

# THE UCSI GAZETTE

THE UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

## PUSHING THE FRONTIERS OF SCIENCE

Advance Research at Imperial



Passion-Fuelled Medical Research



Research at Tsinghua



2017 STAR TREKKERS

VOLUME 14

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# PROGRESS YEAR IN, YEAR OUT

What constitutes a great year? Standing out as Asia's fastest rising university in 2017 helps. The same goes for a major campus expansion that increases our operational capacity by more than 1 million ft<sup>2</sup>. While these milestones are encouraging, we are cognisant that our true measure of success lies with our students. So when they are annually selected by the world's best universities like Harvard, Imperial College London and Tsinghua to push the frontiers of knowledge, we know that we are shaping the future.

*Join us and find out what's next in 2018.*



**TOMORROW'S  
EDUCATION TODAY**

*UCSI's campus expansion is just the first phase of a grander plan to turn its Kuala Lumpur campus into an education city.*



*UCSI Hotel Kuching and the new Sarawak campus are the latest attractions at the Isthmus commercial business district.*

*In Kuching, UCSI launched an eponymous hotel and a new Sarawak campus to much acclaim. UCSI Hospital is also almost completed in Springhill, Negeri Sembilan, promising to turn the locale into a hub of healthcare, education and medical tourism.*



*The artist's impression of UCSI Hospital in Springhill, Negeri Sembilan.*



*The artist's impression of UCSI's education city in Kuala Lumpur.*



## JOIN ASIA'S FASTEST RISING UNIVERSITY

UCSI recorded a meteoric 131-spot climb in the QS University Rankings: Asia 2018 exercise to occupy rank 212 after making improvements in virtually all aspects of evaluation criteria. It is also rated in Tier 5 (Emerging Universities) in SETARA 2017, placing it on a par with established foreign branch campuses in Malaysia.



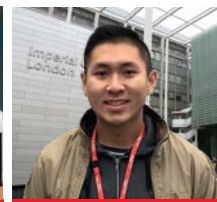
## GLOBAL RECOGNITION

Harvard, Imperial College London and Tsinghua annually select UCSI students for high impact research programmes. The following students were chosen to work alongside the world's best minds in 2017.



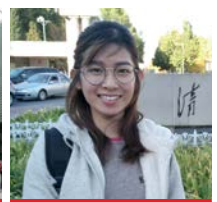
**HARVARD**

TAY CHEE SIN (left) and JESSICA MARIAN LEE MEI SZE



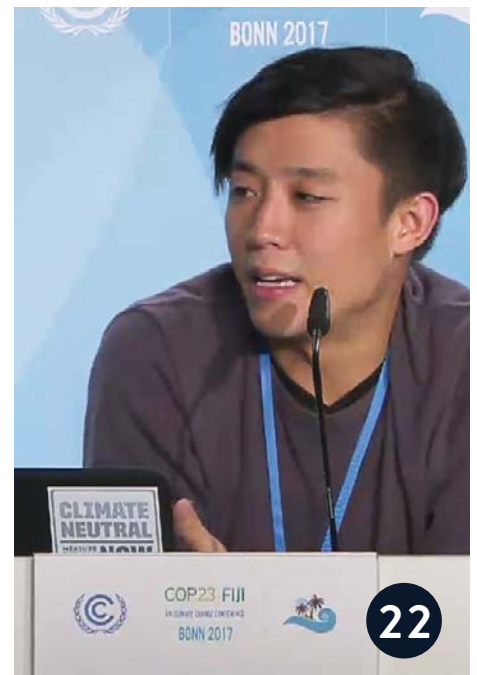
**IMPERIAL**

GARY POH KWOR XIANG



**TSINGHUA**

THI SHIKI



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Assistant Professor Dr Christine Tan Yunn Bing, Chairperson of PPC 2017, welcomed participants with hopes that it will be a fruitful and inspiring affair for everyone.



Emeritus Professor Dr Michael Campbell, shared his discerning perspective on what piano teaching can be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in his Keynote Address.



Emeritus Professor Dr Michael Campbell, offers constructive guidance to a participant of his Unmastered Class.



Seasoned jazz pianist, Michael Veerapen enlightens a participant of his pre-conference workshop.

2017

# PIANO PEDAGOGY CONFERENCE

Tinkling the Ivories in the Future



Piano teaching goes beyond an art or an occupation; it is a legacy that makes the next generation better – thus the sentiments expressed by Professor P'ng Tean Hwa, who now heads UCSI University's (UCSI) Institute of Music (IMus) regarding Emeritus Professor Dr Michael Campbell, his own piano teacher who was invited as the Keynote Speaker at the institute's Piano Pedagogy Conference 2017.

More than 150 participants and speakers at this inaugural conference reflected, discussed, debated and contemplated on the same question. What is piano teaching – is it a just a business, or does it serve a higher purpose?

How will it affect and be affected by the changes taking place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

Piano pedagogy involves the study and teaching of motor, intellectual, problem-solving, and artistic skills involved in playing the piano effectively. The two-day conference that looked at piano pedagogy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought together piano pedagogues, pianists, academics and industry experts from Asia, Europe and America for the first time in Malaysia for a rewarding and constructive learning and sharing affair.

Dr Michael Campbell, in his Keynote Address

shared some tips for piano students including mastering skills such as reading notes and acquiring experiences of playing together or collaborating with others to hone their craft. He extolled the wonderful implications of playing the piano for others and not restrict oneself to particular genres but to expand their repertoire.

He also encouraged both teachers and students to adopt three strategies that he believes can make piano teaching and learning more effective and meaningful. He reasserted again the necessity of mastering as many genres as possible. Quoting a number of interesting findings from non-music related research,



*Participants, mostly students, raptly listening and capturing the sagacious advice of their 'gurus'.*

Dr Campbell propositioned that they are applicable and can be incorporated into instruction/teaching.

Lastly, Dr Campbell urged everyone to avail themselves of the wide variety of technologies available today for teaching and learning the piano, which he claims his generation was not blessed with. He cited some examples such as recording teaching points for revision including video recording and using multimedia instructional guides and instruction software such as those supplied by TimeWarp Technologies.

In the forum on bridging the gap between industry and music schools, acclaimed Malaysian veteran jazz pianist, producer and record studio head, Mr Michael Veerapen put forward a very practical perspective – unlike schools, in the industry, music graduates must deliver according to the needs of their customer.

He was joined on stage by Dr Chan Cheong Jan from UPM, Evelyn Hii, founder of No Black Tie

and Assistant Professor Justin Lim Fang Yee from IMus (moderator) to discuss the skills that the music industry look for in aspiring music graduates as well as measures both industry and academia can adopt to bridge the gap between them.

The seasoned academics and industry professionals shared with the participants who were mostly students, nuggets of wisdom and advice. One pertinent point that was agreed upon and stressed repeatedly was the importance of having the right attitude, be it in pursuing employment or recognition or making groundbreaking music.

The conference participants were treated to engaging and enlightening discussions and sharing of experience on topics ranging from performance, pedagogy, literature/repertoire, music technology, and the health and wellness of musicians over the two-day line-up of presentations, recitals, masterclasses and forums by 13 distinguished academics, industry experts and musicians.

In his opening speech read by Associate Professor Dr Yeong Siew Wei, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Academic and Research, Senior Professor Dato' Dr Khalid Yusoff, Vice-Chancellor and President of UCSI, highlighted the timeliness and necessity of the conference.

“By bringing together the who’s who in both the classical and contemporary fields, IMus is creating a platform for the cross-fertilisation of ideas that will take piano pedagogy to the next level through the critical appreciation of best practices and constant innovation,” Dato' Dr Khalid remarked.

This one-of-a-kind conference marks another milestone for IMus and is a testament to the school's dedication and passion in nurturing musical talent and advancing music education in this region. The conference certainly presented a unique platform for networking opportunities, critical discussions, inspiration and exposure as well as keeping abreast of developments for the piano-loving community.



*The panelists, with decades of wisdom and experience between them, offered many practical pointers for a rewarding career in music.*



*Dato' Peter Ng's toast  
- "May we stand firmer,  
speak louder and fight  
harder for the things  
that matter. May we  
continue bending the  
arc of history."*

The day of the highly-anticipated UCSI Staff Appreciation Dinner finally arrived. The inaugural gala dinner was organised to thank all the members of UCSI Group for their invaluable contributions and hard work throughout the year in their various roles and capacities.

Throughout its amazing journey from a small computer training institute in a shop lot to one of Malaysia's foremost private education providers, the UCSI Group has overcome many challenging phases with the help of its dedicated and passionate staff who came together to work for the Group's common aspirations.

The night was made extra special as 161 of UCSI's longest serving employees (who served more than 10 years) were presented with Long Service Award. The awards were given in recognition of their tireless dedication and invaluable contributions over the years.

It was only apt that the dinner was held at the swanky Le Quadri Ballroom in the brand-new Block E in honor of the very same people who made it possible for these new expansions of the campus. In keeping with theme of the night - From the Heart, UCSIans turned out in full glam mode with their stylish and elegant evening wear.

As the guests started filling up the tables, many took the opportunity to capture their happy and fun moments with their colleagues at the photo booth, artistically set up by Lucas Lim Boon Leong, De Institute of Creative Arts and Design's lecturer.

In his appreciation speech, which was the first programme for the evening, Dato' Peter Ng took the opportunity to thank and acknowledge his staff for their contributions throughout the years.

"The results of our hard work are not just about the company's growth, it's also about the impact we have on society. And when we have the privilege of changing the circumstances for people who go on to change the world, we experience what it is to be consequential," remarked Dato' Peter proudly to a thundering applause from the audience.

“

**I thought the UCSI Staff Appreciation Dinner was enjoyable, the food were great and served us just nice. Also not forgetting the idea of the photo booth, it was fun, we should definitely have it more often.**”

— ANGGRAENI WIGNJOPRANOTO

*Group Corporate Affairs*



*Dr Lee Kiat Moon  
wooned the voters and  
walked away with the  
Best Dressed Female  
award for the night.*



**UCSI**  
**GOES SASSY AND CLASSY**  
- A night of fun, appreciation and good fellowship -



**It was a fun night. The food was delicious and the organiser clearly put a lot of effort into making it a memorable night for all staff.**

**— KELVIN CHOW KAK WING**

*Computer Services*



*One of the lucky draw winners of the night.*



*Many UCSIans have become friends over the years working together.*



*The Best Dressed Male award was clinched by Muhammad Haziq Muizzuddin with his smart evening wear.*

After Dato' Peter's speech, some staff members presented a choir performance of "Heal the World" and a short fancy play featuring pirate Jack Sparrow before food was served. The dinner menu from Le Quadri Hotel comprising of 8-9 main courses, appetiser and dessert was exquisite and received overall nods of approval from the guests.

The Long Service Award ceremony celebrated a total of 116 staff members who have been in service with the UCSI Group for more than 10 years. Many of them appeared to be touched by the recognition and were all smiles and some were somber while a few others were on the verge of tears as they received their certificates of appreciation from Dato' Peter on stage.

Throughout the evening, lucky guests walked away with a number of lucky draw prizes from a Samsung Gear FitPro to shopping vouchers. Muhammad Haziq Muizzuddin from Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management and Dr Lee Kiat Moon from School of Engineering, Architecture and Built Environment won the popular vote for the night and walked away with The Best Dressed Male and Female awards, respectively.

The dinner night ended with a choir performance of "Feeling Good" by UCSI students which the guests enjoyed greatly while having their dessert. On the whole, it was an unforgettable night for many UCSIans who felt their work and contributions appreciated and acknowledged.



*It was a memorable night for UCSIans as they let their hair down and treated themselves for a wonderful night of fun and camaraderie.*

# ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION PRODUCES GLOBAL GRADUATES



*The numerous workshops and talks on English communication received very good response from UCSI students from various programmes.*



Language is one of the fundamental aspects that prepare graduates to face the Fourth Industrial Revolution. More often than not, it is taken for granted as its use has been manipulated and exploited for different purposes.

This is particularly true in the case of its role as a global language. Such changes have been necessary to accommodate the needs of people from various walks of life. Eventually, the Lingua Franca lost its essence of standard. Soon, people begin to believe that it was acceptable to use various jargons, slangs and dialects regardless of the domain.

To create more awareness on this issue, students from the English Language Student Association (ELSA), under the Department of English Language and Communication from Faculty of Social Science and Liberal Arts of UCSI University organised a series of talks and workshops to create awareness on the importance of Standard English in the working world as well as in academia:

- Workshop: Conflict Resolution at the Workplace
- Impressing Interviewers 101
- Workshop: Personality - The Driver of Teaching-Learning
- The Future Trend and Importance of English

Language

- Right to Read: Enhancing Employability
- Right to Read: Hire Me Lah!

“The students have put in a great amount of effort in organising these talks and I’m glad I could support them in their effort,” mentions Assistant Professor Dr Vighnarajah, the Head of the English Language and Communication Department.

He further added that these talks were also aimed to promote the 4<sup>th</sup> Goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) proposed by the United Nations which works to ensure inclusive and equitable quality





Participants in the workshops diligently took notes to improve their communication skills.

education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

“It serves to assert that all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development”, he added highlighting the need for students to equip themselves with relevant graduate attributes to increase their chances of employability.

“Being involved in organising these talks and workshops, we (students) learnt to be more entrepreneurial and improve our organisational skills which will certainly useful in the real working world. We thank the ELC department for giving us the opportunities to be a part of the organising team,” remarks Lydia Devadas, the Student President of ELSA.

These talks were held in UCSI University KL campus with a turnout of 150 students and external participants from various fields of study.

“The talks were truly an eye-opener. I realised that I should practice Standard English more often and reduce the use of non-standard jargons” admitted Chen Wen Jie, a UCSI student



4<sup>th</sup> Goal of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

from the Department of Biotechnology.

Pan Xiang Nan, a UCSI ELC language major from China highlighted: “Stronger enforcement of Standard English should be carried out because it promotes future foreign collaborations and it is wonderful to know that UCSI is enforcing this policy.”

UCSI not only endeavours to prepare graduates who are competent and compatible for the working world but also in communicating and conducting various discourses necessary to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Such efforts will continue to be carried out to further improve the quality of graduates as they go out into the working world.



# STATINS

Do we know all we think we know?

*Professor Gordon Williams, renowned clinician scientist from Harvard Medical School, shared his research expertise on statins.*

While statins may be the best-selling pharmaceutical and second-most widely-prescribed class of drug in the world (more than 100 million users worldwide), it does come with its own set of detractors who are increasingly lambasting its array of adverse effects.

Professor Gordon Williams, renowned clinical scientist from Harvard Medical School and a visiting professor at UCSI University, recently shed some light on the controversies surrounding the adverse effects associated with the prescription of this drug in recent years.

Statins or HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors, as they are known by their scientific name, are a cholesterol-lowering drug used as a form of secondary prevention for cardiovascular disease (CVD). The drug works by inhibiting the enzyme (HMG-CoA reductase) that produces cholesterol in the liver.

World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that high cholesterol levels contribute to a third of coronary artery diseases (CADs), the most common type of CVD, globally and 4.5% of this results in fatality (2.6 million deaths).

In Malaysia itself, CAD was the principal cause of deaths in 2016 (13.2%), more commonly amongst males. Alarmingly, the age for the onset of CAD is increasingly becoming lower in Malaysia compared to other neighbouring countries.

Cholesterol reduction is related to CAD as while cholesterol is a natural compound required by the body, it can contribute to development of atherosclerosis – a condition in which arteries are narrowed due to build-up of plaque (mixture of cholesterol, lipid, and other degenerative materials) on its walls.

Since its first development by Dr Akira Edo,

studies have continuously demonstrated that statins significantly reduce major coronary and cerebrovascular events as well as all-cause mortality rates.

Long known as the golden child for preventing CVD, statins have been courting controversies of late as they have been associated with a number of adverse effects such as bladder and lung cancer, liver damage, diabetes and contributes to dementia.

Professor Gordon's arguments and explications in his talk foreground the importance of non-randomised evidence. He contends that most of the accusations against statins have been made based on randomised or circumstantial evidence and not non-randomised evidence as should be the case.

Professor Gordon highlighted that most of the



controversy arises within the context of statins considered as a primary protection for CVD. As the users of statin already have a number of CVD risk factors, Professor Gordon raises the question if the adverse effects are in fact related to statin use or are due to these other risk factors.

In his talk, Professor Gordon used a simple analogy of the strengths of direct evidence, circumstantial evidence and hearsay evidence (in descending order) for convictions. Similarly, he stated, medical research also its own set of bad/weak and strong/good evidence.

He explained that almost all risk studies are based on observational analysis which is akin to circumstantial evidence and as such is not the strongest set of evidence. Instead, clinical trials provide the strongest results as direct evidence. Professor Gordon went on to use a case study on post-menopausal oestrogen therapy to illustrate his points. His case study showed that while circumstantial evidence such as observational studies, preclinical studies and clinical studies all supported the use of oestrogen to prevent heart attacks in post-menopausal women, direct evidence such as clinical trials by Women's Health Initiative (WHI) showed the opposite.

Professor Gordon went on to evaluate each adverse effect based on the various types of evidence available and asked the audience to make their own deduction on the association of statins with these effects.

Professor Gordon shared as well another benefit of statins that is still being researched, specifically its role in off-target protective effects such as decreasing atrial fibrillation and

ventricular arrhythmias amongst others. However, researchers are yet to determine if these effects are statin-type specific or even if it is caused by statins, as there could be other potential mechanisms involved.

He further highlighted one important effect of statin use is on aldosterone secretion (aldosterone is a well-known contributor to CVD) and proceeded to share the results of two studies that explored this. Both studies looked at the effect of statins on aldosterone secretion in hypersensitive patients and effect of statin on blood pressure and salt sensitivity.

Results showed that chronic statin use in hypertension and diabetic subjects was associated with lower aldosterone production specifically without any effect on any other components such as renin or cortisol.

Nevertheless, Professor Gordon stressed that these findings are still circumstantial evidence and the next step would be to obtain direct evidence by investigating on the effect on aldosterone secretion in adrenal cells which would require clinical (which is not possible) or animal or cell-based studies.

He explained further that statins actually act on the steroid pathway that changes cholesterol into aldosterone. He referred to the regulation steps that are acted on by statins which determine the lowering or increasing of aldosterone levels.

Professor Gordon enthused on Cherish Chong's work on mineralocorticoid ultra-short feedback which furnished ground-breaking findings. Cherish was UCSI's first medical student to be

*Members of the audience were enthralled with the in-depth explanation on the mechanism, use and research work on statins.*

mentored by Professor Gordon in her one-year research attachment at Harvard Medical School under UCSI's Star Trek initiative.

Cherish's research revealed the role of the mineralocorticoid receptor which when blocked, results in increased aldosterone secretion and vice versa. Her findings also showed that statins act on the later regulating step in the aldosterone pathway, specifically on aldosterone synthase which converts corticosterone to aldosterone.

Professor Gordon wrapped up his talk by summarising that statin users need to be aware of the research and evidence available regarding the adverse effects associated with statins.

As research has shown, lipophilic statins will significantly reduce aldosterone secretion without the related adverse effects. On the other hand, hydrophobic ones will not reduce aldosterone secretion but instead will reduce lipid levels but this type is associated with adverse effects.

Thus, Professor Gordon urged statin users to understand and recognise the type of statins that is prescribed to them to ensure they choose the right ones. He hoped his team would conduct more research studies that will continue to shed light on the workings of statins to further educate both the medical community and statin users.



**ABOUT US**



Welcome to UCSI Swimming Academy, the best swimming training centre for adults and children in Cheras. The academy is fully operated by UCSI Child Development Centre, a strategic business unit under UCSI Group.

It is our belief that swimming is a vital life skill that helps keep one fit and relaxed. Our passion is to teach swimming and with our qualified teachers, excellent pool design and facility as well as a dedicated customer service team, we will help you become a skilled swimmer.

# **A GREAT PLACE TO START**

## *Fun Place to Learn Swimming*

### **OUR TRAINING SCOPE**

We support all swimmers who want to take the plunge and progress, whatever their level of ability. Our classes are inclusive and suitable for all age groups:

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- Parent and Baby Lessons
- Preschool Lessons for 3-6 years old
- Children Swimming Lessons for 7 years and above
- Children Aquatic Skills
- Adult Swimming Lessons
- Competition and Endurance Lessons, High-performance Coaching
- School Holiday Crash Course

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**



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COVER  
STORY

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# PUSHING THE FRONTIERS OF SCIENCE

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2017 STAR TREKKERS

UCSI University's aspirations go beyond cohorts of well-educated and skilled workforce – many of our alumni have gone on to take their place as productive members of the global community, as leaders, visionaries, change makers, seed planters and research leaders. Aimed at creating a dynamic research-rich and innovative culture and community in mind, the Star Trek programme paved the way for research collaborations with some of the world's leading research institutions and continues to grow from strength to strength. Last year, Tay Chee Sin, Jessica Marian, Gary Poh Kwor Xiang and Thi Shiki joined our former Star Trekkers to advance research with some of the best minds in the fields of medicine and engineering. The Gazette presents a round-up of their stories.



Chee Sin and Jessica Marian with their mentor, Professor Gordon Williams, a renowned clinician scientist.

## PASSION-FUELLED MEDICAL RESEARCH

There is a life-changing moment or episode for everyone that determines one's life path or calling. For Jessica Marian Lee Mei Sze and Tay Chee Sin, their vocations into medicine were based on very personal experiences which remain vividly memorable till today.

"The doctor who treated my uncle and was there to support my family when he eventually passed away changed and inspired me in so many ways. I wanted to emulate his dedication, passion and commitment in helping others and being there for them," Jessica Marian recalls.

Seeing her grandmother help countless friends and strangers using her traditional knowledge of herbs and potions, inspired Chee to pursue a similar calling in curing ailments and alleviating pain, albeit one set in modern medicine and healthcare.

Realising the need for research in advancing healthcare and medicine, these two second-year UCSI University medicine students decided to apply for a year-long research attachment at Harvard Medical School. After an intensive shortlisting exercise and interview process, they were finally selected for this prestigious programme.

The girls, who happen to be two good friends, are currently being mentored by Professor Gordon Williams, a renowned clinician scientist, who also leads the Hormonal Mechanisms of Cardiometabolic Injury Programme at Harvard's Brigham and Women's Hospital and is Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School.

In the past, three other medical students worked with Prof Gordon and his team in furthering research on aldosterone regulation and human genetic phenotype-genotype correlation. The ongoing research collaboration is a part of UCSI University's Star Trek initiative that opens doors to prodigious students and academic staff to pursue cutting-edge research with prominent university partners.

Expanding further the work of their seniors, Chee Sin and Jessica Marian are both unravelling the mechanism of mineralocorticoid receptor (MR)-mediated ultrashort negative feedback loop in aldosterone secretion, specifically looking at the roles of striatin and Cav-1, respectively.

Striatin is a calmodulin-binding protein (calmodulin = calcium-modulated protein) which may function as scaffolding or signalling protein and may play a role in dendritic  $Ca^{2+}$  signalling. Chee Sin hopes her research will shed light on the variants in the striatin gene that are associated with Salt Sensitivity of Blood Pressure (SSBP) in humans and mice.

Cav-1 or Caveolin-1 is a scaffolding protein that is the primary component in the caveolae plasma membranes found in most cell types. As Cav-1 is involved in glucose/lipid homeostasis and may modulate MR signalling, Jessica Marian's research work will look into the effect of Cav-1 expression on aldosterone/MR's signalling on several pathways of glycemia, dyslipidemia, and resistin.

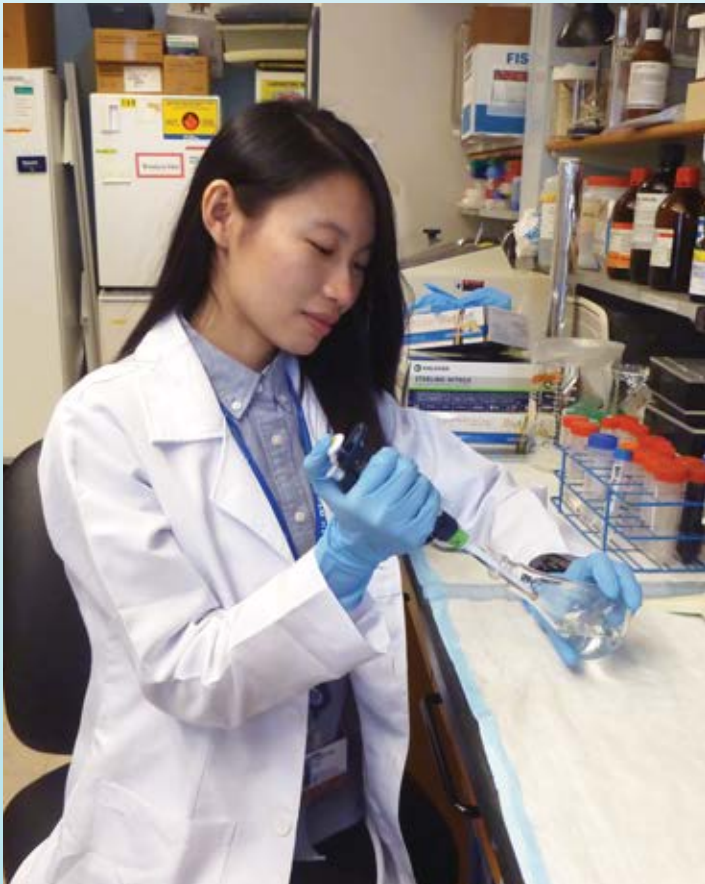
The eldest of five siblings, Jessica Marian hopes to specialise in paediatrics as she loves working with children. She believes the experience of working with the brightest minds in the field and seeing the 'behind-the-scene' of research would prove invaluable.

Initially hesitant at the prospect of extending another year on top of her four-year medicine programme, Chee Sin finally opted to give the programme a go after realising the golden opportunity presenting itself. "I have always been interested in drug research and I am keen on learning as much as I can so that I save lives or alleviate pain through medical research," enthuses Chee Sin who aspires to be a successful cardiologist.

Backed by a strong mission to inculcate a strong research interest and culture, UCSI has successively sent many bright talents to learn and work alongside leading academics in renowned universities.

To date, six engineering students have advanced science at Imperial College London and Tsinghua University whilst three pharmacy students have also worked on high-impact research collaborations at Canada's prestigious University of British Columbia.

Undeniably, UCSI's notable research engagement and collaborations with leading universities across the world continues to open doors and nurture its pool of talents such as Jessica Marian and Chee Sin, who intend go out into the world and make a difference.



The duo bonded during their studies at UCSJ and their shared desire to advance science saw them preparing intensely at UCSJ's labs.

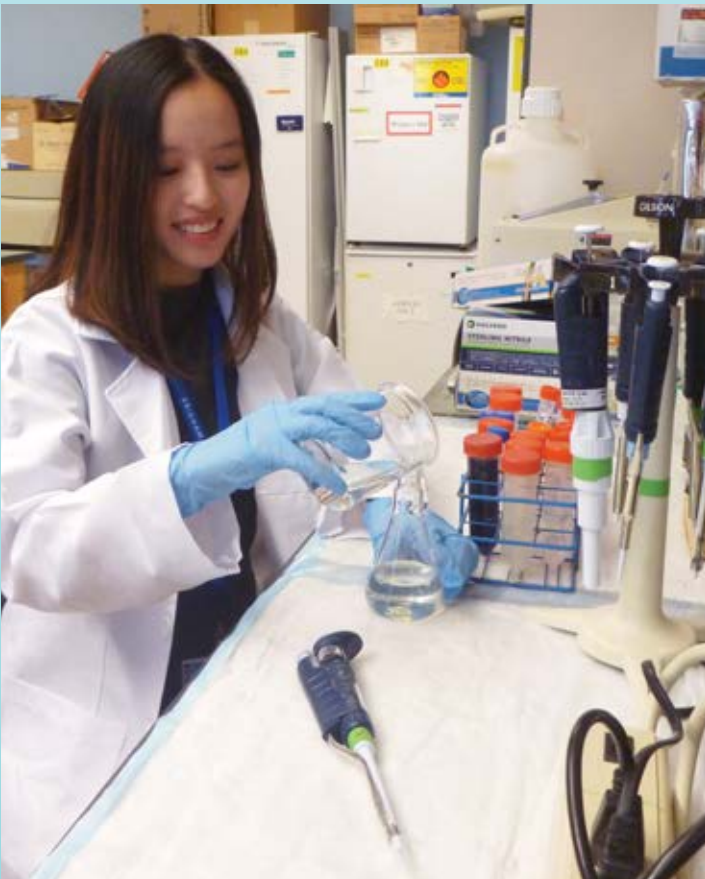


Chee Sin's interest in drug studies motivated her to pursue a research attachment at the prestigious Harvard Medical School.

Jessica Marian hopes to be a passionate and dedicated paediatrician and believes that research will take her ambitions further.



It's dream come true for both girls to be working at one of the best medical research faculties in the world.





*Poh is determined to advance findings on protein crystallisation in London.*

# ANOTHER UCSI UNIVERSITY STUDENT ADVANCES SCIENCE AT IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON.

Gary Poh Kwor Xiang, 23, added another feather in his cap when he was recently selected to advance cutting-edge science at Imperial College London, becoming the fourth UCSI University student to do so.

Now based at Imperial's Surfaces and Particle Engineering Laboratory, Poh is currently working to advance findings on protein crystallisation under the tutelage of Dr Jerry Heng, a leading academic who co-leads the laboratory.

Relishing his opportunity, Poh said that advances in protein crystallisation were crucial in the effort to improve the understanding of disease pathogenesis. And advanced knowledge of the chemical properties of proteins would contribute significantly to drug

discovery and drug improvement.

"The advancement of bio pharmaceuticals will become increasingly crucial and the potential of R&D in this field is virtually limitless as we are just scratching the surface of things at the moment," enthused Poh who is a fourth-year chemical engineering student.

"I was always interested in polymers and surface chemistry so the opportunity to work with Dr Heng and his team was too good to pass up. It's an exciting time to be here and I thank UCSI for getting me ready for this."

Apart from making headway with his research, Poh is looking forward to expand his network as his works alongside academics who are at the forefront of their respective disciplines.

Poh's selection is the latest milestone in UCSI's Star Trek programme – and initiative that sees UCSI collaborating with the world's best universities to provide students and staff with opportunities to hone their talent.

The initiative began in 2014 when UCSI's top medical student was selected for a year-long research programme at Harvard. The first batch of engineering students were selected by Imperial in 2015.

To date, five UCSI medical students have been selected by Harvard, four engineering students by Imperial, three pharmacy students by the University of British Columbia and three more engineering students by Tsinghua University.





# A DIFFERENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE.

*Shiki is advancing research on protein crystallisation at Tsinghua University, China.*

While most student dreams of driving high-impact research at world-class universities during their undergraduate years, it is a reality at UCSI University (UCSI).

Made possible by UCSI's Star Trek initiative — a specially designed programme where the brightest students are sent to gain research experience at leading universities and with top academics from around the world, Chemical Engineering student Thi Shiki followed in the footsteps of her predecessor to pursue research in DNA nanotechnology at Tsinghua University, widely regarded as the best university in mainland China.

She will be innovating protein crystallisation, a process which produces the crystals needed to study the molecular structure of protein for various pharmaceutical or biotechnological applications. A difficult and expensive procedure, it has moderated progress in related studies and this is what Shiki is hoping to remedy.

"It will not be an easy process, but the lecturers at UCSI are knowledgeable and they have prepared me well so I have every confidence that I will thrive abroad," she said.

When Shiki first enrolled into UCSI, she never imagined that she would end up conducting research at a world-class university in China. After all, her first choice of study was not Chemical Engineering but Cosmetic Science — the study of the effects that raw materials and mixtures can have on parts of the human body.

However, a few weeks into the programme and Shiki found herself gravitating towards engineering, and that was when she was empowered to do her best and pursue a research stint in her fourth and final year of study.

Shiki's first few weeks at Tsinghua were spent familiarising herself with the laboratory equipment and preparing to conduct the experiments she needed. With all that behind her, she is now hard at work and consistently spending almost 10 hours in the lab for six days a week.

Her progress is supervised by Associate Professor Dr Yang Zhongqiang, a highly regarded expert in DNA-related functional materials.

"Associate Professor Dr Yang is very knowledgeable and supportive," said Xsu Li, "we have weekly meetings to review my work and share our thoughts, and these discussions with her always motivate me and make me excited to do more."

Tsinghua is a member of the elite C9 League in China — similar in repute to the Ivy League in USA, Russell Group in the UK and the Group of Eight in Australia — and the university stands out for its engineering and technology expertise.

Some of its more prominent researches have been referenced amongst the top 10 advances achieved in science and technology by Chinese

universities. Its sprawling 395-hectare landscape, declared Asia's most beautiful campus by Forbes, is only a plus.

"It was a rigorous shortlisting process and I am really lucky to have been chosen for this programme and I still can't quite believe it," said Shiki, "there is a lot to learn but I fully intend on making the best out of my time here to take in as much as I can."

This means a desire to achieve more than just favourable research outcomes.

"I want to gain more knowledge on how to conduct research-based studies and to improve overall as a researcher," she said, "I also hope that having to be away from home will train me to become more independent and self-reliant."

Shiki follows the departure of her classmate and fellow Star Trek student, Gary Poh Kwoor Xiang, who left in October to pursue his own research in cenosphere enhancement and optimisation at Imperial College London. They will both return to complete their final semesters at UCSI.

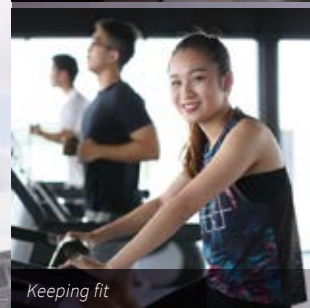
Star Trek launched in 2014 when UCSI's top medical student Cherish Chong Chiu Wern was selected for an intercalated year-long research programme at Harvard. Since then, more arrangements were made with other leading institutions of global repute, and more students are sent abroad each year.



Mixing that perfect espresso in the Culinary Lab



Enjoying the infinity swimming pool



Keeping fit



Ready for action at the Chemistry lab

◀ UCSI University at the Isthmus

## HAPPY 1<sup>ST</sup> ANNIVERSARY AT THE ISTHMUS!

UCSI University Kuching Campus vacated its previous location at Jalan Tun Jugah and moved into the UCSI Hotel, located just opposite BCCK at the burgeoning Isthmus Commercial Hub, one year ago.

UCSI University, a model of transformative change here in the city of Kuching, started as the humble Sedaya College at Jalan Haji Taha later becoming a university college, and has since become the only local private university in Sarawak since 2008. Now, with the development of the UCSI Hotel, it is being demonstrated that UCSI University is fulfilling its aspirations of being a praxis university, resulting in close interactions with businesses and key industry players.

The UCSI Kuching Campus houses the Faculties of Hospitality and Tourism Management (FHTM), Business and Information Science (FOBIS), and the Centre for Pre-U Studies (CPU). FHTM offers five programmes; namely, Diploma in Hotel Management: Diploma in Culinary Arts, Diploma in Leisure Management, BA (Hons) in Commerce, BA (Hons) in Event and Tourism Management, and BA (Hons) in Hospitality Management. FOBIS has three programmes, Diploma in International Business, BComm (Hons) in Accounting and Finance, and BComm (Hons) in Marketing, while CPU has two programmes, Foundation Studies in Science and Foundation Studies in Arts.

Students enjoy a meaningful educational experience because the campus is fully equipped with an abundance of state-of-the-art

facilities: Housekeeping Suite, Pastry and Bakery Laboratory, Gastronomy Laboratory, Culinary Laboratory, Chemistry Laboratory, Biology Laboratory, Lecture Halls, Lecture Rooms and Tutorial Rooms, Discussion Rooms, Recreation Areas, Learning Studio, Student Lounge, Library, the Quad Restaurant, the Hatton Restaurant, Hua Yi Yuan Chinese Restaurant, convenience store, stationery shop, gym, infinity pool, as well as a sports field.

Our first year at the Isthmus has been both memorable and eventful, having been involved in no less than 15 volunteer programmes and 25 community outreach programmes, all of which brought about collaboration between UCSI Kuching Campus students and staff as well as numerous government ministries, non-government organisations, strategic partners and stakeholders from various fields and disciplines.

This new year of 2018 we will continue to produce quality events such as the Next Big Chef, and the Science and Maths Quiz State Level Competition. Some new endeavours will also be established; namely, the Next Homestay Paradise Programme (NHPP) and the Regional Centre of Expertise (RCE). While the NHPP is a project focused on improving the quality of tourism and hospitality standards in Sarawak, establishing a community network and providing opportunities for education through scholarship, the RCE is a cross-sector network of organisations committed to using education as a tool to promote sustainability, with strong ties to the United Nations. Through these new

projects, UCSI Kuching Campus will be impacting the tourism industry and the natural environment of Sarawak, spring boarding a great number of events and research studies.

It is evident that students and staff alike have enthusiastically embraced their new home here at the Isthmus. This new facility offers them so much more room and so many more activities with the abundance of lecture halls, student recreation areas on levels 1 and 3, the gym and infinity swimming pool on level 5, and the discussion rooms and extended study area in the library.

Madam Mukvinder Kaur Sandhu, the COO of UCSI University Kuching Campus while reflecting over the past year of transition into the Isthmus Campus, enthused, "We are very proud to see the outdoor signage prominently displayed; and the finished product truly having taken shape now. It is a reminder to all the students and staff of UCSI University Kuching Campus that this university is realising its ambition and has effectively completed a new chapter which we embarked upon together."

The UCSI Hotel is the first phase of a major development project that is underway at the Isthmus, and the UCSI University Kuching Campus is located inside the Hotel until the completion of the second phase of this building project. The second phase involves the building of a dedicated UCSI University Kuching Campus, which will begin soon, now that the UCSI Hotel has been completed.

# TOWARDS A CASHLESS SOCIETY



The signatories (from left) – Tham Wai Mun (COO, UCSI 1 Card), Dato' Peter Ng (UCSI Group Founder and CEO), Mr Jasani Abdullah (HLISB CEO) and Mr Resham Singh (HLISB General Manager – Personal Financial Services-i)



Members of both signing parties came together to witness the momentous signing ceremony of the UCSI-HLISB UCSI 1 Card partnership.

Cashless is the future – as global trends continue to demonstrate. Many developed economies such as Netherlands, UK, China and Sweden are leading the way in transforming into a non-cash economy; Malaysia is no exception, albeit still at the inception stage.

While many other businesses are still mulling over or tinkering their systems and processes, UCSI Group has leapt ahead to become an early adopter of a cashless community by introducing its ground-breaking UCSI 1 Card in 2016.

The UCSI 1 Card, a collaborative initiative between UCSI Group and Hong Leong Islamic Bank (HLISB), functions as a student and staff ID card that doubles up as a debit card. The card equipped with multiple functions including access to various banking services aims to provide convenience, comfort and benefits to the campus community.

The partnership was officially inked between UCSI Group (represented by Dato' Peter Ng Tung Se, Group Founder and CEO and Tham Wai Mun, Chief Operating Officer, UCSI 1 Card) and HLISB (represented by Mr Jasani Abdullah, CEO and Mr Resham Singh, General Manager – Personal Financial Services-i).

Quoting China and Airbnb as examples, Dato' Peter was very enthusiastic and hopeful of the immense potential of the partnership. "We need to go beyond UCSI 1 Card and advance further to keep pace with the revolution of cashless society that is taking place today," contends Dato' Peter.

The small but pivotal signing ceremony was witnessed by members of both parties before everyone adjourned for refreshments and group photo sessions.

UCSI 1 Card Sdn Bhd (formerly known as UCSI Campio Trading Sdn Bhd) was first incorporated in the year 2007 as a subsidiary of UCSI Group, specialising in trading and property-related matters. It was later renamed to UCSI 1 Card Sdn Bhd in April 2016.

Apart from UCSI 1 Card, the subsidiary also manages convenience stores in the campuses. Other plans in the pipeline include the UCSI Loyalty and Rewards programme, where staff and students of UCSI are rewarded for the money they spend within the campuses and beyond.



*Insights from some of Malaysia's most experienced authors and journalists.*

Ipoh-born **Paul GnanaSelvam** is the author of *Latha's Christmas and Other Stories* (2013). To date, his short stories and poems have been published in e-magazines DUSUN and ANAKSASTRA, anthologies *Write Out Loud*, *Urban Odysseys*, *Body 2 Body*, *Lost In Putrajaya*, *KI Noir: Yellow* and the biannual literary journals - *ASIATIC* and the *Lakeview Journal of Arts and Literature*. He has read his works at *Seksualiti Merdeka*, *Readings @ seksan*, *Northern Writers* and *Colours of Cambodia*. Occasionally, he is invited to speak and take part in panels at literary events. He is currently lecturing at *Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman* in *Kampar, Perak*.

**Please share with us how did you begin your career as a writer and what was the journey towards publishing your own work was like.**

Beginning 2005, most of my friends and colleagues began to comment that I have a certain flair for narrating - be it real-life stories or newspaper reports or simply subject-content based clarification. And a few close ones literally asked me to start writing. I first began to write *Letters to Editors* in the *Star Education* in 2005, followed by three articles that appeared in the *Heart and Soul* section in *STAR TWO*. A number of colleagues, friends, church members and family gave very positive remarks on my style of writing. This led to my first successful short story publication in the anthology *Write Out Loud* in 2006. That created the onset for me to pursue creative writing. I began to see myself as a writer.

The journey towards publication was not easy. Publishing is very competitive and very few authors get published, maintain a continuous presence in publishing or even remain long in the field of writing. For me, there was a lot of battling with self-doubt, coming to terms as a

# WRITE RIGHT

writer and satisfaction over the works produced, accepting the many rejections from publishers and having to contend with a full-time job as an academic and researcher.

I received a lot of encouragement from my colleagues and friends - to see my written outputs as a form of art. That took a while to digest, despite getting published. And since I was aiming to be a published author, I took a serious step towards becoming qualified in Creative Writing. I signed up for a course in Creative Writing from The Writers' Bureau, UK in 2007 and completed the Comprehensive Diploma in Creative Writing in 2011. By 2013, I had published my first collection of short stories in Malaysia, two short stories in international journals, three short stories in Malaysian anthologies, seven short stories and a poem in e-magazines as well as invited to four readings in Malaysia and one in Cambodia. As the saying goes, there was no turning back. Post-2013 has opened many more opportunities for me to publish short stories in India and the U.S. and poetry in various magazines and one anthology (the latest being accepted by the Paris-based literary journal, *Postcolonial Text*).

**For those who don't know anything about your book, *Latha's Christmas and Other Stories*, how would you briefly describe it?**

*Latha's Christmas* is a collection of short stories written between 2006-2011. There are eleven short stories in this collection, five of which had been previously published. The stories revolve around characters mainly of the Malaysian Tamil community (though interspersed with Chinese, Malay and Western) and deals a lot with contemporary social issues and themes - migration, politics, family values, marriage, generation gaps, socio-economic status, religion, race, gender, sexuality and the supernatural - and the need to be liberated from these issues.

**Where do you find inspiration or content for your stories and what is/are your favourite subject(s)?**

I feel stories are ever present everywhere. Every abstract entity, person, animal, plant and object has a story to tell, and the writer has to only observe them. Inspiration comes from their struggles and triumphs, and when the nuances of emotions and experiences are identifiable with the author's, themes are created, characters are born, a story is weaved, and the rest is fiction. I personally believe that all stories must be told - for it is the worth of someone's life, and it is through stories that we learn and appreciate ourselves and others. The fabric of society rests on these premises. When stories are understood, there are more acceptances of others and a greater sense of belonging to the world is inculcated.

I like stories from the Indian Diasporas, the detachment and the connectedness to the motherland, or simply telling the Malaysian Indian experience as part of this great Diaspora through my stories. I usually write on the local Indian Diaspora. Apart from K.S. Maniam, I feel there are very few Malaysian writers in English who represent the Malaysian Indian community, particularly the Tamils. I suppose I am one of those contemporary voices that bring up social issues that surround the community.

**How have your family and friends responded to your literary journey?**

My colleagues and friends have been the greatest pillar of support in my endeavours as a writer. Many tell me their own stories and of others; some recommend great books and reading materials, some read and respond to my drafts and published works, some offer a different way of re-thinking my plots, a few help to edit and provide criticism as well as encouragement. And I appreciate those who gracefully include me in their own publishing spaces. I live under the shadow of family. They are my worst critics :)

**What are the main challenges you face when you write in general?**

Getting muddled between the conventions of literary fiction and creative writing and not having enough time to write (or even imagine my stories).

**How do you hone your writing skills?**

By diligently writing every day - be it poetry or fiction, I keep at writing something every day, even bit by bit, especially on works in progress. Reading, reading and reading. Having a book for recording down story ideas, and a word list; these have helped a lot. Doing background research. Continuous editing and re-writing.

**Do you have any writers that you look up to? Who are the Malaysian and non-Malaysian writers that have left a deep impression on you and why?**

V. S. Naipaul - for his sarcasm and witty take on life/ sharp descriptive observations.

R. K. Narayan - for his narrative styles & imbibing Tamil elements in English literary writing.

Arundhati Roy - the simplicity of language and the endearing madness of "The God of Small Things" that took me by storm.

Jhumpa Lahiri, Rabindranath Tagore, Vikram Seth, Kamala Das, Amitav Gosh, David Davidar, Hari Kunzru, Khaled Hosseini, Anita & Kiran Desai, Aravind Adiga, Sham Selvadorai, Chitra Benerjee and so many more who have added meaning to my Indianness and diaspora. The world seems more real and exciting through

their lenses.

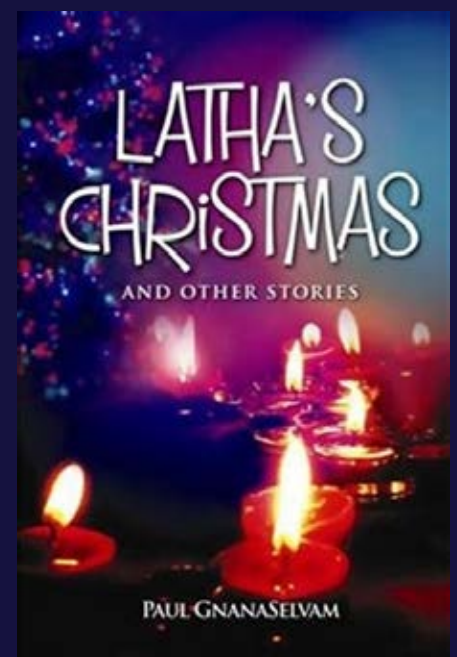
K.S. Maniam - for planting the seed of identity, be it Malaysian, be it Indian. Other Malaysian writers include Rani Manica and Tan Twan Eng.

**What are your plans for future published works or as a writer?**

To continue writing and publishing short stories and poems and see what happens. No plans yet.

**What advice would you give to those who also dream of publishing their own book?**

- Make sure you read extensively - anything and everything.
- Decide what you want to tell the world. There must be a story swimming in your mind.
- Get a scrapbook - write down your ideas as notes.
- Make sure you know your basic elements - plot, characters, themes and etc.
- Do research if you have to. You need to be credible.
- Identify your genre - whether it is fiction, poetry, or non-fiction
- Work towards your goals - stop dreaming! Write something first.
- Tell/ show/ share with others 40% of your idea. Consider their opinions.
- Do not expect any form of glamour!





(Middle) The panel addressed questions and concerns from the audience.

(Top Left) Koong Lin Loong, Chief Executive Officer of K-Konsult Group, shared his perspectives on the taxation aspects.

(Bottom Left) Lee Heng Guie, Executive Director of Social Economic Research Centre, presented an overview and trends of the economic outlook.

# MALAYSIA BUDGET

While the Malaysian government may have dispensed goodies for almost all sectors in the recently announced National Budget, industry pundits highlighted some perpetual shortcomings of the Malaysian economy that have yet to be addressed comprehensively by any budgets to date including this one.

Nevertheless, they also urged everyone to capitalise on these measures to develop and grow their human capital or their businesses, in particular as the countries and industries anticipate rapid technological disruptions stemming from the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

These were the major takeaways from a recently held public forum hosted by UCSI Poll Research Centre to help members of the public to understand better the implications of the recently tabled National Budget 2018 and consider possible strategies and measures that they can adopt.

The invited speakers, prominent academicians and industry leaders from the business and financial world, included Lee Heng Guie (Executive Director of Social Economic Research Centre), Koong Lin Loong (Chief Executive Officer of K-Konsult Group), Dato' Dr Ir Andy Seo Kian Haw (Vice-President of Federation of Manufacturing of Malaysia) and

Dr Wong Chin Yoong (Associate Professor in Economics from UTAR).

Speaking on a range of topics from economic problems, to economic outlook and taxation, the speakers offered their perspectives and insights on how the key measures and initiatives will impact individuals, businesses especially small medium enterprises (SMEs) and the country in general in the coming year. They also explored and discussed possible steps or action that can attenuate these implications.

The year's budget with a total allocation of RM280.25 billion has been well-received by



(Top Right) Dr Wong Chin Yoong, Associate Professor in Economics from UTAR, spoke at length about five main concerns affecting our economy and if the 2018 Budget addressed them.

(Bottom Right) Dato' Dr Ir Andy Seo Kian Haw, Vice-President of Federation of Manufacturing of Malaysia, shared his wealth of experience on how SMEs can gain from this particular national budget.

# 2018 FORUM



many parties including businesses and individuals. Overall, the speakers agreed that the various exemptions, aids, rebates and subsidies reflect an inclusive and welfare-friendly budget that aims to help address the rising living costs borne by all Malaysians.

“Our recent public survey on the 2018 National Budget showed that while most of the participants agreed that the budget did take care of their well-being, many did not think the measures could actually help them reduce their living costs.”

“Thus, we felt a public forum of this nature would be a timely avenue for those who would

like to have a clearer understanding of the budget items, ‘claimed Associate Professor Dr Ngerng Miang Hong, Associate Professor of Quantitative Finance and Risk Management at UCSI University’s Faculty of Business and Information Science (FoBIS) who is also CEO for UCSI Poll Research Centre.

Fielding a number of questions from the floor, the panel ended on a positive note that despite uncertainties and challenges, everyone especially students should adopt the right attitude and approach to prevail and thrive in what could possibly turn out to be the greatest era of opportunities of our time.

UCSI Poll Research Centre is a subsidiary of UCSI Group that aims to develop a world class praxis® research centre, which conducts rigorous interdisciplinary research within the domain of social science, provide valuable research insights, which can be utilised by various stakeholders and clients as well as the society and the larger public, maintain integrity and to cultivate trust towards survey research among researchers and create a repository of knowledge in public opinion and attitudes through empirical research.

[www.ucsipoll.org.my](http://www.ucsipoll.org.my)

# CLIMATE CHANGE DELEGATE



- ▲ Kelvin represents the Human Rights Working Group of YOUNGO at a press conference during the COP23.
- ▼ Kelvin shares insights on climate-smart agriculture that his social enterprise, TU:GU practices at the China Pavilion's 'One Belt One Road' forum in Bonn.
- ▶ Kelvin and his cofounder at TU:GU, Amalen conduct the #Grow4thePlanet session with local climate campaigners and activists.

Kelvin Lai Hao Cherng presents an interesting authority on climate action, uncharacteristic for someone his age and his educational background, as he explicitly explains terms and definitions, rattles off statistics, and pleads the cause with unbridled passion and enthusiasm.

Much of this is attributable to his volunteer work with Power Shift Malaysia, actively involved in training and educating youths on climate change, since 2016. The recently graduated chemical engineer is now ready to spread his wings and take on his next role as an international delegate for climate change.

Kelvin edged out 3400 applicants from 140 countries to be the recipient of the Global South Scholarship – he received financial assistance and capacity building training to represent youths of the Global South (less developed or developing economies such as Africa, Latin America, and developing Asia) in the recent United Nation Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)'s 23<sup>rd</sup> Conference of Parties (COP) in Bonn.

In prepping for his role as a youth delegate, Kelvin underwent online training with his mentors from YOUNGO which is the official non-governmental youth constituency of UNFCCC and represents a formal voice of the young people of the world on climate change.





Additionally, YOUNGO creates platforms and spaces for youth delegates and organisations to learn more, share experiences, discuss and network for consensus, initiatives and collaborations of their own climate action. The youth delegation can also act on or endorse an initiative as a constituency and deliver interventions (speeches) at COPs.

2017 has seen a record number of extreme weather calamities – hurricanes, cyclones, heatwaves, drought, floods and landslide – which scientists have for a long time claimed will become more frequent and extreme due to increased global warming.

While man-induced climate change continues to be an ebb-and-flow conservation topic for many, scientists and activists continuously push for stronger and more effective interventions and solutions to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system. UNFCCC COPs are the highest-level forum for such policymaking involving the international community.

The blend of conditions and challenges, including cultural, socio-political and historical aspects of the Global South are decidedly different from that of the Global North, and therefore, will require a different set of climate action interventions. As a youth delegate for the Global South, Kelvin and the Global South delegates are tasked to ensure that the South's voice is heard.

Kelvin engaged in four platforms during his time at COP23: Center of International Environmental Law (CIEL) – Human Rights and Climate Change (HRCC) Working Group; YOUNGO Bottomlining team; YOUNGO Human Rights working group and YOUNGO Agriculture working group.

Sharing his unforgettable experience, Kelvin related the work carried out by observers such as his youth team in influencing decisions taking place inside negotiation rooms. In addition to co-writing four intervention speeches for Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement (APA) and Subsidiary Body for Implementation of the Convention (SBI) platforms, Kelvin was also a panel member in YOUNGO Human Rights Working Group's event and presented on climate change-induced migration and displacement.

He and his team also successfully worked on interventions and actions that influenced the COP23's decision to adopt a draft agreement on agriculture leading to policy implementation to address food security and climate change and to create the indigenous people platform (IPP).

He also moderated a forum on moving forward

with global cooperation in sustainable agriculture, organised by Care about Climate. For his prudent work and commitment, Kelvin was successfully inducted into YOUNGO's Bottomlining team, and will be focusing on upcoming work for the COP24 in Katowice, Poland.

Kelvin is no stranger to leadership roles - he was a student leader in UCSI University's Scholar Circle (U-Schos) and has initiated numerous projects and has also represented Malaysia as a Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) delegate in early 2017.

Recently, he led another initiative called Malaysian Youth Congress on Statelessness 2017 (#MYCS2017), which took place from 28-29 October. The convention is one of the early steps aimed at forming a nationwide youth coalition network of organisations and individuals to tackle statelessness in Malaysia.

During the COP23, he ensured that the stateless' voice was heard by multiple UN agencies through advocacy. Notably, climate-induced migration makes it more complicated and difficult for stateless individuals and communities to access their rights, exposing them to the risks of political exclusion, and legal complications particularly owing to the lack of identification and safeguard.

Taking on an unconventional career pathway, Kelvin is now creating local access to natural, genuine, and affordable produce using crowd-farming and community-building initiatives through his social enterprise, TU:GU which he cofounded with his business partner, Amalen Sathananthar.

Kelvin believes that TU:GU, which stands for Tanah U: Green Union, is an indirect and long-term solution to address climate change through clean farming and green spaces. Thus far, his team has already embarked on a number of urban community gardening projects with stakeholders like business funders and civil-based organisations.

Kelvin explains that as a result of 80% of Semenanjung Malaysia's vegetables being supplied from Cameron Highlands, this high demand is giving irresponsible agri-corporations incentives to cut down forests, and pollute rivers in the highland with synthetic chemical runoffs.

He strongly believes this is why food production power must be returned to local communities, by shifting food dependency from unsustainable and irresponsible sources to clean, local, and people-oriented sources, hence creating public farming spaces, using agritech as a mean to drastically reduce carbon footprint.

Using COP23 as a platform, Kelvin presented his social enterprise and how it is an example of climate action (mainly relating to both SDG12 and SDG13) that the youth can take, during the China Pavilion's One Belt, One Road youth panel.

Kelvin is certain that the insights and networks from his delegation stint will enamour him further in his cause. Apart from capacity building through talks, publications and training to share his experience and 23th UNFCCC COP, Kelvin looks forward to developing his social enterprise further and furthering the climate change agenda in Malaysia.



# Rachel Soon

**BA (Hons) Event and Tourism Management, graduated 2015**  
**Guest Services Supervisor, Hokkaido Tourism Management, Japan**

As UCSI University marks three decades as an exceptional education provider, we have successfully created a tradition of incredible achievers. To honour these individuals, The UCSI Gazette catches up with the University's alumni to shine a spotlight on their career and achievements after graduation, and glean some words of wisdom from the alumni themselves. This issue, we liaised with **Rachel Soon**, a BA (Hons) Event and Tourism Management student, who upon graduation has accumulated a notable amount of working experience in the industry.



## **Please describe your career journey.**

I was first offered a job in 2015 by my current employer after I completed a half-year internship placement with them in 2014. I started off in the Guest Services division in Niseko Central and moved on to Reservation Department for Hokkaido Tourism Management taking care of the reservations for the company's three brands including Niseko Central, Ki Niseko and GoSnow. Currently, I have moved back to Niseko Central as a Guest Services Supervisor for the 2017 – 18 winter seasons.

## **What motivated you to pursue a career in tourism management in Japan?**

I love the diverse working environment in Niseko. Niseko is a world-famous ski resort and working with various people from around the world is a very good challenge and provides many opportunities to learn.

## **Is your current working experience similar to what you imagined when you were still a student?**

I have been actively involved in event management activities during student life. I started developing a passion for the hotelier life ever since I did my six-month internship in Niseko Central in 2014.

## **What are your favourite aspects of the job?**

Meeting people (colleagues and guests) from around the world and creating a memorable and an exceptional Niseko experience for guests.

## **What motivated you to pursue BA (Hons) Event and Tourism Management at UCSI University? How did your interest in this field come about?**

It all started with my part-time event coordinator jobs after high school and my passion for event management has grown and developed with guidance and support of previous employers. Noteworthy advice and career guidance from my university lecturers, past employers, parents and family have also been a good encouragement for me to work hard for my career. I was lucky to get an internship opportunity in the Japan resort and my career just took off from there.

## **Can you describe to us your experience studying at UCSI?**

UCSI is a place I call home and the four years I was there, was an important journey of learning and growth in life together with my course mates, lecturers and university staff.

## **How did UCSI affect you in terms of personal and professional growth?**

The guidance and patience of my lecturers throughout my entire university life has been a very important part of my life. They have also been very helpful in helping me to study well and also in sharing advice and tips on pursuing a rewarding career.

## **Who are the lecturers that you bonded with at UCSI University and why? What would you like to say to them?**

Every single lecturer I met has been amazing. I would like to specially thank Miss Sim Pei Lin, Programme Head of Event and Tourism Management who had always been so patient and helpful with me right from the first semester until I graduated.

## **Do you have any words of advice for students who wish or are currently pursuing an education in hospitality management?**

Chase your dream and opportunities are always available for those who are ready.



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

UCSI GROUP SUPPORTS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS  
TARGET 2030



Find out more at [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment)

## AN EXCERPT FROM THE INAUGURAL TALK ON SDG AT UCSI UNIVERSITY (15 NOV 2017)



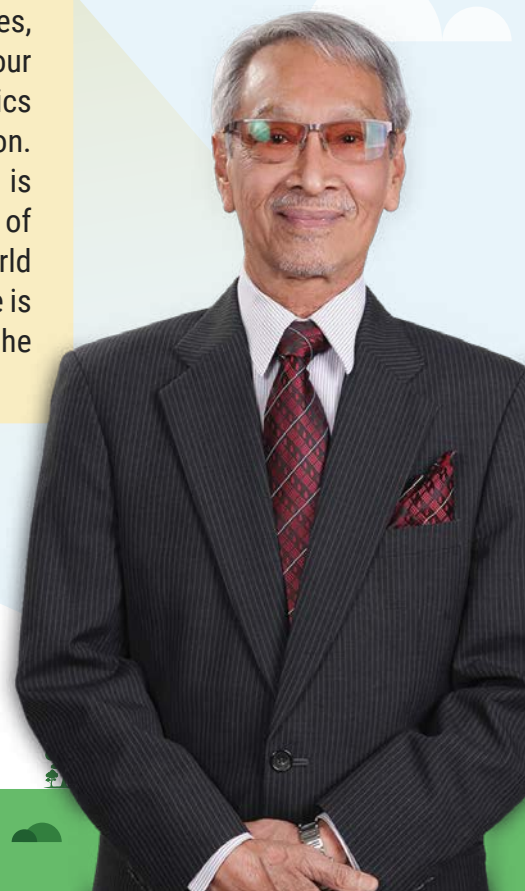
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The future of the world is at stake. Climate change, depleting resources, never-ending conflicts and extreme weather phenomena continue to threaten our very existence in the world. Much is driven by a burgeoning global demographics as well as our own unbridled greed in terms of consumption and production. Unless we change the way we live and grow, the sustainability of the world is under question. Future generations may not enjoy the same pristine conditions of life as we do. Fortunately, the United Nations, through the wisdom of many world leaders, introduced the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Unless there is a concerted investment in science, technology and innovation, realising the aspirations of the SDGs will prove to be a major struggle.

”

**Professor Emeritus Tan Sri  
Dr Omar Abdul Rahman, FASc**

*UCSI University Council Member  
Founding President and Senior Fellow Academy of  
Sciences Malaysia  
Malaysia's first Science Advisor to the Prime Minister*



# THE UCSI GAZETTE

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