

# BLAZE

THE SUNWAY UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE

## EMPOWERING WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES



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# FOREWORD

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

## PROFESSOR SIBRANDES POPPEMA

What a fulfilling first-quarter of the year it has been. It is with great pleasure that I share with you the heartbeat of Sunway University and its contributions to the advancement of planetary health and the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Sunway University has launched its own #CampusWithaConscience campaign, promoting the underlying principles and embracing everything students and staff will experience during their time at Sunway University. Recently, we kickstarted the Campus With A Conscience LIVE Webinar Series – a platform showcasing movers and shakers, experts, changemakers, and policymakers from institutions of higher learning, NGOs, private and public sector sharing insights into challenges facing our society today.

Being not-for-profit means that all our income is invested in the quality of our education and research programmes. Sunway University is becoming increasingly research intensive and much of our research focuses on Planetary Health and Sustainable Development.

We remain committed to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and have adopted Planetary Health as the guiding principle through our leadership and work practices. The newly set-up Sunway Centre for Planetary Health based at Sunway University provides a space to share knowledge about planetary health, translate academic discourse into easily accessible information, facilitate learning, and create solutions together with a broad range of stakeholders to effect lasting systemic change.

In recognition of Sunway's embrace of the sustainability agenda and our commitment to advancing the SDGs in Asia, Sunway University and the Jeffrey Sachs Center on Sustainable Development were selected by United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UNSDSN) to join New York City (for the Americas) and Paris (for Europe and Africa) as one of the three UNSDSN centres in the world to coordinate continent-wide sustainability initiatives in Asia.

This issue of the Blaze magazine offers you an understanding of the many meaningful and vibrant events which have taken place on campus, and insights on some of the achievements within our institution.

This March issue also highlights the Sunway University Convocation Ceremony in February, our second physical convocation ceremony since the COVID-19 pandemic. We are extremely happy to have celebrated the achievement and milestone of over 3,000 students within a safe environment. In conjunction with International Women's Day, we also feature a story on female scientists at Sunway University who are leading the way in science in Malaysia.

I am optimistic that this year will see many of us coming together in person more frequently as things are looking way better and the path ahead is much brighter. Please continue to stay healthy and I sincerely hope to meet you on campus.





# EMPOWERING WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

Written by Hailey Chung



Do you believe that both men and women bring different strengths to the table? The Sunway Education Group (SEG), led by Professor Elizabeth Lee Fuh Yen, is in reliance on this fact and hence espouses the principles of gender equality.

Chasing that goal saw Professor Elizabeth becoming the award winner in the Leadership Commitment category at the United Nations Women's 2021 Malaysia Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) Awards ceremony last November.

The SEG Chief Executive Officer recalled how the Sunway Group was a male-oriented workplace back in the mid 80s to early 90s, mainly due to its initial beginnings as a construction and development company. Today, she said that women had penetrated and even held more than half of the top positions.

This was evidenced by the company's statistics in 2020, where women held six out of the ten most-senior posts. Furthermore, 160, or 58%, of SEG staff holding managerial posts and above were women, an increase from the 136 women in 2018.

**"The institution evolved, and we saw more female applicants for roles within SEG. I take a stand for women not just because I myself am a woman, but because I believe a woman can be as good, if not better, and should be given equal opportunity," Professor Elizabeth said.**

## Building a level-playing field

The progression was certainly not by coincidence as steps were designed to ensure the organisation gained ground in establishing a more gender-blind and merit-based environment.

**"The best candidate should get the job but gender-related impediments had to be removed. Ultimately, it all boils down to ensuring that women are given equal opportunity to pursue their goals in life, both personally and professionally," Professor Elizabeth shared.**

She also raised an important point that gender equality is not just merely about gender balance, such as having more women participation. Verily, she pointed out that there are generally more female teachers compared to male teachers after all.

**"It was more about ensuring gender equity, that women and men ought to be remunerated equitably, commensurate with their contribution. As for promotions and appointments, it had to be about putting the right person on the job, and just rewards should follow accordingly."**

**"Leaders need to be fair to all employees equally. It is also important to listen and observe in order to make changes to ensure that the career playing field is fair yet still competitive for all colleagues, both male and female."**



Professor Elizabeth Lee (middle) joining conversations surrounding women's health in conjunction with International Women's Day (IWD) 2022.

Professor Elizabeth humbly declared that she was not the only one to stick up for this as other senior leaders of the company, spearheaded by chairman Tan Sri Jeffrey Cheah, are always cognizant of the potential added strengths of having more capable women contributing to the company.

**"SEG is where it is today thanks to the effort and dedication of my colleagues who walked the talk fervently, and with the firm support from the Board and our Chairman himself who is a great advocate for education, gender equality, women empowerment and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Together we ensure our workplace is safe, inclusive and empowering for all."**

## Breaking limitations

Associate Professor Ts. Dr Angela Lee Siew Hoong is able to testify of living her dreams, being the Head of the Department of Computing and Information Systems in Sunway University's School of Engineering and Technology.

Upon the success of completing her PhD with Sunway, Dr Angela harboured a desire to inspire more younger women to continue to further their studies. During then, she was glad to see several females enrolling in computing programmes.

**"I chose computer science as my major because it allowed me to combine two of my passions: problem-solving and creating unique experiences. I can come up with creative answers to user-specific problems, develop and prototype viable solutions, and then put them into action using code," she said.**

The prospect for a female in the field was not as optimistic in the past as it looks currently. Dr Angela said technology itself was not particularly stressed or accessible, with only a tiny computer lab shared among classes in her school.

Despite the slim opportunities, she held to her interest in the computing field and kept faith that the industry will eventually lead her to a variety of careers



and industries, giving her the bright future that she envisioned for herself.

“Many people perceive it as a male-dominant field, maybe because of the cultural image of how a boy is always involved in playing robots and video games which are computer-related, whereas a girl will likely be playing with dolls.”



Dr Angela debunked the clichéd perception and highlighted the plentiful number of females that are adapting well and excelling in the computing and information systems field. In times when she has experienced discrimination, she said the strength to choose resiliency was aimed at doing the right thing.

**“Believing in yourself is very important because you will continue to strive for what you believe is right and do well in it. Be confident and trust your own judgement, then work hard and prove that judgement.”**

#### Bringing diversity and inclusion

Professor Elizabeth had also expressed the aspect of needing to build a safe workplace and education institution for girls and women. For instance, she has worked to beef up security in and around campus with lighting added to especially protect the female community.

Gender-sensitive messages were also cultivated and imbued in day-to-day conversations.

“Sex-based and sexual harassments are taken very seriously and no jokes about the matter will

be tolerated. It was great to see the level of sexist jokes and remarks decrease over the years. Awareness of sexism was created on account of it being called out if apparent,” she said.

While constantly laying better policies and strategies in stone for years, Professor Elizabeth knew that challenging gender stereotypes was the giant to conquer in rooting the gender equality value personally and cascading it to the circles around her.

“The changes over the years were not just about instituting policies but essentially in changing mindsets too,” she said acknowledging that every human has grown up with various unconscious biases and prejudice.”

“Perhaps due to our upbringing, cultural background and social beliefs, family or friends which may be unfair towards certain people.”

Amazingly, the agenda on tackling gender stereotypes had, in turn, caused other great things to come to fruition, such as woman empowerment and establishing a favour for greater diversity and inclusion on campus.

Sunway University welcomes students and academics from different cultures and backgrounds. It has developed and implemented the Disability Policy to fulfil and protect the rights of students with disabilities. The university also does not neglect in providing counselling, academic and mental health support for students.

**“We need to learn and avoid making assumptions about people in general, whether it involves one’s gender, sexual orientation, ethnic origin, religious affiliation, origins, nationality or even education, physical traits, and backgrounds.”**

“This journey is a process, one should always make it a point to be open and curious, to learn from others and to challenge our own beliefs, to further gain awareness of ourselves as well as those around us.”

“In doing so, may we create an environment in which all feel comfortable, accepted and valued. This is what we at SEG strive to promote,” Professor Elizabeth said.



# CAMPUS UPDATES

## Key recent highlights on campus



### Waste to Taste: Sweden Ambassador Transforming Waste into Future Food at Sunway University

The Swedish Ambassador to Malaysia, H.E. Joachim B. visited the #MostHappeningCampus for a delightful and sustainable discourse on avoiding food wastage. A cooking demo led by the Ambassador himself along with our very own Sunway University Young Chefs where nutritious recipes inspired by Scandinavian heritage were created.

The Embassy of Sweden in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and Sunway University are dedicated to the Sustainable Development Goals – and to efforts to accomplish them at all levels.

All food waste will be composted – something that anybody can do at home – to provide healthy soil for one’s house garden, plants, or herb planters.



### Sunway University Welcomes McLaren Elva on Campus

The recently debuted state-of-the-art supercar, McLaren Elva, has made its first public appearance in the Malaysian market on the Sunway University campus.

The collaboration with McLaren was inspired by two of Sunway University’s leading growing faculties, the School of Arts as well as the School of Engineering and Technology at Sunway University.



### New Provost of Sunway University

With great pleasure, we welcome Professor Abhi Veerakumarasivam as the new Provost of the University.

Professor Abhi joined Sunway University in 2018 as Head of the Department of Biological Sciences, School of Healthcare and Medical Sciences. He was appointed as Dean of the School of Medical and Life Sciences in 2020. He obtained his doctorate in Genetics and Oncology at the University of Cambridge.

### Co-Director of the Future Cities Research Institute

Our heartiest congratulations to Professor Sabine Chaouche, Cluster Leader of ElastiCities, who was recently appointed as Co-Director of the Future Cities Research Institute.

Professor Sabine will be working with Professor Emmanuel Tseklevs, Professor in Global Health Design Innovation at Lancaster University, to aid Sunway and Lancaster University researchers to connect as well develop projects aiming to improve planetary health.





# SUNWAY UNIVERSITY'S FEMALE SCIENTISTS ARE LEADING THE WAY IN SCIENCE IN MALAYSIA



For centuries, women around the world have made important contributions to the sciences and advancement of technologies. However, their efforts and achievements were often not highlighted as much as they deserved. The International Women's Day is celebrated globally to commemorate the achievements of women while recognising their contribution towards building a sustainable future.

In conjunction with International Women's Day, Sunway University is celebrating its female scientists who have contributed significantly to propelling the University towards being among the top cited research universities in Malaysia.

In line with United Nations Sustainable Development Goal No.5 Gender Equality, Sunway University has been

a pioneer in this sector and has led the way in this aspiration through goal no.4, the power of Quality Education. The University has a role in recognising and acknowledging the role of female scientists in the University, the nation and the world in addressing global challenges and impact.

Sunway University has female scientists across various sectors such as Engineering and Technology, Arts, Medical and Life Sciences, Hospitality and Service Management, Mathematical Sciences, Business, English Language and Sustainable Development. The University's female researchers collaborate with experts locally and internationally by applying their knowledge to satisfy and advance human needs while at the same time ensuring planetary health.

**Professor Elizabeth Lee**  
*Chief Executive Officer of Sunway Education Group (SEG)*

"SEG, as a whole, is committed to gender equality, now even more so with our commitment to the UN SDGs. Over the 30 years I have been here now, it has been amazing to see the increasing number of women within our campus community, especially academics, researchers and leaders. We are proud of our women researchers who are paving the way forward in the scientific community. I believe celebrating their achievements will inspire a generation of young female scientists for the future."



Sunway University is committed to advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, especially goals no. 4 – Quality Education, no. 5 – Gender Equality and no. 10 – Reduced Inequalities. The University fosters gender equality as part of many efforts to build an inclusive work environment, as they believe men and women bring different strengths to the workplace.

**Professor Tan Sri Dr Jemilah Mahmood**  
*Executive Director of Sunway Centre For Planetary Health*



"It is often said that women hold up half the sky. As a medical practitioner, with a long humanitarian and development career, I have witnessed the courage, strength and resilience among women in different challenging settings. I am constantly reminded that where women are respected and where gender equality thrives, the entire community benefits from better health outcomes, better education, and stronger community bonds. This is why I am now committed to advancing the University's mission towards sustainability, of both people and the planet as one interconnected system – that is planetary health. As a woman, I know that change happens when we are collaborative, relational, intuitive, empathetic and focused on results, which are inherent qualities of feminist leadership."

**Professor Sibrandes Poppema**  
*President of Sunway University*

"For the world to step up to a better future, 100% of humanity needs to be involved." At SEG, women make up more than 65 percent of the workforce, including top management roles. Various policies in place including Flexible Work Arrangements for Mothers, Anti-Sexual Harassment, as well as Diversity and Inclusion ensures both female and male employees' welfare and wellbeing.







## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS – EDUCATION FOR ALL AT SUNWAY CAMPUS

To become a globally connected, forward-looking education institution dedicated to sustainability, the Campus With A Conscience Committee of Sunway Education Group (SEG) has successfully developed and launched an online Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs) Education Course campus-wide in partnership with the SDG Academy, as one of its initiatives to drive sustainability efforts in the SEG in January 2022. The course is designed to strengthen our staff and students' foundational understanding of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and its 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

This initiative will not only have a vast impact on the SEG community but also hopes to create a positive ripple effect on the community around them for many years to come. It is backed by strong support from the management such as the Founder and Chairman of Sunway Group, Tan Sri Dato' Seri Dr. Jeffrey Cheah AO, and CEO of Sunway Education Group, Professor Elizabeth Lee. The online course for staff consists of brief lecture videos, whereby Professor Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network and Special Advisor to United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres on the SDGs, shares the history, scope, and significance of SDGs as well as explores how learners can be responsible in contributing to the SDGs in different roles. There

are also relevant reading materials, comprehensive assessment, and discussions prompting learners to think critically about how the SDGs apply to their personal and professional lives. As it is important for all SEG staff to be educated on this topic, they are required to complete this course within this year and their progress will be reported.

Every student in Sunway Colleges and Sunway University has to complete the compulsory MOHE MPU subjects offered under the General Studies Department. Beginning this year, the General Studies Department has incorporated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) modules in their teaching and learning content by providing two SDG videos from the SDG Academy for review during pre-class activities. Another 10 SDG videos were given to students for group discussion. After watching the videos and going through the group discussion, students are required to do critical analysis, write a report and present it in class. The content of the MPU subjects has elements of current issues and one of the modules has current issues related to SDGs, which students can implement or apply in their daily lives.

Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". Here we are helping to provide a better world for our future generations.



## SUNWAY UNIVERSITY CHAMPIONS FOOD WASTE REDUCTION AND COMPOSTING



Dr Jane, Chef Soon, Prof Kheirredine with the food composting machine

Sunway University is dedicated to championing sustainability and in materialising the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through education and research to build a sustainable future for all. In the pursuit of advancing the University's teaching, learning and research, the University is playing an important role to ensure our programme curriculum design and practices are in line with SDGs. A Culinary Labs Food Waste Management System is designed and implemented in the University as a demonstration of integrating best practices in the teaching curriculum that would differentiate ourselves as the pioneer in sustainable brands.

The aim is to reduce food waste in the operation setting of the University. Reducing food waste by sending it to landfills would cut greenhouse gas emissions, slow the destruction of nature through land conversion and pollution prevention, enhance the availability of food and thus reduce hunger at a time of global recession. In this project, we also repurpose the unavoidable food waste by converting it into value-added products, and one of the solutions is through composting.

To better address SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, the Sunway Materials Smart Science and Engineering Cluster (SMS2E) of Sunway University officially launched the food waste project in January 2022. This multidisciplinary project is put together by the efforts of professionals from various disciplines at Sunway University, which comprises experts from different backgrounds ranging from chefs, psychologists, scientists, engineers, social scientists and economists.

Professor Mohamed Kheirredine Aroua, Associate Dean (Research and Postgraduate Studies) at School of Engineering and Technology, mentioned, during the welcoming remarks, that the food waste project contributes to the attainment of SDGs initiated by the United Nations and promote planetary health as the project focuses on analysing and addressing the impacts of human activities, particularly food and plastic waste generation to the environment on ecosystem and human health.

The introduction of the cluster project was presented by Dr Jane Gew. She mentioned that the importance of practicing waste segregation may be one

of the solutions to combat food waste and plastic pollution issues in Malaysia. The newly rented composting machine is now located at Level 5, Sunway University.

Malaysia is committed to United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and working towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. However, in moving forward with SDGs (in particular, Goal 12: Responsible consumption and production), Malaysia lacks expertise and initiative in the culinary labs' waste management to promote sustainable utilisation of waste and address the pressing global grand challenges to design a future without waste.

The sustainable living attitude is still a new concept in the Malaysian context. To cultivate such an attitude in both daily and professional practice, the new generation needs to be educated. Thus, proper and adequate research related to mindset, mentality, attitudes, motivation and hindrances need to be conducted. The collective findings are essential to furnishing the education and training programmes on sustainable behaviours.





# February 2022 Convocation Photowall







**ALICE VOONG SHEW YIN**  
BSc (Hons) in Accounting and Finance,  
Sunway University Business School

"The exposure and experiences in Sunway are both unforgettable and valuable – we were taught to always be curious and proactive with a kind human touch. This is one of the many key values that was implanted deeply in me to help me face the working world and I am sure you may have similar feelings."



**LOW SONG AN**  
BSc (Hons) Information Systems,  
School of Engineering and Technology

"Here at Sunway University, we were surrounded by many excellent lecturers who were prepared to guide us from the ground up. Their passion and excitement in sharing their knowledge truly sparked my interest in their teaching. And I'm proud to share that the spark has turned into a flame of passion that drives me to make use of all the learning, most specifically in the field of technologies that can bring value and betterment to society."



**IRENE NG WEI NA**  
BSc (Hons) in Conventions and Events Management,  
School of Hospitality and Service Management

"To Tan Sri Jeffrey Cheah, the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation and Sunway Education Group, thank you for providing us with abundant facilities. With all the clubs and societies in campus, we were able to train and improve our communication and presentation skills, leadership, and teamwork with all kinds of people."



**ANGELINE TAN MIN CHERN**  
BA (Hons) Digital Film Production, School of Arts

"This graduation is extra special because we're not just celebrating our academic achievements. We celebrate the perseverance and strength it took for you to be here. God only knows the battles you've fought to finish this race. Today, we celebrate the people that never gave up on us. To Tan Sri Jeffrey Cheah for having the vision to found Sunway University and giving us the opportunity to study at such a wonderful institution, thank you."

## MEET THE VALEDICTORIANS



**CHIN YUE-XIN**  
BSc (Hons) Psychology,  
School of Medical and Life Sciences

"Sunway University played a significant role in shaping who I am today—someone adventurous, tenacious and hungry to learn. The culture cultivated by Sunway, which encourages us to explore our potential, is something I will be eternally grateful for. My time here has shown me that people are profoundly capable of very, very big things as long as we put our hearts and minds to it. We will all do well, and always, always take pride in whatever we do."



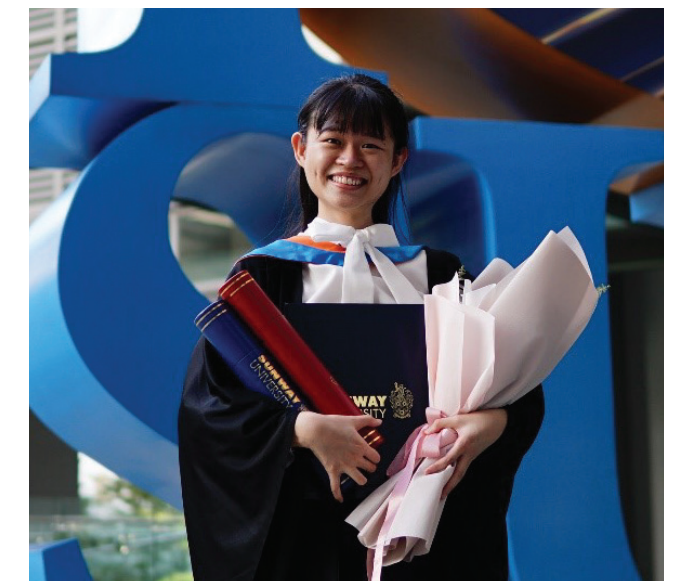
**HEE HAU YEN**  
BSc (Hons) in Accounting and Finance,  
Sunway University Business School

"Enrolling in the Accounting and Finance programme with the Jeffrey Cheah Entrance Scholarship has granted me unimaginable opportunities, from organising the Sunway Business Investment Society 2020 Annual Event as the event director, to performing in Sunway University Chinese Orchestra's very first concert and many more. I've gained great experiences and valuable lessons that shaped me into who I am today. A better me."



**TAN JUN JIE**  
BSc (Hons) in Actuarial Studies,  
School of Mathematical Sciences

"As we look back on the three amazing years, it is easy to see that Sunway University has played an instrumental role in shaping us into who we are now. Joining Sunway to pursue my passion and being offered a scholarship was the greatest game-changer for my entire life. It allowed me to do what I love and strive for the best in what I do. Most importantly, it gave me access to a top-quality education and I believe many people would feel the same too."



**YONG PAULINE**  
BSc (Hons) Global Supply Chain Management,  
Sunway University Business School

"Sunway University has made this journey in our life very interesting and remarkable. All of us came from different backgrounds when we first entered here, but we are all leaving as proud students of the same University with the common wish to be successful. I'm thankful that every ending is accompanied by a new beginning."



Sunway University Press and the Department of Psychology at the School of Medical and Life Sciences ran a month-long psychology awareness campaign, WhatSUP with Psychology '22, which explored the topics of emotions, relationships, and growing up through a series of forums with expert panellists from the field of Psychology. A forum titled 'Mending Hearts' was conducted with panellists discussing the ways in which relationships are formed and experienced, and how they impact and influence the human condition. The forum then culminated in the launch of the book *Mending Hearts: Healing from Separation and Loss, a Collection of True Stories*, an edited collection of true stories and photos from contributors of many ages and backgrounds, compiled and displayed at Sunway University's hit Breakup Exhibitions.



Azah Yazmin



Mengzhen Lim

- Q** • Breaking away from the safety of a connection can cause separation distress. This can affect everybody, regardless of age. How can that pain be managed?

- A** • Processing separation distress can be challenging, and some days can be harder than others. You may cope with that distress by bingeing Netflix shows, staying in all day, or going for marathon runs. Distract and surround yourself with friends and family members who support you during this hardship. It is easy to retreat and wallow in your stress when you do not have that support system. So, find people who can support you emotionally and mentally, and give yourself grace and self-compassion to get yourself through it.

- Q** • Love and loss are universal experiences, and almost everyone has had their hearts broken and mended. Many people are fascinated by and respond to the topic of relationships, but for a social psychologist, what was the objective of your investigation into relationships and their endings?

- A** • From a social psychological perspective, we have observed how important endings are. Endings matter—if you are a student, you end your academic journey with a graduation ceremony. The same applies to relationships. In Finland, there was an exhibition by the Museum of Broken Relationships that people flocked to. These people would read the story of each exhibit with such reverence and care. It dawned on me that such an exhibition could help many people find closure. With the Breakup Exhibitions at Sunway and the book *Mending Hearts*, we want to encourage people to come together and have a shared experience and to normalise the experience of heartbreak and loss so we can learn from each other and overcome hardships.



Dr Catherine

- Q** • Younger people tend to find that their romantic relationships are not taken seriously by parents or adults in general. Consequently, any pain from a break-up between young people is dismissed or downplayed by adults. What are your thoughts on that from the perspective of a clinical psychologist?

- A** • Each relationship is a stepping stone to help you work out what you want and need from a partner, and also who you are as an individual and as a partner. There is growth from everything. When you are younger, you have so much trust, kindness, and forgiveness—and naturally, you do not want a relationship to end because you have put so much of yourself and investment into the relationship to make it work. So, the pain from any break-up is valid and real, and it is very important that people recognise that.



Dr Grace Yap

- Q** • There is a saying that goes, "Time heals all wounds". How much of that is true?

- A** • Some statistics show that the pain from a break-up or loss takes 11 weeks to heal, and other studies estimate the time to be 13 months. Having said that, it is difficult to simplify pain and to reduce it to timeframes. The healing process can be long and painful—sometimes memories can be triggered and catch you by surprise, and you experience the hurt all over again. It is important that you help yourself by managing and regulating your emotions. Indeed, this can be a daily effort, and while you may have lost everything after a break-up or loss, what is most important is not losing yourself.

## PHD IN BIOLOGY GRADUATE OBTAINED A POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

### AT ALBANY MEDICAL COLLEGE



Dr Salima Sadruddin Lalani at Sunway University campus

Recent PhD in Biology graduate under the Centre for Virus and Vaccine Research (CVVR), Dr Salima Sadruddin Lalani was accepted into the prestigious Albany Medical College in New York, USA.

At Albany Medical College, Dr Salima would be researching the role of enteroviruses in the aetiology of Type 1 diabetes, as well as how specific integrins work in cancers, while also developing a bioinformatics core.

Hailing from Karachi, Pakistan, Dr Salima learnt from her friends studying at the School of Medical and Life Sciences, Sunway University that there were research facilities available for studies into virology. Being someone who had a longstanding interest in virology, she was accepted into the PhD programme in Biology under the supervision of Distinguished Professor and Head of the Centre for Virus and Vaccine Research, Professor Poh Chit Laa. Dr Salima was on a fully-funded PhD studentship from June 2018 and completed her studies in good time despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

For her PhD, Dr Salima majored in virology and antiviral therapeutics with a focus on functional insights into the host and virus-targeted antiviral agents. Her PhD dissertation was entitled "Functional Insights into the Activity of Flavonoid Silymarin and the Antiviral Peptide L-SP40 against Enterovirus A71" – a thesis devoted to discovering and elucidating the molecular mechanism of natural flavonoids and peptides against EV-A71, an enterovirus which has the potential to cause severe hand, foot and mouth disease (HFMD) in young children, especially in Asia. Her primary work was on identifying and characterising novel antivirals against the neurovirulent Enterovirus A71 as well as delineating their functional and molecular mechanisms. The lab she belonged to was also working on vaccine development against EV-A71, dengue, influenza and SARS-CoV-2 and she had a chance at the other viruses.

When asked about her main findings from her PhD projects, Dr Salima explained, "Enterovirus 71 (EV-A71) is a significant etiological agent of hand foot and mouth disease (HFMD). Some strains of EV-A71 have the potential to cause severe neurological infections especially in children, which could lead to death. Since there is no US-FDA approved vaccine in the global market, we studied two direct-acting flavonoids and a host-directed peptide as potential antiviral candidates against Enterovirus A71.

Dr Salima also commented on her working experience at Sunway University, "Our labs in the Department of Biological Sciences and Centre for Virus and Vaccine Research are well-equipped to conduct the required research activities. I was provided with all kinds of support to work in other universities when the facilities to perform specific type of experiments were not available on campus. Besides University, Sunway City was an amazing place to live around. Everything you can think of was available in the near vicinity. Without a second thought, I would say, it was the safest and the coolest neighbourhood to live in!"

Professor Poh Chit Laa, Dr Salima's supervisor, praised her for being professional, ambitious and competent in pursuing her goals. "She is highly energetic and has a very good spirit and enthusiasm for research. She has published five first-authored SCOPUS articles (4 Q1 and 1 Q2) and one co-authored book chapter from her PhD work. I found her to be a very dedicated, hardworking, talented and progressive researcher. She has the capability to diagnose scientific problems and handled them until she could find successful solutions. Salima has acquired abundant experience in virology research during her stay in my group. She adopted virology, molecular biology and in vivo techniques such as evaluating antiviral assays against peptides in mice so that translational applications using antiviral peptides against EV-A71 could become a reality in the not too distant future."



## ONE ACADEMIA FOR ALL THINGS DATA SCIENCE, ANALYTICS AND BEYOND



*Ts Dr Angela Lee Siew Hoong*  
Associate Professor  
Head, Department of Computing  
and Information Systems

Sunway University has 11 subjects related to analytics. She adds that the University's teachings and curriculum were built along with the concept of making sure that their students know how to leverage data and how to generate actionable outcomes for future tech companies. The ultimate outcome of this programme is to allow students to learn about the many data science algorithms that are utilised to produce outcomes.

### Data Science at the Core of Making Graduates Career Ready

The programme is designed in such a way that it allows the learners to apply their analytics knowledge to solve multiple different industries with real-world problems. The curriculum is up-to-date with the latest technology and tools that are being taught in the programme to close the gaps between the needs of the industry and the graduates' skills. She highlights that the University has embedded SAS, Alibaba, and AWS syllabus into the programme to empower students with the competencies and capacity to contribute back to the fast-changing economic, social and technological world.

### Exposing Learners to the Industry with Internships and Capstone Projects

Dr Angela mentions that students at Sunway University Bachelor of Science (Hons) Information Systems (Data Analytics) are required to complete both an internship and a capstone project. This internship usually takes place over three months for the final year student. Over the years, the sponsors of the capstone projects include, Sunway Berhad, Sunway Medical Center, Sunway Property, BonusLink, Carsome, Citibank, Coway, DHL, RHB, Royal Commission Medical Centre, Saudi Arabia, SAS and UOB to name a few. This equips the students to manage a large-scale data science and analytics project from the moment they arrive at work.

### Creating the Data Scientists of Tomorrow

Dr Angela opines that by 2025, Malaysia's big data analytics industry is anticipated to be valued

at US\$1.9 billion. Malaysia has big intentions to grow its digital economy, with initiatives like the 'Malaysian Digital Economy Blueprint' indicating that data and digital technology would be a big part of the future. In this environment, it's apparent that data science expertise will be in great demand, one that is already seeing a significant rise in both demands for personnel and prospective remuneration. Industry 4.0 is predicted to generate between 3.3 million and 6 million employment in Malaysia. As new and developing data-driven positions fuel connected employment future, data science and analysis will continue to be a primary career growth potential in this landscape, she says.

### Confronting the Digital Trends with Advanced Learning

Talking about the challenges that data analytics faces, Dr Angela mentions that every sector of the globe, including emergency services, health care, research and space, as well as the business sector, has seen a significant change in the way they manage and operate their activities on a daily basis as a result of data science. All of these sectors now have the ability to forecast future outcomes by making more appropriate crucial decisions and by taking more effective actions. They're using big data analytical tools to get their users' data and access their personal information, such as their interests, behavioural patterns, ideas, security details, personal interactions.

### The Dynamic Future of Big Data Analytics in the Education Sector

"The global big data analytics in the education industry grew significantly with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because governments in the majority of countries have implemented lockdowns, there has been a large increase in the acceptance of online teaching culture among students and teachers. Furthermore, measuring students' performance, identifying students' main areas and tracking the students after they graduate from college are just a few of the many important benefits of big data and business analytics in education, all of which contribute to market growth and lead to more universities or institutes implementing analytics curriculum to support the needs that arise due to the pandemic," concludes Dr Angela.

Sunway University is Malaysia's leading, not-for-profit private university that is dedicated to quality education. With a research focused aspect on key global problems under the umbrella of Planetary Health and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the University supports innovation and entrepreneurship.

### A Young University Setting Impeccable Global Standards

The University was established in 2011 and is relatively young by the global standards, but is already ranked within the top 2% of universities in the world (QS World University Rankings), in the top 1.5% of universities in Asia, as well as in the top 150 universities in the world under 50 years old. Sunway University has a 5-star "Excellent" rating by the Malaysian government (in the latest SETARA assessment exercise) and is one of just 11 universities in Malaysia to be awarded the special "Premier Digital Technology University" status.

### An 'Advocate' of Data Science

Ts Dr Angela Lee Siew Hoong is an Associate Professor at Sunway University. She introduced, developed, and is currently teaching Analytics and Data Science programme at Sunway University. Dr Angela has been developing a data science curriculum since 2009. She prepares her students to enter the analytics workforce by staying up-to-date with the industry needs and considers herself an "advocate" of data science.

### Preparing Students for a Tech Future through Advanced Analytics Program

Dr Angela says that the development of analytics curriculum at Sunway University started in 2009 by embedding four analytics subjects into the University's existing Information Systems degree programme. In this programme,

## JAPANESE AI EDUTECH TOY EIGHT JOINS INVESTKL GKL LIVE LAB PROGRAMME, PARTNERS SUNWAY UNIVERSITY TO BUILD AI ASSESSMENT TOOL

InvestKL, the leading investment promotion agency for Malaysia's capital city announced the joining of Japanese artificial intelligence (AI)-backed edutech startup Toybox Creations and Technology (TOY EIGHT) to the Greater Kuala Lumpur (GKL) Live Lab programme.

GKL Live Lab was launched in April 2021 to position Greater KL as an innovation and ideation smart city, acting as a testbed where foreign companies experimenting with new and disruptive ways to solve the most challenging problems in the world today can bring their ideas to life while collaborating with local players. It aims to create high-value and future-ready jobs, as well as deepen our local ecosystem with more sophisticated and complex activities. GKL Live Lab, through InvestKL's Business Ecosystem Collaboration (BEC) programme, provides a platform for multinational companies to have productive business relationships with local academia and Malaysian companies. It creates an integrated and holistic ecosystem.

TOY EIGHT is currently developing an AI-based tool that democratises developmental assessment for preschoolers via a smartphone. Designed by an ex-Nintendo game designer, it analyses children at play to understand their characteristics and strengths. This is part of TOY EIGHT's collaboration with Sunway University, which aims to address socio-educational issues in Southeast Asia by making developmental assessment affordable and accessible whilst rapidly improving the understanding of child developmental levels in different communities and areas.



Through the GKL Live Lab, Sunway iLabs (iLabs Foundry) connected TOY EIGHT to two psychology researchers from Sunway University's School of Medical and Life Sciences, Dr Woo Pei Jun and Dr Wo Su Woan who worked closely with TOY EIGHT's technical team for 12 weeks.

This collaboration resulted in a localised AI system that focuses on early childhood development including motor skills, fine motor, cognitive, receptive language, and expressive language. The AI system aims to assist young parents in Malaysia to recognise what their children are naturally good at and unlock their talents through personalised learning content, whilst identifying areas of concern or delay so parents can seek early assistance from professionals. The AI system is currently undergoing pre-commercialisation validation for the Malaysian market by Associate Prof. Dr. Rafidah Aga and Dr. Ponmalar Alagappan of the University of Malaya.

## SUNWAY UNIVERSITY PARTNERS CARSOME TO SET-UP DATA INNOVATION LAB

Sunway University, through its innovation arm, Sunway Innovation Labs (Sunway iLabs), and Southeast Asia's largest integrated car e-commerce platform Carsome, have forged a strategic partnership includes the setting up of a Data Innovation Lab in Sunway University.

The Data Innovation Lab aims to revolutionise Southeast Asia's used car industry through data, and power the future of mobility by creating value in multiple areas including customer empowerment, sustainability, and cybersecurity.

The Data Innovation Lab involves a multi-disciplinary research consortium that consists of the Sunway University Business School, School of Engineering and Technology, School of Mathematical Sciences and the stakeholders of Carsome.

Sunway University is the first to collaborate with Carsome on data innovation which will see various initiatives take place, including collaborations involving student coursework, student hackathons and contract research and consultancy.



"This collaboration will allow our students the opportunity to work on real-world solutions in one of the most exciting growth industries in the region as well as learn from Carsome's data team who will, I'm sure provide them valuable insights into the possibilities of future careers in data," said Sunway Education Group CEO Professor Elizabeth Lee.

Chief Innovation Officer of Sunway Berhad & Director of Sunway iLabs, Matt van Leeuwen said, "Collaborative efforts between start-ups and academia will prepare the youth for Malaysia's digital economy as well as accelerate innovation which will drive the nation's economic sustainability."



# FROM INSTANT NOODLES TO *Fine Dining*



**Siyin Soon**  
sous-chef, Hide KL

Tucked away in Ritz-Carlton Residences KL is Hide KL - a hidden restaurant with only 13 seats, serving seafood-focused, modern creative cuisine. If that isn't intriguing enough, the chef table concept probably will be! Guests get to have an intimate and dynamic experience as the chef cooks, serves and explains the dishes all in the same space. Serving a 14-course chef tasting menu, guests can look forward to a plethora of flavours and cooking techniques brought together by the team.

Part of the amazing and creative team of chefs is Siyin Soon, a BSc (Hons) in Culinary Management alumna. Growing up, Siyin spent a lot of time in the kitchen with her grandmother where she would mostly observe since she was not allowed to help much. Her love for the food and beverage industry sparked when she worked at Starbucks after studying International Business for a year. After graduating from Sunway University in Culinary Management, she began her role in Hide KL in December 2020 as chef de partie without any prior working experience and was promoted to sous-chef in just five months!

Reminiscing on the times before her culinary journey, she realised that she had indeed an unfound love for cooking even as a child. She remembered playing with candles, bricks, metal tins and leaves to 'cook' during Mooncake Festivals. Joining the café hopping trend, she also tried to make Eggs Benedict but ended up with hard-boiled eggs instead.

"Before this, I had zero to little knowledge in cooking. But I am now proud of myself to have made it to this point." Back in the day, all she could cook was instant noodles or white rice.

Siyin calls herself lucky to be part of the team headed by Chef Shaun Ng who has worked in Michelin-starred restaurants. He imparts his knowledge to the team where they will all learn a lot from the basics like cutting fish, shucking oysters and curing seafood, up to being part of research and development for their menu which changes every three to four months. Siyin's role as sous-chef puts her next in line if the Head Chef is not in. She also manages the staff, human resource matters and procurement - all of which she was glad to learn at Sunway University. In the kitchen, each chef creates their own ideas to propose during the research and development of the new menu and is in charge of their own station and serves the dish - Siyin primarily covers the main courses.

"My favourite dish to make/prepare is the Amadai dish as the technique known as 'matsukasa' is not well known

and also daunting to perform. This technique involves pouring hot oil over the raw fish (with fish scales on) to create that 'pinecone' look. The hot oil will puff the fish scales up, as water is trapped between the fish scales. This creates a spiky-looking fish and gives a crispy element to the fish. Paired together with the fish are clam foam and onion soubise."

At Hide KL, the ingredients used and methods of cooking are not set in stone. They could be using Japanese ingredients but cooked with Chinese or French methods. Taking inspiration from her grandmother's cooking, Siyin loves to experiment with traditional food and flavours and turn them into modernised creations.

However, working in a fine dining restaurant immediately after graduation can be challenging. Siyin had to pick up various skills in a short amount of time to a point where she felt like giving up. One thing she found particularly difficult would be dealing with seafood, such as filleting different fishes that were not taught in school and were not commonly found or prepared in

Malaysia. She was also trained by the Head Chef at Hide KL without recipes in hand but only ingredients. In one case, it took her every day for almost five months to practice and make a sauce without having any adjustments at the end by the Head Chef. Today, some of her proudest moments working with Hide KL would be returning guests who remember her. It means a lot to the team as it shows that their guests enjoyed the food and their service.

"I'm also happy that I'm resilient. If I had quit, I wouldn't get to where I am today."

Siyin believes that having the right mindset when stepping into the culinary industry is important as it can get really tough. One needs to be proactive, disciplined and improve oneself by asking questions to learn more.

*Have an alumni story to share? Reach out to the Sunway Alumni Relations team via [alumni@sunway.edu.my](mailto:alumni@sunway.edu.my) as we would love to hear from you!*





# ALUMNI on the move >>

## TSAI YAO CHERNG, CHIP

Bsc (Hons) Computer Science

SEA IT Manager, Deloitte SEA Services



When thinking of fond memories as a Sunwayian, I funnily miss being nervous, pressing the refresh button on iZone frantically to retrieve my results. I miss those days when my friends and I would study in the foyer until late in the night or camp in Starbucks for discussions, making videos and laughing ludicrously.

I recalled my valedictory speech - "Our journey ahead might not be smooth sailing, but Sunway University has equipped us with enough experience to persevere." Little did I know the saying transpired within four months after I graduated. The startup company I joined had failed and ceased to operate. I became jobless after a three-day notice. Fortunately, I was able to reach out to contacts I made during my internship programme facilitated by Sunway University. I was grateful and did not take the opportunity lightly. Eventually, I was promoted to Manager and was given opportunities to travel to multiple countries. I also handled projects from end-to-end, and launched several automation projects such as document management system, online meeting room booking system and

business relationship forms for multiple business functions across several countries in Southeast Asia.

One of the biggest challenges I faced in my career is having to always keep myself updated as technology is ever-changing. However, I really love the quote, "The only difference between stumbling blocks and stepping stones is the way you use them." Just stay positive and keep learning.

## PATRICK CHONG MUN KEAT

Diploma in Events Management

Managing Director, Brillions International Sdn Bhd



I took two steps to be where I'm at now - first, "Vision" and second, "Direction". When I first started at Sunway University, my vision wasn't clear and my direction wasn't right. The only thing I was sure about was that Events Management was the course for me because I narrowed down every possible course that was available and I went with the one I was most interested in.

After two years of studying various subjects, it gave me a foundation to start on, but it didn't improve my passion because my vision wasn't clear until I went for my internship. In my opinion, the internship gave me the final answer to whether I should pursue this passion. From there, I saw my vision and direction brought to life. Pro tip: Take your internship seriously because you can learn and see everything from an intern perspective. The knowledge gained during an internship cannot be bought. If you excel, you shouldn't have any problems in your first job interview or perhaps the company might even hire you when you complete your internship.

After graduating, I wasted no time and worked in the Events & Exhibition industry. I worked myself up for four years, rotating in only two companies and started my own company after that. It is not uncommon to hear comments such as, "What you studied may not be applied to the working world". As honest as the comment may sound, I had a contrary experience. I took subjects during my course that matter to me until today. These are the fundamentals that stick with you forever and I'm glad I'm a part of Sunway University.



## NIK MOHAMMAD KHALID BIN NIK AHMAD SAIDE

BSc (Hons) Actuarial Studies

Actuarial Analyst, Actuarial Partners Consulting

I was a Foundation in Arts (FIA) graduate from Sunway College with a CGPA of 4.00. I then pursued BSc (Hons) in Actuarial Studies at Sunway University and graduated with a Second-Class Division 1 degree. Ever since I started my studies, I always wanted to work towards becoming a professional actuary. Thanks to Sunway University, I am one step closer towards realising my dream. I am currently working as an Actuarial Analyst and at the same time sitting for professional papers from the Society of Actuaries (SOA) to pursue an associateship under SOA.

During my time in Sunway, I was an active member of Sunway Student Volunteers, where I volunteered in various events including MotoGP, KL Sea Games, a few marathon events, Zoo Negara, et cetera. I also participated in Sunway's own leadership body, called Sunway Ambassador Leadership Trek for Boarding Institutions (SALTB), where we organised leadership programmes specifically for boarding school students.

My fond memories in Sunway would be the time spent staying up all night in the Sunway foyer. We would stay there until the next morning, prepping for tests, group assignments, presentations and even final exams. I can say that the Sunway foyer is like a smaller version of New York, a city that never sleeps, where you will find students 24/7. Unfortunately, since COVID-19 hit the whole world, we were unable to do so anymore, which is the reason I cherish this memory the most.

## KRYSTABEL KOK SU LYN

BA (Hons) Design Communication

Designer at TOY EIGHT



My creative course gave me the opportunity to travel on a plethora of study trips. Throughout my degree, I visited Kelantan, Bangkok, Seoul, multiple cities in Taiwan and numerous museums right here in Kuala Lumpur. Though I would sometimes be the only one in my cohort or circle going on these trips, the idea of the unfamiliar company did not deter me as it pushed me out of my comfort zone, which I do enjoy. In my final year, I was meant to visit Lancaster University as a part of my scholarship, but unfortunately due to COVID-19 this was not possible. This made me even more grateful for having the courage in those years prior to go on all those study trips. Nonetheless, Student LIFE made a gracious effort to recreate the Lancaster experience at Sunway University for all of its ambassadors.

Currently, I am a designer at a Japanese education start-up called TOY EIGHT, whose mission is to uncover every child's unique strengths through diversified assessment methods. Interestingly enough, I obtained this job via recommendation from Sunway iLabs. My main scope of work involves developing the user interface (UI) for the assessment, which is in the form of a mobile game. I also work on the character's design, the game's story and flow. I even get the chance to voice the game's main character!

As I am only beginning my career, its trajectory remains a mystery to me. However, I say with certainty that I wish to continue using my creativity and artistry to encourage others to live their lives to the fullest - as I did mine during my time at Sunway. My final words to the next generation of Sunwayians would be: SEIZE the opportunities of today because tomorrow is not promised.



**SUNWAY**  
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