Crawford (Oxford University), Terrance Odean (University of California, Berkeley), Ted O'Donoghue (Cornell University) and Matthew Rabin (University of California, Berkeley).

About 70 participants attended the summer institute. They hailed from Australia, China, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Korea, Singapore, Spain, Taiwan and the USA.

More than 240 papers were presented and the conference was well-attended by close to 260 economists from all over the world.

The SAET conference dinner was held on 14 August 2010 at the SAFRA Resort. Performances by the NUS Chinese Orchestra and NUS Ilsa Tari (Malay Dance Group) were presented during this dinner for the entertainment of the conference participants.

**1ST ASIA SUMMER INSTITUTE IN BEHAVIOURAL ECONOMICS**

The plenary speakers were Professor Edward C. Prescott (Nobel Laureate in Economics 2004, Arizona State University and Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis) and Professor Charles R. Plott (California Institute of Technology).

is honoured to be the co-organiser of the inaugural Asia-Pacific SAET Conference.

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**PUBLIC LECTURES**

“Emergence of Laboratory Experimental Methods in Economics: Basic Science, Policy Design and Implementation” by Professor Charles R. Plott, California Institute of Technology, 23 August 2010

Jointly organised by the Department of Economics, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS and the Centre for Public Economics, Civil Service College, Singapore

Professor Plott’s lecture outlined the development and use of laboratory methods in economic science, including the key discoveries and applications. In the early years, laboratory methods focused on the basic laws of supply and demand and how they operate to create a process of price discovery. Over the past decades, they evolved to encompass how information is transmitted through prices and the possibility of bubbles and market instability. More recent evolution finds the research being focused on the design of competitive institutions to solve complex resource and environmental problems. The lecture focused on the nature of the discoveries, and how they can be used in the design and implementation of policy.

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Professor Charles R. Plott is the Edward S. Harkness Professor of Economics and Political Science, and Founder and Director of the Laboratory for Experimental Economics and Political Science at the California Institute of Technology. Together with Vernon Smith, the 2002 Nobel Laureate in Economics, Professor Plott is widely acknowledged as a co-founder of the discipline of experimental economics. He has also been particularly influential in applying the methodology of experimental economics to address public policy issues and challenges. These include the design and implementation of computerized market mechanisms for allocating complex items (such as the markets for pollution permits in Southern California, the FCC auction of licenses for personal communication systems, the auctions for electric power in California, and the allocation of landing rights at major U.S. airports). Dr. Plott is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Fellow of the Econometric Society, and Distinguished Fellow of the American Economic Association.

Lim Chong Yah Lecture on “Asia Booming, U.S. Depressed, Europe Stagnating” by Professor Edward C. Prescott, 2004 Nobel Laureate in Economics, Lim Chong Yah Professor, National University of Singapore, W. P. Carey Chair, Arizona State University and Senior Monetary Adviser, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, 16 August 2010

Nobel Laureate in Economics Professor Edward Christian Prescott, W. P. Carey Chair, Arizona State University, delivered a public lecture at NUS on 16 August 2010 in his capacity as Lim Chong Yah Professor at NUS’ Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS). Professor Prescott is also Senior Monetary Adviser at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

His lecture topic was “Asia Booming, US Depressed, Europe Stagnating”. Speaking to a packed audience, he traced the growth of Asian economies such as Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan which are swiftly catching up with the United States and Western Europe. He also elaborated on China’s continued rapid growth, the United States’ present experience of a minor depression, and on how the 2010 financial crises in the Euro Zone could lead to positive change.

Professor Prescott is known for his seminal work in policy analysis, business cycles, economic development, general equilibrium theory and finance. In 2004, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics jointly with Norwegian economist, Professor Finn Erling Kydland, for their contributions to dynamic macroeconomics: the time consistency of economic policy and the driving forces behind business cycles.

The Lim Chong Yah Professorship in Arts and Social Sciences was launched in 2001 and established at the FASS in honour of NUS Emeritus Professor Lim Chong Yah, one of Singapore’s eminent policy economists, outstanding academicians and pioneers of the Faculty.

“The Long-Term Consequences of the Financial Crisis: What We Know, What We Don’t, and What We Can Learn from the 1930’s” by Professor Barry Eichengreen, Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS) Term Professor in Economics and Finance, National University of Singapore, George C. Pardee and Helen N. Pardee Professor of Economics and Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Berkeley, 19 October 2010

Jointly organised by the Department of Economics, NUS and the Monetary Authority of Singapore

Professor Barry Eichengreen delivered his second public lecture as the MAS Term Professor. The lecture reflected what Professor Eichengreen believes is the need for economists to adopt a more focused approach to the recent financial crisis, given how it has been so deep, global and financially pervasive. Economists have been quick to judge the causes and short-term consequences of the crisis but analyses of potential long-term consequences have been scant, resulting in a high degree of uncertainty as to whether or not future growth will be permanently impaired by the crisis.
“Confidence Crises - Panics, Meltdowns, Depressions and How to Escape Them” by Professor Costas Azariadis, Tan Chin Tuan Professor, National University of Singapore, Edward Mallinckrodt Distinguished University Professor, Washington University in St. Louis, and Research Fellow, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 25 February 2011

Professor Azariadis’ lecture described the history and causes of bank panics and financial meltdowns over the last century and up to the present time, with particular emphasis on the policy problems credit crunches pose for today’s global economy.

Professor Azariadis works on multiple equilibria and stabilization policy, the dynamics of economic development, and the role of imperfect financial markets in dynamic general equilibrium. He is the inaugural Director of the Center for Dynamic Economics (CEDEC) at Washington University in St. Louis. His current research attempts to devise a unified framework for macroeconomics that describes the core behavioural relations of that field in terms of stochastic dynamical systems.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Faculty members of the Department of Economics contributed the following articles to the “ASK: NUS ECONOMISTS” column in the Straits Times.

“China-Taiwan pact puts pressure on ASEAN”, Dr. Sarah Y. Tong, Straits Times, Review, 26 February 2011

“China’s use of reserve ratios”, Dr. Connie Chung, Straits Times, Review, 18 February 2011

“Oiling the wheels of contest in a duopoly”, Assoc Prof Anthony T. H. Chin, Straits Times, Review, 12 February 2011

“Why fewer COEs mean luxury car boom”, Professor Ivan Png and Dr. Qiang Fu, Straits Times, Review, 3 February 2011

“Resolving the current ‘liquidity spillover’?”, Assoc Prof Shin Jang-Sup, Straits Times, Review, 5 November 2010

“Quantitative easing: A move to spur lending”, Professor Ivan Png, Straits Times, Review, 27 October 2010

“High household savings good, but don’t oversave”, Assoc Prof Wong Wei Kang, Straits Times, Review, 21 October 2010

“Fast food: Should governments intervene?”, Mr. Chan Kok Hoe, Straits Times, Review, 19 October 2010

“Taxing issue of corporate tax incentives”, Assoc Prof Chia Ngee Choon, Straits Times, Review, 9 October 2010

“Green may be colour of China’s economic future”, Assoc Prof Albert Hu, Straits Times, Review, 30 September 2010

“Making the most of globalisation”, Assoc Prof Shandre M. Thangavelu, Straits Times, Review, 23 September 2010

“Impact of money supply on inflation”, Professor Basant K. Kapur, Straits Times, Review, 23 September 2010

“Both property price cycles and price trends matter”, Assoc Prof Tilak Abeyesinghe, Straits Times, Review, 9 September 2010

“China must look beyond GDP growth”, Professor Ivan Png, Straits Times, Review, 28 August 2010

“Rising Sing$ may not keep prices low”, Assoc Prof Tilak Abeyesinghe, Straits Times, Review, 29 July 2010

“Private tuition: Does it help?”, Professor Ivan Png, Straits Times, Review, 1 July 2010

“Too small to set prices? Not always”, Professor Basant K. Kapur, Straits Times, Review, 1 July 2010

The following are further articles in the Straits Times that covered the views and work of faculty members of the Department.

“Budget should benefit less well-off”, Professor Basant K. Kapur, Straits Times, Review, 27 January 2011

“Buying within your means”, Assoc Prof Tilak Abeyesinghe and Ms Gu Jiaying, Straits Times, Review, 4 August 2010

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The following are articles in the press that covered the Panel Discussion on the Singapore Government Budget 2011 that was organised by SCAPE.

“Lower-income may miss the boat”, Straits Times, 23 February 2011


“德勤会计师事务所合伙人岑义隆:加强教育才能助底层国人脱”, Lianhe Zaobao, 23 February 2011

(All the above articles can be accessed at the SCAPE website at http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/ecs/cape/news.html)

MR. AND MRS. NGIAM FOOK QUEE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

When Alisha Gill graduates this year with a Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) degree from NUS’ Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FASS), it will be a proud moment not just for her parents, but for the Ngiam family as well. Alisha was the first student to receive the Ngiam Fook Quee Scholarship, which was set up in 2006 by the Ngiam family in honour of their parents. The Scholarship supports a four-year Honours degree in Economics. In an inspiring show of family commitment to the cause of education, 15 members of the Ngiam family – the second and third generation – collaborated to establish this gift. Mr Ngiam Tong Yuen, acting as a representative of the family, puts it simply, “It was time to give back. We are older. We are comfortable. Time to pass it on.”

Mr Ngiam Tong Yuen and his four siblings have experienced, first-hand, the warmth of a helping hand. When their father passed away while they were still in primary school, he and his siblings received scholarships and financial aid from various sources, both private and public, including their clan association. The four brothers went on to University and professional success. They are now retired or “actively ageing” as they prefer to be described. Mr. Ngiam Tong Dow is currently Pro-Chancellor of his alma mater, NUS. Mr. Ngiam Tong Yuen is busy with RSVP, a voluntary organisation that promotes volunteerism among senior citizens. Mr. Ngiam Tong Lan, who was an Associate Professor at the NUS School of Pharmacy, is now indulging in his long-held interest in art. Mr. Ngiam Tong Tau, who was the first CEO of the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore, is now on a second career as a consultant and adviser to the agro-technology industry. Their sister, Ms Ngiam Kiow Ngo, is a happy grandmother.

Now Alisha is basking in the warmth of the Ngiam family’s generosity. She says, “The Ngiam family has been incredibly generous. I have been able to go through four years of university with a sense of calm, knowing that my tuition fees are being taken care of. I know that for many people, this is a constant source of worry.”

Alisha, who was also a participant in the University Scholars Programme, an inter-disciplinary academic programme, is looking forward to a career in the public sector. Returning to school after a few years of work is also a possibility, she says. Passionate about the study of Economics (“I am constantly excited and amazed at the diversity of situations to which Economics tools can be applied”), she is keen to contribute to a better understanding of income disparities in societies. She says, “I believe that anyone with aptitude should have the funds to help them along. I would hate to be a person who doesn’t give back to society or to causes that I believe in.”

As Alisha embarks on the next phase of her life, another Ngiam Fook Quee Scholarship recipient, Lee Zen Wea is just mid-way through his University days. Zen Wea is a second-year undergraduate FASS student, who is also a participant in the University Scholars Programme. With his tuition fees taken care of, Zen Wea is able to afford overseas trips to broaden his range of experiences – both academic and personal. He has already participated in the Yale Summer School programme and has also been selected for a Student Exchange Programme with the University of Nottingham, UK. He says, “The best gift that one can give a person is the gift of opportunity. The Ngiam Fook Quee Scholarship has expanded and enriched my university experience. I hope that in whichever field I work in the future, I will have a positive impact on society.”
The inaugural NUS Economics Alumni Bursary Awards were presented to three undergraduates, with effect from academic year 2010/2011. They are Joyce Ng Shimei, Valerie Seet Jia Le and Tan Kian Guan. The award is worth $2,000 per student per year, for a maximum of three years. The aim is to increase the number of bursaries to ten per year. The selection and renewal criteria include that applicants must be Singaporeans, whose per capita monthly household income does not exceed $500. We encourage alumni members to donate to this worthy cause at www.nuseconomicsalumni.org.

The following comments are from Tan Kian Guan who shares about himself and how receiving the award motivates him to work even harder.

“I am very active in sports. I swim, jog and work out in the gym during my free time. I am also training with the Team NUS IVP volleyball team about three times a week. I recently participated in the Singapore Volleyball Open Championship with the team.

I chose to major in economics because I have a passion for economics since I first took the subject during junior college. I like economics because it is unique and different from other disciplines. While my peers from the same major fuss about the amount of mathematics involved, I am always fascinated by the way economics converts the real world reality into mathematical forms and attempts to make sense out of it, formulating new ideas.

I have a passion for economics and would like to pass on the same sentiments to the younger generations by becoming an economics teacher. Most importantly, I think the bursary award is a great source of motivation for me to work even harder in my studies. I think getting a good result in my studies is a way of showing my appreciation towards the Economics Alumni group. I will use the money to pay part of my tuition fees and the rest to buy new textbooks in future.

Upon graduation, if I were to become a teacher, I will pay more attention to those needy students in the school, giving them free tuition if there’s a need. If I do not become a teacher, I will think of contributing part of my income to charities in future whenever the opportunity arises.”

Launches in 2008, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) Economic Dialogue serves as a platform for academics, economists and students to exchange views and discuss pertinent economic issues facing Singapore. The interactive session is an opportunity for students to gain insights into policy making. The MTI Economic Dialogue 2010, which was held on 14 October 2010, also gave recognition to the top economics students through the presentation of the MTI Academic Awards. The MTI Book Prize was awarded to the best third-year economics student across all three universities. Khaw Kaimin of NUS was presented with this award. Also, the MTI Best Thesis Award was presented to Tan Boon Hua, also from NUS, in recognition of the best economics thesis.

Speaking at the third MTI Economic Dialogue, Trade and Industry Minister Lim Hng Kiang said Singapore places a premium on rational thinking, and economics can be a powerful tool to evaluate the best policy options. Mr. Lim also presented the MTI Book Prize and the MTI Best Thesis Award to the top economics students.
GRADUATE PROGRAMME
WELCOME PARTY

The NUS Economics Department organized its annual welcome party for graduate students on 28 August 2010, at the Sun Bistro. The location provided a cosy atmosphere for fraternizing and delicious buffet spreads which everyone savoured throughout the evening. The purpose of the welcome party was to introduce faculty members and students to the newly-joined ones in an informal environment, fostering a better working relationship in the future, especially as the Department consists of people from different parts of the world.

Faculty members and students began streaming into the venue at six in the evening with anticipation, not only familiar faces whom we always sit next to in classes but also fresh faces, many of whom we have never spoken to before. The new students were encouraged to find their seats among the students who have been here for a longer time and it was not long before persons at each table engaged in their own lively conversations, asking each other about the places they came from and tips to do well in each module. The event officially started with the introduction of each faculty member. It was a good opportunity for new students to meet professors beyond those who are teaching their classes. Associate Professor Zeng Jinli, who is also the Director of the Graduate Programme, gave a welcome speech and commended seven Teaching Assistants who achieved the best student feedback.

After the formalities, the evening livened up with the ice-breaking game Bingo. The game enlivened the spirit at the venue as everyone busily sought out the others who possessed characteristics described on the grid that was distributed. This was followed by more games which required the participation of both students and faculty members, as students gamely sang and performed as punishments when they lost. One memorable moment was when the students dispensed with the formalities they usually have in front of their professors when they engaged Professor Danny Quah, Dr. Jessica Pan and Dr. Tatsushi Oka in a number game where they had to form groups among each other in order to make up a number specified by the game master.

The party came to a close with a lucky draw where attractive prizes were awarded to the winners. It was not only the prize-winners who had prizes to bring home with them, but everyone left the event with fond memories as they look forward to their stay in NUS.

NUS ECONOMICS ALUMNI

Ice-Cream Workshop cum Buffet

On 30 October 2010, twenty alumni and family members had an enjoyable time at the Udders Ice Cream shop. They spent two hours learning about the principles of ice-cream making, understanding the pros and cons of different ice-cream machines, making ice-cream and lapping up all the different types of ice-cream on offer!! The buffet consisted of “all-you-can-eat” ice-creams, waffles and hot and cold beverages. The vendor also gave a 10 percent discount for take-away pints of ice-cream! It was also a fruitful time getting to meet some new members who participated in an alumni event for the first time.

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Alumni Give Back to Alma Mater through Mentorship Programme

When a group of National University of Singapore (NUS) Economics alumni launched a mentorship programme for undergraduates, Claire Ban ('07) was very attracted to it, and signed up as a mentor. She says, “I have always felt strongly about giving back. If I could turn back the clock and become an undergraduate again, I would have seized every opportunity I could to understand and prepare better for the world out there after university.” Claire, who works in the logistics and supply chain industry, is now giving the benefit of her work experience to three Economics undergraduates.

The five-month-old NUS Economics Alumni Mentorship Programme, launched by alumni in collaboration with undergraduates from the NUS Economics Society, connects alumni with undergraduates looking for career guidance. Currently, there are 20 undergraduates and nine alumni mentors working in fields as varied as banking, energy, government, shipping, and transport.

Dr. Lee Soo Ann, Chairman of the NUS Economics Alumni and Senior Fellow at the Department of Economics, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, is an enthusiastic supporter of the mentorship programme. He says, “In the university setting, students appreciate advice on the paths they could take after graduation. However, they may not be familiar with the avenues they can tap into to get such guidance. The mentorship programme bridges the gap between these students and alumni, who are often very enthusiastic about giving back to the University as mentors through their time and expertise in specific industries.”

After almost four years in the working world, Claire says, “I want to help my juniors to think a little deeper, a little further and a little bit differently about life after university.”

“The programme is marvellous and extremely helpful as many lessons, such as the transition to working life, are not easily available to us. Learning through the guidance and experiences of my mentor prompted me to think beyond university life and about the years to come,” says Keh Chun Wei, a second-year Economics student and Claire’s mentee.


The Kukup Adventure

Armed with nothing more than zest and camaraderie, the inaugural trip of the NUS Economics Alumni embarked upon over the weekend of 19-20 February 2011.

Destination? Kukup – a small fishing village located just a short distance away from Singapore, a mere 40 kilometres southwest of Johor Bahru, in the district of Pontian (Johor), and facing the Straits of Malacca.

Post-storm, the huge puddles of water by the jetty posed a threat to pedestrians looking to board the boat en route to Kukup. Fortunately, we had the gung-ho organizer to the rescue – with his handy scooter! Lunch was a sumptuous seafood spread.

From the boat, we had our first glimpse of Kukup - a most rejuvenating retreat-to-be, albeit the stormy skies. Taking a walk around the village of Kukup highlighted some interesting sights – fishing nets, houses on stilts, mudskippers, even an abandoned boat. The main mode of (green) transport on the little island is none other than the trusty bicycle.

One of the favourite pastimes of the Kukup village residents is a good game of table-tennis! We pitted our two champions in the sport against the resident champion in Kukup village. Taking a respite from our stroll… Mahjong and karaoke marathons, anyone? More activities for the day – The Coconut Short-put Competition! (Item required – 1 coconut per person.)

Here are some of the most gorgeous sights of the trip – the lovely sunset and dusk – complimentary, of course. The night activity was a most exciting one! Writing our wishes on the Kong Ming Lanterns prior to sending them off through sheer physics – akin to the principles of a hot-air balloon. In addition, we had fun, both watching AND lighting up fireworks into the night-sky! Certainly a feat worth mentioning…! The finale of the trip on the returning day was a short excursion to the kelong, where we had the chance to see really exotic sea creatures, such as puffer fishes, seahorses and… even sharks!

Friendships forged, memories created, skills honed (ranging from improving our Mahjong and singing ability… to the ability to light up the Kong Ming Lanterns and fireworks!)… Definitely a most fruitful inaugural trip for the NUS Economics Alumni Club members!
Ho Kim Cheong, Year 3 Economics Major @ Waseda University

As many would say, a student exchange programme opens you up to a world of new horizons, exposing you to the unknowns and leaving you to adapt to a completely new culture. For me, my overseas exchange experience took place in Japan. Japan is a land of contrasts, as old towns and mega skyscrapers lie side-by-side, and geishas and businessmen co-exist in harmony within their individual professions. While indeed those were the first few impressions that I had when I was in Japan for the first few weeks, I began to realise the intricacies of Japanese culture and behaviour of the Japanese, beyond the usual things mentioned in travel guidebooks. Japanese are extremely well-mannered people and they treat people with utmost respect, as evident from the amount of honorific language they use when communicating with other people, for example, between the service staff and their customers, bosses and subordinates, and towards the seniors. I would say that the level of service treatment that I received from even the most common of shops in Tokyo is unrivalled. The Japanese are very helpful and honest people, as evident from the spontaneous help that I received from them when I was lost with my friend during a winter trip in Hokkaido. The Japanese are extremely punctual too, as seen from how they manage their train system to arrive exactly to the minute so that their almost mangled-looking train system operates perfectly. The seasons in Japan were lovely too; as I had my exchange for one year, I could experience the distinct four seasons as the weather and colour of the leaves changed. Not to mention the change in seasonal fruits and packaged Lipton tea drinks that come along too!

I studied in the School of International Liberal Studies (SILS) in Waseda University for my exchange. The spring school term lasts from April to July and the autumn term lasts from September to early February. As the name of the school suggests, one is able to study an array of subjects ranging from the sciences to the humanities to business and economics, all in English. SILS is like a mini-United-Nations - apart from Japanese, there are Koreans, Chinese and other international students from over forty countries. In fact, Waseda University has the greatest number of international students throughout Japan. There will be chances for you to interact with both Japanese and international students not only in SILS itself, but also in the co-curricular activities, their so-called “circles”. It is reputed that more than three thousand circles, formal or informal, exist within Waseda University. No matter what kind of interests you have, be it bungee jumping, cooking or plain beer drinking (their nomikai/飲み会 sessions), they have a circle suited for you. There will be compulsory Japanese classes for international students to take during their exchange term, and depending on your aptitude, you could be streamed to higher level Japanese classes. I was initially shocked as I could not really understand the Japanese the teacher was saying during the first few Japanese classes, but as time passed, as I learnt more Japanese grammar and vocabulary and spoke with the Japanese people, my language skills improved.

Even though Japan is wonderful in many aspects, problems consistently plague the country too. Even though deflation has been the phenomenon for the past year or so due to the recession, the prices are still extremely high. A two-station subway ride within Tokyo city costs about the same as a subway ride across the ends of Singapore, and fruit and vegetable prices are exorbitant. With a high service level and quality of food definitely comes a high price tag. Fortunately, there are those 100 yen shops at which you can buy most of the necessities at just 100 yen (S$1.50) per item. As the recession drags on, people are feeling the stress brought upon by their never-ending working hours and decreasing pay. The changing mentality of the young Japanese people of today also gives rise to a new class of part-timers who refuse to conform to the current working mentality of the Japanese businesses, while others abandon the notion of working altogether and became unemployed instead. The political situation is also messy too, as seen from the frequent changes in Prime Minister and the inability of the current political administration to steer the nation out of the deflated economy.

What makes being an exchange student interesting for me is...
that I have the chance to compare the cultural, political and economic aspects between Singapore and Japan and this has allowed me to look at the world from a different point of view. Coupled with the modules I took in my faculty and the interactions with international students, I have realised that there are so many things to explore and one should not just be satisfied staying in one’s comfort zone, but should try venturing out to seek knowledge. If you like learning a new language, have a keen interest in understanding a new, intriguing culture, and interacting in an international setting, the exchange programme at SILS in Waseda University would be the right one for you.

Joshua Tan Kok Leng, Year 3 Economics (2nd Major) @ University of Ottawa

I was given the opportunity to embark on a student exchange at the University of Ottawa, Canada during Semester 1 of AY2010/2011. This was a huge undertaking for me as I would be away from Singapore, in an unfamiliar environment for four months without the support of my family and friends. However, my fears were unfounded as my new friends and the student community at Ottawa made me feel right at home! The student exchange programme has given me the opportunity to meet new friends, experience a new culture and system of education, travel to many places and more importantly, to discover more about myself. My time spent abroad has been a delightful experience and I have never regretted my decision to embark on my student exchange! To begin, I would like to introduce you to the geography of Ottawa.

Located in the Eastern Part of Canada in the province of Ontario, Ottawa is the political heartland of Canada, and boasts a rich history and vibrant arts culture. The Parliament Building, Museum of Natural Sciences and Museum of War are just a few of the attractions that Ottawa has to offer. Travelling is not a problem as the city is compact and is served by an efficient transport network of buses and trains. The campus is a network of buildings, both aged and new, that is located away from the hustle and bustle of the city but remains walkable to most parts of the city. Although Ottawa is the capital of Canada, the city is not as built-up as Toronto or Singapore and affords one the tranquillity of quiet neighbourhood and the convenience of a city.

Historically, Ottawa was chosen as the capital of Canada as it lies between the English and French speaking regions. Hence, a strong emphasis is placed on bilingualism as a means of respect for their English and French roots and as a result, the University of Ottawa is a bilingual university. I was surprised at how seriously they took their bilingual policy when I found out that students are able to do their exams in English or French and all activities are conducted bilingually, even the emails that are sent by the university are in English and French.

The University of Ottawa, also known as U of O, has a strong standing in the social sciences, and, due to the proximity to the Parliament of Canada, is often consulted in matters of governance. There is a strong focus on proposing policies that are based on sound social and economic research. I was privileged to study under Professor Serge Columbe, a renowned expert on economic growth whose research has greatly influenced Canadian economic policy. Students are actively engaged in formulating policy in lectures where academics meets public policy. The enthusiasm and level of engagement in class has spilled into student activities in which students from the Student Federation of University of Ottawa, SFUO, are actively engaged in writing articles, handing out flyers and badges and advocating for student rights, such as the right to affordable education and the right to be free from discrimination. I was impressed by the vibrancy of the civil society and student engagement at the University.

Student life is not only about academics and staying at Marchand, a student residence; I shared my living space with local Canadians and international students from China, Belgium, France and many more. This created many opportunities to experience different cultures and bond with my floor mates through various floor activities such as Halloween pumpkin carving and international potlucks, which were a delightful treat, as well as birthday celebrations! Life is not always smooth sailing and sharing one’s personal space with many people from different cultures can be stressful sometimes, but there was a culture of communication as well as mutual respect and tolerance, values that Canadians hold dear, that helped to ease tensions. From my personal experiences and daily interactions, Canadians in general are warm, friendly and approachable and the friends that I made have left me with a positive long-lasting impression.

Jordan Tan (first from left)
In addition, the International Office at the University of Ottawa had gone out of its way to ensure that international students are welcomed and actively involved in campus life through organizing a plethora of activities. I thoroughly enjoyed activities such as Francophile nights, during which students are exposed to French culture, visits to local attractions in Ontario such as the Animal Safari, nature trails, white-water rafting and laser tag quest, as well as short trips around Canada to Montreal and Quebec for whale-watching! The international office also organized an international student night, during which students were given the opportunity to share more about their home country and was instrumental in helping the international students bond together and settle into our new environment.

Before I left Singapore, I left knowing that I wanted to enrich my life with new experiences and thinking back, sometimes it is the little things in life that we often take for granted that make the biggest difference. For example, the simple act of grocery shopping and cooking with my exchange friends not only provided many opportunities to bond with my Canadian and Singaporean friends but has also made me more independent. I also enjoyed the long dinner conversations that we often have which led to new spin-offs for trips around Canada after the semester had ended. We also had the opportunity to celebrate two of my Singaporean friends’ 21st birthdays in Ottawa. One was celebrated at the parliament hill where we were nearly chased away by the police and another where we made a trip down from Ottawa to Kingston to surprise her at her house!

All in all, I spent a whole month travelling before my student exchange started, after my student exchange and during my school term. I travelled with my fellow Singaporean student exchange friends to the United States and around Canada and one of my most memorable experiences was being able to meet up and travel together with fellow Singaporeans on exchange from all over Canada such as from Queen’s University and the University of Guelph. Some of the more memorable activities that we did together were skiing in Montreal and celebrating the New Year countdown in Times Square!

My SEP experience has left me with many fond memories and lasting friendships which I will always treasure and which have greatly enriched my life.

Loh Jun Lai Eugene, Year 3 Economics Major @ Chinese University of Hong Kong

My first acquaintance with Hong Kong was an overwhelming experience. Being one of the most densely-populated cities in the world, the streets and trains are constantly inundated with people, a phenomenon that greatly magnifies Singapore’s overcrowding in trains. High-rise buildings complete with dazzling neon lights and signage pepper the skyline. Coupled with the constant chatter of Cantonese all around, a language I can barely comprehend, my first few days in a bustling foreign land were bewildering and disorienting.

However, it did not take long for me to adapt to life in Hong Kong, home to a diverse range of food cuisines. Being an avid foodie, I took delight in knowing that great food was often within reach. My mornings were often kick-started by yum cha sessions or going for dim sum, a typical Cantonese cuisine where small portions of delectable meat and seafood dumplings are freshly steamed and served in steamer baskets. Lazy afternoons were perked up by trips to small cafes where I sipped Hong Kong’s signature creamy milk tea and sampled Chinese pastry such as egg tarts and pineapple buns, served hot out of the oven. For supper, I could turn to the many dessert joints for great comfort food.

As much as I would have loved to continue eating, shopping and sightseeing, I had to ensure I was not neglecting my studies. Being an exchange student at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), I was able to enjoy using the many facilities provided on campus. As the campus is built on top of a hill, CUHK is not only surrounded by lush greenery but also has great views of the nearby harbour and hilly landscape. I am very grateful for the warm hospitality extended by the staff and students of CUHK during my stay in Hong Kong. The Office of Academic Links in CUHK helped exchange students settle in and organized a plethora of activities for us, which included dinner parties, excursions around Hong Kong and even community involvement projects. Many of the local students I met were very outgoing and friendly. I am still amazed by their ability to juggle schoolwork and the many extra-curricular activities they were involved in. As every CUHK student is student is affiliated with one of the four colleges that make up the university, each student is also expected to actively participate in college-related activities which range from anniversary dinners, mass dance competitions and sports events.

CUHK is also the only tertiary education institution in Hong Kong with Nobel Prize winners on its faculty and I was fortunate to be able to attend an international finance lecture by a notable Economics Nobel Prize winner Professor Robert Mundell, in which he expounded his views on the various major currencies in the world.

My SEP experience in CUHK not only gave me a short break away from Singapore, it has given me an opportunity to soak up different experiences overseas, make new friends and be more independent. As any student who has been on SEP would share, going on exchange is like embarking on an eye-opening adventure and a golden opportunity for personal growth.
The Talks and Seminars Subcommittee of the NUS Economics Society organised the inaugural NUS Economics Forum 2011 on 16 February 2011. The Forum was organised in line with the NUS Economic Society’s aim of providing opportunities for students to gain a deeper insight into Economics and creating greater awareness of the career opportunities available upon graduation.

To enable students to gain first-hand knowledge of the applications of Economics in real-life working environments, and insights into the diverse career opportunities available for Economics students, we invited two NUS Economics alumni - Mrs. Chew Soon Gek (Head of Portfolio Management and Investment Strategy for Asia at Clariden Leu) and Mr. Lincoln Teo (General Manager of DP Credit Bureau Pte Ltd) to share their experiences in the private sector. In addition, we also invited Dr. Thia Jang Ping (Director of the Economics Division at the Ministry of Trade and Industry) to provide a glimpse into life in the public sector.

During the forum, the speakers were engaging and provided insightful glimpses into their respective professions. For instance, Mrs. Chew shared her wide experiences in dealing with clients in the private banking industry as well as how economic data was used to analyse and construct portfolios. Furthermore, Mr. Teo related his deep understanding of risk management, including his experience at a credit bureau. He also shared interesting examples of research in consumer psychology used in his line of work. In addition, Dr. Thia provided many relevant and interesting examples of the applications of economics in public policy, such as how consumer behaviour may affect energy policy, as well as how various government policies, such as the Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) Scheme, have affected the Singapore economy.

The Forum, which drew around 65 students, was a success as it provided a good opportunity for students to interact with professionals, including NUS Economics alumni, who were keen to share their experiences and their passion for Economics. Indeed, we believe that students benefited from the sharing of thoughts regarding the applications of economics in real-life working environments, and from the insights into the different careers.

We would like to thank the Dean’s Office of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the NUS Economics Department for their strong support of the Forum, and we hope to continue organising such forums to benefit the NUS Economics student community.

Dr. Thia Jang Ping, Mr. Lincoln Teo, Benny Yeo, Wang Xinmin, Mrs. Chew Soon Gek (from left to right)

Mr. Lincoln Teo sharing his experience with the students

The talk, organized by the NEFMQ 2011 Committee of the NUS Economics Society, conducted by the Investment Management Association of Singapore and supported by MoneySENSE, took place on 18 March 2011. The talk was held at Lecture Theatre 12 of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at NUS, attracting 130 students from various faculties, including Business, Computing, Engineering, Arts and Social Sciences, Law, Medicine, Science, Design and Environment, and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

The students who attended the talk gained much insight from the speaker Mr. James Ong, a Certified Financial Planner and a Chartered Life Underwriter. He conducts seminars and workshops regularly in many organizations and corporations in Singapore, was a practitioner in the financial planning industry with more than 15 years’ experience, and is widely known for his approach to integrated financial planning. He was one of the top 10 finalists in the Financial Advisor Representative Award 2004. James contributes articles to the Sunday Times and has been featured on the news radio channels 93.8, 95.8 and television Channel U. He was formerly a Module Head in the certification board of the Financial Planning Association of Singapore (FPAS). Today, Mr. Ong represents the Investment Management Association of Singapore, an industry association that partners MoneySENSE, Singapore’s national financial education programme.

With his many years of experience in the investment industry, Mr. Ong gave his audience an extremely insightful and informative talk on a wide range of investment products. His talk covered topics from stocks and bonds to other retail investment products. He also spoke in detail about the basics of investing, such as deciding on an appropriate asset allocation and considering the risks and transaction costs of one’s

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intended investments. He engaged the audience well with his personal stories, making the investment products seem real and not merely terms.

At the end of the two-hour talk, Mr. Ong was happy to answer any doubts or queries raised by the audience. Students in the audience posed several questions, which he responded to patiently and conscientiously. When the question-and-answer session came to an end, the emcee thanked him for his delightful talk with a round of applause from the audience. A token of appreciation was then given to Mr. Ong by the President of the NUS Economics Society, Foo Xian Yun.

Even after the talk came to a close, some members of the audience had questions which they wanted to ask Mr. Ong personally. Graciously, he stayed back in the lecture theatre to patiently answer what the students asked. We are sure all students benefited significantly from the talk and Mr. Ong’s kind advice.

The smooth running of this event would not have been possible without the support of MoneySENSE. The organizing committee of the NUS Economics Society National Economics and Finance Management Quiz (NEFMQ) 2011 also contributed to the planning of “Investing Now”. NEFMQ 2011 would like to extend our appreciation to the speaker, the Investment Management Association of Singapore, MoneySENSE and the NUS Economics Department for their invaluable help.

**NATIONAL ECONOMICS AND FINANCE MANAGEMENT QUIZ 2010**

Top 4 teams with Assoc Prof Chia Ngee Choon (7th from right) and Assoc Prof Tan Erm Ser (1st from left)

NEFMQ 2010 Organising Committee

And by the Judges’ decision, the winner is from Hwa Chong Institution!” announced the emcee.

The supporters of Hwa Chong Institution exclaimed with joy. What a day it was for them to win the prestigious National Economics and Finance Management Quiz 2010, held on 31 July 2010 at the NUS University Cultural Centre. For Dunman High, it was a great display for them, finishing second and performing better than they did last year. We also had a first-time finalist in River Valley High School, and Victoria Junior College was in the top 4 as well. In all, we had a total of 345 students and 115 teams from close to 20 institutions including junior colleges, polytechnics, integrated programme and international baccalaureate institutions participating in the event.

This year, NEFMQ 2010 was rebuilt to bring in an elimination round along with a presentation round for the final two teams. The preliminary grade was also revamped to include a 40 per cent score from online mini-quizzes and 20 per cent from online blog-postings, where students had to explain and evaluate their responses to questions. This change was also in tandem with the 20th anniversary of NEFMQ.

We are proud to have Mrs. Tan Say Tin from the Ministry of Education, Mr. Tang Wee Lip from the NUS Economics Alumni
and Mr. Paul See from the Association of Financial Advisers as our judges for the presentation rounds. We are also proud to have received support from the NUS Economics Department and the NUS Office of Corporate Relations for this event. Our sponsor, MoneySENSE, has been our sponsor for the third year running, and we received further support from our other sponsors – E1 Technologies, the Public Utilities Board, EmitAsia and Gardenia Bread.

During one of the audience rounds, a unique video spanning twenty years was shown to the audience, which shared with them the history and development of the Quiz. We were also proud to have Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, Senior Minister of State for Ministry of Law and Ministry of Home Affairs, as our Guest of Honour. Also in the audience were Associate Professor Chia Ngee Choon, Deputy Head of the NUS Economics Department, Associate Professor Tan Ern Ser, Vice-Dean to Office of Student Affairs, and Associate Professor Anthony Chin, Advisor to NUS Economics Society.

We were honoured that our Guest of Honour, Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, addressed us on the day itself. He mentioned the importance of economics in a student’s life as well as the importance of financial management and why we must always be abreast of key issues in these fields.

Associate Professor Chia gave a resounding speech on what economics is about and why it is important in our daily lives – even for students. Her speech was exceptionally engaging as she made use of many examples to bring across her message to the students.

The planning of NEFMQ 2010 started in September 2009, and the Organising Committee successfully organized the Quiz after months of hard work and preparation. The finalists who took part in the Quiz, likewise, had to go through a gruelling competition as they contended against other teams in online mini-quizzes and blog posts, buzzer and flash rounds, the team round and the final presentation round. In all, NEFMQ 2010 has come to an end, but its spirit will live on and we hope to look forward to an equally, if not more exciting, NEFMQ 2011 – the 21st anniversary where NEFMQ will officially become an adult!

NUS ECONOMICS SOCIETY (ENS)

NUS Economics Society Dinner and Dance 2010

The NUS Economics Society Dinner and Dance 2010 was held at the Peninsula Excelsior Hotel on Saturday, 19 June 2010. Current students, former classmates and professors made time for one another, and together, devoted a fruitful evening to forging new friendships and deepening old ones. The light-hearted atmosphere that filled the ballroom throughout the evening was the result of a thoughtfully-planned programme. The entire committee has been preparing for this event for months since last year. Relentless effort from all committees can be shown where some even had sleepless nights for the final preparation for the event!

On that night, guests chatted amongst themselves amidst the cheery courses designed specifically for the Singaporean palate. The VIPs, Professor Sun Yeneng and ENS president Mr. Yap Kim Leng, went up to the podium respectively to deliver their speeches. Professor Sun spoke at length of the proud history of the NUS Economics Department, and the differences between past and present, and also of the future. He commended the laudable efforts of NUS Economics Alumni, and how all the efforts by the undergraduates, graduates, Department and the alumni will all contribute towards building the NUS Economics identity. He received a round of applause when he finished. So did Mr. Yap Kim Leng, as he spoke words that touched the hearts of Economics undergraduates, graduates and alumni alike.

The programme gradually built up with Mr. John Khoo, a self-made singer and composer, belting out smooth ballad after ballad, along with his co-performer, Mr. Jon Ang. The...
guests, charmed by their angelic voices, sat spellbound song after song. Both of them also cooperatively belted out another song after receiving a special song dedication from the audience. Later, we had an invigorating breakdance performance by Recognized Studios. Everyone in the ballroom was captivated by the energetic ten-minute dance performance. We also had an enthralling magic show by Ms Priscilla Khong, a magician born into a legacy of magic. Dressed in a shiny outfit that befitted her twinkling smile, she was the centre of attention of the adoring crowd, playfully leading the mood of the participants.

We also had interactive games, for example Collector’s Nest where each table was given a unique list of items to collect. The guests laughed and snorted at what they had to do as the Emcees for the night, Mr. Darren Foong and Ms Ipsita Basu, enthusiastically explained the rules. Some tables had to collect things like cufflinks and fedora hats, while others had to collect a kiss and bring an alumnus along to the stage, where the Emcees will check that they had indeed collected their specified items. In return, only the top 3 that were fast enough to collect all the items were awarded a hamper full of goodie sand!

On that night, we also had our very own contest titled “Divo Diva”. The friendly sabotage of arrowed couples on stage soon tickled the roaring (and merciless) crowd. Sashaying with the music, each couple catwalked their way down the aisle to the groove of popular romantic music such as “Today you must marry me” by Jolin Tsai and David Tao, and “Touch my body” by Mariah Carey. A few were shy, and needed encouragement and cajoling from their partners and the Emcees. By popular voting as shown by the loudest applause received, the favourites of the night would have to be the King of Hearts, Mr. Joshua Tan, and his Queen, the Queen of Hearts, Ms Dawn Lee. Second runner-up would be the King of Ace, Mr. Yap Kim Leng, and likewise the Queen of Ace, Ms Serena. The chosen couples beamed at the camera, wearing their tiaras and sashes respectively. And especially for those who became proud owners of brand new iPods, hard discs and mini loud speakers from the lucky draw, the dinner ended on an even higher note.

It was a glorious night with everyone enjoying themselves, professors and alumni engaging with students. Friends hugged and lingered to chat. There were cameras flashing the whole time during this event as students took photos with friends for remembrance. It was be a night many will remember fondly, and cherish, years down the road when their hair has turned white and memories grow long.

Nonetheless, there are three things which make this year’s Dinner and Dance particularly successful. First, is the artfully-designed venue. The light-hearted mood facilitated interaction between the professors, alumni and students. Second is the insightful arrangement for key members of staff and the society to be consistently on stage. Amidst the evening of fun, students’ awareness of leading personnel in their own faculty was raised. Potentially and hopefully, students with ideas know the right people to approach. Third, and most importantly, is the dedication and efforts of the planning committee. The resourceful securing of sponsorships and meticulous preparations, involving an endless list of efforts, ensured the success of the night. The NUS Economics Society Dinner and Dance 2010 was, unmistakably, a satisfying and spectacular success.

AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

First Grant by AXA Research Fund in Asia Awarded to NUS

GRANT PRESENTATION CEREMONY: (From left) NUS Department of Psychology’s Professor Richard Ebstein, NUS Deputy President (Research and Technology) Professor Barry Halliwell, Head of the AXA Research Fund Mrs. Anne-Juliette Hermant, NUS Department of Economics’ Professor Chew Soo Hong and CEO of AXA Life Singapore Mr. Glenn Williams

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For their study on “Biology of Decision Making under Risk”, NUS researchers Professors Richard P. Ebstein of the Department of Psychology and Chew Soo Hong of the Department of Economics were awarded the first grant offered by the AXA Research Fund in Asia.

The AXA Research Fund, a major and innovative initiative of scientific philanthropy supported by the worldwide insurance group AXA, is awarding 517,000 Euros (S$904,079) over a period of three years to NUS for the study. This marks the first time the Fund has awarded a grant to a university in Asia.

NUS Deputy President (Research and Technology) Professor Barry Halliwell said: “We are pleased to receive this esteemed gift from the AXA Research Fund which will support the work of NUS researchers to identify and explain the biological underpinnings of risk-taking in human choice and behaviour. The gift is recognition of NUS as a leading global university centred in Asia, and the University’s relentless drive to contribute to holistic understanding of critical issues for Asia and the rest of the world.”

“We are convinced that basic research is essential for the development of knowledge in this area and thus contributes to building stronger and safer societies. AXA teams in Singapore share with me the pride of this extension of the AXA Research Fund outside of Europe. I believe it is a very strong sign of our long term commitment to the region and its strategic importance for the Group,” said CEO of AXA Japan-Asia-Pacific Region and Member of the AXA Group Executive Committee Mr. John R. Dacey.

Over a period of three years, the two researchers will look into identifying the genes and environmental influences that can be linked to an individual’s propensity to take risks. They will use methodologies from behavioural and experimental economics, psychology and the biological sciences. The study will generate quantitative phenotypes that can propel advances in understanding the molecular architecture of human decision making in a risky environment.

It is hoped that the study will offer additional insights into the “nature versus nurture” debate about what influences an individual’s attitude towards financial risk.

Several problems that afflict the world today remain obscure due to an almost complete ignorance of the biological architecture of human decision making. These problems can be viewed in terms of breakdowns in decision making ranging from economic meltdowns, driven in large measure by widespread breakdowns in trust between individuals and institutions freezing commerce worldwide, to disorders in individuals where the primary symptoms are more dramatic and often involve pathological changes in decision making behaviour, e.g. drug addiction, pathological gambling, eating disorders, borderline personality disorders and extreme mistakes in saving and spending.

In addition to support from the AXA Research Fund, a grant from the Singapore Ministry of Education will be used for the study of the genetics of social decision making. The AXA Research Fund, which aims to encourage scientific research that would contribute to understanding and preventing environmental, life, and socio-economic risks, has supported 192 research projects implemented in 17 countries by researchers of 39 nationalities.

(From Latest@NUS, 3 December 2010, NUS Office of Corporate Relations)

Tier 2 Grant Awarded by the Ministry of Education’s Academic Research Council

The Ministry of Education’s Academic Research Council awarded a Tier 2 grant entitled “Biological Economics and Decision Making” to a NUS-based research team led by two recent additions to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Professors Chew Soo Hong and Richard Ebstein. Together with Dr. Zhong Songfa, a recent hire in the Department of Economics, they have published three out of the first nine papers on the genetics of economic risk taking, all appearing in 2009, in addition to two papers on the genetics of social decision making in 2010. The grant is particularly timely in reinforcing NUS’ support of this highly multidisciplinary research direction and enabling the team to sustain its leading position in the nascent area of the biology of economic decision making and its extensions to the social sciences.

Faculty Research Award 2010 - Promising Researcher

Dr. Chen Yi-Chun is a recipient of the Faculty Research Award 2010 (Promising Researcher category). The Faculty of Arts and Social Science inaugurated the annual Faculty Research Award in 2010 to recognize excellent staff achievement and to encourage quality research in the Faculty. There are two categories of awards, Award for Excellent Researcher (AEP) and Award for Promising Researcher (APR). Dr. Chen joined the Department of Economics in 2009 after obtaining his PhD from Northwestern University and his areas of interest are Microeconomic Theory, Game Theory, Mathematical Economics and Information Economics.
differ from the definitions of “short run” and “long run”
given at the macroeconomic section of the same text.
Another example of such diversity is evident from the list
of renowned economists. Keynes and Hayek exemplify
the different ends of the spectrum, representing different
schools of thought on the business cycle, in particular,
about the right actions, and size, of the government in
an economy.

I found myself giving both sides of the business cycle
story when I was explaining how equilibrium arises from
interaction of the aggregate demand and aggregate supply
curves, and how full employment may be attained. In my
opinion, the thinking process and the logical structures
in economics are no different from the sciences, but
when presenting an economic model to the students, we
should always discuss the assumptions behind the model,
so that the logical structures and reasoning that are built
on these assumptions would not be lost or termed as
“economic logic”.

Mr. Liu Zhengning

It’s an honour to win this award and I feel very fortunate
to receive this recognition. My teaching philosophy
is influenced by Han Yu, who was a famous Chinese
philosopher, as well as essayist and poet, during the
Tang dynasty. According to him, the role of a teacher
is defined as “to transit wisdom, impart knowledge and
resolve doubt”. So, generally I worked on these three
aspects of teaching when I taught in the course Money
and Banking.

First, I tried my best to demonstrate to my students the
brilliant wisdom of great economists in the history of
monetary economics, namely, the doctrines of John
Maynard Keynes, Milton Friedman and Robert Lucas Jr.

Second, I always addressed the intuition behind economic
models. I constantly employed real world examples to
complement the formulas and abstract mathematics
taught in the textbook. Third, I often encourage the
students to be sceptical of what they learned. On top of
that, I would invest sufficient time and effort to resolve
any doubts raised by the students.
Professor Costas Azariadis joined the Department of Economics as Tan Chin Tuan Professor in Banking and Finance from 2 February 2011 to 4 March 2011. Professor Azariadis is the Edward Mallinckrodt Distinguished University Professor in Arts and Sciences, Washington University, St. Louis. He works on multiple equilibria and stabilization policy, the dynamics of economic development, and the role of imperfect financial markets in dynamic general equilibrium.

Professor Adam M. Brandenburger was jointly appointed as Goh Keng Swee Professor by the Department of Economics and Department of Strategy and Policy from 13 to 17 September 2010. Professor Brandenburger is the J.P. Valles Professor at the Stern School of Business at New York University. Prior to joining Stern, he held the MBA Class of 1958 Professorship at Harvard Business School. Professor Brandenburger is an authority on game theory and its application to business strategy, and teaches an MBA course on this subject. He was voted NYU Stern MBA Professor of the Year in 2006. His book “Co-opetition” (with Barry Nalebuff, Doubleday, 1996) is used by businesses as a guide to strategy in the information economy, and has been translated into more than a dozen languages.

Professor Vincent Crawford was appointed Distinguished Speaker for the 1st Asia Summer Institute in Behavioural Economics conducted from 26 July to 6 August 2010. Professor Crawford is the Drummond Professor of Political Economy and Fellow of Oxford University and Distinguished Professor Emeritus and Research Professor at the University of California, San Diego.

Professor Cheng Hsiao was jointly appointed as Visiting Professor by the Department of Economics and the Department of Strategy and Policy from 19 July to 17 August 2010. Professor Hsiao is Professor of Economics at the University of Southern California. He is an Academician at Academia Sinica and Fellow of the Econometric Society. He is a world-leading expert in panel data econometrics.

Professor Terrance Odean was appointed Distinguished Speaker for the 1st Asia Summer Institute in Behavioural Economics conducted from 26 July to 6 August 2010. Professor Odean is the Rudd Family Foundation Professor of Finance at the University of California, Berkeley.

Professor Ted (Edward) O’Donoghue was appointed Distinguished Speaker for the 1st Asia Summer Institute in Behavioural Economics conducted from 26 July to 6 August 2010. Professor O’Donoghue is Professor of Economics at Cornell University.

Professor Edward C. Prescott was appointed Lim Chong Yah Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences from 13 to 17 August 2010. Professor Prescott received the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics in 2004, jointly with Finn Kydland. Currently working as Senior Monetary Adviser at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and as the W.P. Carey Professor at Arizona State University’s W.P. Carey School of Business, he is a leading figure in modern macroeconomics. Professor Prescott was one of the plenary speakers for the 10th SAET Conference on Current Trends in Economics, jointly organised by the Department of Economics, NUS and the Society for the Advancement of Economic Theory (SAET).

Professor Danny Quah joined the Department of Economics as Tan Chin Tuan Professor in Banking and Finance (3-year appointment for visits lasting from 6 weeks to 2 months each year, starting in 2010-2011). Professor Quah is a Professor of Economics at the London School of Economics (LSE), Co-Director of LSE Global Governance, and Council Member on Malaysia’s National Economic Advisory Council. At LSE he is also Senior Fellow at LSE IDEAS, Senior Research Associate at the Centre for the Study of Human Rights, and Chair of the Board of the LSE-PKU Summer School. He was Head of the Department of Economics, LSE from August 2006 to September 2009. His research interests include economic growth, income distribution and inequality, the global economy and information technology.

Professor Matthew Rabin was appointed Distinguished Speaker for the 1st Asia Summer Institute in Behavioural Economics conducted from 26 July to 6 August 2010. Professor Rabin is the Edward G. and Nancy S. Jordan Professor of Economics at the University of California, Berkeley.

Professor Matthew Shou-Chung Shum joined the Department of Economics as Goh Keng Swee Professor from 23 March 2011 to 2 April 2011. Professor Shum is a Professor of Economics at the California Institute of Technology since 2008. Since receiving his PhD in 1998 from Stanford University, Professor Matthew Shum has rapidly emerged as one of the leaders of the growing field of structural estimation in Industrial Organization. He has provided some of the pioneering work on the structural estimation of auctions. This research has been applied to many topics in the auction literature, such as the winner’s curse, asymmetry in auctions, and information aggregation in auctions.

Professor Nicholas C. Yannelis joined the Department of Economics as Goh Keng Swee Professor from 19 July to 24 August 2010. Professor Yannelis is the Commerce Distinguished Alumni Professor of Economics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (main appointment) and Sir
John Hicks Professor of Economic Theory at the University of Manchester (joint appointment). He is the current Chief Editor of the highly-regarded economics journal *Economic Theory*, published by the Society for the Advancement of Economic Theory (SAET). Professor Yannelis was the Programme Co-Chair for the 10th SAET Conference on Current Trends in Economics (13 to 15 August 2010), which was jointly organised by the Department of Economics, NUS and SAET.

**Dr. Lu Yi**, who received his PhD from the University of Hong Kong, was appointed as Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics with effect from 1 July 2010. His research interests include the Chinese economy, international economics, urban economics, economics of organization and strategy and development economics.

**Dr. Tatsushi Oka**, who received his PhD from Boston University, was appointed as Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics with effect from 2 July 2010. His research interests include econometrics, applied time series and labour economics.

**Dr. Jessica Pan**, who received her PhD from the University of Chicago, was appointed as Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics with effect from 21 June 2010. Her research interests include labour economics, applied microeconomics, economics of education and development.

**Dr. Zhong Songfa**, who received his PhD from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, was appointed as Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics with effect from 1 August 2010. His research interests include behavioural economics, experimental economics, biological economics and neuroeconomics.

**Dr. Zhu Shenghao**, who received his PhD from New York University, was appointed as Assistant Professor in the Department of Economics with effect from 21 June 2010. His research interests include macroeconomics and financial economics.

**Dr. Chark Chi Hang**, who received his PhD from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, was appointed as Research Fellow in the Department of Economics with effect from 3 January 2011.

**Dr. Connie Chung**, who received her PhD from the National University of Singapore, was appointed as Lecturer in the Department of Economics with effect from 1 January 2011.

**Dr. Tiago Freire**, who received his PhD from Brown University, was appointed as Visiting Fellow in the Department of Economics with effect from 27 July 2010.

**Dr. Nguyen Hong-Oanh** from the University of Tasmania was appointed Maritime Port Authority (MPA) Visiting Senior Fellow from 14 June to 24 July 2010.

**Dr. Park Jin Ho**, who received his PhD from the University of Missouri, was appointed as Research Fellow in the Singapore Centre for Applied and Policy Economics, Department of Economics with effect from 1 February 2011.

**Dr. Park Myung Duck** from the University of Georgia was appointed as Visiting Fellow in the Department of Economics with effect from 26 July 2010.

**Professor Jose Tongzon** from Inha University was appointed Maritime Port Authority (MPA) Visiting Senior Fellow from 2 August to 5 December 2010.

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**BUNDLE OF JOY ...!**

**Congratulations to ...**

Dr. Tomoo Kikuchi and family on the arrival of their baby boy, Yui, on 27 November 2010.

Dr. Serene Tan and family on the arrival of their baby girl, Pénélope, on 27 October 2010.
OTHER ENS EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Sports and Social Subcommittee organised various events such as the annual Sports Day, Mooncake Festival, Chalet and Chinese New Year steamboat gatherings. Our annual Mooncake Festival gathering was a great chance for members in different committees to get to know each other. Non-Singaporeans also participated in this Mid-Autumn festival celebration, where we savoured mooncakes under the moonlit sky together as a society!

The annual Chinese New Year Steamboat gathering also provided one of the best opportunities for members in every committee to come together to celebrate the New Year.

The Student Welfare Committee of ENS embarked on several new initiatives this year under the 48th Management Committee. We set up a Student Feedback Forum, and organized a Welfare Pack giveaway targeted at all Economics majors and society members. For this new initiative, 300 Economics majors received goodie bags which contained various snacks, a water bottle and stationery.

The Bazaar Committee of NUS Economics Society also successfully organized our annual bazaar in conjunction with Valentine’s Day. Held at the Central Forum, this event ran for three consecutive days – 14 February till 16 February 2011, with the theme of “Love’Ship”.

ENS also took part in the annual NUS Open House on 12 and 13 March 2011, manning a booth in Multi-Purpose Sports Hall 5 for the weekend, to introduce our society to potential students and members.

Since the start of the academic year, the members of ENS Publications have come together to carry out weekly discussions on Economics issues. Our online publication, dubbed as The Marketplace, can be found on the Economics Society’s website for all interested readers.

SEMINAR SERIES

The Department of Economics’ seminars (http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/eces/events/seminar.html) are usually held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 4.00 pm - 5.30 pm. All seminars are held at the Lim Tay Boh Seminar Room (AS2/03-12); unless otherwise mentioned.

To join the mailing list:

NUS users -  https://groups.nus.edu.sg/NUSgroups/join.asp?groupname=ecs-seminar
Others - administrator@groups.nus.edu.sg
We would like to express our sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to this issue of ECONews.

We welcome your contributions on teaching, research and learning topics, as well as feedback on this issue. Please write to ecsnews@nus.edu.sg.

Do we have your correct name and address? Would you like us to send a copy of ECONews to your friends/colleagues? Please fill in the form below and fax or email it to us.

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