



ALUMNI E-NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2008

[@VJC Weblink](#)

@VJC, the alumni e-newsletter, will be sent to your mailbox every month to keep you informed about the exciting developments taking place in VJC. Success stories of our students and alumni will be shared and relevant information provided to help you stay connected to VJC.

No lengthy write-ups, just the gist to keep you in touch!

Each month you can expect stories about:

- Research being conducted and its impact
- College members (staff and students) who are making VJC a great place to study
- Innovative developments in the college
- Alumni who have created a niche for themselves
- Students who are making the most of their academic experiences
- Alumni services and events that can benefit your personal and professional life

Let us tell your story — send us your tales of success and achievement. We hope to profile an alumnus in @VJC each month. Submit your story of accomplishment.

VJ love stories — Share your tales of your VJ love, your favourite hangout in college!

VJ concert memories — Many performing artists have graced the stage of VJC throughout the years and we hope to highlight some concert memories which you can contribute. Take a trip down memory lane.



Old Victorians' Association

<http://www.ova.org.sg>

In our continuing efforts to strengthen the Victorian Community and to build strong bonds, the OVA is lining up a series of social networking and sports activities. We invite all Victorian alumni to participate in these activities.

STAY CONNECTED

VJC Alumni Affairs strives to provide interesting services for VJC alumni with the prime objective of helping alumni stay connected to one another and their college. To start off, we offer the tracing services to help you link up with your long, lost fellow alumni. Just email Teo_Yik_Tee@moe.edu.sg . As long as we have the information, we will help you link up!

To keep the information updated, kindly log in and update your particulars at:

<http://www.vjc.moe.edu.sg/alumni/update/index.htm>

COLLEGE HIGHLIGHTS

Victorians Feelin' Fab!

[Formula One \(F1\)](#) fever has reached Singapore schools - even before Lewis Hamilton and Co roar into town this month. VJC brought a taste of race-car driving to its students for the first time at its annual Feelin' Fab! physical fitness day. With the emphasis on the spirit of adventure and confidence and encouraging every



individual to explore new experiences, Victorians experienced an array of activities ranging from the likes of snow boarding to the likes of massage and coffee appreciation.

ALUMNI FEATURE

Chia Kuan Wei Conran (06S35) broke the 7 year duck for VJC by clinching the SAF Overseas Merit Scholarship this year.

Battle for bright minds

More than ever, talent critical to armed forces, says PM

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WITH a buffet of scholarships available and more families now able to send their children abroad, Singapore's "talented and ambitious young people" are being urged not to rule out pursuing an overseas education through the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) scholarships.

Especially at a time when the SAF – faced with new non-conventional threats such as terrorism – needs to groom leaders to take it to the next level, said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong yesterday.

"Young Singaporeans have a plethora of scholarships to choose from, and thereafter many opportunities to pursue challenging and rewarding careers both locally and overseas," said Mr Lee, at the award presentation ceremony at the Istana.

"In this globalised environment where opportunities are aplenty, we must impress upon young people the importance of the SAF, and the challenge and satisfaction that an SAF career through the SAF Overseas Scholarship (SAFOS) can offer.

"Without the SAF, the good life and the opportunities that young people enjoy



SAF Overseas Scholarship 2008 recipient, OCT Conran Chia Kuan Wei. TREVOR TAN

would disappear like Cinderella's coach at midnight," he said.

While the SAF has constantly sought to learn from other armed forces, it has "reached a level of maturity where often it cannot find ready-made solutions elsewhere, but must develop its own to stay ahead. This makes talent even more critical to the SAF."

"More than ever, the SAF needs leaders of the highest quality throughout the organisation, who can think ahead, conceive new ways of operating, implement bold and creative plans and bring the SAF to the next level," he added.

Past scholars, Mr Lee said, have gone on to do well in other fields, rising to top management posts in the private sector, leading

ministries as permanent secretaries or statutory boards as chief executive officers, or even as Cabinet ministers – Foreign Minister George Yeo and Defence Minister Teo Chee Hean were SAF scholars.

Inspired by PM Lee's examples of past SAF scholars who had done well, one of this year's scholars, Mr Conran Chia, 19, is open to a political career.

"I have not made a decision yet but I am going to see how the military service would open me up to such a possibility," the pilot trainee with the Air Force, who will be pursuing economics at University College London, told Today.

When asked why he decided to take up the SAFOS, Mr Chia pinned it down to a need to answer "a higher calling" by serving the people. "The sense of fulfilment I get from being in the public service is something money cannot buy. It is something the private sector can't offer me because there I will work mainly for profit," he said.

This year, the SAF awarded scholarships to four Singaporeans. Apart from Mr Chia, the other recipients are pilot trainee Jason Lau who will read sociology at the University of Warwick in the United Kingdom; Army cadet officer Wayne Ho who will pursue economics at Warwick; and Navy scholar Alex Ang who will read physics at Cornell University in the United States.

Courtesy of Today, 7th Aug 2008

CHIN LI TAO MELANIE (05S34) took a path less well travelled...



By Sandra Davie

Think it's fun and games? Not at DigiPen

REDMOND, WASHINGTON, U.S. - Throughout her teenage years at Nanyang Girls' High School and Victoria Junior College, Melanie Chin left her parents fretting about the endless hours she spent playing video games. They wondered if all was lost when she chose to do a degree in making video games.

After receiving her A-level results in March last year, she secured a place in the Singapore campus of the DigiPen Institute of Technology. To her surprise, the institute, dubbed the Harvard for game developers and animators, offered her a scholarship to its American campus in Redmond, Washington, instead. It had decided to delay opening its Singapore to the middle of this year.

'I couldn't believe it. I'd get to study in DigiPen in the US, in Seattle, a hot spot for the gaming industry,' recalled the long-limbed 20-year-old who, with coloured streaks in her hair, resembles a Japanese anime character.

But first she had to persuade her civil-servant father and housewife mum. 'I explained how game development was serious business and showed them how the curriculum involved high-level maths and science. They relented,' she said, sitting in a classroom at DigiPen campus nestled in the woods in Redmond, Washington, a stone's throw from Microsoft and next door to Nintendo.

The only other Singaporean among the 950 students there, 25-year-old Low Xian Yang, relates a similar tale. The mechatronics engineering graduate from Ngee Ann Polytechnic, now in his third year at DigiPen, said: 'My dad was hoping I would go into biotech, so he was really surprised when I told him I wanted to learn how to design video games instead.'

The self-confessed games addict became hooked during his polytechnic days. 'After my gaming binges, I would go to bed thinking up ideas on how the game can be made better.' It is comments like these that DigiPen officials listen out for when choosing students. That, and top grades in advanced mathematics and physics.

Every year, the school gets 12,000 requests for applications. About 1,000 eventually compete for around 250 slots in two undergraduate degree programmes in game development and animation. But getting in is just the first hurdle, before a rigorous four-year course. The month-long summer break is on, but many students have stayed for more classes or to complete projects. Bleary-eyed as they arrive for early morning classes, they describe the pace as gruelling, intense and rough. Those doing game development programme have to survive 18 courses in mathematics, 26 levels of computer science, six courses in physics, as well as eight semesters of projects designing games. The place looks more like a grey office building than a university campus, has no dormitory activities, sports club meets or sorority dances.

There is little socialising beyond a quick commiserating chat at the 7-Eleven next door, while getting a refill of a caffeine-packed soda drink. When deadlines loom, students put in 16-hour days, churning out thousands of lines of computer code. Some burn out. Others quit altogether. The attrition rate for each cohort is about 20 to 30 per cent. Mr Low summarises his second year in one word: Hellish. 'There was a constant flood of work. I was staying in school from 8 am until midnight for weeks. Luckily, I have a close circle of friends and we all helped each other out. If not for them, I would not have made it.'

But DigiPen president Claude Comair is unapologetic. 'It is not meant to be easy,' says the Lebanese-American who transformed DigiPen from a 3-D graphics production house into a leading institute for game developers. 'The gaming industry is an exciting industry but it is also a tough one. It will not tolerate mediocrity.'

'Gaming companies spend millions, as much as US\$15 million (\$20.5 million), to make a game and they can't afford to have a miss. With gamers becoming more sophisticated, the pressure is on to make games faster, with exciting, new storylines and graphics, and more immersive than the last,' he said. DigiPen graduates have met the exacting demands of gaming companies and are snapped up by top game developers and publishers such as Nintendo, Electronic Arts, ArenaNet, Valve and Lucas-Arts.

Many get two or three job offers when they graduate. Typically, their starting wage is US\$50,000 to US\$60,000 a year. Within a few years, they make US\$100,000 or more, if they are part of a team making a best-selling title. Mr Jeff Strain, co-founder of ArenaNet US, the studio behind Guildwars, said of the DigiPen graduates: 'They are among our most talented and capable developers. They are ready to hit the ground running.'

Mr Comair said that his graduates enter a recession-proof sector. 'Other industries have their ups and downs, but the game industry just keeps soaring,' he said, pointing to forecasts of a worldwide video game market tipped to exceed S\$67 billion by 2011. He was in Singapore last week for the opening of the DigiPen campus, which starts in September with a pioneer batch of 40 students.

Mr Comair promised them an equally rigorous education as at the US campus, and the same sterling job prospects. He noted Singapore's success in drawing some of the world's biggest video game makers here, including Electronic Arts, the world's top game publisher, and Ubisoft, which has hit titles such as Assassin's Creed and Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell.

He is confident DigiPen will help draw more here. After all, when his university first set up in Redmond in 1998, there were just seven game companies there. Now there are over 50, located around the school itself.

This article was first published in The Straits Times on 9 July 2008.

Alfian Kuchit (94A52) was recently awarded the Fulbright scholarship to pursue a Master's degree in Law at Columbia University.

VICTORIA'S 25TH (SECRETS REVEALED)

“Victoria's Journey Continues: Stories, Moments, Dreams”

We've covered major milestones since our 20th birthday and we're sure you have too. We are as eager to share with you our achievements as we are to hear of your progress, and so would many of your friends and associates belonging to our Victorian fraternity. As such, we've invested much time and thought before coming up with what we hope are wonderful and meaningful opportunities for you to gather with cherished friends and perhaps, meet new ones.

These are some of the events we've lined up for next year:

- 1) A series of **performing arts concerts**. These include quality performances from groups like the Choir, Band, Chinese Orchestra amongst other increasingly blossoming arts groups.
- 2) **Our 25th Anniversary Homecoming Dinner cum College Day**. This will be held on our very own College grounds and we anticipate seeing you there in what we hope will be a major gathering of Victorians.
- 3) A series of **keynote lectures** by noted speakers.
- 4) **Victorian's Day** where we hope to get all Victorians, past and present to come together for a day of entertainment and celebration, in a festive atmosphere.

So that we may keep you informed of all these noteworthy activities, we would greatly appreciate you taking a few minutes of your precious time to update us of your particulars. Please click on the following link:

<http://www.vjc.moe.edu.sg/alumni/update/index.htm>

We would also be most grateful if you could help us disseminate this email to your peers and acquaintances who may not be on our alumni newsletter subscription list, be they your ex-classmates, CCA mates or Victorians you may have gotten to know over the years.

We thank you for taking time out to read this as well as your help in making our 25th year a most memorable one.

UPCOMING EVENTS 2008

OCTOBER

Sat 04 VJC Open House (10 am - 3 pm)

NOVEMBER - JANUARY 2009

Sat 01 Nov VIP Symposium

Fri 12 Dec VJC Band Not So Silent Night

Mon 05 Jan - Wed 07 Jan IP Orientation

For full list:

http://www.vjc.moe.edu.sg/02_calendarOfEvents.shtml