

N **SIM-UB** NEWSLETTER

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The New Normal: Returning to Campus after COVID-19

By Dr. Kevin F. McKelvey, Resident Director, SIM-UB Programs

In this edition of the SIM-UB Newsletter, we feature several articles that highlight the return of the SIM-UB program from the pandemic era of home-based learning, virtual events, and non-stop adjustments to the ever-changing list of Safe Management Measures (SMMs) on campus and in Singapore in general. Since the spring semester of 2020, our former model of primarily in-person learning has undergone significant transformations. Many of the lessons that we have learned in response to the necessity of living, learning, and working under conditions of social distancing, group size limits, and online collaboration, have remained with us and continue to offer value as the world reopens and readjusts to the “new normal”.

It was with both great relief and a fair degree of trepidation that SIM-UB resumed completely in-person classes in Fall 2022. There were strange moments when we met for the first time people whom we had known only through Zoom, and confusing moments of trying to recognize people, with or without masks, whom we hadn't seen for a very long time. On one occasion, I even encountered a group of students who were standing outside of a lecture theatre, waiting to be

let in, as if it were a Zoom room! However, within a few weeks, the campus had returned to the familiar, vibrant, and enjoyable environment that we knew before the pandemic. It was especially joyous to see the return of student clubs and activities in the Student Hub on the ground floor of Block B, which for so long had been devoid of its usual festive ambiance.

Reflecting on the challenges that our faculty, students, and staff have faced over the past two and a half years, I realized that there is one thing that has not changed: the strong sense of community that binds all of our members together as a tightly-knit and mutually-supportive collective of scholars. It was our commonality of purpose—to carry on with our studies and work despite the challenges—that helped the program to not only cohere, but also to thrive through the difficult times of the pandemic. However, the family-like atmosphere of our program in Singapore is not new—it predates the pandemic and extends back to the founding of the SIM-UB undergraduate program in 2004. Hence, our new normal as a community is really just an extension of the old normal!

SIM-UB Graduation

By Dr. Kevin McKelvey
Resident Director
SIM-UB Programs

The University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, awarded a total of 807 bachelor's degrees in two series of commencement ceremonies at the Singapore Institute of Management on December 7-8, 2021, and July 15, 2022. For the first time in SIM-UB history, there were two sets of commencement ceremonies in one academic year to honor graduates from 2021 and 2022. The degrees were conferred on the students by Vice Provost for International Education, Prof. Nojin Kwak and President Satish K. Tripathi of the University at Buffalo. We had the pleasure of welcoming Prof. Kwak for his first visit to Singapore to celebrate the December 2021 graduation ceremonies. The July 2022 graduation ceremonies marked the 12th graduation ceremony officiated by President Tripathi. We are grateful to President Tripathi and Prof. Kwak for visiting Singapore for our first in-person graduation since the pandemic. The continued support of President Tripathi and Prof. Kwak in attending the annual commencement in Singapore signals UB's commitment to the SIM-UB academic partnership, in which the students earn a degree from a prestigious American research university while studying in the dynamic and diverse environment of Singapore. The graduates now join a growing community of SIM-UB alumni in Singapore (with over 6000 graduates of SIM-UB programs) and over 240,000 UB alumni worldwide.



The degrees conferred were as follows: Bachelor of Science (Business Administration): 144; Bachelor of Science (Geographic Information Studies) 7; Bachelor of Arts (Communication) 204; Bachelor of Arts (Psychology): 211; Bachelor of Arts (Sociology): 106; Bachelor of Arts (Economics): 22; Bachelor of Arts (International Trade): 25. In addition, 23 graduates received double degrees, and 65 received double majors.

The students at SIM-UB continue to excel in their academic performance. In the class of 2021, 360 graduates, or 72.73% of the class, finished with Latin honors, including 81 Summa Cum Laude (GPA of 3.75 or better), 150 Magna Cum Laude (GPA 3.50 – 3.74), and 129 Cum Laude (GPA 3.20 – 3.49). In the class of 2022, 330 graduates of 73.83% of the class finished with Latin honors, including 85 Summa Cum Laude (GPA of 3.75 or better), 128 Magna Cum Laude (GPA 3.50 – 3.74), and 117 Cum Laude (GPA 3.20 – 3.49). This outstanding achievement is an indication of the excellent quality of the SIM-UB student body and the hard work that they devote to their studies. It also reflects the excellent quality of the highly interactive, student-centered, and experiential education that they receive in the SIM-UB program.

The graduation delegations included President Tripathi, Professor Nojin Kwak, Mr. Joseph Hindrawan, Dr. Kevin McKelvey, Professor Wei Kwok Kee, Dr. Timothy Chan, Mr. Lim Kuan Meng, Ms. Hay Lee Keng, Ms. Kandis Pogoda, Professor Debra Street, Professor Mark Frank, Professor Alex Anas, Professor Nallan Suresh, Professor Timothy Pruit, and Professor Jared Aldstadt. Valedictorians representing their graduating classes were as such: Yao Kun Tan (BAIT 2021), Shun Yuan Yeo (BAS 2021), Si Ming Xiao (BAE 2021), Darryl Lim Yang Qing (BAC 2021), Allen Vijeyndran (BAP 2021), Gautham Manesh (BScBA 2021), Saranporn Urairaksa (BAC 2022), Bryan Francisco (BAS 2022), Alycia Chee (BAP 2022) Marc Wee Wei Xun (BAE 2022), Russell Wong (BScBA 2022), Su Yu Ng (BAIT 2022) and Glen Lim En Rui (GIS 2022).

On behalf of the UB and SIM, we congratulate the graduates of the Classes of 2021 and 2022 and wish them continued success in their future lives and careers.



Reflections from SIM-UB Scholars

The SIM-UB program offers two merit-based scholarships each academic year (fall and spring) to deserving students, who represent the program as our student ambassadors to the home campus in Buffalo. The scholarship provides for tuition and fees, as well as housing and transportation (up to S\$7500).

If you told me in my first year in university that I would study abroad in Buffalo, I would have called you crazy. Why would I want to be 9,370 miles away from everyone I know just to experience the cold, harsh winter when I have spent my entire life comfortably near the equator? But ironically, I sit here – still in my apartment on UB campus- months after my UB Bound journey has ended, to pen down my reflection.

As cliché as it sounds, studying abroad changes something within you as it constantly pushes you out of your comfort zone. After uprooting my life from my comfortable island home, I was forced out of my bubble to meet new people and try new things. It pushes the limit of the word “independence”, holding you responsible for your own actions and making you in charge of your own physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing.

The biggest takeaway from my UB Bound experience would be the amazing opportunities UB campus has offered me, both academic and non-academic. In my last semester at UB, I took a Spanish 101 class which allowed me to dive deep into the language and the culture – something I would have never done back in Singapore. Outside of the classrooms, there is a wide plethora of clubs and societies you can take part in. My personal favorite is the Outdoor Adventure Club that brought me on many hiking trails and adrenaline-inducing activities like Whitewater rafting (for free, yes Singaporeans’ favorite word!). It developed my love for nature which then inspired me to take a road trip around the United States to visit different canyons and National Parks such as Yosemite National Park, Zion National Park, Bryce Canyon National Park and even Antelope Canyon (where the famous Microsoft Windows wallpaper was taken) to name a few, witnessing breathtaking landscapes that were not available in Singapore.

Back in the classrooms, I was impressed by my classmates’ enthusiasm in participating in class discussions where everyone expressed their opinions confidently and eloquently while holding a respectful and open mind attitude towards opposing opinions. The professors here are also able to impart their knowledge and experience to you outside of the classroom through various research projects. In addition to these, opportunities such as being a part of Terese Kelly Investment Group and the Finance Academy, are also the reasons why I chose to further my studies in UB as a graduate student pursuing a Master of Science in Finance degree.

Last but never the least, my UB Bound experience would not have been amazing without the meaningful friendship forged with my fellow UB Bound pals. Being so far away from home was a daunting challenge but we were able to seek comfort in one another and find a “home away from home” among ourselves.



Alice May Thwe Thwe Khaing (Spring 2022, Business Administration major)

Attending SIM-UB and the UB home campus are among the best decisions I have made. They have given me an excellent education, mentors I admire, and friendships I treasure.

The initial appeal of the US education to me was the ability to delve deep into my chosen field of study while also pursuing academic interests outside my major. This is exactly what I got during my time at both campuses. I had the chance to take classes in my major—Economics—as well as in Sociology, Communication, Dance, Philosophy and more. Making connections across these fields of study has made me a more well-informed citizen, served me well in my academic career and been of value in my professional pursuits.

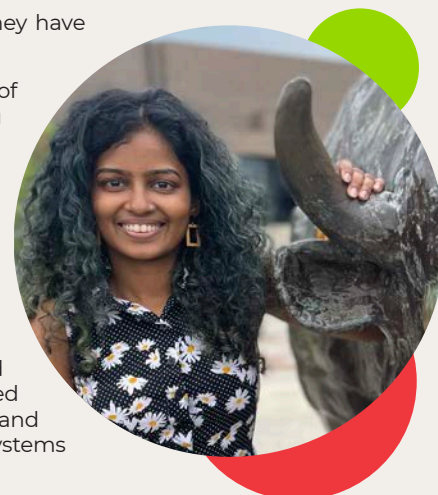
In today's world where technology is constantly changing and research is revealing new information every day, we are having to keep learning and unlearning. Hence, the thirst for knowledge, the ability to find information, and the willingness to adapt are of greater value than knowledge itself. To be successful, the education we receive must impart these skills. As Plutarch said, “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” The professors I had emphasized this through the way they designed classes, assigned readings, developed assignments, and conducted class discussions. They challenged us to question the status-quo and think out of the box. The test taking skills and hard work emphasized in the Asian education systems gave me the tools to excel and make the most of my time in college.

We also have a healthy learning environment where students are encouraged to focus on personal growth and working together. This is made possible by the criterion-referenced grading system used in most classes which makes us feel like learning from our peers and helping each other will allow us all to perform better.

My most treasured experience by far at UB was staying in the student dormitory. I made so many friends and had the chance to take part in a plethora of fun college activities. I learned to be more independent and navigate the challenges that came with living in a new country, all while having ample support to fall back on in case I needed it.

I also enjoyed meeting UB students from diverse cultural backgrounds that we do not encounter in Singapore. I sought out clubs and activities organized by these students to learn about their food, dance, festivals, values, and struggles. I was able to share about my culture with them as well. This has broadened my horizons and enhanced my cultural awareness.

I am eternally grateful for everything I have gained during my 4 years in university. If you are someone who loves to learn, wants diverse experiences, all at a reasonable price, then SIM-UB and the UB Bound program are for you!



L. Kannamma (Fall 2021, Economics major)

Visiting Faculty Celebrate Singapore National Day 2022

Happy 57th birthday, Singapore! This year's theme "Stronger Together" can also describe our SIM-UB community. Check out this BufoHorn video entitled "Get to Know our Professors over Lunch and Games" featuring visiting instructors, Dr. Blake Hendrickson and Dr. Thomas Saltzman to see how they spent National Day in Singapore.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lo0gFDmJFzE>



SIM-UB Welcomes GIS Instructor Adam Grodek to Singapore

In Fall of 2019, the SIM-UB program launched its newest major, the Bachelor of Science (Geographic Information Science). This major offers students the opportunity to study cutting-edge technology in the rapidly growing field of GIS, which uses geo-spatial data in a myriad of real-world applications, including retail, transportation, public health and epidemiology, and the monitoring of climate and environmental change, among many others. Given the abundance of data that is generated daily, the potential for future development of this science to analyze and solve the problems of the modern world are enormous. It offers excellent career paths in both the public and private sectors, as well as almost limitless avenues for entrepreneurial exploration.

The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the travel of UB visiting faculty to Singapore for several semesters, but in Fall 2022, Mr. Adam Grodek was finally able to come in person to teach his GIS classes (GEO 105 – Earth, Environment, and Climate Laboratory; GEO 106 – Global Climate Change; GEO 381 – Cartography; and GEO 481 – Geographic Information Systems), which he had previously offered in an online format from Buffalo. Moreover, during his time in Singapore, Mr. Grodek gave several workshops and presentations to audiences of prospective students about the topic of GIS, the industry-standard computer technology that practitioners in the field use—which is also used in his lab classes—and the extraordinary power of this science for understanding and dealing with the most challenging problems of our age.

Mr. Grodek is currently completing his doctorate at the University at Buffalo, and his full profile can be seen on the Department of Geography website.

[Adam Grodek - Department of Geography - University at Buffalo](#)

We look forward to welcoming the future Dr. Grodek back to Singapore in future semesters!



Let's Celebrate Dr. McAfee's Graduation!



Paul McAfee has been teaching courses in Strategic Management (MGO 403) and Entrepreneurship (MGO 330) in the Bachelor of Science (Business Administration) program at SIM-UB since 2014. During this time, he has also been working towards his doctorate in Curriculum, Instruction, and the Science of Learning (CISL) offered by the Graduate School of Education at the University at Buffalo. His dissertation research focused on the topic of experiential learning—a mode of learning which is deeply embedded in the courses he teaches at SIM-UB. Both of his courses entail simulations which give the students an opportunity to engage at a highly complex and interactive level with the myriad nuances of running an actual business; for students in the Business Administration program, this is the culmination of their studies, allowing them to actively integrate and deploy all of the content that they have accrued in their previous business courses.

We are extremely pleased to congratulate Paul on the completion of his doctoral studies. His accomplishment has been featured in an article by Ms. Danielle LeGare of the Graduate School of Education at UB. The article, which highlights the copious experiences of Paul's own life and education, can be found at the following link.

<https://ed.buffalo.edu/news-events/ticker/archive.host.html/content/shared/ed/news/ticker/2022/11/08.detail.html>

Photo courtesy of Dylan Buyskes

Congratulations Doctor McAfee!

Kandis in Kandyland

One year ago, I landed in an eerily empty airport with only a few people dressed in hazmat suits and my exit ticket was an invasive COVID test. Unpacked, jetlagged and awaiting my release from quarantine, I dove into "Emily in Paris", a Netflix series about an American moving to Paris. I enjoyed the light-hearted nature of the first few episodes and literally laughed out loud when Emily told her new teammates "Sorry, I don't speak French. I listened to Rosetta Stone on the plane and it hasn't kicked in yet." There is a scene where Emily is scolded by her French boss who perceives that Emily is treating her time in Paris as if she were at Disneyland. The criticism is that Emily goes to major landmarks to take selfies and post on social media; she makes minimal effort to establish herself and better understand her new environment. Emily's boss's remark influenced me to reflect on how I want to create my life in Singapore because an extended Disney vacation always sounds brilliant, but after a few days even "The Happiest Place on Earth" can lose its luster. I began to consider how to set myself up to sustainably enjoy my life in Singapore instead of having Disney-like spurts of fun.

Four is my favorite number - so here are my top four strategies to approach living abroad. Take each strategy with a grain of salt and adapt them to your own situation.

1. Keep an open mind

Open-mindedness is crucial when we leave our home countries - for tourism or when moving. Being open to new experiences, foods, phrases, and in Singapore's case, weather, is an imperative first step to enjoying our journey and continuing to enjoy our experience, especially in times of adversity or profuse sweating.

2. Recreate important aspects of our lives in the new environment

As much as possible, try to recreate important aspects of your life back home in the new context. This can mean bringing along hobbies, finding similar communities, finding similar or new hobbies, etc. The goal is to find experiences that bring joy (Marie Kondo-like) and try to be the truest version of yourself in the new environment.

3. Build self-awareness and perspective

There is a metaphor to describe perception of the world through sunglasses with colored lenses - very Bad Bunny-esque. My socialization from growing up in California may make my sunglasses have yellow lenses. The idea is that I see Singapore with a yellow hue while Singaporeans may see in a blue hue. We can never remove our sunglasses as we can't completely erase our past experiences, learned behaviors, or morals. What we can do is add to our lens. Building on our experiences, we can perceive our environments in secondary colors - adding blue to my yellow sunglasses and to see Singapore in shades of green.

4. And lastly, don't be Emily in Paris.

This one is simple - the more you challenge yourself, put yourself out there and the more effort you make, the more you will get out of your experience.



I encourage our students to consider opportunities that lie outside of the borders of our Disneyland-like setting in Singapore. Moving abroad can be challenging but it is also incredibly rewarding. As I wrap up my first year in Singapore, I look forward to many more to come.

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