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Dear fellow students,

Our second edition of U-Insight features stories and perspectives from students because NTUSU is about walking the NTU journey with you. The Union has set a clear direction – your concerns are at the core of our work. We will continue to involve all students in issues that concern all of us, whether through simple conversations or data-driven methods.

Within these few months, we have introduced several policies which are reflected in this edition.

My team, the 28th NTUSU Exco, and I are committed to representing your voices and advocating for your interests. There are challenges ahead which we will continue to tackle as a team. Leadership is not about enjoying the benefits and sometimes doing what is necessary is more important. Your continued support for NTUSU keeps us going as we seek to bring positive changes for you. Thank you.

The paradox in the concept of time is that we’re running against it and never with it. We’re constantly moving forward, approaching the end of yet another academic year head first.

In the second issue of U-Insight, we seek to rectify what gets lost in the blindingly fast pace of university. We’re about carving out a space for all and amplifying the voices of our fellow students. There is strength in numbers and power in voice, thus it’s paramount that we share and celebrate the stories of the NTU community and speak up on issues that affect us.

Let’s take the time to look back at how far we’ve come and what we’ve achieved. We hope you find your university days more than inspiring, fulfilling, and stimulating, as much as the team has enjoyed putting this together. Here’s to celebrating the most beautiful part of university: us, students.

**Vice-President (Corporate Communications)**
Tiffany Choo

**Corporate Communications Executive (Relations)**
Gwyneth Thong

**News Editor**
Mandy Ngoh

**Media Layout Editor**
Cheah Guan Ying

**Writers**
Shannon Ang, Claire Goh, Banerjee Preksha, Lyana Zaky, Spriha Mishra, Jahnavi Roy, Shermaine Lim

**Publishers**
Leow Sue Yu, Janessa Tan, Lee Jia Rong, Lim Yi Xun

**Cover Page**
Daphne Tan
Types of Students in NTU

With 24,000 students in NTU, you are bound to meet all sorts of people. Here’s a breakdown of the types of NTU students just because we like to stereotype.

Text: Mandy Ngoh | Design: Cheah Guan Ying

**GPA 5.0**
A God-like figure, mere mortals won’t understand what theories they’re talking about.

**All-Rounder**
Good-looking, good results, popz kid. Truly the full package.

**Influencer**
Hangs out with fellow popz kids, thousands of followers on Instagram, curated Instafeed.

**Hungry for $$$**
Skipping class to earn money, weekend also earn money but always say no money.

**Enthu Kia**
In JCRC, in Jam Band, in dance, in SU, in faculty, alamak everything also want to join.

**Camp or Hall Siao**
Unnatural hair colours, only owns camp or hall tees, always eating supper, loves crude, lup sup cheers.

**Looking for Soulmate**
4 years in the Soulmate-Searching Club, but still single.

**Snek**
Blends in until it’s time to strike. Will do anything to get what they want. *Cues sneak cheer.*

**F-boi/F-gal**
Fun boi and fun gal. Always using the latest dating apps, but settling down? What’s that?
Alcoholic
Drinks in the morning and drinks while chionging assignments.

Mr/Ms Popular
Charismatic, either camp leader, dance captain or both. Even your cat knows them.

Keyboard Warrior
Probably the most well-read. Also, everything is a trigger. New day, new war.

Elitist
High SES. Only hangs out with a select few. #2good4u

Anti-social
Only animals allowed. Alone time is always a good time.

Sleepyhead
Can sleep even while standing. 24 hours also not enough.

Mr/Ms Normal
We just want to graduate lah!
Insanely Easy Ways To ‘zhng’ Your Maggie Mee

Call it cheap but fancy gourmet, if you will.
Text: Shannon Ang | Design: Leow Sue Yu

It’s safe to say that instant noodles are a godsend to mankind. It is the lifeblood of a university student, alongside coffee. They’re a quick and easy fix to sporadic hunger pangs, and are relatively affordable with a long shelf life. That MSG high can be comforting during those wee hours, when you need that extra fuel to power through the night.

But sometimes that little flavouring packet isn’t enough for our insatiable taste buds; also, omelettes over noodles are passé.

To take things up a notch, here are a few simple ways to spice up your instant noodles and transform your dish into a radical gastronomic experience. We say unleash your inner Gordon Ramsay. You’ll never look at this essential (and versatile) student staple the same way again. Let’s get cooking!

**DITCH THE SOUP**

Be experimental with condiments to enhance overall flavours. This recipe is an absolute winner with no extra cooking involved.

After cooking and draining the noodles, add in the seasoning packet provided, sesame oil, and a few squirts of Sriracha sauce.

You can add in your favourite vegetables for a balanced meal that is right up your alley. This is definitely not a meal for the faint-hearted.
since Sriracha packs a fiery punch. But it’s a great alternative if you’re craving *mala* or Samyang’s Korean Spicy noodles.

Psst: this dish also happens to be great for hangovers, according to people who’ve tried and tested it.

Not a fan of spice? Turn to ready-made pasta sauces, for a fool-proof meal if you’re in the mood for a quick and fuss-free Italian fare. Spice everything up with a medley of basil, oregano, salt and pepper, and don’t forget some minced meat and diced tomatoes.

**MORE THAN JUST A SPREAD**

Ever heard of peanut butter with instant noodles? While it may strike some as bizarre, it surprisingly works well with ramen. Not only does it add a boost of protein, it also thickens the overall flavour – the best of both worlds.

After cooking your noodles, add sesame oil, a few dollops of peanut butter, soy sauce, ready-made chopped garlic, and a drizzle of honey. Give it a good stir until it’s well-combined to form a smooth, creamy sauce.

Pour it over the drained noodles and stir them until they’re evenly coated. If you’re feeling fancy, garnish with sliced green onions and sesame seeds. Chopped peanuts are a good addition if you want an extra crunch. Rumour has it that it mimics the taste of *phad thai*.

**SAY CHEESE**

Meet Ram’n Cheese, the ramen version of Mac and Cheese. Unlike macaroni, the ramen will soak in all that cheesy goodness, introducing a whole new world of texture to the dish.

You can use either cheese sauce or shredded cheddar cheese. Mix it with milk and butter, and heat it in the microwave until the texture becomes gooey. Pour it over the noodles, top it off with more cheese and continue to heat until it turns brown and bubbly.
Tackling University Freedom

The daunting truth of your new life in university might not be as promising as it sounds.

Text: Preksha Banerjee | Design: Leow Sue Yu

Freedom can be overwhelming, especially for a bunch of intuitive, curious, and exuberant young adults. Back in the comfort of your home, things are always planned out for you – food is always on the table and clean clothes are taken for granted. Now, you are scouring for the new $1 coins to wash your clothes at 2am in the morning.

Unlike before, we now have the freedom to do whatever we want. We get to plan our own timetable and curfews are a thing of the past. If you don’t need to get up early the next day, watching Netflix into the night would be a no-brainer. More importantly, university gives you the freedom to explore new hobbies. You might even discover your hidden talent as a dancer, or your newfound passion for debating – a storehouse of opportunities indeed.

However, not all facets of this freedom are roses and cherry blossoms. Many students may find managing this sudden surge of freedom challenging, consequently abusing this newfound freedom by being irresponsible in the absense of parental supervision.
Perhaps being YOLO means having a drunkard heart-to-heart sesh till 4am, even though your midterms are at 8am in the morning. Or better still, trying something that you’ve never thought of doing when the status quo gets boring. Sounds scandalous, doesn’t it? A quick scan through the NTU Confessions page will make you realise that these experiences are closer to home than you realise.

It’s true that society is progressively focusing on soft skills rather than results. But when you pick up bad habits through socialising, or when your body clock is in a mess and your grades are compromised, who do you turn to get back on track?

As young adults, we need to start being more aware of the implications of our actions, and focus on what’s important. Learning to be independent and responsible will probably be one of the most meaningful lessons that you can take away from university.

There will always be distractions preventing you from achieving your goals, regardless of how much you try to stay focused.

There are times where it’s tempting to go off track and forgo your responsibilities. But after bracing through countless obstacles, do you want to be yet another floating log on the sea of freedom? Only you have the power to make the most out of your university daze.

The way you utilise this newfound freedom is entirely up to you. With your fate and future in your hands, why not make use of this to work towards being the best version of yourself? You do you, only you know yourself best.
BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

We unearth the craziest and wildest hall experiences as told by students.

Text: Shannon Ang | Design: Leow Sue Yu

Long story short, hall stay could possibly be the best gift bestowed upon a university student. Your room is literally a stone’s throw away from your classes and there’s no more splurging on Grab when you’re late. On top of that, who would say no to impromptu steamboat sessions every other week?

That said, things aren’t always sunshine and rainbows during your stay in hall. We spoke to some of our friends to dish the dirt on their craziest and most embarrassing hall life experiences. Think you’ve heard enough? Things are only getting started.

The Hunt For The Uninvited, Wild Guest

Just a few months ago, a humongous monitor lizard decided to make an appearance in my hall – so much so that the video of it clawing and clambering persistently at the door of a resident’s room was making its rounds on multiple Instagram stories.

After the initial video spread like wildfire, there were speculations that it came from the next block. Curiosity got the better of me and my friend and I decided to see if it was true.

To our horror, we found tons of scratch marks all over the lower half of the door that the lizard previously visited. Minutes later, some seniors came with brooms and mops to chase it away, but it had disappeared.

It was recently spotted again – one time it was nestled comfortably in the grass patches near the link bridge between two blocks.

I guess it comes and goes whenever it pleases.
The Neighbour Who Made Things Awkward

I once overheard some weird noises coming from my neighbour’s room and figured that she was probably getting frisky.

The next day, she came around to ask if I heard anything coming from her room. Being the non-confrontational person I am, I lied and said no. But she didn’t let it rest and went on to ask me a second time. When I eventually admitted what I overheard, she fessed up to me that she was indeed getting it on with her boyfriend and shockingly, the high-pitched noises were not from her… Not sure why she had to be so honest though.

Almost Caught “Raid” Handed

I often went over to sleep over at my boyfriend’s hall, though security was strict and it felt like we were constantly being watched.

One night around 6am, we were awoken by a loud rap on the door, something along the lines of “hall office, spot check”. I knew that if we got caught we would be punished, so I had to hide. I nearly went into the closet, but decided against it and hid under the blanket instead. Curled up under it, I froze with my heart palpitating and tried to breathe super shallowly.

The loud knocking ensued and became even more aggressive. When my boyfriend finally opened the door, he was told to open the closet, ostensibly to check if there was anyone inside (lucky me!). However, I had hung my undergarments there, which caused the hall administrator to confront my boyfriend. Shaken by the sudden intrusion, my boyfriend was forthright and revealed that I slept over occasionally. The former then reminded him that illegal squatting is an offence and we could be evicted, while I was suffering and panicking under the sheets.

The morning after, we were informed that somebody had snitched on us and we had a good idea of who it was. There were also a few women accompanying the security guard the previous night who might have noticed my silhouette under the blanket because they were muttering among themselves, while my boyfriend tried to block their view. I don’t know if they were giving us a chance, or if I was just lucky.

After that incident, I packed up and completely moved out of his place. I hardly went back to his room again and he, too, soon moved to another hall after that year.
We often take comfort in the fact that we will not live long enough to see the end of the earth. However, on our current path of wastage and pollution, we could potentially live to witness the destruction of our planet – watching it wither into one that is inhabitable for our future generations.

Among numerous measures to combat the pervasiveness of plastic waste on campus, a notable initiative would have to be the extensive use of metal straws. Owing to their high reusability, they’ve been touted as an alternative to disposable plastic straws. You probably own a metal straw and readily whip it out whenever you buy a drink. But is this really enough?

In August 2018, NTU’s President, Professor Subra Suresh, launched the oneNTU initiative, “ECHO”. The “ECHO” initiative – which stands for Eco-friendly, Connected, Healthy One NTU – strives to promote a smart, eco-friendly and healthy campus through the combination of digital and sustainable technologies.

In line with this initiative, we bring you more methods to save our home planet, beyond the trendy metal straw movement, to kickstart your journey towards a cleaner and greener lifestyle, on campus and beyond.

NTU has announced its ban on issuing plastic bags for free at campus events, as well as retail and F&B establishments on campus from October 2018. This is part of its five-year growth plan, which focuses on environmental consciousness. As students will now be charged 20 cents for each plastic bag, it is high time to get your own reusable shopping bag. U-Shop, located in North Spine, is a great place to buy stylish and practical tote bags.

NTUSU also has a ‘Sustainability Workshop’ that works closely with NTU’s “ECHO” initiative, student groups and hall committees. Committed to increasing awareness and involvement in green initiatives, they’re currently implementing a tote bag donation and sharing system in halls.
Picture this: you’re in primary school again and your classmate struts in carrying his very own Power Ranger lunchbox. You look on, green in envy, as you schemed to cajole your parents to get you one, with your favourite Black Ranger on the lid.

To live the ultimate throwback while doing your part to reduce plastic waste, bring along your own tupperware and flask when buying your food and drinks. Available in many designs and colours, you are sure to find reusable containers that tickle your fancy. You might even inspire your friends to follow suit. Nostalgia gets the best of most of us — what better reason to embrace it than doing our part for Mother Earth?

Instead of buying the same pen over and over again, you can opt to buy pen refills instead. As pen refills come in plastic wrappings, you may be wondering how this contributes to the effort to reduce plastic waste. Per contra, the waste generated from a pen refill is significantly less than discarding entire pen shells when they run out of ink.

Food is life — it’s a universal statement that we can all agree with. Yet, according to the National Environmental Agency (NEA), the amount of food waste in Singapore has increased by about 40 per cent over the past 10 years. Left unchecked, it is expected to continue on its current trajectory, especially with our growing population and economic activity.

It’s important to know your limits when you order. If you know that you can’t finish a full meal, you can choose to ask for lesser portions. That way, you can satisfy your hunger while ensuring that you don’t end up wasting food.

There are plenty of ways to save the earth, and it is crucial to start now. If we do nothing, we will end up with nothing but landfill waste and empty buildings. Oh, and also lots of plastic straws.
The culture of overcommitment

Perhaps it’s time to take a time-out on overcommitment.  
Text: Cheryl Lim | Design: Janessa Tan

I can’t help but cackle at the irony of writing this piece about overcommitment as I stare blankly at the endless pile of readings that have long collected dust on my desk.

When I entered NTU, I told myself to say “yes” more to the opportunities that would come my way; something totally unheard of when I was a loyal member of the Sunshine Club in polytechnic. Sadly, no, it’s not a real club – it’s just a jocular term for people who have no school commitments and go straight home after class before the sun sets. I made the jump and opted for a change in university, finding myself stepping out of my comfort zone by signing up for various clubs and activities.

One unique thing about university is its seemingly infinite sandbox of opportunities and activities. We’re encouraged to try as many things as possible, but students generally choose to invest their time in one out of the following three: hall, school or club activities.

There’s nothing wrong with wanting to be part of many things as every opportunity is a path for self-discovery. This, however, tends to propagate the culture of overcommitment.

I laugh when my friends tell me that I’m a changed person. Frankly, I’ve never thought that I’d be holding two leadership roles in school, participating in hall activities, tutoring on weekends, and writing freelance during my free time. Since I have so many things on my plate, sleep and leisure time are the lowest of my priorities.

Tiffany Choo, a final-year Communications Studies student and the Vice-President of Corporate Communications of the NTUSU, says, “The university environment presents itself with an endless stream of exciting opportunities, which can be hard to resist. I honestly wish that I found out more about them in my first few years in university when I had more time to spare.”

Besides juggling her Final Year Group Project on top of two classes, Tiffany tries to squeeze in some time for volunteer work whenever the opportunity presents itself.

She says, “Personally, I’m someone who wants to maximise the time that I have, hence I feel the most fulfilled when I’m being productive. Thus, I tend to sign up for various things, which I believe will help me grow as an individual.”
However, according to American researcher and professor Silvia Bellezza, the culture of overcommitment is being glorified in modern society and has become more of a status symbol.

While it might sound cool to be involved in various activities, overcommitment is anything but a virtue, as it compromises the efficiency and quality of your work.

When we’re involved in too many things, we often find ourselves ticking off our (long) to-do lists impassively, rather than creating value for the things we do and dedicating all our energy and time into them.

If we bite off more than we can chew, we’d find ourselves spread out too thin and underperforming. This then prompts the question: what do you hope to get out of your commitments?

It’s all about prioritising and knowing what you want, while reserving some leisure time to work on yourself. If you’re an overachiever or workaholic, remember that it is perfectly okay to say no – it might just be good for you. You are not obligated to take up something if you don’t think you can handle it. Although you might think you could be losing out on a great opportunity, ask yourself whether you can afford to give it your hundred per cent.

In fact, the late Steve Jobs prided himself on saying “no”, choosing to only focus on his utmost priorities.

At the end of the day, there’s really no other cure to overcommitment than less commitment. If you want to join something, go for it, but make sure you can balance your school work, social life, and other responsibilities – while still having enough time to breathe.

When asked about how she balances everything out, Tiffany states that having clear, effective communication with the people around her and a well-planned schedule is vital.

She adds, “If you’re great at time management, being part of multiple activities would be a great opportunity to experience your university life to the fullest, without sacrificing your health and grades.”

After all, we only have 24 hours in a day – use them efficiently and wisely. Remember: getting sufficient rest is just as important as giving your all to your commitments and studies.

“People think focus means saying yes to the thing you’ve got to focus on. But that’s not what it means at all. It means saying no to the hundred other good ideas that there are. You have to pick carefully.”

– Steve Jobs
As the legislative branch of the Union, the NTUSU Council makes decisions relating to the entire student population in NTU. It consists of the Executive Committee (Exco) and representatives of the Constituent Clubs.

According to the Union Constitution, the Union Executive Committee is the recognised means of communication between the students and the university.

The Constituent Clubs consist of the Academic Constituent Clubs (ACCs) and Non-Academic Constituent Clubs (NACCs). They represent the interests of their members, collectively encapsulating the student population. There are 16 ACCs and three NACCs.
NTUSU COUNCIL STRUCTURE

ACADEMIC CONSTITUENT CLUBS

ABC
André Chew Tai An

ADM
Kwok Quan Rui Desmond

ASE
Kathleen Ooi Siew Min

CEE
Tommy Antony

EEE
Muthukumaran

CI
Ho Kai Feng

MSE
Marco

MAE
Ho Qing Xuan Nigel

NON-ACADEMIC CONSTITUENT CLUBS

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES CLUB (CAC)
President
Wong Liang Bei
Vice-President
Ang Jun Heng Sean

WELFARE SERVICES CLUB (WSC)
President
Chan Kah May
Vice-President
Jeline Chia Sin Ning

SPORTS CLUB
President
Ong Xian Jun
Vice-President
Clement Ang Yong Zuo

SBS
Justin Chia Cheng Ze

SCBE
Alex Goh Feng Tian

SPMS
Tan Cheryl

SSS / Council Chair
Tom Lim Bao Ming

SMS
Gabriel Tan

SCSE
Cedric Lim

SOH
Cleo Tan Wei Ting

TTC
Teo Wei Chi, Nicholas

ABC
Andre Chew Tai An

ADM
Kwok Quan Rui Desmond

ASE
Kathleen Ooi Siew Min

CEE
Tommy Antony

EEE
Muthukumaran

CI
Ho Kai Feng

MSE
Marco

MAE
Ho Qing Xuan Nigel
Orientation

NTUSU has successfully pushed for new perks for the University’s Transition and Orientation Programme (TOP) 2019. The number of first aid workshops and sponsorships, cash advancements, and hall buddy subsidies have been increased. Additionally, early check-in to halls for seniors is now available. NTUSU has also developed a pilot e-module in collaboration with the Teaching, Learning and Pedagogy Division (TLPD) in NTU to streamline the orientation handover process for student leaders.

Hall Allocation Scheme

Under the new hall admission scheme, students’ contributions on campus, rather than distance points, will be taken into consideration in hall allocation. This change comes as more halls are being built on campus, and every student is now guaranteed hall allocation for their first two years in NTU.

Therefore, students’ concerns have shifted from getting allocated into a hall to getting a placement in preferred halls. Students are encouraged to participate in at least one activity on campus and to take on leadership positions. The likelihood of being allocated to a hall of their choice is dependent on their level of contribution to campus life.

Student Spaces

Over the years, the number of student activity spaces has been a concern among the student body. NTUSU has thus garnered feedback from students through data-driven methods, and proposed changes to the Campus Life Committee. Recent breakthroughs include offering dance groups with more spaces to practice. More work is in progress for other student groups.
**Academic Schemes**

NTUSU constantly reviews academic policies to ensure that they remain relevant for students.

**Internships**

NTUSU has been working with the university management towards greater flexibility in the Industrial Attachment Programme for Engineering students. They are also working to expand on Technology-Enhanced Learning for students to take on more e-modules during their internship.

In a joint effort to provide students with more internship opportunities, the Union has collaborated with the Nanyang Environment and Water Research Institute (NEWRI), the university management and corporate laboratories. The end-goal is to establish a greater alignment with syllabus content and learning outcomes.

**Stars**

NTUSU has initiated a review of the Student Academic Registration System (STARS). Upcoming improvements include clearer information and the amalgamation of multiple sites for seamless user experience. In the long run, the system will be further revamped to form an integrated student management site.

**S/U options**

The Union has conducted a survey to better understand students’ opinions regarding the S/U option in February 2019, gathering over 2,000 responses. It followed up with focus group discussions on the topic. NTUSU will soon present its findings to NTU’s management for a review.

**Transport**

Four new initiatives have been introduced by the 28th NTUSU Executive Committee. The Campus Transportation Feedback Report (CTFR) is one such initiative that aims to improve transportation services.

The recent launch of the Express and Lunch Express Shuttle Bus Services aims to alleviate hotspots during peak hours, allowing students to explore more food options. The existing official NTU Campus Shuttle Bus application will also be revamped in the near future to improve its accuracy and user-friendliness.

**Healthcare**

To improve campus healthcare services, the NTUSU Information and Research Committee (IRC) gathered feedback from more than 3,500 students via a survey.

Findings revealed that waiting time was the most pressing issue, and emphasised the role that the school management can play in elevating students’ healthcare experience. A formal report has been submitted to both the management of NTU and Fullerton Health, detailing proposed recommendations. Discussions are currently ongoing.
Towards Hiring Beyond Grades

NTUSU sparks dialogue on employability beyond grades with distinguished industry leaders and educators.

Text: Jahnavi Roy and Gwyneth Thong | Design: Lim Yi Xun

Are grades still the best way to determine one’s calibre – or are skills beyond the curriculum a more effective and reliable way to determine one’s capabilities?

These were the questions answered during The First Step, Singapore’s first inter-varsity students’ union-led conference hosted by the Nanyang Technological University Students’ Union (NTUSU) to discuss student employability and overemphasis on academic grades.

“One of the biggest concerns of undergraduates is how employers are responding to the needs of the future workforce.”

Mr Edward Lim, President of NTUSU

This has prompted NTUSU to pioneer the project for students to attain the best headstart for their future upon graduation, broadening the definition of merit and moving beyond grades. Held on 30 January 2019 at One Farrer Hotel, the forum gathered over 300 CEOs and their human resource leaders, together with more than 250 undergraduates from the six autonomous local universities.

Minister for Education, Mr Ong Ye Kung, was the Guest of Honour and Patron of the event. Commending the initiative, he noted that the time has come for society to broaden its understanding of meritocracy and for “hiring practices and selection techniques to evolve in tandem”.

Attending as keynote speaker was Mr Piyush Gupta, CEO of DBS Group. He elucidated how the modern economy requires the integration of multiple disciplines to innovate, as well as the importance of being adaptable to the rapidly changing demands of the workforce today.

There were also two panel sessions with industry leaders, educators and students – which ignited critical dialogue on the traditional hiring mindset of valuing academic grades.

During the session, Managing Director of the Singapore Economic Development Board (EDB), Mr Chng Kai Fong, acknowledged that grades still remain as an indicator of one’s abilities and are an important consideration due to their reliability.

However, he added that he prefers candidates who have “curiosity and a desire to explore” and has rejected individuals with perfect grades who only offered textbook answers during interviews.
Deputy CEO of International Enterprise Singapore, Ms Kathy Lai, also underscored the importance of valuing traits over grades. She listed empathy, curiosity, resilience, and humility as key traits to look out for in an individual.

Panellist Mr Danny Yong, founding partner of Dymon Asia Capital and an alumnus of NTU, echoed this by challenging employers to hire 10 per cent of incoming employees entirely based on their traits. He argued that this mindset shift can be beneficial for organisations.

“The why hire different? Diversity is for survival. We need to evolve, otherwise, we're going to go out of business.”

Mr Danny Yong

The role of universities in the employability equation was another key consideration. President of NTU, Professor Subra Suresh, observed that universities should consider what value-adds to one’s resume, beyond the curriculum. University is a time of exploration, where not only specialised technical skills are gained. Character development, which defines and shapes an individual, is also a key takeaway from one’s time in university.

Mr Gupta also introduced how DBS Bank is using a new “virtual-recruiter” called Jobs Intelligence Maestro (JIM), which uses artificial intelligence to screen resumes and compute the traits required for a job. It corresponds with another initiative that uses data science and assessment tests to evaluate applicants. This creates an alternative to the process of shortlisting through grades, broadening the scope of potential hires, and benefiting students with other kinds of expertise beyond grades.

Following that, the event also saw the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between NTUSU and the Singapore Manufacturing Federation (SMF), which was witnessed by Mr Ong Ye Kung. Of highlight from the MOU is the Transformative Leadership Programme, which allows NTU students to draw from SMF’s extensive network of over 3,000 companies to develop their career and leadership abilities. Selection will be based on skills and traits, instead of academic results.

The First Step was also featured on several media outlets, including The Straits Times and Channel NewsAsia, sparking national conversation on the importance of hiring beyond grades. Several companies have also approached NTUSU for further discussion on how hiring practices can be improved for students.

Stepping into the working world has always been a concern for students. Met with the harsh reality of tough competition and an ever-changing economy, finding a job is a challenge for many. Leading the way, NTUSU has pushed the boundaries of student representation by championing the long-term interests of its students.

Mr Lim adds, “There is an enormous significance in student initiatives – employers have felt the flame, and the next step is just coming our way.”
It is Monday morning and you’re on your daily commute to school. Looking up from your phone as the train pulls into the next station, you’re met with the sight of the morning rush hour crowd; heads bowed with thumbs mindlessly scrolling through their phones. While this may seem like an attempt to disengage from reality, the contrary is oftentimes true.

Social media has integrated itself into the very fabric of the 21st century and is part of the reality of daily life today. A 2017 survey conducted by consultancy firm Ernst & Young revealed that Singaporeans spend more than five hours on their phones daily – two hours more than the global average.

In the world of red hearts and double taps, the omnipresent barrage of perfectly filtered photos exists in marked contrast to our humdrum lives, providing us with a temporary withdrawal from the monotony. However, in our desire to escape, the innate and human need to compare ourselves to others serves as a constant threat to our vulnerable self-esteem.

Although social media has its own set of undeniable merits, we cannot totally discount its role in growing cases of social alienation and exacerbation of poor mental health.

Professor Chong Siow Ann, vice-chairman of the medical board (research) at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH), revealed that the extended use of social media puts millennials at a higher risk of experiencing mental disorders. This is supported by a study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine in July 2017, which reported that the more time young people spent on social media sites such as Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, the more socially isolated they perceived themselves to be.

The extensive use of social media leaves little time for sleep and for exercise. It can also potentially cripple our social capabilities. In addition to everything else, comparing the extravagant lives of Instagram influencers to our own prosaic one is bound to put a dent on our self-esteem.
Social media users tend to compare themselves to others, fixating on the content uploaded online excessively. This is especially evident when they come across a highly curated Instagram feed. The popular and casual saying “Insta-goals” may be concealing a deeper and darker desire to achieve these unrealistic standards.

“When you look at other people’s lives, particularly on Instagram, it’s easy to conclude that everyone else’s life is cooler or better than yours,” says psychologist Melissa G. Hunt.

For instance, a travel photo from a friend on semester exchange may leave us feeling trapped in the blistering heat in Singapore. While watching others’ Instastories, we realise that our friends are out and about in town as we are stuck in our room doing the week’s readings. The fear of missing out creeps into the depths of our insecurities, leaving much to be desired from our own mundane life. Therefore, it is important to mitigate this issue by disconnecting from social media periodically.

Making an effort to disconnect from the digital realm can be immensely beneficial. Those who have taken a digital detox quickly realise that a large block of time is now freed for other purposes.

To keep our hands off our digital devices, we can opt to partake in social activities, such as going out with friends or exercising. Developing good habits, such as eating well, maintaining a proper sleep schedule, and making time for relaxation (not on the phone!) can facilitate the creation of a more wholesome lifestyle. This is made easier in schools where students are provided with a cornucopia of clubs and activities to join. Keeping ourselves healthy and active is a fun way to utilise our time more productively, instead of laying in bed and aimlessly scrolling through social media.

Ironically, there are also excellent apps available on smartphones today that incentivise individuals to put their devices away to focus on other activities. This includes Moment, Bear Focus Timer, and Forest, to name a few. Through these measures, the adverse effects of social media on mental health can hopefully be mitigated.

We owe it to ourselves to keep our bodies and minds in good shape. The topic of social media and mental health often gets swept under the rug due to its stigmatised nature, causing many to refrain from seeking professional help. The conversation surrounding poor mental health is difficult, but it is a discourse that has to be sustained. Once the silence is broken, steps can be taken towards rehabilitation.
Here’s a couple of tips to help you stretch that dollar.

Text: Jahnavi Roy | Design: Janessa Tan

As much as I would love to make it rain and throw dollar bills into the air, you’re more likely to find me salvaging notes from the ground. University is painfully expensive, food prices are generally increasing, and transport (see: adult fare) makes our wallets bleed.

Case in point: the high standard of living in this cosmopolitan city can take a lot out from you, but it’s still not impossible to live comfortably on a budget by making the most out of everything.

**SPEND LESS ON TEXTBOOKS**

Let’s be real, I can’t think of anyone who would be happy to buy a $50 textbook and only read through it when it’s two weeks to finals. Buying a second-hand textbook on Carousell can help you save more than 70 per cent, with many books being priced reasonably at $8 to $15. Other cost-free alternatives include finding an online edition (if a quick Google search can save you up to $50, why not?), or borrowing textbooks from the library and seniors.

However, if the textbook cannot be obtained by these thrifty means, share with a friend and split the cost! This way, you can give the book a run for its money by alternating its occupancy or just by studying together. You can also re-sell it at the end of the semester and get some money back.

**INDULGE IN STUDENT DISCOUNTS**

Many activities and eateries in Singapore offer student discounts, so don’t forget to check if you’re entitled to a cheaper fee. UNiDAYS is an application specially curated for students to indulge in discounted branded goods. Golden Village has weekday (Monday to Friday) discounts before 6pm and many KTV places such as Teo Heng KTV have very affordable rates.

Out of campus with friends? Check out Eatigo, an application that shows the current deals and discounts at restaurants all over Singapore. Alternatively, you can check out NTU Perks!, an exclusive privilege programme by NTUSU where students can obtain discounts from its partners. As long as you have your NTU matriculation card, you are eligible! Find out more at tinyurl.com/ntuperks.
Our university is called Pulau NTU for a reason. It can sometimes take you up to two hours by MRT or up to $40 on Grab, especially if you stay in the East.

If warming the seat on a train or bus isn’t your cup of tea, try carpooling instead. GrabShare and GrabHitch are cheaper alternatives to the usual Comfort taxis. Telegram groups in NTU like Ride Kakis also offer car owners and riders a platform to communicate and share rides with one another at affordable rates.

Keep track of your expenditure! Identify areas where you spend the most money on and take measures to cut back or make adjustments. Cooking in your hall is much cheaper and healthier than getting an upsized McDonald’s meal. Similarly, getting coffee for less than $1 at Koufu or making your own from coffee sachets instead of getting a Starbucks latte can make a significant difference to your spending.

Sales and loyalty points are also a blessing. Sign up for loyalty cards and memberships at stores you frequent – it can save you lots of money in the long run. For grocery shopping, purchasing in-house brands is a cheaper alternative. Giant’s peanut butter is not that far off from the famous Skippy and is much cheaper. You can also buy groceries in bulk with friends.

**Earn now, Spend Later**

If you’re hustling on the side with a part-time job for extra allowance, you should start saving. For example, saving 10 per cent each month allows you to have a safety net. If that seems a tad tedious, an easier approach would be to cut down on your daily expenditure and save a little every day.

Financial counsellor Samuel Ng says, “Students these days cannot practice enough delayed gratification. Refraining from impulse purchases goes a long way. If $200 is your original salary, attempt to increase that money before spending it, or else saving from your original salary can be time-consuming and very difficult to build up.”

He also advises multiplying your earnings through investing and trading, and doing research on saving endowment plans, a life insurance policy which helps you save regularly over a period of time and provides insurance coverage against death, total or permanent disability during the policy term.

While it is hard to meticulously plan your future, cutting costs in small ways and saving regularly is a good financial habit and will go a long way, especially when you enter the working world.
All is pastel and pantone on Instagram, until your pictures get misappropriated.

Posting pictures and sharing our lives with the world has become a norm. However, the content we upload online has the potential of being misappropriated and spread around without consent.

According to the Sexual Assault Care Centre (SACC), technology plays a role in approximately 20 per cent out of the 338 SACC cases reported in 2016. Additionally, about 48 per cent of the cases involved image-based sexual abuse and harassment. The Association of Women for Action & Research (AWARE) defines sexual harassment as involving “threatening, abusive or insulting words, behaviours or communications of a sexual nature”.

I've always been an avid fan of Instagram OOTDs, and I loved recreating what fashion influencers wore. Unfortunately, I soon came to realise that my frequent uploads could be misconstrued as a desire for male attention.

What caught me off-guard was a direct message from my ex-schoolmate.

“Hey, is this you?! If this is not, someone is using your photo!”

Someone was using my photo as a feature image to sell provocative photos and used underwear online, but my face had been strategically cropped out of the image.

Outraged, I decided to create an account to probe the impostor further about the photos he had (ironic, I know). I then received a sneak peek before my purchase – it was a nude photo indeed – but that body wasn’t mine.

I reported the transgression to the police, but the outcome was disappointing. I was informed that there were insufficient leads to pursue the incident. As my Instagram account was public, it was also possible that the perpetrator was not based in Singapore.

I thus directed my anger to the seller. After quarrelling with him for two days, he requested a selfie “for verification purposes”. Naively, I sent it to him. His tone became gentler and he apologised. However, he added that he had used my picture to “do the nasty” because it was “such a turn on” for him.

His apology, however, does not discount the fact that he manipulated my pictures for his own benefit. He violated my right of publicity by using a picture of me without my consent for commercial purposes. Furthermore, claiming ignorance of the law does not exempt one’s liability for their actions.

The same applies to incidents where the dignity of another person is concerned. If I hadn’t called him out on his behaviour, my pictures would continue to be misused to promote his “business”. Considering the nature of the other pictures used, this was probably not a one-off occurrence.

I was shaken after that incident. It had never crossed my mind that my photos could be used in such ways. Sadly, my experience is just
the tip of the iceberg. Online websites where predators leave sexually provocative comments on pictures of unassuming individuals, regardless of gender, are rampant.

Men aren’t spared from online predatory behaviours either. Upon sharing my experience with a close friend, he revealed that he had received many unsolicited messages and pictures after posting videos of himself gymming.

“My experience at UWC”

My friends suggested that I visit the University Wellbeing Centre (UWC) for a counselling session. After some hesitation, I made an appointment with them when I realised that I needed it.

Located on the second floor of Fullerton Health in NTU, my counsellor was extremely patient and did not interrupt as I rambled on about my ordeal. I felt much better after airing out my grievances. She then advised me on how to cope with my discomfort.

NTU offers a multi-pronged approach for students’ mental wellbeing. Besides counsellors at UWC, there are Pastoral Managers in our faculties and Hall Fellows (Faculty-in-Residence). If you prefer to talk to a fellow student, you can look for Confidants from the Peer Helping Programme (PHP) too.

NTUSU is also in the works of creating an ‘Empowerment Workgroup’ to provide a safe platform where students can reach out for help with regards to similar issues faced on campus.

This incident has taught me to stand up for myself when my safety is compromised. Due to the taboo surrounding sexual matters, victims often remain silent.

“Tackling sexual harassment”

If you’ve been harassed online or physically, The Media Literacy Council has compiled a list of steps for you to take action:
1. Remember, it is not your fault.
2. Share your distress with someone you trust.
3. Report to online administrators.
4. Do not respond to the harasser’s requests.
5. Keep all evidence. Screenshots are your best bet.
6. Consider contacting authorities or even engaging a lawyer.

“It’s now up to us to build a society where victims can feel confident that they will be supported if they seek help. The more we speak up about sexual harassment, the more we can help ourselves and others.

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“It’s now up to us to build a society where victims can feel confident that they will be supported if they seek help. The more we speak up about sexual harassment, the more we can help ourselves and others.”
We’ve all come across a fair share of tips on how to eat healthier, but even the best of us get thrown off the bandwagon. According to the National Health Population Survey conducted from 2016 to 2017, obesity in Singapore has been on the rise since 1992.

Being overweight can increase the risk of getting heart diseases, diabetes, and hypertension. Healthhub, a website launched by the Ministry of Health, reported that about 440,000 Singaporeans aged 18 and above had diabetes in 2014, and the number is estimated to grow to a million in 2050.

Therefore, U-Insight has decided to make healthy living a priority and our publisher, Sue, was challenged to eat healthily for a month.

Eating healthy? Lettuce do it!

Can we really resist our daily *teh bing* and midnight *mookata*? We put healthy eating to the test.

Text: Mandy Ngoh and Leow Sue Yu | Design: Leow Sue Yu
After embarking on my healthy eating journey, I realised how high in calories and low in fibre many local dishes are.

Instead of selecting sinful and gravy-laden side dishes when I order mixed rice, I opted for two portions of vegetables instead. I also chose brown rice to load up on my complex carbohydrates – they are higher in dietary fibre and keep us satiated longer.

It was difficult for my taste buds to adjust to my new diet, but the emotional changes I experienced kept me going. The fact that I was consciously feeding my body with healthier food made it easier for me. I was also less bloated that month.

Besides improving my diet, I also tried to exercise thrice a week. I’ve always been a couch potato, preferring to watch Netflix in bed. However, for the purpose of this challenge, I dragged myself to the swimming pool for some physical activity. Getting started is the hardest, but the surge of endorphins I felt after a good workout made it worthwhile.

If you’re looking to change your diet and eat healthier, start by choosing fruits instead of munching on chocolates. You can opt for healthier food preparation options like steamed and soupy dishes. Your body and health will thank you.
WHAT KIND OF BEVERAGE ARE YOU?

Many of us look like zombies marching in an apocalypse before we have our cup of joe. Take this quiz to see whether your favourite beverage reflects your personality!

Text: Mandy Ngoh | Design: Lee Jia Rong

START!

YOUR LECTURER HAS JUST GIVEN YOU YOUR ESSAY DEADLINE. DO YOU...

START IMMEDIATELY!

WHERE DO YOU USUALLY SHOP?

TAobao, Shopee, Zalora!

HIGH STREET BRANDS

HOME SWEET HOME

PROCASTINATE! DIAMONDS ARE MADE UNDER PRESSURE!

ARE YOU ACTIVE IN HALL?

YES!

YES! I'M IN JCRC AND A DANCE CAPTAIN!

AINT GOT TIME FOR THAT!

IT'S CAMP TIME! YAY OR NAY?

TAKE THE TRAIN!

3-IN-1 HAZELNUT COFFEE

CHAI LATTE WITH SOY MILK AND STEVIA

NAH I'LL PASS

HELL YEAH!

GRAB!

1000 INSTAFOLLOWERS!

Your exceptional social skills and impeccable fashion catapult you into the limelight — you're glowing! You're probably popular on Instagram too.

Disciplined and motivated, while everyone is rushing their submissions, you've already consulted your professors and finished your essays.

You're often spotted bouncing around with boundless energy. Always up for a camp cheer.

Thrifty and practical, you're often dubbed as the cynic (but also the smart one). It's hard to get your approval but once you let your guard down, you're the best person to be with.
ARTIFICIAL OR TRUE LOVE?

The promises of Artificial Intelligence (AI) sound like a dream – but what if it’s a pandora’s box that should remain tightly shut?

In “Hang the DJ”, an episode of the popular British TV series Black Mirror, a man and a woman were made to believe that they were going on a date. Following that, they had a limited amount of time to spend with each other, before they weren’t allowed to see each other again. Finding that they genuinely enjoyed each other’s company, they attempted to find loopholes in the system to enable them to spend more time together. It was eventually revealed that they were in a simulation, a matchmaking algorithm used by the dating app they were using. The couple was identified as a 99.8 per cent match.

If you think finding such an ideal soulmate today is impossible, think again. Chris McKinlay, an American mathematician, successfully manipulated the algorithm of the online dating site OkCupid, utilising artificial intelligence (AI) to meet his ideal partner. His less than satisfactory experience on the dating site drove him to create the program. This helped him to strategically craft a new profile that would appeal to his desired partner. OkCupid’s matching algorithm uses data to calculate a couple’s compatibility through a set of questions.

Utilising this feature, he was successfully matched with women with results almost a hundred per cent similar to his. As he met more women on the app, he became more confident – and finally met his current fiancée. Despite the seemingly perfect (and convenient) relationship that AI has created for McKinlay, this incident raises questions on the ethicality and legality of finding “the one” via formulated algorithms. Furthermore, McKinlay had exploited the system to get a huge pool of matches, deceiving women to go on dates with him just because their percentage was a near-perfect match to his.

This leads us to the main concern: can AI really help us to find true love? We cannot deny that there are successful cases of online dating, McKinlay is just one example. But in the process of orchestrating his own love story, he might have blindsided those who happened to be just a technical error in his algorithm.

AI has proven to be a significant breakthrough in technology, especially in the improvement of dating apps and websites. As today’s fast-paced lifestyle often leaves little time to foster romantic relationships, the need for these sites become elevated. Furthermore, the global issues of low marriage and fertility rates in numerous developed countries place more pressure on adults to find partner. Today, people can now forge online connections conveniently and in the comfort of their own home. How does one protect themselves from such manipulation – especially when they are genuinely seeking a partner online?

With AI changing the technological landscape, there needs to be a balance between the digital and real world. The line between what is truly human – for instance, love – and what can be manipulated by AI becomes blurred. AI might bring us a brighter future, but it could potentially drive towards a colder and impersonal tomorrow.
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