

SCHOLARS' CONNECT

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Thoughtful planning

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A series of insightful sharing for aspiring scholars

REINVENTING SINGAPORE⁺

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Director's Message



As we stand at the crossroads of an ever-evolving world, I am filled with immense pride and hope as we embark on a journey of reinventing Singapore – a journey that calls for innovation, resilience, and a collective commitment to shaping a future that is not merely an extension of the present, but a bold leap into the unknown. At the heart of this transformation lies our ability to adapt, to learn new skills, and to reframe the boundaries of possibility.

Through the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy's "Anecdotes of Tomorrow" card game, which is part of the Futures Thinking Workshop, students are equipped with scenario planning skills, encouraging them to challenge assumptions and critically evaluate policy impacts. Such initiatives highlight the foundational role of innovative education in preparing our youth for the uncertainties ahead.

Leadership and its transformative potential are further explored through the LEAP camp, where our EDGE students were entrusted with roles that demanded thoughtful decisions, prompting them to contemplate the essence of leadership. This reflection on leadership is a critical piece of the puzzle, emphasizing the need for thoughtful and resilient leaders in guiding Singapore through its evolution.

The Kayak N Klean event, part of the People's Association Project Blue Wave was meaningful in helping the EDGE participants see the urgency in managing trash in Singapore.

As the EDGE participants navigated the serene waters, they mastered the art of kayaking and grasped the urgency of environmental conservation. The sight of plastic pollution starkly reminded the students of their collective responsibility to protect our surroundings and preserve our vulnerable shores. This urgency is intertwined with Singapore's very survival and forms the cornerstone of the 2030 Singapore Green Plan.

The visit to Dignity Kitchen saw our compassionate students delivering hot meals to those in need. Many were surprised that there are people who cannot afford food in affluent Singapore where food waste is all too visible. The act of distributing food for those who need them goes beyond nourishing bodies as it nourishes the spirit of unity, resilience, and compassion that is quintessentially Singaporean too.

The EDGE programme underscores our SP students' remarkable ability to evolve, to foster new connections, and to cultivate skills that knit our society closer together. As the EDGE team continues to give to its community and serve generously, more exciting activities, be it the IvyPrep workshop or the Scholarship Specials 2023, will continue to benefit our EDGE students and bring them closer to their dreams and ultimately bring about a brighter Singapore!

Mr Clarence Chua
Department of Student Services



Shaping the Future:

Singapore Futures Youth Competition



Contributed by:

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The Singapore Futures Youth Competition, hosted by the Executive Education Singapore Futures (EESF) unit of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP), took place from June 12th to 16th. This five-day policy-making challenge invited participants from diverse institutions to develop and present policies focused on the theme "Social Well-Being and Inclusivity in 2050." Of concern was achieving social compact -- a shared understanding of how society's various segments relate to each other and play a part in the common good -- in Singapore.

We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.

- Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Singapore is entering an unprecedented period of turbulence since its independence in 1965. Challenges abound within and beyond the shores of Singapore necessitating a refreshing of its social compact. Domestically, a rapidly ageing population, slowing social mobility, and rising living costs threaten to fracture society along class, racial, and religious lines. Internationally, great power rivalry, man-made climate change, and a resurgence in nuclear proliferation unseen since the end of the Cold War destabilise the rules-based world order that enabled Singapore to survive and thrive for so long.

To tackle a "wicked" environment - a setting whereby rules are unclear, and the outcomes of actions may be delayed or unclear - "Futures Thinking" is employed. In this case, it was vital for any team to tackle the complexities of the policymaking process. In my team's case, "Futures Thinking" entailed thinking about the trends that impact how Singapore's society evolves and envisioning its desired future state. Then, ideas are generated by leveraging upon said trends. To further enhance our ideation process, a multitude of tools were employed. Namely, the "Futures Cone", which helps us flesh out the various future outcomes that may divert from a given starting point, and "Challenging Assumptions" which is taking apart the underlying assumptions to find clarity and objectivity.



All in all, 32nd U.S. president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt put it best: "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." Today's world is in a state of drastic, constant flux, and the ones who control the levers of power today may not, and likely would not be able to anticipate the hurdles of the future. To reinvent Singapore and maintain its competitiveness, we must stand together as a nation and work together towards a common goal of safeguarding our homeland and never take our peace and prosperity for granted. Through this Singapore Futures Youth Competition, I have learnt to examine social issues more critically and more shrewdly from multiple angles. It has indeed been a fruitful 5-day learning experience!



Anecdotes of Tomorrow



Contributed by:
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Recently, I had the privilege of participating in a 'Futures Thinking' workshop, an enlightening experience organized by the EDGE scholarship team. This program, part of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy's Executive Education offerings, delved into the art of scenario planning. It equipped us with the tools to think critically about the future, emphasizing the importance of anticipating changes, recognizing assumptions, and identifying vulnerabilities. Such foresight is crucial in our collective effort to not only safeguard but also to actively shape the future of Singapore. We're reminded through this workshop that the success, progress, and peace we enjoy should never be taken for granted, but rather seen as achievements to build upon with thoughtful and strategic planning.



During this workshop, the participants had a lot of fun playing a card game called the 'Anecdotes of Tomorrow.' The game requires each participant to draw five random cards. Each card represented a character, a place, a time, an issue, and a mood. To provoke us out of our comfort zones to consider the bigger systemic context beyond our immediate domains, and to activate our imagination at both the individual and organizational levels, we had to produce a narrative and connect seemingly disparate elements based on the cards we drew. In so doing, we learned that given the ever-increasing disruptions that policymakers face in their various policy domains, and where complex interconnections between socio-economic, political, technological, and environmental forces are poorly understood, futures thinking helps to sensitize organizations to fundamental surprise by rehearsing for different futures through Scenario Planning, thus deepening their agility and resilience. The game also pushes me to seek creative solutions to potential problems that cannot be easily solved through conventional means, and it encourages me to ask bold questions based on patterns and emerging trends that I observed from current scenarios.

Overall, the workshop deepened my understanding of visionary thinking and effective communication. I get to hear other EDGE members' points of view, and that lends dimensions and nuance to my thinking. I came to appreciate other critical perspectives even when they do not necessarily agree with mine, and I saw that in harnessing collective wisdom, there is greater meaning in the overall conversation. The facilitators asked probing questions to nudge us to consider a scenario from all angles, and the experience made me realize that a good leader must have vision and foresight. This further called to mind a quote from John F. Kennedy that 'Leadership transcends mere authority and dominance; it entails possessing a visionary outlook and the ability to communicate that vision effectively.' I hope that if I become a leader in any capacity – big or small, I would be able to realize these traits and contribute to the future of Singapore, ensuring that it continues to enjoy peace, prosperity, and progress.



Navigating the US College Admissions Process:



Contributed by:
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School of Media, Arts and Design, DMAD

Hoping to gain more insights on how I can navigate the competitive and complex admissions process to secure a place at my dream university to pursue my passion in sound and music, I attended the IvyPrep <https://ivyprep.com.sg/workshop> held in SP on the 12th and 13th October 2023 during the last week of our term vacation. The presenter shared the options that are available to polytechnic students who desire to expand their horizons in the United States of America (USA), and this list goes beyond the coveted, standard Ivy League schools that most ambitious students want to get into. She explained that there are five key educational categories in the USA – private research, public research, liberal arts college, specialised institutions and the Ivy League.

For the uninitiated, private research colleges are mainly privately funded, tend to be smaller and more expensive. This is understandable as small class sizes have the privilege of having more resources allocated to each student and this raises costs. Examples of such colleges are the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), California Institute of Technology and Princeton University. Public research colleges, on the other hand, are more affordable with a larger intake of students, which also mean that lesser resources and attention will be catered to one single person. But before you write them off as budget options, these colleges can be good choices and value for money because they are funded by the USA government and if affordability is something important to you, then you ought to consider some of these such as the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and the University of California, Berkeley.

For those who are more inclined towards an interdisciplinary approach that encourages students to think critically across subjects with a strong focus on problem-solving and creativity, the smaller class sizes at expensive liberal arts colleges may just be the choice for you. The smaller student-to-faculty ratio means personalized attention and often extensive campus resources are made available to each student, offering a unique educational experience that goes beyond traditional disciplinary boundaries. Finally, specialized institutions are colleges that focus exclusively on specific subjects such as music, fashion, and more. Prime examples of specialized institutions include the Berklee College of Music and the Royal College of Music, both of which I aspire to join!





All in all, I understood better from the talk that limiting myself to the highly competitive Ivy League colleges such as Harvard, Cambridge and Oxford just because they are so sought after may not necessarily be the best choice for me because it is important too that I consider carefully my end goals, my temperament, limitations and the school culture which will work best for me as a person.

For a start, it is worth examining one's reach, match and safety while selecting the colleges. Reach refers to the colleges that you can reasonably get in via your grades and any other requirements needed to gain admissions. Matching refers to your fit – there are instances where students with perfect grade point averages and outstanding achievements do not get accepted into their preferred colleges. This can happen when admissions officers believe the student might receive better offers and reject the application for fear the student might decline acceptance. So, to be clear, having perfect scores does not guarantee admission to your desired college if you apply indiscriminately and without careful consideration. Lastly, safety refers to school choices which act as safety nets if you are unable to get into your top choices, basically, your contingency plans.

Given that there are so many colleges in the USA, application deadlines can differ. It is therefore important to note down what each deadline for your selected colleges are. For instance, there are early action and early decision periods where one can apply to inform the school that one is particularly interested in joining the school. Opting for this route means that if one is offered admission, one will have to withdraw all applications to other colleges. In short, take time to reflect on what your negotiables and must-haves are during your four years overseas, because you don't

want to look back and realize that those four years were not as fulfilling and meaningful as you had wanted them to be. Go through your academic profile, career options, and available financial choices when you are shortlisting colleges – all these are practical concerns that will have long-term repercussions, so it is worth investing time to scrutinize them before you confirm your choices.

Some questions worth asking are:

1. What makes an application to the US really stand out?
2. What should I write about in my application essays? Are there any themes I should avoid?
3. How do my CCAs and extracurriculars fit into my application?

There are two different types of essays which you need to submit, one is the Common App Personal Essay (CAPE) and the other is a supplementary essay. Your essays should help the admissions officer answer the following questions about you:

1. Who are you?
2. What can you contribute (to the campus)?
3. How will you make the most of this opportunity (once you graduate)?

As I move forward, I have learnt the importance of thoughtful consideration and strategic planning in pursuing my passion for sound and music. The journey to higher education is not merely about securing a place at a prestigious institution but finding a space that nurtures my talents, aligns with my goals, and prepares me for a future where I can thrive and contribute to the world of music. With a clearer vision and a strategic approach, I am now more prepared than ever to embark on this next phase of my journey, confident in the knowledge that the path I choose will be the right one for me.



Scholarship Specials 2023



Scholarship Specials 2023, a dynamic virtual gathering, brought together scholarship providers from both local and international spheres from September 4th to 6th, creating an enriching experience for all participants.

The event commenced with an informative session by EducationUSA, shedding light on the diverse scholarships available to aspiring scholars. They meticulously covered the costs associated with U.S. universities, guidance on application preparation, submission procedures, and essential timelines. Aspiring scholars gained invaluable insights to set them on their path of an overseas education.

Subsequently, seasoned college counsellors, Tom Barry and Lori Jones, beamed in from the United States to share their expertise on applying for scholarships in the United Kingdom, offering invaluable tips on navigating university admissions. Their guidance was much appreciated by those considering educational opportunities in the UK.

Notably, Stanley, the co-founder of Cialfo, took the virtual stage to delve into the admission processes for universities in Australia and New Zealand. His comprehensive insights provided clarity to those exploring educational avenues in these countries. He even offered a complimentary personal statement writing workshop especially to the attendees of the virtual event.

At the local level, prominent organizations such as Smart Nation, MOHH, NEA, SFA, PUB, and MAS joined the conversation, presenting an array of enticing scholarships and elucidating the criteria for securing these prestigious awards. Scholarship recipients from these organizations candidly shared their personal journeys, illuminating the transition from academic life to the professional world. They highlighted the meaningful experiences and strategies they employed to overcome challenges during their tenure.



Emphasizing the significance of service learning in a scholar's portfolio, The National Youth Council, Halogen Foundation, and The Astronauts Collective introduced youth-centric programs designed to engage students in a wide array of community activities. Current volunteers, including Sherlyn, a Year 3 SP Banking and Finance student, shared their motivations for contributing as volunteers, particularly in aiding disadvantaged youths and mentoring secondary school students. Sherlyn also provided insights into effectively managing volunteering commitments alongside academic responsibilities.

Collectively, the event offered numerous insightful moments, providing rare glimpses into organizational cultures and experiences. These invaluable insights would not have been accessible had participants not tuned in. The speakers' sincere and earnest sharing sessions allowed students to glean tips for excelling in scholarship interviews and clarifying their overseas education plans, including the various application timings, and the required documentations for





admissions. Participants also learned the importance of strategic selection when engaging in community projects to enhance their portfolios and build targeted resumes for better success outcomes.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed speakers for generously dedicating their time to present and share their invaluable insights with our students. Scholarship Specials 2023 was indeed a transformative experience that will undoubtedly impact the educational and professional journeys of all who participated. It also refreshed our minds to the reinvented future educational landscape that awaits our scholars!



Kayak & Klean

Paddle with a Purpose



Contributed by:
Jordan Ho Zhi Heng
School of Chemical and Life Sciences, DOPT

I had the opportunity to participate in the People's Association Project Blue Wave, Kayak N Klean event, which lasted 4 hours under the fierce sun. Kayak N Klean is a signature activity that combines water sports with environmental conservation efforts. The instructor from Passion Wave@Sembawang presented to us the ways in which trash can pollute our waterways, one of which is through canals. Having a sustainable water supply is something that Singapore does not take for granted. An impressive 8000km connected waterway network was built to channel water into reservoirs and subsequently treated and distributed to households. However, the canal network passes through the city-islands bustling streets and inevitably becomes prone to accumulating litter. As a result, some of this litter ends up in areas such as Simpang.

This Kayak N Klean event provided the SP EDGE students with a chance to reduce environmental damage. The instructor taught us kayaking basics before we headed out to sea in pairs. With the goal of collecting as much trash as possible, we did what we could. There were tons of bottle caps, plastic bags, straws, masks, and even helmets – all items that once served a purpose but now cast aside mindlessly. A pair of EDGE students even found what looked like the head of a long-dead crocodile! Midway through, our bags of trash had already piled up in our kayaks, and we were running out of space on our kayaks to carry more bags of rubbish. At some point, I felt the futility of our efforts because the task at hand was so much bigger than what our limited manpower could do but I was reminded by how every little effort, accumulated, can improve what seem like a hopeless situation.



Adrian Chan, a Year 3 senior EDGE student who volunteers regularly to clean up the trash that pollutes Singapore's shores, took the initiative to organize this activity and I find his dedication to the cause of environmental rescue admirable. Adrian's passion for environmental conservation is not only inspiring but also pivotal in the context of Singapore's sustainability goals. His dedication highlights the urgency and importance of addressing environmental issues in the nation. By actively promoting environmental awareness and conservation, we can all contribute to the reinvention of Singapore as a model of environmental stewardship.



Dignity Kitchen



Contributed by:
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I embarked on a transformative journey with the SP EDGE team that helped me to see the compassionate side of Singapore and experienced firsthand the incredible feeling of inclusivity in this sunny little island. Project Dignity, nestled in an iconic building in Boon Keng is a non-profit, social enterprise in the Food and Beverage (F&B) industry that serves meals to any who needs it with no questions asked and no strings attached. It imparts work skills to persons with disabilities to restore dignity to them by enabling their employability and therefore financial independence.

Dignity Kitchen, a branch of Project Dignity is not just a place where delicious meals are whipped up but also a protected space where dignity is served alongside every plate. A beacon of hope for persons with disabilities, patrons can also buy a meal for a person in need. Dignity Kitchen offers a variety of hawker food, including wanton mee, Chinese claypot rice, rojak, longtong, nasi padang and western food in generous portions at affordable prices. There are also many pastry choices to go with a cup of hot beverage when one needs a good tea break. In fact, mooncakes were on sale the day we visited because the Mid-Autumn Festival was round the corner.

Assistant General Manager, Miss Cindy Berlandier, shared with the EDGE students the initiatives Project Dignity is involved in, one of which is the Dignity Learn, which is committed to empowering persons with disabilities. Through vocational F&B training, tailored to capitalize on individual strengths, Project Dignity ensures that everyone, regardless of their speed of learning, can find meaningful employment. It was humbling to see how much efforts these individuals put



Restoring dignity to persons with disabilities

in, to do their work well when I think about how I sometimes take my own ability to work for granted. The bustling kitchen is actually quite a surprise because it actually leverages on technology to make the process more productive – something I did not expect. The claypot machine, for instance is a marvel of efficiency, highlighting the indispensability of technological use in Singapore.

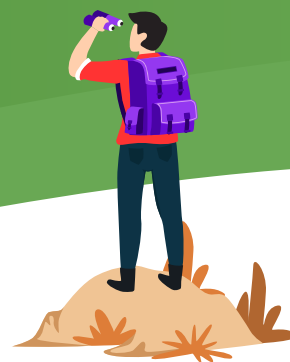
One of the most touching moments was learning basic sign language from Mr. Peter Ong, the drinks stall manager. His patience and enthusiasm underscored the collaborative spirit that defines Project Dignity. Ordering my favourite Iced Kopi C Siew Dai in sign language helped me empathise with the difficulties that the mute and deaf faced, in their day to day living. I reminded myself that in future, if I come across a special needs person ordering food, I must be patient and empathetic – maybe even lend my voice to facilitate the other party's smooth food ordering!

Donning hair nets and plastic aprons, we were given the opportunity to pack bento dinners, which were to be distributed to the grateful elderly recipients waiting patiently in line outside the premise. I felt the importance of a warm meal to them through their smiles and thank-yous, and I learnt to give thanks for mine. The learning journey culminated in a "Draw in the Dark" challenge where I walked in the shoes of someone who cannot see. After trying to draw accurately blindfolded, I felt relieved that my "blindness" was temporary. Beyond that, my mind was able to see better how much energy it took for persons with disabilities to live a full life.



Leaving Dignity Kitchen, I carried with me more than just memories of a day well spent. I carried a renewed understanding of the immense value of work—not just as a means to an end but as a source of pride, purpose, and identity. Project Dignity had revealed to me the transformative power of reinvention—a power that lies not in grand gestures but in the collective impact of small, meaningful actions. To become a brighter, more compassionate and inclusive Singapore, we need to reinvent ourselves as a society just as Project Dignity reinvented the lives of persons with disabilities. Project Dignity is not just a kitchen; it's a beacon of hope, a testament to the unwavering spirit of Singaporeans who want a kinder, more patient, more tolerant society, and a shining example of how, through collective efforts, we can reinvent not just the way we live but also the way we uplift and empower those around us.

Becoming Leaders of Tomorrow – LEAP Camp 2023



Contributed by:
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The annual LEAP camp aims at sharpening the participants' leadership skills through interesting and engaging activities that will make you think deeper and more carefully about what the concept of leadership is all about. It is an explorative process where we had the opportunities to observe different leadership styles at play and become more aware of our own styles and their corresponding strengths and weaknesses in different situations.

One of the most memorable activities was when each group was asked to volunteer a leader. It was one thing to believe that the participants were enrolled in this camp because someone saw us as potential leaders, and really another to have the self-confidence to stand up and volunteer to lead! After what felt like an eternity, finally someone stood up for each of the group – I think each of these people who made the decision to stand up was very brave because all eyes were on them, and obviously expectations and perhaps judgements too. I understood that the facilitators wanted leaders to be proactive and to take personal responsibility for their own training and learning, so the next time this volunteer call was repeated, I mustered my courage and stood up.



I was so nervous, and my heart was thumping furiously. I also felt extremely awkward and embarrassed to be scrutinized by so many pairs of eyes, but I managed to explain calmly what motivated me to volunteer myself and it was an inspiring experience. As the leader, I tried to be inclusive and to ensure that everyone contributed to the activities. I believe that a leader must serve with his heart and to encourage team efforts, so I did what I could to optimize participation from every member. To ensure that everyone was respectful when they opined, I reminded everyone to be mindful of our ground rules.

Besides games which tested our leadership acumen and personal resolve, we went through physical and mental tests. We also covered the different leadership styles and how to apply these styles. The experiential learning allowed us to experiment with different leadership styles to suit the scenarios presented to us. We also learned to adjust to one another's leadership style and prioritized teamwork over personal differences. One instance of doing so was to bond over lunch each day and this paid off because by knowing one another better, we learnt to leverage on one another's strengths and emerged as the overall champion for Day 2 of the camp.

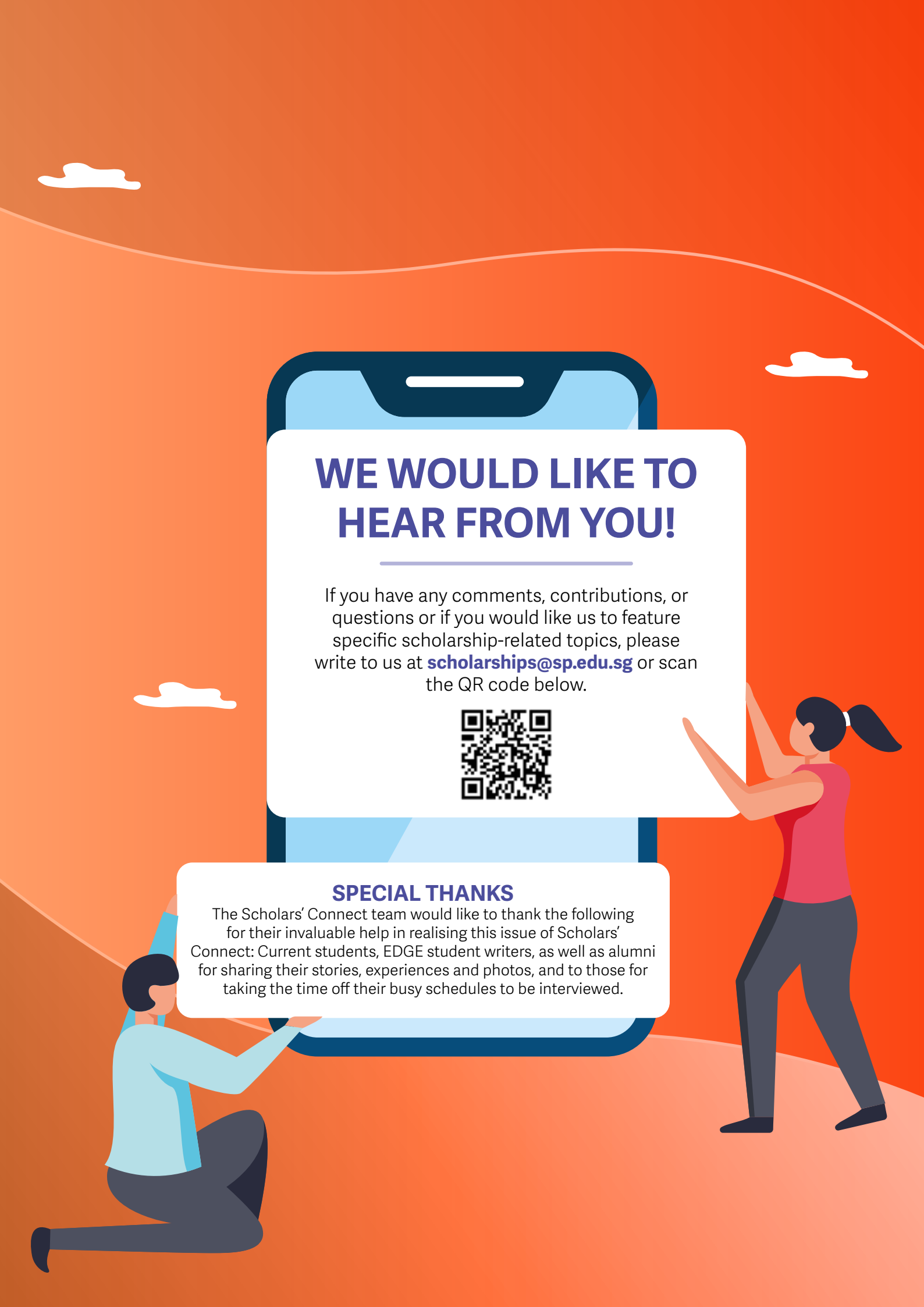




At the end of each day, our facilitators will complete a debrief by summarizing the takeaways for the day and that also set the tone for the next day. Our facilitators were also careful to check in with us regularly to ensure that we were all adjusting and learning well. I learnt that to be an effective leader, we need to be self-aware, especially of what works for us and what does not. Indeed, through proactiveness and experimentation, I was able to step out of my comfort zone to challenge myself to achieve more during the camp.

I thought through more carefully what I wanted to achieve after listening to the EDGE alumni shared about their passion projects and how they manage their time to optimize their aspirations while studying in SP. The camp taught me that leadership is not a destination but a continuous journey of growth, adaptation and maturity. In parallel, I have become more invested in our Singapore 4G leadership's commitment to reinvent the social compact of our nation with its visionary "Forward Singapore" roadmap. Equipped with the know-hows to better govern myself, I aspire to grow into a more responsible citizen who can contribute to the reimagined landscape of my beloved country, Singapore!





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, EDGE student writers, 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.