

# Chem<sup>NUS</sup>CONNECTIONs

Newsletter of NUS Chemistry



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## Editorial Notes

We warmly extend our best wishes to everyone for a joyful 2026 and a fulfilling Year of the Horse, filled with good health and productivity. In this issue of *ChemConnections*, we are excited to share with you several highlights: the retirement of Madam Tan Gek Tian after an extraordinary 28 years of service; the NUS Chemistry Award and Appreciation Lunch 2026; our inaugural winter immersion programme, "Exploring Chemistry, Culture and Commerce in China (EC4)"; the Singapore Science and Engineering Fair (SSEF) 2026; and reflections from our alumnus, Dr Dazril Phua (BSc Class of 2009, MSc in Industrial Chemistry Class of 2011).

## Chemistry Alumni Reunion

*calling all alumni, especially Applied Chemistry graduates*



We are thrilled to invite all Chemistry alumni to our Alumni Reunion on **Friday, 24 April 2026, from 5.30 PM to 8.00 PM, at the Chemical Bonding Lounge (S8-03-01)**. We extend a special welcome to our Applied Chemistry alumni to join us in this gathering. Come and reconnect with former classmates, research group members, and fellow alumni. Enjoy great company as we share memories and catch up on what's new. Please RSVP here: <https://tinyurl.com/336jy3n5> or scan the QR code by **12 April 2026**. We can't wait to welcome you back!



Editors : Associate Professor Chin Wee Shong  
Dr Michael Yudistira Patuwo  
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*We welcome contributions from our alumni. If you are interested in writing for the newsletter, please contact the Editor at [chmcws@nus.edu.sg](mailto:chmcws@nus.edu.sg).*

## Happy retirement to Madam Tan Gek Tian

Madam Tan Gek Tian has retired from the Department in December 2025 after an extraordinary 28 years of service. She joined us in 1997 and supported various teaching laboratories throughout her career as an Operations Associate. For the past decade, she was a key staff to the General and Synthetic Chemistry Teaching Laboratory. Her unwavering support and commitment have left an enduring mark on the Department's culture and operations, and we are deeply grateful for her years of passion and dedication. Thank you, Madam Tan, for your decades of loyal service. We wish you good health and a blissful retirement.



## NUS Chemistry Awards and Appreciation Lunch 2026

On 11 February 2026, the Department of Chemistry organised the NUS Chemistry Award and Appreciation Lunch at the Chemical Bonding Lounge (S8-03-01). We extend our heartfelt thanks to our alumni and partners whose generous support of our various bursaries and funds continues to help chemistry students in need and recognise academic excellence.

The event commenced with a warm welcome and a fund update by Associate Professor Chin Wee Shong. A key highlight was the Award Presentation ceremony, where donors personally presented certificates to the awardees, capturing memorable moments. Attendees then enjoyed a lunch that sparked engaging conversations and deeper connections between donors and students. These interactions offered insights into students' academic journeys and future aspirations. Awardees expressed their gratitude through personal letters to their donors, acknowledging the impact of their support. The event strengthened the bond between donors and students, enriching the academic community. We sincerely thank all our donors for their generous support.



## Exploring Chemistry, Culture and Commerce in China (EC4)

From 6 to 16 December 2025, the Department held its inaugural winter immersion programme, titled “Exploring Chemistry, Culture, and Commerce in China (EC4),” in the cities of Chongqing and Chengdu. Twenty-six undergraduates, accompanied by one faculty and one staff member, participated in this programme. Among them, five students were able to receive financial support from the Chemistry Alumni Fund. The programme featured a deep dive into China’s market economy, chemical industry trends, and role of international internships through various company visits, seminars, and networking events. Participants developed essential skills for global workforce competitiveness while experiencing China’s rich cultural heritage, making the programme especially valuable for chemistry majors pursuing global career paths. The 10-day experiential learning trip was an eye-opening experience, and for some participants, it was their first overseas trip that was made possible through the generosity of the chemistry alumni community.



## Singapore Science and Engineering Fair 2026 (SSEF 2026)

SSEF 2026 took place from 9 to 11 March 2026 at Singapore Expo, gathering some of the brightest young scientific minds in the country to showcase innovative projects and bold ideas. Representing the Department of Chemistry, three faculty members served as judges for the NUS Chemistry Special Awards. They assessed more than 60 student projects, carefully evaluating each entry for scientific rigour, creativity, clarity of presentation, and potential real-world impact. The breadth of topics and the quality of work reflected the strong curiosity, discipline, and inventive-



ness of the participants, making the judging process both demanding and rewarding. After thorough deliberation, the judging panel selected six outstanding projects for recognition under the NUS Chemistry Special Awards. The awards were presented on 11 March 2026 by Associate Professor Yeo Boon Siang, Jason, Deputy Head (Education), in a ceremony that celebrated not only achievement but also the spirit of scientific inquiry. We extend our congratulations to the award recipients and to all student participants for their excellent work, perseverance, and inspiring contributions to the scientific community.

# “Be the catalyst and use the scientific grit you’ve built to innovate solutions in any sector your find yourself in”

by Dr Dazril Phua

**Class of 2009 (BSc Appl. Chemistry), Class of 2011 (MSc in Industrial Chemistry)**

“My interest in chemistry was piqued in secondary school by a great teacher who explained the concepts well and got me engaged to explore how interactions at the molecular level shape the structures and properties of materials and items in our everyday lives, from the fuel we use to power our vehicles to ingredients that tickle our tastebuds. With that same curious lens, I was eager to delve deeper which eventually led me to take on MSc in Industrial Chemistry and eventually studied PhD in colloidal and polymer chemistry. I am grateful that my time in NUS afforded me opportunities to learn beyond the lecture theatres and laboratories, to be exposed to chemistry as practised and applied by the industry.



Prior to co-founding NandinaREM in 2023, I led the design and execution of numerous operational and strategic projects and programmes at the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS). At Nandina Remanufacturing (NandinaREM), I now serve as Chief Operating Officer (COO) where I lead the operations and carbon fibre composite product development teams. We are the only producer of carbon fibre in Singapore and ASEAN, transforming end-of-life assets into high-performance circular carbon fibre that is delivered quickly and reliably without a green premium.



*With classmates in Europe in 2006 as part of the EURIP Programme*



*With Assoc. Prof. Suresh Valiyaveetil and lab mates during my Final Year Project circa 2007*



*With classmates on Commencement day as BSc graduate in 2009*

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None of these would be possible without the strong grounding from my studies and the support of peers and partners along the way. There is a unique resilience that one builds in NUS Chemistry as not every hypothesis or experiment succeeds the first time. Whether you end up in a lab, a boardroom, or a startup, carry that 'scientific grit' with you to solve the often messy, and complex problems of our planet's future."