NUS ChemCONNECTions

Newsletter of NUS Chemistry

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Editorial Notes

We are deeply shocked and devastated to hear of Professor Yao Shao Qin's passing. Professor Yao was an exceptional academic, researcher, and educator. It feels like just yesterday that he stood at the front of the lecture theatre, teaching a 20-year-old me organic chemistry, retrosynthesis, and the disconnection approach. His absence is felt dearly by all who experienced his kindness and were inspired by his commitment to scholarly excellence.

As we speed towards the close of the semester, we are reminded of the importance of keeping ourselves physically and mentally healthy. On a brighter note, the haze that has hovered over Singapore is finally clearing, perhaps to the chagrin of some of my students who are still trying to get some air quality data for their chemistry project. In this newsletter, we are pleased to share with all of you the latest updates and happenings from across our beloved department. As we wrap up the term, let us all take time to look after ourselves and one another. Wishing you all a restful and joyous holiday season ahead.

In loving memory of Professor Yao Shao Qin



We ended October 2026 with a profound sadness. We lost our esteemed colleague and dear friend, Professor Yao Shao Qin. An outstanding scientist, dedicated educator, and generous mentor, Professor Yao made exceptional contributions to the Department, the University, and the wider scientific community.

Beyond his accomplishments as a scientist, Professor Yao was a deeply respected and valued member of our Department. He was generous in sharing his knowledge, experience, and insights, and was always willing to lend a helping hand to his colleagues. As a senior academic, he took a genuine interest in the professional growth of younger faculty members, encouraging them to pursue ambitious research directions and to realise their full potential. Those who had the privilege of knowing Professor Yao will remember him not only for his scientific achievements, but also for his wisdom, humility, kindness, and generosity of spirit. He was a colleague who readily offered his support, a mentor who took pride in the success of others, and a friend whose warmth and sincerity touched many lives. Professor Yao will be deeply missed by all of us in the Department of Chemistry. We will remember him with great affection, admiration, and gratitude. May he rest in peace.

NUS National University of Singapore

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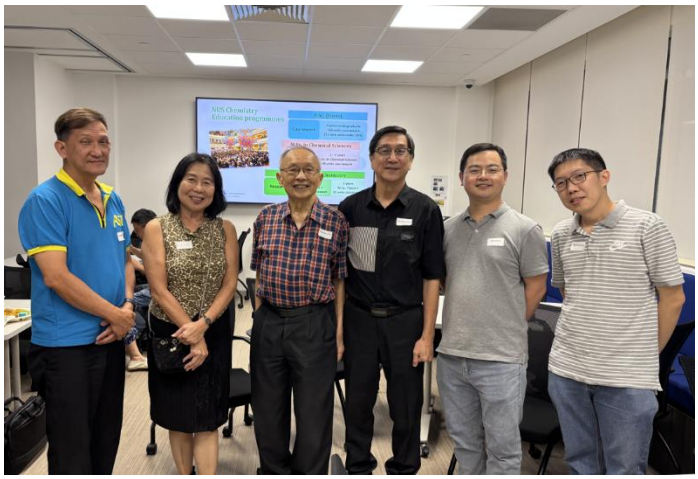
We welcome contributions from our alumni. If you are interested in writing for the newsletter, please contact the Editor at chmcws@nus.edu.sg.

Chemistry Alumni Reunion Dinner

Calling for all NUS Chemistry Alumni 🎉

As the holiday season approaches, we are excited to bring everyone together! Please join us for our reunion dinner on Friday, 27 November 2026, from 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM at Chemical Bonding Lounge (S8-03-01), NUS Chemistry. It's a wonderful chance to catch up with former classmates, research group members, and fellow alumni while closing this year with making new memories together. We are looking forward to seeing you there! 🥰

🎟️ Save your spot: Please register here by **20 November 2026**: https://tinyurl.com/336jy3n5





Chemistry Bond and Brew 2026

On 5 August 2026, the Department of Chemistry welcomed about 80 freshmen to the Chemistry Freshmen Bond & Brew event, marking the beginning of their academic journey at NUS Chemistry. The programme opened with a welcome address by Associate Professor Chin Wee Shong, Deputy Head (Administration), who introduced student life, key faculty members, and the support services available to undergraduates.

A highlight of this event was the "Getting to Know Chemistry" session, where students explored the Department's laboratories and gained firsthand insights into its facilities and activities through interactive station visits. Students collected stamps at each station to earn a special gift upon completing their stamp cards.

The afternoon concluded with an Ice Cream and Snack Time, providing a relaxed opportunity for students to enjoy treats and mingle with their peers. The event served as a warm and engaging orientation to the Department, helping our freshmen feel welcomed and connected as they join the NUS Chemistry community.







Outstanding Graduate Mentor, University Award 2026

We are proud to celebrate the achievement of Professor Liu Xiaogang (centre) from the Department of Chemistry, who has been honoured with the Outstanding Graduate Mentor Award. Professor Liu Xiaogang is recognised as a world-leading scientist for his work in the optical manipulation of photon conversion in nanocrystals and their applications in X-ray and light-field imaging. Beyond his research contributions, he is also a dedicated mentor who has inspired generations of young researchers to seek excellence. Under his guidance, his students earned many accolades, such as the National Ten Thousand Talents Programme of China. Many of his former mentees now hold academic appointments in prestigious institutions in Singapore and abroad, as well as positions of key contributors across the industry. Our warmest congratulations to Prof Liu Xiaogang on this well-reserved recognition!

Learning Journey to NUS Chemistry

From September to October 2026, the Department of Chemistry was delighted to welcome students and teachers from four schools for a series of engaging Learning Journeys at NUS Chemistry. The visits provided the young learners an opportunity to gain deeper insights of chemistry at the university level and experience our research activities and facilities firsthand. Our visitors included NPS International School, Invictus International School, Bedok South Secondary School, and Jurong Pioneer Junior College. A total of 120 students and 8 teachers participated in this journey.





Each visit began with an introductory degree talk by Madam Saradha Thyagarajan, who engaged the students in lively discussions and addressed their questions about NUS Chemistry. The visitors then toured our research facilities, including the Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) and Mass Spectrometry (MS) laboratories. Through these visits, the students gained valuable exposure to real-world laboratory practices and ongoing research within in the Department.

We were delighted to share the NUS Chemistry experience with these young visitors and hope that these Learning Journeys have inspired a lifelong curiosity in the field of chemistry.

"Challenge yourself and go beyond!"

by Dr Leon Goh, BSc Hons Class of 2022, PhD Class of 2026

"I am currently working at NextKidney Singapore, where I am part of a team developing a new generation of portable dialysis systems that could allow patients to receive treatment in the comfort of their own homes. It is challenging work, as the systems need to be adapted to meet different treatment requirements, but it is also incredibly meaningful to see science being translated into something that could make a difference in people's lives.

One particularly rewarding part of my journey has been working with zirconium phosphate, the very material that formed the basis of my PhD research. During my doctoral studies, it was the focus of my research; today, I have the opportunity to see how it can be applied in the development of a medical device. It has been fascinating to witness how knowledge and research can take on new meaning beyond the laboratory.

I chose chemistry because I believed it was essential to the world around us. Looking back, however, I realise that my journey gave me much more than scientific knowledge. The rigour of the discipline, the challenges I faced and the experiences I shared with my peers taught me to think critically, adapt to new situations and persevere when things become difficult.

My advice to students is simple: challenge yourself and go beyond. Step outside what is familiar and explore opportunities you may never have considered. You never know where they might take you."





