

Alumni Niche

NGS Alumni Club

Interview with the president -
Teo Peili



Post-doc Experience

Prof Robert H. Grubbs lab
[Caltech, Pasadena] for
2yrs & 3mths.

Great experience and
plenty to learn from a
Nobel lab despite the
great amount of stress.

Current Research focus

Developing catalysts for
carrying out one step
Anti-Markonikov Olefin
Hydration. This is a
process to make primary
alcohols from terminal
alkenes (C=C double
bond compounds). There
has been no reproducible
known catalyst that can
carry out this
transformation so it is
deemed to be a ground
breaking science once
successful. It has also
been listed as the Top ten
challenges in catalysis
since 1993.

Why did you decide to set up the NGS alumni club?

While I was back in Singapore for the CNY holidays, I suddenly felt that there was no proper alumni group in NGS that takes care of alumni welfare in a systematic manner. All activities organized previously were ad hoc and run by NGS staff instead. I felt that the alumni would understand alumni needs best so I started discussing the setting up of an alumni club with Pak Kay and Wai Leong. They both agreed with me and we decided to start an NGS Alumni Club! I then quickly talked to Prof Li to get his support for the Club's formation before the people I enrolled started regretting! We started getting more and more people to join the Exco so that we would have enough representatives in the Club from classes of 2008 to 2011, AGS, NGSS and GPBE programs. Slowly, one by one, we enrolled a total of 11 members for the Exco, enough to form the central committee as well as to fill the two core sub committees, Publicity and Events sub-comm.. During our first Club meeting, I was "arrowed" to be the President of the Club, probably because I'm the most free person in the club to come up with this idea of starting a club like that (given that it is 2 am in LA now and I'm still working on this)! Now that the club is 3 months old and has had its first event being organized successfully, I would love to see this club continue on and organize more activities that would benefit the NGS Alumni. The club would also serve as a platform for alumni to stay connected through activities and the club's newsletter.

Exco 2011

President

Peili Teo

Vice-president

Tan Sweejin

Treasurer

Stanley Ng

Secretary

Tang Pak Kay

Events committee

Linda Lim

(director)

Yeow Waileong

(deputy-

director)

Publicity/IT

Committee

Felicia Loe

(director)

Alison Lee

CONTENT PAGE

Page 1

Alumni Club

Page 2 to 3

*Science Communications
talk by Kevin McGee*

Page 4

Commencement 2011

Page 5

*Wii Pizza Party
& Baby Bliss*

Page 6

Upcoming Events

**If you have any
comments/inputs.
Do drop us an email at
calixte.fleur@gmail.com**

" The Alumni niche (Issue V) was designed and written by the NGS alumni club publicity committee (Felicia & Alison) with contributions from Peili and Vivien. The views presented do not necessarily represent the views of NGS and NGS Alumni Club."



We know what we are talking about -- but does anyone else?

*a seminar by **Kevin McGee** on the topic of Science Communications*



The very first event that our new NGS Alumni Club Committee organized was a session on scientific communication. The session was entitled “We know what we are talking about, but does anyone else?” and conducted by Associate Professor Kevin McGee at Infuse, Fusionopolis on 11th March 2011. Kevin leads the Partner Technologies Research Group (ParTech) at NUS and his aims, as he has described them, are “to understand what makes good human team-mates and to create artificial ones.” The purpose of his talk was to share with us tips on how to communicate effectively the nature of our research work to non-professionals or people outside our field.

Kevin started by posing a question to us – could we explain our work to our parents? I dare say that all of us have had to

attempt to describe our work to people around us, and our first attempt must have been clumsy. Even if we have never been called upon to describe what we do, the skill of scientific communication will serve us well in our careers – in securing financial funding, engaging the interest of the general public and facilitating interdisciplinary projects. Moreover, making an attempt to describe our research interests in easy terms, forces us to examine and improve our research process so that we can convey clearly the importance, motivation and novelty of our work. In a bid to equip NGS students at an early stage, there are plans to introduce a module of this nature into the NGS curriculum in the near future.

(continued)

The challenge in scientific communication is that once we have become deeply engrossed with our research, we fail to recognize that while our work is obvious to us, it is not to others. To communicate our work in an easily understandable way, we should use a vocabulary that consists of little insider knowledge and technical jargon. When introducing our research work, a

opportunity to learn from each other. There were excellent examples for us to emulate, like Linda's opening statement: "I make brains," and Clara's interesting research problem "I study why some people get fat and some don't." The evening ended with dinner and drinks at Harry's.



+
 "Please explain it to me as if I'm a 3-year old"
 To communicate our work in an easily understandable way, we should use a vocabulary that consists of little insider knowledge and technical jargon.
 - Kevin McGee



good way to get people's attention is to address upfront something that they are most likely to misunderstand. We can also startle them with a statement they were not expecting, or recount a story on what got us started on our research. As we progress through our speech, we should avoid generalization, which is unfortunately second-nature to most scientists and engineers. By giving concrete examples or "leading with a scenario", we can illustrate why our research problem is interesting or challenging, and why we want to take the effort to solve it. Finally, our speech should be governed by this unspoken request from our audience: "Please explain it to me as if I'm a 3-year-old."

After Kevin's talk was over, all those who were present gave a brief description of their work. The intellectual exercise not only reinforced the concepts that we had just learnt, but also gave us the



“For love and money”

by *Gene Russo in Nature Vol. 465, 1104-1107, 24 June 2010.*

A recent article that presents a survey of postdoc job contentment in various countries, using attributes such as health-care benefits, maternity /paternity leave, postdoc’s degree of independence and level of guidance received from supervisors and co-workers (see Table of “Satisfaction scores” in article). It is by no means an exhaustive list of countries or measures of assessment, but this being “Nature’s first-ever salary and career survey” among more than 10,000 researchers worldwide, makes for fun reading and might set you exploring career destinations you had not considered before.

Commencement

Every PhD student starts with a nagging thought, “Will I ever graduate?” For the NGS student, there is the additional quarry, “Will I make the CAP requirement?”

A common joke states that getting a PhD means getting a permanent head damage, I have to say, I totally concur. The grueling process utterly revamped my mindset >> I was an “ex-wildtype, now a knock-out!”

As I approach commencement, I reflect upon a period of intense growth and development, friendships made, lessons learnt and look forward to a future of opportunities!

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By Appointment Only

I attended the dinner gathering with staff and alumni on 30th September held at the NGS office. I had arrived late and in a bid to hide my embarrassment (and surprise that there were just five of us!), I quickly asked Gloria what the special occasion was. She replied that there was no special occasion – the event was organized just so that the staff and alumni could meet one another. It was nice to know that as alumni, we are still very much a part of the NGS family.

Over the course of dinner, once we got past the formalities (“how have you been lately”), we began to chat about overseas vacations, those we have been on before and those we would like to have. There was a wide array of opinions on what we yearn to

do when we travel: the appreciation of nature and beautiful scenery, understanding the local culture and history of the country and not to forget, undergoing retail therapy which is a common activity regardless where one travels to. Through our conversation, we learnt various details about each other’s family (Gloria’s and Ivy’s kids, Pak Kay’s sister and niece), which made our interaction a whole lot more meaningful.

Then, it was the highlight of the night – Wii! It was amusing to learn that none of us had played Wii before. It was then that our small group size made it possible for us to play to our hearts’ content, because we did not have to fight over the remotes and nunchups. We played golf, boxing

Wii Pizza Party 30th September 2010

(might I add, Vivien is superb at this) and bowling, without sustaining any injury. That is a definite advantage of virtual sports. The night ended on a high note with each of us looking forward eagerly to the next games night.

So now I know that our friends in the NGS office have lots to recommend regarding travel destinations. If you are planning a vacation soon, you know who to ask!

--Alison Lee



New Baby Bliss



Issac
Dr Vanessa Ding
19th Nov 2010
(0908 hrs)
2.165 kg
48 cm



Nataline
Second child of Dr Zhi Xiong

Sarah
Dr Selena Wu
15 March
2011
6.47pm



One Year On....



Ashlee (left) & Oliver (right).

In our last issue, we announce the birth of twins to Dr Siew-Wan Ohl...

Look how they have grown!

Upcoming Events!!

Commencement 2011

According to the NUS Commencement 2011 website, the presentation of degrees to new NGS graduates will take place on 8 July 2011 (Friday) at 3 pm.

NGS Commencement Dinner 2011

We will be celebrating with our new graduates on 22nd July 2011. The venue and activities will be announced at a later date.

NGS Induction Day (28 July 2011)

This will be a day of orientation activities for all new NGS students. The venue and activities will be announced at a later date.

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gourmet coffee & fusion food

We offer a menu that evolves month to month featuring mainly seasonal omnivorous fare including sandwiches, soups, salads and more!

We can tailor a menu to suit any event such as

- Baby showers
- Bridal showers
- Birthday parties
- Surprise parties
- Company events
- Family gatherings
- Weddings

or anything you can think of!

CAFE LOCATION:

Tiffany's Cafe at the Esplanade

#03-02 (Next to the library)

Tel : 6337 0704

Opens from 11am to 9pm daily

Email : regentcuisine@gmail.com

Visit us @ <http://itstiffanys.weebly.com>



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