Maintenance of the Mind
We speak to Associate Professor Dr. Lim Lee Wei about his efforts in the battle against dementia

Silicon Valley for Masters of Code!

Oxford Symposium a smash hit

Tan Sri Lin on education
Sunway University is a member of the Sunway Education Group, which is owned and governed by the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation.

Jeffrey Cheah Foundation

Nurturing the Seeds of Wisdom

Founded by Sunway Group Chairman Yang Berhobongan Tan Sri Dr. Jeffrey Cheah, AO, the Foundation continues the legacy of giving through providing quality education to all deserving Malaysians. More than RM720 million has been endowed into the Foundation. Since 1997, more than RM165 million worth of scholarships have benefitted over 20,000 students. The Jeffrey Cheah Foundation – which operates through the Sunway Education Group – is the first of its kind in Malaysia, and is based on the inspirational framework of the internationally-renowned Harvard University.

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Two students – one each from Sunway University and Sunway College – and their three high-calibre team mates demonstrated excellent computer science knowledge when they won the Regional Round of the MasterCard Masters of Code Competition held in Singapore.

Following their regional victory, Sunway University BSc (Hons) Information Technology student Leonardy Kristianto (20) and former Sunway College A-Level student Lim Jay Ching (19), will be given full funds to enable them to compete in the Grand Final of the Masters of Code hackathon in Silicon Valley.

There, they will have the opportunity to meet and learn from Silicon Valley experts, as well as undertake the MasterCard Priceless Experience tour of Napa Valley and San Francisco. Additionally, they will stand a chance to win the Grand Prize of US$1,000,000 (RM377,000).

The MasterCard Masters of Code Competition is a series of hackathons (where computer programmers and others collaborate intensively on software and hardware development) that traverses the globe, and gathers together the very best coders.

Lim, the youngest member of the team, was also its founder. He met the other three Malaysian teammates through a coding bootcamp to learn Ruby on Rails. After discovering the MasterCard Masters of Code competition, Lim convinced them to form a team, after which he immediately invited Leonardy to become the front-end designer.

Leonardy – who hails from Medan, Indonesia – only joined the team a day before the competition; however, there were no fears on that score as the team clicked instantly. “We identified and recognised each other’s capabilities, and started brainstorming throughout the bus journey from Malaysia to Singapore,” said the marathon runner, who is also active in academic and extra-curricular activities, such as volunteering for community services and designing the campus newsletter.

The team proved to be fearless, despite one of the features triggering an error during their first pitch – which left them with only 30 minutes to debug the system and solve the problem before the finals. “We managed to pull together in the end and it was really a close call from the competition!” said Leonardy.

The team is currently working on developing their hackathon skills, by forming a startup with their winning project “One Small Step,” while simultaneously negotiating a partnership with the UN.

Sunway University and Sunway College are proud of the students’ exceptional achievements. The institutions will continue to serve the community by nurturing more talented and well-rounded individuals like Leonardy and Lim.

BLAZE
Putting Parkinson’s Disease in its place

Associate Professor Dr. Lim Lee Wei is an authoritative figure whose work is making headway in the fight against dementia and mental illness.

Suffering from any of the numerous physical diseases is a burden that befalls the fate of many people – and more often than not, a majority of them have extreme difficulty in coping with the realities of it, never mind the effort and expense required to become cured. The problem becomes even more pressing when the disease is not merely physical but affects the victim psychologically or mentally.

Amongst the most devastating of these diseases that befalls people from all over the world, dementia and depression are perhaps the most insidious. According to a 2008 report by Alzheimer’s Disease International on the prevalence of dementia worldwide, it is predicted that the number of people suffering from dementia will be over 100 million. Meanwhile, more than 350 million people of all ages suffer from depression globally, making it the fourth leading cause of societal burden among all diseases, according to World Health Organisation.

Recently, however, a major breakthrough was achieved, thanks to the efforts of Associate Prof. Dr. Lim Lee Wei of Sunway University and his research colleagues from Europe. BLAZE News spoke with the soft-spoken professor from Ipoh to talk about his work.

“Depression is quite a serious problem,” said Dr. Lim, who teaches Neuroanatomy and Research Methods and Ethics at Sunway University. “It does not only affect the patient, but the entire family is affected as well. It is a global disease, and a social and economic burden to the government.” According to Dr. Lim, approximately 20% of depression patients are resistant to existing treatments, such as pharmacotherapy, psychotherapy or electroconvulsive therapy. The remaining approximately 80% of patients receive inadequate treatment. “That means that is even though the treatments are effective, the depression actually relapses. So, are we just going to let this 80% suffer just like that? I say: ‘No’, and my team and I have worked very hard to do something about it.”

That hard work, spanning a period of over five years, has led to the discovery that electrical stimulation into the brain – via a technique call Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS), which targets the prefrontal cortex – not only treats symptoms of depression most effectively, but is also effective in combating dementia.

“Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) is quite a well-known technique; it is new – it’s just how you apply it that makes it a ‘novel’ factor,” said Dr. Lim, who graduated as a medical doctor before pursuing his PhD. “Prior to this, while clinical studies have demonstrated the efficacy of DBS in treating depression, the most effective brain area to administer DBS for this purpose had not been identified. With this research, we are able to target the prefrontal cortex as a specific modulator of depressive-like behaviours – which meant that we could obtain the optimum result for treatment with DBS.”

Miraculously, this new application of an existing technique – also known as Neuroromodulation – was also able to reduce the symptoms of dementia in experimental animal models, which means that the potential to improve short-term and long-term memory functions is not only possible but effective.

Dr. Lim speaks in a calm and quiet manner - but it is very clear to see the passion and dedication he puts into his work, which comes through when you hear him talk about his research. “We looked through these treatment-resistant depression patients, to try and see if DBS is effective. At that time (2008), different centres have their own preference targets - and there were very strict standards about conducting clinical trials.”

“I was doing my PhD at Maastricht University, and we had just received a very prestigious grant worth €300,000. On top of that, I myself received another grant – the Koostra Top Talent Research Fellowship worth €50,000 – so when I finished my PhD, I was able to immediately continue with this project on depression.”

“We started the project in 2009, where I stimulated different targets in animals. Then, in 2011, I found very specific brain targets for which anti-depressants were very effective, compared to several other brain targets,” he said, adding that in order to discover more about this mechanism, he collaborated with several universities to conduct some experiments.

The results were encouraging, and Lim was able to write and defend his research paper, which led to him receiving the very prestigious Lee Kwan Yew Research Fellowship in August 2011. It was not all smooth sailing, though. “During the first year when I started to work on the project, most of the experiments failed; it really was very difficult to get good results. But I persevered, and got some good results in 2013, which continued on to 2014. By March of this year, I wrote up the whole thing and submitted it for peer review – and when it was polished and completed, I could announce what was essentially a major breakthrough,” he said with little laugh.

It is a dismaying low-key and self-deprecating statement, considering that the news spread like wildfire not only in the medical journals but in the mainstream news as well. It is even more amazing when you consider that Dr. Lim’s humblistness does nothing to conceal his brilliant mind. It is this brilliance that led him to be chosen by Majlis Anugerah Inovasi (“Innovation Awards Council”) as a Finalist for the National Young Scientist Awards 2015.

Humble beginnings, determination

When asked about what gave him the drive and motivation to do this research, Dr. Lim talked about his background. “I finished my PhD within such a short period of time: I started in May 2007, and finished in February 2009, slightly less than two years,” he said with a smile.

After he finished studying medicine, Dr. Lim got a scholarship to do a Masters in the Netherlands. “At the time, all my colleagues were PhD students and candidates – and this motivated me to do a PhD. Normally, I worked day and night to make sure that I could get the PhD done within a short period of time. During this time, I developed my passion and patience for research. I discovered that I loved research more than I did clinical work, and that is what made me stay back to pursue the PhD,” he said. “My family had actually objected when I wanted to pursue the PhD. They told me: ‘If you work and open a clinic, you can earn tons of money!’ But research is the opposite. However, when I got my PhD, they were so proud of me.”

Dr. Lim was quite frank about how difficult life was for him: his parents had divorced, and his biological father had passed away, so he was under the custody of his grandmother. “At that time, I was the most mischievous boy in the kampung. I didn’t do well in my study. When I was 11, my family planned to send me to a foreign country – and on the advice of the pastor, they sent me to the Salvation Army Boy’s Home in Ipoh.”

He recounted how difficult it was for him, because he didn’t speak either Bahasa Malaysia or English, and how he would sneak into the toilets late at night after lights-out to study by himself – and it paid off when he scored four As for his PMR exam, much to the surprise of his family and the home. The young man had also prayed for two things: for a loving parent figure, and for the chance to do medicine. Amazingly, his prayers were answered, in the form of a man known as Mr. Ong. “He used to come and donate to the Home – and he adopted me as a son. God touched Mr. Ong – and he supported me all the way, both here and when I studied in the Ukraine. He is still alive in Ipoh, and I owe my success to him and my uncle.”

“Mr. Ong” is now the university’s President and Vice-Chancellor, and according to Dr. Lim, he does not rule out returning back in the future to teach at the university once more.

“I’m very thankful for my university,” said Dr. Lim, adding that although he would be leaving the university at the end of August to pursue further research elsewhere, he does not rule out returning back in future to teach at the university once more.

“I love the university, I teach about the brain, as well as research methods and ethics; how you should perform that research, what kinds of methods to use, from the very basic level to the highest. I also continue my research, and I have found the university to be very supportive of my work. In many respects, Sunway is just starting out as far as involvement can be concerned – and I know that there will definitely be a bright future for Sunway,” Lim said, adding that although he would be leaving the university at the end of August to pursue further research elsewhere, he doesn’t rule out returning back in future to teach at the university once more.

“My father and uncle died of electrocution in Singapore – and it drove my grandmother into a depression. Today, I use electricity to treat depression – and the breakthrough was conducted in Singapore.”

In the university, I teach about the brain, as well as research methods and ethics; how you should perform that research, what kinds of methods to use, from the very basic level to the highest. I also continue my research, and I have found the university to be very supportive of my work. In many respects, Sunway is just starting out as far as involvement can be concerned – and I know that there will definitely be a bright future for Sunway,” Lim said, adding that although he would be leaving the university at the end of August to pursue further research elsewhere, he does not rule out returning back in future to teach at the university once more.
JCDSS returns stronger than ever

Since 2005, the Jeffrey Cheah Distinguished Speakers Series (JCDSS) at Sunway University has given the community and general public an opportunity to listen to outstanding experts speak on a variety of issues. Serving as a platform for intellectual discourse and lifelong learning, this series is one of the many activities which Sunway University has embarked on to further boost its social responsibility efforts through education, and shows no sign of slowing down even a decade after its inauguration.

The year 2014 saw two special lectures: a medical lecture by Harvard Medical School neurology professor Prof. Dr. Igor Koralnik; and a history lecture on Southeast Asia by Prof. Peter Carey, Fellow Emeritus of Trinity College of the University of Oxford. After a short break, the JCDSS returned stronger in 2015 with three public lectures in March at the state-of-the-art auditoriums within the university’s brand new 12-storey building.

For this year, Sunway University Chancellor and Sunway Group Founder and Chairman Tan Sri Dr. Jeffrey Cheah, AO, brought in three distinguished guest speakers: University of Oxford Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Development and External Affairs and Professor of Behavioural Neuroscience Prof. Nick Rawlins; University of California Professor of Economics and of Political Science and University of Cambridge Professorial Fellow at Gonville & Caius College Prof. Barry Eichengreen; and Prof. Jeffrey Sachs, Special Advisor to the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon.

For many years, Prof. Rawlins has had his research in the areas of neural basis of memory, brain degeneration, pain and anxiety widely published. As the first JCDSS guest speaker at Sunway for the year, he spoke on the topic of “Pain and the Brain”, which explored the human brain and his new experimental work on phantom limb pain.

Listed as one of Foreign Policy Magazine’s 100 Leading Global Thinkers in 2011, Prof. Eichengreen was a Senior Policy Advisor at the International Monetary Fund. His topic in the JCDSS lecture series was “Global Economic Prospects: What Should Keep Us Up At Night?”, where he laid his analysis and argued against the global consensus view of seeing a stronger US dollar in 2015, and focusing on the downside risks of the global economy.

Last and certainly not least was the famous Prof. Sachs, who has 30 years of experience in international development, and holds many key and influential posts with NGOs and think tanks from around the world. Speaking on “The Age of Sustainable Development”, he argued that 2015 is a defining year for sustainable development and a year of several important global negotiations. “If we make it right we can make a difference in the world. If we neglect and get it wrong, it will be an opportunity that is not going to come back anytime soon,” said Prof. Sachs, adding that he hoped to reach out to more people, in order to share on what is at stake and what needs to be done to encourage all global leaders, who will ultimately be the ones to negotiate the agreements during the second half of 2015. Prof. Sachs is certainly no stranger to Sunway University, with this lecture being his second ever visit to the educational stronghold that he described as a “profoundly impressive rising institute”.

Sunway University Public Lecture Coordination Committee Co-chair Dato’ Dr. Koh Cheng Teik was especially pleased with the response to this year’s JCDSS series. “The popularity of the Jeffrey Cheah Distinguished Speakers Series can be ascertained from the increasing attendance levels. Each lecture this year has set a new attendance record and this afternoon (at Prof. Sachs’ lecture), we witness a new record, and we have some over 500 registered,” said the recognised academic and Sunway University Public Lecture Coordination Committee Co-chair Dato’ Dr. Koh Cheng Teik.

The 4th Southeast Asian Studies Symposium, the world’s largest annual conference on Southeast Asia organised by the University of Oxford, was hosted by Sunway University and the Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia (JCI) from 20 to 22 March – the first time that the symposium has ever held outside of Oxford.

The guest of honour was the Sultan of Perak, Duli Yang Maha Mulia Paduka Seri Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah ibni Almarhum Sultan Azlan Muhibbuddin Shah Al-Maghfurah. His Royal Highness – who is both an alumnus of the University of Oxford, as well as the Royal Patron of JCI – delivered the royal keynote address. Among those in attendance were Jeffrey Cheah Foundation Founding Trustee and Sunway University Chancellor and Sunway Group Founder and Chairman Tan Sri Dr. Jeffrey Cheah, AO; University of Oxford Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Nick Rawlins; and National University of Singapore East Asian Institute Chairman Professor Wang Gungwu, CBE, who delivered the keynote lecture.

The Symposium – themed “The Year of ASEAN: Integrating Southeast Asia” – was also the first public event to be held at the new University Building, and highlighted of a week of intense intellectual discourse and discussions, with global thinkers and thought leaders comprising academics, business, political and civil society leaders coming together to address Southeast Asia’s most important challenges.

In conjunction with the Symposium, Sunway University also hosted the Asian Economic Panel conference (AEP) from 23 to 24 March, bringing in former lawmakers in Southeast Asian countries together on one platform, which was chaired by JCI President Professor Woo Wing Thye. Amongst the distinguished panellists were Former Indonesian Minister of Trade Dr. Mari Pangestu; Former Thai Minister of Finance and Thailand Development Research Institute Former President Dr. Chalongphob Sussangkarn; and Former Indonesian Minister of Finance Dr. Muhammad Chatib Basri.

REGAL BEGINNING: His Royal Highness the Sultan of Perak strikes the gong to signify the start of the Symposium, as JCF Founding Trustee Tan Sri Dr. Jeffrey Cheah (left) and Oxford Pro Vice-Chancellor Professor Nick Rawlins (second left) look on.
The new field was abuzz with activities as students and staff members of Sunway University and Sunway College gathered at the new sports facilities for an evening of friendly matches of football, tennis, basketball and netball.

Sunway University Vice-Chancellor Prof. Graeme Wilkinson, Sunway Group Education and Healthcare Division CEO Dr. Lee Weng Keng, and Sunway Education Group and Sunway University Senior Executive Director Dr. Elizabeth Lee were on hand to officially launch the facilities by releasing balloons, before joining the students and staff for a group exercise and warm-up session to start off the games.

The new sports facilities include a FIFA-certified synthetic turf football field, tennis courts, basketball court and a gym – exciting, state-of-the-art amenities that can be enjoyed by all Sunway University students and staff members. The 12,000 sq ft SunGym can accommodate up to 250 people at any one time. Open daily to students and staff of Sunway University, Sunway College and Monash University Malaysia, it offers a wide variety of classes, including Zumba, Yoga, Boot-camp style and Cross-fit style workouts, among others.

Focusing on the student community, the SunGym also also offers Personal Training, Physio-Therapy, basic supplements, guidance on weight loss and weight gain at reasonable fees. This means that everyone can not only expand their minds, but get healthier at the same time – while having fun, to boot! BLAZE

In his speech, Tan Sri Cheah said that Sunway had achieved a remarkable milestone for the nation’s public transport at large. “We believe that this first-of-its-kind project in Malaysia will be setting the minimum benchmark standard and model for all future BRT lines and public-private initiatives. I am pleased to inform that the BRT-Sunway Line has been completed three weeks ahead of schedule,” he said.

Consisting of a fully-elevated 5.4km highway, the BRT-Sunway Line will be serviced by 15 environmental-friendly electric buses. There are seven stations, including one with a “Park ‘n Ride”, as well as a depot. With a top speed of 80km/hour, the buses are fully-equipped with universal access facilities for the disabled, and has a capacity of 67 passengers (25 seated). The seven stations are: Sunway-Setia Jaya; Menara; Sunway Lagoon; SunMed; SunU-Monas; South Quay; and USJ 7 as the final station.

Kompleks BRT Sunway – which is located across from the SunU-Monas Station – houses the “Park ‘n Ride” facilities, and provides a total of 1,153 parking bays, including 102 special bays for lady drivers and 23 for handicapped parking. The BRT-Sunway Line will be connected to the KTM Komuter Setia Jaya Station and the LRT network via Station 7 (USJ 7) of the extended LRT line, which is currently under construction and scheduled to be opened next year.

In its newest initiative, Sunway Bhd – in collaboration with Prasarana Malaysia Bhd, under the innovative public-private partnership (PPP) programme – broke new frontiers with Malaysia’s first elevated Bus Rapid Transit system: the BRT-Sunway Line.

Officiated by Prime Minister Dato’ Sri Mohd. Najib Abdul Razak on June 1, 2015, the BRT combines the convenient features of a Light Rapid Transit (LRT) system with the use of a comprehensive system, made up of dedicated lanes, environmentally-friendly electric buses and customer-friendly infrastructure. Present at the official ceremony were Prasarana Chairman Tan Sri Ismail Adam, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai and Sunway Group Founder and Chairman Tan Sri Dr. Jeffrey Cheah, AO.
A wise, gentle soul with a sharp mind

Tan Sri Dr. Lin See Yan's recent appointment as Sunway University Pro Chancellor and Research Professor is not surprising, as he shows no sign of slowing down as time goes by.

As the BLAZE team walked into the office of recently appointed Sunway University Pro Chancellor and Research Professor Tan Sri Lin See Yan – which looks deceivingly unassuming from the outside – it seemed like we had entered a small world of its own, as it also appeared to double up as a mini library, museum and art gallery, dotted with collectibles and souvenirs from distinguished global personalities, including a painting from the late Nelson Mandela.

Looking for all the world like a wizened master, Tan Sri Lin – who also sits on the Board of Trustees of the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation – greeted us with a warm smile, sparking eyes and a firm handshake, putting us at ease immediately as we plonked down on the comfortable classic Chesterfield sofas.

It seems that the word “retirement” does not apply to Tan Sri Lin; when you consider that since he finished his tenure with Bank Negara Malaysia (the Central Bank), he has been keeping busy for the past 20 years with a list of activities and bodies – both commercial and non-commercial – that would shame anyone even one-third of his age. Among other things, Tan Sri Lin has run a commercial bank; taken on advisory roles in the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the national economic council working group; served on the boards of public listed companies and private enterprises, including Cabot Malaysia, Silverlake Axis, Jobstreet, Top Glove, Genting, Ancom, and Wah Seong – and that does not count his contributions to Great Eastern, F&N, Straits Trading and The Star.

“What do I do if I retire?” said the Harvard-educated economist with a quiet laugh. “I would go on my wife’s nerves if I stay in the house. How much coffee or roti canai can I have?” In a nutshell, Sunway University’s new Pro Chancellor is not one to rest on his laurels, but one who believes in setting and maintaining a good example for people to emulate.

“I’m here (in the office) every day until 7pm. There is a lot that I can do, and I enjoy it. Many people come and see me to ask for help – they know I sit on many foundations, so they ask for scholarships, or assistance. I try my best to help,” said Tan Sri Lin, adding that his own Lin Foundation, which is run by his wife, had recently organised a fundraiser for people affected by the Nepal earthquake.

So what keeps a 76-year-old economist going with a zestful demeanour going? “Curiosity,” said the mindful gentleman in a simple, matter-of-fact tone. “I keep learning – and there are a lot of things you can learn about… You have to keep doing something. I write, teach and travel a lot.

I also contribute to think tanks; after all, I’ve been more than 50 years in the business, and of many businesses at that!” he said with a chuckle.

Tan Sri Lin is well-known for his writing, the scope of which is impressively eclectic: from comments on business trends to social and cultural issues, it seems that he really means it when he says “I write about almost everything.” To this day, Tan Sri Lin writes a regular column in The Star newspaper, and he recently came out with a book – The Global Economy in Turbulent Times – that is a compilation of his columns over the past few years for the daily paper. The book was officially launched by the Sultan of Perak, Duli Yang Maha Mulia Paduka Seri Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah Al-Maghfurlah, at Sunway University on June 15, 2015 – and it even has an illustration by popular Malaysian cartoonist, Lat, who managed to capture the mischievously characteristic character of Tan Sri Lin in a minimal number of strokes. “The book has around 1,000 pages covering issues of world economy, education, the middle class, poverty, corporate governance. My experience has enabled me to have a very wide scope and big coverage of things.”

HIS VAST EXPERIENCE CERTAINLY COUNTS FOR A LOT, AS TAN SRI LIN HAS THE UNIQUE Advantage of having served all six of Malaysia’s prime ministers, not to mention a stint with the country’s first ever finance minister, Tun H. S. Lee. His experience, travels and voracious appetite for reading and gaining knowledge ensure that he has a broad and unassailable grasp of the world stage. When asked how the business landscape of today has changed compared to before, he said: “Companies and their boards now have become more professional.”

“This is opposed to the traditional family-run companies, whose owners relied on instincts and their gut feel. They often never paid much attention to the companies’ feasibilities – but companies now are growing by use of public money. They liquify investments, rather than have their money held up by properties like buildings and factories – they sell off the buildings, then lease it back!” Tan Sri Lin said, using the Vidal Group as an example, where the holding company is not only the majority owner of the business, but sold the business to a REIT, which it in turn manages.

“You leverage whatever (little) money you have, and you leverage in a good way. In the old days, you couldn’t borrow a lot, as banks were very conservative. Now, you can leverage it up using new instruments. Even small businesses are more dynamic and flexible. But it increases the risks,” he cautioned. Tan Sri Lin’s words can certainly be taken at face value, considering that he has invested in practically every single business entity whose board he sits on goes from strength to strength – certainly from the moment he joins right up to the time he leaves.

“Dead serious about education

Tan Sri Lin’s endeavours when it comes to education are as legendary as his career – and he certainly has something to say about improving the education system in Malaysia. “We can do a lot,” he said in a serious tone that is quite different from his usual jolly mode. “We can – and must – change mindsets. I believe that when you want to do something, you shouldn’t do it unless you have a passion for it. Otherwise, it will be done ‘half-past-six’: neither here or there. A lot of things we do are simple – it’s common sense. The only thing is, that involves change. If you ask people, they say they will change – but they don’t change. Change doesn’t come easy – but you have to change.”

Tan Sri Lin stressed that change not only applies to people. “Look at Kodak. They discovered cameras and digital cameras – but they opposed digital, and were killed by it. We have to completely change how we do things. You cannot get an electric bulb by trying to improve the candle. We have to change the system and the attitudes, and to get tough. Sometimes, people compromise – but never compromise on principles.”

He insists that the country must be committed to quality education, and that parents have to take responsibility, and not just leave it to the schools. Giving the example of his own parents, who were teachers, Tan Sri Lin longs for a return to the days when teachers had great respect in society. “Change is better than the status quo,” he says, espousing on the importance in learning the liberal arts where “you study everything.” “You have to understand history to understand yourself. Understand the mistakes of the past by understanding history. I write and try to help young people. The only thing I can do now is to try to influence in the best way I know. A lot of these things, I won’t get to see in my lifetime. So that’s why I still write and teach.”

As both the Chairman Emeritus of the Harvard Graduate School Alumni Association Council at Harvard University and the President of the Harvard Club of Malaysia, Tan Sri Lin is working hard to bring more Harvard people to come and share their knowledge with Sunway. “We want to encourage more exchange of scholars to upgrade the standard of education, and to promote more research on Southeast Asia. Because without enough research work, we can’t get good policies,” he said, stressing on the importance of having access to transparent and accountable information and data in order to get enough data for research and analysis.

“That’s what education is all about: organising and putting data together, analysing them, putting it into a form that people understand, and with tools to analyse. If we’re serious about improving the education system, we need to get the input from all the people involved.”
The Sunway University Business School (SUBS) – through the efforts of the Sunway University Marketing Society (SUMS) – recently threw a “Zero Birthday Party” to commemorate the launch of Sunway University’s new BSc (Hons) Marketing programme.

The BSc (Hons) Marketing is a specialised degree encompassing the multifaceted components of marketing knowledge, and is designed to groom marketing champions with a focus on understanding consumer behaviour as a driver of product design, distribution, communication and pricing strategy.

The idea of celebrating the new programme came from Associate Dean of Postgraduate Programmes Prof. Brian Charles Imrie, together with his team consisting of Dr. Choy Tuck Yun, Jessica Ho Sze Yin and Padma Priya K. Pillai, as well as senior lecturers and lecturers from the Department of Marketing and the founding members of the BSc (Hons) Marketing programme.

Praising the team’s effort in getting the approval from the Ministry of Education to launch the programme, Prof. Imrie elaborated on the hardness of rolling out the “dual award” programme, where students of the new programme will be receiving two scrolls upon graduation: one from Sunway University, and another from Lancaster University.

Lancaster University is not only ranked in the Top 1% of universities worldwide and Top 10 in the UK, but its Marketing Department is also the UK’s very first established university marketing department and ranked first in the Complete University Guide 2013.

Aside from cakes and balloons, two guest speakers were invited to speak at the birthday party, which served as an alternative learning channel for current students. Guest speakers were invited to speak at the birthday party, which served as an alternative learning channel for current students. Guest speakers were invited to speak at the birthday party, which served as an alternative learning channel for current students.

The birthday party, which served as an alternative learning channel for current students, was deemed a success, thanks to the support and help of the SUMS members, who set up and decorated the venue, in addition to coordinating and hosting the event. SUMS President Dinh Der-Jiunn said that SUMS is a testing ground for students to be exposed to the business world.

That exposure has certainly proven useful for Sunway University student Fionne Wong Siang Ning. This 22-year-old, who is currently undergoing Semester 1 of Year 3 of the BSc (Hons) Business Studies programme, will be joining a L’Oréal Management Trainee 2016. “Through my involvement with SUMS, I have been exposed to many opportunities of networking with companies from various industries and exposure from the various events held,” she said.

Meanwhile, Zubir described Julian as the ‘epitome of a talented Sunway University graduate with high potentials to rise as a future business leader’.

SUMS that add up to greatness

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Meanwhile, Zubir described Julian as the ‘epitome of a talented Sunway University graduate with high potential to rise as a future business leader, and he urged the students to learn from Julian. The Zero Birthday Party is the first of many upcoming events that BSc (Hons) Marketing students should expect. For more information about BSc (Hons) Marketing or other programmes under SUBS, please call 03-7491 8622, or log on to http://sunway.edu.my/university/subs.

SUMS heroes help make the ‘Zero Birthday’ a reality

The TEDxSunway Club takes flight

The TED global set of conferences has already become an important and much-anticipated event for the dissemination of the things that make up its slogan: “Ideas Worth Spreading.” It has become so popular that an after-party series – TEDx – was created to support independent organisations who want to create a TED-like event in their own community. That spirit has now come to Sunway University, where approximately one hundred students attended the TEDxSunway Club launch, organised entirely by students of Sunway University.

“In bringing TEDx events to Sunway, my team and I wanted to provide a platform for like-minded, curious and passionate thinkers, who are interested in participating in a TED-like experience,” said TEDxSunway Club President Nicole Tan in her speech. She confessed to being both terrified and elated when approached with the idea of the club, as the responsibility to maintain and uphold the standards of TEDx are not light. However, Nicole said that thanks to the help and support of Sunway University Group and Sunway University Senior Executive Director Dr. Elizabeth Lee, and the dedicated team of student leaders, the TEDxSunway Club was successfully established, and set to prosper with a continuous succession of Sunway students. The planning and formation of the TEDxSunway Club began last year in November. Currently, the club has 31 members.

In her welcoming address, Dr. Lee said that TEDx’s mission “in the spirit of ideas worth spreading” is akin to the spreading of good deeds - for at TEDx events, the goal of the speakers is to teach the audience something new, something they didn’t know before, and something profound enough to inspire and change the audience’s view of the subject matter. “The subject matters are pretty wide as TED encompasses Technology, Entertainment and Design – hence, the sharing of ideas from the speakers to the audience is the creation of a cycle, and the good deed is passing on information and knowledge,” she said.

The speakers for the day were Refugees (RFTR) Founder Heidy Quah; Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI) Chief Operating Officer Ng Yeen Seen; BeatNation Founder-CEO Cody Foo; and Monash University Malaysia Clinical Associate Professor of Surgery and Gleaneagles Intan Medical Centre Consultant Urological Surgeon Dr. George Lee. Also present at the event was TEDxKL Head Curator Daniel Cerventus Lim.

Quah shared her experience and passion in helping Myanmar refugee children by providing the children with education. This was done through RFTR, a registered non-governmental organisation she founded when she was just 18 years old. Meanwhile, Ng spoke on the challenges faced whilst trying to rally sponsors to support efforts to provide financial aid for food, water and necessities for her fellow citizens of Kelantan. This was in the wake of the recent floods that devastated the entire state, and she paid tribute to the doctors, nurses and volunteers who helped.

Foo – better known as five-time beatbox champion Coex and the brains behind Beatnation – was the third speaker. The beatbox aficionado and leading educator in the beatbox movement entertained the crowd with various performances throughout his talk. Finally, Dr. Lee’s talk on psychology focused mainly on the journey of fear. Touching and speaking based on his own experience, Dr. Lee spoke on the various points of fear. The day proved to be interesting and informative in a well-balanced manner for the attendees. BLAZE
Recently, Sunway University and Sunway College were ranked No. 1 in Asia for Graduate Employability, according to the i-graduate Student Barometer Survey Entry Wave 2014. This is amazingly impressive, as the survey tracks feedback from over two million students from 1,400 universities, colleges, schools and government agencies across 30 countries in Asia. Being recognised as Asia’s No. 1, it is a sterling tribute and testimony to the hard work of Sunway’s academic and administrative staff in nurturing its students to be highly competent in meeting the job market.

In view of this, Sunway University and Sunway College’s popular Career Month returned in April 2015 to great reception, having “Get Hired 2015” as the theme for this round. The Career Month is one of the many initiatives at Sunway to help connect students with prospective employers and prepare students for the working world. The Career Month featured various career talks by employers from prominent companies; Industry and CEO Forums, which involved panelists of top management from notable companies; a Résumé Clinic, which honed students’ curriculum vitae writing skills; and visits to various companies, which gave students a sneak peek into the real working world. Participating students mainly came from the Sunway University Business School (SUBS); the Faculty of Science and Technology; the Centre for Tourism, Hospitality and Culinary Management; and Sunway College’s Victoria University, Sunway TES Centre for Accountancy Excellence.

The Sunway Career Services Team has once again delivered an impressive and informative Career Month, by having an impressive lineup of speakers to take part. Sunway students were able to learn the most up-to-date job market demands and tips in order to secure an internship or full time job. The Industry Forum: Branding & Marketing Forum – entitled “Creating a World Class Brand” – featured Scoot Chief Executive Officer Daniel Joshua; Eight Gourmets Executive Director June Chang; and RHB Bank Head of Group Brand Marketing ST Rajen. The Industry Forum for Accounting and Finance featured notable personnel from the Big Four, including KPMG Tax Partner Tai Lai Koi; PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Executive Director of Tax Anushia Joan Soosaipillai; and Ernst & Young Tax Consultants Sdn Bhd Partner of Human Capital Tan Lay Keng.

The CEO Forum – “Winning with People” – was one of the main highlights of the Career Month, with Mattel Southeast Asia Country Manager Petrina Kho; HSBC Bank Malaysia Chief Executive Officer Mukhtar Hussain; and Shell Business Operations Kuala Lumpur General Manager Nyon Kam Yew forming the forum’s panel. BLAZE
Young leaders for 2015 Student Council

Sunway University’s dynamic Student Council has always been an admirable and commendable student body – and recently, the outgoing team formally handed over the reins to a new batch for 2015, secure in the knowledge that their legacy will not only be matched by the new team, but bettered as well.

“To those of you entering into the Student Council today, you are entering into the realm of student leadership, which can both be a challenge and an honour,” said Sunway Education Group and Sunway University Senior Executive Director Dr. Elizabeth Lee. “You are representatives of the student body, and embody the best in student qualities that our university has to offer. I do hope that you will be mindful of this as you embark on your duties and tasks.”

Outgoing Student Council President Teoh Han Ee paid tribute to various parties – his pro-active and highly committed team; Vice Chancellor Professor Graeme Wilkinson; Deputy Vice Chancellor Professor Pua Eng Chong; Dr. Elizabeth Lee; and Sunway University heads of departments and staff – for their continuous guidance and support during his tenure. “When faced with challenges, always remember to talk to your team and move together as one,” he advised his successors. “Be a fighter, be in a team.”

“I could be the voice of the students and turn ideas into reality,” said incoming Student Council President Kelly Goh Siok Mun. “I am grateful to my previous seniors, who gave me both the drive to take on this challenge, as well as support. Of course, my friends, acquaintances and students of Sunway University played a big role too, for voting for me and giving me this chance to represent them.”

Currently pursuing her second year in the BSc (Hons) Business Studies degree, Goh hopes to connect with her fellow students, in order to promote a better bond of friendship between the students and the Student Council – a move she knows will ensure that students are comfortable in sharing ideas and opinions for a better university experience.

Meanwhile, new Vice President Yoon Pelli said that she hopes that, together with all the members of the Student Council, “...we are able to be the channel of communication between students and the management, with regards to any issues that they face on campus”.

The Sunway University Student Council is the governing body for the Sunway University Student Association, where they act as representative voices for student opinions, handle important issues on campus and help the university management to execute various objectives.

Last year in 2014, the Student Council collaborated with the Sunway Volunteer Society on various causes, including helping out at the Kechara Soup Kitchen and collecting daily essentials for the East Coast Flood relief.

Earlier this year, the two collaborated with the Chinese Independent School Alumni Club (CISA) and the Chinese Cultural Society (CCS) on the Young and Fun Festival for a day of festive celebration ushering in the Chinese New Year, featuring a 24 Seasons Drum, Chinese Traditional Dance and Lion Dance performances by students.

The ‘local’ Korean from KL

Jung Chul Soon
Diploma in Hospitality & Tourism Management

Even though he originally hails from South Korea, Jung Chul Soon feels confident in saying that Kuala Lumpur is his kampung (“hometown”). “I first came to Malaysia when I was only 8 years old, and basically grew up in KL. I love Malaysia, especially for the “malai-n-makan”(eating)! Every state here is also so full of heritage – and I am from a land where the population is only about 51 million (compared to Malaysia’s 20+ million!), but with a land size that is probably three times smaller than Malaysia!”

Jung considers it a privilege to be able to graduate in Hospitality and Tourism Management from Sunway. “The reason why I chose Sunway was because I always had a passion for the hospitality industry. At that point in time, I had many friends who chose Sunway. Naturally, that meant that I would choose Sunway Uni to kick start my learning curve.”

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For Yap Mun Keong, the journey in Sunway University has been a great ride. “I started in Sunway as an AUSMAT student in 2010, before continuing as a Bachelor of Information Systems student.”

Along the way, he also got nominated for the Sunway University Korean Cultural and Language Programme in Daeil University, South Korea in 2011. “It was great, as I directly gained a better insight on Korean cultural experience,” he said, adding that the support of the Korean students and lecturers was invaluable.

Throughout his studies at Sunway University, Mun Keong was actively involved in clubs and societies which motivated him to become the Sunway Statistical Analysis System (SAS) Club President and the Sunway Young Entrepreneur Society (YES) Club Student Advisor. “Joining the clubs and societies have well equipped me with industrial skills - plus I got to make many new friends in the process.”

After completing his degree, Mun Keong joined Hilti in 2013 as an SAP ByDesign IT Process Consultant in the area of reporting. “I am responsible in various roles, which range from support, project development and implementaion, fulfilling legal requirements, and providing training to the end users and developers,” he said. Since January 2014, Mun Keong had the chance to contribut to the successful roll-out of the SAP ByDesign system in Kuwait, Lithuania, Estonia, Ukraine, Belarus, Greece, Colombia, and Oman.

Mun Keong is currently pursuing an MSc in Information Systems at Sunway University.

Computers and culture

Yap Mun Keong
Bachelor of Information Systems (First Class Honors)

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The foundation of his career

Dominic Ho
Bachelor in Computer Science

Twinning programmes between local universities and foreign ones hold several key advantages for many people. This certainly provides an assurance of quality education – particularly when they are with institutions that are renowned the world over – while at the same time resulting in a lessening of the financial burden for the student, compared to the outlay that would ensue had they undertaken a full study course overseas.

Dominic Ho certainly agrees with this, having undergone the process himself. He started as an undergraduate student of the Sunway-Western Michigan University Twinning Programme, before eventually transferring to Western Michigan University (WMU), Kalamazoo, Michigan as a junior to complete his Bachelor in Computer Science. “It was definitely quite an experience, and I am glad that I went through the twinning programme. During my final semester, I did a one-year internship programme with Pfizer in Portage, Michigan, and I really learned a lot from it!”

Upon graduating and obtaining an Optional Practical Training (OPT) card from the US government, Dominic moved to a different American environment: Fremont, California, a part of the legendary Silicon Valley near the San Francisco Bay Area. He did this in order to enroll for Software QA testing training, to gain both knowledge and experience. “I wanted to study something that I could take with me, and improve upon for the rest of my life,” said the young man.

After training and working for several years in the Bay Area, Dominic decided to return home to Malaysia for work. He currently works in IRIS Corporation Bhd as a Software QA, where his job is to test software applications, devices and firmware for Trusted ID Card and Electronic Passport.

Returning home of course meant gathering up his old college mates for a reunion – the traditional and fun way to reconnect with old friends in order to both reminisce and tell a few tall tales. “Study-firm grounding: Dominic says that his education at Sunway and WMU is his lodestone in life.”

Lost a limb, but conquered mountains

Melvin Tong
Bachelors in Information Systems

Sometimes, we need to lose something in order to gain more and learn from that loss. For Sunway alumns Melvin Tong, this is certainly true, and BLAZE got him to share his story about conquering mountains – he has climbed Mount Kinabalu and the Mount Everest base camp and his fears that he faced along the way.

Losing his right leg to amputation to prevent the spread of fibrosarcoma, a soft-tissue cancer, seems to have given Melvin more reasons to push himself further, be it growing his business ventures or finding ways to share his stories to inspire more people. The 30-year-old director of Extreme Limousines, and Extreme Supercars, caught the entrepreneurial spirit when he was only 14. “I lost my leg right when I was 17, right before the SPm exam. Despite my success in building our website, I still had the nagging fear of what the future had for me. But I knew that after losing my leg, I had to move on with my life,” he said matter-of-factly.

“We were quite the geeks, my twin brother Kelvin and I. Very much into IT stuff, computers and PC games, we created our first gaming website called ‘Speed Extreme’. That’s how the ‘extreme’ came about,” he explained, referring to the name of his current company.

“It took me a few years to move on from that major change. I still cared about how I looked. I was worried about not being able to have a girlfriend, a family, or how the business would turn out. I didn’t have anyone to help with me about how to deal with the situation. I just hoped for the best and tried to live as positively as possible. To go through it, that was my own journey of self-discovery,” he shared.

“The first few months in college was tough, as I was on a wheelchair. It was rather difficult, even though the campus was disabled friendly and I had my brother by my side. It was socially challenging. When I reflect back, it wasn’t easy for me to communicate with others. I felt lonely, and couldn’t connect,” he said woefully. “People may have thought it’s like, you know he’s there, but you don’t know him, and would rather choose to be friends with someone who isn’t different. After college, I still felt alone, and at a disadvantage. I asked myself what was ‘wrong’ with me. I was socially awkward, and couldn’t sit and talk to people face-to-face. Then I learnt to improve on my social skills. If I have nice things to say to someone, I’ll just say it. When you compliment someone sincerely, both parties feel good.”

The brothers tried a few ventures, including a web hosting and web design company, and opening a computer shop in KLCC. Having discovered the challenges and risks in retail, the brothers then sold off the business and decided to dabble in a multi-level marketing business. Melvin said that the training he received helped him gain knowledge on how to sell, to be more confident and to improve his speaking skills.

Ain’t no mountain high enough

Facing his fears took on greater dimensions when Melvin decided on a new challenge in 2010: Mount Kinabalu. “It was driven by personal reasons. I was looking for something to challenge me. My girlfriend then wanted to climb the mountain with her friends. Then, I hadn’t even climbed a hill. And I thought, ‘Why not, let’s do it!’” he said with a grin. “Since I was going to climb, I decided to also help raise funds for Shelter Home for children. Each climber was to raise RM3,000 each. I set a higher target and managed to raise over RM100,000, with the help of family and friends.”

In March this year, Melvin climbed up to the Mount Everest Base Camp in March with 18 Malaysian climbers for “Trekk for a Cause”, raising money for charitable groups working with underprivileged children. “If you put your heart into it, you can get what you want. It’s about persistence and consistency,” he said.

His great achievements

In addition to his ventures and achievements, Melvin also contributed to the START Society project, which brought author and motivational speaker Nick Vujicic to speak in Malaysia in 2013. For his efforts, Melvin got the privilege of giving Nick a ride in – what else – one of his supercars.

“It wasn’t about overcoming losing a leg – those were things that I had to face anyway. I’m proud that I’ve climbed the mountains, and have been able to give talks – to share my story to inspire people or even one person. That gives me some sense of satisfaction that I’m doing something right. People ask me what’s the next mountain, or next big thing that I want to do. Film director Christopher Nolan gave a keynote address at a university, and said to not just dream, but to go after your reality. I’m not chasing a dream, I’m living my reality,” he said.
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