

SCHOLARS' CONNECT

A biannual publication

04 A STORY OF RESILIENCE

Overcoming the odds with Jia Min, our SP and EDGE alumna.

08 THE RIGHT SCHOLARSHIP

Which scholarship is most suitable for you?

STRIVING TOWARDS EXCELLENCE

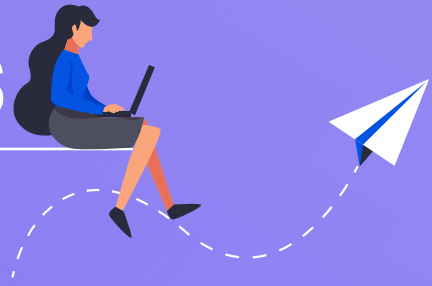
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Director's Message



It seems like 2022 would be yet another eventful year, with all of us learning to manage and live with Covid-19, grappling with rising costs due to inflation and watching the Russia-Ukraine war closely as it subjects the global economy to various shocks. Notwithstanding the gloom, there are silver linings to the stormy clouds, one of which is that our leaders are committed to steering our nation out of this crisis to a better tomorrow. Measures are in place to protect the livelihoods of Singaporeans and plans are being made to ensure a sustainable and resilient future for generations to come. Indeed, to be resilient is to be tough though this toughness is not the absence of weakness but the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, as is our focus for this issue of Scholars' Connect.

In this issue of Scholars' Connect, I hope the story of how Lim Jia Min, our EDGE alumna who overcame a period of difficulties before clinching the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) Scholarship to pursue Social Work at the National University of Singapore (NUS), will inspire you to persevere in your goals even if your journey is fraught with challenges. I also hope that you will not give up easily but put up the good fight in the face of challenges. When you feel overwhelmed, know that help is at hand and that you are not alone. As Jia Min shared, it is okay to feel overwhelmed when the going gets tough and you will not be judged for seeking support. In fact, that is part of the journey to becoming a more resilient and stronger you. To those of you who may be going through a rough patch right now, I want to encourage you to persevere and to press on courageously. Approach

our scholar mentors for assistance if needed – we are always here to guide and cheer you on!

To support you in your scholarship quest, the EDGE editorial team has put together illuminating pieces on how to choose the right scholarship and provided relevant resources for you to be better equipped in your scholarship journey. In addition, this issue also covers what our scholars have been up to – from honing their leadership skills at the National Young Leaders Fellowship Programme to active engagements in community services to improving the environment and touching the lives of foreign workers – our scholars are committed to making a positive difference to our community.

Finally, the SP Scholarship Team has also planned a series of workshops throughout the year which are especially curated for the students in the EDGE programme, with the aim of helping them become emotionally and mentally more resilient and at the same time, more informed about current affairs. Remember, the SP Scholarship Team is here to support you in your quest, so seek them out – a little support can sometimes help you go a long way. They will be glad to lend you a hand and they are here to share their knowledge and resources with you! In closing, readers, I hope you will find this issue of Scholars' Connect both enjoyable and fruitful!

I wish you the best of luck in your scholarship journey!

Mr Clarence Chua, Department of Student Services



A Story of Resilience



The EDGE team caught up with an EDGE programme alumna and NCSS Social Service scholar, Ms Lim Jia Min. She is currently a third-year social work major at the National University of Singapore (NUS). Jia Min previously studied Accountancy at Singapore Polytechnic (SP), only making the decision to become a social worker when she was in her final year of studies at SP.

One thing about championship teams is that they're resilient. No matter what is thrown at them, no matter how deep the hole, they find a way to bounce back and overcome adversity.

- Nick Saban

Her passion for serving vulnerable older adults began when her mother introduced volunteering to her. This fondness to serve the elderly may be due to the close relationship she had with her grandmother during her childhood. She continued volunteering with older adults for the next six years, while also explored working with other needy age groups such as the youths and children. During her time in SP, the experiences in organising community service projects and the exposure to social issues ascertained her interest in the human condition. One key lesson she had learnt through her varied experiences was to first and foremost, invest in building a relationship of trust and safety before offering any assistance.



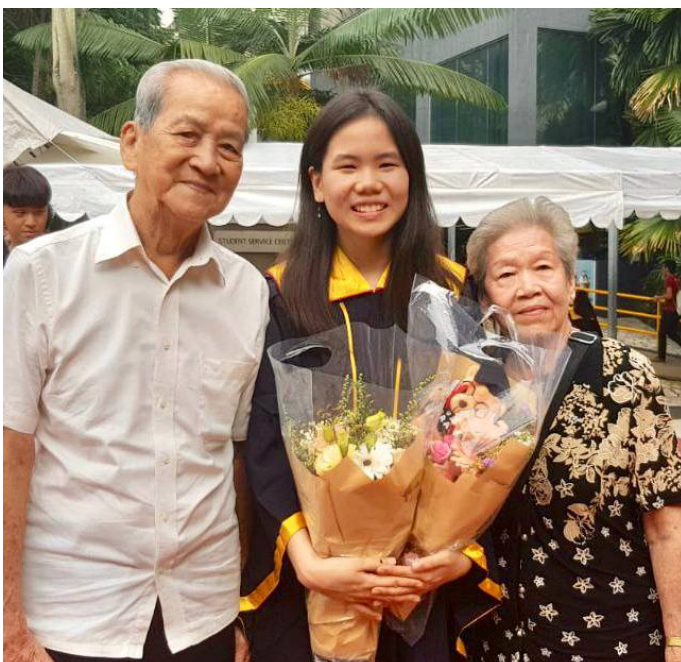
Lim Jia Min

Diploma in Accountancy
Class of 2018/2019

However, her journey has not been all smooth sailing. When her father's battle with cancer took a turn, Jia Min found herself unable to bring to fruition the fundraising campaign she was organising then. While caring for her father, she had to skip classes and spent many nights rushing school assignments and trying to meet deadlines. The sudden loss of her father was so distressing that she suffered insomnia for months after that and she even had to take a semester off school to get back on her feet again.

To make matters worse, this was also when her mental health reached its limit. Even when things were better at home and less stressful at school, Jia Min could no longer leave her room because she started experiencing panic attacks. The pressure from needing to perform, building a "good enough" portfolio, while battling personal desires for external approval and meeting expectations finally all came to a head and took its toll on her.

Seeking professional help quickly allowed her to schedule a make-up session for her final examinations, showed up for admission interviews and subsequently, started volunteering again.





Yet, these struggles would intensify once university studies began. It became a continual process of learning that a lot of opportunities she believed she could count on, would actually not serve her the way she thought they would. She realised that she needed to prioritise taking care of herself before she could reach out to others. Indeed, it was a challenging period where she was confronted by many worries and fears, but she overcame them with professional help, amazing friends, and by working ceaselessly on pulling herself together.

Recounting these incidents, Jia Min shared that it had been a long journey of processing the emotional and mental complexities that she had been carrying. From learning to manage stress to drawing boundaries and being more mindful about who she gives her time and energy to, it has been a continual effort in finding the balance between self-preservation and fulfilment. Eventually, she did return to school to continue pursuing her dream of serving others. Through it all, she has also grown stronger and more confident in reaching out to the people who have similar struggles. The ability to empathise is especially important



in the helping profession. However, being able to protect one's peace and practicing self-care are also necessary in minimizing burn-outs, and to becoming an effective social worker who has the necessary stamina to stay the course in the long haul. Thus, knowing when to care for, and extending the same kindness to ourselves (like we do for others) is crucial.

For those of you who are struggling and feeling like life is an impossible uphill climb, Jia Min would like to share with you that you are really not alone – try taking one small step at a time. Subsidised counselling and therapy are available, and there will be somebody out there who will listen and care about you. Take time to find your tribe -- the people who will nurture and support you and allow you to take up the space that you need. Developing a good understanding of ourselves and building a strong support system will also be valuable in aiding one to handle life's curveballs.



In listening to Jia Min's story, she has showed us that learning how to slow down and making the decision to rest can be acts of courage and redemption. She has also demonstrated to us that it is alright to seek social and professional help, especially when we require additional support when things become too much for us to handle alone. Most importantly, we are not alone in facing challenges – help is available.



Message from our Alumni



Kirstin Yip was enrolled in SP's Diploma in Creative Writing for TV and New Media from 2015 to 2017. She is also the proud recipient of the SP Scholarship and the PSC Scholarship as well as a Toh Chin Chye Gold Medalist and a Singapore Press Holdings Gold Medallist.

Besides having enjoyed a very fulfilling education at SP, she has also learnt a few key life lessons during her stay at the polytechnic. The first, is the importance of open and honest communication. You would all be familiar with the many group projects which you need to participate in for your various modules and sometimes, you may end up in groups where you do not naturally get along or necessarily see eye to eye with one another. Kirsten's experiences in such situations is to seek out her group-mates and discuss her frustrations with them openly but diplomatically and respectfully. Being a person who would instinctively avoid confrontations, this was initially difficult for her. However, she realized that by learning to speak up, she learnt to be brave, and she had the satisfaction of being heard. This inspired other members to open up and share their views and she then had the chance to listen to their views and perspectives, which can be very rewarding too.

The second takeaway is the need to set boundaries. Fearing that she would miss any opportunities, Kirsten was quick to participate in everything without proper and careful consideration of how much she really wanted to join a certain activity. She also felt that it was hard to say no. Consequently, she was overloaded with many projects and responsibilities, some of which were neither meaningful nor fulfilling to her. With time and experience, she is now a lot more discerning in what projects she commits her time and energy to. This is especially since she has also come to realize that time is finite and one has to be very selective in how one allocate this limited resource.



Diploma in Creative Writing for TV and New Media
SP Scholarship (2015-2017)
Toh Chin Chye Gold Medal (2017)
Singapore Press Holdings Gold Medal (2017)
PSC Scholarship (2018)

Having grown more confident, Kirsten now sees in retrospect, that at 17, she ought to have realized that she was good as she was and there was really no need for her to impress anyone. While it is always important to try one's best, one does not need to always be the best. Indeed, her parents have always affirmed her since she was young, that her best is good enough and even if she does not meet the expectations she has set for herself, it is alright. She continues to embrace this belief.

In conclusion, Kirsten has the following advice for her fellow school-mates:

- To speak up more and listen more.
- To respect boundaries for yourself and for others.
- To keep in mind that you're doing your best and you're fine and to take care of yourself.

With these, Kirsten wishes all her fellow school-mates all the very best in their stay at SP and hope that they found her insights applicable and useful!



Jamie Yau, a student from the EDGE Programme, has been selected for the National Young Leaders Fellowship after persevering through and putting in good performances through the rigorous selection process to be among the top 30 finalists. Congratulations Jamie!

The National Young Leaders Fellowship (NYLF) is a highly curated programme that recognises and develops outstanding youths aged 15 to 19 years old who are passionate in the things they do. Selected fellows have to go through a 5-day induction and a 9-month fellowship where they will be involved in community projects, plenary, closed-door fireside chats and embarking on learning journeys to expand their horizons. It is a tailored leadership development programme where selected fellows can build their social networks and receive professional coaching and guidance through the Halogen Career Conversion Programme, personal mentoring, workshops, project-based acceleration for social causes and passion projects.



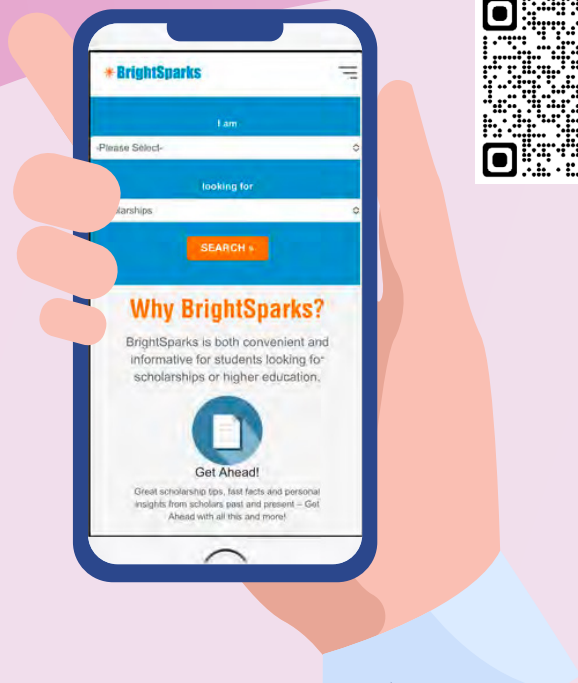
In his first public speech since being promoted to the role, Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong attended the award presentation for NYLF at Changi Cove, and urged youths to step forward and play their part in writing the next chapter of the Singapore story. Addressing some 30 fellowship recipients selected for the dialogue session on June 17, Mr Wong also touched on various topics, such as political polarisation and Singapore's ageing population.

"Our future generations are entering a new era — a world that is more challenging and unpredictable. Challenges like geopolitical contestation, climate change, and our aging population can be daunting especially when you read about them almost every day online. My advice is don't be discouraged. The strongest steel comes from the hottest fire. You have risen to the challenges of your time and I am confident that you will be the next change-makers in Singapore," said DPM Wong.

Jamie herself felt that the experience was a fulfilling one – "It was incredibly enriching and truly an awesome opportunity."



Choosing the Right Scholarship



For those of you with sterling academic results, exemplary character and outstanding co-curricular activity (CCA) records, there are plenty of scholarships available for you to choose from. The BrightSparks portal itself offers over 200 scholarships for you to choose from. It can be overwhelming to be faced with so many choices and this can lead to 'choice paralysis,' where students are unable to pin down any choice simply because they do not know where to start.

Besides the prestige, being a scholar means you get the opportunity of being on a dedicated developmental track where you may get the chance of being rotated through different job functions to gain a holistic picture of the entire organisation and be placed on the leadership track. You may also get to choose whether to pursue your tertiary education locally or overseas.

Simply applying for anything and everything is definitely not advisable. A targeted approach, aiming for the scholarship that's best for you, is the better approach. But how do you choose which scholarship is "best for you"?

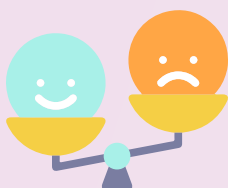


These tips will offer some helpful insights.



1 One Application Form

Fill up the Scholarship Résumé form just once and you can use this to apply for multiple scholarships in the future easily and conveniently.



2 Easy Comparison of Multiple Scholarships

With the BrightSparks Compare Scholarships tool, you can see eligibility and bond periods at a glance - determining the right scholarship has never been easier!



3 Relevant Tips and Advice

Read about the experiences of scholars past and present so as to consider more comprehensively the advantages and disadvantages of a scholarship. This will help you make a more informed decision

Some questions which you may want to ask yourself are:

1



Application Process

2



Finances

3



Living Arrangements

4



Temperament

5



Career Aspirations

Given the prestige and desirability of a scholarship, the entire application process from gathering your documents, making your introduction video to the panel interview will take time and this requires stamina and patience. It is also a test of whether you are committed enough to see through the sometimes long-drawn process and the hassle of preparations.

Most scholarships come with bonds and you should carefully assess whether you are comfortable with the idea of having to serve in a particular organization for a given number of years. It is also wise to have a good sense of the work culture and work environment of the organization that you may be working in for the next 4 to 6 years and ask yourself whether there is a good fit between your temperament and the settings of your potential workplace.

If you are opting for an overseas scholarship, do consider what kind of living arrangements are available in the country of study and plan your expenditure prudently. Would you be staying in the dormitory? Do you mind sharing a room?

Are you independent enough to see to your own meals and laundry and take care of yourself when you fall ill? Your parents will unlikely be readily available to give structure to your day to day activities and you need to be resourceful enough to solve most of your immediate concerns when you are alone overseas. While your scholarship will come with financial support, it is still sensible to understand the finances at home and put aside sufficient savings for possible unexpected expenses.

Finally, what are your career aspirations and how will this scholarship bring you nearer to your dream job? What kind of holiday work attachment program, internship scheme and corporate tracks are available in the industry which is offering the scholarship?

With careful consideration, we hope you will find your ideal scholarship and be a step closer to embarking on your dream job.



BIG Interview



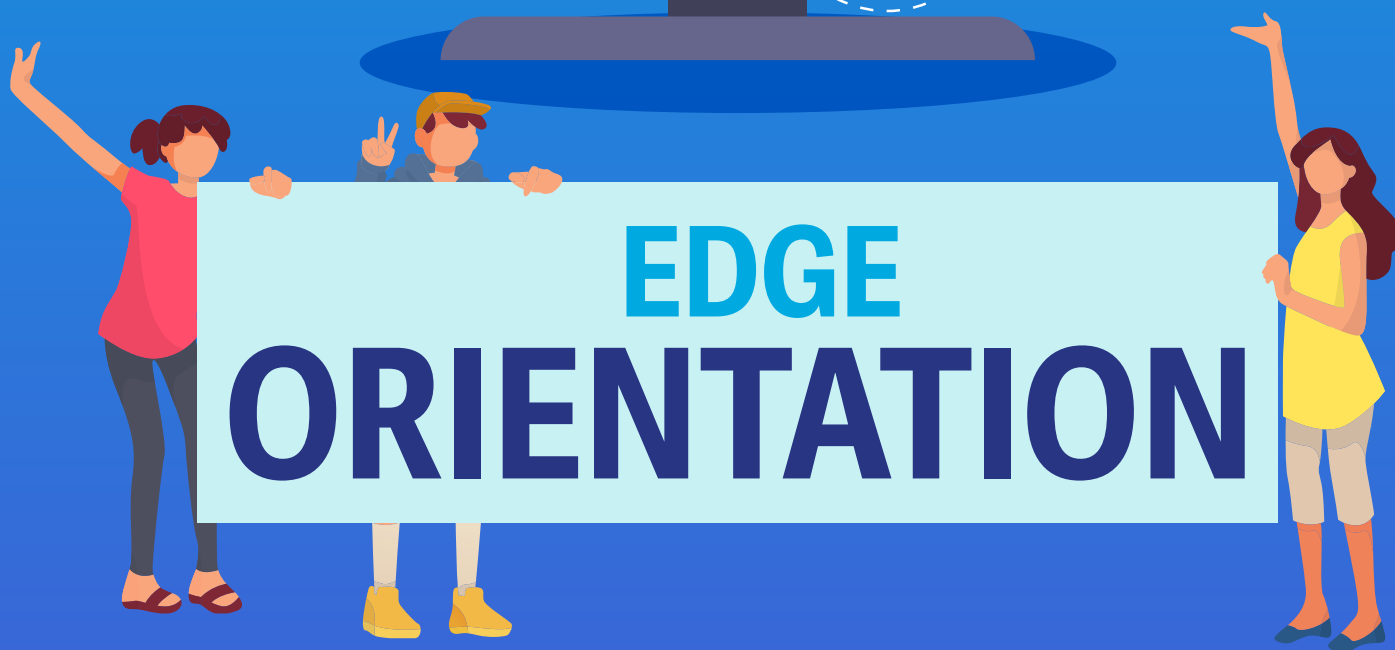
What is Big Interview?

Big Interview is an online system that combines training and practice to help improve your interview technique and build your confidence, whether you are interviewing for a scholarship, job, or university placement. Perfect your delivery and conquer your nerves by practicing on thousands of behavioural and technical questions available on Big Interview, complete with recommended sample answers. You can also leverage the 'Answer Builder' tool to craft the right stories to share during interviews.

TRY IT OUT NOW!

[SP.BIGINTERVIEW.COM](https://sp.biginterview.com)





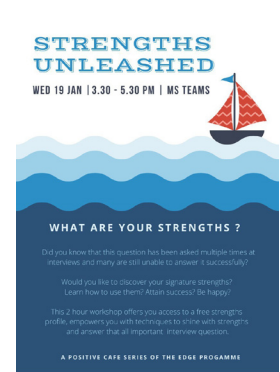
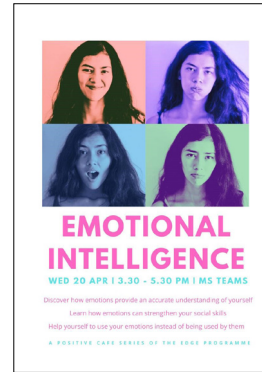
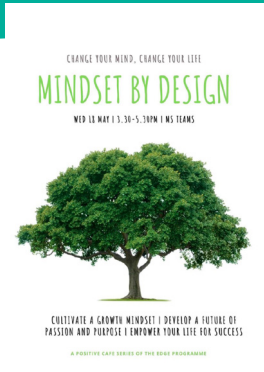
A carefully put together EDGE orientation that sought to focus on pertinent themes such as social inclusive-ness, universal design and employment and employability was conducted virtually for our newly minted EDGE students this year.

To help our students envision what an inclusive space entails, they were brought on virtual tours to sites such as ‘the Universal Design’ Architecture, Inclusive Playground and Amphitheatre, Cargivers Pod, Tech Able and The Art Faculty Social Enterprise.

In particular, the visit to Enabling Village, an inclusive space that represents a fresh approach to social businesses and

community building vividly illustrated the concept of a community space where people with different abilities can move independently, feel accepted for who they are, and be valued for their contributions. Our scholars learned how assistive technologies can return a sense of usefulness and therefore dignity to the disabled, as they now have a means of earning their own income and supporting themselves through gainful employment. This lends meaning to their lives and is a stark reminder that we can be down but we won’t be out. Most of all, a compassionate society does not ignore its vulnerable members, and this is what unites us as a people living, growing and learning in a common space.

Workshops by our EDGE Team



As part of our aim to support our scholars to become more well-rounded, the EDGE scholarship team has lined up a series of workshops from intangible soft skills, communication and branding mastery to knowledge of current affairs. Some of EDGE signature workshops include “Strengths Unleashed,” “Positive Relationships,” “Building Resilience,” “Emotional Intelligence” and “Mindset by Design.”

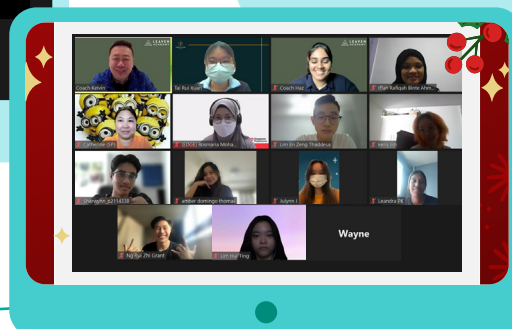
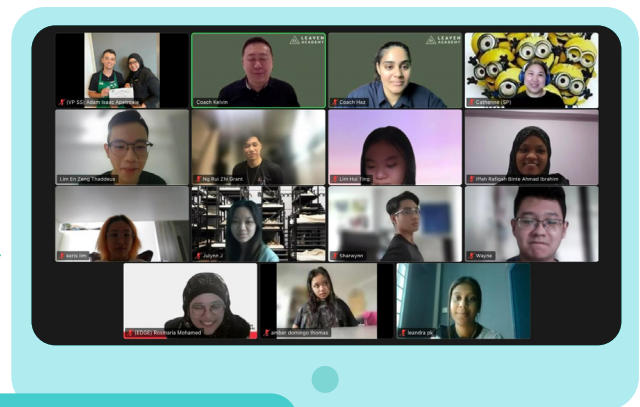
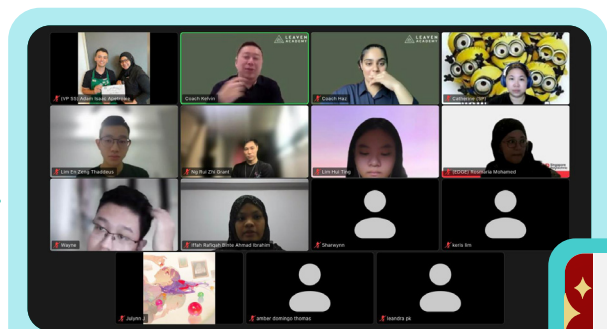
These workshops aim to cultivate the psychological and emotional well-being of our scholars and illustrate to them the importance of living life with gratitude, focusing on the blessings rather than the lacks. By complementing others’ weaknesses with the unique strengths they have, EDGE scholars are reminded that they have the ability to create stronger communities, which work to uplift one another.

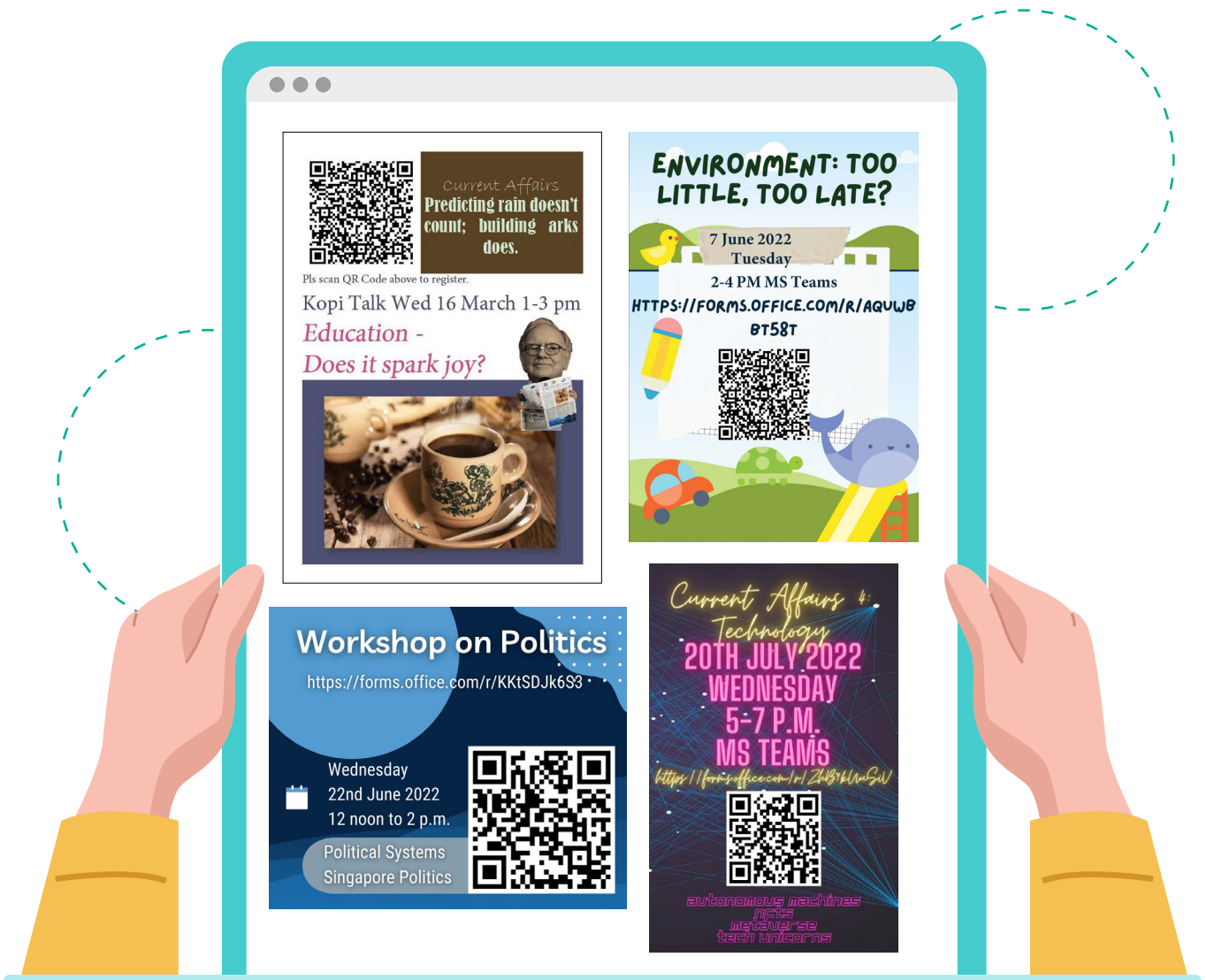
Besides being reminded that they should seize the day, and work for practical outcomes – “Don’t waste your time chasing butterflies. Mend your garden, and the butterflies will come,” ~Mario Quintana-- students also learn to be more mindful about how to manage their emotions and thought patterns, so as to form more positive relationships in this series of workshops.

By painstakingly curating relevant workshops for our EDGE students, we hope that each of them, like butterflies in each of their own gardens, would grow more radiant, healthier and more beautiful, as they tend to their gardens with dedicated care and become resilient leaders in the future.

To support their leadership journey, EDGE students also participated in a four-level progressive SP Student Leadership Programme (LEAP), which aims to groom our students into caring leaders who are committed to serve the community, become effective individuals, team contributors and deserving team leaders.

This year’s LEAP camp was conducted virtually over a course of three days, which saw enthusiastic participation from both the students and the facilitators. Participants were also taught the principles and application techniques of using a ‘90-Day Success Map’ to capture their goals.





As a potential scholar, you would very likely be involved in policy work at some point in your career. As such, demonstrating that you are well-read and well-informed about current affairs cannot be over-emphasised.

We know that our students are very busy, and sometimes it is simply hard to keep up with the routine of daily newspaper reading. So, the Scholarship Team at SP has thoughtfully put together regular current affairs workshops from discussing the topic of Education to Environment, Politics and Technology, where the most pertinent and latest news and research on a given area are consolidated and presented to you in a two-hour sharing.

We hope that by so doing, you will be able to very quickly and efficiently fill up any knowledge gaps, and become more confident when you attend your scholarship interviews. Plus, these workshops are customized just for our EDGE students, so the students always have a say in voting for the next topic and the preferred time and date of the workshop. This is to ensure that as many students can benefit from the workshops as possible.

So stay tuned for the next upcoming one on Censorship and Freedom of Speech (voted by students)! And many other potential ones such as Economics & Finance, International & Multilateral Relations, War & Defence, Social Institutions such as the Family et cetera

Serving the Community With EDGE



Tree Planting @ Minden OneMillionTrees Movement by National Parks Board

Our EDGE students from the YEP-GO Chiang Mai 3 Team organized a tree-planting exercise in collaboration with the National Parks Board (NParks) to contribute to the OneMillionTrees movement. During the session, students get the opportunity to cultivate rare and diverse species of trees and learn the importance of supporting domestic reforestation efforts.

Mr Primeman Tan, a Senior Arborist from NParks and an SP alumnus, was there on that day to welcome our excited EDGE students. He and his team demonstrated how to use the changkol and shovels to dig a hole in the ground that is deep enough to place the tree sapling in and cover up the hole with mud, water and fertiliser. Leaf litter, which acts as natural fertiliser, was also scattered around the trees to provide more nutrients for the trees. It was a memorable and meaningful morning which increased the students' sense of ownership and care of Singapore's foliage and deepened their appreciation of nature.

Contributed by William Austin Chan, ABE, DARCH; Matthias Chua, SOC, DISM; Edryss Pallas Sim, MAE, DARE & See Yinghui, SB, DAC, members of the EDGE YEP-GO Chiang Mai 3 Team.





Packing and delivery of Care Packs

Prior to starting their Chiang Mai Youth Expedition Project Goes Online (YEP-GO), our EDGE students participated in two community service projects as part of their learning.

The first was lending a hand to the #fightingvirusttogether initiative by Nee Soon East Youth Network (NYEYN). To show appreciation for the front-liners and cleaners' contribution at the Nee Soon East Vaccination Centre, our EDGE students prepared and delivered care packs filled with personal wellness items from kind sponsors. To make the care packs even better, our EDGE students designed brochures to promote mental wellness amidst the stressful COVID period. The EDGE students befriended many volunteers in the process and seeing the smiles on the recipients' faces made them feel heartened that they can make a positive difference to the lives within the community.



Besides the #fightingvirusttogether initiative, our purpose-driven EDGE students launched a donation drive in partnership with "Its Raining Raincoats," a local charity that aims to integrate migrant workers and the residents of Singapore through improving the migrant workers' welfare. The Singapore Polytechnic community generously donated disposable masks, snacks, beverages, umbrellas and t-shirts, which they subsequently delivered in-person to our hardworking migrant workers. Like the #fightingvirusttogether initiative, this too, was a heart-warming and uplifting experience where both the donors and the recipients felt greatly blessed.

Many thanks to our EDGE students for their proactive outreach to members of our community – even a small action can leave a big impact on others!

Contributed by Chloe Chan Min Xuan,
MAD, Integrated Marketing Communications.
Member of the EDGE YEP-GO Chiang Mai 3 Team

WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

If you have any comments, contributions, or questions or if you would like us to feature specific scholarship-related topics, please write to us at scholarships@sp.edu.sg or scan the QR code below.



SPECIAL THANKS

The Scholars' Connect team would like to thank the following for their invaluable help in realising this issue of Scholars' Connect: Current students as well as alumni for sharing their stories, experiences and photos, and to those for taking the time off their busy schedules to be interviewed.

