ASIAN
UNDERGRADUATE
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Connecting COMMUNITIES

10 YEARS OF ASIAN UNDERGRADUATE SYMPOSIUM

NUS 120
CELEBRATING THE PAST, SHAPING THE FUTURE

NUS COLLEGE

Our profound appreciation to all our AUS supporters through the years

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10 Years of Asian Undergraduate Symposium

Ten years ago, a simple idea took root: what if young people across Asia could come together to learn not just about each other, but with each other? What if their conversations could spark meaningful collaboration, and even real change? That idea became the Asian Undergraduate Summit. Initiated by the students from the University Scholars Programme and now proudly hosted by NUS College, AUS was founded on the belief that young people are not just participants in global conversations: they can lead them. What began as a student-led initiative has grown into a dynamic, international platform that brings together young people with the courage to ask difficult questions, who are open-minded enough to listen to other voices, and who possess the drive to act on their convictions.

AUS now brings together more than 300 student delegates and councilors each year for a two-week symposium. Through workshops, field visits, keynotes, and





roundtable discussions, delegates explore some of the most urgent and complex issues of our time. Oriented each year around a unifying theme, the symposium offers an entry point into both the challenges and the possibilities of our shared world.

AUS encourages young people to think deeply about the human implications of the material, economic, social, and technological dimensions of our world. It provides thoughtful, passionate university students with an environment that challenges them to think, feel, and collaborate in new ways. During their time at AUS, they form meaningful relationships, learn to navigate differences with care, and push the boundaries of what can be achieved — together. They leave with sharper questions, and a confidence that collaboration by passionate future leaders can build solutions to tomorrow's challenges.

At the heart of AUS is its project-based model, which construes ideas as tools for transformative change. For such change to be possible, students must be given license to explore how insight can effectively be translated into action. Throughout the symposium, teams collaborate to craft projects that are grounded in an understanding of specific communities. Many of these projects go on to receive funding to continue their activities beyond the end of the symposium, with advice provided by NUS College faculty and mentors.

Over the past decade, AUS has grown beyond the sum of its parts — evolving from a series of activities into a shared tradition and a space for honest, courageous engagement. This book marks a journey of **reverie**, as students dream of a better world; **renaissance**, as fresh ideas revive old challenges; **resonance**, as friendships and insights echo beyond the symposium; **revelation**, as discovery sparks understanding; and **reflection**, as we look back with gratitude and forward with hope. ◘

Welcome to ten years:
From Asian Undergraduate Summit to Asian Undergraduate Symposium

Welcome to AUS.

“On the first day, the speaker had each country turn on their phone flashlights one by one—transforming the dark auditorium into a sea of light. It was a powerful reminder that while one light may be small, together we can illuminate the impossible.”

Dethrat Vitou / AUS 2024 Delegate





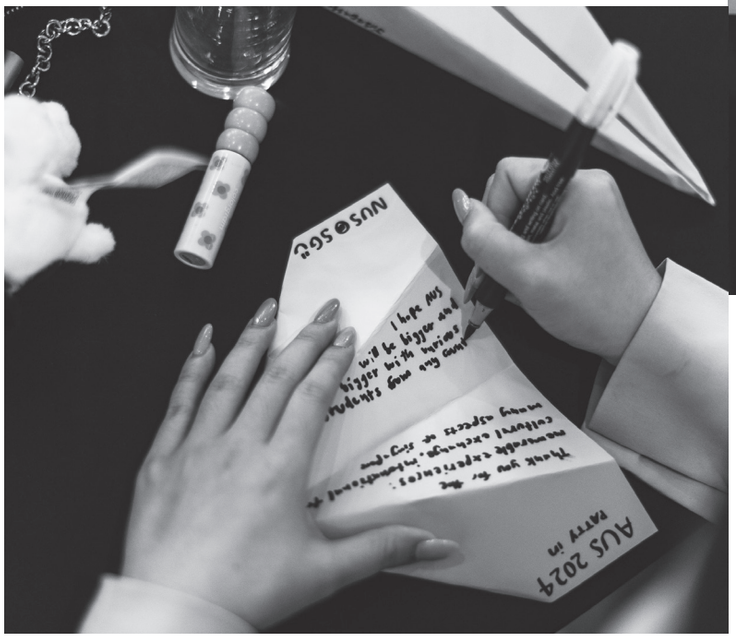





SIX STAGES OF CAREGIVING
WHO CARES?
OMG HOW??


ASIAN
UNDERGRADUATE
1-13 July 2024




NUS SGU
AUS 2024











Connecting COMMUNITIES

“

For years to come, AUS will be a shining beacon that inspires and enables young people across Asia to create a brighter future for our interconnected world”



Message from NUS President

Professor Tan Eng Chye

Congratulations on the 10th anniversary of the Asian Undergraduate Symposium (AUS)! What a remarkable milestone this is – a testament to the decade-long hard work that began as a ground-up, student-led initiative in the University Scholars Programme. Since taking the reins in 2023, NUS College has expanded the scope of the original mission, bringing together bright, curious, and socially-engaged undergraduates from Singapore, ASEAN and Asia to learn, ideate and develop practical solutions to urgent, real-world challenges.

More importantly, I have watched with pride as AUS has evolved into a launchpad that nurtures young people into builders of their communities and catalysts for change beyond borders. Cultivating, empowering and inspiring the next generation to do good underscores NUS' mission to develop future-ready graduates who not only thrive and realise their own potential, but also acquire the values and skills necessary to respond constructively and sensitively to the needs of their communities.

I commend NUS College for the commitment and leadership they have demonstrated in extending their signature interdisciplinary and experiential learning pedagogy to a broader Asian student community through AUS. My sincere gratitude goes to our partner universities and generous donors for their steadfast support in making AUS a successful model for cultural exchange, student development and regional collaboration.

I look forward to the many more excellent ideas and solutions that AUS participants will co-create and implement, whether in their home communities or beyond. I am confident that AUS, over the next decade and beyond, will continue to be a shining beacon that inspires and enables young people across Asia to create a brighter future for our interconnected world.

Message from NUS College Dean

Professor Simon Chesterman

The Asian Undergraduate Symposium (AUS) turns 10 this year! We are thrilled to celebrate this remarkable milestone, which over the past decade has united more than 2,000 talented undergraduates from 90 universities across 17 Asian nations. This platform was specifically designed to cultivate the next generation of impactful leaders and advocates, anchored on a highly immersive "I-4" model for participants to inspire, ideate, interact and implement solutions across boundaries to better the world.

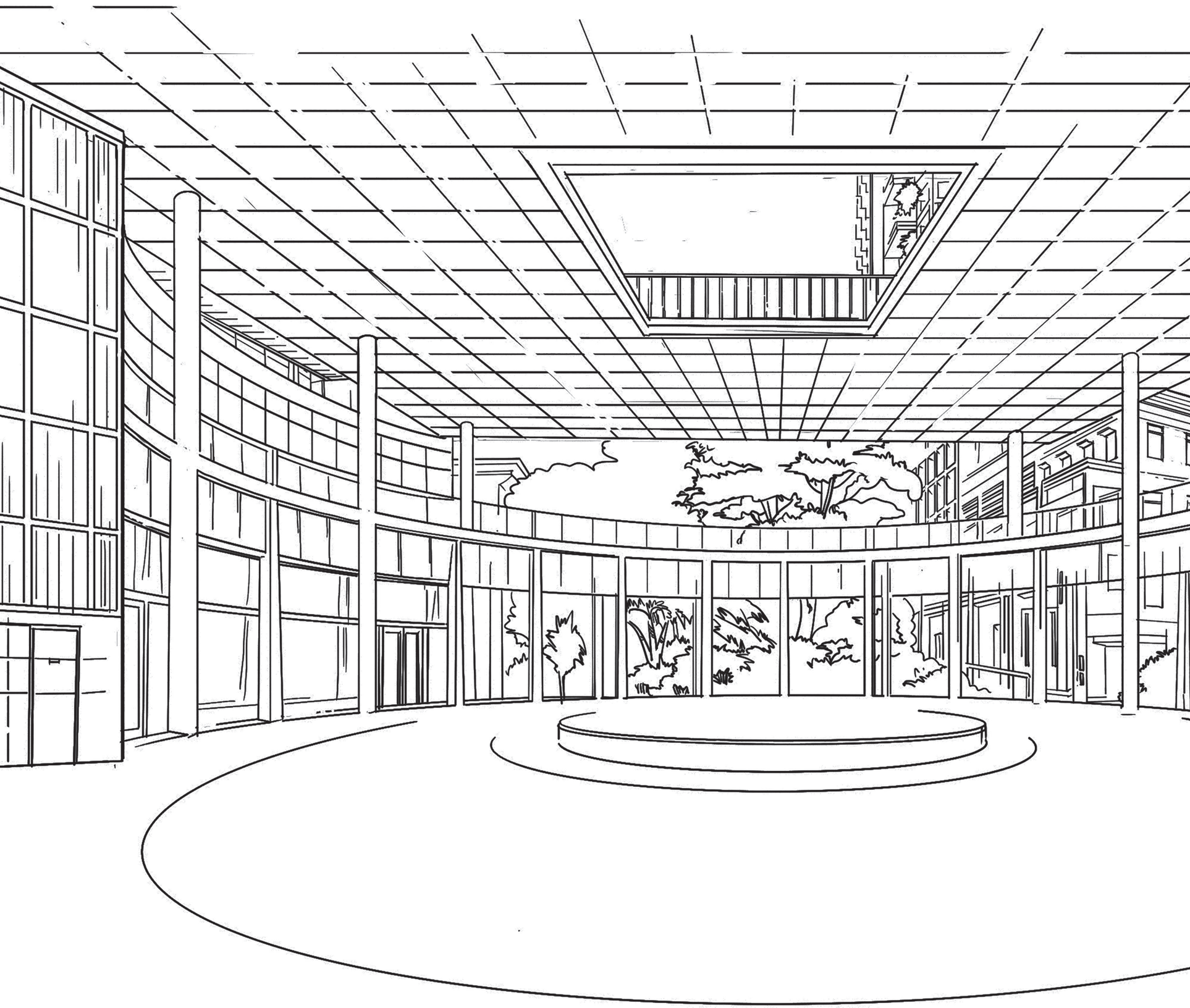
Since NUS College undertook to support AUS in 2023, the symposium's growth has affirmed our vision of what education can help young people achieve, as well as our commitment to break open the classroom and create dynamic, interdisciplinary learning experiences in support of nurturing courageous problem solvers and changemakers. We hope we can do this for all AUS delegates and are particularly proud to see the tangible impact of ideas incubated here already taking root and thriving in the home communities of our AUS alumni.

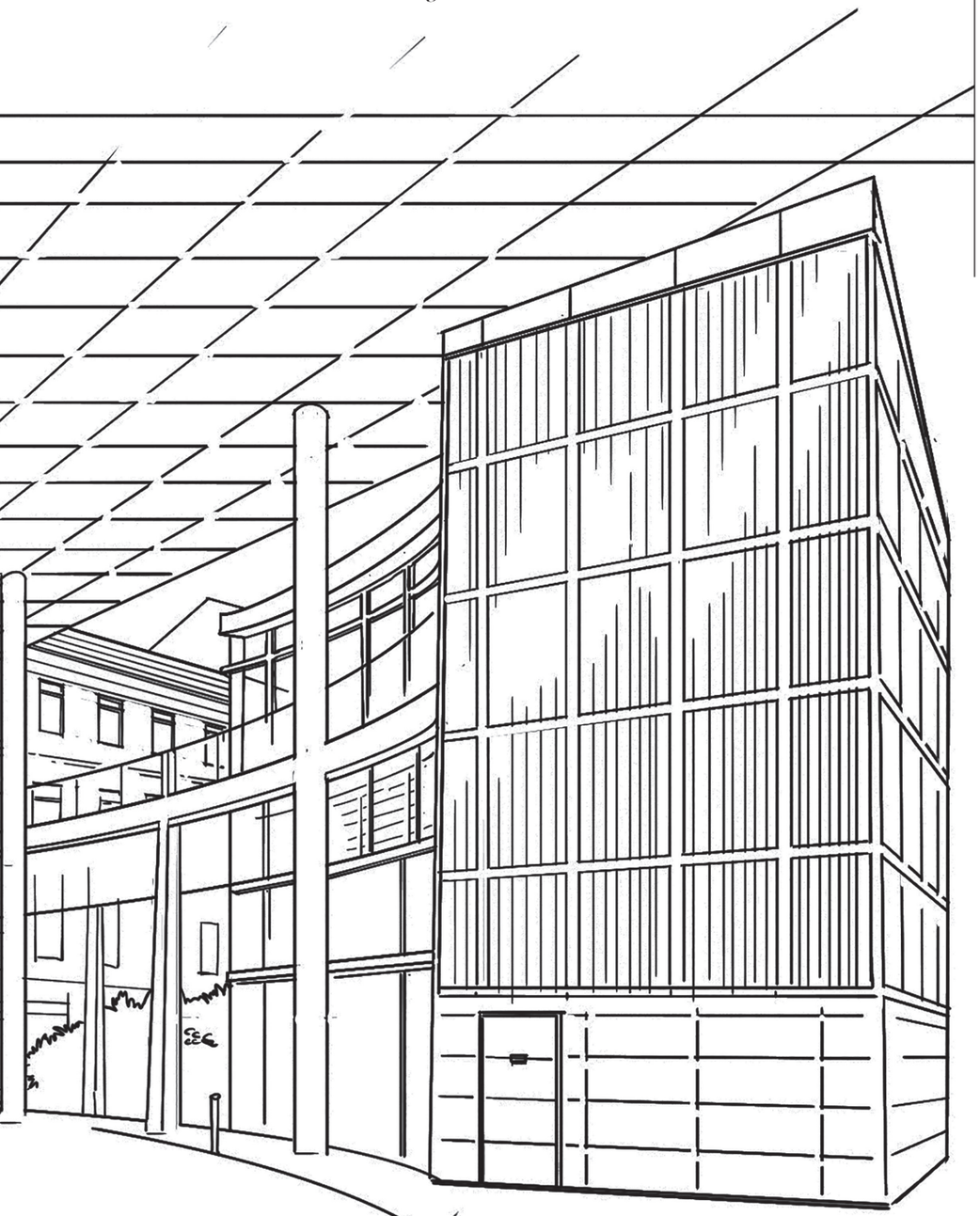
I extend our sincere gratitude to the dedicated team of NUS College students and staff for their outstanding efforts, the unwavering support of the NUS President, and the indispensable contributions of our university partners in making AUS a resounding success.

Your continued participation and support in this symposium will be an impetus for collective learning, meaningful connections, and strengthened resolve to be an agent of positive change. I look forward to celebrating AUS into its second decade and its continued impact upon communities locally, regionally, and beyond!

"Your continued participation and support in this symposium will be an impetus for collective learning, meaningful connections, and strengthened resolve to be an agent of positive change.







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Rez

The spark of imagination, where vision is first conceived.

2015

verie

FROM INCEPTION TO DECENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

Birth and Development of the Asian Undergraduate Symposium: From Summit to Symposium





2015-2022

The Asian Undergraduate Summit

Conceived as a student-led platform for building connections across Southeast Asia, the first-ever Asian Undergraduate Symposium (then called the Asian Undergraduate Summit) was inaugurated in 2015 by its first chairpersons, Mr. Goh Seng Chiy and Ms. Amanda Chan, University Scholars Programme (USP), class of 2017. The first meeting brought 100 delegates from five partner universities to Singapore, with NUS students making reciprocal visits to these overseas institutions. The summit was sponsored mainly by the Singapore International Foundation, Shell PLC and the National University of Singapore (NUS). The programme was organised within the NUS's University Scholars Programme (USP), the flagship honours programme during that period.

From 2015 to 2019, the summit adopted a multi-part format that blended regional immersion with a central gathering in Singapore. Each edition began with programmes hosted by partner universities across Asia, immersing delegates in local contexts through academic exchanges, cultural experiences, and community engagement shaped by each host's distinct perspective. The final Summit Week in Singapore brought all delegates together for keynote panels, workshops, and collaborative projects, often culminating in group presentations. Featuring speakers from academia, industry, and government, the programme fostered cross-cultural dialogue, practical learning, and peer collaboration, making it both intellectually stimulating and personally transformative.

In 2020, AUS was paused due to COVID-19. From 2021 to 2022, it transitioned online, reimagining its workshops, panels, and collaborative projects in a virtual format that sustained its spirit of cross-cultural and experiential learning.

2023-2025

The Asian Undergraduate Symposium

In 2023, the Asian Undergraduate Symposium opened a new chapter, with its integration into the newly established NUS College, the honours college of the National University of Singapore. With this transition came a refreshed structure, deeper faculty involvement, a renewed focus on long-term impact and a new overarching theme of Interconnected Communities, reflecting an important aim of the symposium: to bring together diverse voices and perspectives from communities across Asia.

From 2023 onwards, AUS is jointly organised by NUS College faculty and students, formalising a collaborative model that balances student initiative with institutional support. This hybrid structure preserves the dynamic, student-driven character of the earlier Asian Undergraduate Summit, while enabling greater scalability, sustainability, and integration with NUS College's educational mission. The AUS programme runs on the I-4 Model – Inspire, Ideate, Intercultural and Implement – to empower delegates to transform academic discourse into practical solutions for real-world challenges, while building lasting networks across Asia. It now attracts more than 300 delegates, and not just from ASEAN states, but also countries in the wider region, including China, Japan, South Korea and India.

This reorientation comes to life through a renewed two-week structure based entirely in Singapore. The first week, shaped by Inspire and Ideate, immerses delegates in lectures, keynotes, and learning journeys that spark curiosity and fresh perspectives. The second week, guided by Intercultural and Implement, brings diverse teams together to co-create projects that translate ideas into action. Outstanding proposals receive start-up grants to nurture their growth beyond the symposium, driving meaningful change that extends far past its conclusion.



Echo

- Shermaine Yeo
AUS 2016 Chairperson
/ National University of Singapore

To me, AUS is proof that big dreams take flight when you dare to begin. What started as a bold idea to bring Asia's youth together has now grown into a decade of impact!

One message to future participants:
Stay curious, stay courageous. The future of the region depends on young minds willing to step up—through dialogue, debate, and action. Don't just join the conversation—shape it. Your voice matters, and your choices can drive real change for the region.





Ten years of AUS: Looking back at the start

Reflections from AUS 2015 Founding Chairpersons
Mr. Seng Chiy Goh and Ms. Amanda Chan
University Scholars Programme (Class of 2017), National University of Singapore





A little over ten years ago, a group of students on NUS's University Scholars Programme found ourselves asking how students like us could step up more: not merely participating as members of a community, but also shaping the experiences we were part of. We also wondered how we could feel more connected to the region we lived in and the changes unfolding around us.

At that time, NUS offered many international programmes, and we were fortunate to take part in several. But we began to notice a pattern. The structure was usually fixed, with faculty setting the agenda and students following along. Most programmes leaned in one of two directions: they were either primarily social opportunities to build friendships, or were curriculum-focused, but delivered asymmetrically: a series of lectures followed by Q&A. Rarely did they invite students to take the lead, or allow space for shared ownership. We believed there was room for something more.

Many of these programmes were also focused on destinations beyond our region, often focusing on major global capitals. Yet, being based in one of the most dynamic and fast-changing parts of the world, this felt like a missed opportunity to engage more intentionally with South-East Asia – to learn from our neighbours, build relationships across borders, and grapple with the issues shaping it from within.



That was genesis of the Asian Undergraduate Summit.

We started with a blank slate, but we had a clear view of what we hoped to create: a programme we would have been excited to join ourselves. That intent guided every choice. We identified four principles that shaped the design of AUS.







First, **we wanted the programme to examine the complexities of the region**. Our intent wasn't just to work in Southeast Asia, but to explore the tensions, differences, and trade-offs that shape it. We chose themes with no easy answers: issues that varied across national contexts and couldn't be solved in isolation. In the first year, we focused on the Food-Water-Energy Nexus. These systems are deeply interconnected, but each country balances them differently, depending on its needs, resources, and priorities. We wanted delegates to grapple with that complexity, understand competing perspectives, and challenge their assumptions. The goal wasn't consensus, but a deeper appreciation of how others navigate hard choices.

Second, **we designed for learning through collaboration and exchange, not passive instruction**. We didn't want AUS to be a one-way download; we wanted delegates to actively engage, apply, and create. The programme was structured in two parts. In the first week, NUS students travelled to a partner university in the region. It's one thing to study an issue on paper; it's another to see how it unfolds on the ground, to speak those affected, and to observe the systems in context. These visits were designed to encourage immersion and dialogue. In the second week, all delegates gathered in Singapore and worked across teams, disciplines, and cultures to deepen their understanding of how these challenges played out in practice, and to co-develop responses that were grounded and context-specific.

Third, **we wanted delegates to leave with a new skillset they could use beyond the Summit**. In our year, we worked with futures thinking practitioners from the Singapore Government to design a four-day programme focused on horizon scanning, scenario planning, and identifying second- and third-order consequences of decisions. It gave the delegates structured tools they could apply beyond the Summit, to help them make sense of uncertainty, think long-term, and approach complex problems with greater clarity and rigour.

Fourth, **we believed the programme should be accessible to all delegates, regardless of financial background**. The first AUS was designed such that delegates paid only for their flights. We wanted to remove monetary barriers and focus on what mattered: a student's interest, openness, and willingness to engage fully with others and with the ideas at hand.

Designing a thoughtful program was the first big hurdle. The second challenge we faced was getting it off the ground. The idea was ambitious and unproven. We had no formal backing and very little time. We began by speaking to faculty and administrators at NUS for support. Some advised us to wait a couple of years to let the idea mature, but once it took root, we wanted to make it happen.

Eventually, two faculty members, Associate Professor Peter Pang and the late Professor John Richardson, gave us the green light, on the condition that we could secure external funding. With that, we began pitching to different







organisations. Most said no, so we learned how to tell our story better and tried again. The turning point came when the Singapore International Foundation agreed to support us as our first major sponsor. Their backing gave us credibility and momentum. With that in place, we were able to bring others on board.

We then invited universities across the region to join us as hosts. It was a big ask. The model was untested, the outcome uncertain, and our budget extremely lean. When questions came up about funding and delivery, we proposed a shared model: each host university would fund and run their portion of the programme, including an overseas component aligned with the AUS theme. We worked closely with them to shape experiences that were immersive, relevant, and grounded in local context. More than logistics, it was about ownership. Host universities helped shape the narrative they wanted to share and became equal partners in the journey. Five said yes. Their trust helped bring the first AUS to life.

Executing the programme was a milestone, but the real litmus test was how delegates perceived the programme and if it felt meaningful to them. We were incredibly grateful that in the weeks after, partner universities asked when the next edition would take place. Delegates from the first iteration stepped up to organise the next run. Some wanted to return as facilitators, or to participate again. That gave us confidence that we had created something valuable, and that it would live on beyond the founding team.

Since then, AUS has evolved. We've been asked if this is still the programme we started, and how we feel about how it has changed. Our honest answer: AUS is doing what it was meant to do. It adapts to reflect the voice of each cohort who organises and participates in it, and it continues because others have chosen to make it their own.

Our only advice to current and future organisers: Don't do this for your resume. Do it because you want to create something that belongs to you. Do it because you believe in building meaningful, cross-border conversations. Keep pushing boundaries. Ask what your generation needs. See where the gaps are. Reinvent what feels dated. Strengthen what still works. And most of all, find a good team – the battle is half won when you have great people to journey with.






NUS COLLEGE
ASEAN UNDERGRADUATE SYMPOSIUM 2023
INTERCONNECTED COMMUNITIES
ETHAN LAU SI ZHENG

From Summit to Symposium The Challenge of Re-imagining The Symposium After COVID



The 2015 Asian Undergraduate Summit set the tone for what the Asian Undergraduate Symposium would become: systemic, responsive, and interdisciplinary. The subsequent editions, 2016's Smart Cities, Smart Citizens; 2017's Disruptive Change in Everyday Life; and 2018's Taking on Diffused Responsibilities each developed the 2015 two-leg model in different ways. Regional fieldwork and overseas exchanges continued, with delegates visiting host institutions, such as Institut Teknologi Bandung and Lady Shri Ram College. Their projects explored digital urban mobility, inclusive design, care of the elderly, and community-based education. The geographical and thematic breadth of AUS continued to grow.

In 2019, the theme became 'Harnessing Untapped Potential.' This encouraged delegates to identify overlooked resources and communities and develop synergistic, community-based interventions. Projects ranged from rehabilitative cafés for former inmates, to waste-reducing networks linking homemakers with recycling businesses. Then came the pandemic. The disruption cut to the heart of what AUS had become: a space for embodied, cross-cultural connection. The 2021 and 2022 editions began rebuilding after that loss. Virtual platforms replaced field visits. The 2022 theme 'Creating Opportunities in Times of Uncertainty' reflected the emotional and institutional reality. Virtual collaborations brought together delegates from institutions in Brunei, Cambodia, South Korea, Vietnam, and Indonesia, who co-developed projects on eco-cities, food systems, and inclusive tech. While the format was on-line, the work remained grounded in community challenges and cross-cultural exchange.

AUS returned to in-person engagement in 2023, with a new institutional home in NUS College. This marked a significant turning point. The programme was restructured into a single, intensive two-week format in Singapore and guided by the I-4 Model: Inspire, Ideate, Intercultural, Implement. With face-to-face exchange finally possible again, delegates moved beyond proposals. They designed pilot-ready solutions, pitched to a panel of regional practitioners, and

competed for seed funding. Five teams went on to implement their projects across their respective countries in the months that followed. The 2023 symposium laid the foundation for a new AUS, one that prioritised continuity, action, and impact.

In 2024, these projects continued to unfold, reaching communities, refining partnerships, and testing the durability of ideas formed in intense collaboration. AUS's commitment to regional leadership matured into a network of action, where implementation was no longer a distant ambition but an immediate responsibility.

Now, in 2025, AUS celebrates a decade of regional collaboration. The theme 'Interconnected Communities' gathers threads woven through past editions, while opening new possibilities. With a focus on regeneration, inclusion, and heritage, this edition partners with the inaugural Regen Asia Summit and welcomes 300 delegates from ASEAN and beyond alongside global thought leaders. In the following pages, we will explore the journey and celebrate the achievements of this reemergent AUS.

Echo

- Raag Sudha Sanjay
AUS 2017 Chairperson / National University of Singapore

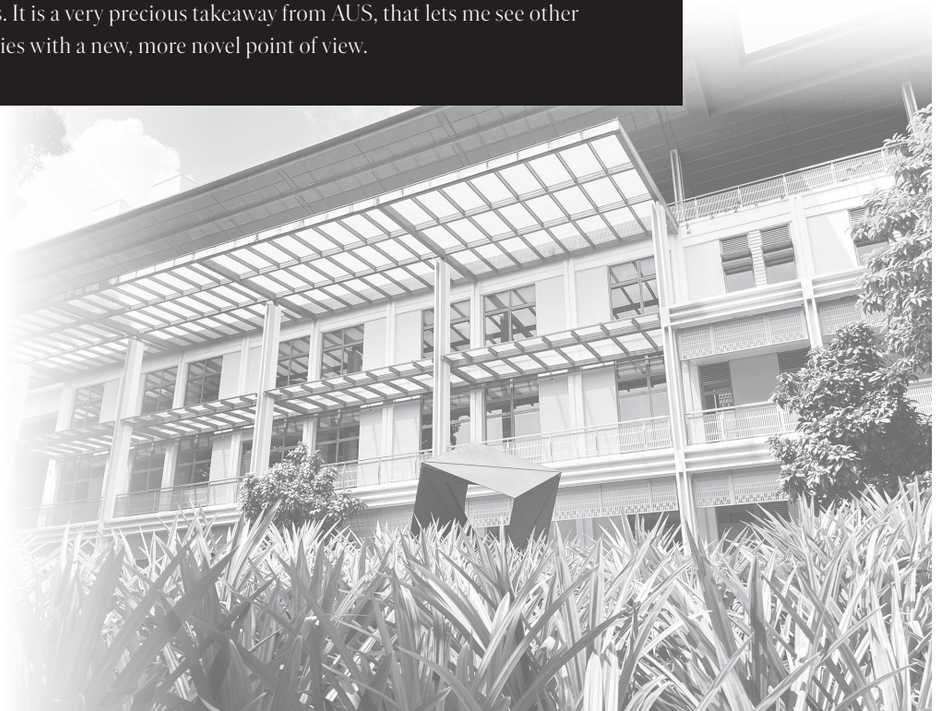
AUS was where I learned the real meaning of leading with both vision and humility. As Chairperson in 2017, I saw first-hand how bringing together passionate, curious people from across Asia could spark conversations that challenge perspectives and build unlikely friendships. More than just a conference, AUS became a living, breathing experiment in cross cultural collaboration, and it shaped how I think about connection, empathy, and impact to this day.

One message to future participants:
Come with open ears, an open mind, and an open heart. The most transformative moments often happen in between the scheduled sessions — in late-night chats, shared meals, and the quiet exchanges where trust is built. Take the leap to share your story, ask the hard questions, and truly listen. You'll carry home new ways of seeing the world and your place in it.

- Rachel Teng Ying Xin
AUS 2019 Organising Committee Member / National University of Singapore

What friendships or connections came about by your AUS experience? How have they changed how you see the world?
It connected me with the world, and made me more aware of pertinent issues in the region, and how they may differ/be more similar than expected across different countries.

We continue to keep in touch via social media, and whenever we visit each others' countries for holiday/work, we try to meet up with 1-2 old AUS friends. It is a very precious takeaway from AUS, that lets me see other countries with a new, more novel point of view.



Renna

A period of new growth or activity.

2023

isance

PROCEEDINGS OF 2023 ASIAN UNDERGRADUATE SYMPOSIUM

Beginning Anew, Preserving Continuity



Reflections by AUS 2023 Academic Lead
Dr Norman Vasu
NUS College, National University of Singapore

The 2023 iteration of the Asian Undergraduate Summit (AUS) was doubtlessly exciting, to put it mildly. The brief was seemingly simple: refresh the well-established Asian Undergraduate Summit – an annual student run conference started in 2015 offering undergraduates from Asia opportunities to engage in intellectual discussions, foster intercultural exchange, and provide memorable moments with a diverse group of delegates.

As with many undertakings seemingly simple in statement, the task felt like catching the moon in a pail of water. How do you improve on a great event?

The course, then, was set not toward revolution, but toward a measured evolution. The transformation from Summit to Symposium was marked chiefly by two distinctions: first, the field of participants was narrowed from the whole of Asia to ASEAN; second, a novel provision was made whereby select proposals would receive a grant of $5000, to be employed in realising a self-conceived remedy to an identified problem. Both changes were bound by the same reasoning – ASEAN's common challenges may be alleviated by its youth who are possessed with vision, gumption, and learning: youth who deserve the means to give their ideas form.

The Symposium retained many excellent aspects of the original Summit. AUS remained, in essence, an enterprise of the students, for the students; and its purposes – to nurture leadership, develop a devotion to service, and strengthen the bonds between cultures – continued.

After months of hard graft, NUS College (NUSC), with the support of the Temasek Foundation and an able student committee, put together a 2-week residential programme under the theme of Interconnected Communities. Bringing together 150 undergraduates, AUS 2023 engaged with four challenges affecting all in ASEAN. The challenges were (and in effect still are): (1) climate change and sustainability; (2) diversity and inclusion; (3) heritage and culture; and (4) needs and wants.

Over the fortnight, participants engaged with domain experts and practitioners, were trained in project proposal writing, and nudged to collaborate with each other in order to arrive at an actionable proposal to mitigate a problem they identified. Two weeks after the AUS, formal proposals were submitted; from these, three groups were chosen to receive the grants, thus commencing the work of bringing their visions to fruition.

Following on from the grant, one group – Gro-up! – a card game that addresses the misallocation of talent away from agriculture has gone on to secure more grant funding from Kent State University. It has reached over 500 students through 6 organised workshops, and the organisers have presented at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Philippines Youth Social Innovation Lab.

I feel privileged to have played a part in AUS 2023 and am truly inspired by how AUS 2024 and 2025 have continued to build upon that foundation. These achievements reflect the incredible dedication and collaboration of the student committee led by Deeksha Kapoor and Kok Ai Xuan, the administrative team at NUSC, and the NUSC faculty. Their energy and commitment made everything possible, and I am grateful to have worked alongside such an exceptional group.

Building Teams and Learning to Lead





Reflections by AUS 2023 Student Chairpersons
Deeksha Kapoor and Kok Aixuan
NUS College, National University of Singapore

Leading AUS 2023 was one of the most transformative experiences of our undergraduate journeys. AUS brought together around 160 delegates from across Asia to exchange ideas and co-develop multidisciplinary solutions around the themes of sustainability, diversity and inclusion, basic human needs, and culture. The symposium was more than just a conference—it was a platform for youth empowerment and innovative collaboration across ASEAN.

Planning for AUS began over six months in advance, involving multiple moving parts: academic workshops, project development, stakeholder engagement, and the logistics of hosting a regionally diverse group. With a broad-based support system—including the Temasek Foundation, NUS College, and a dedicated team of student councillors—we aimed to create a meaningful experience that would have a lasting impact.

One of the most important lessons we learned was how to adapt quickly in the face of complexity. In the second half of planning, AUS underwent a pivotal transition. As our responsibilities expanded and the scale of the event came into sharper focus, we worked closely with the NUSC administration team. This support was instrumental in helping us structure our workflow and prioritize what mattered most.

We also learned the importance of managing a team that thrives on collaboration, respect, and empathy. We came to value a committed, reliable team possessing a common purpose. We were able to build a team culture grounded in collaboration and optimism, which carried us through to the final execution.

AUS 2023 was the culmination of months of dedication and shared vision. Delegates participated in workshops and dialogues with leading academics and professionals across the globe, and presented project ideas developed over the course of the symposium. Several teams went on to receive seed funding to pilot their ideas in their home countries—tangible proof of AUS's long-term impact.

The experience deepened our appreciation for working with stakeholders at different levels. From engaging with the NUS President's Office, to coordinating with the Temasek Foundation and university partners across ASEAN, as well as many of our distinguished panellists, we developed confidence in managing high-stakes relationships and aligning diverse interests toward a common goal. It was a unique opportunity to learn to communicate clearly and convincingly with a variety of different stakeholders. It was fundamental in shaping our AUS experience.

Perhaps the greatest personal outcome of AUS was our growth as individuals and as leaders. We had the opportunity to learn and to forge friendships across ASEAN. We learned how to navigate ambiguity, support each other under pressure, and lead strategically and with passion. We are incredibly grateful for everyone who walked this journey with us—from our mentors to our peers—and we're excited to see how AUS continues to evolve as a beacon of regional student leadership and impact.





The Panel Discussions 2023

Panel 1 - Climate Change and Sustainability

Moderator: Dr. Julius Bautista – *Senior Lecturer, NUS College*

As climate change intensifies, addressing sustainability requires bold, multifaceted action—from restoration of degraded ecosystems to harnessing foresight, technology, and creative communication. This panel explored how communities can develop locally grounded, yet globally aligned conservation and restoration strategies. It also highlighted the power of storytelling and social media to shift public consciousness and mobilize climate action, especially among youth. Panellists shared personal journeys that underscored the importance of finding one's unique path in sustainability, blending professional expertise with creative activism.



Key conversations addressed the trade-offs and tensions between climate adaptation and mitigation, and the urgency of aligning efforts with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In an engaging Q&A session, delegates raised questions about reconciling profit-making with environmental ethics, barriers to real implementation, and the role of governance and community in driving impactful change. The session encouraged delegates to think critically about how systems, digital tools, and inclusive engagement can be harnessed to build resilient, regenerative futures for people and planet alike. At the end, delegates had the opportunity to raise questions in a moderated Q&A. These led to conversations about how to reconcile sustainability and profit-making, the barriers in implementing sustainability efforts, and balancing legislation and raising awareness.



(left to right) Ms. Chan Kah Mun, Dr. Gretchen Coffman, Ms. Kong Man Jing and Mr. Veerappan Swaminathan

Our Panelists

- **Ms. Chan Kah Mun**

Sustainability Professional & Creator of 'How Light Falls'

Chan Kah Mun integrates sustainability and the creative arts, dedicating her career to the climate movement through work in areas like supply chains, capacity building, and decarbonisation. She uses photography and videography to tell empathetic stories that celebrate nature and shared humanity, believing in the power of people and collaboration.

- **Dr. Gretchen Coffman**

Senior Lecturer, The Tropical Restoration (TRE) Lab, National University of Singapore

Dr. Gretchen Coffman is a senior lecturer in Geography at the National University of Singapore and leads research in restoration ecology and conservation biogeography across Southeast Asia. She founded the Tropical Restoration Ecology Lab, where her team develops community-based strategies to support ecosystem recovery.

- **Ms. Kong Man Jing**

Co-Founder, Just Keep Thinking

Kong Man Jing (MJ) is the co-founder of "Just Keep Thinking," a science and environment channel that blends education with entertainment to engage over 500,000 followers online. Beyond digital content, she also guides nature tours and leads workshops on biodiversity and sustainability.

- **Mr. Veerappan Swaminathan**

Chief Executive Officer, Sustainable Living Lab

Veera Swaminathan is the CEO of Sustainable Living Lab and edm8ker, with expertise in sustainability, foresight, innovation, and AI skilling. He co-founded Repair Kopitiam and holds key roles including Co-Chair of the Climate Action SG Alliance, Exco member of the SGTech Sustainability Steering Committee, and Fellow of the EdSAFE AI Alliance Leadership Network, earning multiple awards for his contributions.

Central questions explored by the panel include:

- How can we develop conservation and restoration strategies to mitigate climate challenges?
- How can we use creative storytelling and social media to champion environmental sustainability?
- How can we use foresight and technology to move towards UN's Sustainable Development Goals?

The Panel Discussions 2023

Panel 2 - Diversity and Inclusion

Moderator: Associate Professor Eleanor Wong

Vice Dean (Residental Programmes & Enrichment), NUS College

This panel explored the intersections of identity, equity, and social well-being in a complex and diverse world. At its heart was a call for inclusive innovation—rethinking systems, policies, and design processes to reflect a broader spectrum of human experience, especially for marginalised groups. Panelists shared insights from their work on gender equality, disability rights, mental health, and social cohesion, demonstrating how inclusive design and data-driven approaches can break down barriers. From tackling stigma and polarised ideology, to addressing generational tensions and workplace discrimination, discussions highlighted that inclusion is not simply a moral imperative, but a path to societal resilience. Technology, when centred on people, can enable access and empowerment—but must be co-designed with communities.

Delegates engaged meaningfully in the Q&A session, raising challenging questions on affirmative action, mental health disparities, and the future of interfaith and interethnic harmony. The session underscored that true diversity is not just about representation, but about cultivating environments where everyone can fully participate, thrive, and co-create inclusive futures.

Echo

- Nadya Low
AUS 2022 Delegate / National University of Singapore

What friendships or connections came about by your AUS experience? How have they changed how you see the world?
I met Mehek through AUS, though only online during the COVID era. Fast forward 2 years later to 2024, she came to Singapore on a family holiday and we met in person for the first time! Though we might have forgotten most of the content of what we discussed back during the programme, what brought us back together was a shared hope and ambition for making a change in the world.

As we chatted in person, it felt like the warmth of reconnecting with an old friend. It was heartwarming to share our personal journeys towards adulting as we caught up — looking back on university days and student life as well as looking forward to our aspirations joining the working world.











(top to bottom)
Mr. Ken Chua,
Dr. Jean Liu,
Dr. Shivani Gupta
and
Mr. Leonard Sim

Our Panelists

▪ **Mr. Ken Chua**
– *Founder & Director, (these)abilities*

Ken Chua is the Founder & Director of (these)abilities, an inclusive design and technology agency that creates products, policies, and experiences that serve both persons with disabilities and the wider public. He has been recognised by communities such as Forbes Asia 30 Under 30, the Obama Foundation, and the World Economic Forum's Global Shapers for his contributions to inclusive innovation.

▪ **Dr. Jean Liu**
– *Founder, Insights Bridge Consultancy*

Dr. Jean Liu is the founder of Insights Bridge Consultancy and an adjunct Assistant Professor at NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, with a research focus on health, technology, and data-driven policy. Formerly a Yale-NUS faculty member, she has advised organisations like the WHO and serves on national expert panels and councils for care effectiveness and screen use.

▪ **Dr. Shivani Gupta**
– *Lecturer, NUS College, National University of Singapore*

Dr. Shivani Gupta is a Lecturer at NUS College, with research focusing on gendered experiences in urban settings, particularly through the lenses of violence, surveillance, and mobility. She holds a PhD in South Asian Studies and has published in journals such as Feminist Anthropology and Gender, Place, and Culture.

▪ **Mr. Leonard Sim**
– *Youth Leader, President, hash.peace*

Leonard Sim is the President of hash.peace, a youth-led organisation that promotes social harmony through workshops, dialogues, and the R2D2 (Research, Reflect, Discourse, Develop) model. A Young Leaders Program alumnus at ICCS 2019 and trained Explorations-in-Ethnicity facilitator, he actively champions cultural awareness and youth leadership in his community.

Central questions explored by the panel include:

- How can we enable social mobility and actualisation of the self and community?
- How does diversity and inclusion (or lack thereof) impact our mental health?
- How can design and technology be used to develop Inclusive products for Persons with Disabilities?

The Panel Discussions 2023

Panel 3 - Heritage and Culture

Moderator: Associate Professor Loy Hui Chieh – *Vice Dean (Academic Programmes), NUS College*

In a rapidly globalising and digitalising world, what does it mean to preserve, transform, and transmit heritage? This panel explored how tangible and intangible cultural heritage shapes collective memory, belonging, and identity. From cultural mapping to digital archiving, panelists examined evolving approaches to heritage conservation in multicultural societies. They discussed the tension between globalisation and cultural authenticity, and the role of heritage in navigating generational conflict and change-readiness.

A key theme was the role of digital technologies in distributed meaning-making—how tools like social media, virtual museums, and digital storytelling are reframing how we access and engage with our past. Critical reflections emerged during the Q&A, where delegates explored complex questions around preserving vernacular languages, reconciling traditional values with contemporary shifts, and balancing cosmopolitanism with rootedness. Ultimately, the panel called for heritage work that is dynamic, inclusive, and forward-looking—recognising culture not as something fixed to be preserved, but as a living process to be negotiated and reimagined.





Our Panelists:

- **Dr. Azianura Hani Shaari**
  Senior Lecturer, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

Dr. Azianura Hani Shaari is a Senior Lecturer at UKM's Center for Research in Language and Linguistics, specializing in sociolinguistics, language and crime, gender studies, and intercultural communication. She has authored over five books, published extensively, and received multiple awards throughout her career.

- **Mr. Izni Azalie**
  Lecturer, University Brunei Darussalam

Izni Azrein Noor Azalie is a human geographer completing his PhD at University College London, researching halal industrial governance and its impact on Brunei's agri-food producers. He has extensive experience in environmental and community consultancy related to oil and gas, urban development, and the socio-economic effects of industrial growth in Brunei.

- **Associate Professor Natalie Pang**
  Deputy Head, Communications and New Media Department, National University of Singapore

Associate Professor Natalie Pang is Deputy Head of the Communications and New Media Department, Principal Investigator at the Centre for Trusted Internet and Community, and University Librarian at NUS. Her research and teaching focus on digital citizenship, wellbeing, and digital humanities, and she serves as an ExCo Member of the Singapore Heritage Society.

- **Dr. Kevin Tan**
  Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Law, National University of Singapore

Dr. Kevin YL Tan is an Adjunct Professor at NUS Faculty of Law, teaching Constitutional and Administrative Law, Singapore Legal History, and the Legal System. He has authored and edited over 60 books, served as President of the Singapore Heritage Society and the Singapore chapter of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), and is Editor-in-Chief of the Asian Journal of Comparative Law.

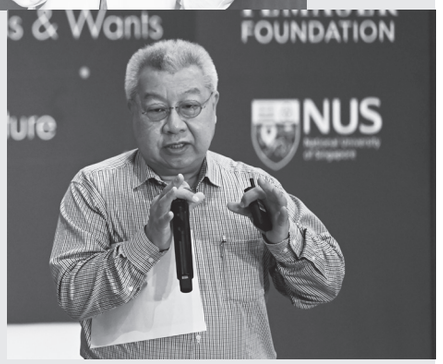
Central questions explored by the panel include:

- What is cultural mapping and what is its significance in social spaces?
- How can we bring about a deeper connection with our past and cultural roots?
- What is digital citizenship and digital heritage?









(top to bottom) Dr. Azianura Hani Shaari, Mr. Izni Azalie, Associate Professor Natalie Pang and Dr. Kevin Tan





The Panel Discussions 2023

Panel 4 - Needs and Wants

Moderator: Associate Professor Daniel Goh

– Vice Dean (Special Programmes), NUS College

This panel examined the evolving relationship between fundamental needs and societal wants in an age of technological change, economic inequality, and environmental crisis. Through lenses like public health, water access, food security, and housing, speakers challenged delegates to rethink assumptions around scarcity, consumption, and development. Whether addressing hidden homelessness in urban spaces or promoting women-led water solutions, the discussion emphasized that meeting basic needs goes beyond charity—it requires systems change rooted in equity and resilience. The panel also spotlighted the promise of regenerative agriculture and inclusive food systems in ensuring local sustainability.

Delegates posed pressing questions on the influence of consumerism, barriers to access, and redefining human flourishing beyond material accumulation. Speakers encouraged a shift from top-down aid models to participatory, community-based approaches. In reimagining how we meet needs and navigate wants, the panel highlighted the importance of solidarity, interdisciplinary thinking, and culturally sensitive policies that enable dignity and agency for all.

Our Panelists

- **Mr. Timothy Fang**
  Senior Consultant, ACCESS Health International (Southeast Asia)

Timothy Fang is a Senior Consultant at ACCESS Health International Southeast Asia and leads the Asia-Pacific Cardiovascular Disease Alliance program. He previously worked at the Agency for Integrated Care and served in the Singapore Foreign Service, including a posting at the Singapore Embassy in Phnom Penh and assignments across Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Arctic Council.

- **Ms. Merry Lianita**
  Graduate Student, Nutrition and Food Systems, Ghent University Belgium

Merry Lianita is a graduate student in Nutrition and Food Systems at Ghent University, Belgium, focusing on



(left to right) Mr. Timothy Fang, Ms. Merry Lianita, Ms. Griselda (Gay) Santos, Professor Veera Sekaran and Dr. Harry Tan

nutrition equity through sustainable food systems. She has research experience across Australia, Greece, and Indonesia, and recently completed a project in Bali addressing challenges in equitable nutrition.

▪ **Ms. Griselda (Gay) Santos**
Regional Director (Southeast Asia), Water.org

Gay brings over 25 years of experience in investment, credit operations, and advisory services from her roles at the World Bank Group and IFC. Now Regional Director for Southeast Asia at Water.org, she is also a financial inclusion advocate, chairing the Financial Inclusion Committee of the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines and serving as Trustee of Fintech Alliance Philippines.

▪ **Professor Veera Sekaran**
Head of Regenerative Agritech Center, Department of Biological Sciences, National University of Singapore

Professor Veera Sekaran is Head of the Regenerative Agritech Centre at NUS Biological Sciences, with over 35 years of experience as a botanist, urban farming specialist, and green futurist. He has founded businesses focused on regenerative, nature-based solutions and has held key roles including Assistant Curator of Horticulture at the Zoo and Night Safari, Curator at Changi Airport, and Assistant Director at the National Parks Board.

▪ **Dr. Harry Tan**
Research Fellow, Institute of Policy Studies, National University of Singapore

Dr. Harry Tan is a Research Fellow at NUS Institute of Policy Studies, focusing on long-term homelessness and the financial behaviours of low-income families in Singapore. An experienced ethnographer, he has conducted research on homeless populations and street communities in Singapore and Thailand, with publications exploring homelessness, vulnerability, and stigma.

Central questions explored by the panel include:

- What is food insecurity and why/how does it happen even in food secure nations?
- How can we break down the financial barriers limiting access to safe water, housing, healthcare, and sanitation?
- How can farming methods technologies drive a more secure and sustainable local food supply?


ASIAN UNDERGRADUATE SYMPOSIUM 2023
Welcome & Introduction
Professor Simon Chesterman
Vice Provost (Educational Innovation)
Dean (NUS College)
ASIAN UNDERGRADUATE SYMPOSIUM 2023
9 July - 22 July 2023
Organised by
NUS COLLEGE
Climate Change & Sustainability
INTERCONNECTED
Needs & Wants
COMMUNITIES
Diversity & Inclusion
Heritage & Culture
Funded by
TEMASEK FOUNDATION
NUS

Redefining Success

Fireside Chat with Ms Gan Siow Huang

Minister of State (2020-2025), Ministry of Education, Singapore



From left, Mr Amrin Amin (Head of Corporate Development, Temasek Foundation), Professor Simon Chesterman (Dean, NUS College), Ms Gan Siow Huang (Minister of State), Associate Professor Daniel Goh (Vice-Dean, NUS College), Dr Norman Vasu (AUS 2023 Academic Lead)

As part of the Asian Undergraduate Symposium 2023, a fireside chat was held with Ms. Gan Siow Huang, Singapore's Minister of State. Moderated by Professor Simon Chesterman, Dean of NUS College, the conversation spanned a wide array of themes central to education, workforce development, inclusion, and well-being in modern Singapore. Ms. Gan offered a reflective and pragmatic view of Singapore's approach to nurturing human potential in a resource-scarce yet opportunity-rich context.

A core emphasis of the discussion was upskilling in the workforce, a national priority in Singapore. Ms. Gan stressed that continuous learning and skill enhancement are non-negotiable to meet the evolving demands of the modern world and to adapt to individual life circumstances. Upskilling should be viewed not merely as economic preparation, but as empowerment, an essential response to an unpredictable and competitive global landscape.

Speaking of the international reputation of Singapore's education system, Ms. Gan offered a multi-faceted perspective. She highlighted the system's strong focus on communication skills, critical thinking, and personal development. Unlike traditional rote learning models, Singapore's approach encourages students to interact freely with their professors, leverage AI-integrated tools, and develop both abilities and character, not just acquire knowledge. The goal is to create conditions where students are empowered to discover and nurture their full potential.

Given Singapore's limited natural resources and small population, Ms. Gan underlined the country's heavy investment in human capital. With no mineral wealth and even water needing to be recycled, the nation's survival and growth depend on a well-educated, adaptable population. Therefore, a significant policy concern remains the extent to which citizens have access to higher education and whether that access is truly inclusive.

She explained how equity in access is a significant challenge. Ms. Gan acknowledged the tension between maintaining high educational standards and ensuring affordability, particularly for low-income families. This led the conversation about how physical and social infrastructure must be optimized to serve a diverse student population.

The conversation also covered the challenges of situating cultural preservation within a highly globalized education system. With English as the working language, Ms. Gan emphasized the importance of protecting mother tongue languages to preserve Singapore's multicultural identity.

In discussing the future of education, Ms. Gan celebrated Singapore's shift towards holistic development. She spoke of a "healthy body, healthy values" mindset, the importance of valuing non-academic talents such as sports and the arts, and the evolution of school admission systems that now recognize a student's attitude and potential, not just grades. She said that teachers play a crucial role not only as instructors but as role models, shaping values and inspiring ethical citizenship.



Addressing the emotional landscape of youth in a high-stress, high-income society, Ms. Gan offered practical advice: manage personal expectations, seek support, and focus on long-term growth over instant results. She encouraged students to redefine success on their terms, beyond degrees and salaries, and pursue what brings meaning, purpose, and joy.

Her closing message was clear and powerful: *"Don't stress about whether you meet some predefined criteria. Just do your best with sincerity and purpose."*

This Fireside Chat left participants informed, truly inspired, and equipped with a broader understanding of policy and a deeper sense of personal agency.

"Among the many unforgettable moments I had during my time at AUS, the Fireside Chat with Ms. Gan Siow Huang, Singapore's Minister of State for Manpower, definitely stood out. Even now, years later as I pursue graduate school, I still think about the reflections from that session. One that really stayed with me was the idea of redefining success.

Too often, we measure success by degrees, titles, or salaries. But what about how much we give back to the community? Or how well we create space to grow. Not just for ourselves, but for others too? That message really resonated with me, especially as someone who believes in meaning-driven leadership. It reminded me that success isn't one-dimensional, and that teachers, mentors, and role models play such a huge role, not just in shaping knowledge, but in shaping values. Perhaps the most powerful message of all was: don't stress too much about whether you meet some external "criteria." Just do your best with sincerity and purpose.

It was such an engaging and impactful conversation, and honestly, it still inspires me today."

Ms. Raisya Rahmawati
AUS 2023 Delegate
University of Indonesia



"The fireside chats with professionals like Mr. Vishnu Saran and Minister of State, Ms. Gan Siow Huang, inspired me to think beyond traditional career paths, showing me how impactful leadership stems from passion, strategy, and persistence.

Ultimately, AUS did more than expand my knowledge, it instilled confidence in me to pursue my interest, strengthened my ability to navigate interdisciplinary discussions, and reinforced my belief in the power of collective action. It is an experience that will continue to shape my academic and professional journey in ways I'm still discovering.

The fireside chats with industry professionals and the mentoring sessions during the proposal pitches and presentations helped me refine my ability to connect abstract theories with practical solutions. AUS wasn't just about knowledge, it was about transforming ideas into action, and that is what inspired me the most."

Ms. Kaela Michaela Coleen P. Lopez
AUS 2023 Delegate
Polytechnic University of the Philippines









Exploring Communities: The Learning Journeys

A central feature of the AUS experience is learning beyond the seminar room through direct engagement with communities. The learning journeys allow participants to step into spaces where Asia's evolving narratives are lived. In 2023, these experiences reflected the programme's core themes: Diversity and Inclusion, Heritage and Culture, and Needs and Wants. They connect seminar concepts with real-world contexts, giving delegates a chance to understand communities' needs, challenges, and solutions firsthand.

A window into Singapore's social fabric

Each journey revealed Singapore's complex social fabric. At Ground-Up Initiative, a nonprofit "kampung" community, participants explored sustainability rooted in mindfulness and collective responsibility. From composting and closed-loop farming to planting microgreens, environmentalism became personal and practical. One delegate noted that the farm's simplicity showed meaningful change doesn't require complex solutions. Digging soil and nurturing seedlings reminded many that sustainability starts with small, intentional acts grounded in community.

Cultivating sustainability with Green Nudge

Another journey led delegates to Green Nudge, a social enterprise promoting environmental action through urban engagement. Walking through Bugis, participants encountered stories of multiculturalism and sampled plant-based dishes linking sustainability to daily choices. In Bedok, they observed green spaces integrated into public housing, while at Common Ground Civic Centre, they explored how social enterprises collaborate to advance sustainable urban living.

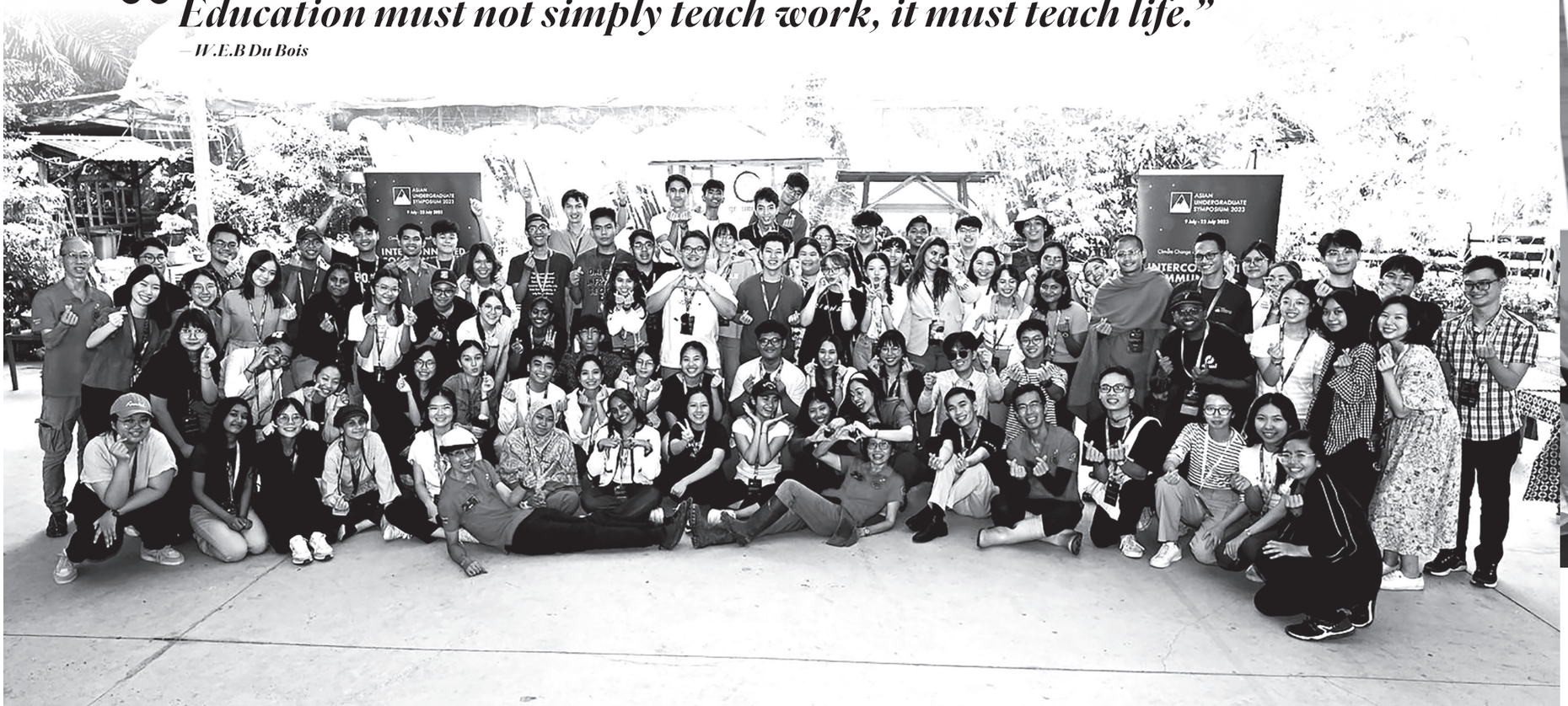
Interfaith dialogue at the Harmony Centre

A third journey focused on interfaith dialogue at the Harmony Centre @ An-Nahdhah Mosque. Delegates toured exhibits on Islam and discussed Singapore's policies promoting religious harmony. Rather than seeing faith as static doctrine, they reflected on the everyday negotiations that allow diverse communities to coexist—a key element of regional peace.



“Education must not simply teach work, it must teach life.”

— W.E.B Du Bois



Designing spaces for care in Toa Payoh

The journeys also prompted delegates to explore urgent social questions. In Toa Payoh, they saw how public housing was designed for elderly residents, demonstrating how social design reflects values like care and inclusion. Delegates considered how "needs" are shaped not just abstractly, but through urban planning and cultural context.



Learning rooted in people and place

Across every journey, one theme remained: building inclusive, sustainable, and heritage-conscious societies begins with the people who inhabit them. For AUS participants, learning often started not with theory, but with soil on their hands, plant-based meals shared in conversation, or quiet reflection in a place of worship.





"I really remember my learning journey where we were taken to Toa Payoh and shown how certain residential complexes were specifically designed to cater to the needs of the elderly... I took away the lessons of sensitivity, inclusivity and care."

Ms. Arushi Gupta
AUS 2023 Delegate
/ University of New Delhi


Cultural Night
AUS
CULTURAL
Cultural Night









Celebrating Origins, Valuing Diversity: The Cultural Night









As the AUS 2023 drew to a close, Cultural Night was an opportunity to celebrate and share delegates connection with their home cultures. It is an evening designed to bring the delegates together through food, conversation, and shared cultural expression, reflecting AUS's broader mission to deepen cross-cultural understanding across Asia.

At the heart of the evening were the cultural booths, set up by delegates from each partner university to represent their country and its creative arts and cultural practices. Delegates displayed traditional items, brought snacks from home, and prepared posters or games that sparked conversations. While modest in scale, these booths gave students the chance to speak about their lived experiences and national identities in ways that were accessible and sincere, offering glimpses into how culture is expressed and made manifest in daily life.

The cultural booths were followed by a series of informal performances. From solo singing to traditional dance, the programme reflected the diversity of the cohort and gave students the chance to celebrate each another. Cheered on by their newly made friends, with many performing for the first time, the setting was intimate with an atmosphere of encouragement and celebration.

The night ended with an opportunity for unstructured socializing, during which delegates stayed in the venue to chat, revisit booths, and take photos. In this time free of activities many of the most meaningful interactions took place: conversations arose spontaneously, as students reflected on what they'd learned not just about each other's countries, but about each other as individuals.

Cultural Night 2023 captured the essence of what AUS strives to foster: understanding, not through abstraction, but through shared experience. The evening exemplifies the idea that cultural dialogue need not require a formal framework, which may instead get in the way of the substance of it. Sometimes, it begins with a small snack, a short performance, or a quiet conversation between strangers who've become peers.





The Student Projects:
Analysing Problems, Creating Solutions

The student-led projects presented in this compilation are the result of teamwork, a shared vision, and the cross-cultural exchange made possible by the delegates coming from all across ASEAN. Developed during the final week of the new AUS format, but informed by learning that takes place throughout, these initiatives address real-world issues, grounded in local contexts, and informed by inter-cultural dialogue.

Each project began with a shared desire to respond meaningfully to pressing regional challenges—from sustainability and public health, to inclusive education. Delegates, often working across languages, time-zones, and disciplines, engaged in critical discussion and conversation that deepened their understanding of each other's communities, and the interconnected issues facing the region.

Some initiatives took shape as limited-term campaigns or prototypes; others continued to evolve long after the symposium ended, becoming grassroots movements, ongoing partnerships, or even formal organizations in their own right. Regardless of their scale or duration, each project reflected the unique blend of regional insight and youthful ambition that AUS was designed to foster.

These projects demonstrate that, with the right platform, young people can move beyond dialogue into action. By supporting one another, challenging assumptions, and drawing strength from their shared regional identity, delegates turned ideas into impact—laying the groundwork for future collaboration and leadership in Asia.



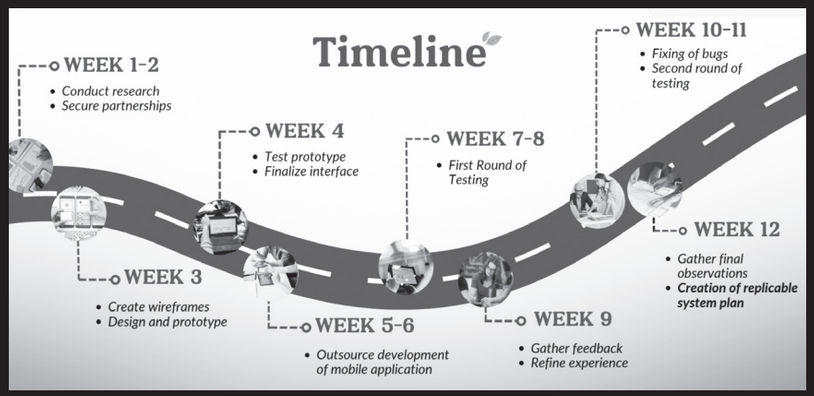






PROJECT

Farmagogo:
A Farm-to-School Innovation for a Healthier Philippines





Farmagogo is a farm-to-school mobile app from the Philippines that connects local farmers directly to schools, NGOs, and charities to provide fresh, nutritious food for children. One of the top-voted projects at the 2023 Asian Undergraduate Symposium, Farmagogo tackles two pressing issues: unstable incomes for small farmers and poor nutrition among Filipino schoolchildren.

In many rural areas, farmers depend on middlemen who take a large cut of their earnings, while countless students lack access to healthy meals that support learning and growth. Farmagogo bridges this gap by allowing schools to buy directly from farmers through a user-friendly mobile platform.

The app features in-app ordering, delivery tracking, and nutrition facts, along with automated text alerts to help farmers prepare harvests on time and reduce waste. Over time, it also gathers valuable data to help farmers plan better and increase efficiency.

Beyond transactions, Farmagogo builds a self-sustaining ecosystem: empowering farmers with data insights and financial literacy while giving children access to healthier meals. The platform operates on a small 2% commission and ad revenue, aiming to reduce schools' sourcing time and costs by up to 20% and 15%, respectively.

In its pilot phase, the app connected ten farmers with multiple schools and NGOs—proof that with the right mix of technology, empathy, and teamwork, communities can "grow a better tomorrow, one school meal and one local farmer at a time." ⭘

"The issue here can be summarized as a classic 'bloated middleman' problem that plagues many economic relationships, from finance to retail and certainly to food security. Farmagogo's uniqueness lies in its application to a specific context within which such projects have not been run before."

— Dr Lim Chee Han (Project Mentor) / National University of Singapore

PROJECT

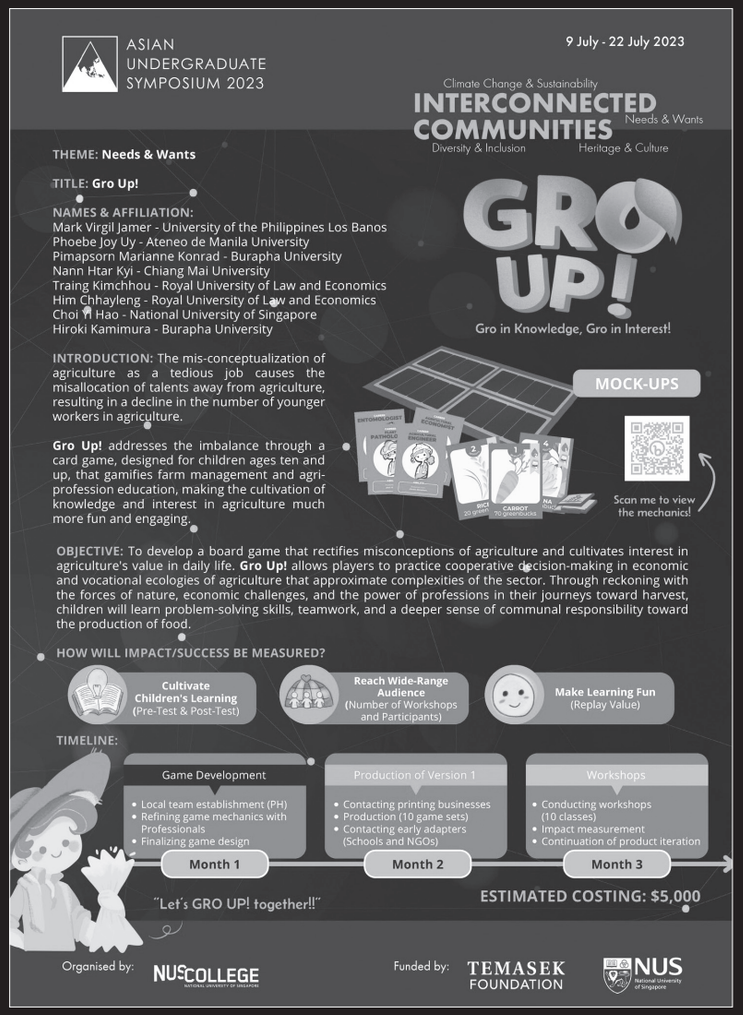
Gro Up!
A Fun Card Game That Planted Seeds of Agricultural Interest in Kids

Gro Up! is a creative board game designed to spark children's curiosity about agriculture through play. It aimed to address a pressing issue in Southeast Asia—especially in the Philippines—where fewer young people were pursuing agricultural careers. With the average Filipino farmer aged 55 to 59, experts warn of a looming shortage within the next decade.

Through its colorful, interactive cards, Gro Up! showed that agriculture goes beyond planting crops. Children learned about sustainability, crop science, farm management, and the diverse, tech-driven careers available in the field. The game encouraged teamwork, problem-solving, and a deeper understanding of how food systems work.

The team ran five play-based workshops reaching over 500 students, supported by 34 volunteers, and expanded their impact beyond the Philippines to Singapore and the United States. They also showcased Gro Up! at the UNDP Philippines Youth Social Innovation Lab, featured it on the Para Kanino? podcast, and collaborated with the University of the Philippines in a strategic planning workshop.

Ultimately, Gro Up! became more than a board game—it grew into a movement inspiring the next generation to see agriculture as a modern, dynamic, and essential part of a sustainable future.



"I like the overall design of the cards —both aesthetically and epistemically —as it packages scientific knowledge in a cute and fun way to appeal to young people's tastes, while also steering the narrative about agriculture from hearsay towards a more scientific understanding."

— Dr. Lim Chee Han (Project Mentor) / National University of Singapore

PROJECT

Tak Miserable Foods

A 2018 WWF report revealed that 91% of people were unaware that our food habits—production, consumption, and waste—posed one of the greatest threats to the planet. In Malaysia, about 40% of fresh produce is discarded before reaching consumers due to strict cosmetic standards, despite being perfectly edible.

This issue inspired Tak Miserable Foods, conceptualised during AUS 2023. The project received a grant to pilot its idea in collaboration with The Lost Food Project and NGOs, collecting and selling "ugly" produce at reduced prices through morning markets. Surveys, sales, and demand data were used to assess impact, with success measured by achieving 70% consumer willingness to buy such produce and selling two-thirds of weekly stock. If proven viable, the model would be scaled to other markets to support farmers and promote sustainability in Malaysia's food system.

The team faced several challenges, including the loss of a team member, difficulties securing permits, limited student engagement during semester breaks, and inconsistent data collection. These setbacks forced multiple pivots, underscoring the importance of adaptability in grassroots projects.

Beyond the project, Tak Miserable Foods became a catalyst for continued involvement in food justice and climate advocacy, shaping Ayrtton's leadership in initiatives such as WWF Malaysia's Sustainkita Outreach Series, Demokrat Youth Development Academy, and the ASEAN Youth Environment Forum.



"The problem we addressed began with a simple but jarring statistic: around 40% of fresh produce in Malaysia is discarded, not for lack of quality, but because they do not meet cosmetic standards. We realised that addressing this systemic food loss demanded more than just awareness; it required cultural and behavioural change."

— Ayrtton Leon (Project Member) / University of Malaya



Echo

- Bren Noah M. Nieto
AUS 2021-2022 Delegate
/ Tarlac Agricultural University

Joining AUS significantly boosted my confidence in my ability to catalyze change, even in the smallest ways. I became more proactive in exercising leadership and continued to carry these lessons with me as I entered the workforce.

I encourage future AUS participants to open their eyes to what they can do for the world—and, through that, to discover their own purpose and the essence of their existence.

Connecting COMMUNITIES



Having the ability to evoke enduring images, memories, or emotions.

Reso

2024

nant

PROCEEDINGS OF 2024 ASIAN UNDERGRADUATE SYMPOSIUM

Focusing On Community

Reflections by AUS 2024 Academic Lead
Dr. Lim Chee Han
NUS College, National University of Singapore



The AUS has its roots in the Asian Undergraduate Summit, evolving from a student-led initiative in 2015 to an NUS College-organized symposium in 2023 that brought in nearly 150 delegates from various ASEAN countries. AUS 2024 built upon the success of its predecessor, through expanding its network to include more delegates from other Asian countries, and collaborating with the ASEAN University Network (AUN) to become a university-level summer programme that received approximately 300 delegates. Continuing with the theme of "Interconnected Communities", AUS 2024 maintained the tradition of a two-week programme that combined learning journeys with expert panels, mentoring sessions, project pitches, fireside chats, and cultural activities.

By integrating four panels into three, namely, Needs and Wants, Climate Change and Sustainability, and Diversity and Inclusion, AUS 2024 was able to better align the symposium's theme with the Learning Journeys. For example, students explored the management of income inequality at Jalan Kukoh, sustainable urban development at the Sustainable Singapore Gallery, and relationships with migrant workers in Little India. To better frame the discussions and team projects, AUS 2024 introduced an opening one-hour lecture by the panel chair for each of the three panels, followed by 20-minute presentations by each speaker, and a discussion oriented around a Q&A session.

To showcase Singapore's attempt at integrating big data with sustainability and urban development, AUS 2024 also featured a smart-city tour that involved delegates in an "amazing race" around NUS campus. This culminated with a panel exploring how various Singaporean institutions utilize digital connectivity to synchronize services across industries, communities, and domains of life. As with AUS 2023, delegates also attended a fireside chat, this year with Dr. Maliki Osman, Singapore's 2nd Minister for Education, during which he discussed Singapore's role in ASEAN.

The mentoring sessions replicated the encouraging results of AUS 2023, pairing two teams of delegates with one mentor and a teaching assistant. Over a three-day intensive, facilitated group discussion, teams of delegates worked closely with NUS College mentors to concretize solution-driven projects in ASEAN cities across the three panel topics. Unlike its previous iteration that saw each team present its project in a one-day event, 38 teams submitted a video presentation on a digital platform that was used to solicit popular votes for the best presenters. The top three teams were then given a chance to present their project proposal in front of a live audience on the final night of the symposium. A new "Project World Café" event was also introduced, that involved seating teams in their own tables for them to prepare their presentations, and getting team members to visit other tables during which the receiving teams would present their projects. This not only helped teams better understand each other's projects but also helped them better prepare for their pitches. As with AUS 2023, project teams submitted a project proposal two weeks after the end of AUS, from which instead of five, eight teams received a $5000 grant to bring their ideas to fruition.

In sum, AUS 2024 built upon the success of AUS 2023, preserving the formula while further closing the gaps between the experiential component of learning journeys, topical explorations in expert panels, and effective facilitation during the mentoring sessions.

Sharing A Journey

Reflections by AUS 2024 Student Chairpersons
Mr. Le Mai Tan Dat and Ms. Heidi Ng
NUS College, National University of Singapore





Reflecting on AUS 2024, one of its great successes was in creating a shared space where young and energetic students from across ASEAN+ could gather and workshop proposals for a project attempting to make someone's life better. Witnessing the friendships and conversations that blossomed over the course of two weeks, we are confident the symposium achieved its primary goal. The handshakes shared after friendly matches; the cheers sung straight from the heart after our peers showed off their cultural performances; and the applause for the ground-up initiatives to address local social problems - these exemplify what AUS was truly about.

AUS 2024 ushered in many changes, which raised interesting challenges. For the first time, we welcomed past delegates as AUS Fellows, who now made up one-third of the whole student council. As the AUS Fellows were mostly international students, there was therefore a need for induction and additional support. Though we were often pulled in opposite directions - ensuring a safe and positive experience for our student councillors, and the unrelenting task of updating the programme details - we found the experience very meaningful and fulfilling. It brought us growth as leaders and individuals, laughter from infinite insiders' jokes, and friendships across borders.

The expansion in size and scale of AUS 2024, nearly doubling delegate numbers to 300 students, meant that we needed to revamp the structure of the student council, including manpower allocation, administration, and most importantly, the support system. We carefully designed the deployment so that we always had spare "runner" councillors who could cover other councillors in the event of emergencies. Emergencies could take the form of first aid for delegates, or replacement of any student councillors not feeling well. The "runner" system also fostered trust and a healthy co-dependence within the council, as well as the feeling that we were one big family.

Although we prepared as well as we could, there were, of course, unexpected challenges. What carried us forward was open communication — a key ingredient to adaptability in event-planning. Our approachable, on-the-ground student councillors made delegates comfortable expressing their worries. Meanwhile, the councillors consistently had opportunities to share observations and difficulties during nightly debrief sessions. To further ensure our responsiveness, a "Feedback" topic was created in the council's Telegram chat for comments on-the-go throughout the day. We cannot emphasise enough the number of changes that were enacted from the feedback received. We provided the communication channels, but the councillors worked the magic.

If there's anything AUS 2024 taught us, it must be that we are stronger together — interconnected, one might say! Running the student council made us realize that the culture of AUS echoes that of the council. The council was positive, uplifting, supportive, driven, and communicative.

Now that AUS 2024 is over, one might wonder: what more might we want to see in future iterations of AUS? We'd love to see a larger pool of AUS Fellows returning as councillors to support passionate changemakers! We'd also like to see AUS to explore virtual attendance for specific segments, such as topic lectures, as an effort to democratise access to education - especially for students with a desire to learn, but constrained by budget.

For the coming years, we cannot wait to see how much more AUS can and will become.

Echo

- Noble Jolie Vannak
AUS 2024 Delegate
/ Royal University of Law and Economic

Ms Sherena Loh's story left a deep impression on me because of the strength, wisdom, and resilience she showed. She stood as a powerful example of inner strength, purpose, and unwavering dedication to creating a better world for others.





The Panel Discussions 2024

Panel 1: Needs & Wants

Subtopic Lead: Dr. Lim Chee Han

Senior Lecturer, NUS College

The Needs & Wants panel encouraged a deeper reflection on what constitutes a meaningful life in a world driven by material excess. Delegates were asked to consider the critical difference between necessities and desires—not simply as personal choices, but as reflections of societal values and systems. Overconsumption was discussed as a symptom of broader structural inequalities, contributing to environmental degradation, social disparity, and unsustainable lifestyles. The panel challenged the idea that "More is always better", proposing instead a shift towards mindful consumption and policy frameworks that prioritize equitable access to essentials such as housing, healthcare, and food.

Framing needs as socially and culturally contextual, the conversation highlighted how people's basic requirements differ across environments and communities. Recognizing these distinctions is crucial in crafting solutions that are just, inclusive, and effective. The panel called for a collective reimagining of success—not as the accumulation of goods, but as the well-being of individuals and communities. Delegates left with a renewed understanding that change begins with realigning values at both personal and systemic levels. By centering human dignity and planetary health, societies can shift toward models of living that are more sustainable, just, and grounded in care rather than consumption.

Central questions explored by the panel include:

- What are needs?
- What are wants?
- Where do we draw the line between them?

Our Panelists



(left to right) Dr. Lim Chee Han, Dr. Nurhidayahti Mohammad Miharja, Ms. Sherena Loh and Dr. Justin Lee

"Context matters in meeting people's needs."

- **Dr. Lim Chee Han**
  Senior Lecturer, NUS College

Dr Lim specialises in the study of healing systems, religiosities and cultural constructs of the human body. He has published on topics such as qigong, medical ethics, cognitive linguistics, religion and experiential learning.

"Food insecurity should be understood as lived experiences enacted within structural constraints."

- **Dr. Nurhidayahti Mohammad Miharja**
  Lecturer, NUS College

Dr Nurhidayahti's research interest lie in race, class and nation-state building intersections.

"One's purpose in life can be discovered through reckoning with brokenness."

- **Ms. Sherena Loh**
  Co-Founder and Director of the Muscular Dystrophy Association (Singapore)

Ms Loh uses a motorised wheelchair for mobility, and was once told that she would not live beyond 25 years due to muscular dystrophy. She has been volunteering with disability organisations for more than three decades.

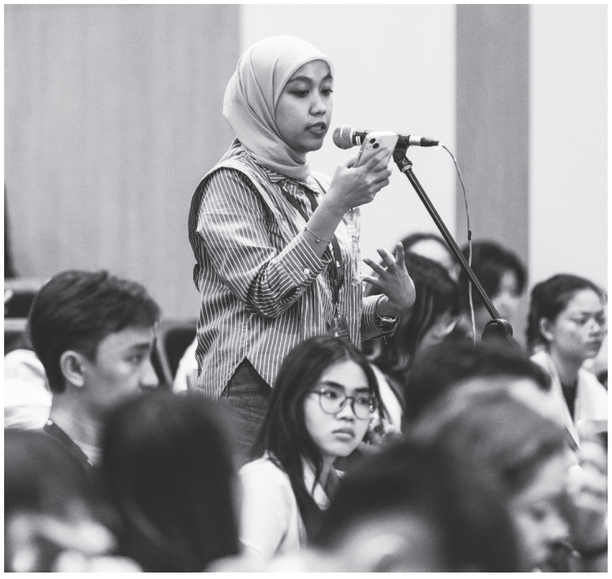
"Solution-talk is more energizing, hopeful, and connective than an obsession with problems."

- **Dr. Justin Lee**
  Senior Research Fellow and Head of Policy Lab at Institute of Policy Studies

Dr Lee works with partners to implement participatory budgeting at a Town Council and hopes to start a special version of a Citizen's Assembly.







The Panel Discussions 2024

Panel 2 : Environment & Sustainability

Subtopic Lead: Professor Veera Serkaran
Department of Biological Sciences, National University of Singapore

In the Environment & Sustainability panel, the focus turned toward regeneration—not just preservation—as a necessary mindset for today's environmental challenges. The discussion opened with a sobering reflection on the state of the planet, but quickly moved into hopeful, solution-oriented dialogues on integrating sustainability into all layers of society. Participants examined the promise of renewable energy, the practicality of circular economies, and the transformative role urban planning can play in creating greener, more resilient spaces.

One key takeaway was that sustainability is not only an environmental concern but a socio-political one. Resource management, waste reduction, and biodiversity preservation all depend on governance systems, economic models, and cultural habits. The idea of a "circular economy" was particularly emphasized, offering an alternative to the traditional linear model of take-make-dispose. In circular systems, waste becomes a resource, and design processes prioritize reuse and regeneration from the start.

The panel also addressed how city planning, when done with ecological intelligence, can reverse urban sprawl, reduce emissions, and bring nature into everyday life. Above all, the session affirmed that sustainability is a collective effort—and that young people, communities, and institutions must work together to build not only sustainable but regenerative futures that give more than they take.

Central questions explored by the panel include:

- How can renewable energy be integrated?
- What are the benefits of a circular economy?
- How does urban planning support sustainability?

Our Panelists



(top to bottom) Dr. Adrian Loo, Professor Veera Sekaran, Mr. Vivek Kumar and Ms. Mathilda D'Silva







"Let's grow our networks like fungal networks, sustaining each other in our efforts for a better future."

- **Dr. Adrian Loo**

Group Director of the Centre for Wildlife Forensics at NParks

Dr Loo leads the team to combat illegal wildlife trade. He is also the mentor for the CITES Global Youth Network that engages youth in the protection of endangered species.

"Regeneration rather than sustainability is a better way to think about and deal with environmental damage."

- **Professor Veera Sekaran**

Director of the Regenerative Agritech Centre in the Department of Biological Sciences at NUS

Prof Veera is a is a botanist, urban greening and farming specialist, and green futurist with over 35 years of experience.

"As our world confronts the twin challenges of climate change and rapid biodiversity loss, our youth have a unique opportunity to shift mindsets and behaviors, leading us collectively towards a sustainable future where humans and nature thrive together."

- **Mr. Vivek Kumar**

Chief Executive Officer of World Wide Fund for Nature (Singapore)

As CEO of of World Wide Fund For Nature (Singapore). Prof Vivek is focused on shaping conservation strategies with global impact and local relevance, bringing communities, businesses and governments together to enable change.

"Be inspired by the great blue beyond, and work together to care for our one and only ocean."

- **Ms. Mathilda D'Silva**

CEO of Ocean Purpose Project

Ms D'Silva is an ocean and blue economy advocate who leads the ocean sustainability initiatives in Singapore. Her work focuses on Plastic to Fuel, Bioremediation and Bioplastics, and Behavioural Change. With a background in journalism and social media campaigns, she leads global teams to combat ocean pollution.







The Panel Discussions 2024

Panel 3: Diversity & Inclusion

Subtopic Lead: Associate Professor Eleanor Wong
Vice Dean (Residential Programmes and Enrichment), NUS College

The Diversity & Inclusion panel explored how societies can grow stronger by embracing, rather than resisting, difference. Diversity—of identity, background, thought, and ability—was framed as a vital driver of social innovation and community resilience. The conversation moved beyond theoretical discourse to examine lived experiences of exclusion and belonging, making clear that true inclusion requires intentional action and continuous effort at every level of society.

The panelists and delegates discussed how cultural, racial, gender, and ability-based differences intersect with power structures. Inclusion, they emphasized, means more than just visibility; it involves systemic access to opportunities, resources, and platforms for meaningful participation. Public spaces and institutions must be redesigned with universal accessibility and equity in mind. Inclusive policies, they argued, are only effective when accompanied by individual support, empathy, and a willingness to challenge societal norms—especially when those norms are deeply entrenched.
A key insight was the idea that inclusive communities don't just accommodate diversity—they actively celebrate it. Participants were encouraged to think about support not as charity but as solidarity: standing beside, not just speaking for. In fostering inclusive cultures, the panel concluded, we strengthen our social fabric and create environments where everyone can thrive.

Central questions explored by the panel include:

- How do cultural differences enrich community diversity?
- What strategies promote inclusivity in public spaces?
- How does allyship contribute to advancing diversity and inclusion?

Echo

- Saw Min Yie
AUS 2024 Delegate
/ Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia

I realized how often people, including myself, overlook the complexities of identity and privilege. Learning about context-dependent identity and the ways discrimination amplifies societal inequalities challenged me to be more mindful of my own biases and to advocate for more inclusive spaces in my community.

Our Panelists



(left to right) Assistant Professor Rayner Tan, Dr. Alisa Hasamoh and Professor Michael Tan

"Calling people out is easy calling people in (to discussions) takes a lot more effort, but is worth it."

- **Assistant Professor Rayner Tan**

Assistant Professor at Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, NUS

Assistant Professor Tan is also a visiting fellow at National Centre for Infectious Disease, Singapore. His research revolves around the social determinants of health, community engagement, implementation science, and health equity of vulnerable communities.

"Diversity and inclusion need action."

- **Dr. Alisa Hasamoh**

Lecturer at Social Development Department at Prince of Songkla University

Dr Hasamoh teaches courses in development and disasters curriciulum. She works with the Deep South Relief and Reconciliation Foundation to promote physical and mental health in conflict areas of the southern border provinces of Thailand.

"DEI should start with our personal lives, challenging social norms such as the way women's accomplishments are erased once they are married."

- **Professor Michael Tan**

Professor Emeritus at University of the Philippines Diliman

Professor Tan is a medical anthropologist, veterinarian, writer and educator. He served as the 10th Chancellor of the University of the Philippines Diliman from 2014 and 2020 and has been teaching there since 1984.



The Panel Discussions 2024

Smart Cities

The Smart Cities panel explored the intersection of technology, community, and sustainability—emphasizing that innovation must be grounded in the needs of people. Rather than viewing smart cities as a purely technological pursuit, the discussion re-centered the conversation around inclusivity, resilience, and human-centered design. Digital infrastructure, data visualization, and urban innovation were positioned not as ends in themselves, but as tools to enhance quality of life for all, especially the most vulnerable.

Delegates discussed how participatory data collection and civic technology projects can democratize planning processes, allowing communities to shape the spaces they live in. A key takeaway was the importance of multi-agency collaboration and public-private partnerships in designing livable, adaptive cities. Speakers also emphasized the role of digital planning strategies in anticipating future challenges—from climate risks to demographic shifts—and responding with integrated, flexible solutions.

Crucially, the panel stressed that a truly smart city is not defined by the sophistication of its systems, but by how effectively it addresses inequality, supports well-being, and fosters connected communities. In imagining alternative urban futures, participants were invited to think beyond sleek technologies and toward cities that are people-centered, ecologically mindful, and socially just.

Central questions explored by the panel include:

- What makes a city ‘smart’?
- How can smart cities improve the lives of residents?
- How can justice and fair access to resources be promoted by smart cities?

Echo

- Peter Siow
AUS 2024 Delegate / University of Malaya

What were the talks, panels or workshops that inspired you?
The segment on Regenerative Smart Cities marked a profound shift in how we view urban development. Rather than seeing cities as entities that merely coexist with the environment—often at its expense—it reframed them as active agents of ecological restoration, prompting participants to rethink how infrastructure can drive environmental regeneration and a sustainable future.

Our Panelists



(top to bottom) Assistant Professor Ahn Chaewon, Ms. Kitty Khoo and Mr. Kevin M Schmidt

"Civic technology projects can help us imagine alternative smart futures."

- **Assistant Professor Ahn Chaewon**

Department of Architecture, National University of Singapore

Dr Ahn is an urban researcher who visualizes urban data and develops participatory data collection methods to better understand cities. Her research focuses on the nexus of community, politics of urban development, smart city, and urban models.

"Digital planning is a collaborative effort, comprising multi-agency, public/private partnerships. At the heart of it is the need to create a livable and sustainable environment for Singapore."

- **Ms. Kitty Khoo**

Senior Planner, Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore

Ms Khoo drives the PLAN.AI strategy and efforts under the Design & Planning Lab in URA. She worked as an urban planner in the Physical Planning (Central West) team from 2014-2020, and handled the Jobs and Skills portfolio in the Economics Programmes Directorate in the Ministry of Finance from 2020-2022.

"(Smart) cities are only as good as how well they treat their most vulnerable residents. The most important aspect when talking about cities -- is people. And in the context of smart cities, it is crucial to emphasize the importance of people- centred tech and innovation."

- **Mr. Kevin M Schmidt**

Urban Innovation, Technologies and Digitalisation Specialist, United Nations Development Programme Global centre Singapore

Mr Schmidt explores how technology and is exploring how technology and digitalisation can be used to make communities more inclusive, liveable, resilient and sustainable.

Reflections

On 2024 Fireside Chat by **AUS Delegates**

"From my perspective as a Philippine delegate and computer science student, the Fireside Chat with Dr Maliki Osman really struck a chord. The way he spoke about understanding people on the ground before jumping into solutions reminded me that even in tech, it's not just about building systems. It's about serving real needs. His words made me reflect on how, sometimes, we just need to slow down and really listen before we can create anything meaningful in this interconnected world."



Mr. Pyae Sone Chan Thar Aung
AUS 2024 Delegate
University of the Immaculate Conception, Davao City

"The Fireside Chat with Dr. Maliki Osman at the AUS was a dynamic and engaging exchange between South Asia's youth and a policymaker who has been actively involved in regional and educational leadership. Dr. Osman shared insights on Singapore's foreign policy priorities and past policy dynamics, the importance of inclusive education, and the role of youth in shaping an interconnected Asia.

Dr. Osman emphasised ASEAN's crucial role in ensuring peace, cooperation, and mutual growth in the vast and diverse region. He reaffirmed Singapore's dedication to nurturing future-oriented citizens, and highly encouraged students to think beyond academic achievements and focus on building cross-cultural understanding, such as that achieved through the symposium. He thus highlighted the significance of platforms like AUS in cultivating leadership grounded in diversity and dialogue.

The session was followed by a Q&A discussion in which students raised questions about the shifting geopolitics of South Asia and the role that nations play in the mitigation of climate change. This reflected the diversity and thoughtfulness of AUS participants. In all, the Fireside Chat served as a powerful reminder of the value of youth-led discussions and their involvement in policymaking and international relations, thus reinforcing the vital importance of regional academic forums like AUS to influence future leadership, policy innovation, and finally social transformation."



Ms. Ameya Kasliwal
AUS 2024 Delegate
Lady Shri Ram College for Women









From Policy to Practice Redefining Success

Fireside Chat with Dr. Mohamad Maliki bin Osman

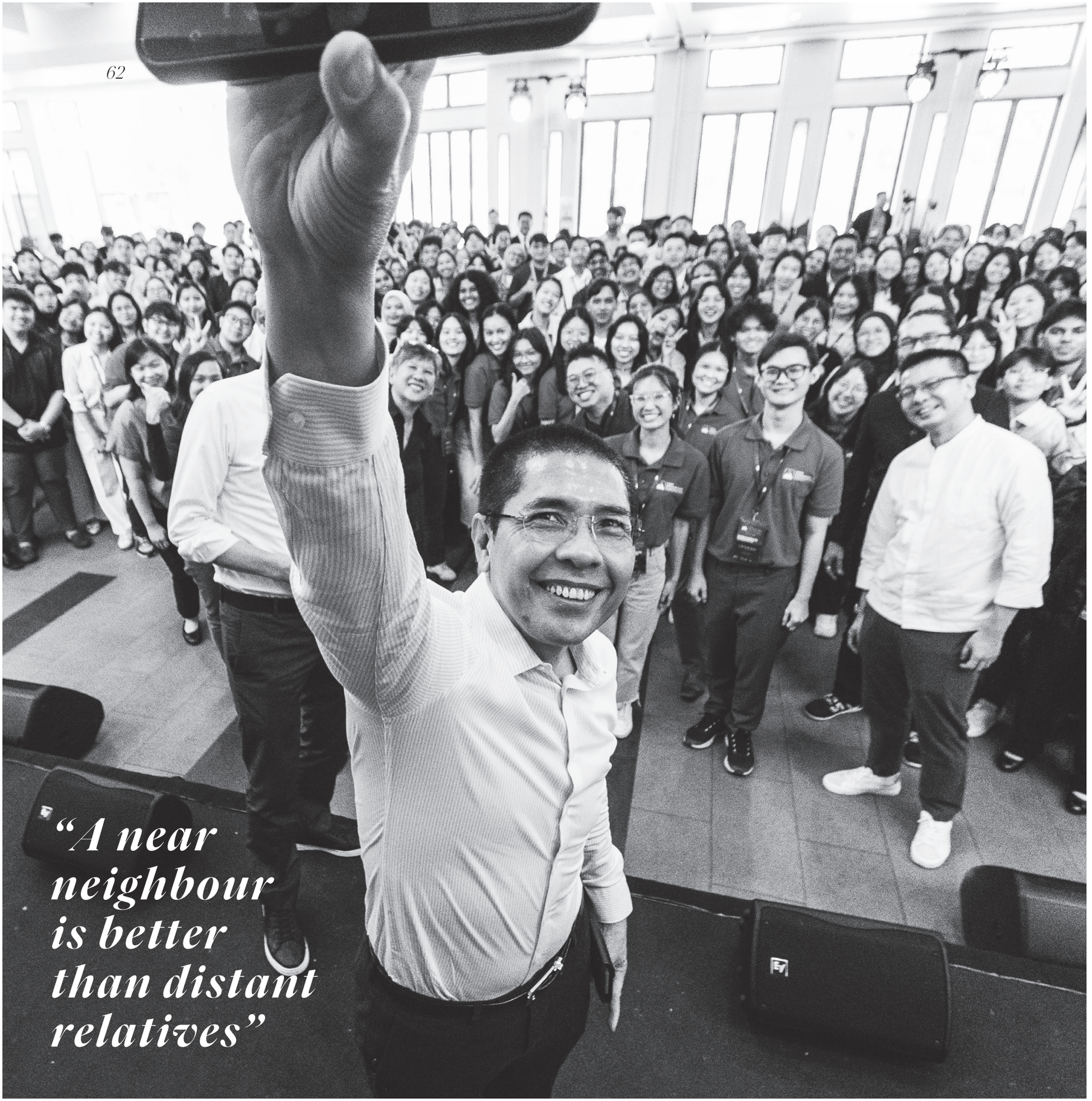
2nd Minister for Education and Foreign Affairs, Singapore

As part of the AUS 2024, a closed-door fireside chat was held with Dr. Mohamad Maliki bin Osman, Singapore's Second Minister for Education and Foreign Affairs, hosted by NUSC Dean Professor Simon Chesterman. With nearly 300 students from across Asia and no media presence, the session provided a rare space for open conversation. Dr. Maliki responded to questions with frankness, offering a considered and insightful articulation of the complexities of governance, inequality, diplomacy, and sustainability in Singapore and the region.

As a long-serving Member of Parliament, spanning over two decades in public service, Dr. Maliki spoke about the balancing act that defines policymaking in a small, diverse, and resource-constrained country like Singapore. From managing national budgets to responding to shifting societal values, he emphasised the importance of making pragmatic choices that serve both current needs and long-term national interests.

Inequality was one of the central themes of the discussion. Dr. Maliki acknowledged that, while Singapore has made significant progress, income gaps continue to impact access to quality education and opportunities, particularly for children from lower-income families. He pointed out that early intervention is key, highlighting how the government is subsidising pre-schools, setting clear national standards, and working to ensure that all children, regardless of background, receive a strong educational foundation. Education, he stressed, remains the most effective tool for reducing inequality, though it must be supported by sustained investment and well-calibrated policies.

He was equally candid about fiscal realities, noting that Singapore operates under a balanced budget framework. "There's only so much you can do," he remarked, explaining that every decision, especially about spending, requires difficult trade-offs. In this context, defence spending, often debated publicly, should not be viewed in isolation. Dr. Maliki argued that defence ensures peace,



"A near neighbour is better than distant relatives"

which underpins economic development and national stability. While not always visible, these investments are essential to preserving the environment in which Singapore can thrive.

On matters of foreign policy and international cooperation and in response to one of the questions on Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Dr. Maliki spoke about the importance of such organisations and Singapore's greater role in forums such as the Forum of Small States (FOSS) where Singapore is also a founding member, and which allows smaller nations to share perspectives in a rapidly polarising world. He reaffirmed Singapore's commitment to maintaining good relations with both as geopolitical competition intensifies, especially between global powers like the United States and China. He described ASEAN as an essential regional stabiliser, founded on consensus and mutual respect, and noted that smaller states must continually find space to assert their interests diplomatically.

Dr. Maliki also addressed the importance of civic engagement to emphasize grassroots inclusivity in policymaking. He highlighted that Singapore consistently works to involve its citizens in the decision-making process as much as possible. "We try to include Singaporeans in every stage from consultation to co-ownership," he said, stressing the significance of youth voices in shaping future policies.

He also made the case that governance is not just about creating laws, but about implementing them effectively on the ground. Legislation is about putting the right frameworks in place and initiating programmes that reflect them. Actual enforcement, he explained, comes from consistent community engagement, not top-down directives.

Sustainability, too, featured prominently in the discussion. Dr. Maliki called on young people to take ownership of pilot projects and collaborate with ministries, stakeholders, and one another. He acknowledged that generating political will can be difficult, especially when tough decisions like tax increases are involved. But, he argued, such decisions are sometimes necessary for long-term societal benefit.

The conversation ended on a note that echoed Singapore's values-driven pragmatism. Quoting a familiar proverb, *"A near neighbour is better than distant relatives"*, Dr. Maliki reinforced the importance of community, mutual trust, and inclusive governance. The dialogue was an informative and a powerful reminder of the role that young people must play in co-creating the future.

Echo

- Ye Linn Htet
AUS 2024 Delegate
/ University of Yangon

I'm grateful for the chance to meet Minister Dr Mohamad Maliki bin Osman and have a meaningful exchange, asking questions that gave me fresh perspectives.





The Student Projects of AUS 2024

During the final week of the Symposium, the delegates work in teams to develop a project that offers a solution to some problem rooted in the needs of a community. It is a culmination of all the learning activities across the two weeks of the Symposium. The following pages spotlight the student-led initiatives developed during AUS 2024. Building on the momentum of previous years, the 2024 projects reflect a commitment to collaboration, inclusivity, and impact that endures over the long-term. With themes ranging from sustainable communities and education, to digital innovation and social equity, these initiatives embody the aspiration of regional problem-solving through youth leadership. Each project was shaped not only by the cultural and national contexts of the delegates, but also by the shared values and aspirations emerging from the Symposium. This year's teams brought fresh energy and bold ideas—many of which are now being implemented or developed further across Asia.



PROJECT

Weathering With You:
A Community-Centered Approach to Early Warning Systems

Voices from the project

"Even just getting to the island here was an eye-opener. Climate change affects those who are the poorest... and they are not the ones who actually cause it."

— Jonathan Wong (Project Member)
/ Victoria University Melbourne

"We tried to be very innovative in our solutions, but always in a way that makes sense for the island."

— John Denyl Torrijos (Project Member)
/ University of the Philippines Los Baños

"Two aspects stood out for me: the strong commitment to engaging the community through awareness and practical action, and the group's cohesion and willingness to navigate their diverse positionalities."

— Dr. Rowena Yip (Project Mentor)
/ National University of Singapore

On the small Indonesian island of Barrang Lompo, rising sea levels and unpredictable tidal flooding are reshaping daily life. Supported by the AUS Seed Grant, Weathering With You has grown into a community-led effort to build climate resilience and strengthen local preparedness.

In collaboration with Universitas Hasanuddin (UNHAS), BMKG (Indonesia's national weather agency), and local partners—from fisherfolk and teachers to women's associations and youth NGOs—the team focused on three goals: improving climate literacy, developing a flood early warning system, and fostering local ownership of adaptation efforts.

Workshops brought together residents and scientists to exchange knowledge, blending traditional weather observations with scientific forecasting. Electricity and connectivity challenges inspired low-tech solutions such as colored flags, bells, and public noticeboards, supported by volunteer leaders who trigger community alerts.

Despite logistical hurdles, the team launched an educational campaign, worked with BMKG for real-time weather updates, and shared their progress through media and social platforms. Beyond tangible outputs, the project became an exercise in humility, adaptability, and the power of local wisdom in shaping climate action.



PROJECT

Project SIBOL:
Planting Seeds of Climate Awareness in Young Minds

As sea levels rise, many Philippine islands are slowly sinking—placing children at risk of experiencing climate impacts throughout their lives. Project SIBOL aims to empower Filipino children aged five to eight to take early climate action by nurturing adaptive eco-emotions through storytelling.

Using story booklets written in Filipino, SIBOL hopes to spark empathy, instil values, and build environmental awareness among young readers. Storytelling, a long-standing Filipino oral tradition, has been shown to help communities process trauma and strengthen resilience. By weaving real community experiences into engaging narratives, SIBOL uses this cultural tool to promote climate education and action. In the project's first phase, the team will immerse themselves in Batasan Island, Bohol—one of the country's fastest-sinking islands—to collect local stories and assess gaps in climate education for children. Insights will inform the creation of storybooks rooted in lived experiences and reviewed by educators for developmental appropriateness.

During the pilot phase, SIBOL will conduct storytelling sessions and environmental activities in primary schools to create safe spaces for children to explore emotions, share ideas, and imagine solutions. The storybooks will remain in schools for continued learning. Impact will be evaluated through children's emotional responses, pre- and post-assessments, and feedback from teachers and parents.

Voices from the project

"I'm especially inspired by SIBOL's plan to co-develop the story with island communities. This participatory approach builds local ownership while teaching the team—and future readers—about on-the-ground realities. A huge part of helping others is listening, and SIBOL's book will hopefully compel the world to listen to the stories told by residents of the sinking islands."

— Dr. Teck Heng Tan (Project Mentor)
/ National University of Singapore



"What drew me to SIBOL is its urgency and heart. Climate change is no longer distant—it's reshaping lives today, especially in vulnerable countries like the Philippines. Children face this future most directly, yet are often left out of the conversation."

— Ms. Dawn Aleli Ferrer Tuliao (Project Head)
/ University of the Philippines

PROJECT

GreatPlate:
Transforming Surplus Food into Community Value



GreatPlate is an innovative social initiative tackling two pressing challenges in Southeast Asia: food waste and food insecurity. Led by Mr. Nguyen Hoang The Kiet (Sam) and his team, the project developed a user-friendly mobile application connecting event organizers with surplus food to budget-conscious consumers, particularly university students and young professionals in Vietnam. By creating a digital marketplace for discounted meals, GreatPlate transforms potential waste into a valuable resource while fostering responsible consumption and community engagement.

What sets GreatPlate apart is the team's culturally informed approach. Through field research and global benchmarking, they tailored the solution to Vietnam's unique dining habits, attitudes toward food sharing, and mobile payment trends, ensuring relevance and local impact.

The team demonstrated adaptability in overcoming technical and logistical challenges. Limited manpower and initial partner hesitation led them to pivot from larger restaurant partnerships to campus vendors and introduce a Reserve List via an online form. This minimum, testable solution allowed them to maintain engagement while developing the mobile app. Beyond technology, GreatPlate built awareness through social media outreach and workshops, creating opportunities for community involvement and feedback to guide future development.

With its practical, adaptable, and socially conscious model, GreatPlate exemplifies how youth-led innovation can address complex regional challenges, making it a promising force for reducing food waste and improving access to nutritious meals across Vietnam.

"GreatPlate represents exactly the kind of scalable, community-driven solution that emerging youth leaders can develop when given the right platform and support. The team embodies the symposium's mission of nurturing changemakers who address complex regional challenges through collaborative innovation. I truly envision GreatPlate becoming a credible platform for surplus food distribution in Vietnam—the foundation they have built, combining technological innovation with deep cultural understanding and stakeholder engagement, positions them for meaningful impact."

— Dr. Nurhidayahti Mohammad Miharja (Project Mentor)
/ National University of Singapore



Connecting
COMMUNITIES

Echo

- Jia-han Yang
AUS 2024 Delegate
/ National Taipei University

AUS taught me the value of working not just hard, but effectively and smartly. In a room full of talented people, it's easy to become siloed or competitive, but deep discussions go beyond consensus—they help us understand others, sharpen our thinking, and appreciate our surroundings with care and openness.

Message to future participants:
Try everything wholeheartedly! AUS shines through its diversity and wide range of activities, from daytime sessions to late-night gatherings. Engage with people from different backgrounds—you'll gain fresh perspectives, be inspired to serve your communities, and deepen your understanding of Southeast Asia.









Reve

To lay bare something previously obscure.

2025

lation

PROCEEDINGS OF 2025 ASIAN UNDERGRADUATE SYMPOSIUM

Preparing for Impact

Reflections by AUS 2025 Academic Leads
Dr Chan Kiat Hwa & Dr Nurhidayahti Binte Mohammad Miharja
NUS College, National University of Singapore





AUS has certainly come a long way since it was founded by USP students in 2015, gathering around 100 undergraduates from Asia to network and learn together. It was so well-received and successful that AUS continued uninterrupted until COVID-19 interrupted in 2020.

However, the enthusiasm for AUS was so strong that it resumed in 2021 with a 120-strong group, albeit conducted online due to travel restrictions, and in-person again with vim in 2022 when restrictions were eased. When NUS College was charged with taking over responsibility for the AUS, this past success presented its own challenge: how could NUS College bring something new to the table?

When NUS College was founded in Academic Year 2022/2023, the Special Programmes team decided to build upon the success of the students and introduced the I-4 Model: Inspire, Ideate, Intercultural and Implement. This is an innovative impact phase of the Symposium in which the delegates from different countries would form project teams to conceptualise and propose solutions to real world problems in their communities. The objective is multi-fold: to deliberately ask students from different countries to experience learning and working together with people from different cultures, languages, working styles to help underprivileged and/or disadvantaged communities, in line with the ethos of Communities and Engagement of NUS: "to engage students in thinking deeply about and taking constructive actions to address societal needs and real-world issues such as inequality, poverty, food security, climate change, wildlife conservation and underprivileged/disadvantaged communities". For AUS 2025, we aimed to provide an early opportunity for motivated entrepreneurial civic-minded students to make a positive societal impact.

One of the ways we did this was to extend support offered to these projects, building on the work of AUS 2023. Seed funding was made available to the most promising projects and the impact is immediate and obvious: Gro Up, conceptualised at AUS 2023, is a farming-themed board game that has educated more than 500 Filipino students about agriculture and its importance. Many others, such as Finable, MangoGo!, Weathering With You, and Great Plate, are at various advanced development stages too.

On the 10th anniversary of AUS, NUS College's commitment and faith in the regional delegates is demonstrated by further increases in the seed funding, going to the most promising projects. Our hope is that the I-4 initiative will serve as a catalyst to promote further regional cooperation and friendship among the students across the region. In this regard, we ask everyone to continue to support us to push AUS towards even greater heights.

Connections & Community





Reflections by AUS 2025 Student Chairpersons
Hridayansh Khera & Suchi Shahrja
NUS College, National University of Singapore

As with many young people, we've both been faced with the question: What do we care about?

For the two of us, the answer took shape through AUS. When we first signed up to co-chair the Asian Undergraduate Symposium, we were ambitious—but also apprehensive. We were in our first year of university, and neither of us had ever planned something of this scale. We didn't fully understand the thought process behind many of the program's segments. But we decided to take a leap of faith. Looking back now, that might be the best way to describe our decision: a leap of faith into the unknown.

And in hindsight, we're still at a loss for words—not because there's nothing to say, but because there's simply too much to feel.

AUS was built on ambition: to bring young people from across Asia together to think, discuss, and act on ideas of heritage and culture, sustainability and regeneration, and diversity, equity and inclusion—to build stronger, better, more interconnected communities. And in many ways, it succeeded. Through panel discussions, dialogue sessions, workshops, and cultural exchanges, we saw how AUS became a platform for people to air their worries and imagine borderless futures.

But what stayed with us the most weren't the programmes we curated or the events we organized—it was the people. We still remember the late-night supper runs with the student councilors, wandering through the city, complaining about how tired we were, sharing bingsu at 1 a.m., and simply being together. Those weren't in the plans, but maybe that was the point all along.

Because when AUS talks about "interconnected communities," that's what it means. It's about sharing a meal with someone from across the continent and realising you're not that different. It's about forming bonds that transcend language, nationality, or background. It's about discovering that regeneration begins not just with ideas, but with trust, empathy, and friendship. It's strange how people you've only known for two weeks can start to feel like family—how one symposium can redraw the borders in your heart.

AUS reminded both of us why we care: about creating community, about stories that make a difference, about meaningful collaboration amidst our differences. It reminded us that leadership isn't about knowing all the answers—it's about creating space for others, being present, and taking that first leap of faith, even when you don't know where it'll lead.

I came with words.

I leave with words.

And in between...I discovered people. I discovered purpose.

I found a vision of Asia I wanted to create.

That, to me, is what AUS was all about.

And I would not change it for the world.

- Hridayansh Khera

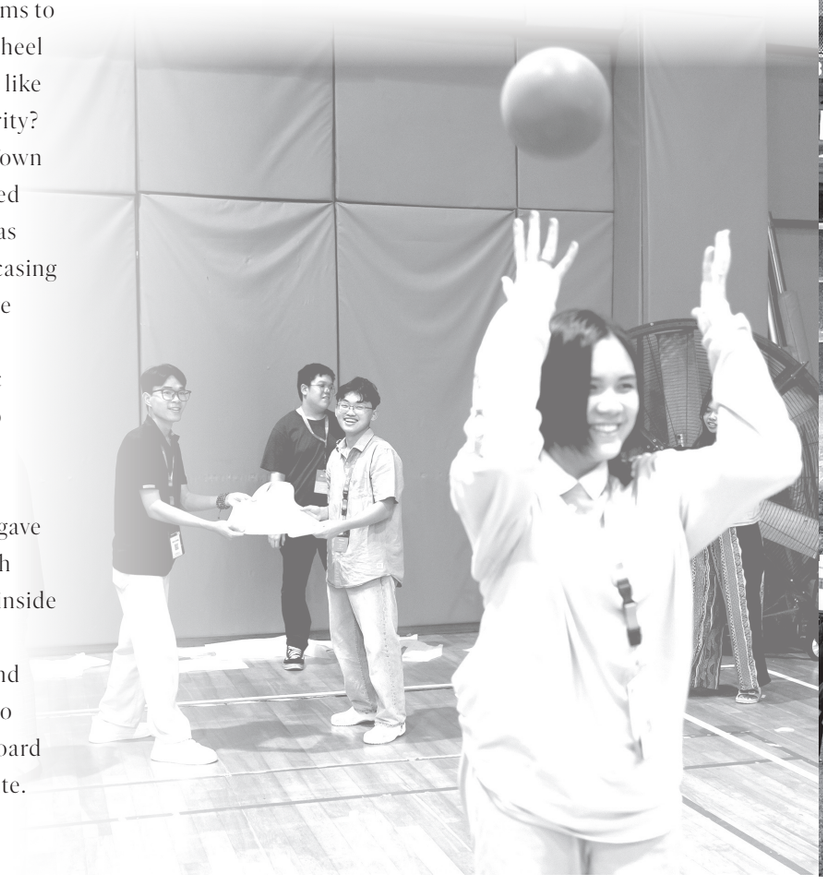
Day 1: Teambuilding with A Day of Creativity and Camaraderie

With over 300 delegates descending on AUS from all parts of ASEAN+, the opening activities are designed to facilitate students meeting each other and developing friendships.

The sun had barely risen when participants gathered at Elm Dining Hall, in NUS College's buildings, buzzing with anticipation for the first full day's orientation. The air was thick with excitement, and the scent of breakfast, as facilitators kicked off the morning with ice-breaker games. Laughter erupted during the game 'Two Truths One Lie', while 'Heads Up!' had everyone scrambling to give the quirkiest clues. In just 20 minutes, strangers became teammates, setting the tone for a day of collaboration and creativity.

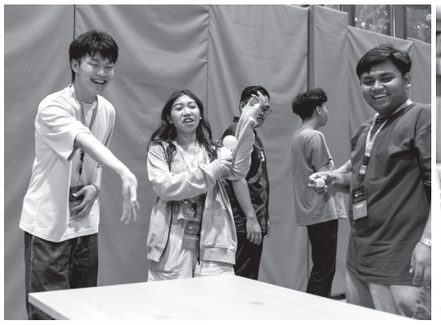
By mid-afternoon, the activities shifted to the Dining Hall at NUS's Tembusu College, where the real challenge began: Festive Town Building. Armed with recycled materials, teams drew themes at random, such as a Deepavali-themed shophouse or a Lunar New Year airport, and got to work. Cardboard was transformed into intricate shop facades, marker pens sketched vibrant details, and double-sided tape barely held together towering structures. The room hummed with organized chaos as teams debated designs, negotiated roles, and occasionally groaned as their "masterpiece" threatened to topple. Toward the end came the Special Event, a sudden twist where cryptic food hints appeared on the AUS Telegram Channel. The first five teams to solve the puzzle raced to spin the Wheel of Fortune, winning quirky supplies like pipe cleaners ("For structural integrity? " someone joked). Meanwhile, the Town Exhibition, in which groups displayed their creations, turned competitive as groups campaigned for votes, showcasing their builds with pride. Stickers were strategically placed (no self-voting allowed!), and by 6:30 PM, a mosaic of cultures stood tall, a testament to teamwork under pressure.

As the day wrapped up, exhaustion gave way to satisfaction. What began with awkward introductions ended with inside jokes, shared glue-gun burns, and a city built from nothing but scraps and solidarity. "I didn't expect to learn so much about resilience from a cardboard police station," admitted one delegate. Mission accomplished.




#NUS


WITHIN US, BEYOND SELF






#NUS120







The Panel Discussions 2025

The first week of AUS 2025 was dedicated predominantly to exploring the central themes of the symposium through conversation with academic experts and industry specialists.

Each of the first three days was dedicated to a single theme, explored first in a panel session, followed by Q&A with the delegates. These sessions provided the intellectual foundation for what was subsequently examined outside the classroom, during the Learning Journeys.

There were three main panel sessions:

Panel 1: Regeneration and Sustainability

Panel 2: Diversity Equality and Inclusion

Panel 3: Heritage and Culture

These were supplemented by three further academic sessions, two focused on connected issues: (i) a Regeneration Workshop, offering a deeper dive into the topic, and (ii) a panel on Making a Difference, aimed to empower delegates with tools to effect significant change. The final session, a plenary panel, drew together the diverse strands of the academic portion of the symposium to a close, after which the delegates turned their energies to developing their team projects.

Echo

- Dk Nur Amal Syazana binti Pg Jamaluddin
AUS 2025 Delegate
/ Universiti Brunei Darussalam

One key insight I gained from this session is that heritage and culture are living forces that shape our identity and community resilience, and preserving them requires actively passing traditions while adapting to modern challenges.

- Rhea Rose Balaysoche
AUS 2025 Delegate
/ University of the Philippines Tacloban College

Prof. Gupta was the best mentor we could have asked for. Her vast knowledge of social sciences—and beyond—is matched by her genuine passion for people and society. I learned so much from her. She is truly an inspiration for someone like me, a woman with big dreams despite coming from a small town.







The Panel Discussions 2025

Panel 1:
Regeneration and Sustainability

Subtopic Lead: Associate Professor Adrian Loo

During the panel on regeneration and sustainability, scientists and social entrepreneurs came together to confront the pressing reality of living at the edge of a planetary crisis.





Session 1

Associate Professor, Adrian Loo
Subtopic Lead
National University of Singapore

Opening the discussion, Associate Professor Adrian Loo highlighted the gap between human-centered systems and the planet's ecological limits. Even industries like palm oil rely on overlooked networks such as pollinating weevils, yet forest fragmentation poses far greater risks—food insecurity, wildlife trade, and mass extinction.

Singapore's role as a trading hub reflects these global pressures, but Loo reminded that regeneration begins small: a bridge reconnecting monkeys, the return of freshwater crabs, or the grafting of plants to restore life. "Nature just needs a small gesture in the positive direction," he said.

Session 2

Dr Supatchaya Techachoochert
Mae Fah Luang Foundation

Dr. Supatchaya Techachoochert shared her journey from Bangkok city life to forest conservation. Her Refill Station—a zero-waste store—started with just one customer but grew through persistence and community support into a network of over ten outlets. "We have no competitors," she said. "We wish for more stores like ours."

She also highlighted DoiTung, a social enterprise fostering sustainable livelihoods across Southeast Asia through carbon credits, forest fire monitoring, and eco-tourism. "You can choose the kind of impact you'd like to create," she said, showing how business innovation can drive ecological regeneration.





Session 3

Dr Farrah Shameen Ashray
Malaysian Timber Certification Council

Dr Farrah highlighted how biodiversity links across species—from hornbills relying on woodpeckers to proboscis monkeys losing habitat.

Through national policy and certification frameworks, her work encourages industries to meet sustainability standards. "Each of us can choose to support products that are certified and ethical," she urged, reminding that collective action begins with individual choices.

Session 4

Ms Sam Shu Qin
National University of Singapore

Marine conservationist Ms. Sam Shu Qin closed the session with a look underwater. With 60% of Singapore's coast replaced by sea walls, her team restores coral reefs around Tuas Port using "underwater HDBs" made from recycled materials to attract coral and fish.

"We dive five times a month just to check if the system works," she said. "And it does." Her work showed that even in altered environments, regeneration can begin with small, steady efforts.



The Panel Discussions 2025

Panel 2:
Diversity, Equality and Inclusion

The second panel explored a staple of the AUS in recent years: the ways in which we respond positively to diversity. Diversity occurs both within societies and between nations and cultures. The panel explored both of these aspects, drawing lessons about how to arrange our societies, as well as cooperate better across the ASEAN+ region.





Session 1

Associate Professor Eleanor Wong
Subtopic Lead

National University of Singapore

Associate Professor Eleanor Wong's session on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) challenged participants to rethink the assumptions shaping their understanding of inclusion. Opening with the question, "What do you think DEI means?", she urged the audience to move beyond viewing DEI as simply fairness for marginalized groups, toward recognizing overlapping systems of privilege and discrimination.

Addressing critiques that DEI has become performative or siloed, Professor Wong offered a memorable response: "Diversity by seeing, Inclusion by doing." True inclusion, she explained, begins with recognizing privilege, appreciating diverse experiences, and confronting blind spots. Participants reflected on factors such as access to education, safety, and representation—reminders that privilege can obscure others' realities.

Inclusion, she emphasized, must go beyond statements or entitlements. It should be embedded in daily practice, shared across an organization, and properly supported. True DEI, she concluded, begins not with policy but with perception—our willingness to see what we have not yet seen.



Session 2

Professor Bumsoo Kim

Seoul National University

Professor Bumsoo Kim examined the tensions between cultural diversity, justice, and policy, asking how societies decide which cultures deserve respect and when intervention is justified.

Affirming that culture is a human right central to identity and belonging, he questioned whether "bad" cultures should also be protected, and who defines them. He illustrated these dilemmas with examples such as honor killings, circumcision, and female genital mutilation—where cultural respect and human rights collide.

One case, involving Baljinder Badesha, a Sikh man in Canada who challenged a motorcycle helmet law, raised deeper questions about balancing cultural freedom and public safety. Professor Kim contrasted liberal universalism, which emphasizes equal treatment, with multiculturalism, which supports group-differentiated rights to correct inequities.

He noted that societies often fail cultural justice through forced assimilation, racism, or neglect. Yet cultural rights are not absolute—they must be balanced with safety, equality, and cohesion. The task, he concluded, is to pursue justice without erasing identity or excusing harm.



Session 3

Mr. Narash Narasimman

Impart Ltd.

In the final session, Mr. Narash Narasimman highlighted the challenges faced by Singapore's vulnerable youth and how meaningful support can help them thrive. Sharing stories from Impart's work, he described a 19-year-old who escaped family abuse to live independently, an LGBTQ+ youth who found purpose through barista training, and a burn survivor who rebuilt confidence through sports.

These stories illustrated the need for tailored support rather than one-size-fits-all solutions. For example, volunteers designed home-based tutoring for a trauma survivor who couldn't attend school, helping her reach university. Another youth who rarely spoke found his voice through boxing and later addressed a graduation crowd.

Mr. Narasimman also pointed to systemic blind spots—such as primary students struggling with literacy despite Singapore's strong education system. Achieving equity, he concluded, requires flexible approaches, mental health support, and above all, consistent human connection.


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= social env and friendship
= caring community and mental well-being
HUGE WINS for Inorm through our welcoming Spaces
PLAY!!
QUALITY of OPPORTUNITIES
tapestry of possibilities?
choose to care
MOSAIC
INCLUSION BY DOING
Responsibility located with relevant stake-holders
solutions fitted to persons + contexts
with realistic costs
the gift of recognition in our relationships
Root causes of non-inclusive behaviours?
"Fair"/"just" way to treat cultural differences?
Communication and social consensus
False vs. true universals?
respecting communities' deep histories
Where do the solutions lie?
Politics, legal, Community
Building communities th listen
Should we respect different cultures of others? To what extent?
1 Equal treatment - "colour blind"
2 Ensure group-specific rights
Should we respect 'bad' culture?
Limits of toleration?
DEI to counter backlash online?
HOW TO KEEP GOING?
Be optimistic!
Let go of disappointment
understand that the efforts take time
A difference made to one person does it for me!







The Panel Discussions 2025

Panel 3: Heritage and Culture

The discussion of this panel opened with a simple question: “What comes to mind when you hear the word ‘heritage’?” Answers varied from history to traditions, from architecture to daily life, showing how personal heritage is to each of us.

A key takeaway of the panel was that successful conservation requires both top-down policy and bottom-up community effort. As one speaker put it, “The goal isn’t to freeze a city in time, but to manage change thoughtfully so residents aren’t left behind.”



Session 1

Ms. Chang Yueh-Siang
National University of Singapore

Ms. Chang examined the deep connections between development, environmental change, and cultural fragmentation through the lens of Cigondewah, a village in West Java, Indonesia. Once sustained by rice farming and river-based traditions, the community has endured 20 years of degradation due to nearby industrial expansion. This resulted in severely polluted waterways that have turned the river red and led to the collapse of agricultural livelihoods. As residents shifted to collecting imported plastic waste, traditional rhythms tied to harvest festivals, fishing, and communal life began to erode. Yet amid this disruption, culture has emerged as a regenerative force. A seemingly simple act - reading traditional tales to children - became a catalyst for adults to reconnect with their own history and shared heritage.

Session 2

Dr. Ng Keng Khoon
National University of Singapore

Dr. Ng challenged land-centric views of identity and regeneration by describing the Bajau Lauts - stateless sea nomads of the Sulu and Celebes Seas - as knowledge holders with a deep, ancestral connection to the ocean. He argued that regeneration must go beyond environmental restoration to protect diverse ways of life and to honor the wisdom of communities like the Bajau Laut, who have long lived in harmony with the sea.

When asked how we can respect the stateless identity of the Bajau while still ensuring their rights are decolonized, Dr. Ng acknowledged the complexity of the political situation in Southern Philippines. He highlighted that many stateless communities, like the Bajau Laut, face compounded challenges because they cannot even claim refugee status. Drawing on “third world theory,”





he explained how stateless peoples around the world are often excluded from frameworks of protection and recognition. In response to the question, he posed a critical challenge: Can we imagine new forms of citizenship that go beyond the nation-state? While he admitted there is no simple solution, he stressed the need for collaborative action and systemic dialogue, rooted in solidarity and imagination, to ensure rights and dignity for stateless communities like the Bajau.

Dr. Ng shared four keywords that shape his community-engaged work: Connection, Co-Creation, Continuation, and Creative Culture. Connection, he emphasized, goes beyond transactional partnerships - it's about reciprocity, solidarity, and building lasting friendships rooted in mutual support. Co-Creation means recognizing that "everyone has something to offer, no one is unnecessary," and fostering equitable collaboration between students, researchers, and local communities. Continuation reflects a commitment to long-term impact and relationships that outlast project timelines. Lastly, Creative Culture calls for both imaginative solutions to complex problems and the use of artistic expression to transcend language barriers and deepen collective understanding. These principles, he noted, are essential in designing inclusive, regenerative futures.

Session 3

Mr. Kwek Li Yong
Founder of My Community

Mr. Kwek explored how heritage lives in the everyday, shaped and reshaped by people's daily interactions, memories, and rituals, especially in fast-changing urban environments. As founder of My Community, a nonprofit dedicated to documenting and regenerating community heritage in Singapore, Kwek drew from nearly two decades of grassroots engagement to highlight the value of bottom-up preservation.

Mr. Kwek traced the evolution of global heritage frameworks, from UNESCO's early focus on monuments, to its 2003 recognition of intangible cultural heritage (ICH). He emphasized that heritage is not fixed; it evolves with people and places. "History is the recorded past," he noted,

"but heritage is how we interpret and live it today." Through community tours, storytelling, and creative documentation, My Community helps bridge institutional gaps and ensure that lived heritage, found in hawker centers, void decks, and personal narratives, is not lost to development. He closed by advocating for a more inclusive, co-created approach to heritage, one that sees culture as dynamic, communal, and vital to social sustainability.

Session 4

Ms. Khoo Salma

Author and Custodian of Sun Yat Sen Museum, Penang

In a deeply reflective talk, Ms. Khoo Salma shared her personal and professional journey in heritage conservation in George Town, Penang, while raising urgent questions about urban change, displacement, and cultural authorship. Tracing George Town's transformation from a historic port city to a UNESCO World Heritage Site, she emphasized that "heritage is not merely nostalgic" but about memory, community, and everyday life.

Ms. Salma recounted how early grassroots efforts reframed inner-city heritage as both a cultural and economic asset. While UNESCO listing in 2008 brought global recognition, it also accelerated gentrification, displacing long-time residents and commodifying culture. "Where are the real children?" she asked, noting how street art now substitutes for the families who once lived there.

Despite these tensions, Ms. Salma highlighted community resilience: adaptive reuse of heritage spaces, renewed youth interest in traditional practices, and grassroots place-making efforts. Yet challenges like evictions, congestion, and loss of local businesses persist. She closed with a powerful call to action: "Whose heritage is it and who will write the city's future?" urging inclusive, community-led approaches to preservation and regeneration.







AUS 2025 Learning Journeys

The Learning Journeys provide an opportunity for delegates to learn out in communities around Singapore.
These provided opportunities apply what delegates had learned in the panel sessions to concrete, real-world scenarios.

Behind the Scenes of a Heritage Tour (My Community Clementi)
Behind the Scenes of Participatory Design (My Community Dawson)
Healing the Cracks (This Connect)
A Soilful Approach (Living Soil)

Care: **A Responsibility No One Should Shoulder Alone** (SG Assist)
Power-to-Change: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (Artably at Common Ground)
Green or Greenwashing? A Consumer Reality Check (Green Nudge at Common Ground)
Introduction to the Orang Laut: Community, Cultural Heritage and Ethical Engagement (The Black Sampan at Common Ground)





Learning Journey in Focus

Behind the Scenes of a Heritage Tour

(My Community Clementi)

Located in the west of Singapore, Clementi may seem like just another residential town on the MRT map—but it's a surprisingly rich and rewarding destination for a learning journey. With its deep roots in Singapore's public housing history, Clementi offers students and visitors a chance to experience firsthand how heritage lives not in monuments, but in everyday spaces. From pioneer residents and multi-generational shop owners to long-standing hawker stalls, Clementi becomes a living classroom where one can explore themes of resilience, urban change, and the quiet strength of community ties.

This spirit came alive during a recent heritage walk organised by My Community, where participants journeyed through Clementi not merely as observers, but as guests welcomed into the town's collective memory. Guided by long-time residents and local shopkeepers, the walk peeled back the layers of Clementi's evolution—from kampung beginnings and pioneer flats to the present-day hawker centres and heartland malls.

One striking theme was the transformation of space. Participants heard from Miss Tan, who recalled a very different Clementi in 1978—one with open bus terminals and fewer buildings. Today, modern developments have changed the skyline, yet Clementi remains rooted in community, with familiar faces and enduring landmarks offering a sense of continuity.

Equally powerful were the stories of local businesses—enterprises that have weathered change not just by adapting,

but by holding fast to purpose. Take Clementi Kian Seng, a curtain and textile shop that began in 1981 and is now helmed by the second generation, Mrs. Ng. Her love for colours and people makes her store more than just a business—it's a touchpoint of trust and memory for schools and residents alike.

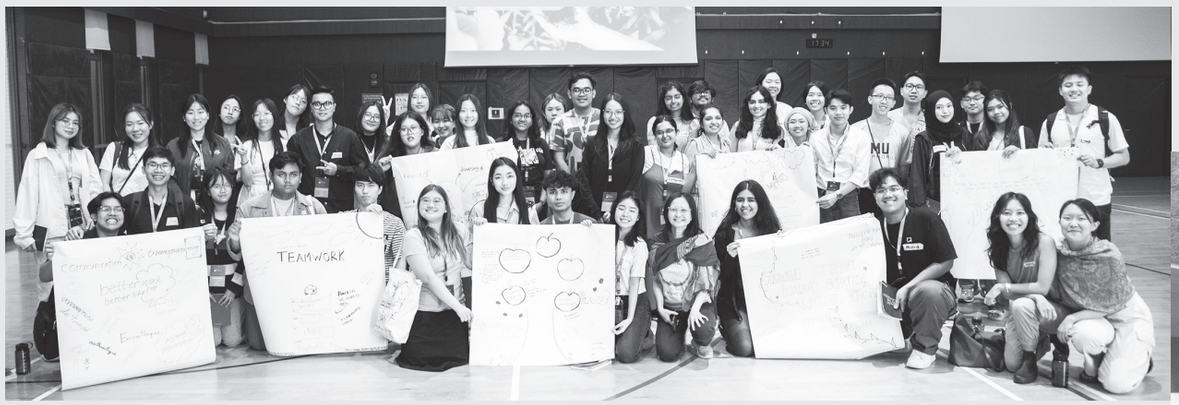
Food, too, emerged as a living archive of Clementi's cultural mix. At the hawker centre, stories weren't just served on plates but in anecdotes—like the origins of the "butterfly" pancake at Xi De Li, a humble stall with roots tracing back to Chinatown pushcarts of the 1920s. Or the porridge stall where queues of 45 minutes speak to both taste and tradition. Even the number of satay sticks—always three—carries symbolic meaning, blending culinary detail with cultural depth.

More than anything, it was the people who made the walk unforgettable. Guides like Jackie Neo and hawkers like Madam Ng didn't just relay facts; they shared emotions, memories, and insights into the unseen bonds that hold Clementi together. Whether it's hikers training on the slopes, kids playing at void decks, or former residents returning to greet old friends—Clementi is a place where connections endure.

In the end, this wasn't just a walk through Clementi—it was a walk through time, community, and the intangible threads that turn a town into a home.







Learning Journey in Focus:

A Soilful Approach

(Living Soil)

On this Journey, delegates were invited to get their hands dirty, literally and metaphorically, as they explored the theme of soil not only as a foundation of life but as a living ecosystem central to regeneration and climate resilience. Anchored on the premise that "soil is not dead dirt, but living matter," the Journey connected hands-on activity, sensory experience, and systems thinking to highlight soil's vital ecological role.

The Journey began at Tembusu Hall, NUS, where delegates participated in a playful but provocative activity: standing on a spectrum from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" in response to statements like "Soil is dirty," or "I like playing with soil." This simple game surfaced personal perceptions and cultural biases around soil. For some, soil was "messy" or "smelly," while others shared fond memories of childhood gardening. One delegate noted, "I never realized how disconnected





I've become from the ground beneath my feet."

The facilitators and participants then walked through the NUS campus, engaging their senses to smell, touch, and observe different types of soil, examining textures, colors, and natural cues from nearby vegetation. Facilitators introduced the soil food web, explaining how plant roots release sugars to feed microorganisms, which in turn provide nutrients to plants. These symbiotic relationships are often disrupted by chemical farming practices, leading to broader consequences such as poor soil health and climate impacts. A striking example was shared: the Sentosa River turning pink due to fertilizer runoff and algae bloom.

Delegates also learned how composting food waste can transform organic scraps into fertile, living soil serving as both a practical technique and a metaphor for renewal. The contrasts between soils near tree roots and those on exposed slopes highlighted the importance of biodiversity and ecosystem support.

By the end of the journey, delegates began to rethink their relationship with soil not as something passive or "beneath" us, but as a living partner in regeneration. Soil became a shared medium for care, learning, and reconnection with each handful holding the potential for healing both land and self. ⭘





Learning Journey in Focus
Common Ground

"I am from Cebu and speak a different dialect, Bisaya. My personal story is what I consider to be my biggest weapon, and I'm very proud of it. I am inspired by the work of Black Sampan, and I am eager to learn how to tell my own stories creatively."

Johanna Therese Cerbo Ehido
AUS 2025 Delegate
/ Ateneo de Manila University

"I am a Data Science student from Thailand, but I am very interested in design. Today, I learned how to make design more inclusive and enjoyable through Artably. Artably teaches members how to use PowerPoint to create designs without the need for expensive tools like Photoshop. His designs were simple yet full of character, and seeing the people he taught create and even sell their own designs filled my heart with warmth. His movement focuses on reaching people from marginalized communities, and witnessing individuals with disabilities experience the joy of design gave me a powerful new perspective on my studies."

Chanchau (Leo)
AUS 2025 Delegate
/ Chiang Mai University



"Today's session with the CEO of Green Nudge was eye-opening. When we were asked what factors influence our purchases—price, convenience, taste, efficiency, sustainability, or prestige—no one, including myself, chose sustainability. It struck me that simply knowing about sustainability doesn't automatically lead to action. The real challenge is turning awareness into meaningful behavior change. Moving forward, I want to explore how I can apply what I learn in this program to make sustainable choices in my everyday life."

Anna Tanaka
AUS 2025 Delegate
/ Nagoya University











"At times, we see our truest selves in our vulnerability. In breaking, there is an opportunity for good things to happen. The journey toward healing may shatter us, but it can also transform us into a better version of ourselves."

Matthew C. Tenorio
AUS 2025 Delegate
/ National University - Manila

Learning Journey in Focus
Healing the Cracks
(This Connect)

"I find it fascinating how the human brain is wired to puzzle piece together something so obviously shattered yet still try to find meaning from it. It also felt oddly freeing to be vulnerable to a stranger; maybe sometimes we just need to stop, breathe and accept that not everything has to make sense."

Eilliyah Fong Binti Abdullah
AUS 2025 Delegate
/ Universiti Utara Malaysia







"I perceived that having cracks in my life is not something to be ashamed of. It is important to know how to overcome them."

Song Minhyeok
AUS 2025 Delegate
/ Seoul National University

"At the beginning of today's session, the instructor asked me, "What does a well and fulfilling life look like for you?" I answered that it would be having many friends with whom I have deep connections. However, another participant said, "Waking up in the morning and being able to think that I love myself." That response made me realize that I also need to see myself as someone important and worthy of love. It encouraged me to reflect more deeply on self-acceptance as part of a fulfilling life."

Anna Tanaka
AUS 2025 Delegate
/ Nagoya University

Learning Journey in Focus

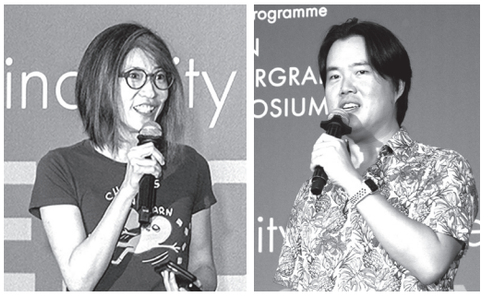
Care: A Responsibility No One Should Shoulder Alone

(SG Assist)

"I visited a caregiving center for the elderly. I realized how important a strong community is for aging people. The center provides a safe and secure space where they can live comfortably and with dignity. I was especially impressed by the thoughtful design—basic colors, large letters, and smart equipment that make daily life easier and safer for older adults. I truly wish that Myanmar could have safe and supportive communities like this for our elderly as well."

Zwe Mann Aung(Matthew)
AUS 2025 Delegate / Chiang Mai University





The Regeneration Workshop
Bridging Generations of Regeneration

Facilitators:
Ms. Bernise Ang *Chief Alchemist at Zeroth Labs*
Mr. Shaun Koh *Chief Strategist at Zeroth Labs*

This workshop was a new addition to AUS in 2025 and aimed to build on the momentum created by the Regen Asia Summit (RAS), held the week immediately prior to AUS 2025. The Regeneration Workshop was designed to ground abstract ideas of regeneration in practical understanding, and ensure that knowledge doesn't stay siloed among those who had access to RAS. Around 200 of the 600 delegates from RAS carried the conversation begun there over to AUS, roughly a third of AUS delegates, about 100, were engaging with these ideas for the first time. Mr. Shaun Koh and Ms. Bernise Ang led a focused, hands-on workshop that provided a bridge between returning RAS delegates and newcomers at AUS.

This was an active, participatory experience, with movement, dialogue, and shared responsibility for learning, more akin to a public marketplace than a formal lecture hall. The three main activities were organised around two problematising questions:

- What is regeneration?
- How does regeneration connect with the other themes of AUS 2025?












GROUP 2 - diversity, equity, & inclusion
DIFFERENTLY-ABLED
GENDER
RELIGION
MINORITY
LIFESTYLE
LANGUAGE
SMALL THINGS DO MATTER
BEYOND THE PHYSICAL
EQUAL VALUE
FOOD
ACCESSIBILITY
CULTURE
DRESS
EMPOWERMENT
INTANGIBLE





Activity 1
What is Regeneration?

Participants explored what "regeneration" means, blending personal reflections with collective insight. Experienced delegates guided the discussion, while newcomers brought fresh perspectives, resulting in a shared understanding that captured diverse ideas and sparked curiosity.

Activity 2
Give Me Some Tangible Examples

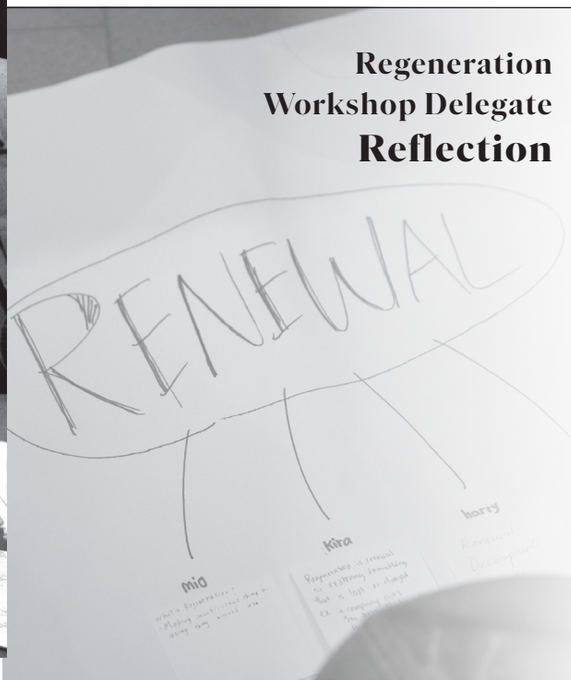
Abstract ideas came to life in a "story marketplace," where delegates explored real examples of regeneration across ASEAN—from indigenous farming in Vietnam to eco-tourism in the Philippines. In small-group discussions, they asked: What struck you about this story? How does it connect with what you heard earlier? What parts feel relevant in your own context? This grounded the morning's reflections in lived realities, showing regeneration not just as theory, but as action already unfolding across the region.

Activity 3
How Does Regeneration Connect?

The final activity explored how regeneration connects with AUS themes: sustainability, diversity and inclusion, and heritage and culture. Delegates reflected on questions such as:

- What's the difference between sustainability and regeneration, and why does it matter?
- What cultural or ancestral wisdom did we encounter today?
- When does inclusion break down, and what does true inclusion look like?

These conversations drew out diverse perspectives and surfaced tensions and possibilities within each theme. The workshop carried forward lessons from RAS while giving new delegates space to engage meaningfully, showing that regeneration is not only something you talk about, but something you do—in learning, listening, sharing, and moving together. It also reminded participants that regeneration often begins with a simple question, a shared story, or a moment of seeing your place in a larger system. ●



Regeneration Workshop Delegate Reflection

"The session taught me so much about going above and beyond the bare minimum when it comes to caring for our environment. It helped me understand the collective and shared responsibility we hold—not only to act responsibly now, but also to take ownership of past actions and take positive steps to restore and recreate the thriving ecosystems we've damaged.

What was profound was learning how acts of regeneration extend beyond the environment, touching all spectrums of life and aligning perfectly with the themes of our symposium. The discussion format deepened my understanding, allowing me to learn not only from the speakers but also from the localized experiences shared by my peers from different nations."

Noor Sehgal
AUS 2025 Delegate / Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi, India

Echo

- Reigne Dee Salimbagat Barbasa
AUS 2025 Delegate / Ateneo De Manila University

Change starts even on a smaller scale. It is up to each person to uphold consistency and passion to continue initiatives that can create ripples in the world.

The Complexity of Making a Difference

Making a difference is rarely straightforward. It is complex, personal, and often defined not by dramatic gestures but by consistent, deliberate acts rooted in care, thought, and connection. In the panel discussion on changemaking, speakers from diverse backgrounds came together to share what it means to create lasting impact.



Ms. Rachel Phoon
(Moderator)
Youth empowerment advocate, Head of Alumni Relations and Development at NUS College



Dr. Aaron Maniam
Fellow of Practice and Director, Digital Transformation Education at University of Oxford's Blavatnik School of Government



Mr. Ami Firdaus
Senior Associate at the Milken Institute Asia Center, managing the Philanthropy Program in Asia



Ms. Jolene Lum
Investor & Entrepreneur in Sustainable Food, Agri-tech, and Digital Ventures



Mr. Mervin Junus
Community builder, fosters youth engagement and changemaking initiatives in Asia



Ms. Shane Yan
Growthbeans co-founder, advancing social enterprise, inclusivity, and social impact programs









Dr. Aaron Maniam's A–Z Framework

Dr. Aaron Maniam presented an A-to-Z framework providing a vocabulary for thinking about the building blocks of social change. Each letter represents a core value, mindset, or practice essential for someone aiming to create impact. From A for agility, analysis, and activism, to Z for zooming in and out, he encouraged young changemakers to embrace both introspection and systems thinking. B stood for bridging and bonding—highlighting strong relationships within teams, and C for care, connection, collaboration, and conversation. This alphabet wove together the intellectual, emotional, and practical dimensions of changemaking. Dr. Maniam emphasized that making a difference requires the whole self—one's history, humour, identity, and values. He closed with Y and Z, stressing "you—and me" and the need to zoom in on individual struggles while zooming out to see them in larger systems.

Panelists' Personal Journeys

The conversation also covered lived experiences, with panelists reflecting on what making a difference has looked like in their lives. Ms. Shane Yan spoke of connecting people and creating spaces for those who feel invisible or unheard. Ms. Jolene Lum reflected that while many are unsure of their path, she always brings full energy and emotional commitment to hers. Mr. Mervin Junus reminded the audience that changemaking is not just about helping others but empowering them to continue the change. Mr. Ami Firdaus recounted how building homes for boys with his own money—a small, necessary act—grew into broader community impact.

Addressing Challenges in Changemaking

The panel also tackled difficult topics like burnout, failure, and financial sustainability. Ms. Lum candidly shared the heartbreak of not being able to repay people who left their jobs to work on a shared mission. Passion, she noted, is vital—but it is not enough on its own.

A Collective and Ongoing Journey

The final message was that making a difference is not linear or a checklist. It is slow, often invisible work: identifying a problem, choosing to care, and continuing to show up even when results are not immediate. Change is rarely solitary. As one speaker reminded the audience, "Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."


MAKING A DIFFERENCE
The ABCs of
A Agility Analysis Activism
B Bridging Bonding Bold
C Care Connection Collaboration Conversation Core (strength, beliefs)
D Doing Deliberation Design
E Ethics Everyday acts and choices Embrace ↔ Tolerate
F Fun(ding) Friendship Fights (the right kind) about the issues
G Grace Gifts - yours + others'
H History Hugs Honesty - What's come before → for hard days
I Idealism Identity Intention Ikigai - calling
J Journey. with Joy
K Knowledge Kinship K-pop (connection)
L Love Loyalty Lived experiences/realities Language - ē deep metaphors Listening
M Map Moral imperative Movement building
N New and old - balance Non-profits
O Organised "Obsession" Opportunities Others - not alone Omissions - who's left out?
P People, Personal Power Philanthropy
Q Quirkisstially you - only you can do
R Respect Regeneration Relationships
S Stories Snacks → bias, assumptions Stand/sit Serendipity
T Truth Tenacity, toughness Trust
U understanding unlearning ubuntu - What I am, partly defined by who I am to others
V Values Virtues Vision
W Women Wins - quick and sustained
X X-ray vision - to go deep X-ennial
Y You - and me!
Z zeal Zoom in, Zoom out details + big picture
"it started with an experiment"
embedded in childhood
emerged from experiences
- what does my community need?
genesis from a need you once had, which wasn't met
Performance & authenticity
sometimes to change a system, you need to be in! with it first
Gaining confidence in an age of online validation?
Fear of failure
What failed? Why did I fail here?
PAUSE. and acknowledge your strengths
Sustained Focus
Black dot only, or also the white space around it?
it's also about knowing what is NOT yours to do
vs momentary awareness
Playing a long game
and building relationships and networks
getting through inertia
- supportive friendships
You know one another's strengths
What's your driving emotion?
How comfortable do you want to be?

The Plenary Roundtable Discussion

The plenary roundtable closed the academic discussion before delegates moved on to their projects. It wove together core symposium themes: cultural heritage, environmental crises, marginalized communities, and fragile cooperation. Rather than offering solutions, it invited participants to question assumptions and examine the systems we often take for granted.

"This is about questioning the systems we take for granted, not handing out answers."



Prof Loy Hui Chieh
Chairperson



Ms Bernise Ang
Sustainability & Regeneration



Associate Professor Eleanor Wong
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion



Ms Chang Yueh Siang
Heritage & Culture

Central Question: Shared Ground

The guiding question was simple but profound: what kind of ground can we stand on, together? Speakers shared stories from Penang, Queenstown, and coastal Kelantan, showing how policies and preservation efforts often work only in specific contexts—and can lose meaning if replicated elsewhere.

"What works in one place may break another."

Institutional Heritage vs. Lived Memory

A recurring tension was the gap between institutional heritage and lived memory. Official efforts focus on museums and conservation zones, while sustaining living traditions is often overlooked—especially when urban renewal displaces the people who give those places life.

One speaker noted that heritage preservation in Georgetown, Penang, made it harder for longtime residents to stay, asking: what value does heritage have if those who shaped it can no longer live there? Another shared experiences from Singapore, emphasizing that true heritage work begins on the ground—listening to residents and walking the streets.

"True heritage work starts from the ground up, not from the museum."

Perception, Positionality, and Cooperation

The discussion highlighted how perception and positionality shape whose voices matter. Cooperation is important, but context is key. Solutions that succeed in one place can fail—or cause harm—elsewhere.

This tension surfaced in debates on diversity and equity, where imported values can overshadow local perspectives. The point is not to reject these values, but to ask who they serve and whether the affected communities have a say.

"Cooperation without understanding can do more harm than good."

Development, Sustainability, and Planetary Boundaries

The conversation turned to sustainability. Planetary boundaries—nine environmental limits, six already crossed—show that climate breakdown and biodiversity loss are global challenges.

Addressing them requires more than harm reduction. Speakers urged moving beyond net zero toward net positive goals: repairing what has already been broken.

"We must aim not just to do less harm, but to actively repair what's broken."

Confronting Economic Systems

Achieving this ambition means confronting economic systems that prioritize growth and shareholder value over people and culture. Traditions are commodified, measured by tourist appeal rather than community meaning.

Speakers asked: why does a developer's vision of progress outweigh a fisherman's understanding of value? When small, sustainable livelihoods are sidelined, essential knowledge and culture are lost.

"When culture becomes a product, communities lose their meaning."

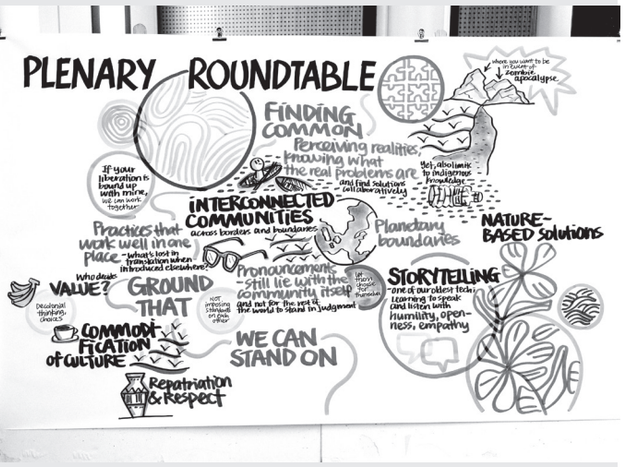
Visibility of Tensions and Future Directions

The roundtable did not resolve these tensions—but it made them visible. It challenged assumptions about progress, equity, and aid, pointing toward a future rooted in relationships rather than templates, and humility rather than expertise.

"The future we need is built on relationships, not blueprints." ○









From Curiosity to Change
A Fireside Chat with Dr Janil Puthucheary

Senior Minister of State for Sustainability and Environment & Ministry of Education, Singapore

Opening Reflections: From Observer to Participant

At the 2025 Fireside Chat, Dr. Janil Puthucheary, Senior Minister of State, spoke openly about culture, governance, and generational responsibility. Moderated by NUS College Dean Simon Chesterman, the conversation ranged from heritage and AI to education reform and public service. Throughout, Dr. Janil returned to one idea: participation must begin early and evolve throughout life. Change, he emphasized, does not come in a single moment—it comes from curiosity, showing up, and being willing to learn over time.

When asked why he entered politics, Dr. Janil admitted it was never part of his plan. Over time, however, he grew uncomfortable with being a passive observer. Leadership shapes lives, he said, and if we want better outcomes, we cannot stay on the sidelines. Everyone has a part to play.

Heritage and Cultural Evolution

On heritage, Dr. Janil explored why cultural preservation can be difficult in economies focused on GDP. While culture may not produce instantly measurable outcomes, its impact is profound. In Southeast Asia's mosaic of religions, languages, and histories, heritage is about interpretation as much as preservation. Some traditions are worth celebrating, others need adaptation. He cited Singapore's hawker culture: once stigmatized for poor hygiene, it has evolved into a globally recognized culinary treasure. "This is not contradiction," he said, "it is evolution."

Dr. Janil stressed the importance of connecting young people to their heritage. Awareness alone is not enough—older generations must guide them in understanding what is worth keeping, what must change, and how to approach cultural inheritance thoughtfully.

Youth, Participation, and Community Ownership

Audience questions explored balancing culture with commerce, particularly in rural and indigenous communities. Dr. Janil emphasized that communities must decide how their culture is shared.

While risks of exploitation exist, dignity is preserved through relationships and fair processes. Heritage, he argued, is not zero-sum; even within one tradition, multiple expressions can coexist. Preservation should support pluralism, not erase it.

On youth participation, Dr. Janil noted it can take many forms—from student clubs to community projects. Early efforts, guided by listening and understanding existing work, build confidence and deeper commitments over time. Cross-border opportunities like ASEAN fellowships can spark engagement, but true collaboration emerges from relationships, not top-down goals.

Technology, AI, and Cultural Engagement

Technology and AI were major themes. Dr. Janil acknowledged tensions between AI advancement and sustainability. Instead of choosing one over the other, we must find creative ways to balance both. AI can also enrich cultural engagement; he cited the Singapore Light Festival as an example of using digital tools to bring heritage to life.



On cognitive impacts, he warned that AI tools like ChatGPT can offload thought, not just work. Intentional use, guided by educators and parents, is essential. Growth, he said, comes from struggle—challenge builds skill. Lifelong learning remains critical, whether for older generations embracing new tools or young people exploring novel ways of expression.

Education, Gender, and Social Equity

Education reform sparked candid discussion. Dr. Janil acknowledged policy changes, like revised scoring systems, help reduce stress, but societal pressures remain. Students are increasingly exploring non-linear paths—working before university, changing schools, or studying part-time—but cultural norms around success evolve slowly.

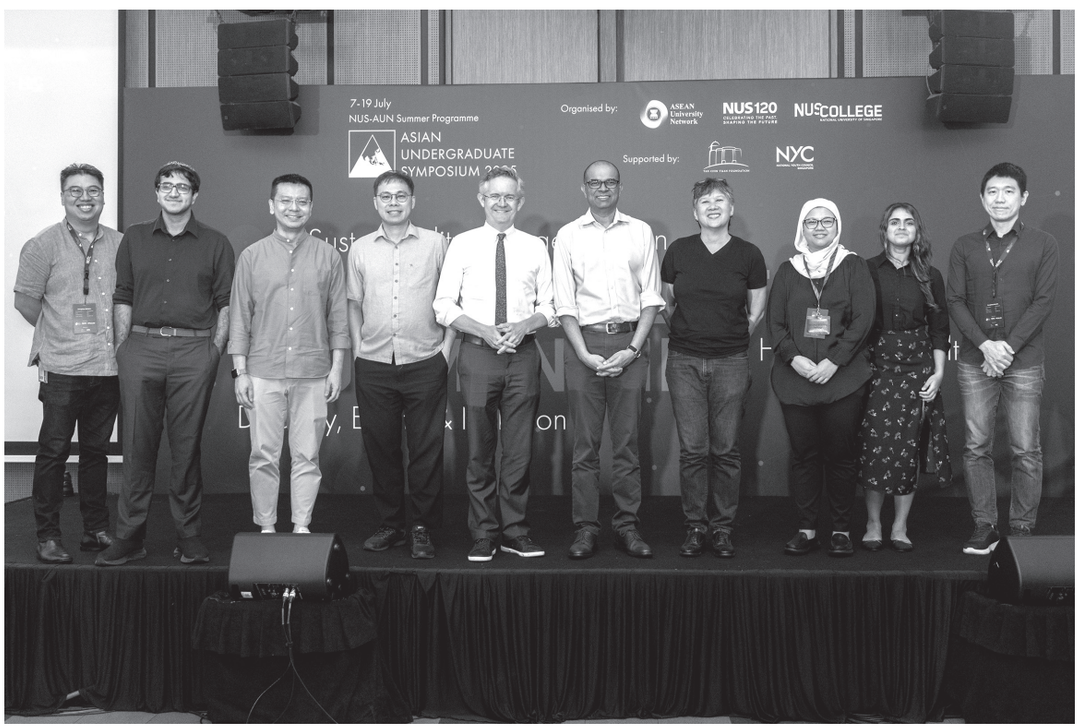
Gender equality and economic fairness also require attention. While Singapore performs well globally, caregiving roles remain disproportionately shouldered by women, and social expectations lag behind policy. Migrant worker protections, especially for domestic workers, must go beyond legislation to reflect lived realities. Respect, safety, and dignity are fundamental for all, regardless of nationality or job.

Lessons for the Next Generation

The conversation ended with reflection. Dr. Janil shared what he would tell his younger self: it is okay not to know. Be curious, explore without limits, and let interests evolve. Life is like walking into a bookstore rather than scrolling an algorithm—you discover things you never expected.

Dr. Janil offered no simple solutions, but a call to engagement. Change begins not with certainty, but with curiosity, reflection, and the courage to step forward before you have everything figured out.













The AUS 2025 Projects: From Ideation to Development

One of the challenges AUS 2025 presented to delegates arriving from across Asia was to think big and act local, with the goal of developing community-rooted, actionable projects under broad-banner themes: sustainability & regeneration, diversity, equity & inclusion, and heritage & culture. Students teamed up across borders to tackle urgent problems in creative and meaningful ways, showing what happens when youth are trusted to lead.

After a week of academic activities, both in the panel sessions and out on Learning Journeys, the second week of AUS 2025 was dedicated to establishing and working in teams to develop a project. This began with a structured ideation session to help the delegates propose and evaluate concepts for possible projects.

The session employed three categories for project proposals, each falling under one of the main themes of the symposium, and each colour coded: green for Sustainability & Regeneration, orange for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI), and pink for Heritage & Culture. The Student Council facilitated the distribution of colored sheets to delegates, who then documented their project ideas, before displaying them on a central whiteboard for collective review. As this represented the first collaborative project of this scale for many delegates, initial uncertainty was evident among participants.

Following the ideation phase, a voting process was implemented where delegates used stickers to signal the most promising proposals. The ideas receiving the largest number of votes were announced and displayed on the Finalist White Board, with the delegates who proposed them designated as team leaders. These leaders were then tasked with assembling a diverse team of 7-8 members, but were required to also include representatives from at least three different Asian countries, to ensure regional representation.

As the session unfolded, the initial uncertainty gave way to enthusiastic collaboration, with teams establishing communication channels through Telegram groups to maintain project momentum and to facilitate coordination among the newly formed teams.









Project Development: Working in Teams, Working with Mentors

The first two days of the second week were dedicated to shaping project ideas into concrete, structured proposals. Delegates began with initial concepts - some fairly broad, others more narrowly circumscribed. The work of each team was conducted under the supervision of mentors from faculty and industry, who guided them as they refined their proposals into more precisely articulated solutions for the problems they had identified. The process began with brainstorming sessions, in which teams freely explored possibilities, discussed challenges, and shared perspectives based on their own experiences and research.

The mentors played an important role throughout, not only by providing technical advice and industry insights but also by facilitating structured activities to encourage creative thinking. These included guided questioning, developing mind-maps, and “challenge reframing” exercises, which helped participants identify the core problems they wanted to address and evaluate the feasibility of their ideas.

The AUS student councilors also contributed to the process by offering support, and prompting teams to turn abstract ideas into concrete plans. They encouraged participants to think through practical aspects such as target audiences, implementation strategies, and potential impacts, ensuring that each project was both innovative and grounded in reality.

By the end of the two days, most teams had progressed from vague concepts to clear outlines, ready to move towards prototyping and final presentation. Reflecting on the process, many delegates noted how valuable it was to have an iterative approach: testing, refining, and reshaping their ideas based on feedback. The collaborative environment, supported by mentors and the AUS team, not only accelerated idea development but also deepened delegates’ understanding of how to translate creative thinking into actionable outcomes.



Reflections

On 2025 Project Development by **AUS Mentors**

"Mentoring the students was nothing short of inspiring. I witnessed raw passion transform into bold projects with the power to change lives (including the lives of bees which one group was focused on). What amazed me most was their resilience. Each time feedback challenged their ideas, they didn't retreat. They adapted, reinvented and sometimes tore everything down to build something even stronger. They were not content with doing "just enough." They wanted impact. They wanted to make a real difference.

At the close of the programme, I wrote to them: "It has been a pleasure mentoring all of you." Their reply captured the spirit of our journey together: "You're still our mentor, it's not over yet." And they were right, it isn't over. Mentorship is not bound by a timeline; it's about the bonds we forge, the lessons we carry and the shared commitment to keep pushing boundaries.

In just two days, they reminded me why I believe so deeply in the next generation. They carry within them not only hope, but the determination to turn that hope into action. I have no doubt they will go on to create ripples of change far greater than we can imagine. And I am humbled to have walked with them at the start of that journey."



Associate Professor Louis Ng
NUS College, National University of Singapore

"I am deeply encouraged by Group BB's enthusiasm and curiosity about coral reefs, which inspired them to create a booklet as an educational tool to raise awareness about marine conservation and encourage divers to participate in local reef monitoring efforts. During our discussions, they also shared interesting marine conservation projects, the challenges facing the ocean, and opportunities for action in their respective countries. They demonstrated strong teamwork by leveraging each other's strengths and collaborating effectively to bring the project to life. The whole journey has been incredibly fulfilling, and it has been heartening to watch them grow and bond closely with one another in just two days. I am very excited for what lies ahead for them and hope that this experience at AUS will greatly benefit them in the future."



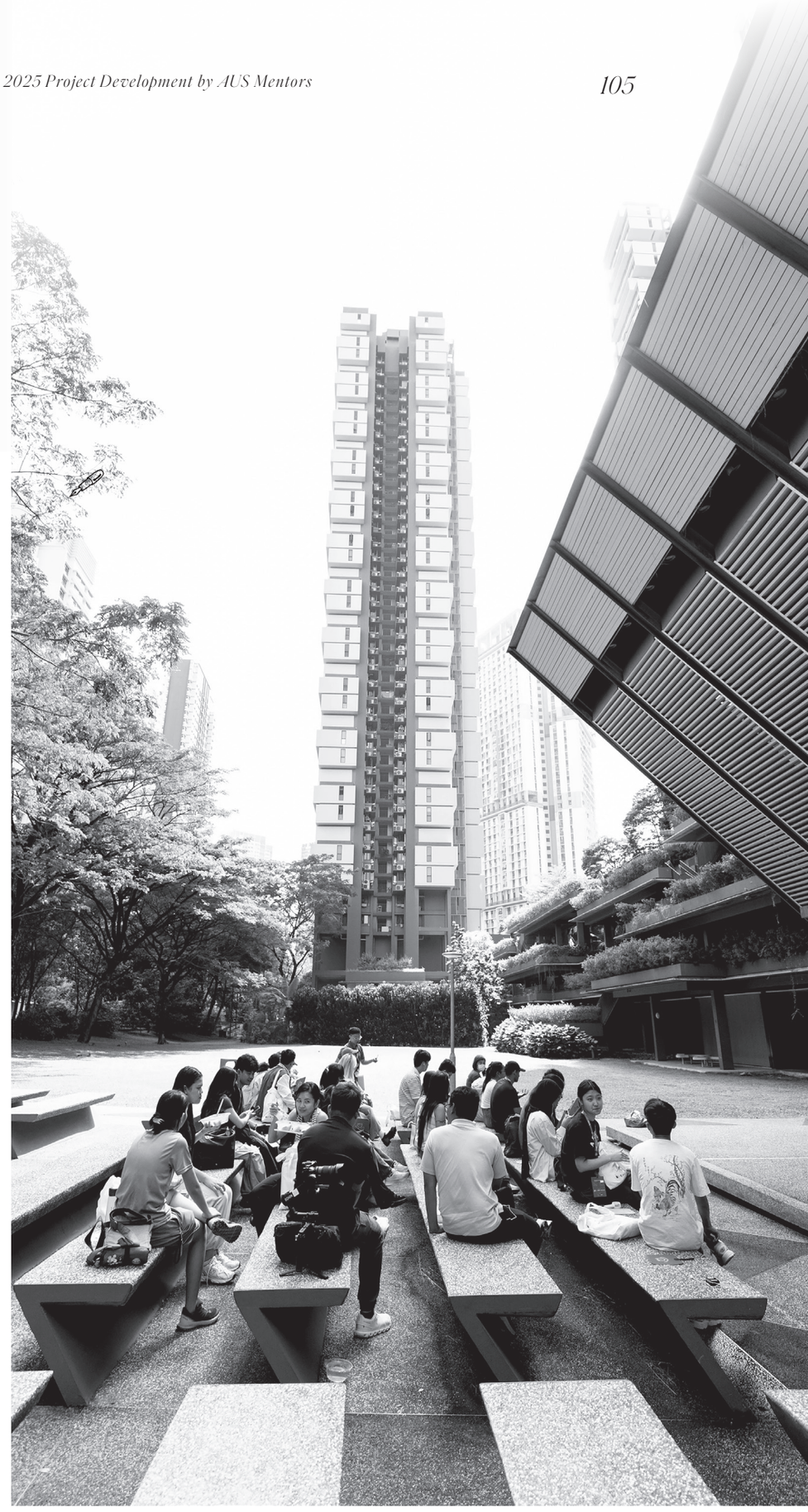
Ms Sam Shu Qin
NUS College, National University of Singapore

"At AUS 2025, mentoring Luk Learn and Re-Makers was a deeply fulfilling experience. Luk Learn's project originated from a local village in Thailand, aiming to close the literacy gap among students, whereas Re-Makers tackled the broader global challenge of production waste in Jogjakarta, Indonesia. I was particularly drawn to their shared emphasis on building connections—Luk Learn by fostering literacy and mentorship among students, and Re-Makers by linking artisans with consumers to reduce waste.

What stood out most clearly was how the students refined their projects once they grounded their ideas in specific community needs. This practical orientation toward tangible solutions significantly enhanced the feasibility of their projects. For instance, Re-Makers initially proposed developing an app alongside extensive outreach within a brief three-month period. Through collaborative discussions, we prioritized outreach, treating the app as a supportive tool to be developed in the longer-term. This clarified our central goal: raising broader awareness about waste reduction and fostering meaningful community relationships.

Witnessing students from diverse nationalities across the region collaborate effectively, communicate openly, and creatively problem-solve was inspiring. Their enthusiasm and creativity, evident through their videos and posters, made this mentorship enjoyable and memorable. Most of all, observing their sustained commitment and the personal connections they built reaffirmed my belief in the enduring value of genuine community-building efforts."

Dr. Hanisah Abdullah Sani
NUS College, National University of Singapore



Reflections on 2025 Project Development by **AUS Delegates**

"We started with this big, heartfelt idea—using postcards to preserve Indigenous cultures, beginning with the Orang Laut in Singapore. It felt exciting at first, but also really overwhelming. There were so many questions: What stories do we tell? How can we do it ethically? Who are we trying to reach? How do we even do this in three days? We had lots of ambition, and also a lot of conflict. The feedback we got was harsh, and I could feel my teammates getting discouraged. But somehow, we pulled through. We reminded ourselves why we cared and, in the end, we made something that still carried that hope. It was stressful but fruitful and I learnt a lot through this experience."



Jessica Ng Shu Wei
National University of Singapore

"Being one of the delegates who attended AUS 2025 was an enriching and eye-opening experience for me. During the project ideation phase, one of my friends introduced her idea to use effective microorganism balls—commonly known as bokashi balls or "mabuhay balls." This concept was entirely new to me and, at first, I was hesitant to get involved since it was outside my area of expertise as a business student. In spite of this, I was one of the first delegates to approach her during the initial stage of her proposal, and I was genuinely impressed by how clearly and passionately she explained her project. Over the course of three days, filled with mentoring sessions and intense planning, I found myself challenged, especially since the project leaned heavily into scientific disciplines. There were aspects of the science I struggled to fully grasp, but I contributed by identifying key problems, and handling the financial dimensions of our proposal.

With the support of our distinguished professors and mentors, we were able to clearly define the scope, target, and implementation plan of our project. It was truly a team effort, we each had our own roles and responsibilities, which helped make our proposal both feasible and focused.

Even after the symposium officially ended on July 19, 2025, we stayed connected through Telegram and email to finalize the project proposal. This experience not only taught me about interdisciplinary collaboration, but also reminded me of the value of stepping out of my comfort zone to contribute meaningfully to a shared goal."



Peter Anthony Laciste
Central Luzon State University

"Our project "In Our Shoes", a socially inclusive board game showcasing the stories of persons with disabilities, emerged from dozens of brainstorms. Our aim was to ensure both able-bodied and disabled people could participate together. For the next two days, we read research papers and experimented with the game mechanism and content. The board game had to be fun, but also to be a great platform for communicating these stories. After some considerable development, we finalised our board game and laid out a plan to distribute and make the game widely accessible, by developing it into an app. These three intense days of work aimed, per the NUSC motto, to break open the classroom: but we also broke open our own boundaries. From the experience, I learnt how young changemakers can inspired, if they are provided with the resources they needed to create impact. Thank you AUS and NUSC."



Novanda Akbar Dwiyanto
State University of Surabaya



From Ideas to Impact:
AUS 2025 Student Projects That Inspire

The 10 project grant winners for AUS 2025 are:

NOOR:
Navigating Opportunities, Overcoming Roadblocks

Project Noor (Noor meaning "light") aims to illuminate the path forward for orphaned youth in India by compiling, printing, and distributing a two-track guidebook that will provide information on a) vocational jobs, and b) higher education, such as scholarships and government resources.

NUSAJIWA:
Bridging Corals and Communities through Accessible Reef Data and Local Engagement

NUSAJIWA is a coral conservation initiative designed to close the critical gap in accessible, engaging, and locally relevant information about the coral reefs in Semporna, Sabah. It tackles this by creating a gamified literacy toolkit anchored by our flagship product: a physical interactive booklet. This booklet combines digestible information that is tailored to the region with educational games such as 'Coral Bingo' and 'Where's Coral' to promote curiosity, appreciation, and learning.

RELEAF:
Youth for Mangroves Summit

RELEAF HUB is a youth-led initiative empowering young Cambodians to drive environmental action. Our first initiative, the Youth for Mangroves Summit 2025 (YMS), tackles the urgent decline of mangrove ecosystems. Through hands-on training, mentorship, and collaboration with experts and communities, youth co-create practical solutions for mangrove restoration.

Leng Chea Muoy Buzzy!:
Wild Bee Conservation Through Indigenous Knowledge

In Cambodia, wild bees play a vital role in maintaining biodiversity, yet conservation efforts often overlook them in favor of domesticated honeybees. At the same time, traditional rafter beekeeping, a practice passed down through generations, is at risk of being lost. "Leng Chea Muoy Buzzy!" (Let's Play with Buzzy!) addresses both issues through education and play. The project introduces children in rural Siem Reap to bee conservation using BuzzKits—interactive kits that include bamboo mini-rafters, clay honeycombs, educational guides, and a bee mascot. Workshops held in schools will connect children with local rafter beekeepers, combining ecological learning with the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems.

KnowRoots:
Bringing Indigenous Knowledge to Everyone

Indigenous cultures hold generations of living intelligence in ecological, medicinal and social domains, rooted in deep connections with nature. Yet, this wisdom is rapidly disappearing due to the lack of public accessibility, proper documentation and representation. KnowRoots preserves and spreads these invaluable wisdoms by leveraging social media platforms, making this knowledge accessible to all and extending its reach beyond spatial and temporal boundaries.

Strawvo: From Burned to Earned - Turning Rice Straw into Regenerative Livelihoods

Globally, over 360 million tonnes of rice straw are burned each year, releasing harmful pollutants such as CO_2, PM2.5, and NOx. In Egypt, field studies estimate over 11 tonnes of CO_2-equivalent emissions per hectare from open burning, contributing to respiratory illnesses and environmental degradation. Similar practices remain widespread across Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, one of the world's top rice producers, where open burning remains a fast but hazardous disposal method. Strawvo presents a regenerative solution: upcycling rice straw into low-cost, eco-friendly boards that aims to substitute conventional plywood. This approach tackles environmental and health risks while creating new rural income streams, reducing dependency on imported wood, and promoting circular economies in agricultural regions.

TRIbaLINGUAL:

Preserving Heritage, Building Futures

TRIbaLINGUAL is a project that addresses the dual challenges faced by Primary H'Mong students in Sa Pa Town, Lào Cai province: falling behind academically due to language barriers, and the gradual loss of their mother tongue. With the aim of helping H'Mong students thrive in a globalised world while preserving their language and culture, this project enhances their English learning through culturally grounded trilingual materials in H'Mong, Vietnamese, and English. This is complemented by a community co-created website that documents and preserves their linguistic and cultural heritage.

Project AGOS:

Advocating Green and Organic Solutions

PROJECT AGOS ('flow' in Tagalog) focuses on community-led environmental restoration through the rehabilitation of the polluted Estero de Paco in Metro Manila, Philippines. The project aims to not only restore the river's ecological health through eco-friendly biotechnology - Bokashi balls - but also to better equip local residents with sustainable practices that promote environmental responsibility and social resilience. The long-term goal would be to foster a strong interconnected community throughout Manila that would gather the attention of government officials to improve the waste disposal system.

In Our Shoes:

See the World Through New Eyes

In Our Shoes is a participatory board game that helps youth aged 12–25 develop empathy and understanding toward persons with disabilities. What sets this game apart is the foundation in real community-sourced experiences gathered by our game developer, making it a relatable and practical tool for raising awareness compared to other board games. Based on real experiences from Sainampueng High School, the game uses role-play, with players playing the identities of characters with different disabilities—such as blindness, autism, or mobility challenges. Designed for accessibility and adaptability, the game features tactile elements, sign language references, and clear visuals. In Our Shoes fosters empathy, inclusive thinking, and social change.

Recaseé:

Turning Waste into Opportunity

1.6 billion plastic phone cases are discarded in landfills every year. Transparent phone cases turning yellow does not affect the functionality of phone cases and therefore should not be disposed of. It created unnecessary waste in the environment. Phone cases can be refurbished in order to reuse it again. Recaseé focuses on reusing old phone cases by turning them into unique, hand-painted art pieces. It aims to engage people with disabilities to create hand-painted phone cases, which will be sold. The profit gained will go back to the people with disabilities. This creates meaningful employment to help them reintegrate into the society by contributing meaningfully.




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INTERCONNECTED COMMUNITIES











Connecting COMMUNITIES

Connecting COMMUNITIES




7-19 July
NUS-AUN Summer Programme
ASIAN
UNDERGRADUATE
SYMPOSIUM 2025
Organised by:
ASEAN University Network
NUS120
NUS COLLEGE
Supported by:
NYC




SUSTAINABILITY & REGENERATION
DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION
PROJECT AGOS







Reflections on the Past, Present & Future of AUS

Mr. Nigel Kaw

AUS Lead & Chief Facilitator (2023-2025)

Some of the best things are conceived from asking questions and better yet, going through the process of experiencing to try and answer those questions.

It feels fitting that my reflections on the Asian Undergraduate Symposium follow this natural journey of learning: exploring, experiencing, reflecting, and carrying the insights forward.

The 'What?'

In 2015, Goh Seng Chyi - then a student on the NUS University Scholars Programme - drew attention to the many and varied problems faced by communities in ASEAN. Gathering a group of like-minded Scholars Programme students, they dared to ask the question 'What if we create a platform for cross-cultural friendships and perspectives where ASEAN undergraduates can discuss and tackle real-world challenges faced by communities in the region? ' That was Asian Undergraduate Summit 2015: a bold, ground-up, student organised summit which drew over 100 ASEAN participants. The stage was set.

The 'So What'?

In his retrospective of the inaugural AUS 2015, Seng Chyi remarked that, "[p] eople would only continue something like [AUS] if they see value in it, and I'm glad to see that people feel what we started has value." And AUS did continue: year on year, the summit grew as the original vision resonated with subsequent batches of University Scholars Programme students. Thus, an unspoken underlying value of AUS, right from the very beginning - almost a rallying cry, really - has been... 'We are better together than we are alone!'

In 2023, in my first year of joining NUS College (the spiritual successor of the University Scholars Programme), I had the privilege of being invited to be part of the AUS community. I marvelled at the incredible work done by the student organisers over past iterations, and two questions emerged which helped me visualise AUS's evolution: 1) 'How could AUS develop from primarily a student initiative into an NUS College community effort?' and 2) 'How could we build upon the existing foundation, and the strengths of the AUS format,

to turn dialogue and discussion about positive impact into a concrete reality?'

These questions shaped AUS 2023, where the summit became a symposium in which the NUS College community of students, academics and executive staff journey together to produce something meaningful. Elaborating on what was initiated in 2015, regional issues were not only to be discussed by participants of AUS 2023, but also rapidly ideated, hackathon style, into projects that could be supported with seed grants. This AUS 2023 format of developing rapid prototypes was a tremendous success, and the ASEAN University Network requested AUS grow to 300 participants, so that more undergraduates could experience AUS. The rest has been catalogued in these pages. AUS is now a cornerstone of the ASEAN University Network's Summer Camp Programme.

The 'Now What?'

Since 2015, AUS has hosted over 2000 youths who have grown to be changemakers and leaders. They have come from 90 universities, spanning all of ASEAN and including China, India, Japan and South Korea who have grown to be changemakers and leaders.

The question now is, 'How can we leverage the like-minded AUS community that intersects all over Asia to move the needle to make real positive impact on regional communities?' Just as in 2015, all it takes are like minded individuals who believe in making a positive impact. This time, in 2025, a group of AUS alumni from across different countries have united to found an AUS Fellowship. Under this initiative, AUS alumni - past and present - will have a hub to network within, to stay up-to-date on AUS developments, and even to contribute back to AUS, whether in the form of supporting existing AUS projects or even returning to run future editions.

Serendipitously, NUS College will further support AUS by welcoming its promising seed funded projects to its incubator lab programme, giving them access to further support and funding.

So, here we are. The future is bright for AUS, as it continues to evolve and, more importantly, to grow upon its firm foundation.

AUS then, now, and in the future stands for the collective hopes, dreams and aspirations for the young people in the ASEAN region. As an increasingly growing interconnected community, we as a community, as a fellowship, become a serenade to collective self-awareness, a repository for collective wisdom (we hope!) and, even more, a locus for collective action.

AUS 2025 | Publication Team

The storytellers and memory keepers capturing and curating the heart of our journey.



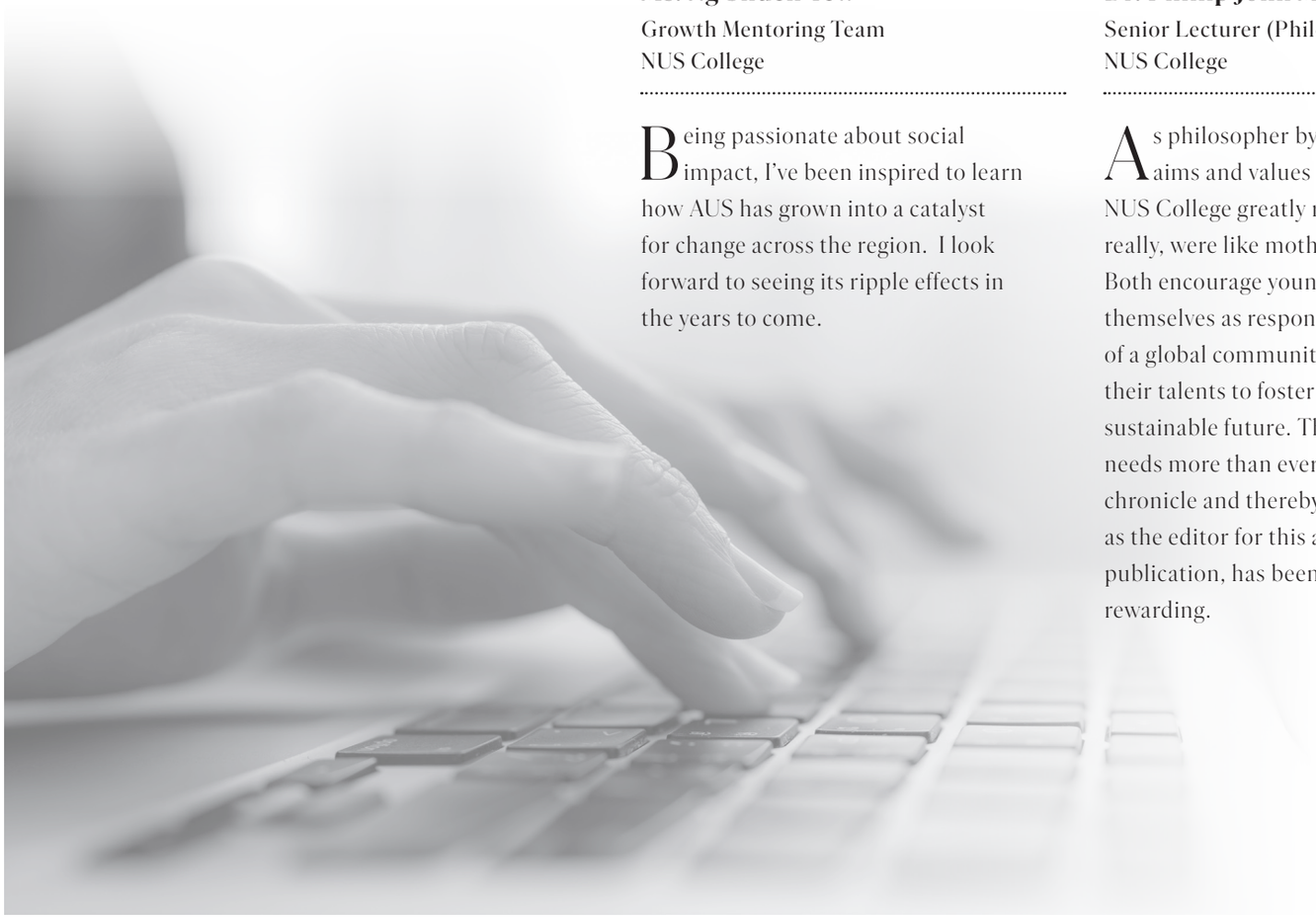
Ms. Ng Shuen Yew
Growth Mentoring Team
NUS College

Being passionate about social impact, I've been inspired to learn how AUS has grown into a catalyst for change across the region. I look forward to seeing its ripple effects in the years to come.



Dr. Phillip John Meadows
Senior Lecturer (Philosophy)
NUS College

As philosopher by training, the aims and values of AUS, and NUS College greatly resonated and really, were like mother's milk for me. Both encourage young people to see themselves as responsible members of a global community who can use their talents to foster a peaceful and sustainable future. This, the world needs more than ever. Being able to chronicle and thereby witness this, as the editor for this anniversary publication, has been deeply rewarding.





Suchi Shah
National University of Singapore
2025

Being part of the Publication Team has given me the opportunity to explore AUS more intimately. I've developed a deeper understanding of its history and the diverse intersectionalities that have shaped both past and present editions. Through curating content and engaging with stories from different batches, I've come to appreciate how AUS continues to evolve while staying true to its core values.

ONE FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF

My badminton abilities peak between midnight and 4am :)



Nguyen Huynh Cam Tu (Lily)
International University - Vietnam National University / 2024

This was my first time working with such a diverse group of people - from participants and project founders to professors - and it was a truly interesting experience. Being part of the Publication Team taught me the importance of active listening and focus. During the panels, I had to concentrate deeply on what the speakers were saying to write effectively. This helped me absorb more insights and reflect more deeply on the topics being discussed. It also sharpened my writing and note-taking skills under time pressure.

ONE FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF

Not proud of it, but I do silently judge people when they use plastic.



Paulyana Battung
University of the Philippines
2024

I learned that AUS is never just one thing — it is shaped by whoever is looking back. I had the chance to listen to participants and mentors from different AUS batches, and through hearing what they held most dearly about their experiences, it felt like I was walking through multiple versions of AUS — not just the one I knew, but fragments from past years as well. These versions were shaped by sessions that resonated differently for each person, and by the ever-changing constellation of friendships and project groups. No two reflections were the same, and I think there's something beautiful about that.

ONE FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF

I have a small collection of obsolete cameras!



Wong Yin-Ze (aka Y.Z.)
Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
2024

Being part of the Publication Team has been a transformative experience, one that has allowed me to dive deep into the perspectives of others. Through this role, I've had the privilege of understanding thoughts and ideas from representatives across ASEAN, each voice adding a unique thread to the tapestry of our shared narrative.

This opportunity has not only allowed me to connect the diverse themes within AUS but has also given me the space to grow, both as a thinker and as a listener. I've learned to be courageous in asking questions, but more importantly, to truly hear the answers, letting them shape my understanding in ways I never expected.

As the writer and philosopher Maya Angelou once said: "We are more alike, my friends, than we are unalike." This role has reminded me of that truth, bringing people, ideas, and stories together in ways that reveal our shared humanity.

ONE FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF

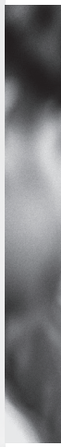
Addiction to caffeine (I need 5 cups of coffee per day to function properly, or else I'll be Hulk from Avengers)

Anushka Srivastava
Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi
2024

Since participating in AUS in 2024, it has held deep meaning for me — something I always look back on with a sense of longing. Being part of the Publication Team helped me understand the roots of AUS: how and why it started, how it evolved over the years into the form I eventually experienced, and how it continues to grow. It allowed me to see and experience AUS 2025 through a completely different lens — one shaped by the reflections of past chairs, participants, and mentors on what AUS has meant to them over the past 10 years. From interviewing former chairs to writing about current projects, the Publication Team gave me the chance to look into the heart of AUS and the values it stands for — a story of continuity amidst a sea of change. 'The more things change, the more they stay the same.

ONE FUN FACT ABOUT YOURSELF

I'm a bit of a memory hoarder—I'll keep anything that holds good memories, even if it's just a candy wrapper or a crumpled piece of paper!















Connecting COMMUNITIES

Acknowledgements



We gratefully acknowledge the invaluable support of NUS College, the ASEAN University Network, and our past sponsors, without whom this 10th Anniversary of AUS would not have been possible.

We also extend our sincere thanks to all contributors, speakers, organizers, and participants who have shared their knowledge, time, and enthusiasm throughout this journey.

Your dedication has shaped AUS into a vibrant community of scholarship and collaboration.

As we commemorate this milestone, we look forward to many more years of growth, learning, and partnership.







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[2015 - 2024]

Connecting Communities

Timeline

[**Theme**]

Leadership in a Complex World:
The Food, Water and Energy Nexus

2015





Supported by the Singapore International Foundation and Shell PLC, the very first AUS explored the interdependence of food, water and energy systems.

An overseas leg where participants were hosted by partner universities to gain insights into country-specific challenges, followed by a Singapore leg that brought participants together for expert panel discussions and a dialogue with then Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Law, Mr K. Shanmugam.

Overseas Host Universities:

- Mahidol University
- Ateneo de Manila University
- Universitas Airlangga
- National University of Malaysia
- Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City





[**Theme**]

Leadership in a Complex World:
Smart Cities, Smart Citizens

2016



The second AUS focused on the rise of smart cities and the need for active citizen participation in shaping liveable urban futures.

Overseas Host Universities:

- Mahidol University
- Universitas Airlangga
- Bandung Institute of Technology
- Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
- Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City





[**Theme**]

Leadership in a Complex World:
Disruptive Change in Everyday Life

2017

The third AUS explored how disruptive technologies are reshaping daily life and industries, urging participants to leverage innovation to create locally grounded solutions.





Overseas Partner Universities:

- Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Incheon National University
- Universitas Gadjah Mada
- Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City

Overseas Host Universities:

- Fudan University
- Hindu College, University of Delhi
- Mahidol University
- Universitas Airlangga



[**Theme**]

Leadership in a Complex World:
Taking on Diffused Responsibilities

2018



The fifth AUS examined the idea of diffused responsibilities and the importance of personal and collective action in tackling complex societal challenges.

Overseas Partner Universities:

- Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Seoul National University
- Zhejiang University
- Fudan University

Overseas Host Universities:

- Chulalongkorn University
- Incheon National University
- Hindu College





[**Theme**]

Leadership in a Complex World:
Harnessing Untapped Potential

Due to COVID-19 Pandemic,
AUS was paused.



2019

AUS 2019 challenged students to discover and harness untapped resources, redefining value in pursuit of sustainable community development.



Overseas Partner Universities:

- Royal University of Phnom Penh
- Fudan University
- Universitas Indonesia
- Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
- University of the Philippines
- Mahidol University

Overseas Host Universities:

- Zhejiang University: "Sustainable Cities"
- Seoul National University: "Peacebuilding"
- Chulalongkorn University: "Tapping on the Aging Population"
- Universitas Airlangga: "Technological Advancement and Leadership"
- Hindu College: "Cultural and Environmental Resources"

2020



We are not able to meet in person,

but the AUS spirit lives on.

Let's relive some old memories together in the safety of our homes.

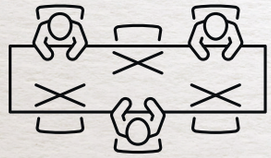
With the constantly evolving COVID-19 situation worldwide, AUS 2020 was not able to take place.

July would have been the month where we held both our overseas and Singapore legs.

Since we are unable to do so, let us instead take this time to:

1. Look back at some of our fondest memories of AUS,
2. Reflect on our current circumstances, and
3. Think about how we can move forward together, as a region.





| Theme |

Leadership in a Complex World:
Managing the Dilemma of Growth

2021 (Online)

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, AUS 2021 was held virtually, urging students to confront the challenges that come with Asia's accelerating development.



Overseas Partner Universities:

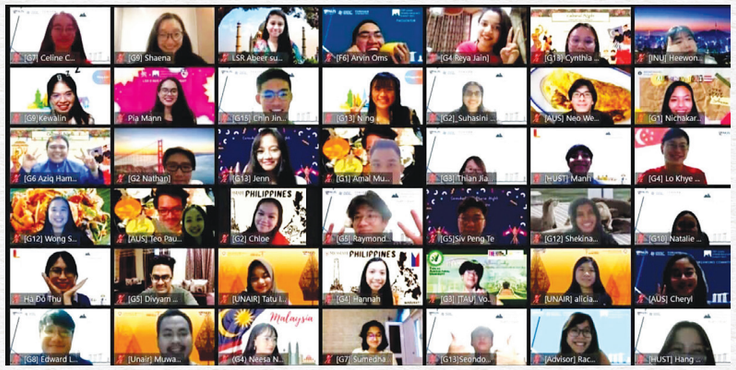
- Royal University of Law and Economics Cambodia
- Hindu College
- Universitas Airlangga
- Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)
- Messiah College
- Tarlac Agricultural University
- Incheon National University
- Chulalongkorn University
- Mahidol University
- Panyapiwat Institute of Management
- Hanoi University of Science & Technology

Overseas Leg:

Due to restrictions on air travel, each host university is encouraged to develop their own Summit activities in response to the overarching theme.

Overseas Host Universities:

- Zhejiang University
- Lady Shri Ram College for Women
- National University of Malaysia



| Theme |

Leadership in a Complex World:
Creating Opportunities in Times of Uncertainty

2022 (Online)



Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate crises, and digital disruption, AUS 2022 explored how adaptive leadership can turn uncertainty into opportunity.

Overseas Partner Universities:

- Hanoi University of Science and Technology
- Incheon National University
- Lady Shri Ram College for Women
- Mahidol University
- National University of Malaysia
- Royal University of Law and Economics
- Seoul National University
- Tarlac Agricultural University
- University of Yangon
- Universitas Indonesia

Overseas Host Universities:

- Universiti Brunei Darussalam
- Universitas Airlangga
- Chulalongkorn University
- Zhejiang University





[**Theme**]

Interconnected Communities

2022 (Online)

Supported by the Temasek Foundation

- Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy supported and co-funded the Future Thinking Workshop component of the program.

10 Partner Universities

- Expanded outreach to new countries like Myanmar and other universities in Singapore.

Programme

- Introduced a new programme segment titled Leadership in Service Panel Discussion, aimed at promoting community service through insights and experiences shared by leaders from the social sector on creating positive community impact.
- A gamified Cultural Night was organised on the Gather.Town platform, enabling participants from diverse countries to design virtual cultural booths and engage in activities through online avatars across ASEAN+ country representations.



2023



Asian Undergraduate Summit >> Asian Undergraduate Symposium

This AUS marked a transition to a programme helmed by students and staff at NUS College featuring a revised format oriented around real-world action on the subthemes of Climate Change & Sustainability, Needs & Wants, Diversity & Inclusion and Heritage & Culture.



[**Theme**]

Interconnected Communities

2024



New Format

- 14-day intensive programme held at NUS

Programme Features

- Project teams are formed from a diversity of students from ASEAN and matched with a suitable mentor from NUS College

Final Outcome

- Up to 5 top proposals awarded SGD $5,000 each for implementation

Learning Journeys

Ground-Up Initiative / Green Nudge / Harmony Centre

- Supported by Temasek Foundation
- 150 symposium delegates
- 10 countries represented: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam
- 51 Schools





AUS 2024 was a scale-up from the 2023 iteration with greater number of participants and participating schools.

Became one of the flagship summer programmes under ASEAN University Network (AUN).



Subthemes

- Needs & Wants
- Climate Change and Sustainability
- Diversity & Inclusion

Learning Journeys

Sustainable Singapore Gallery / Common Ground Civic Centre / Harmony Centre
SG Assist / Urban Trails in Toa Payoh, Little India & Jalan Kukoh

- Supported by National Youth Council Singapore
- 300 symposium delegates
- 16 countries represented, with new additions: China, Japan, South Korea and India
- 58 Schools





AUS MISSION

To cultivate the next generation of leaders and advocates, who can interact, inspire, ideate, and implement implement interdisciplinary solutions across boundaries to better the world.

AUS VISION

To be a meeting place for thoughtful, passionate university students from the ASEAN+ region, and to provide a platform for examining the human implications of the material, economic, social, and technological dimensions of our world.

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At first glance, our logo reveals many faces —
a horse galloping freely across open plains,
a spotlight casting light upon Asia's map,
or a distant mountain peak brushed with snow.

Each image tells its own story, yet together they embody the spirit of the Asian Undergraduate Symposium (AUS) — a celebration of diversity, dialogue, and discovery among undergraduates across Asia.



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Connecting
COMMUNITIES

10 Years of Asian Undergraduate Symposium