Community Conversations

ON CHANGE, LEADERSHIP AND THE FUTURE

SUSS
ANNUAL GIVING REPORT 2020
Our Champions

(Organisations)

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Aastar Trading Pte Ltd
ACCA Singapore Pte Ltd
Accounting & Corporate Regulatory Authority
Allgreen Properties Limited
Angkasa Kargo Pte Ltd
Arcadis Singapore Pte Ltd
Asia Philanthropy Circle Ltd
Assembled Private Limited
Association for Early Childhood Educators (Singapore)

B
Baey Sim Swee & Co Pte Ltd
BDO Tax Advisory Pte Ltd
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Bioenergy Packaging Pte Ltd
Building & Construction Authority

C
CAIA Association Singapore Office Ltd
CapitaLand Limited
Cengage Learning Asia Pte Ltd
CFA Society Singapore
CGS-CIMB Securities (E Asia) Limited
Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants
Intellectual Property Office of Singapore
International Facility Management Association (Singapore Chapter)
International Women’s Forum

J
Jada Art Gallery
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Jones Lang Lasalle Property Consultants Pte Ltd

K
Kewalram Chanrai Group
KPMG LLP
Kuok (Singapore) Limited
Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple

L
Lee Foundation
Lembaga Bimaswara Kenangan Maulud
LHL International Pte Ltd
Lorong Koo Chye Sheng Hong Temple Association

M
Mapletree Investments Pte Ltd
Marketing Asia
McGraw-Hill Education (Singapore) Pte Ltd
Millenia Private Limited
MKM Car Leasing Pte Ltd
Modern Montessori International Pte Ltd

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FEU International Pte Ltd
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G
Gerontological Society – ALMS
GIC Private Limited
Golden Village Multiplex Pte Ltd

H
Hill & Knowlton (SEA) Pte ltd
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Human Capital (Singapore) Pte Ltd
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I
Infocomm Media Development Authority
Institute of Materials (E Asia)
Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants
Intellectual Property Office of Singapore
International Facility Management Association
International Women’s Forum (The Community Foundation of Singapore)

L
Lee Foundation
Lembaga Bimaswara Kenangan Maulud
LHL International Pte Ltd
Lorong Koo Chye Sheng Hong Temple Association

M
Mapletree Investments Pte Ltd
Marketing Asia
McGraw-Hill Education (Singapore) Pte Ltd
Millenia Private Limited
MKM Car Leasing Pte Ltd
Modern Montessori International Pte Ltd

MV Credit Pte Ltd
MY World Preschool

N
Nam Leong Co Pte Ltd
National Council of Social Service
NCS Pte Ltd
Nexia TS Pte Ltd
NTUC First Campus Co-operative Ltd
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O
Octava Foundation
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Pavilion Capital International Pte Ltd
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RSM Choo Lim LLP

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S M Jaleel Foundation
S R Nathan Education Upliftment Fund
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Serangoon Broadway Studio & Bridal Place
Sift Analytics Group Pte Ltd
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Singapore Link Sciences Pte Ltd
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Singapore Press Holdings Ltd
Singapore Tamil Teachers’ Union

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Takasago International (Singapore) Pte Ltd
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The Institution of Engineers, Singapore
The Masonic Charitable Fund
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The Write Connection Pte Ltd
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TOE Board
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Y
Yangzheng Foundation

Singapore Technologies Engineering Electronics Ltd
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Every attempt has been made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the list of donors. Some donors wish to remain anonymous. Should there be an error, please accept our sincere apologies and contact us to rectify our records.
Our Champions

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- Adhineeth Vinsent
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- Adhineeth Bala
- Adi Kisan
- Adi Nath
- Alina Mary
- Alina Jiah Surya
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Our goal is to nurture socially-minded individuals. In this edition of our Annual Giving Report, we gather our community – donors and students, benefactors and beneficiaries – to converse with one another about their shared passion for making a difference in society. Sit back, have a cuppa and be nourished by our community conversations.

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SCAN FOR DIGITAL
As you read this report, you can also look out for QR codes, which will take you to the extended conversations online.
We have a vision to be a leading university for social good. This stems from our belief in the power of education to impart insights and skills that serve and improve society.

We cannot do this alone. Our students and the university are simply parts of a larger community. All of you, our donors and benefactors, are another key player in this community for good. I am thankful for your support towards education, particularly in providing aid to students in need and funding our initiatives for social good.

Together, we can build a vibrant community where our passions and our skills – spanning disciplines from business, law and finance to science, technology, social sciences and the humanities – are used for the greater good.

Our donors and the students being supported are indeed passionate about what they do. This has inspired us to open conversations among them in the latest edition of our Annual Giving Report.

I am heartened by the conversations. First, they reveal that the support from you does not just provide our students with educational opportunities and skills; it also helps to deepen the students’ conviction in contributing to society. In these pages, I hope you can sense the excitement of the students as they talk about their aspirations to create social impact.

Second, these conversations take us into the minds of our featured donors, who, as change-makers, leaders and visionaries, offer us insights into navigating a post-pandemic world. We have grouped the conversations into three main themes – change, leadership and the future – which we believe are critical for the new normal.

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Spirited Conversations

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Our donors and the students being supported are indeed passionate about what they do. This has inspired us to open conversations among them in the latest edition of our Annual Giving Report. Here, they bounce ideas off one another in the areas of their shared interests such as youth empowerment, resilience, environmentalism and the impact of technology.

From One Generation to Another

In these trying times, we must make even more effort to connect, keep the conversations going and focus on the good work.

To our donors: We express our deepest gratitude and appreciation once again for your care towards the community. It is a joy to partner with you to advance a worthy cause.

To our students: It is important that you remember the support you have received. When the time is right, we hope that you will go on to help others in your own spheres of influence.

This is how a community becomes stronger: a generation is uplifted, and then it energises the next. All of us are on this meaningful journey together, and each of our contributions will matter.

Professor Cheong Hee Kiat
President, SUSS
A Record-Setting Year

As the pandemic loomed, 2020 became a year of great change for everyone. Yet, it also compelled more people to help those in need and strengthen the community.

In 2020, we saw the greatest number of new donors to our cause. Meanwhile, two student-led committees were launched: the Advancement Alumni Advisory Committee provides strategic counsel in alumni giving and engagement; and the Class Giving Committee encourages SUSS students to pay it forward.

We celebrate the generosity of our donors and the lives they have transformed. Gifts made to SUSS strengthen our academic initiatives, benefit students who require financial assistance and help us to meet emerging needs and opportunities.
Change
Dear Mr Teo,

I am no stranger to crisis. When my twin sister and I were seven years old, our mother passed away from cancer. By the end of 2020, it would be eight years since my sister last studied or worked due to a mental illness. We are 24 now.

I share my story to let others know that if I can overcome, then they can, too. Struggles are part and parcel of life, and it is through struggling that we become more resilient.

In fact, struggles can unite us: we reach out to each other, offer healing and bounce back from adversity together – now stronger.

My life experiences led me to decide on studying social work. I am keen to work with vulnerable groups such as orphans and persons with mental health conditions.

I also want to spread the message of loving oneself and others. My contribution to the world does not have to be big. It is meaningful enough to do what I can within my means and limits.

However, in my journey, I wish to be courageous always, to keep daring to try.

Lin Siew Ching

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Dear Siew Ching,

Your life is a demonstration of resilience – a skill that has become especially essential as Singapore emerges from COVID-19 and adapts to the post-pandemic new reality.

Resilience is a hallmark of a thriving community, which is something The Ngee Ann Kongsi strives to strengthen in Singapore. A thriving community is one that bands together and remains united in the face of adversity, with those who have the ability to help extending a lending hand to those needing support; and different groups working towards a collective goal to emerge from crises stronger.

We strongly believe in the importance of embodying the spirit of “守望相助”: to support and look out for one another, especially the disadvantaged or less-privileged individuals amongst us.

As the world changes, these relationships and values continue to form the bedrock of a tight-knit community, where hopefully, no one gets left behind. The many helping hands approach is at the heart of a strong, ever-evolving society.

In our work, we also prioritise access to quality education and opportunities, to empower students like you to pursue your aspirations.

The resilience you’ve exhibited is inspiring and admirable. The experiences that have shaped you thus far will be a compass for your future voyages, and I am certain that the strength in you will help you to persevere through difficulties. May you remain courageous in your academic pursuits. We wish you all the best!

Lin Siew Ching

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The SUSS Student Care Fund is supported by The Ngee Ann Kongsi’s Emergency Relief Fund, which helps students who face unexpected and sudden financial crises during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ngee Ann Kongsi is a non-profit body that empowers young persons to pursue their aspirations, supports educational institutions in providing robust and quality education, and builds conducive environments to learn and grow in.
Moving Into the Future

A conversation on how transport and logistics are changing

Technology That Moves

MR TOH: The power of technology to enhance almost all sectors is huge, including improving inclusivity. For us at Tower Transit, which is in the transport sector, we’ve been involved in many discussions with commuters from all walks of life. We see plenty of room for technology to make public transport more welcoming to the elderly and people with disabilities.

Technology can also greatly improve public transport safety. I believe we’re only starting to scratch the surface of fatigue management technology. More can be done to help professional drivers stay alert on the roads.

DING CHENG: As for me, I was working in a freight forwarding company before embarking on further studies. At the time, I witnessed many exciting digitalisation projects. Just imagine a one-stop online platform for customers to get instant quotations, book their cargo delivery and use electronic proofs of delivery instead of physical copies. It’s already happening. The platform empowers the customer because he or she can now digitally manage the entire logistical process and cut out the middlemen.

Ushering an Era of Automation

DING CHENG: Most of us know by now that automation will very much be a part of our lives, which is both an opportunity and a challenge. In logistics, task allocation can now be automated via the transport management system. Even more game-changing is the automated warehouse, which enables better utilisation of space with a seamless end-to-end warehousing process.

MR TOH: Automation is similarly changing the transport sector. Autonomous vehicles may appear on our roads sooner than we think.

To prepare for this, Singapore is advancing the development and regulation of autonomous vehicle technology by establishing a set of national standards. These standards will guide the design of various towns to be ready for autonomous bus deployment as early as 2022.

DING CHENG: Well, that’s certainly fascinating! I agree that we’ll need to prepare people quickly for the era of automation. Many are concerned about job security while having to adapt to new technologies and the safety issues that arise.

MR TOH: Indeed. We’re constantly upskilling our transport workers so that they can keep up with technological advancements.

A People Business

MR TOH: Public transport is ultimately a people business. So, it’s not just about technology. There is still a need to nurture a gracious and caring commuting culture for public transport to be enjoyable and efficient.

DING CHENG: Yes, truly effective services have people at its heart. What also got me interested in logistics is how people with different skills are needed to manage the complexities of a supply chain across its various stages. It’s not as easy as simply implementing a technological solution.

MR TOH: I agree; what remains important in the future is the flexibility of applying skills from different disciplines to jobs in our industries. This is especially so as our industries will continue to evolve rapidly, whether due to technology or changing needs.
A Fairer Society for Young People

A conversation on helping youths through social work

Dear Willy,

Our family has been deeply inspired by the work of the philanthropist and businessman Lee Kong Chian, especially when it comes to his focus on education.

You see, we’ve directly benefitted from Dr Lee’s good work. A few of us, in our younger years, studied in educational institutions that were supported by his foundation, also known as the Lee Foundation.

Now, through our own foundation, we want to pass on the values of Dr Lee that have helped and inspired us!

We’ve chosen to support social work education because we observe an increasing and urgent need to improve the wellbeing of society. An extended family member of ours is also active in the social work space and enlightened us to the needs of society and youths.

The work done by social workers across all spectrums of society is important, and we’re privileged to be part of the journey.

Willy, we see in you a similar aspiration to serve society. We are heartened by your conviction and maturity, and we hope to witness your passion strengthened during the course of your studies!

Dear Sim Foundation,

I share your enthusiasm in social work and especially in helping our youths.

I chose to study social work because I want to focus on empowering children and youth. I hope that I can unlock each of their unique abilities. The early and adolescent years of a person are important: one brims with potential and should not be held back by circumstance!

A memorable lesson from my course of study was the debunking of stereotypes. Our professor conducted an activity where we learnt about how people get marginalised just because they belong to a certain demographic group.

This lesson totally changed me. It made me more aware of the role that social workers can play in the community: we have the skills and tools – and thus the “super” power – to identify those at the periphery and promote social justice.

I hope to change the lives of marginalised youths in a real way. Most of all, I want to enable them to achieve their dreams. Thank you for supporting me in mine!

Willy Ng

SIM FOUNDATION SOCIAL WORK STUDY GRANT RECIPIENT
Willy Ng, Student, Bachelor of Social Work, Year 2

“The early and adolescent years of a person are important: one brims with potential and should not be held back by circumstance!”

Willy Ng
A Life with No Regrets

A conversation on flourishing against all odds

The Wong Lan Eng Endowment Fund provides scholarships to eligible students enrolled in the Master of Non-Profit Management programme. They are awarded to high calibre individuals keen to contribute significantly to society. Mdm Wong Lan Eng, who has passed on, led a life well-lived: she survived the Japanese Occupation and was a passionate geography teacher.

I was an infant when an accident scarred me for life. My mother was doing her crochet and realised she needed to get a clean diaper for me. Upon her return, she was horrified to see the crochet needle had pierced my left eye. After this accident, my left eye was affected.

Later on in life, I decided to remain single as I couldn’t conceive due to my weak health. Nevertheless, I take joy in other things! I would cook for visitors. I saved and travelled to see the world and have been to many countries. I was a volunteer teacher at Methodist Girls’ School while studying in Raffles College.

However, my studies were interrupted by World War II. During the Japanese Occupation, I signed up and learnt the Japanese language. By knowing it, I could also work for them.

When the war ended, I continued my studies under a scholarship. After my graduation, I started teaching as a career. I enjoyed teaching Geography and would challenge my students to be inquisitive and ask questions. To make my lessons interesting, I let the pupils learn through play. I didn’t plan to be a teacher and if given a choice, I don’t mind teaching again. I gained a lot being a teacher!

As I was able to speak Japanese, I could also work for them.

When the war ended, I continued my studies under a scholarship. After my graduation, I started teaching as a career. I enjoyed teaching Geography and would challenge my students to be inquisitive and ask questions. To make my lessons interesting, I let the pupils learn through play. I didn’t plan to be a teacher and if given a choice, I don’t mind teaching again. I gained a lot being a teacher!

I have learned to accept my health condition. I am not afraid of death for I am prepared to die. I have handed my life to God and I am ready to leave this world without regrets.

Second, I wish to continuously equip myself with different skills and knowledge to live out different experiences. These include life skills such as home repair, first aid and elder care training as well as completing another graduate degree.

It is definitely important to live a life without regrets! It is also important to make well-informed or considered decisions. Even if things do not turn out to be the best, I have learnt not to bash myself up. Some regrets in life are signs that we have lived.

Mdm Wong, to keep your legacy alive, I would like to live every day to the fullest and strive to empower others to do the same!
Q: Why has Octava Foundation chosen to focus on helping children and youths?

OCTAVA FOUNDATION: They are the future of our world. Investing in their holistic education and development is critical in helping them to achieve aspirations, which in turn can contribute to better lives for themselves and a better world for others.

Q: All of you have a passion to help Singapore’s young. What does it mean to empower them?

OCTAVA FOUNDATION: Empowerment entails helping them to build their capacity so that they can better navigate society and overcome challenges; providing them with opportunities to pursue their dreams; and inspiring them to contribute back to the community – especially with the vulnerable in mind.

FATIMAH: To me, empowering the young means helping them to gain life and work skills and increasing their understanding of various issues. This way, they can make informed decisions and have a voice in their families, communities and workplaces.

JESSEY: Many youths face similar issues, but we rarely talk about them. We fear being vulnerable. But if we speak up about the crises we face, we will find that we are not alone. By learning together through our common struggles, we can really empower each other.

OCTAVA FOUNDATION: Fatimah and Jessey, we believe that both of you can be powerful agents of change despite the challenges you have faced or continue to face!

Q: How has the Foundation’s approach changed as it works with children and youth?

OCTAVA FOUNDATION: We are increasingly taking a more hands-on approach. By personally engaging with those whom we support, we can deeply examine the root causes of their challenges and seek best practices that help us better journey with them as they move up the education continuum.

Q: Jessey and Fatimah, could you share more about your aspirations working with children and youth?

JESSEY: I want to inspire kids and youth with my own story and advocate for mental health. Despite having gone through a lot at different stages of my life, I stay positive! Our past does not define us; we can look ahead and chase our dreams fearlessly. Then, we see what we are truly capable of.

FATIMAH: I would like to help children build up their self-esteem. I want to improve their communication skills and encourage them to voice their views, so that they can be heard, understood and accepted in the community.

Q: What impact would Octava Foundation like to see on the SUSS students whom it is supporting?

OCTAVA FOUNDATION: We wish to see the students we support in higher education like Fatimah and Jessey graduate successfully and go on to empower others. We hope that they have found strength and comfort through us. Seniors who have graduated from our programme can become role models for juniors as they grow in their careers and mature into inspiring mentors.
The Empathy Factor

A conversation on the late former president S R Nathan’s most enduring leadership quality

Dear Mr Chin,

Tributes celebrating Mr S R Nathan’s life describe him as a social worker at heart. So, I have been thinking about that particular quality he possessed, which made him such a memorable social worker on top of his illustrious roles in government.

I would say that it is empathy: he had an ability to identify with, and understand things from, another person’s perspective. Empathy also helped him to be a skilled political negotiator.

His varied life experiences, from being a rebellious school dropout to President of Singapore, probably enabled him to empathise with all kinds of people.

As an aspiring social worker, I aim to practise empathy too. While sympathy requires me to understand people with my intellect, empathy demands that I connect with others using my entire being – including re-visiting my past experiences or examining similar emotions that I have to help them.

Through my chosen path, I also wish to honour my late grandmother. I was a caregiver to her, and I realised that I enjoyed the responsibility. It changed me and gave me a sense of purpose. I decided to do something similar in my career, where I can continue caring for others.

Dear Michelle,

You said it! Mr S R Nathan certainly related to people across all segments of society. As a change-maker, no cause was too small for him. Even if an initiative benefitted only a few people, he still did his part – he simply empathised with them. After all, Mr Nathan himself was shaped by his past of poverty and a troubled youth.

When the idea of an education fund was proposed to him, he quickly accepted the suggestion. He believed that it was especially important to uplift the lives of those financially disadvantaged through education. Today, the Fund garnered a lot of support, thanks to Mr Nathan’s ability to move people swiftly towards action. It was the power of his leadership and ultimately, character.

Mr Nathan also commanded respect. His generosity and presence had an immediate effect on people. Most willingly served him in different capacities as soon as he opened his mouth to ask.

The S R Nathan Education Upliftment Fund is but just one testimony to the man’s great qualities. The Fund garnered a lot of support, thanks to Mr Nathan’s ability to move people swiftly towards action. It was the power of his leadership and ultimately, character.

BENEFACCTOR
S R Nathan Education Upliftment Fund
Mr Bobby Chin,
Chairman, Grant Advisory Committee

The S R Nathan Study Grant supports students with financial aid to overcome difficulties, pursue their dreams and forge a brighter future for themselves and their families. The grant was established by the S R Nathan Education Upliftment Fund, which is managed by The Community Foundation of Singapore.

S R NATHAN STUDY GRANT
RECIPIENT
Michelle Tay,
Student, Bachelor of Social Work,
Year 2

As an aspiring social worker, I aim to practise empathy too. While sympathy requires me to understand people with my intellect, empathy demands that I connect with others using my entire being – including re-visiting my past experiences or examining similar emotions that I have to help them.

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Dear Mr Chin,

Tributes celebrating Mr S R Nathan’s life describe him as a social worker at heart. So, I have been thinking about that particular quality he possessed, which made him such a memorable social worker on top of his illustrious roles in government.

I would say that it is empathy: he had an ability to identify with, and understand things from, another person’s perspective. Empathy also helped him to be a skilled political negotiator.

His varied life experiences, from being a rebellious school dropout to President of Singapore, probably enabled him to empathise with all kinds of people.

As an aspiring social worker, I aim to practise empathy too. While sympathy requires me to understand people with my intellect, empathy demands that I connect with others using my entire being – including re-visiting my past experiences or examining similar emotions that I have to help them.

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Taking the Lead for Diversity and Inclusion

A conversation on making learning possible for all

Dear Mr Clarke,

I’ve always been interested to work with children with special needs. In order to understand them better, I applied to study psychology. I’ve not looked back since!

Through my studies, I was exposed to the ideas of diversity and inclusion. For example, in the Cultural Psychology course, I learnt that collectivistic countries focus on unity and selflessness, while individualistic countries emphasise independence and identity. I have many colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds. I understand them better now and am more confident communicating with them.

We also explored different case studies from Asia. This got me interested in venturing around the region and working overseas, which will expose me to a more diverse group of children.

Today, as a special education teacher, I collaborate with allied health professionals to develop creative numeracy, literacy and life skills lessons. I also work closely with my students’ parents – each student is unique and deserves different types of interventions.

I plan to specialise in diagnosis and therapy interventions for children with special needs. In the long run, I hope to pursue a PhD and contribute to educational psychology research.

It’s endless what I can learn here – so much so that I put my children in local schools, too. For example, I’ve been able to explore many types of civilisations and encounter various community-based ways of thinking, such as Hinduism and Islam. I continue to challenge myself to blend the best of all worlds in my thinking.

Let’s keep exploring and questioning the status quo. COVID-19 has challenged everything, so it’s a good time for us to unlearn, relearn and think anew. I’m encouraged that you want to continue learning and contribute to both society and knowledge creation. I look forward to your journey ahead and hearing from you again!

Dear Eugene,

Thank you for sharing your wonderful story. We need more young folks like you, who can take the lead in making education more inclusive for diverse learners.

I hope you never feel alone. Diverse classrooms are in fact a global mission. For example, the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals promote equity, where all children should have a right to education and be able to make progress.

I haven’t taught children with special needs. As a father of two, I can only speak from my own experience: In all that I do, I hope to inspire a sense of adventure in my family, friends and community.

That’s also because it’s the journey I’ve taken as a learner myself. I came from England to Singapore and have lived in the tropics since 1991. What is incredible is that after all these years, Asia – one of the most diverse regions on Earth – continues to be my favourite teacher.

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Strong Women, Strong Communities

A conversation on girl power

Growing up as a Young Woman in Singapore

QIAN YU: So far, I’m really thankful for the equal opportunities in Singapore. I’ve been able to explore my potential to the fullest here, and there is minimal discrimination against women.

MR CHANRAI: That’s good to hear. In our work, we also help girls living in crisis and the most disadvantaged regions. The gender inequalities they face are very harsh.

QIAN YU: Yes, I’ve embarked on a few immersion programmes to developing countries. The gender disparities became apparent to us quickly. Regardless of their contributions to the family unit, the women remained ignored or silenced. We’re a lot more fortunate in Singapore! Here, it’s about overcoming long-held expectations that only women should take charge of household chores, cooking and parenting.

HUI WEN: Exactly! In Singapore, women are still sometimes expected to be the main caregivers. Yet, as both women and men work today, domestic and caregiving responsibilities can also be shared.

Bridging the Gender Divide

HUI WEN: It’s not easy to change gender-role stereotypes that are deeply entrenched in society. And it can’t be done by women alone.

QIAN YU: What’s also interesting these days is that many women are taking things into their own hands with social media. They’re using it as a platform to be heard and understood, and more importantly, to connect with other women globally.

The Power of Women

MR CHANRAI: Yes, in fact, education for both girls and boys remains the key for breaking gender stereotypes. Girls can acquire the skills and confidence to exercise their agency. Boys can learn to think critically and understand that gender roles are ultimately constructs.

QIAN YU: What’s also interesting these days is that many women are taking things into their own hands with social media. They’re using it as a platform to be heard and understood, and more importantly, to connect with other women globally.

MR CHANRAI: In our Group, some significant leadership roles that women have taken on are Financial Controller and Chief Finance Officer.

QIAN YU: Wow, seeing more women holding high positions in your organisation, I feel inspired to walk in their footsteps! Women do have refreshing leadership styles. I’m thinking of Jacinda Ardern, who, with her empathy and relatable communication style, bravely and steadily steered New Zealand through the Christchurch shootings and the pandemic.

HUI WEN: Another example of a courageous and compassionate woman leader is Malala Yousafzai. This young Pakistani advocate for female education and gender equality is my role model!

MR CHANRAI: Well, it has always been possible for women to become great leaders. It’s what we’re hoping for the both of you, Qian Yu and Hui Wen. Go make your voice heard and discover your own power as leaders!

The Kewalram Chanrai Group Study Grants support female undergraduates with the skills and knowledge to empower their future. The Kewalram Chanrai Group of companies spans 14 countries with businesses in textile, automobiles, agri-inputs, financial services and palm residue recycling.
Stewarding Resources Wisely

A conversation on financial stewardship skills

Dear Ernest,

Did you gain practical financial skills during your studies?

In my case, being skilled in finance has enabled me to be a responsible steward of money, an important resource.

I enjoy financial stewardship for two reasons. The first is personal: being wise and prudent with my own resources, so that I can improve standards of living for myself and those around me.

The second is that I am able to use my skills to help others. Planning people’s finances has been one fulfilling career, where I engage both mind and heart.

I analyse the markets and offer objective advice while understanding people from all walks of life deeply to plan the best way forward for them.

It sometimes feels like I am right beside my clients throughout their life journey. We were once strangers but have now become friends!

Ernest, as a young person just entering the workforce, you will encounter many mountains to climb. Try your best to do the right thing. It sounds simple, but it is actually not easy in the real world. If you fail at first, don’t give up and do the next right thing.

Looking at the bigger picture, the pandemic has exposed great vulnerabilities around the world. I hope that from now, leaders of corporations will take green investing and sustainable finance seriously. I wish to continue my learning in these areas, as I believe that it is time to confront these global resource challenges.

I am so appreciative of your support, and I won’t take for granted your advice on doing the right thing.

Thank you!

Ms Ivy Chia,  
Financial Services Consultant

BENEFACTOR

IVY CHIA ACHIEVEMENT AWARD  
in Financial Planning and Management

Recipient

Ernest Neo,  
Graduate, Bachelor of Science in Finance

The Ivy Chia Achievement Award in Financial Planning and Management supports students in the Bachelor of Finance programme. Ms Ivy Chia is an individual donor.

Dear Ms Chia,

Yes, I did gain many practical skills studying finance at SUSS. We learnt a lot about the finance sector, such as equities, bonds and derivatives. Yet more importantly, we learnt to be money-wise.

For example, many things were de-mystified: the lessons on taxes, CPF and retirement planning were very accessible. I feel more empowered now as I have the skills and agency to better manage what I earn, save and spend.

As for my career, I am lucky to be currently employed in banking operations. Since the pandemic, many of us graduates fear that we will not be able to find jobs. I kept sending resumes to companies and did so non-stop for seven months!

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Advocating for the Voiceless

A conversation on the contributions lawyers make to society

Dear Mr Chandra,

I embarked on the Juris Doctor programme at age 38. When I was a young university student, I chose to major in accounting – not because I felt a calling, but because it seemed like an impressive profession. This, of course, turned out to be insufficient motivation to excel! My journey then spanned diverse disciplines across accounting, advertising, human resource management and early childhood education.

In 2007, I opened a chain of childcare centres and went back to school to qualify as an infant teacher. I began meeting many broken families and children at risk from neglect or abuse. To help the community, the centres soon set aside places for these children. Yet, I became painfully aware of the limitations too: early childhood educators can only intervene while the vulnerable child is in school.

Dear Adrian,

It is heartening to discover your journey of being a beacon of hope in society. Lawyers are in a privileged position. We are equipped with the skills to represent people in court and have knowledge of the judicial system – all this puts us in a position to change or influence society. Lawyers have a great responsibility.

As you describe your journey with children, I recall that one of my most memorable cases is, in fact, a pro bono case involving a young girl. Her father had borrowed money from loan sharks. To clear some of his debts, he helped the loan sharks demand payments by spray-painting on the doors of other debtors. The girl, then 16 years old, recorded her father’s acts on video. They were charged for vandalism, but we managed to reduce her sentence to a probation. This was a meaningful case because a young life – ignorant rather than malicious – had been spared.

More lawyers are needed to participate in society, whether it is helping vulnerable children or the elderly, or to simply give back to the community. Adrian, as a future lawyer with heart, you are just the kind of role model whom we are glad to support. We hope that you go on to raise the bar for the legal profession in Singapore!

Today, I’m working towards becoming a lawyer specialising in family law, with a focus on child issues. As a family lawyer, I hope to do more for children in difficult situations and advocate for their welfare. Children are often the most vulnerable and voiceless in society.

I have learnt that the practice of family law is not a straightforward, formulaic application of rules. Each family conflict is unique. Parties will require a steady and empathetic hand to guide them towards finding solutions. This is not something that comes easily to practitioners. It will require attention and practice, which means that my legal education won’t stop at graduation but will be a lifelong endeavour.

The Rajah & Tann Foundation Top Law Graduate Prize is presented to the top student from the SUSS Bachelor of Laws and Juris Doctor programmes. The Rajah & Tann Foundation is the platform through which Rajah & Tann gives back to the community, which includes supporting underprivileged children, the elderly and disadvantaged groups.
Q: You have been a business and community leader in various capacities for many years. What is a leadership lesson that you hold dear to your heart?

MR JALEEL: Not everything can be measured in dollars and cents; we lose the forest for the trees if we focus on just that.

Instead, relationships are more valuable and enduring. For example, when there are agreements or disagreements between parties, it is ultimately their relationship that holds the key to a way forward. Having a good relationship also allows for compromises to be made today – the goodwill generated opens doors in the future.

Q: Why have you chosen to support students particularly in the S R Nathan School of Human Development?

MR JALEEL: Education can be an equaliser of society. It is important for us to come together and support those who need help towards their potential.

I was fortunate to meet kind and giving people when I was young. Coupled with the eagerness to work hard, I benefitted from them and Singapore’s growth. Now, I would like to see others in the community succeed too.

Human development studies examine the questions of human flourishing and address what I believe in: the need to focus on people and relationships for our wellbeing.

Q: What do you hope for the SUSS students who are being supported by your scholarship?

MR JALEEL: Always find a way to give back. Students like Odelia have their best years ahead of them and can aspire to be leaders. Good leaders seek to make things better regardless of the limitations they face.

It is good to stay guided by a moral compass too. My faith has been the cornerstone of my life and sees me through the ups and downs.

Q: What kind of real-world impact would you like to make after your studies?

ODELIA: I would like to empower people to grow and flourish. I’ve learnt that everyone has the innate ability to excel, but challenges in life may hinder this. I believe in caring for those facing challenges – just like those in my life who did the same for me when I was struggling.

Q: How have you been empowered through your social work studies?

ODELIA: A lecturer once said that even as social work professionals, we are ultimately human and bound to make mistakes. What matters then, aside from doing our best professionally, is not to strive for perfection but to be genuine towards those whom we are helping. They can feel the sincerity, and this is essential in building a strong relationship, whether in work or life.

Practising self-compassion, I continue to be a conscientious yet assured person.

The Mohamed Abdul Jaleel Scholarship supports undergraduates from the S R Nathan School of Human Development who are passionate about the promotion of human flourishing. Mr Mohamed Abdul Jaleel is the founder and CEO of MES Group and one of Forbes’ 40 Heroes of Philanthropy in Asia in 2014.

Q: You are keen to interact with people from all walks of life. How is the social work programme helping you to deepen your interest in people?

ODELIA: I gain knowledge – on human behaviour and society – in a systematic way. This helps me to assess and intervene appropriately in social issues.

I also get to learn essential skills, such as communication and presence. I can better interact with people, understand their needs and help them in a more informed and collaborative manner.

I find social work a very meaningful profession! I witness lives being changed and can be part of that change.
Future
Sharing Past, Present and Future
Stories

Sharing Past, Present and Future Stories

A conversation on why stories matter for future generations

The annual Singapore Chinese Film Festival promotes film appreciation alongside a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and the language. In 2020, the Hong Leong Foundation – philanthropic arm of the Hong Leong Group – supported the festival. The Centre for Chinese Studies@SUSS is a co-organiser of the festival with the Singapore Film Society.

Q: Why is the sharing of stories, such as through the medium of film, significant for building up a community?

MR QUEK: Stories are a way of communicating across generations. Through these stories, we are guided in our behaviour in ways that allow our community to thrive. And this behaviour eventually shapes our culture. Without these stories, we would have lost a significant source of wisdom from the past and be less confident of charting our future.

MR FOO: Visual storytelling through films can affect us powerfully. The combined impact of images, music, dialogue, lighting, sound and special effects elicits strong emotions and helps us to reflect on our own lives, our society and our culture.

Q: What is the role of language in storytelling?

MR FOO: We are reminded of a panel discussion in the Singapore Chinese Film Festival’s 2018 edition titled “To Dub or to Sub: The Importance of Presenting Original Dialogue and Local Dialects in Film”.

In this panel, we discussed how audiences in Singapore are used to the dubbed versions of film and television content. For example, Hong Kong content is primarily in the Cantonese dialect and dubbed into Mandarin for Singaporeans.

The Festival believes it is important to present the original language for three reasons. First, watching the film in its original language is the most authentic way of experiencing it. Second, while people from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore can speak a common language that is Mandarin, they have different stories to tell through various dialects, which possess different histories. Finally, Chinese films should not be defined by just standard Mandarin. It is important to present the diversity of spoken Chinese languages, including the dialects, to explore the numerous cultures that Chinese filmmakers want to bring to light.

Q: The arts and culture are innovating in the time of pandemic. In response, the Singapore Chinese Film Festival adopted a dual track of online and offline screenings in 2020 – something that technology has made possible. Ms Tan, could you share more about this process?

MS TAN: For the 2020 edition, we had 40% of our screenings online and 60% in the cinema. The majority of post-screening Q&A sessions with filmmakers was broadcast live on Facebook and YouTube.

The new format was the result of COVID-19, which has changed the film industry. Despite the challenges, there have been many opportunities for innovation and collaboration. The thinking and camaraderie displayed by the team – from the SUSS community and our partner, the Singapore Film Society, to festival volunteers, film industry partners and sponsors – were really remarkable.

Q: Mr Quek, looking ahead, how do you think communities can be strengthened, especially in an increasingly technological and fragmented world?

MR QUEK: As much as technology is a tool that has democratised community-building, it has also created much division in society. I don’t think that we will find our best answers in technology. I’m fearful if we continue to rely on it to shape our communities.

In a rapidly-changing world, it’s important not to lose sight of what we are trying to achieve together, which is a deep sense of our common humanity. The best way to safeguard this humanity, I believe, is to be more mindful of our relationships with one another and certainly, with our technology.

It is a good time for us – and our stories – to return to core values. Even doing or saying less with more thoughtfulness and more considered intentions is already a good outcome to have.
Openness in the Post-Pandemic Landscape

A conversation on how the social sciences can address today’s pressing issues

Dear Jeremy,

The world you are entering as you begin your career will be reshaped by the pandemic, but your knowledge and skills from studying sociology will remain more relevant than ever.

We believe that COVID-19 is not a problem that the medical sciences alone can solve. Skills from the social sciences are really needed to understand who are not getting access to vaccines, why some people are hesitant about them, and how we can communicate assurance.

Working across disciplines, the social sciences can also tackle the larger problems: the disproportionate impact of the disease on communities of colour and the poor; the impact of lockdowns on mental health; and distinguishing between accurate and misleading information.

Dear Ms da Garcia,

I am encouraged by your letter about how social sciences graduates have an even more crucial role to play in the post-pandemic world.

An equitable society, in particular, is an interest for many young sociology graduates like me. It is where I hope to contribute. While there is no perfect solution to such a complex issue, I believe that informed, individual action can play a part.

I agree that a sense of openness is important in the social sciences. It is what I enjoyed in my sociology course. I experienced a safe setting, where we could openly explore and bridge the knowledge gap between each other and engage in constructive, non-judgmental conversations on society.

So, I would say that one of the most important skills I gained from studying sociology is the ability to understand issues from multiple perspectives and think critically about them. I hope it delights you to know that this has helped me to approach problems with a much more open mind!

Rosalia da Garcia

BENEFICTOR
SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific
Ms Rosalia da Garcia,
Managing Director

SAGE GOLD AWARD RECIPIENT
Jeremy Quek,
Graduate,
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology

“We need to open our minds even more, listen to diverse voices and collaborate widely.”

Rosalia da Garcia

In the post-pandemic landscape, we will need to open our minds even more, listen to diverse voices and collaborate widely. As Ziyad Marar, SAGE’s President of Global Publishing, notes:

The challenges we face in modern society, from responding to climate change through to anti-microbial resistance via so many issues to do with economic, social, political, and cultural wellbeing, do not come in disciplinary packages. They are complex and require an integrated response drawing on different levels of enquiry.
Doing Well and Doing Good

A conversation on combining business and social impact

The Mrs Wong-Mah Jia Lan Bursary supports financially-disadvantaged part-time undergraduate students. Mrs Wong-Mah Jia Lan, or Mama Wong to beneficiaries and friends, is an active philanthropist who has contributed for decades to a wide scope of charitable projects in Singapore and Asia.

Two Businesswomen, Two Different Generations

MRS WONG-MAH: As a young girl in the 1950s, I was not allowed to study. I helped out in the family business instead. After I got married, my late husband and I ran various businesses together in tin mining, shipping supplies and the hotel industry. We travelled between Singapore and Malaysia and hardly slept. We worked really hard! Now, I keep my mind active by studying my investments.

AMIRA: Things have changed so much since Mrs Wong-Mah’s time! Today, women are more empowered. I am one of them. Since my teen years, I’ve dreamt of running my own business. During my course of study, I finally took the leap of faith to start my own online food business. It feels so real when I’m fully invested in it, applying what I’ve learnt from business school and expanding my creativity!

BENEFACTOR Mrs Wong-Mah Jia Lan, Philanthropist

MRS WONG-MAH JIA LAN BURSARY RECIPIENT Amira Alwee, Student, Bachelor of Science in Business, Year 3

Bringing Business and Doing Good Together

AMIRA: I’m an environmental enthusiast and believe in educating my current pool of customers about recycling, reusing and reducing. I also use social media as a way of promoting good environmental habits.

MRS WONG-MAH: The future of sustainable business practice is already here. Taiwan has good recycling projects, where small businesses turn waste into useful items. Shanghai has put its recycling policies into action. There is much that we can learn from the region as we embark on doing good for the environment.

In the area of combining profit and philanthropy, it is always possible but can get more difficult in a small place like Singapore and as our economy faces uncertainty and challenges.

At the same time, it’s easy to be recognised as a philanthropist these days through media coverage or awards. Yet true philanthropy has to do with the heart; it is behind the scenes and does not require anything in return, not even recognition.

Second Chances for Others

AMIRA: One other area that I wish to help in is by giving ex-convicts a second chance in life when they’re out of prison. They, too, can have equal opportunities. I would like to hire them as part of my team if my business grows well to do so.

MRS WONG-MAH: It’s a reality that many don’t come from families with a good background. Some don’t grow up with important core values or struggle with the day-to-day. We can give them a chance to do better. It’s best if they are grateful and do the same by contributing back to society too.
The Promise of FinTech

A conversation on the future of financial inclusion

Q: FinTech holds a lot of potential in increasing financial inclusion. Tell us more about this phenomenon, its pros and cons.

DR LO: About two billion people in the world live outside of financial systems. FinTech can reach out to the unbanked or under-banked, who really need access to services like payment, remittance and microcredit. FinTech can make such financial services simpler and more affordable for these communities.

MS LI: By lowering costs – in areas such as running enterprises, automating processes and building trust –

FinTech also allows for more to enter business, where new business models may emerge.

Meanwhile, during the pandemic, we have seen how FinTech enables financial services to continue with contactless connections.

MR LAI: There are risks, too. As we increase access to digital financial services, we will also need to increase the digital and financial literacy of people. Now that we can easily move and manage money simply with our smartphones, we must stay careful and wise about our financial decisions. Financial access and financial health go hand in hand.

As with other technologies, FinTech is not excluded from the challenges of data privacy and cybersecurity. There will be a need for regulation to ensure that there is no unequal access to digital infrastructure or a misuse of tech by a minority.

Q: FinTech is a hot field today. What are some of the crucial skills required for this industry?

MR LAI: I would say risk management skills are important, which are a mix of hard and soft skills. These include a balance of tech and financial knowledge, logic, strategic thinking and an understanding of policies, economies and market sentiments.

DR LO: If one has a good understanding of tech, one can deep dive into its possibilities. At the same time, tech has produced a deluge of fake news and deep fakes. Today, a valuable skill is to be able to verify and present accurate facts in such an environment.

Q: The future of FinTech is probably limitless. What are you most keen to see?

DR LO: One word: decentralisation. It can further increase financial inclusion. This could mean decentralised communications such as a mesh network; decentralised tech and governance for more democratised financial services; or decentralised exchanges like cryptocurrency exchange, where corrupted third parties are cut out and there is enhanced security.

MR LAI: Mathematical modelling that can envision more sustainable and stable economies and a better distribution of wealth. Also, more personalised services with the strengthening of data privacy and protection.
The Age of Analytics

A conversation on the potential of big data

The SAS Programming and Its Application Book Prize is awarded to the top graduating student from the Bachelor of Science in Business Analytics to encourage him or her to make a difference through analytics and technology. A leader in analytics, SAS Institute Pte Ltd empowers organisations around the world to transform data into intelligence through innovative software and services.

Q: Is the transformational potential of big data true? Can it really make our world better or safer?

CHEE SIANG: Studies have shown that the potential of big data continues to grow. We’re now seeing how businesses and governments use data analysis to discern patterns and make better decisions. As many tech figures believe, data is the fuel of the future. Being in this field, I definitely witness how that is true.

MR TEOH: Yes, the potential can’t be understated. What’s also really powerful is that big data is relevant to almost all industries – from public safety, social services and education to infrastructure and more. For us, we’ve been really excited to use data analytics to address diverse issues across food security, healthcare, the life sciences and transport.

Q: That’s what we’re curious about too: How are each of you currently working with data to address real-world issues?

MR TEOH: In recent times, due to the pandemic, we’ve been using advanced analytics to improve healthcare. We’re collaborating with a foundation that helps patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, a condition causing severe chest and breathing problems. We apply machine learning and AI to natural language data collected from surveys done in the community, so that we can identify the best treatments. The foundation also leverages our text sentiment analysis and visual analytical tools to explore unstructured data, identify trends and create reports that better understand patients’ needs.

In another project, we’re partnering with a biopharmaceutical firm. We use tech to deliver personalised healthcare solutions to patients, with an aim to optimise health outcomes. We do this by integrating pharmaceutical products with diagnostics, data, devices, education and support services in a fully regulatory-compliant cloud environment. This way, the firm’s international teams can access the data anywhere and at any time and decentralise clinical trials, making healthcare more accessible and affordable for all.

CHEE SIANG: It’s inspiring to hear how SAS is using healthcare analytics to make a direct impact on patient care. For me, I’m employed in an electronics manufacturing firm. In this industry, efficiency is a key concern. My role is to use data analysis to improve operational efficiencies.

I manage customer orders, which exposes me to sales data. I analyse the data to understand who our customers are, what their needs are and how they behave. I enjoy drawing insights from the data to communicate trends to various departments and predict outcomes. This helps the company to make well-informed operational decisions involving manpower and inventory adjustments.

Q: Thanks for sharing about the work you do. In the age of analytics, the possibilities of data are indeed vast.

CHEE SIANG: I’m thrilled to be in this field! Big data will evolve and change how we live and work. The SUSS Business Analytics course opened my eyes to a totally different world too. The knowledge that I’ve acquired has improved my analytical skills, and it’s rewarding to use data to make useful recommendations to stakeholders.

MR TEOH: We do hope that students like you grow in your passion to pursue data analytics and find solutions to business and social issues. We would like to add that apart from possessing skills in digital literacy, computational thinking and flexible thinking, it is also important to grow in emotional and social intelligence in this digital age. The abilities to collaborate and empathise are uniquely human and cannot be replaced by digital technologies.

It is also incredibly vital for both public and corporate organisations to have a coherent decision sciences strategy that leads to operational outcomes. Doing so helps fortify and, more importantly, institutionalise their market differentiation and unique value to society. With a clear strategy, big data can now become the fuel to propel organisations towards their operational goals.

MR TEOH: We’d like to add that the knowledge that you’ve acquired has improved your analytical skills, and it’s rewarding to use data to make useful recommendations to stakeholders.
How You Can Help

A Gift That Keeps on Giving

With your support, students can have the opportunity to develop their fullest potential and make their impact on society. Contact us to find out more about empowering the lives of future generations.

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<td>Choose to give monthly or annually, regardless of the amount, via GIRO or credit card to advance education at SUSS.</td>
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<td>Pledge your properties, savings, CPF, securities or life insurance policies to SUSS by designating the university as a beneficiary in your will.</td>
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