

law link

THE HEART OF HER CALLING
JUSTICE DEBBIE ONG '89

NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION
CAREER ADVISERS GENEVIEVE CHIA '96, SHAUN KANG LL.M. '14
MENTORS GRACE TAN '08, TAN HONG MING '10

REMEMBERING BUKIT TIMAH CAMPUS

THE VOLUNTEER SPIRIT
PRO BONO PROJECT LEADERS SHARE
WHAT DRIVES THEM TO DO GOOD

STEPHEN BROGAN-JONES DAY LEGAL
FELLOWSHIP ON THE RULE OF LAW

CONTENTS



2 Message from the Dean

Professor Andrew Simester



3 Alumni Spotlight

- The Heart of Her Calling - Justice Debbie Ong '89 3
- Nurturing the Next Generation - Genevieve Chia '96 - Shaun Kang LLM '14 - Grace Tan '08 - Tan Hong Ming '10 7
- The Human Connection - Sadhana Rai '12 10



12 Law School Highlights

- Remembering Bukit Timah Campus 12
- Helena Whalen-Bridge LLM '02: Pro Bono Advocate-Extraordinaire 16



18 Student Features

- The Volunteer Spirit - Pro Bono Project Leaders on Reasons to Do Good 18
- The Value of Discord - NUS Law CLub Presidents on Leadership Lessons 20
- Congratulations, Class of 2024 21



22 Reunions & Alumni Events

- Class of 2009 22
- Class of 1984 23
- Class of 1994 24
- Class of 2004 25
- Class of 1999 26
- Class of 1989 27
- Lamp Launch Goes Downtown 28
- London Alumni Reunion 29



30 Benefactors 32 NUS Giving

- Margaret Cynthia Walker: An Exemplar of Kindness and Love 32
- Stephen Brogan-Jones Day Legal Fellowship on the Rule of Law 33

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TELL US ABOUT YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Please keep us updated on your career achievements or significant awards that you have received, for consideration on our publicity channels, at lawlink@nus.edu.sg.

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

PROFESSOR ANDREW SIMESTER

One might naturally expect that the Dean's second year would be easier. Not everything is new. There might even be some space to resume a piece of research! Alas, not this year. 2024 saw the beginning of not one but two once-in-a-generation events: implementation of the Government's comprehensive reform of the legal education curriculum for Singapore; and, since May, planning for the coming move back to the main NUS campus. These two projects have dominated 2024 and will do the same in 2025.

Beyond these obvious headlines, though, the deeper life of the law school goes on as normal, and there are many other stories. The purpose of this issue of *LawLink* is to tell some of those stories. As you will see, they have some common themes. You never know, for example, *whither* a law degree will lead. For Justice Debbie Ong '89 (page 3), it led to academia and, ultimately, to the Bench. My colleagues in the Career Advisory Team, Genevieve Chia '96 and Shaun Kang LLM '14 (page 7) followed an unconventional route that also took them back to NUS—where they are playing a key role in shaping the lives of our future lawyers.

The practice of law is not for everybody. But it would be a mistake to think that the very point of studying law is to qualify to practise it. That is *one* of the payoffs, to be sure. A good law degree opens doors to the profession. But it creates other options too. As teachers, my colleagues and I do not see our task as merely to impart information. Anybody can look up a legal rule in a statute or, indeed, a textbook. The key to earning a good degree is to understand what to do with that information—especially, what to do when the rules articulated in the books or cases are incomplete, ambiguous, or even seemingly contradictory. We aspire to teach our students how to reason with those rules, rigorously and creatively; in other words, to teach them how to *think*.

That's a great life skill, whatever your career. In many ways, law can be thought of as a generalist degree, as well as a specialist one. The best law students approach challenges and analyse problems with intellectual clarity and rigour.



And heart. Sometimes, as Justice Ong tells us, a lawyer may have to steel herself. No matter how draining a case may be, she must never forget that she is an officer of the court, a servant as well as a professional. Yet as Justice Ong knows, "ethical", even "dispassionate", does not mean cold-blooded. Our former Law Club President Sia Bao Huei '21 (page 20), learnt a valuable lesson about disciplinary cases from his time sitting on the Board of Discipline: that the breach of a rule cannot properly be evaluated without considering the circumstances of the offender and, indeed, the offender's response to their own wrongdoing. It is the mark of any professional office that the officer has discretion. It is the mark of any *good* professional officer that they exercise that responsibility in a manner that is not arbitrary but which is sensitive to the merits of the individuals involved and to the values of their society. Law may be a complex system of rules but, as Sadhana Rai '12 (page 10) has found, those rules are not ends in themselves. They are simply a framework, within which human beings must work out how best to relate to each other.

The pages that follow abound with stories of alumni who, like Grace Tan '08 and Tan Hong Ming '10 (page 7), are inspired to give back by a deeper understanding of what they have learnt across their careers. And not just alumni. In 2024, NUS Law was blessed with a US\$1 million donation

from the Jones Day Foundation, a non-profit organisation funded by lawyers and staff of the global law firm Jones Day. This donation establishes the Stephen Brogan–Jones Day Legal Fellowship on the Rule of Law, administered by our Centre for Asian Legal Studies. It celebrates the career of Steve Brogan, their former managing partner, and responds to Steve's deep commitment to fostering the development of the rule of law in Asia.

Rigour and heart are a powerful combination. With them, one can be a force for good. Our *Lawlink* stories profile colleagues, alumni, students and friends who are doing just that: being a force for good. My former colleague, Justice Ong, has done something extraordinary in getting to the nub of family law: she has played a transformative role in modernising our nation's approach to the traumatic disputes with which family law must grapple. My current colleague, Helena Whalen-Bridge LLM '02 (page 16), is carrying forward the pro bono torch for the Faculty, and inspiring a future generation of ethical graduates. Of course, all of this is at the core of our mission as a law school. NUS aspires to educate and inspire. But above all, we aspire to make a difference. If we can advance the intellectual and moral health, and reputation, of Singapore law, then we have done our job.

And to everyone who has contributed to helping us in our mission, thank you.

THE HEART OF HER CALLING

JUSTICE DEBBIE ONG '89

From Associate Professor to Judge, Justice Debbie Ong '89 reflects on how her life has unfolded in seasons, rooted in a steadfast desire to uplift others, administer justice and protect children's interests. She discusses the emotional nature of family practice, the polarising sentiments towards it, but how she has never regretted taking the path that was not initially planned. Drawing parallels with her journey, she tells young lawyers to never shy away from taking a different fork in the road, to embrace growth, and discover their calling.



"The children who come through the courts deserve my struggles in trying to do what is right for them; my best efforts, my struggles, are what I can give, for there may not be one 'right solution' to relationship issues."

These words by Justice Debbie Ong '89 strike a chord, shedding light on her values, her passion and what matters most to her.

Many know Justice Ong as the former Presiding Judge of the Family Justice Courts in Singapore. From 2017 to 2023, she championed significant reforms such as Therapeutic Justice, a care-centred approach focused on problem-solving. Family law has defined her 35-year career and shaped who she is today.

But she did not set out to practise it, let alone become a Supreme Court Judge.

"That didn't look like me," she recalled, respecting judges as those who must grasp complex evidence and craft brilliant judgments. When she was appointed Judicial Commissioner in 2014, she felt deeply honoured but also daunted. At the time, she was an Associate Professor with NUS Law.

Nevertheless, she took a big leap of faith.

"I believed that if it was a calling, I would have sufficient provision needed to answer the call."



Justice Debbie Ong was sworn in as a Judge in 2017 before the then President of Singapore Halimah Yacob '78 LL.M. '01 LL.D. '16

A deep affinity for family law

This may come as a surprise—Justice Ong did not even study family law in law school. Like most law students during her time, she took up commercial law, intending to practise in a law firm. Yet, life is made of so many forks, as she puts it, and she chose the path of academia after graduation. Rather unexpectedly, she was tasked with teaching family law, filling in for Professor Leong Wai Kum who was due for sabbatical leave, and continued teaching it for 25 years at NUS Law.

"Once I started teaching family law, I developed a deep affinity for it," shared Justice Ong.

Under Prof Leong's strong mentorship and exacting standards, she grew into a respected family law scholar. This passion led her to contribute extensively outside academia: serving on the Child Protective Services Review Board, as *amicus curiae* to the Supreme Court on family matters, leading the Tampines Family Service Centre Governance Committee, and volunteering as a Family Court Mediator. Not only did she contribute many articles on family law in local and international journals, but her expertise was also sought after by governmental organisations on the boards of Marriage Central and COMCARE, as well as in the legal fraternity such as the Law Society and the Singapore Academy of Law.



Justice Debbie Ong (front row, third from left) with the District Judges of the Family Justice Courts

"The children who come through the courts deserve my struggles in trying to do what is right for them; my best efforts, my struggles, are what I can give, for there may not be one 'right solution' to relationship issues."

— Justice Debbie Ong



"I did not want to be disconnected from how family law affected the everyday lives of ordinary people just because I was not out there practising," she revealed. These experiences laid the groundwork for her later role as a Judge.

"It has been a tremendous privilege and a personal calling—to be able to contribute to numerous reforms to the family justice system in quicker and more direct ways. My cup overflows," Justice Ong shared gratefully.

Challenging and intense

Justice Ong made it clear, though, that despite her passion for family law, dealing with such cases is no easy task.

"Sometimes, work sits in a corner like a coiled snake—it needs to be disposed of, but reaching out to touch it takes courage, as the nature of the work can be extremely challenging and emotionally exhausting," she admitted. "Family work is challenging. If one does not have the affinity and aptitude for it, it would be better to explore another area of specialisation."

Transitioning from academia to presiding over court cases presented a steep

learning curve too. She had to quickly master court procedures and practice culture, as well as keep abreast of other areas of law that she had not taught or researched, all while being expected to excel from day one on the Bench.

Family proceedings can be intense and emotional: Judges witness the pain and conflict which leave children emotionally damaged, and they need a firm grasp of the law to reach a just and effective resolution for the family. It is a heavy responsibility—to make decisions such as custody orders, maintenance, and protection from violence—that will have far-reaching consequences. Specialist skills, patience and resilience are also required when conducting court proceedings with self-represented parties who do not fully understand the law and procedures.

Family lawyers too have similar challenges. One cannot be the cold and clinical lawyer who handles commercial breaches when dealing with broken family relationships. Yet, sometimes, the bitterness and resentment of the parties can get in the way of their jobs. Poorly thought-out terms by emotional clients may also result in further disputes.

The stark reality, Justice Ong shared sombrely, is that there are no quick fixes in family matters which involve relationships rather than legal rights.

"Court orders cannot fix everything because parenting is personal," she noted, highlighting that parents' beliefs and abilities shape outcomes beyond court rulings.

Protecting children's interests has been central to her philosophy. She recounted a heartbreaking case where a father had to rush from court to his daughter's side after her suicide attempt. Such moments underscored her belief that parents must not use children as "weapons" in their conflicts.

"The focus must not be about rights and wrongs, but about recasting a positive future, especially for the children."

Justice Ong is glad that the Therapeutic Justice system has sparked a mindset change, encouraging more couples towards a more collaborative and less adversarial approach to manage their divorces via the simplified track and reach mutual agreements. This minimises the level of conflict and tension that children may be exposed to.

The art of staying the course

"Affinity and passion. If I didn't find the work meaningful, it would have been harder to stay afloat," she reflected. "The meaningfulness of the job connects very deeply with me and inspires me to keep at it and do it better."

But like eating durians, you either love or dislike family practice. Justice Ong stressed that it is important to match strengths, interests, abilities and personalities to one's area of work, rather than to go along with what everyone thinks is the "safest" track towards a sought-after career.

"Taking a different path (like I did) can open our eyes to a different interest or passion. Even if we have embarked on a certain path, it is never too late to discover and take on a different fork in life's road."

The important question, she said, is to ask: Why do I want to be a lawyer?

If the answer is to uphold and dispense justice, the legal profession is the right place to be. "However, to become the best lawyer you can be, you have to stay the course. Lawyering is a craft honed over years of learning and doing. It is hard work over many years."

This does not mean that work-life balance cannot be achieved. She believes that as important as it is for young



Justice Ong has always been guided by her steadfast hope for good and the desire to uplift others

lawyers to benefit from mentorship to help them grow and stay the course, senior lawyers and supervisors should also hear from them and work together in creating workplace environments that help them flourish. With clear goals and supportive work environments, young lawyers can sustain their careers and personal well-being.

"Be agile, be versatile and have courage. Make it work for you," Justice Ong suggested.

Her advice to young lawyers: Find trusted mentors and have the humility to ask questions. Just as Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon has been an "unusually inspiring leader and an incredible mentor" in her judicial career, Justice Ong hopes that young lawyers will also find such inspiration and guidance from their mentors.

"Of course, my faith and my husband have always been my anchors through challenging times," she added.

Worth every minute of her time

By the end of the interview, it is hard not to see her humility in recognising the deep responsibility she bears in her roles, as well as the pride for how her career has panned out. For her, life unfolds in seasons, each with its own calling. As a teacher, a Family Judge and now as Judge of the Appellate Division since November 2022, she has always been guided by her steadfast hope for good and the desire to uplift others. Whether through listening to her students, mentoring Justices' Law Clerks, or adjudicating cases, she hopes to have touched lives in ways that ripple outwards.

"The joy and privilege of being that hand that rescues a drowning family member out of the waters of despair is worth every minute of your time." These poignant words of hers encapsulate the heart of her calling, challenging us to reflect: What inspires you, and how will you answer your calling?



Justice Ong and her husband Victor Sim '87 on the day she was admitted to the Bar. They met in law school and she credits him for being her anchor through the years

NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION

Knowing the transformative impact of mentorship, four alumni—who have either left private practice, or carved out time from their busy schedules—share their stories on guiding our students.



Shaun Kang (front row, third from left), seated next to fellow speakers Lee Shu Lin '06 and Genevieve Chia, delivered a talk on the legal market in Singapore to the LLM International Arbitration & Dispute Resolution class

Navigating the rigorous demands of law school and preparing for a successful legal career require more than academic prowess—it calls for guidance, inspiration and a strong support network. Mentorship and career guidance play a pivotal role in helping aspiring lawyers build confidence, hone critical skills, and chart their unique paths in the legal field.

In this article, we shine a spotlight on four NUS Law alumni who are making a difference by supporting the next generation of legal professionals. Through their stories, we gain insight into the transformative impact of mentorship, their experiences in nurturing young talent, and how their efforts are shaping the future of the legal profession.

NUS Law Career Advisory Team

Making an impact from within the administrative offices at NUS Law are Genevieve Chia '96 and Shaun Kang LLM '14. Genevieve leads the Career Advisory Team and in her role as career adviser to students, she focuses on providing tailored career guidance through one-on-one sessions. How did she go from law school graduate to law student career adviser?

"After graduating from NUS Law, I spent time in private practice focusing on family law, commercial litigation and investment funds. I also took on a business development role with an international bank and ventured

into entrepreneurship, co-owning and running a bistro, while channelling my passion for food and travel into freelance writing for lifestyle and travel magazines. I also taught English at a local enrichment centre and later spent a decade in legal recruitment.

"It has been an eclectic journey! About a decade ago, I started reconnecting with NUS Law by conducting workshops for students on resume writing and interview skills. Somehow, this turned into a full-time job offer and I've been happily supporting students here ever since."

Part of Genevieve's work involves helping students build resilience, adaptability and a commitment to their growth so that they're better equipped to navigate diverse paths to success.

Although she is an example of how career success doesn't follow a single

formula, helping students to recognise this is one of the main challenges of her role. "Many students seek clear, step-by-step answers, yet career journeys are highly individual and shaped by unique and sometimes unpredictable factors," she explained.

Individuality is something Shaun can relate to. "No two students are the same. Every student comes with different starting points, challenges, abilities and aspirations. My role is to be the bridge to their goals."

Like Genevieve, Shaun's career journey has been a rather unconventional one. After practising law briefly, he felt a calling to engage with global humanitarian-legal issues. This led him to the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), where he worked in different roles, from community engagement to dealing with protection issues, supporting refugees



Genevieve Chia '96



Shaun Kang LLM '14

from the region and beyond. His career path also took him to The Hague, a city in the Netherlands, where he served as an assistant legal counsel at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA). He also worked at the Centre for International Law (CIL) at NUS as a research associate, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as a legal adviser and, subsequently, as a special adviser.

With a wealth of experience under his belt, Shaun decided then that he wanted to make an impact on the lives of others. After delivering a guest lecture to NUS Law students on international law, at Genevieve's invitation, he was inspired by her to pursue a role as a career adviser and has found so much meaning in what he does now.

He shared, "The best thing about this role is the ability to help students move forward in their lives. A career spans a lifetime, and knowing that I had the

opportunity to shape their thinking and equip them with the ability to be their best selves is truly fulfilling."

Apart from career guidance, Genevieve and Shaun also organise events such as career talks, industry-specific panel discussions and employability skills

workshops. In collaboration with the Alumni Relations Team, the Career Advisory Team also administers the Law Alumni Mentor Programme (LAMP), connecting students with experienced mentors. We catch up with two LAMP mentors to hear their stories.



Genevieve (third from right) with students from the organising committee of the Law Careers Fair 2023



Genevieve and Shaun (third and fourth from left) with LLM alumni who came back to speak with their juniors at the Welcome Briefing and Alumni Panel Discussion for the LLM Class of 2024, organised by the NUS Centre for Future-ready Graduates

Law Alumni Mentor Programme (LAMP)

Grace Tan '08 had no idea what she was getting herself into when she joined the Law Alumni Mentor Programme eight years ago. A junior lawyer then, she felt she had no choice when she was appointed by her senior to volunteer, but she realises that she has gained as much as she has given.

"I found that mentoring is a two-way street. I learn as much from my mentees, including a lot of fresh perspectives from their end on legal issues and career choices. On my part, I want to help the



Grace Tan '08



Tan Hong Ming '10



Grace Tan receiving her Long Service Mentor Award in 2023 from NUS Law Dean Andrew Simester

next generation of lawyers navigate the complexities of legal practice. I also want to give back to NUS Law as it has shaped my career greatly," she shared.

Tan Hong Ming '10 echoes her sentiments, as being a mentor has helped him gain new perspectives.

"Through LAMP, I'm privileged to have the opportunity to interact with future members of the legal profession, and I'm always curious to hear how things have changed in law school and the challenges students face now. Each mentee has different personalities, perspectives and priorities, so my engagements with each mentee, as I share my own journey in private practice and in-house, are always really unique and interesting," he said.

Likewise, Grace has discovered that mentees come with varying levels of career awareness. This ranges from students who have no idea what they want to pursue, to others who have a lot of clarity on their

career direction. Regardless of what stage they are in their plans, she spends time finding out about their background, their uncertainties, goals, motivations behind pursuing law, and their interests in legal fields. With this information, she is able to guide them towards the best path for them.

"We discuss a wide range of topics, from surviving law school to the realities of legal practice. Sometimes I feel like a lot of what they want to hear is just the experience of somebody who has been through that," shared Grace. Having started her career in a large firm, focusing on general litigation, Grace shifted paths to specialise in insurance law at a boutique practice. She feels that this has given her that all-rounded perspective to share her experience.

Hong Ming, who was a partner at a large local firm and is currently senior legal counsel at a US multi-national corporation, added, "I try to foster an open and

supportive conversational environment where my mentee can discuss and explore a wide range of topics important to professional development—topics can range from career planning, differences between disputes and corporate practice, my in-house counsel experience, to the transition from university to working life. Sometimes, the discussion can just be about my mentee's concerns or pain points in school and I'll try to offer pointers and perspectives where I can. By offering a blend of professional insights and personal experiences, I seek to empower my mentees to make informed decisions about their future and help them develop the skills necessary for success in the legal field."

A typical LAMP mentoring journey begins with a launch event for everyone to get together and break the ice. Following that, the mentee and mentor will arrange to meet up or maintain regular written communication. Although the mentorship period is for one year, some mentors stay in touch with their mentees to see how they are doing in their career journeys.

Grace reiterated that being a mentor has been a fulfilling experience. "One of the most rewarding aspects of mentoring has been gaining insights into the perspectives and challenges faced by the next generation of lawyers. This has not only helped me understand my junior colleagues better but has also provided me with fresh viewpoints on the legal profession."

"Additionally, mentoring Master's students from various jurisdictions has broadened my understanding of different legal systems and career paths, enriching my professional journey."



Hong Ming (second from left) with his batchmates at the LAMP launch event in 2023

THE HUMAN CONNECTION

After leaving private practice, Sadhana Rai '12 found vigour in combining her passion for criminal advocacy with pro bono work. Even as she acknowledges the challenges that come with volunteerism, she discusses the impact of a purpose-driven life—urging young lawyers to see that helping others is entwined with both personal and professional growth.



“People will not remember your grades or your accomplishments. They will remember how you made them feel. Treat every single person you meet along the way with respect. In our profession, reputations are hard-earned and easily tarnished—lawyers, much like elephants, have an excellent memory for bad behaviour.”

— Sadhana Rai, on the importance of human connection

Elephants may not seem relevant to pro bono work, but to Sadhana Rai '12, the Head of Representation at Pro Bono SG (PBSG), the sense of community characteristic to a herd of elephants is intrinsic to the work of helping others. “All lawyers must possess some degree of empathy. A community lawyer must have a genuine desire to embed themselves in the community, to listen, and to truly understand the needs of the underprivileged. It is this commitment to

advocacy for those who cannot always advocate for themselves, that defines the role.”

This powerful blend of passion and purpose drives Sadhana, who joined Pro Bono SG (PBSG) in 2015 as a Criminal Legal Aid Scheme (CLAS) Fellow after two years as an associate at Drew & Napier LLC. Leaving private practice was a difficult choice, but the decision led to a serendipitous outcome, as Mr Abraham

Vergis '98, S.C. introduced her to PBSG, allowing her to combine her enduring interest in criminal law with her desire to help others.

As a CLAS Fellow, Sadhana was finally exposed to criminal defence work full time, and had her first taste of handling her first criminal case solo. Essentially serving as a public defender, she became a CLAS Advocate a year and a half later. In this position, she not only mentored junior Fellows, but also took on more complex criminal matters, which gave her exposure to more High Court cases and appeals as lead counsel.

Why pro bono?

One of the cases that she handled involved a client who was charged with voluntarily causing hurt to another. Pending a couple of years, the case eventually went to trial, and he was ultimately acquitted after the defence team showed that, among other things, the person captured on CCTV footage was someone else. She said, “What struck me was how painful the journey was for him. He was not able to travel with his family for their yearly family holidays; his father suffered a debilitating illness while the case was ongoing, which added to his stress; and, above all, he was mentally anguished by all the court visits. He expressed that he was comforted by the presence of a lawyer who believed him, and who could walk with him.”

That sentiment has stuck with Sadhana all these years. It had been what she was searching for: the profound sense of purpose that comes from being able to help someone. “There is something deeply fulfilling about using my skills to make a tangible difference in someone's life, particularly for those who might otherwise have no access to justice,” she said, referring to the human aspect of a lawyer's work. The appeal of pro bono work lies also in that it allows her to invest fully in the craft of the law, without the constraint of billable hours.

A sense of fulfilment

In 2021, Sadhana took on the role of Head of Representation, overseeing a team that includes her deputy and nine

community lawyers. Her focus: Refining legal services to better meet the needs of clients, in view of PBSG's limited resources. To this end, she works with PBSG's partners to evaluate needs and the appropriate responses.

Sadhana's perspective has also grown to encompass a desire to encourage more lawyers to walk the pro bono path. “My biggest achievement so far has been watching the lawyers and students I have mentored go on to find their own paths in pro bono work. To know that I had some small part in nurturing that spark of service fills me with an indescribable pride.”

Three years on, the seasoned community lawyer has found her sweet spot, thriving in work centred on advocacy, learning and service—presenting an argument or cross-examining a witness energises her; she looks forward to learning more about the law through every case she handles; and she sees every case or junior she mentors as an act of service.

Indeed, having walked the path herself, she knows well the obstacles that confront junior volunteer lawyers. Firstly, balancing paid work and pro bono work is always a challenge and, secondly, the lack of practical experience can be daunting. She remembered how she had to pick up some of the unwritten rules of criminal advocacy from scratch. Her advice? Ask for help when you need it. “The generosity of the criminal Bar in giving of their knowledge and time never ceases to amaze me,” said Sadhana. She stresses too that PBSG offers additional guidance and support, ensuring access to resources and mentorship for lawyers who take up pro bono cases under PBSG.



Sadhana Rai and Abraham Vergis, S.C. at the SAL Appreciation Dinner and Awards Night 2023, where she received the Joseph Grimberg Outstanding Young Advocate Award



Sadhana Rai at Mass Call with her Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition teammates from the Class of 2012: (from left) Kevin Lee, Dharshini Prasad and Alvin Yap

The road ahead

To date, there are around 600 active volunteer lawyers at PBSG, spread over schemes that include CLAS, the Family Justice Support Scheme, the Ad Hoc Pro Bono Scheme and a network of legal clinics in the heartland. “I encourage young lawyers to view pro bono work as a valuable opportunity to hone their court craft and advocacy skills. It is an avenue for growth, both professionally and personally, offering the chance to sharpen one's abilities while making a meaningful impact.”

Looking at Sadhana's poised exterior, one may be hard-pressed to imagine she has ever doubted herself. Reflecting on the path she has taken in pro bono criminal advocacy, though, she admitted, “If I could speak to a younger me, I would urge her to worry less ... I would tell her that growth is not linear. There is always more to learn, always more to give.”

And that penchant for thoughtful reflection, combined with a kindness to those around her, is perhaps what is most inspiring about Sadhana. One might even say it speaks to a herd instinct, especially in a pro bono environment that prioritises the group over self. In her own way, Sadhana embodies the spirit animal she identifies with: a female elephant.

“At my core, I am a herd animal—I find comfort in community. There is something profoundly inspiring about an elephant's quiet strength. Despite its enormity and capacity for destruction, it is capable of extraordinary gentleness and empathy.”

In that sense, then, elephants have every relevance to pro bono work, as Sadhana seeks to also imbue her leadership with strength and grace. “My greatest hope is to give enough of myself such that I can leave the world just a little better than I found it.” We daresay she is well on her way.

In Her Own Words

In another life: “As a child, you would find me spending hours pretending to teach in my bedroom. I found joy in guiding imaginary students through lessons only I could see. In another life, perhaps, I would have stood before a classroom instead of a courtroom.”

As a student: “My friends will tell you that I was the annoying outspoken student that had an opinion on everything. I am grateful that they stuck it out and are still my friends. Like most young adults, I was still finding myself and struggled with self-doubt at times. I needed to talk through my subjects and found long mugging sessions unbearable. I survived because I had great friends, family and faith.”

On the importance of volunteer work: “Pro bono is not a fleeting act of charity that you turn your mind to when you find a moment of spare time. It is integral to our profession, and reflects the very essence of why we regard this as an honourable calling. It is a reminder that justice, like compassion, is a relentless commitment.”

REMEMBERING BUKIT TIMAH CAMPUS

The iconic Bukit Timah Campus (BTC) holds precious memories for so many of us who called this place home during our law school years. As we prepare to move out of this campus in 2025, we remember some of the special moments experienced here.



EU TONG SEN BUILDING & FEDERAL BUILDING

The official entrance to the law school, the historic Eu Tong Sen Building (right) is often the first glimpse that visitors get of NUS Law. Together with the Federal Building—two of the six buildings on campus that have been gazetted as National Monuments—they currently house administrative offices on the first floor and academic offices on level two. With their distinctive orange pitched roofs, covered walkways and wide arches, these graceful colonial buildings have become synonymous with the law school and have been the backdrop of countless photos over the years.



"This photo was taken by my father in December 2014 when my parents were visiting me from India. I recall the feeling of pride as I showed them around my campus—like an ambassador of sorts! To this day, I proudly share that I am a graduate of NUS Law wherever I go." (Chetna Agnihotri LLM '15)



"We celebrated each other's birthdays throughout our years in law school, with this shot taken in September 2014 capturing the Federal Building in the background." (Janessa Sit '18, centre, with her friends, from left: Elaine Ong, Janelle Ng, Natalie Lim, Cheryl Lim, Rebecca Koh and Chelsea Chan from the Class of 2018)



UPPER QUADRANGLE

Senior alumni share that the Upper Quad was a place where students frequently gathered to relax, chat and even debate the issues of the day in between classes, as well as for sports and games. Today, this picturesque courtyard of lush green turf continues to be a hive of activity where the outdoor fun happens—football matches, Captain's Ball games, frisbee tournaments, orientation activities, student concerts, graduation photographs and much more!



"Students versus Faculty members in a game of Captain's Ball in 2009, featuring Professors Kumaralingam Amirthalingam on the left, and Arun Thiruvengadam on the right." (Jonathan Kao '10)



"The Upper Quad was the site of many games, including our Inter-year Ultimate Frisbee tournament held in 2010." (Jonathan Kao '10)



"It might have been late, but spirits were high at the Freshman Orientation Camp in 2007." (Jonathan Kao '10)



"Age was no barrier to fun and games, as we posed in front of a bouncy castle at the Block B Party organised by the Law Students' International Relations Committee in September 2014." (Janessa Sit '18)



BLOCK B

Housing major facilities such as the auditorium, lecture theatre, classrooms, seminar rooms, student lounge and the Summit canteen, Block B is the heart of the law school and where it all happens for our students. Over the years, it has also become a research hub as many of our centres are located here, including the EW Barker Centre for Law & Business, Centre for Asian Legal Studies, Centre for Maritime Law and Centre for Banking and Finance Law.



"The Class of 2010 in the auditorium during a rehearsal for Law IV—an NUS Law tradition that involves the graduating class writing, directing and staging a full dramatic piece." (Jonathan Kao '10)



"A photo with Adjunct Professor Kevin Tan '86 (first row, second from right) at Seminar Room 4-4 to mark our last Singapore Law in Context seminar in Year 1!" (Janessa Sit '18)



"It was a night to remember for the cast of Law IV 2018, with this shot taken on the closing night of the musical." (Janessa Sit '18)



"After classes in the day, we sometimes gathered for bonding sessions. Here is a group of us at an impromptu late-night gathering next to the Summit canteen and the Co-Op in 2009." (Jonathan Kao '10)



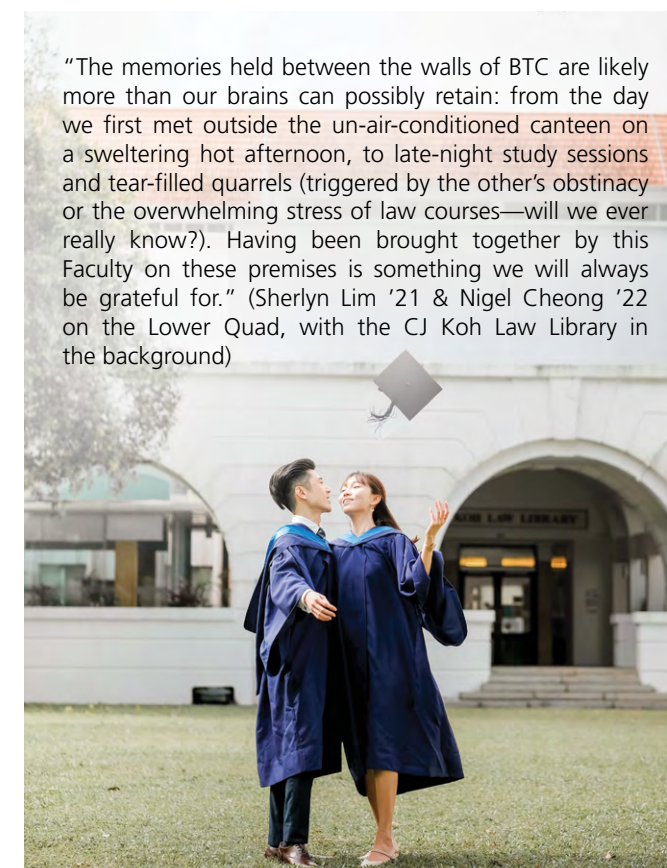
"This was taken outside the Summit canteen after a chat with Professor Andrew Simester, who was my PhD supervisor. My wife Aimpaga Techaapikun (a Fellow at the Asian Law Institute) and I were so happy to be a part of this beautiful campus." (Ronnakorn Bunmee PhD '23)



"The BTC gym may be small, but it was perfect for me. It was where I'd unwind after classes or before heading home, and the pull-up bar was always my favourite. Just me, that rusty old bar, and countless reps—it was simple, quiet, and exactly what I needed. I'll miss it." (Eugene Tai '21)

LOWER QUADRANGLE & CJ KOH LAW LIBRARY

Although mostly surrounded by buildings that house the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, the smaller Lower Quad with its majestic angana tree still holds a special place in the hearts of law students who regularly stroll past it on the way to the CJ Koh Law Library, and use the outdoor tables for quiet study and gatherings with friends.



"The memories held between the walls of BTC are likely more than our brains can possibly retain: from the day we first met outside the un-air-conditioned canteen on a sweltering hot afternoon, to late-night study sessions and tear-filled quarrels (triggered by the other's obstinacy or the overwhelming stress of law courses—will we ever really know?). Having been brought together by this Faculty on these premises is something we will always be grateful for." (Sherlyn Lim '21 & Nigel Cheong '22 on the Lower Quad, with the CJ Koh Law Library in the background)



"To commemorate our time at BTC, my friends and I posed for graduation photos at the Lower Quad back in 2016." (Louis Lim '17, extreme right)



"This photo was taken at the Lower Quad in 2019 with some of my closest friends from law school. We celebrated many birthdays together throughout our four years at BTC. Even though we've moved on to legal practice and many in the group are now married, we are still in touch and continue the tradition of yearly birthday celebrations as a group." (Keith Wong '21, holding the cake)

Share Your Memories!

If you studied at BTC and would like to share your favourite law school memories and photos, we want to hear from you! All submissions would be deeply appreciated, and may be used on various platforms, including our publications, social media and at farewell events. Submit your photos with captions and/or stories to lawlink@nus.edu.sg with your name and graduation year.

HELENA WHALEN-BRIDGE: PRO BONO ADVOCATE-EXTRAORDINAIRE

Her students call her a mentor, her peers a “pro bono advocate-extraordinaire”—Associate Professor Helena Whalen-Bridge LLM ‘02 embodies dedication to pro bono work and is an inspiration to many.

Her students, both current and former, describe her as a dedicated and nurturing mentor. Associate Professor Helena Whalen-Bridge LLM ‘02 has earned many accolades, but perhaps the most fitting description would be “pro bono advocate-extraordinaire”.

Associate Professor Eleanor Wong ‘85, Co-Director of the Centre for Pro Bono and Clinical Legal Education (CPBCLE), aptly call her efforts “sustained, unrelenting and uniformly dedicated”, paying tribute to her years of steadfast commitment and advocacy for pro bono at NUS Law and the NUS Pro Bono Group (PBG).

Championing volunteerism

A Juris Doctor graduate from the University of Connecticut, Assoc Prof Whalen-Bridge joined NUS Law in 2003, a year after completing her Master of Laws at the Law Faculty. Before

academia, she had extensive experience in both the public and private legal sectors, serving as Deputy Attorney General with the California Attorney General’s Office and in-house counsel in Japan and Singapore.

As a multiple NUS Teaching Excellence Award winner and member of the Faculty’s Teaching Excellence and Curriculum Committee, she has developed many courses, including Legal Ethics, Comparative Advocacy and Legal Argument & Narrative. But her enduring impact has been in access to justice and pro bono.

Students are her inspiration. “Many enter law school with strong desires to serve the community, and they are inspiring. As faculty, we strive to provide opportunities that allow them to see the value of pro bono work to themselves and the community.”

When a group of students proposed the formation of PBG in 2005, Assoc Prof Whalen-Bridge volunteered to help. As Faculty Adviser since its inception and a member of CPBCLE’s Advisory Board, she has guided PBG and many law students in impactful initiatives such as the Legal Awareness & Education Programme, University Court Friends, Project Law & You and Syariah Law Friends. These projects, in collaboration with partners such as Pro Bono SG, the Singapore Courts, the Law Society of Singapore and non-profit organisations, have benefited children, teenagers, the man on the street, and marginalised groups like migrant workers.

Her pride in her students is evident. “The Pro Bono Group has achieved much over the years by raising awareness and providing legal information support for various groups, such as protection for the elderly regarding financial scams and

“Students learn a lot of law and procedure in law school. They also need to understand the obligations that come with being a lawyer. Helping people in trouble with legal issues, particularly those who are indigent or vulnerable, is part of that responsibility.”

— Associate Professor Helena Whalen-Bridge

information for migrant workers, before those issues gained wider attention in Singapore.”

A duty to serve

“Students learn a lot of law and procedure in law school. They also need to understand the obligations that come with being a lawyer,” she highlighted. “Helping people in trouble with legal issues, particularly those who are indigent or vulnerable, is part of that responsibility.”

Since the mandatory pro bono scheme was introduced in 2014, the response from students has been encouraging, with many even going beyond the 20 hours. She finds it heartening that senior students, despite their commitment to studies and the need to do internships to keep themselves competitive in the job market, also participate in pro bono projects and help mentor junior students.

Noting that PBG has 11 projects with many openings, she shared, “Sometimes,

we can’t accommodate all the requests for participation.”

Not only has she been a prime mover in the pro bono culture at NUS Law, but she has also made significant contributions to its development in Singapore. She has done so through her scholarly works—*The Role of Lawyers in Access to Justice: Asian and Comparative Perspectives* (2022), *Litigants in Person: Principles and Practice in Civil and Family Matters in Singapore* (with Jaclyn Neo ‘03, 2021), and *Understanding Lawyers’ Ethics in Singapore* (with Alvin Chen ‘00, LLM ‘09, 2016)—and her roles in Pro Bono SG and the Law Society of Singapore, including as a founding member of Project Law Help, which provides legal information to non-profits.

“The progress of pro bono in Singapore is nothing short of a renaissance,” she observed. “While lawyers have always done pro bono work in Singapore, there are now many more opportunities and support from organisations such as Pro Bono SG.”

Fulfilment through service

Acknowledging the demanding life of a lawyer, she opines that pro bono work can help to bring satisfaction and meaning. Lawyers in Singapore are encouraged to dedicate 25 hours annually to pro bono work. Many embrace this opportunity to give back to society, often with their firms’ support.

To law students and young lawyers, she offers this advice: “Law school trains you in important aspects of being a lawyer, such as substantive and procedural law. But you must seek opportunities that develop you into a true professional—a lawyer with empathy who cares for clients and the community. If you’re fortunate, you will find an opportunity that allows you to appreciate how you can make access to justice real.”

With her nurturing guidance and heart of service, Assoc Prof Whalen-Bridge has left an indelible impression on many. In fact, her former students describe her as “a shining beacon of light and strong pillar of support”.



Associate Professor Helena Whalen-Bridge (front row, far right), with NUS Law Dean Andrew Simester, Guest of Honour Justice Choo Han Teck ‘79 (both centre) and students at the Pro Bono Awards Ceremony in February 2024

THE VOLUNTEER SPIRIT

FOLLOWING THE 8TH NUS LAW PRO BONO AWARDS, PRO BONO PROJECT LEADERS SHARE WHAT DRIVES THEM TO DO GOOD



Justice Choo Han Teck '79 (centre) with NUS Law Dean Andrew Simester, the Centre for Pro Bono & Clinical Legal Education leadership team, and award recipients at the 8th Pro Bono Awards Ceremony

As Professor Andrew Simester, Dean of NUS Law, shared in his welcome address at the 8th Pro Bono Awards Ceremony in 2024, "When we reach out to help a stranger in need, when we put their needs first, that is humanity at its best." In a nutshell, that is the heart of pro bono work, and the Centre for Pro Bono & Clinical Legal Education's annual Awards Ceremony recognises these very efforts of NUS Law students in serving the community.

In his keynote address at the awards ceremony, Justice Choo Han Teck '79 echoed Professor Simester's sentiments, and shared a heartfelt account of a pro bono case he took on in his early days as a trial lawyer. He said, "My client and his father were struggling farmers in Lim Chu Kang; they had no money to pay lawyer's fees. Several weeks after the appeal, my client's father walked into my office and left me a bag of eggs and a tin of biscuits."

As he shared personal lessons from pro bono work as a young lawyer, he described how through engaging with people from different walks of life and different perspectives, as well as through dedication to cases, lawyers can develop a better understanding of the human condition and provide a voice for people who do not have it.

"It is through that that we can find professional gratification, even though

the client cannot pay \$50,000 and can only give us 50 biscuits," he said.

The speeches clearly resonated with the students in attendance, each of whom had their own reasons for volunteering to do good, taking charge of specific pro bono projects close to their hearts. To recognise their outstanding contributions to pro bono work, 13 awards were

presented to the project directors across two award categories.

We spoke to some of the award recipients to find out what pro bono work means to them, what inspired them to immerse themselves in the projects they chose to be a part of, and what they have learnt from effecting change.

Pro Bono Innovation Award

This award was presented to **Lee Jie Yi '25** and **Siti Nurellisha Binte Khairi Sallehudin '25** to recognise their unique and innovative contributions to the Syariah Court (SYC). Under their leadership, the Syariah Law Friends project team worked with the SYC to create and populate a knowledge management portal. Student volunteers also summarised cases in the Singapore Syariah Appeal Reports and built a one-stop portal for all legal resources to facilitate legal and presiding officers' decision-making.

Pro Bono Special Recognition Award

This award recognises students for their dedication to excellence in pro bono service in their respective projects.

- **Anthea Cheo '25** and **Damian Lee '25**, for Project Law & You
- **Li Minghan '25** and **Trina Rahardja '25**, for NUS-Financial Industry Disputes Resolution Centre (NUS-FIDReC)
- **Ge Yiming '25** and **Darren Lim '25**, for Building of Bridges
- **Whang Chia Ning '25**, **Adri Faris '25** and **Janice Neoh '25**, for their commitment and contributions as the Pro Bono Group's President and Vice Presidents
- **Janice Neo** and **Germaine Ong '25**, for Project Parachute



"Pro bono work represents a unique opportunity to give back to the community. I have always felt that migrant workers are an important but often underappreciated segment of society. Since my secondary school days, I have been in the company of migrant workers who were hired for construction projects. Through our conversations, I learnt about their lives in Singapore and the numerous concerns they have living away from their families. Therefore, when I enrolled in NUS Law, I began to look for avenues to help them."

– Darren Lim, Building of Bridges

"I believe that law cannot be studied in a vacuum. Pro bono work allows us to have a realistic glimpse into the social effects of laws, while creating a positive impact on underserved communities. I am honoured to have played a role in facilitating access to justice for migrant domestic workers. I met women my age who had left their home countries to work in Singapore to provide for their families. A sobering reminder of my own privilege, it has motivated me to continue serving this community. I learnt that there are many systemic issues plaguing this community that will require the joint effort of multiple stakeholders to resolve and I am excited to contribute further in the future."

– Anthea Cheo, Law & You

"I believe it is a privilege to receive a legal education, hence I want to use the skills and knowledge I picked up in law school to help those in need. I have participated in a wide range of pro bono activities and found it meaningful to be a part of the process that facilitates access to justice. Through my role as Project Director for Syariah Law Friends in AY22/23, I have learnt about the processes at the Syariah Court and the operational aspects of legal clinics."

– Lee Jie Yi, Syariah Law Friends



"Through NUS-FIDReC, I could see the acute gaps in legal awareness among certain segments of the population, and experience the fulfilment of seeing the impact of our efforts. In 2023, we conducted legal awareness workshops for over 200 beneficiaries, and produced publicity materials with key information on scam prevention, common financial mishaps and self-help measures. Four project members also participated in FIDReC adjudications as nominees to assist complainants. We were able to achieve our goal of increasing access to justice."

– Li Minghan, NUS-FIDReC

"One of the motivating factors in studying law is to be able to use my legal knowledge to make the law more accessible to others. I was able to achieve that and I received much more than I gave through meaningful collaboration with NUS Care Unit and AWARE. It allowed me to see how much work is put into improving access to justice for sexual misconduct cases. I am inspired to continue the good work when I am in legal practice."

– Germaine Ong (left) and Janice Neo, Project Parachute



"Doing pro bono work is a way for me to give back to the community by leveraging the legal skills I have acquired. One of the reasons I chose to study law is to be able to help others, and pro bono work allows me to do just that. Furthermore, it is very fulfilling to be able to apply knowledge from the classroom to the real world. Since the project I worked on involves introducing the law to youth, I have not only enjoyed interacting with them but also learnt their perspectives on law (and life). In organising activities for the Pro Bono Club, I also wanted to increase interest in pro bono work within the NUS Law student community."

– Whang Chia Ning, President, Pro Bono Group

THE VALUE OF DISCORD

NUS Law Club Presidents past and present share their perspectives on how being a student leader has shaped their growth.

For alumnus Sia Bao Huei '21 and undergraduate Isabella Rotschaedl '27, the role of being the President of the NUS Law Club unifies them. They've had to shoulder their student leader responsibilities—including overseeing the different directorates in charge of core functions, as well as representing the Faculty and championing its interests at the NUS Students' Union Council—amidst the intensity of their studies.

Isabella likens the role to being the conductor of an orchestra. She says, "Each directorate, be it sports, arts, or publicity, plays its own vital instrument, and my responsibility is to ensure they work in harmony." With the objective being to make the student experience better, Bao Huei points to key events that they were involved in, such as the Law Careers Fair, Open Day and Block B Party. Here, the Presidents of the 39th and 45th NUS Law Club open up about their experiences.

What stands out in your term?

Bao Huei: One of my team's first major events was the Block B Party. The vision was for all seniors and juniors to enjoy a great night together, and it was heartening to see everyone having a good time. Our Events Director conceived a visual concept for the carnival—to have buntings hanging from the second floor down to the performance area. To fulfil this vision, every member of the Law Club helped to cut thousands of triangular buntings after class daily, for a week.

Isabella: Before my current position, I served as the Chairperson of the Freshmen Orientation Central Committee. Planning orientation activities was an incredibly demanding process. Yet, one moment stands out vividly—introducing the orientation team to a sea of eager freshmen for the first time. I felt an overwhelming sense of pride and purpose. Little did I know, this would become one of the Faculty's most successful orientation runs—record sign-ups for every event, achieving NUS Law's first Rag and Flag double gold, and hosting the grandest Freshman Inauguration Ceremony to date.

How has the role influenced your approach to life?



Despite the heavy academic workload, Isabella Rotschaedl (left) and Sia Bao Huei (right, in blue shirt) expressed a commitment to making the student experience in law school both supportive and fun

Bao Huei: When I sat on the Board of Inquiry as a student representative for a case of a minor transgression, I recalled thinking it was a straightforward matter, as the students involved had admitted to it. I assumed that the penalties would be imposed, but another board member pointed out the students' willingness to recognise their errors and that the reasons for their conduct were understandable. I often think about the magnanimity behind this comment. Our practice may at times demand impersonal decision-making. But, as I have learnt, another aspect is having the compassion to understand that everyone inevitably makes mistakes. This has served as a reminder to take a step back and think about what I would do if the shoe was on the other foot.

Isabella: I've often encountered differing viewpoints, and I've learnt that a good leader doesn't become defensive at the first sign of disagreement. She embraces the discomfort, challenges her own ideas, and seeks solutions that prioritise the team's vision. In addition, it's easy to express appreciation when everything goes smoothly. However, thanking people for their effort, even when things don't go as planned, is just as important. This perspective has taught me to be kinder to myself and others. Gratitude and resilience go hand in hand.

How has being a student leader shaped your growth?

Bao Huei: It has taught me that there will be aspects that can be improved upon in any task. The art is in extracting the constructive aspect of all criticism. Certainly, the resilience built over my



time as a student leader has aided me in my current role as a disputes lawyer. Being a student leader has impressed on me that having a good team is critical to any successful endeavour. Throughout my journey from student to lawyer, I have been blessed with exceptional teammates and mentors.

Isabella: The leadership roles I've taken on have challenged me, offering invaluable lessons about myself, my leadership style, and how I interact with others. Over the years, I've transformed from a leader who was highly task-oriented—focused on achieving objectives efficiently and meeting deadlines—to someone who prioritises building camaraderie, fostering team spirit, and empowering those I work with.

In three words, what does the role mean to you?

Bao Huei: Leave it better. The often-repeated adage "leave it better than you found it" was our team's aim during our term, to leave Law School a warmer, nicer and better version than when we first joined. It anchored our decisions and made us willing to go the extra mile (even if it was to cut triangular blue buntings for the Block B Party!). I daresay I have also left the role a better, wiser version of myself. I know that student leadership will only continue to have that effect on the next ones to step up.

Isabella: Growth, connection and purpose. Ultimately, being a student leader has shaped me to be a more self-aware, compassionate and collaborative person. These lessons will continue to guide me long after my time in university.

CONGRATULATIONS!

The Class of 2024 has come a long way. With beaming unmasked faces all around, the Covid-19 pandemic seemed a distant memory; however, these graduates started reading law in the midst of the pandemic lockdown in 2020.

Four years later, they celebrated the culmination of their rigorous study, and a most unusual NUS journey, at the Commencement Ceremony held at the University Cultural Centre on 12 July 2024. Professor S. Jayakumar '63, Pro-Chancellor of the National University of Singapore, presided over the event as Guest of Honour.

Remarking on the students' transition to a new stage of life, the Guest Speaker, Justice Steven Chong '82, underscored how the NUS degree provides the tools and opportunity to make a difference, and shared lessons in life relating to friendships, hobbies and mindsets. Addressing close to 400 graduates, he said, "Stay humble and learn as much as you can, especially in the formative years of your career." He urged the Class of 2024 to stay curious and to stay the course, which would give life much colour and meaning.

As if in continuation of the theme, valedictorian Chua Kang Le spoke about how the Covid-19 gloom had fallen away, painting student life as



having brightened in hue when they experienced "the true essence of university"—long canteen queues, in-person interaction, benching for one another in moots. They had conquered seemingly insurmountable problems,

he affirmed, adding that "we should remind ourselves that in whatever roles we take on, we shall surely prevail".

For the Class of 2024, what a colourful life awaits!



NUS President Tan Eng Chye and NUS Law Dean Andrew Simester warmly applauding the graduates who took their turns in the limelight to receive their scrolls, one of whom was valedictorian Chua Kang Le



REUNIONS & ALUMNI EVENTS

This past year, more classes than ever before gathered to celebrate their milestone anniversaries: a total of 10! In addition, we are grateful that the Law Alumni Mentor Programme (LAMP) saw the highest participation rate from alumni since the inception of the programme. Through these events, we were delighted that close to 700 law alumni reconnected in 2024, rekindling friendships and strengthening the NUS Law community. Here, we feature the celebrations from the second half of the year, and we hope to see you at a future event!

CLASS OF 2009: CELEBRATING 15 YEARS

On the afternoon of 6 July 2024, the Bukit Timah Campus buzzed with nostalgia as approximately 40 alumni from the Class of 2009 gathered to celebrate their 15th anniversary. This milestone event marked their second reunion since their 5th anniversary gathering in 2014. With the law school set to move back to the main campus

at Kent Ridge in 2025 (where the alumni had spent their first year of law school), this gathering was especially poignant, serving as one of their final opportunities to convene at this historic location.

They were joined by one of their former teachers, Professor Joel Lee, who added

to the warm atmosphere with his light-hearted reflections and anecdotes. As classmates shared stories over a delightful high tea spread, laughter echoed through the halls of BTC, bringing back memories of the shared experiences that shaped their lives.

Here's to the next 15 years!



Catching up with one of their former teachers, Professor Joel Lee (right)



Classmates reconnecting and reminiscing about their formative years in law school



The conversation flowed as effortlessly as it did back in the day



Lively conversations unfolding as classmates stroll across the Lower Quad



A picture-perfect moment with the perfect company



This may be the last Class of 2009 photo at the Bukit Timah Campus, but the memories made will last a lifetime

CLASS OF 1984: 40 FABULOUS YEARS

The Class of 1984 celebrated their 40th anniversary since graduating from law school with a memorable reunion at the Kent Ridge Guild House on Friday, 26 July 2024. Nearly 40 classmates gathered to reminisce about their shared experiences and to reconnect. The event was graced by the presence of NUS Law Dean Andrew Simester, along with former teachers Bill Riquier, Kim Seah '77, Lye Lin Heng '73 and Tan Sook Yee.

Attendees enjoyed a sumptuous buffet dinner which enhanced the evening's festive atmosphere. Notably, there were classmates who travelled from overseas to be part of this special occasion, underscoring the enduring bonds formed during their time in law school. The Class showed their support for the law school by continuing to contribute to the Class of 1984 Grant, a fund established at their 20th anniversary to help financially disadvantaged students. The evening was filled with laughter, storytelling and a sense of nostalgia, making it a truly unforgettable celebration of friendship and achievement.



The Class of 1984 celebrating 40 years of memories and lasting friendships



Old friends, new conversations: Classmates, including Law Minister K. Shanmugam, were happy to catch up



NUS Law Dean Andrew Simester raising a toast to the Class of 1984



Classmates reunited with their former teachers, Lye Lin Heng and Tan Sook Yee (first row, third and fifth from left, respectively)



To laughter that never fades with time, and friendships that only grow stronger



Even after all the years, nothing compares to the joy of meeting old friends

CLASS OF 1994: 30 YEARS OF MEMORIES & MUSIC

To commemorate 30 years since their graduation, the Class of 1994 gathered for a reunion on 14 August 2024. The event took place at the Lazy Lizard on Sixth Avenue, which was exclusively booked for this milestone occasion. A total of 40 classmates came together to reconnect over lunch, taking full advantage of the venue's inviting atmosphere to enjoy the beautiful afternoon.

The celebration was made even more special by the presence of former NUS Law Dean, Professor Tan Cheng Han '87, who delivered an inspiring speech commending the alumni on their enduring bonds. The atmosphere was further enlivened by a musical performance by talented classmates Leonard Ng and Rani Singam, who captivated the crowd with renditions of popular hits, including crowd favourite "More Than Words". With Leonard strumming the guitar and Rani's dynamic vocals, the room transformed into a lively sing-along, showcasing the vibrant spirit of the Class of 1994.

In a meaningful gesture, the class committee also rallied support for the Tan Yock Lin Memorial Fund, with several classmates contributing to this cause during the gathering. This reunion not only celebrated their shared past but also reaffirmed the strong connections that have lasted over three decades—truly an eventful afternoon that will be cherished by all and a memorable prelude to more reunions to come!



The incredibly talented duo, Rani and Leonard, bringing their energy to the stage and filling the room with the joy of music



All smiles as the Class of 1994 reunited for their 30th anniversary



The perfect blend of flavours: Catching up over Udders Ice Cream generously provided by founder and classmate Wong Peck Lin (back row, second from right)



Classmates singing along wholeheartedly, reliving memories with every note



Toasting to old memories with law school friends, including Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong '94, S.C. (right)



Full of life and laughter—the Class of 1994 reunion was a celebration to remember

CLASS OF 2004: CELEBRATING 20 YEARS IN STYLE

On a balmy Saturday afternoon in August, the Class of 2004 got together to reminisce, reconnect and celebrate their 20th anniversary at the Bukit Timah Campus. It was a joyful gathering as classmates traded stories over a buffet spread, and caught up with their former teachers, including Professors Tan Cheng Han '87 (who was appointed Dean in 2001, the year that the Class started law school) and Alan Tan '94, as well as Associate Professors Gary Bell and Tracey Evans Chan '97. In addition, retired Judge Kan Ting Chiu '70, LLM '88 was a special guest.

One of the afternoon's highlights was a law school trivia quiz that put everyone's memories to the test, and left classmates in stitches as they battled for an attractive array of NUS Law souvenirs as the top three prizes. The Class also took the opportunity to rally together to help students in need through the NUS Law Student Support Fund.



Classmates reconnected with beloved former teachers through animated conversations over lunch



Classmates posing for a "wefie" while photobombers cheekily joined in



Quizmaster extraordinaire Trina Gan '04, who had classmates enthralled as they battled over who had the best memory in a trivia quiz



Classmates in stitches as the game progressed



The Class of 2004 came together for an afternoon filled with laughter, joy and unforgettable moments

CLASS OF 1999: CELEBRATING THEIR SILVER JUBILEE

Contributed by Glenn Seah '99

Class reunions can be a tricky thing, as any number of movies will tell you. The seminal class reunion movie of our era was probably 1997's *Romy and Michele's High School Reunion*, starring Mira Sorvino and Lisa Kudrow, in which the two protagonists turn up desperately trying to impress their old classmates with the hopelessly doomed but otherwise impressive story that they were the inventors of Post-it notes.

Thankfully, as we hit the age of 50 (or draw close to it, for the female half of the Class!), most of us are, by now, comfortable enough in our own slightly saggier skins, not to feel like we have to impress anyone. The attendance at our reunions has steadily grown, from the 10th to the 20th and now the 25th. Conversations have become warmer, memories gentler, and edges smoother, even as hairlines and waistlines move in rather less desirable directions.

It was a joy to reconnect with those whom we didn't have the opportunity

to meet amidst the hurly-burly of life and legal practice (and let's face it, the far more pressing issue of PSLE/O/A level parenting). Whether we have remained in practice, gone in-house, or moved on to other lives and careers, somewhere deep inside us remains that 20-year-old who, once upon a time, made memories with a bunch of other 20-year-olds in a seemingly random mish-mash of lecture halls and tutorial rooms on top of a little hill, squashed between Arts and Business Administration. Somewhere and some time in there, we grew up.

So, over delicious laksa, satay and drinks, we listened to our professors once more (thank you Professor Tan Cheng Han '87 in particular for gifting us with your welcoming words!), we laughed at and with each other once more, we looked at old photos and dug up old memories once more, and we wondered, who is that person at the table over there once more!

It leaves me only to conclude, with, I must confess, the aid of ChatGPT:

*Oh, the years have flown by, like leaves in the breeze,
With wrinkles and waistlines expanding with ease.
Once we were young, bright-eyed, full of zest,
Now we're just grateful for a good night's rest.*

*No more tall tales of Post-it note fame,
We're content in our skin, no need to play games.
We laugh, we reflect, we smile through the years,
Over laksa and satay, we banish old fears.*

*And as we squint at each face across the spread,
"Who is that person?"—still lingers in our heads!*

See you all at our 30-year reunion!



Classmates relishing a feast that included satay, laksa and kueh pie tee



The reunion was made more meaningful with the presence of former teachers, including Lee Kiat Seng '89 (left) and David Chong (centre)



From classroom camaraderie to lifelong connections



Professor Tan Cheng Han warmly addressing the Class



Reliving the shared memories of yesteryear



A toast to brotherhood, a bond that never weakens



Years may have flown by, but the wide smiles remain constant



A whopping 94 guests (comprising Class of 1999 alumni and former teachers) reunite on campus to celebrate 25 years since their graduation

CLASS OF 1989: A COSY 35TH ANNIVERSARY GATHERING

Not wanting to let the year pass them by without at least trying to mark their 35th anniversary, the Class of 1989 pulled together a dinner celebration on 14 September 2024 at the home of two classmates. A cosy group of about 50

gathered to celebrate 35 years since their graduation and had a wonderful time. Shared one of the organising crew members, "It was an evening of happy catching up and sharing memories. We vowed to get together again in five years' time!"



A casual arrangement turned into a heartwarming celebration, as the Class of 1989 gathered in the comfort of their classmates' home



All smiles over dinner – proof that spontaneity can lead to the most unforgettable reunions



True friendships always find a way to reconnect

LAMP LAUNCH GOES DOWNTOWN

This year, the Law Alumni Mentor Programme (LAMP) team decided to head to the heart of the CBD for the annual Launch Event. The air was filled with excitement and anticipation as close to 300 mentors and students turned up at The Exchange at Asia Square on 27 September 2024.

This is the first and main event that kick-starts the year-long programme for all LAMP participants, which include mentees who are Year 1 and 2 LLB students as well as JD and LLM students, and mentors who are generally alumni who are three to 15 years out of law school. In recent years, the programme has also expanded to involve more senior alumni, and a few non-alumni legal practitioners with a heart to mentor law students in their journeys. This AY 24/25, we were filled with gratitude for the 242 mentors who registered—the highest since the programme started 13 years ago.

Mentors and mentees got to know one another over a delectable spread of crowd favourites including burgers, fish and chips, and an eye-popping grazing table. It was heartening to witness groups of students clustered around alumni mentors who generously shared their experiences and advice, and ensured the students felt at ease. It was also encouraging to spot mentors who had previously joined the programme as young and eager students, now taking the opportunity to pay it forward with a new batch.

On behalf of our students and the LAMP team, we would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all mentors taking part in LAMP this year, and in past years. Without your enthusiasm and care for the new generation of law students, this programme would not be possible.

This year, we are delighted to recognise another group of **Long Service Mentors** who have volunteered with LAMP for five or more years. Special thanks to:

- Vincent Leow – Class of 2002
- Nick Sim – Class of 2010
- Terence Tan – Class of 2010
- Amy Tan – Class of 2011
- Samson Leo – Class of 2011
- Shikha Ojha – LLM Class of 2011



Taking a quick “wefie” to remember the enjoyable evening



Mentors and mentees building connections



No communication barrier: Students intently listening and learning



Participants of LAMP AY 24/25 enjoying their interactions during the Launch Event held at The Exchange, Asia Square



LAMP participants helping themselves to the delectable offerings on the grazing table



Mentees fuelling up before diving into meaningful conversations

LONDON ALUMNI REUNION

On 9 November 2024, the Dean of NUS Law, Professor Andrew Simester, and Professor James Penner joined the NUS Office of Alumni Relations (OAR) team to meet 50 alumni and students from NUS. Organised by OAR and held at the Millennium Hotel Gloucester in London, the event saw a strong turnout of 14 law alumni and students from the Faculty of Law, some of whom had even travelled from other cities for the gathering.

Professor Simester shared an update on various developments at the University and the Faculty of Law with all present. It was an evening filled with warm conversation, laughter and connections. We look forward to another opportunity to reconnect with law alumni in this bustling metropolis!



A group photo to mark this lovely occasion, where new connections were forged



NUS Law Dean Andrew Simester delivering a speech on the future aspirations of the Faculty



A memorable evening in London, where NUS Law alumni and students met up with Professor Simester

UPCOMING REUNIONS

To organise your milestone reunion in 2025 (Class of 1965, 1970, 1975, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000 and 2005), gather a few classmates to form your committee and contact Jo-Ann Chan '97 at lawcjm@nus.edu.sg to get things started. For milestone classes who studied at BTC, do get in touch soon, as it will likely be the last chance to hold your reunion at our historic campus.

UPDATE YOUR PARTICULARS & SAVE THE EARTH

To receive news and invitations to future class reunions, please update your latest contact details with us!

As part of NUS Law's efforts on sustainability, **publications will be distributed mainly in digital format from end-2025**. If you wish to receive *LawLink* and *Letter from the Dean* in hard copy, please opt in via the e-survey below (hard copies will only be sent to alumni who opt in or who have not updated their email address with us).

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* Some donors have asked to remain anonymous.

MARGARET CYNTHIA WALKER:

AN EXEMPLAR OF KINDNESS AND LOVE

As a tribute to her life and legacy, the younger son of the late Ms Margaret Cynthia Walker has established the Margaret C. Walker Bursary and the Margaret C. Walker Prize in Principles of Property Law (JD), in her memory. The Bursary supports financially needy students at the NUS Faculty of Law while the Prize recognises outstanding Juris Doctor students, who have topped their cohort in Property Law, a subject that Ms Walker specialised in and taught as an adjunct faculty in the 1970s.

The following paragraphs, written by the benefactor Justice Philip Jeyaretnam, captures her inspiring story and includes anecdotes from those who fondly remember her:



Photo: Henry Woon

Margaret Cynthia Walker and her husband on their wedding day in 1957

Margaret Cynthia Walker was born in 1930 in Bournemouth and had not heard of Singapore, until she was 12 years old. That was when its dramatic fall to the Japanese was front-page news in England. Yet Singapore was where she would make her home from 1956 onwards until her death in 1980, at the young age of 50. Having met a debonair young Singaporean at University College London soon after the Second World War, she eventually agreed to come out to Singapore and make a life with him here. Her first job in Singapore was at Rodyk & Davidson as its first female lawyer. She found the firm too colonial and stuffy for her liking, and moved on. Margaret after all was a socialist (although not a firebrand): She was a quiet determined egalitarian. She integrated quickly into the local Bar, becoming a respected conveyancer, and in time the “senior partner” of her husband (whose years in legal service meant his call date post-dated hers, although he was in fact four years older than she was).

Strong in her faith, Margaret became registrar of the Singapore diocese of the Anglican church. She was also active in a number of charities, including the Samaritans of Singapore of which she became Chair. Michael Hwang, S.C. was then a young volunteer with the Samaritans, manning the telephones to receive calls from individuals in distress and at risk of suicide. He remembers that Margaret “taught

me ... to abandon my standard practice of taking detailed notes of everything said by the client. She counselled me that what the client needed was our understanding and empathy ... and to win the trust of the client by keeping eye contact at every opportunity, and to work on developing a bond ... Our job was not to get all the detailed facts, but get to the root of the issues causing the client serious distress ... to give hope that he or she had a friend in his or her corner.”

Understanding and empathy were virtues Margaret had in spades. Elisabeth Chan recalls how in 1964 and 1965 when she was the most junior member of the Attorney General’s Chambers and had to oversee adoption petitions, she would meet Margaret on summons days, describing her as “a very kind, soft-spoken lady who never made a very junior lawyer feel clueless or inadequate”. Margaret at that time handled a regular stream of adoptions for British Army personnel.

Margaret did not live to see her sons graduate from university or the births of her four grandchildren. But a life is not measured by its length, rather by its “little nameless unremembered acts of kindness and of love”, in the words of poet William Wordsworth. With such acts she enriched the lives of others. The institution of this Bursary and Prize would be seen by her in the same light.



Photo: The Straits Times © SPH Media Limited

Margaret in the procession at St Andrew's Cathedral as diocesan registrar in 1966

NEW NUS LAW FELLOWSHIP ON THE RULE OF LAW

JONES DAY FOUNDATION GIVES US\$1 MILLION TO SET UP STEPHEN BROGAN-JONES DAY LEGAL FELLOWSHIP

NUS Law has announced a new legal fellowship—the Stephen Brogan-Jones Day Legal Fellowship on the Rule of Law—established through a generous endowed gift of US\$1 million from the Jones Day Foundation, a non-profit organisation funded by Jones Day’s lawyers and staff.

The Stephen Brogan-Jones Day Legal Fellowship on the Rule of Law will expand the partnership between Jones Day Foundation, NUS Law and its Centre for Asian Legal Studies (CALS), by supporting rule-of-law research activities.

It is expected to be awarded to a leading judge, practitioner or academic annually

in perpetuity. The appointed legal Fellow will deliver a seminar or lecture to students and the legal profession to engage the wider Singapore legal community on important issues related to furthering the rule of law.

The Fellowship was announced at an event hosted by Jones Day in Singapore on 10 December 2024. Mr Murali Pillai ’92, LLM ’00, S.C., Minister of State for Law & Transport, attended the event as the Guest of Honour, together with NUS President Tan Eng Chye, NUS Law Dean Andrew Simester, Jones Day Global Managing Partner Greg Shumaker, senior executives from NUS and Jones Day, and other invited guests.

Mr Murali said, “Singapore is a steadfast champion of the rule of law, and we recognise that scholarly research and education play a critical role in its promotion. This Fellowship will help address pressing challenges facing our region and reaffirm the centrality of the rule of law as a cornerstone of peace, stability and progress. It will help foster fresh perspectives, nurture future leaders and deepen engagement on issues that matter to the region and the world.”

Singapore’s legal system is widely recognised as one of the more durable systems of laws, institutions and norms, and the resulting trust in that system has been a critical ingredient



The new Stephen Brogan-Jones Day Legal Fellowship on the Rule of Law will expand the partnership between the Jones Day Foundation, NUS Law and its Centre for Asian Legal Studies by supporting rule-of-law research activities. (From left) Ms Sushma Jobanputra, Partner-in-Charge, Jones Day's Singapore Office; Mr Greg Shumaker, Global Managing Partner, Jones Day; Mr Murali Pillai, S.C., Minister for Law & Transport; Professor Tan Eng Chye, NUS President, NUS; Professor Andrew Simester, NUS Law Dean

in Singapore's economic development and success.

Echoing the sentiments, Professor Simester said, "We are deeply grateful to the Jones Day Foundation for its generous gift and to Jones Day for its continuing commitment to the rule of law. This Fellowship will contribute significantly to deepening our understanding of what a robust and predictable legal system requires if it is to support a prosperous and harmonious society, as well as advance Singapore's standing as a global hub for dispute resolution."

Mr Greg Shumaker said that the new Stephen Brogan-Jones Day Legal Fellowship on the Rule of Law will promote the study and critical examination of this important subject.

"Jones Day's former Managing Partner Steve Brogan has been a tireless advocate

for the rule of law and the important role it plays in economic development, alleviating poverty and advancing human dignity. This Fellowship will promote the study and critical examination of this important subject and help enable others to follow in Steve's footsteps in Singapore and across the world.

"January 2025 marks Jones Day's 25th year in Singapore. We have witnessed the indisputable and profound impact Singapore's strong rule of law tradition has had on a nation's economic growth and stability, and we are proud of the part we have played in supporting the rule of law here. Given our ongoing commitment to supporting future leaders in upholding justice and promoting the rule of law, we are also proud of the Jones Day Foundation for making this Fellowship possible and furthering NUS Law's excellent work."

Jones Day's Singapore office is part of a global law firm with more than 2,400 lawyers in 40 offices across five continents. The Jones Day Foundation was established in 1987, funded by the lawyers and staff of Jones Day, with a mission to financially support efforts that include promoting the rule of law, fostering innovation in academics, medicine and the arts, improving the living conditions and economic opportunities for people in impoverished settings (particularly children and women), and providing support and comfort to people suffering from natural and other disasters around the world.

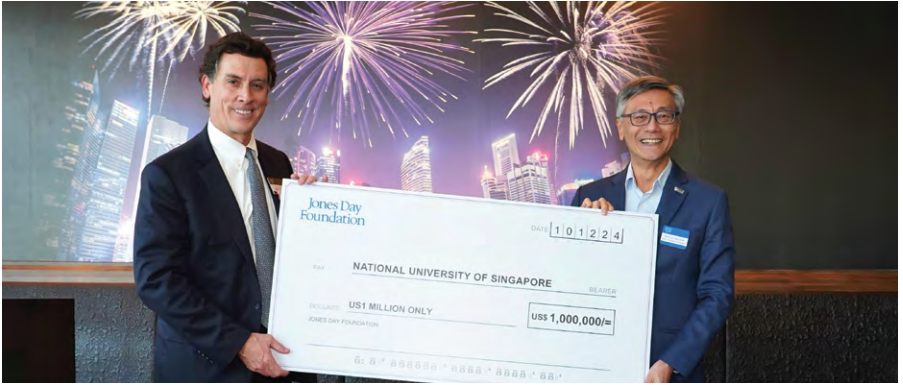
This generous gesture by the Jones Day Foundation builds on its previous US\$2 million gift to NUS Law for the establishment of two visiting professorships each year: The Jones Day CALS Visiting Professorship on the Rule of Law in Asia and the Jones Day Visiting Professorship on Comparative Commercial Law, both of which were established at NUS Law in 2022.

Since then, NUS Law has hosted distinguished legal practitioners from around the world, including Justice Ayesha Malik from the Supreme Court of Pakistan; Lady Mary Arden, former UK Supreme Court Justice; Honourable Geoffrey Ma, Former Chief Justice of the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal; and Tun Richard Malanjum, Ombudsperson to the United Nations Security Council and (Retired) 9th Chief Justice of Malaysia. Each of these appointees has delivered a public lecture at NUS Law and engaged with local academics, students and practitioners to enrich the learning and understanding of the rule of law in the local and international context.

— This story was first published on NUS News.



Professor Simester underscored the Fellowship's significance in his speech



Jones Day's endowment to NUS Law is in honour of its former Managing Partner, Mr Stephen Brogan, who has been a strong advocate for the strengthening of legal systems and advancement of the rule of law in Asia

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