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NGS ALUMNI AFFAIRS

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## Congratulations

to the following students who have completed their degree in the last few months:

### Tang Pak Kay

"I am currently working in I2R, in the Modulation and Coding department. My current research work is a continuation of my PhD topic, which essentially looks at how to share radio spectrum more efficiently among different radio systems, subjected to certain performance constraints. Other than research, I am also taking Japanese language classes after work for interest. In the mean time, I try to keep fit and stay healthy by working out in the gym."



### Mar Choong Hock

Upon graduating, Choong Hock has 3 things he would like to do:

"First, I'll take a break and spend more time: with the family, on my DIY and gardening projects and to read more non-research related books (finally, yippee!). Second, I wish to explore new research interests when opportunity arises. Third, I endeavor to exercise more vigorously to restore back my out-of-shape physique."

Currently, Choong Hock works in the Networking Protocol Department (Institute for Infocomm Research) researching Wireless MAC protocols.



### Did you know??

A Boeing 747s wingspan is longer than the Wright brother's first flight.

Earthworms have five hearts.

Japan is the largest exporter of frog's legs.

Both PM Lee Hsien Loong and Pres. Barack Obama are alumnus of Harvard graduate schools.

### Lua Yan Hwee Sunny



"I have joined A\*STAR Data Storage Institute (DSI) as a Senior Research Fellow and am working in the Spintronics, Media and Interface division. Currently, I am working on perpendicular magnetic anisotropy devices for spin-transfer torque magnetic random access memory (MRAM) applications, with focus on the possibility multi-level storage to increase the ultimate storage density of MRAM."

### Dai Xilei



"I'm now working in the Singapore Immunology Network in the field of cancer immunology. The work of the laboratory is focused on the interaction between the immune system and cancer cells. Now that I have more time (and money), I also hope to indulge in more travelling around the world!"



Koh Hui Shan



Ping Ping Angela



## Women in Science

By Liu Mei Hui

So it is time to do your Postdoc? And you are in a profession that has been, and still is, largely dominated by men? Well, we are all on the same boat. Our very first Tea Break Discussion, organized by the NGS Alumni Affairs, succeeded in providing advice to various career related questions and much more. The discussion, Women in Science: Navigating the Postdoc Years was lead by Dr Tara Huber from the Genome Institute of Singapore. As a principal investigator, she spoke not only of the general challenges she faced as a Postdoc but was also very candid about sharing her experiences as a female Postdoc, and later, as an investigator.



Although the title of the discussion suggested that its content would largely appeal to only female scientists, advice on how to 'survive' your Postdoc was invaluable and was applicable to anyone starting off on their scientific career. As Tara described it, each of us is starting off now on our personal boat whose destination is our goal in a field of science we want to pursue (or an alternate path we wish to chart out). This means we have to choose our crew (the supervisor, the laboratory, the teammates) carefully to help us on our journey. As a young Postdoc, it was elating to know that I was not the only one in the discussion group to experience struggles, in its various manifestations, as a Postdoc because everyone else had been through this, even Tara! Thus, it is perfectly normal, when things are not as smooth sailing, to believe that you are on The Titanic. Further on, this will indefinitely be a stark contrast to the Caribbean cruise ship you always wished you were on instead. Nonetheless, even if one chose to jump ship, it is important to finish at least one significant project first.



Unlike the typical run of the mill presentation session, the discussion group was open, honest, light-hearted and informative. Sharing each of our experiences just came naturally. The presence of good coffee and sweet desserts also helped. While no bras were burnt during the discussion, all agreed that there are still implicit biases concerning women in this field. As Tara views it, even if this is so, we should keep going, develop a thick skin, have an internal compass and get support, like in this discussion we just had!

"Thanks for all of you who made the group discussion so enjoyable. A big thank you to Elissa for organising and Tara who gave good pointers on this topic. It was very interesting to hear the different perspectives. Personally, the advice to find/assemble our 'crew' in our navigation journey was something that struck me. It will be something that I will be more aware of as I continue this journey. All the best and I'm sure we'll cross each other's path in this not very big sea." Delina Swee

"The talk was very informative! I think I now have a better sense of how to navigate my postdoc and what I'm looking for. I think this is a promising start to the new women in science initiative." Melissa Fullerton

## Alumni Dinner 2008

**"Alumni Dinners will be an Annual event held shortly after graduation to welcome the former student to their new status: Alumni!"**

The NGS Alumni Dinner marked the beginning of a new NGS programme: Alumni Affairs. In August, 2003, twenty-six students entered the halls of NGS – the first to tackle the doctorate degree offered by the NUS Graduate School for Integrative Sciences & Engineering. The graduation ceremony in July 2008 was a great celebration of their accomplishments.

Since July 2008, 38 more students have completed their programme and will be joining the others at Biopolis to dive into their post doctoral training. The Alumni Dinner was a time for celebration and reconnecting. It also provided alumni with the opportunity to meet the new NGS Executive Director, Li Baowen, as well as the new coordinator of Alumni Affairs, Elissa Horn.

Professor Sow Chorng Haur of the NUS Physics department was also able to join the dinner and spoke with the alumni about his own experience, journey which included tips for the new postdocs.

The Alumni Dinner will be an Annual event held shortly after graduation to welcome the former student to their new status: Alumni!



## Alumni Focus:

# Dr. Adrian Koh

NGS Class '08

PhD in Nanomechanics

**Current position:** Suo Group at Harvard University, School of Applied Sciences and Engineering, working on theoretical modeling of soft active materials for energy harvesting.

### What is your favorite thing about doing a postdoc so far?

To be in Harvard, and be able to exchange research knowledge with people from all four corners of the earth. To be in the northeastern part of the US, and be exposed to elements from all four seasons of the year.

### Tell us one or two memories from your NGS years that really stand out?

Ethics course, hands-down. Justine is phenomenal; she's sharp and gives very clear and concise analyses of difficult philosophical concepts. It is from this course, that I REALLY LEARN'T how to write proper, good English essays, hee...

### Do you think NGS prepared you for the 'real world'?

NGS has been very caring. Timely courses like the Toastmasters course for final year PhD students, and research exchange seminars really prepared us for our thesis defense. Events like Justine's annual "open her own house" for us to gather and do catch-ups, and NGS' lunches and dinners were always enjoyable. And no, NGS did not really prepare me for the "real world" as they are all much too caring and kind as compared to the "real, practical world" ha.... But please continue to be caring and kind, ok J?

### How did you choose Boston?

Hmm... choosing Boston to further one's academic pursuits is supposed be a no-brainer, right? Ha.... Well, in fact, I did not consciously choose the place to go to, instead I actually chose the professor I wished to work with. Prof. Zhiqiang Suo came by, we spoke; he was a very patient professor, very willing to share all of his knowledge with me, making sure that I understand the things that he's trying to tell me, and nudged and encouraged me to give inputs during the exchange. Most of all, he told me he has a research group size of 10 researchers, and that he spends weekly one-to-one time with all of his students and post-docs! He is an excellent professor, was recently elected to the National Academy of Engineering and, to top it all off, he's from Harvard! I was blown away, and made up my decision there and then.

### How do you find living in overseas?

Living overseas can be a challenge. Things are more expensive. For instance, I can buy three eggs in Singapore for the price of one in Boston. The weather



is very unpredictable, there was once a temperature drop of 40° C in a single day; I was caught in freezing cold with only a T-shirt and a thin sweater at the end of the day! With only me and my wife, we have to handle everything on our own; we no longer have the broad shoulders of our families to rely on. Living overseas can also be very fun and interesting. The sceneries are breath-taking, with rolling hills, open grasslands, beautiful flowers in full-bloom during the summer, beaches with sand as

fine as talcum powder, sunsets that take our breaths away and most of all, the wintry weather that brings soft, willowy snow flakes, that accumulate on the ground, bare trees and rooftops, creating a picture of black and white. These are scenes that we used to see only in Hollywood movies, it now pops right out before our very eyes!

### What do you do in your spare time?

I go shopping with my wife, and my wife accompanies me on trips to search for good Boston food. We absolutely love the lobsters

there! The clam chowder is spoon-licking good and we dig the tender-soft cheesecakes too... In a nutshell, our hobbies are shopping and eating (typical Singaporeans, ha...). We have a new-found hobby though... skiing! We certainly hope to make the most out of this year's winter to do more winter sports.

### Any other updates?

I was married to my lovely wife in 2006. We do not have any children at the moment, but are thinking of having one soon (will give you updates in due time, ok?). No awards for the past year or so (got one in 2007). I've drafted a paper on energy harvesting, currently awaiting Prof. Suo for his concurrence and approval for submission.

"...choosing Boston to further one's academic pursuits is supposed be a no-brainer, right?"

## NGS NEWS...



- Three new Professors have joined the NGS Executive Committee (ExCo): Professor T.H. Lee, FOE, Professor Joxan Jaffar, SoC, and Prof Raj Rajagopalan, ChBE, FoE. The NGS ExCo now has representation from the FoS, FoE, SoM, SoC, and FASS.
- The total number of students currently enrolled at NGS: 332. That number is expected to rise to 450 in the AY 2009/2010.
- Forty-five new students joined the NGS programmed in January '09. Induction day was held on January 6.
- The Graduate Programme of BioEngineering (GPBE) has been fully integrated into NGS as a focus group. It no longer exists as its own programme. Thank you to all those who contributed to the success of GPBE during the past 7 years!

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### April

Pub/Social Night

*Water & Wine, Biopolis—April 23, 6:30-8:30pm*

### June

Alumni-Current Student Discussion  
Group

### August

Induction Day, August '09

Also coming: ***First-ever NGS Reunion!***

*Congratulations!*

... to Emril Ali for competing in the first OCBC Cycle  
Singapore 40km race!

February 22, 2009



#### Newsletter :

The Alumni Newsletter needs a name! Please send in your name suggestions to [ngseh@nus.edu.sg](mailto:ngseh@nus.edu.sg). The person who submits the chosen name will win fame, recognition...and a small prize!

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We also need freelance writers. If you enjoy writing and have a topic that you would like to write about, please contact us! Reviews of Alumni events, lectures, seminars, are also welcomed.

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Photographers needed! Please submit your photographs so the rest of us can enjoy your skills! Photographs will be featured in Newsletters and on the Alumni website.



## Help Wanted:

- ★ *Three alumni to help organize the first-ever reunion!*
- ★ *ALL Alumni to inform Alumni Affairs of recent publications / current news.*
- ★ *Spontaneous, Spunky, Social Scientist to help organize NGS Alumni Pub Nights!*



**We're on the Web!**

<http://blog.nus.edu.sg/ngsalumni/>

and... Facebook:

**"NGS Alumni—Singapore"**

