

Living the entrepreneurship dream

A VIRTUAL NUS campus? Since its stirring inception in 2007, NUS Second Life – the virtual world of NUS where people can interact and socialise with each other through avatars – has attracted more than 10,000 students and visitors. Start-up company Dream Axis, co-founded by recent NUS School of Computing (SoC) graduate Winne Soh, collaborated with NUS Computer Centre to make this a reality.

It was through her stint at the NUS Overseas College (NOC) in Shanghai that inspired Winne to set up Dream Axis. The NOC experience provided her with the opportunity to associate with entrepreneurs from the advertising and media industry. While conducting an evaluation of the digital marketing and new media industry, she met her current business partner and together they officially launched Dream Axis in 2008.

Dream Axis aims to develop 3D virtual space as a mainstream media channel. The company, which specialises in design, animation and creation of avatar-driven virtual worlds, focuses on establishing real-world brands and organisations in real-time 3D online environment.

Setting up a business can be very challenging. Winne was fortunate to have received invaluable advice and mentorship from her business associates during her NOC stint. "My business associates helped me understand how to leverage and build on my funds, and open more doors to connect with the business community at large," she said.

Winne added that her technopreneurship minor helped her to devise a good business plan for Dream Axis. She strategised her business in a disciplined manner with a realistic financial plan to back up her ideas.

Explaining her passion for interactive media, Winne said: "I derive great joy from creating contents with interactive media. It is like a multi-wonder tool of a (digital) artist which gives you the ability to paint anything you imagine."



SECOND LIFE INTEREST: Winne Soh explaining NUS Second Life to visitors at NUS Open House 2009 with NUS President Prof Tan Chorh Chuan (right) looking on.

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Her business acumen surfaced at the age of 15 when Winne created her own CD-ROM production titled "Legend of the Modern City", which was later showcased at the Learning Metropolis Convention at Suntec City in 2000. Her CD-ROM reached more than 3,000 students in Singapore.

In 2002, she won the Platinum Award at the ThinkQuest Internet Challenge, beating some 200 competitors hailing from countries such as the United States and Australia. More recently, Winne clinched the IT Youth Award at the annual IT Leader Awards 2009 organised by the Singapore Computer Society. The award was granted to Winne for her creativity, critical thinking skills and capabilities in IT accomplishment, research and projects. Past NUS winners included SoC's Travis Ho (IT Youth Award 2008) and Assoc Prof Adrian Cheok (Young Professional of the Year 2004).

Moving forward, Winne intends to take Dream Axis beyond Singapore. There are plans to launch Dream Axis in Beijing this July, to be followed by Sydney. **KE**

Finding one's passion at NUS Open House

THE SPORTS AND RECREATION CENTRE (SRC) was abuzz with activity but not with the usual sports events and crowd. Some 16,500 visitors thronged the various halls at SRC to learn about NUS' transformative educational experience at its annual Open House (14-15 March).

Prospective students and their parents welcomed the opportunity to find out more on NUS' wide offering of courses through the admissions and faculty talks as well as the respective faculty booths. The NUS Students' Union exhibition, which showcased a host of student clubs and activities, offered visitors a glimpse of campus life.

Yun Long, who was from Victoria Junior College, was set to pursue an engineering course at NUS. "I realised that there are many new courses here," he said. He praised the Open House as very informative and organised, adding that the staff at the booths were very helpful.

Former Raffles Junior College student Huang Yi Fang was certain about NUS being her main choice. "I would prefer to study locally and at NUS, there will be opportunities for me to go overseas," she said. **KE**



BOOTH STOP: NUS President Prof Tan Chorh Chuan visiting one of NUSSU's booths displaying student activities at the University.



ENGINEERING TALK: A full capacity crowd was found at most faculty talks.



Inventors, unite virtually!

FOR THE FIRST TIME, a virtual Open House was held concurrently on NUS Second Life. A virtual School for Inventors, which represents the School of Computing (SoC), featured projects by its faculty, students and alumni. Prospective students could view the special effects projects which include a rain-removal demonstration that allows avatars to navigate through a rainy patch to clear weather and another where avatars can witness fur growing at their feet. These projects resulted from a collaboration between SoC and Dream Axis, a start-up by alumna Winne Soh. Another project by the NUS Musical mObile Group demonstrated how iPods could be used as musical instruments by simply shaking or tapping one's finger across the screen of the iPod. **KE**



SPANISH VISIT: David Maté and his father Daniel (left) at the Open House.

Spanish Surprise

THE OPEN HOUSE also saw visitors hailing all the way from Spain – David Maté who was accompanied by his father. Explaining his application to the NUS Business School, David said: "I want to experience something outside Europe and NUS would be a good place as it has the international environment that I am looking for. Plus, NUS is highly ranked."

His father Daniel, a commodity trader, said that a tertiary education in Singapore would provide an Asian perspective which will complement his son's Western education. "This blend of Asian and Western education would prove to be useful in today's globalised world," he added. **KE**