

**NUS President Professor Tan Chorh Chuan
Freshmen Inauguration Ceremony
University Cultural Centre, 2 August 2010**

Setting Out to Stand Out

Mr Ho Jun Yi, President of the NUS Students' Union

Mr Tay Zhong Liang & Ms Cheryl Char, Co-Chairpersons of Freshman Orientation
Central Committee

Ms Joanna Zhan, Project Director of Freshman Inauguration Ceremony

Student Leaders, Freshmen of 2010

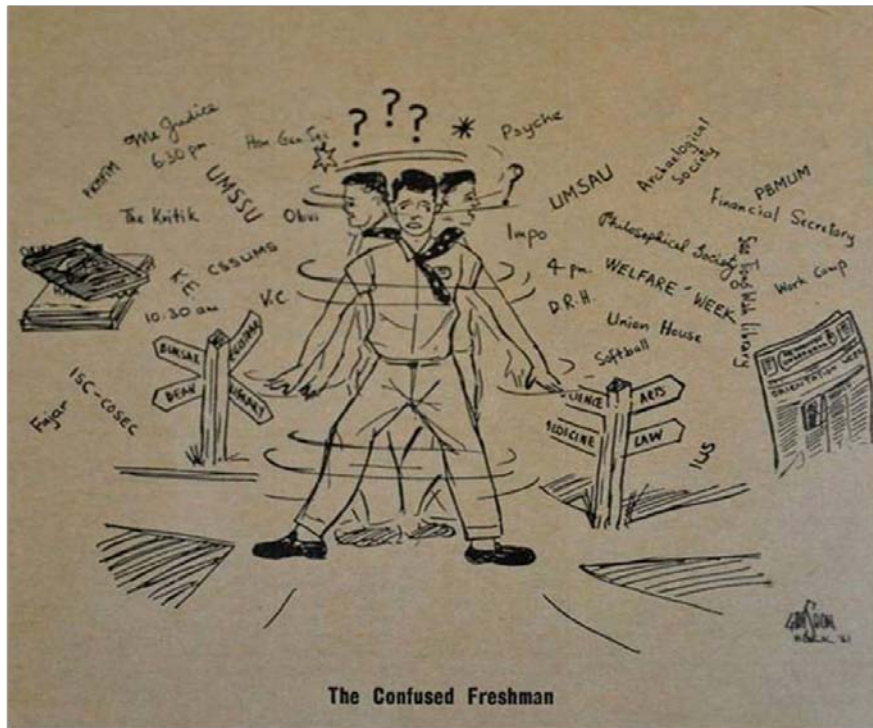
Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning!

One of the things I enjoy most in NUS is that every year, at around this time, we have an infusion of bright young talent that adds to the freshness, energy and creativity of our campus.

So, to all our Freshmen of 2010, let me bid you a very warm welcome to our NUS family and to the NUS experience that awaits you. We welcome you as the 102nd Freshman class to be admitted to our University. Like those who came before you, you are amongst the most talented young women and men in Singapore, Asia and beyond. We know, through your choice of University, that you have a discerning taste for quality and excellence.

Most of you will start this new phase in your life with a mix of emotions – pride, excitement, and optimism, perhaps tinged with some anxiety and uncertainty as to what to expect. I came across a student cartoon which tried to capture some aspects of this. The cartoon is entitled, “The Confused Freshman”.



In case you were wondering, the cartoon wasn't drawn by one of your peers. In fact, it came from an editorial in a 1960s issue of the *Malayan Undergrad*, a publication of our Students' Union then.

So, the good news is that we have had 50 years to work out ways to make sure that our Freshmen are not confused when they first join us.

This year, our student leaders and the Office of Student Affairs have toiled tirelessly to organise your Orientation activities. I would like to thank them for their efforts and dedication. Among the many activities, I would just highlight one, which is the upcoming Rag and Flag, which promises to be very special this year.

I know you all will be doing your part for charity during tomorrow's Flag Day, and I look forward to seeing you at the Rag which will be held in conjunction with the Olympic Flame Arrival Celebrations on Friday.

Starting from Mount Olympia, the Flame will have passed through five cities before reaching Singapore and our Kent Ridge campus. Each of our Halls of Residence will be putting up a float that captures the essence of one of these cities.



Temasek Hall
Theme: Mt Olympia



Raffles Hall
Theme: Berlin



Sheares Hall
Theme: Dakar



Eusoff Hall
Theme: Mexico City



Kent Ridge Hall
Theme: Auckland



King Edward Hall
Theme: Seoul

This year's Rag will therefore be an historic event, and I am delighted to see our students – both Freshmen and Seniors – giving their best to make this year's Rag Day both exciting and grand.

Beyond orientation, you may be wondering how best to use your time and energy here, and how to make the most of your NUS experience. A good place to start is to understand the nature of the institution you have just joined, that is: What makes NUS different? What is special about NUS and makes us stand out?

Let me highlight just three areas.

First, NUS is a global University.

**1: NUS is a
Global
University**

6 NUS Overseas Colleges

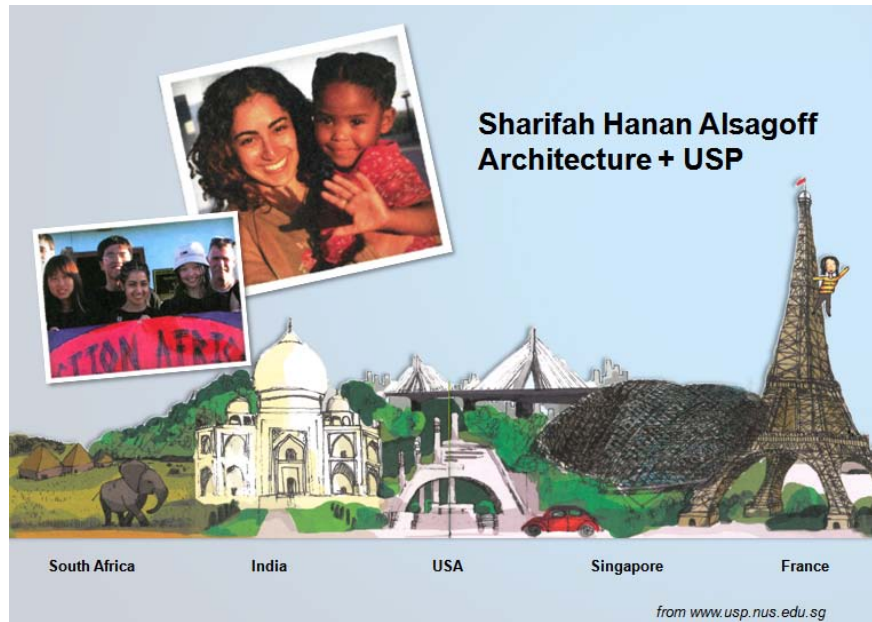
50% undergrads go
overseas, **20%** > 6 months

66 joint- & double-degrees
with top overseas universities

180 partner universities for
student exchange

Our students and faculty come from more than 100 countries and you will find a higher level of diversity here than in most other campuses around the world. NUS also offers a myriad of distinctive global education programmes. Rather than list them here, I thought it would be easier if I illustrate with an example.

Sharifah Hanan Alsagoff joined NUS as an Architecture student in 2003. She was also part of our University Scholars Programme which provided her with a broad-based, small group learning experience. Despite the demanding and challenging curriculum, she participated in numerous USP global activities, which took her to exotic places such as Yemen, India, South Africa and the United States. She then spent a semester abroad at the Ecole Speciale d'Architecture in Paris.

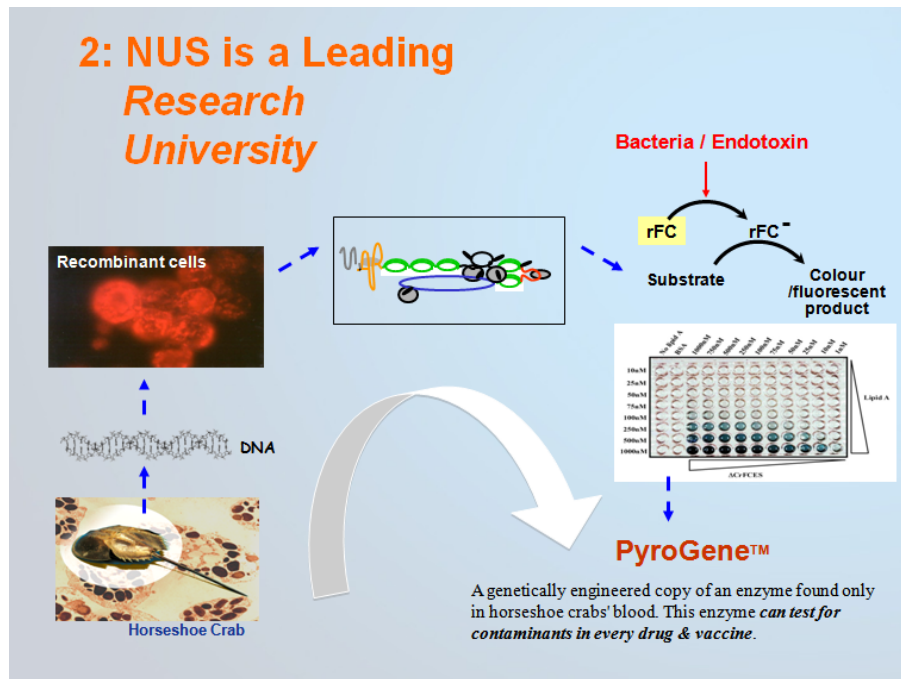


This wide-ranging global experience has served Hanan well. She has geared her architectural projects to focus on what she had learnt from the diverse contexts and traditions to which she had been exposed – such as incorporating influences from Emirati Palaces, as well as innovative ideas from sustainable housing in South Africa. Today, she designs projects for high profile clients in Abu Dhabi, and freelances for architectural magazines.

Of course, not all students in NUS would follow in the same path as Hanan. However, her story illustrates some of the many opportunities which you could pursue at NUS. Our University offers many possible academic pathways – I encourage you to look at the different options and to see what excites you most, and what relates best to your interests, drive and capacity.

Our many unique global programmes, in particular, will enable you to study under top Professors in some of the best universities overseas. They will also help you to be effective in different cross-cultural settings. This is critical for success in a globalised world.

Second, NUS is a leading Research University.



You may not regard this to be relevant to you as undergraduates. But consider this. Learning with Professors who are carrying out cutting-edge research, will help you appreciate how to ask the right questions, and how to formulate strategies to tackle them. It will also give you a sense of the thrill of discovery, and the excitement of applying fundamental knowledge to address real world problems. All these are key elements of critical thinking which is possibly the most important quality you should try to develop while in University.

Third, NUS offers a truly multidimensional learning experience.

You will find the widest possible array of cultural and artistic activities, sports, social and community-based programmes in Singapore and beyond.



When I was at your age, in medical school, my single greatest fear was of becoming a mono-dimensional person. I spent my University days, and most of my life, trying to make sure that this did not happen, and I am very happy for it.

Like me, I think you will find that beyond academic grades, when you graduate, what will be of real value to you will be the leadership qualities, the teamwork and interpersonal skills, the emotional resilience and the ability to communicate, which you developed while in University. These cannot be gained by taking courses – they can only be nurtured outside the classroom, particularly when you challenge yourself by moving outside your comfort zone.

I therefore urge you not to neglect the experiential learning aspects of University life – it will not only be of great use to you later, but will also make your experience here richer, more memorable and enduring.

Dear Freshmen, in today's competitive and fast-paced global environment, hard work is important but it may not be enough. You need to stand out from the crowd.

NUS offers you more than a rigorous education and a degree - it also offers many opportunities for global immersion and for you to grow as an individual.

Always remember that my colleagues and I are here to work with you to develop the qualities of mind and character that will prepare you well for a lifetime of fruitful endeavour and achievement, in work and in life.

So rather than “Confused Freshmen”, we should have “Confident Freshmen” stepping out with zest and boldness, seizing the best programmes that NUS offers, and in the process becoming graduates who are “Complete”.



I wish you much success, fun and fulfillment on this journey! Thank you.