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Foundations Laid, Relationships Forged & Networks to Build: A Year in Outreach

Assoc Prof Chng Huang Hoon
Director, CDTL



Dear colleagues,

On behalf of the CDTL Team, allow me to convey New Year greetings to all of you, and thank you most sincerely for your wonderful support for the year that just passed us by. It is no understatement to say that everything we do at CDTL will not be meaningful without your support and participation in every initiative we collectively worked at from this platform. Your kind encouragement has served as the major motivating force that powers all our efforts – THANK YOU!

It seems like only yesterday that I first started working at CDTL, but a swift two and a half years have flown by! Now that I have worked through almost 3 full cycles in the CDTL year, I can be a little more reflective and take stock of what I have tried to do from this platform.

In the January 2009 issue of *CDTLink*, I shared my wish list in “Extending CDTL’s Mission”, and these are to institute a visiting educator programme, to further develop CDTL’s Student Workshop Series and to have *CDTL Brief* develop into *CDTL Brief Online*.

In the January 2010 issue, I focused on “CDTL: Your Partner in Teaching and Learning in 2010”, sharing the work that my team put in for that year, including working on both University Town and matters relating to student centricity as well as the support we gave to the newly established NUS Teaching Academy. We also saw a higher volume in the Teaching Enhancement Grant (TEG) applications in 2010, with more and more colleagues competing for TEG funds for education-related projects. In 2010, we extended the TEG in two ways – to fund longer term projects with higher grant quantum of up to \$25,000 and to create an avenue for colleagues to participate in education conferences through our education conference support travel grant. Both these new extensions were well taken up this year.

Importantly, in 2010, we also focused on two other additional efforts in both internal and external outreach. One, we introduced a new staff outreach series called simply “The CDTL Luncheon Series”. This is a lunch chat series with small groups of colleagues engaged in a pertinent topic of discussion. Two, we saw the fruition of the visiting educator programme planned for in 2009 – CDTL’s first Educator-in-Residence, Professor Daniel Bernstein of the University of Kansas spent 5 weeks with us and shared his expertise through various formal and informal platforms.

Now that 2011 has rolled in, it is time to present a little “report card” on all the above initiatives.

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- ✦ The Educator-in-Residence Programme (EiRP) has received very enthusiastic support from both colleagues and students, and from the visitor himself. I have received feedback and encouragement to develop this initiative further in the years to come.
- ✦ Student workshops in the last two years have grown both in terms of the number of workshops offered (from 39 workshops in 2009 to 53 in 2010) and in terms of student participation rate (from 1014 students in 2009 to 1460 students in 2010).
- ✦ 8 issues of *CDTL Brief* brought out between 2009 and 2010 were presented as online issues, with at least 2 special-topic issues showcasing “Freshmen Seminar” and “Communication Skills” published during this period.
- ✦ I am also happy to share that under the leadership of Prof Tan Thiam Soon and Prof Tan Tai Yong and together with the help of 4 colleagues – Chui Wai Keung, Ingrid Hoofd, Patrick Daly and Dieter Wilhelm, CDTL’s contribution to the University Town curriculum (in the form of a multidisciplinary senior seminar) between late 2008 and early 2010 has been successfully completed.
- ✦ In this past year, we also worked with Vice Provost (Student Life), Prof Tan Tai Yong on issues relating to student life. To this end, we held several discussions with different stakeholders to find ways to enhance NUS’ student-centric culture. CDTL is proud to be a partner in helping to develop this student friendly climate.
- ✦ The CDTL Luncheon Series, started in Semester 1 of 2009/2010 is an outreach platform to engage small groups of colleagues in conversations about education. This lunch chat series has served well in bringing colleagues together for some good conversations about education in NUS.

In addition to realising all the above plans, CDTL also undertook one more new initiative in 2010 – the able communicator project. We are working with CELC and also developing our own resources within CDTL to help to enhance the communication skills of our students. To achieve this, CDTL has undertaken steps to develop a communication skill series for our students, to be launched within the first quarter of 2011. Our communication skills instructor, Ms Shen Chi, has started work at CDTL from 1 November 2010, and is deep in planning for the 2011 Communication Skills Student Workshop Series. Please help us to encourage your students to actively participate in this workshop series.

2011 therefore promises to be an even busier year, with the above programmes to be further developed and new challenges to meet. The focus for 2011, as the title of this

New

Student Workshop Series: Communication Skills

“The focus for 2011 ... will be to build on the foundations laid and to venture into developing our various outreach efforts

- **CDTL Luncheon Series**
- **EiRP Development**
- **TLHE 2011**
- ***Networking with peer institutions***

message suggests, will be to build on the foundations laid and to venture into developing our various outreach efforts.

Internal Outreach

✦ CDTL Luncheon Series

To date, we have seen 3 sets of colleagues at CDTL engaged in lunch chats on the following 3 topics – *enhancing the student’s varsity experience, developing good communication skills among NUS students and the issues surrounding the external validation of teaching*. Given the level of positive engagement at these luncheons, we anticipate continuing with this initiative for some time to come.

✦ EiRP development

The EiRP is both an internal and an external outreach platform. With the warm reception of the Inaugural Educator-in-Residence, Professor Daniel Bernstein, CDTL looks forward to developing this scheme further, and there is already talk of an EiRP Alumni Circle for the future! As we speak, follow-ups arising from the first visit are in the works, even as we plan for the second visitor to come to CDTL. We take this opportunity to thank all colleagues and students for the interest shown and would like to invite feedback and input to help us make the second visit an even more enriching one for everyone in NUS.

External Outreach

✦ TLHE 2011

CDTL has hosted 5 successful conferences on Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (TLHE) since 2000. The 6th TLHE will be held in early December 2011, and we have plans to make it markedly different from previous TLHEs in terms of structure, and student involvement with more emphasis on hands-on workshops. When plans are more

concrete, we will share the conference details with all colleagues. TLHE 2011 will extend CDTL's reach further by not just bringing together old friends and established partners, but to forge new links and professional contacts and enable even more productive exchanges.

+ Networking with peer institutions

Over the years, CDTL has built up a reputation globally as a place where people gather for pedagogical exchanges on a range of CDTL platforms. CDTL is now well positioned to build up a network of external partners for teaching exchanges, pedagogical research collaborations and sharing of expertise, including our online resources. We believe that by cultivating partnerships with our peer institutions and educators abroad, we will enhance CDTL's capacity

and in the process, bring about both tangible and intangible benefits to NUS colleagues.

I hope you are as energised and excited by all the above developments as my team is. The CDTL team will continue to engage you on the above platforms and will constantly seek to establish new ways of engagement. We hope to have you join us in whatever capacity you wish to be involved and look forward to seeing you at CDTL events in 2011.

Happy New Year, everyone!

**Take care,
Huang Hoon and the CDTL Team**

STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS



*Ms Chichi C. SHEN
Instructor of
Communication Skills,
CDTL*

A Warm Welcome to Shen Chi!

Shen Chi joined our team on 1 November 2010.

Prior to joining CDTL, Shen Chi was a full-time lecturer teaching Academic English in the Writing Centre, National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan.

Shen Chi graduated from the National Taiwan University with a major in Foreign Languages and Literatures. She received her MA in English from the University of York. She also holds the accredited CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English Language to Adults) and BEC Higher (Business English Certificate) from Cambridge ESOL.

Her general interest is in promoting good reading – for the benefit of readers as well as publishers. Her long-term partnership with a publishing representative in good repute has shaped her self-view as a multibrIDGE for authors, publishers, and the reading public. She believes when readers are educated to be critical and selective, they can become the support or driving force behind the publishing business, consequently encouraging authors and publishers to produce more quality and challenging contents for reading.

She will be conducting CDTL's Student Workshop Series on Communication Skills.

A Big Thank You to Shin Dee!

Shin Dee who was Editor of *CDTLink* for the last 3 years will be moving on to focus on other CDTL publications.

If you have any feedback or would like to contribute articles, please contact: Bee Choon email: cdtybc@nus.edu.sg • Tel: (65) 6516 8047

We look forward to your continued support.

Educator-in-Residence Programme (EiRP) 2010

The EiRP is a new CDTL initiative that provides a platform for distinguished educators to visit NUS to share their expertise with the faculty and student community through a range of activities such as public lectures, teaching seminars, staff and student workshops, formal and informal meetings/discussions and individual/group consultations.

The objectives of the EiRP are:

- ✚ To facilitate the exchange of ideas, expertise and perspectives in education, policies, pedagogy and innovations with NUS faculty members, Teaching Academy Fellows and the University Administration;
- ✚ To engage the NUS community in teaching and learning issues to promote teaching excellence and student learning; and
- ✚ To provide opportunities for possible institutional link-ups for research collaborations, study trips and professional exchanges.

Professor Daniel Bernstein was CDTL's first Educator-in-Residence. He is the Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence and also a Professor in the Department of Psychology, University of Kansas. Prof Bernstein has published extensive work on the evaluation of teaching, particularly in the areas of peer review of teaching and course portfolios.

Prof Bernstein visited CDTL/NUS from 13 September-15 October 2010. During the 5-week period, he was engaged in a host of activities with the CDTL Team, the NUS Teaching Academy, faculty members and students.

Main Highlights



• Public Lecture, 28 Sep 2010

The lecture titled “Trends in Higher Education: How can we stay ahead (or even keep up)?” was held at the University Auditorium. Prof Bernstein provided insights on how universities can constructively respond to challenges as a result of influences or changes in instructional practice, education policy and public opinion in education. This lecture is available at

<http://www.cdtl.nus.edu.sg/global/eirp-public-lecture.htm>



NUS Provost, Prof Tan Eng Chye presenting Prof Bernstein with the gift of “xue”
Artist: Dr. Ho Chee Lick



L-R: A/P Chng Huang Hoon, Prof Tan Eng Chye, Prof Dan Bernstein, Prof Tan Thiam Soon, Prof Bernard Tan, A/P Laksh Samavedham, A/P Daphne Pan

• Faculty Dialogue, 9 Oct 2010

About 30 faculty members and 7 students interacted and discussed “Embracing Technology in Education” at the Dialogue session.

• Teaching Assistant Programme (TAP), 22-23 Sep 2010

Prof Bernstein delivered a plenary session titled “Motivating students through engaged learning and authentic assessment” to 49 Teaching Assistants (22 September) and facilitated a microteaching session (23 September).



• Student Workshop, 7 Oct 2010

The workshop on “Graduating into the 21st century workplace: Essential skills for an uncertain world” was held at Lecture Theatre 4, NUS. In this interactive session, Prof Bernstein highlighted the kind of thinking and perspectives required in today’s employment and multicultural work environment. This workshop is available for viewing on NUScast at <http://www.cdtl.nus.edu.sg/global/eirp-stud-wkshop.htm>.



- **Sharing of Expertise with CDTL**

CDTL team had several discussions with Prof Bernstein on various pedagogy issues and organisational matters.

- **Discussion with Provost Office, 17 Sep 2010**

Prof Bernstein had discussion with Prof Tan Eng Chye, NUS Provost; Prof Tan Thiam Soon, Vice-Provost (Education); Prof Tan Tai Yong, Vice-Provost (Student Life); Prof Daniel Chan, Assoc Provost (Graduate Education); Prof Bernard Tan, Assoc Provost (Undergraduate Education); A/Prof Chng Huang Hoon, Director; and A/Prof Laksh Samavedham, Deputy Director, CDTL on education policies.

- **Engaging NUS Faculty Members**

Prof Bernstein held several discussions with NUS faculty members from various departments on education and teaching or learning issues.

- **Teaching Seminars and Discussions with NUS Departments**

Item	Description
Department of Psychological Medicine 29 Sep 2010	Prof Bernstein conducted a small group teaching session on “training the trainer” for about 40 staff, comprising doctors, psychologists and nurses.
Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering 30 Sep 2010	The focus of the discussion with the ECE Academic Committee was on how to measure teaching performance.
Departments of Real Estate and Building 13 Oct 2010	Prof Bernstein conducted a teaching seminar on course planning and use of technology in class for about 20 staff and graduate students.
Centre for English Language Communication 13 Oct 2010	Prof Bernstein was invited to be one of the members for the Panel Discussion on Academic Writing across the Disciplines. The session was convened by the Pedagogical Research and Seminars Committee/CELC

- **Meetings with NUS Teaching Academy**

The NUS Teaching Academy held several meetings with Prof Bernstein. He was invited to attend their regular meetings and activities such as the Teaching Academy Exco meeting, the Teaching and Learning Club outreach activity, E-journal subcommittee, Student Feedback and Peer Review meetings.



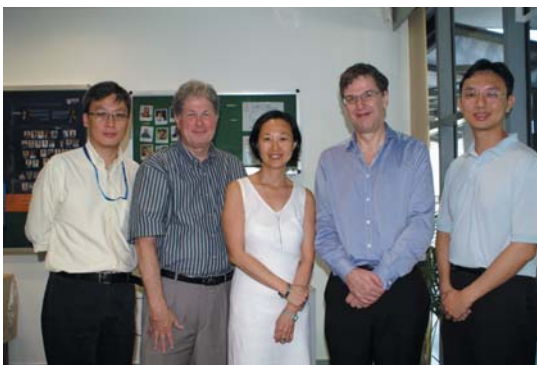
- 3rd CDTL Luncheon Series, 8 Oct 2010

The group comprising 17 faculty members from various departments discussed issues pertaining to External Validation of Teaching



L-R: Dr. Ho Han Kiat, Prof Tan Thiam Soon, Prof Bernstein

- Farewell Lunch, 14 Oct 2010



L-R: Dr Ang Eng Tat, Prof Daniel Bernstein, A/P Chng Huang Hoon, Prof John Richardson, Dr Ben Leong



L-R: Dr Lee Hon Sing, Prof Daniel Bernstein, A/P Laksh Samavedham, A/P Frank Voon Chee Tet



Prof Daniel Bernstein with CDTL team and guests

Educator-in-Residence Programme (EiRP) 2010:

In Conversation with Professor Daniel Bernstein



CDTLink caught up with Professor Bernstein to find out his thoughts on teaching and learning related issues that were addressed during his time in NUS.

Welcome to Singapore and to NUS, Professor Bernstein! Could you tell us a little about your work as Director of the Center for Teaching Excellence at University of Kansas (KU)?

Our centre is organised around a simple idea; teaching should be a continuous inquiry into what procedures and conditions help students learn the best they can. An excellent teacher is someone who learns from the quality of students' work. When students do well, the teacher continues those practices, but when students struggle to learn, an excellent teacher tries to discover better ways to prepare students and help them achieve. So, we do many things to assist our colleagues in that inquiry into student

learning. We offer workshops, we facilitate conversations among teachers, and we provide a community for public consideration of teaching and learning. Our signature activity is the generation of electronic portfolios in which faculty members present their teaching practices, their students' work, and their description of what they have learned about teaching from working with students. We hope that our community of visible conversation around learning will have the same intellectual energy and quality that is typically found around the research and scholarship of our faculty colleagues.

In your conversations with NUS colleagues these past few weeks, what have been the most keenly discussed teaching and learning issue(s)?

One issue that came up a lot is the development of creativity and originality in students' academic work. NUS faculty have great praise for their students' diligence and preparation, and we all see that energy and commitment as an asset. Our definition of understanding in a field, however, usually includes some ability to use what has been learned in ways that were not explicitly taught, and some faculty members feel they are only successful in helping students remember what has been taught. They would like to find ways to develop a broader and more independent understanding that includes new applications and creative uses of the ideas found in their courses.

Another issue centres around the use of class time; many conversations focused on the value of direct lecturing by professors and whether it is the best way to teach. Certainly there are times when a lecture is a good teaching tool, most especially when students already know a lot about a field. When a faculty member lectures on her or his integrated and synthesized understanding of a field, however, that typically does not translate into deep understanding by students. The students can repeat what the professor said, but they likely cannot use those ideas in new ways. So in a sense, the conversation about lectures is related to the conversation about generating a deep understanding in students. Lectures

"An excellent teacher is someone who learns from the quality of students' work. When students do well, the teacher continues those practices, but when students struggle to learn, an excellent teacher tries to discover better ways to prepare students and help them achieve."

“... we must first think of teaching as serious intellectual work, not simply as a routine delivery of knowledge.”

work well in some contexts, but many professors find that lecturing is less effective in helping beginning students acquire a flexible understanding of course ideas. Much of our conversation was spent talking about alternatives to direct lecturing, mostly in discussing practical methods of having useful interactions in large classes.

Are these issues similar (or different) to the teaching and learning issues that your colleagues face at KU?

These issues are very similar to what we discuss. Lecturing is the main way that faculty members have taught for centuries, and it is challenging to reconsider this method in new ways. So we also look for practical ways to encourage students to apply concepts to new problems. Our university, like NUS, has many classrooms that are large lecture theatres, and more planning is required to allow students in such a setting to have meaningful interactions.

One way that our students are different is that some of them are not very diligent about their studies. I admire the way that NUS students do their academic work outside of class, and I tried to learn what I could about how and why that is typical in Singapore. Our goal is for students to use ideas and practice application to new contexts, but that work can only be done if students come to class having done the assigned reading and writing. We spend a lot of our conversations at KU exploring ways to motivate students to come to class ready to use what they have been asked to read.

You strongly advocate that an essential part of excellence in teaching includes providing a culture and environment in which faculty members can represent the intellectual work they do in teaching. Could you tell us more about this?

The key idea is that we must first think of teaching as serious intellectual work, not simply as a routine delivery of knowledge. It is not enough for me to plan a clear presentation that makes available my own understanding of my field; I need to demonstrate that my students have acquired an understanding of the field through their experiences in my module. That is a more demanding intellectual task than simply organising some lectures and giving them in a clear fashion.

All forms of intellectual work are made publicly visible

to other scholars, and that process has many advantages. When work is public it can be used by others engaged in the same field, and in some cases those people will build upon that work and develop the ideas and evidence further. In addition, other scholars can examine, analyse, and possibly criticise public work. Such a marketplace of ideas with constant critical feedback is essential to the continuous development and evolution of intellectual work, and the universality of peer review of scholarship indicates that a critical community is valuable to academic progress. Since we consider teaching to be more than just a performance of knowledge, but an act of intellectual inquiry in its own right, it is essential that we make our teaching and our students' learning visible to our colleagues for their consideration. They may imitate our methods in hope of getting similar results, they may further develop our methods in new ways, and they may point out flaws in what we have done or in how we write about it. In all those cases, we participate in a community of scholars whose focus is on the discovery of the best ways to help students learn deeply. In our centre, we create a virtual community in which faculty members make their teaching and their students' learning visible for all to see and to comment on.

Let's turn our attention to technology-enabled learning, which you have highlighted as being a key component in effective teaching. How can we do more to enable and encourage more faculty members to incorporate technology-enabled learning into their curricula?

It is not easy to convince faculty members to add technological tools to their set of teaching skills; learning to use new tools takes time and energy, and both of those are in short supply in any modern university. We try two approaches to engaging faculty colleagues in that task of acquiring and implementing new technology skills.

First, we appeal to their genuine interest in having students learn their field. There are many studies that demonstrate how well students benefit from individual interactions with technological teaching environments. We read those studies, talk about them, and ask faculty members if they would like their students to use time outside of class to acquire content. If so, we make technological tools available to them, either generic programmes they can fill with their own content or pre-prepared materials that cover general topics in their field.

Second, I ask them what teaching activities take the most time; when I know what those are, I ask which ones they would most like to be rid of. Whenever possible, I suggest that they be liberated from those chores in teaching that are least enjoyable, and we propose substituting something that the professor enjoys more. If there are interesting face-to-

face teaching activities that a professor enjoys, we can make time for those by replacing a less enjoyable activity that can be handled (as well or better) by an automated programme of instruction. Once faculty members experience the benefits of technology, it is easier to invite them to try the more exotic and complex versions that are available. The bottom line in this strategy is that technology can take on a variety of functions that are standardised and often repetitive, allowing the professor the freedom to engage students in more interesting ways that are difficult to do with computers.

You had the opportunity to engage in active dialogue with our students through the student workshop you conducted on 7 October 2010 and our Teaching Assistants Programme (TAP) this semester. What has been your observation in terms of the teaching and learning issues that our students and graduate student TAs face?

From the students' perspective, the biggest challenge is to identify modules or other experiences that will allow the development of independent scholarship and academic creativity. While a foundation of knowledge (simply remembering things) is useful, the real benefit from an education is the ability to respond to and deal with issues, situations, or problems you have not seen before. One of the hardest things a student has to learn is how to recognise what knowledge and skills he or she already has that are relevant in new contexts. If you have only taken modules or programmes that train specific or particular responses to predictable situations, you will be at a disadvantage. Students need to select those opportunities that challenge and stretch them, calling for new uses of old ideas and information.

From the TA perspective, the biggest challenge is to become comfortable with learning from your own teaching. Every time you plan and deliver a module, you are doing an experiment in learning. Your students are learning, and you need to carefully examine that learning to find out what your module did well and where it had weaker impact. This is hard to do, in part because you will want to feel good about your work, and it can be unpleasant to acknowledge there is room for improvement. On the other hand, it is exciting and engaging to have a puzzle or problem to solve, and

there will always be levels of learning that are beyond your students. After 35 years of teaching, I am still discovering new ways to improve every time I teach. You can spend a happy career as a teacher trying to help more students reach higher levels of understanding. But to do that, you need to see yourself as learning about teaching by looking at what your students did and did not learn.

One final question. During your student workshop, you outlined the essential skills students need to navigate the uncertain work world that they will enter once they graduate. As educators, what part can we play in helping them acquire these skills?

This is a very good question, and there is not a single or a simple answer. It is hard to know the future, so we can never be sure we know about the world we prepare our students for. Still, there is a basic frame of reference that may help in this regard. Within any module there is a fixed amount of time and a limit to the amount of studying and writing that students can do. When allocating that time we need to consider the balance between covering the content that we as scholars value and giving students a chance to discover (or uncover for themselves) how we use what we know in addressing new issues. I return to my earlier claim that a deep understanding includes being able to use what you know in ways that were not taught to you. It is hard, but we need to make space in our modules for students to practise using their knowledge and practise the tools of discovery in our field. We need to give them ill-structured problems that are not familiar in form and allow them the time to make mistakes and recover from them. This is very hard to do because it is easy to make problems that are just too hard and beyond their reach. A developmental theorist named Vygotsky identified a zone of proximal development – that space in which the challenges of life are neither too easy nor too hard to be useful. If as teachers we make room within the delivery of content for students to encounter that zone, to struggle a bit with application of their understanding, then we may be preparing them for comparable situations in life and in work.

Thank you for taking time off from your busy schedule to talk to us, Professor Bernstein!

Dialogue Session with Graduate Students

Working on your thesis: How to get started, and how to keep it going?

Left: A/P Sow Chong Haur at the Faculty of Science dialogue session on 1 September 2010.

Right: A/P Laksh Samavedham discussing with students at the Faculty of Engineering dialogue session on 25 August 2010.



Gaining a Masters or Doctoral degree via research involves the use of both domain dependent skills and generic skills. While individual research supervisors may be able to teach all these skills to their students, one can foresee the varying levels of students' awareness of these generic skills. Students normally find asking themselves questions at different stages of their work: for example, "Where, and how, do I start?", "How do I go about selecting the research topic and framing the research questions?", "What if my plans go wrong? How do I cope with failure and still stay motivated to complete my degree?", "What habits and good practices should I adopt to make my thesis writing a less-painful experience?" and "What would examiners look for at my final PhD defense?" Not all students are able to find answers to these questions easily or naturally and yet these are important issues for them to deal with. In this context, CDTL held a dialogue session in March 2010 to engage graduate students on these issues. We are, however, fully aware that one session cannot answer (or even surface) all the issues that any student may encounter – but a start needed to be made somewhere. CDTL sees these kinds of dialogue sessions as important contributions to the recent initiatives that are being put in place to further enhance the graduate education experience at NUS.

About 120 NUS graduate students, most of them enrolled in PhD programmes, were engaged by six faculty members from across the University in these dialogue sessions. While the original idea was to have a single session with a panel of three faculty members addressing the issues and answering questions

from the participants, the audience size of 120 made the idea of a dialogue not so feasible. It was also felt that the research processes and issues surrounding the research work can vary significantly between the different disciplines and; the faculty members involved felt that students can better benefit from faculty/school-specific sessions. Therefore, the original dialogue session evolved into seven segments – one each for FASS, FoS, SoC, YLLSoM, and SDE and two for the FoE (as there were more registrants from this Faculty). Each of these segments was handled by faculty members from the respective Faculty/School. The emphasis was on hearing from the participants; use the experience of faculty members and other participants to suggest ways of dealing/coping with the different issues; and to bring to their attention useful resources available through various media.

There was enthusiastic participation from the students at each of these sessions. Several thoughtful comments and practical issues surfaced from the students which provided some useful feedback for the facilitators to follow-up on in future sessions. Overall, it was a productive endeavour for the students and the faculty involved. Come 2011, CDTL hopes to organise a focused workshop/seminar series that will provide our graduate student community an opportunity to hone the generic skills needed for success in their research. We welcome colleagues from the various departments who may have interest in helping to facilitate such future sessions. Write or call us at CDTL.

A/P Lakshminarayanan Samavedham

University Town (UTown)



University Town (UTown) is one of NUS' key strategic initiatives, where there will be substantive qualitative enhancement to the overall NUS educational experience and reflects NUS' commitment to collaborative and multi-disciplinary learning.



Residential Colleges



Graduate Residence



Education Resource Centre



EduSports Complex



Campus for Research Excellence And Technological Enterprise (CREATE)

Two key components of UTown:

- *A college system incorporating residential learning*
- *A mix of social, recreational, sporting and enterprise-related facilities and activities*

Pictures are artists' impression only and information is accurate at the time of printing.

Located across the NUS Kent Ridge campus, UTown will redefine the way how people live and learn on campus. It combines the convenience of campus living with an exciting multidisciplinary academic programme.

Cutting-edge research facilities such as the Campus for Research Excellence and Technological Enterprise (CREATE) will also be located at UTown.

Its two Residential Colleges (Tembusu and Cinnamon) and the Graduate Residence will be launched in August 2011.



Professor Tommy Koh, who is currently Ambassador-at-Large at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and is also Special Advisor of the Institute of Policy Studies and Chairman of the National Heritage Board, has been appointed Rector of Tembusu College. Prof Koh will be working with College Master Assoc Prof Gregory Clancey, a scholar specialising in Japanese history as well as the history of Science and Technology.

Professor Wang Gungwu, Chairman of the East Asian Institute and NUS University Professor, has been appointed Rector of Cinnamon College. The College will house the University Scholars Programme (USP). This marks a milestone for the interdisciplinary programme as it transforms into a full-fledged College. Its College Master is John Richardson, USP Director and Professor of English Literature.



Pictures are artists' impression only and information is accurate at the time of printing.

Establishing a Residential USP



*Prof John Richardson
Director, University Scholars Programme &
Master of USP residential college*

The move to a Residential College in June 2011 will transform the University Scholars Programme (USP).

For ten years now, the programme has been offering a complementary education for students from its six partner faculties. We take 30% of our students' curriculum and do two things. First, we help them become more broadly educated, more capable of making connections, more critical and more articulate. Second, we provide new perspectives which enable our students to approach the remainder of the curriculum, their major, differently.

All that will continue and, we hope, grow stronger. But the strengthening of the curriculum does not represent a sea change, and the future of our formal education will to some extent be business as usual. What will change most fundamentally will be the informal education we offer. This is where the transformation will occur, and I don't think "transformation" is too strong a word. The Residential College will mean that learning is no longer boxed away into school times and school places. It will happen in classes and outside them, during study hours and beyond them. It will become an integral and important part of our students' lives.

That change will come about in three main ways through three sets of relationships.

Students and Teachers

First, the relations between teachers and students will change. Of course, there is already

a range of such relations. Not every teacher adopts a very teacherly persona, and many students reject an obedient student's role. But given that, the way we arrange our classrooms and conduct our classes still tends to present the teacher as the dispenser of expert knowledge, and tends to nudge students towards sitting (metaphorically) at the teacher's feet.

The teacher/student relationship in the Residential College will be more collaborative than this. Teachers and students will work together, and be engaged in a common pursuit of knowledge and understanding. A number of conditions will ensure this. For one thing, class enrolments will remain small. For another, the classrooms will have no podium or focal-point teacher's desk; they will be set out conference-style or in islands to encourage discussion and interaction. Most important of all, however, will be the fact that students and teachers will meet each other often in settings outside the classroom. Eating and relaxing together will inevitably shift the relationship away from a purely teacher/student one.

"The Residential College will mean that learning is no longer boxed away into school times and school places. It will happen in classes and outside them, during study hours and beyond them."



*Meeting visitors and
interacting over food*



*Prof John Richardson
in conversation with
students*

Students and Students

Second, students will learn a lot from each other. Again this will build upon what happens already. USP is quite blessed with space, and some of our spaces are given over to student use. The students who gather in Chatterbox, their lounge, do so to study, to relax, and above all, to talk. Much of that talk is intellectual in the broadest sense of the word. It addresses important questions and brings different perspectives to bear upon them.



USP students at their student lounge aka Chatterbox

The college will have both the physical environment and the culture to foster even more of that kind of talk. Our spaces will include study rooms (which are not classrooms), a dining hall, a large student lounge downstairs, small lounges on each of the residential floors, and nooks and crannies in all the corridors. In other words, the buildings will encourage the students to gather and talk. And the college culture will reinforce that. There will be non-curricular lectures on all kinds of topics, there will be reading and writing groups, there will be faculty in the dining hall with the students. In short, the atmosphere will be one in which ideas matter and are taken seriously.

Another element in the student mix will be our Student Exchange Programme (SEP) students. The college will take in a good number of these, and we'll be careful both to choose and to induct them so that they can be fully integrated into college life. The presence of students from different disciplines



Artist's impression of a theme room in UTown (picture is accurate at the time of printing)

already ensures a variety of perspectives in USP; the visiting students from different countries will add to this.

Students and Others

Finally, students will learn a lot by mixing with a range of different people.

The current USP office is a model of student centricity. (I can say this because that is what I found in place when I came here a year ago, so it is something for which I can take no credit.) The value of our student focus is far greater than simply giving good service. Students are constantly in and out of the office, not just to hand in papers or collect information, but to work with our officers on various projects. The amount the students gain from such interaction cannot be overestimated. They learn how to operate in the world, how to get things done, how to communicate, how to behave appropriately in different situations and with different people, how to negotiate, and how to make a positive impact. The college setting will enhance this kind of learning by increasing the frequency and variety of meetings between students and officers.

But the college will also bring one other, and completely new, opportunity. We will have three visitors' apartments, and will use these to host a range of international figures. Our visitors will offer talks, sometimes join discussion groups, eat with the students and take part in informal meetings. These activities will give students the chance to converse with different kinds of people in different settings. They will help them develop both intellectually and socially.

Conclusion

Universities can be amongst the most inspiring of human institutions. At the heart of the university is the collaborative struggle of teachers and students for knowledge, understanding, even wisdom. We sometimes lose sight of that among the quotidian cares and worries of working life. But change can act as a salutary reminder, and UTown represents such a change. UTown seems to me to be an attempt to re-energise part of the great vision of what a university can and should be. For USP, this means the opportunity to transform the programme in the ways I have described. More than that, it means the opportunity to fashion an education that extends beyond the classroom and that has a deep impact on our students' lives.

Prof John Richardson

The USP Residential College: A Faculty Member's Perspective

One of the most important aspects of the decision by NUS to develop UTown is that it will aim to integrate living and learning in the Residential Colleges (RCs). This integration will have the potential to extend beyond-the-classroom learning further than has been the case up to now. My hope is that such learning in the colleges in general, and the USP college in particular, will help us achieve the main objective of a genuine education, namely deep understanding. Here I would briefly like to consider three issues that will probably be crucial for achieving this objective in the case of the USP college.

Community

Each of the new NUS colleges will become a *community*. The word *college* is related to *colleague*, a partner. It derives from the Latin *legere*, to choose, which underscores a significant element of an RC: that it consists of a group of individuals in voluntary partnership with one another. Thus, the partnership will involve those who together choose to participate in the college, and all USP students, past and present, and staff will potentially be partners in the college. The idea of a community of partners is further underscored by the name given to the faculty who will staff it: they will be *fellows* of, that is partners in, the college, for the word fellow also has its roots in the notion of partnership in shared property.

This communal aspect of the college comes to the fore most explicitly in the fact that it will be *residential*. Originally having a religious reference, the word implies that those staying in a place perform duties there. Something of this meaning survives today in the notion of an artist in residence, who – quite literally – performs duties to the institution extending residence. I hope that those in residence in the new college will form a community of partners, a genuine fellowship of learning.

Technology

Because the USP has a ten-year history there is already a USP community. Some of the most important members of this community are



Dr Johan Geertsema

the students, alumni, staff and faculty. But to this sense of community founded in a shared history will now be added a significant spatial component, since our college, like the others, will have its own buildings and facilities. The RC is a spatial technology that has been fashioned to integrate living and learning, which will be a cardinal element in fostering a strong intellectual community. The spatial technology that is the college will enable this by means of its physical configuration, which will allow students to study, sleep, eat, relax, attend seminars, and work in teams in one location. Moreover, they will be doing all this in the same location where the fellows of the college will have their offices, and where a good number of them will not only teach but live.

This integration of living and learning through the contiguity of student and faculty spaces will have potentially far-reaching consequences, but the key point for me is that it must be in the service of genuine learning. I hope that

“The RC is a spatial technology that has been fashioned to integrate living and learning, which will be a cardinal element in fostering a strong intellectual community.”



Students meet their USP academic advisors

“If we redefine learning in less hierarchical terms, as we should and as the spatial technology of the RC will allow us, then we will also have to explore new definitions of discipline and guard against the breakdown of boundaries between professors and students.”

this spatial technology will help enable deep understanding, and that such understanding will be further fostered by means of judiciously used additional technological aids: not only interactive projectors or smart whiteboards, but good food shared in the course of good conversations.

Responsibility

As in any community, those who will make up a closely-knit RC will need to learn to live and work together in a respectful way: the notion of *duty*, as noted above, is implicit in *residence*. The physical integration of living and learning, coupled with the fact that students and staff will meet not only formally in the classroom, but informally outside of it, has the potential of transforming the hierarchical relation between them into one that would be more like a meeting of peers.

Traditionally, the relation between the professor and the learner has been understood in hierarchical terms, with the professor publicly declaring and thus imparting his knowledge to learners conceived as disciples: this word derives from the Latin *discipulus*, which means *learner*, from which is also derived

the word *discipline*, since learning would mean disciplining the learner. A relation of teachers and students that is less hierarchical, more one of peers or partners, would be very different from one where the professor is the more important party, the master or owner of knowledge, and the students her disciples or acolytes. It would have the potential of truly being a meeting of minds.

But such a transformed relationship will also pose challenges, perhaps in particular concerning discipline. If we redefine learning in less hierarchical terms, as we should and as the spatial technology of the RC will allow us, then we will also have to explore new definitions of discipline and guard against the breakdown of boundaries between professors and students. Being partners in the intellectual quest for genuine learning and deep understanding cannot mean leveling the distinction between them, for the partners still need to play different roles within the community. One of the important challenges we will face in the college will be to redefine the relation between students and professors in a responsible way.

Dr Johan Geertsema

The USP Residential College: Students’ Perspective

As the University Scholars Programme (USP) prepares for our move into Residential College (RC), we are faced with the challenge of transitioning an existing academic programme that has been honed over the last 10 years, into a residential environment. How will

the introduction of a mandatory residential component redefine our learning experience?

When contemplating the merits of an RC system, many might instinctively envisage the convenience that such an arrangement precipitates. For example, students will no longer need to spend time commuting between home and school during peak hours. Naturally, time saving of various forms will result from living so near to our classrooms. The question then is how extensively will the extra time impact us? Perhaps this convenience that living in the RC accords will cultivate a brand of education that extends beyond the classroom, one that provides students with the conditions for a more reflective form of learning.

Given the tight timeline and heavy workload of university life, it is easy for students to

Residential dining experience for USP students



be constantly in a rush. We rush from lectures to tutorials, from tutorials to the canteen and back. We rush to study for tests and to complete assignments, because there never seems to be enough time. Being caught up in this seemingly never-ending rush often prevents us from pausing to ponder and deliberate on what we have been learning in class. The integration of living and learning in the RC then offers the possibility of change to this routine. Granted, some of us already consciously apportion time for such reflection, but the RC education model systematises this sense of reflectiveness, by the means of both architecture and activities. Strategically positioned common spaces will entice students to stop in their tracks to talk to college mates about something new that we just learnt. Such conversations will also take place as students dine together daily, providing more platforms for us to build on what we have learnt in classes, through listening to different perspectives and opinions and engaging them.

More importantly, USP seems well positioned to make full use of these enhancements given the diversity amongst our students and faculty members, as well as our curriculum. Since 70% of our education is grounded in a particular discipline offered by one of the six partner faculties, every student is able to bring something vastly different, yet relevant to the discussion table. Hence, the scope of such discussions will be broadened by the diversity of views. Also, USP students typically spend the other 30% of our education taking USP modules that emphasise critical thinking, through which we constantly challenge well-established assumptions. The rigour of our academic training will enable us to capitalise on the increased quantity of person-to-person exchanges afforded by the RC system, making “interaction” both a social and intellectual experience. Hopefully, such interactions will constitute a form of learning that has real-world consequences; learning how to appreciate diversity, live with one another, and be humbly taught by others. In fact, it almost feels like USP ought to have been a residential programme to begin with, where we literally can learn as we live.

However, residential living is not without its caveats. The main challenge we face is that of cost. The introduction of state-of-the-art facilities and good-quality food also brings a price tag. As such, the requirements for a USP education as imagined have also changed. Previously, prospective students and their parents could evaluate the viability of pursuing



USP students learn to cook in the USP Residential Pilot

an NUS-USP education without needing to consider this additional cost of residential living. Now that USP will transition into a residential academic programme, the question, “Am I able to afford a USP education?” becomes more pertinent. Though USP will probably be able to continue attracting interested applicants, will the cost factor affect the demographics and mix of the student population? If so, how will this change impact the learning community of the programme?

Even for those who are able to afford this additional cost, would they be willing to do so? Would they be sufficiently informed about the merits of an RC education system to be willing to pay? It is likely that Singaporeans without adequate knowledge of RCs will tend to view the additional cost involved only in terms of the benefits of convenience. Given the efficiency of the public transportation system and how small Singapore is, this task of creating awareness for an RC education system becomes most crucial, and probably requires a concerted effort by both NUS and USP to encourage the public to view residential living beyond its apparent functionality.

Even with these realities in mind, we remain optimistic about the benefits of deep, reflective learning that the RC model will afford. It is a kind of learning that transcends the Olympian view of memorising textbook theories or critiquing arguments, and allows us the luxury of time to ponder meaningfully on how our classroom learning changes the way we view society and ourselves. In time, we hope that the envisioned success of this learning model will pave the way for pedagogies to be formulated that will truly raise the caliber of Singaporean students.

Jeremy Auw (Life Sciences and USP) and Marvin Kang (Business and USP)

VISITORS TO CDTL



October 2010:
Mr Manogaran Suppiah,
Executive Director of the
Academy of
Singapore Teachers (right)

October 2010: Members
of Wipro India's
Mission10X team led
by Mr Nagarjuna and
Vice-Chancellor Brig Dr
R S Grewal, Chitkara
University, Chandigarh
India visited CDTL for
a discussion with A/P
Laksh and Prof Mohan
Kankanhalli (SoC).



November 2010: Prof
Zoya Tuiebakhova,
Vice-Rector for Academic
Affair, and Prof Rinat,
Head, Chemical
Engineering, Kazakh-
British Technical
University (KBTU),
Kazakhstan and Dr.
Suresh Valiyaveetil,
Associate Professor,
Materials Research
Laboratory, Department
of Chemistry, NUS



December 2010: Faculty
members and staff
from several Thailand
universities visited CDTL
as part of their miniMIS
Training Programme



Our sincere thanks to the following colleagues for facilitating workshops for CDTL from July to December 2010.

Name	Department	Faculty
Dr Simon Avenell	Japanese Studies	FASS
A/P Timothy P Barnard	History	FASS
Prof Daniel Bernstein	Psychology, University of Kansas, USA	
Mr Brad Blackstone	CELC	
Dr Caroline Brassard	LKYSP	LKYSP
Prof Casey Chan	Orthopaedic Surgery	YLLSoM
A/P Eric Chan	Pharmacy	Science
A/P Chan Lai Wah	Pharmacy	Science
A/P Chan Wai Meng	Centre for Language Studies	FASS
Ms Chen Peiyi	Statistics & Applied Probability	Science
A/P Chang Tou Chuang	Geography	FASS
A/P David KH Chua	Civil Engineering	Engineering
A/P Teofilo C Daquila	Southeast Asian Studies Programme	FASS
Ms Ranji David	FASS Alumni	
Mr Paul Denny	University of Auckland, New Zealand	
Mr Patrick Gallo	CELC	
A/P Narayanan Ganapathy	Sociology	FASS
Dr Johan Geertsema	USP	
A/P Winston Goh	Psychology	FASS
Prof Gopalakrishna-kone P	Anatomy	YLLSoM
Prof Matthew Gwee	Pharmacology	YLLSoM
Mr Chris Harwood	CELC	
Ms Elizabeth Alderman Jahncke	Epidemiology & Public Health	YLLSoM
Dr Gerald Koh	Epidemiology & Public Health	YLLSoM
Dr Sinha Sujeet Kumar	Mech Engineering	Engineering
Dr Ann-Marie Lew	University Health Centre	
A/P Cecilia Lim	Philosophy	FASS
Dr Lim Khee Hiang	Thomson Reuters	
A/P Lim Lum Peng	Preventive Dentistry	Dentistry

Name	Department	Faculty
Mr Matthew Linus	M & O	NUS Business School
Ms Rita Niemann	Centre for Language Studies	FASS
A/P Ooi Wei Tsang	Computer Science	School of Computing
A/P Daphne Pan	English Language & Literature	FASS
A/P Rajendran K	Anatomy	YLLSoM
A/P Rivera Milagros	Communications and New Media Programme	FASS
Dr Dujeepa Samarasekera	Medical Education Unit	YLLSoM
A/P Khanna Sanjay	Physiology	YLLSoM
Prof Seah Kar Heng	Mech Engineering	Engineering
Dr Seow Teck Keong	Biological Sciences	Science
Mr Sivasothi N	Biological Sciences	Science
Dr Soo Yuen Jien	Computer Science	School of Computing
A/P Sow Chong Haur	Physics	Science
A/P Sum Chee Chuong	Decision Sciences	NUS Business School
A/P Tan Chay Hoon	Pharmacology	YLLSoM
A/P Harold Tan	Real Estate	SDE
A/P Victor Tan	Mathematics	Science
A/P Titima Suthiwan	Centre for Language Studies	FASS
Dr Eddie Tong	Psychology	FASS
A/P Francis Voon	Anatomy	YLLSoM
Dr Valerie Wee	English Language & Literature	FASS
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Dr Yap Von Bing	Statistics & Applied Probability	Science
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editorial information

Guest Writers Chng Huang Hoon, Daniel Bernstein, Lakshminarayanan Samavedham, John Richardson, Johan Geertsema, Jeremy Auw, Marvin Kang

Advisors Chng Huang Hoon, Lakshminarayanan Samavedham

Editor(s) Yong Bee Choon, Vickneswari Savarimuthu

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The Editor, CDTLink

Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning, National University of Singapore, Central Library Annexe, Level 6, 10 Kent Ridge Crescent, Singapore 119260

T: (65) 6516-8047 | F: (65) 6777-0342 | E: cdtpost@nus.edu.sg | W: www.cdtl.nus.edu.sg