

ENTERPRISE SPARKS

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BLOCK71
SAIGON

By NUS Enterprise
In partnership with Becamex IDC

{ Expanding the BLOCK71 ecosystem }

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BLOCK71 SAIGON

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Editor's note

An unprecedented year to say the very least, 2020 brought about numerous challenges due to COVID-19. The pandemic triggered the mass recall of our NUS Overseas Colleges (NOC) students, closed our physical incubators, and delayed the launch of some of our major initiatives. Despite this, NUS Enterprise continued to encourage budding start-ups, innovated through the adoption of virtual events, and found new opportunities for partnerships amid crisis. Notably, we widened our reach in Asia with BLOCK71 Saigon.

This issue, titled "Expanding the BLOCK71 Ecosystem," delves into the newest member of the BLOCK71 family. BLOCK71 Saigon, a joint initiative with Becamex IDC Corporation, provides a key link between Singapore and Vietnam, enabling a two-way flow of talent, technologies, and start-ups. We cover the preview of the facility, highlight what makes Vietnam such a great start-up hub, and catch up with Wonderlabs.io, an NUS start-up that recently ventured into the country.

We also feature major events which were moved online this year, including the first virtual NUS Graduate Research Innovation Programme (GRIP) Lift-Off Day. The event attracted its largest audience to date, with 400 participants from 18 different countries tuning in to watch 18 deep-tech teams showcase their solutions.

One success story to emerge from the GRIP programme to date is Breathonix, which in October revealed a one-minute breath test to detect COVID-19. The groundbreaking technology is non-invasive, easy to administer, and has the potential to be used for mass testing in high-traffic areas.

This issue also captures NUS Enterprise's partnership with Base of Pyramid Hub to collaborate on social innovation; a profile on our newest Philip Yeo Grant recipient; and highlights of the aspiring entrepreneurs who won Pitch Night.

As we move into 2021, new initiatives and programmes like the NUS Venture Building Programme and MSc in Venture Creation will be rolled out to enable and support our students and budding entrepreneurs to create new ventures and impact.

We wish all our readers continued good health and we look forward to bringing you the latest news and initiatives in our ecosystem.

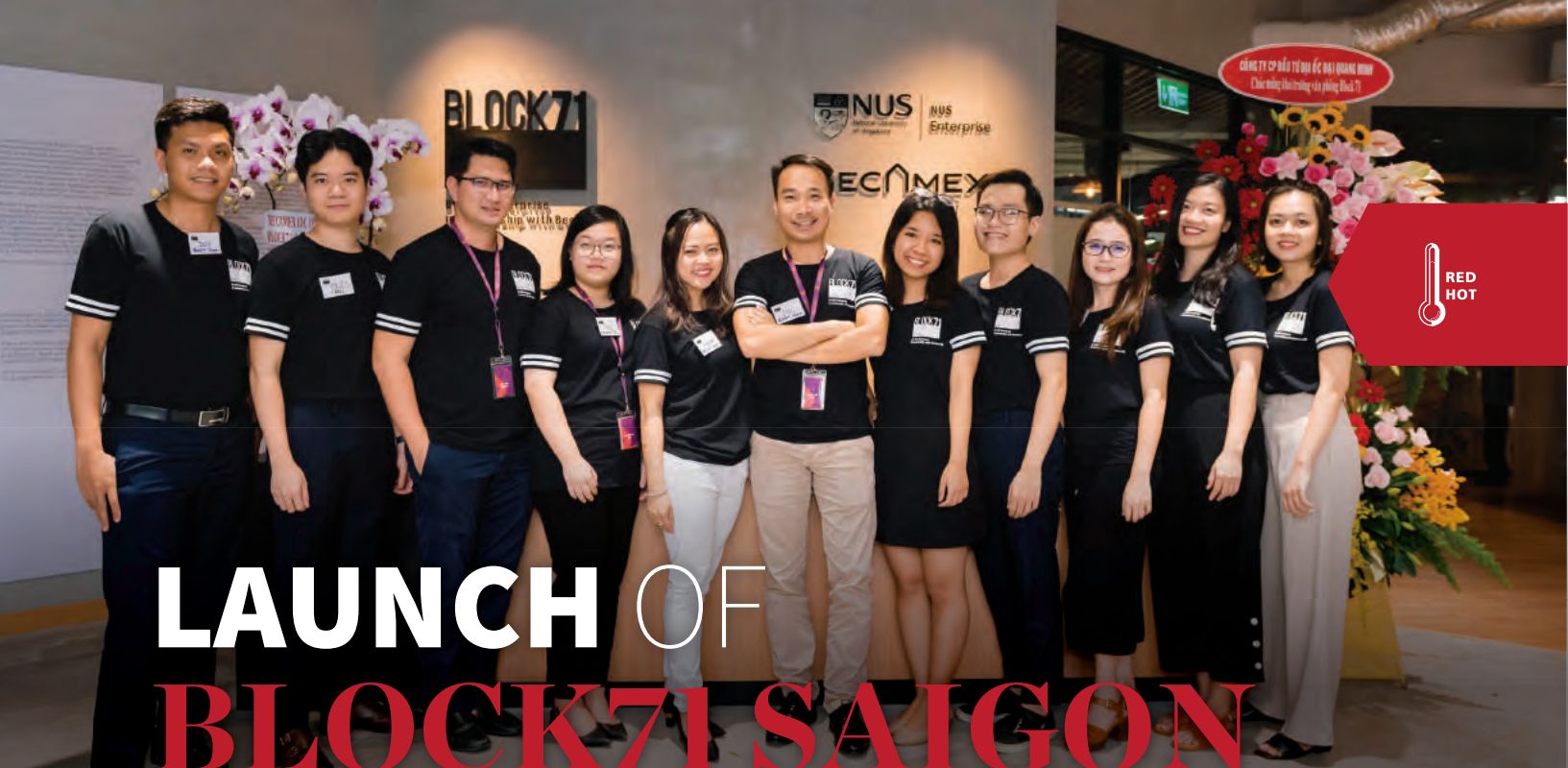


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LAUNCH OF BLOCK71 SAIGON

NUS Enterprise has forged ahead in its expansion of BLOCK71 in ASEAN with the opening of its latest and eighth location, BLOCK71 Saigon.

In November 2019, NUS Enterprise inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Becamex IDC Corporation (Becamex) to establish BLOCK71 in Vietnam with the aim of cultivating a vibrant innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem in country and beyond. Virtual preview of the location in Ho Chi Minh City was held in October 2020.

The joint initiative supports a two-way flow of talent, technologies and start-ups to promote innovation and entrepreneurship development in both countries. Vietnamese and Singaporean start-ups can use BLOCK71's global network of resources and contacts to kickstart their entrepreneurial journey and gain access to international markets. At the same time, the initiative facilitates greater information exchange, connectivity and access to programmes between Singapore, Vietnam and the region.

Professor Freddy Boey, NUS Deputy President (Innovation & Enterprise), and Mr Nguyen Van Hung, Chairman of Becamex, were instrumental in creating this key gateway between both the nations to support innovation and entrepreneurship development.

"This new BLOCK71 in Vietnam will enable entrepreneurs and innovators to access new markets, provide NUS students with interesting internship placements, and provide information and access to technology innovation and entrepreneurship programmes and courses available in Singapore such as full-time Master of Science programmes and the NUS Technology Access Programme," said Professor Freddy Boey, NUS Deputy President (Innovation & Enterprise).

The preview included a three-day seminar series featuring key ecosystem players and thought leaders from across Vietnam. The series covered topics such as:

- ⑤ **The People Building, Bridging and Branding Vietnam** with representatives of the most active cities of innovation: Vietcetera, Saigon Innovation Hub (Ho Chi Minh City), Becamex Business Incubator (Binh Duong), Danang Entrepreneurship Support (DNES) (Da Nang) and Topica Founder Institute (Hanoi),
- ⑤ **Redefining Education and Innovation for the Future Workforce** featuring YOLA, Eastern International University, Information Technology Park - Vietnam National University and NUS Enterprise
- ⑤ **Vietnam's (growing) culture of Open Innovation:** with Innolab.Asia, Amazon Web Services (AWS), BK Holdings, TMA Solutions and Becamex IDC.

The series culminated with a gathering for 100 invited friends and partners and featured a panel on The Next Gen: Solving Vietnam's (and the region's) Most Critical Issues with Science and Technology. Speakers included Touchstone Partners, Dat Bike, ELSA and Monk's Hill Ventures.



A panel discussion The Next Gen: Solving Vietnam's Most Critical Issues with Science and Technology ➔



Attendees welcomed the new collaborative space in Ho Chi Minh City's Sala City – an eco-urban development in District 2.

In 2021, the BLOCK71 team will continue to run regular events such as signature Kopi Chats, Meet the VCs, Open Office Hours, Tech Showcase Days, as well as partner with local corporates and investors to run curated initiatives to engage the tech community.

For access to member-only privileges including a mentor pool, business matching as well as priority support for technology, hiring, and fundraising, tech start-ups are welcome to apply to BLOCK71 Saigon's incubation programme at saigon.block71.co

Burgeoning Start-Up Scene in Vietnam

Vietnam is the third most active start-up ecosystem in ASEAN, behind Singapore and Indonesia, with a reported six-fold increase in invested capital in technology deals in the last two years.

With a large consumer market, the ecosystem has experienced a growing openness to foreign investment and support from government agencies in entrepreneurship, well-matched with Vietnam's young 96 million strong tech-savvy population.

BLOCK71's expansion will aim to serve and grow this demand, and be an aggregator of cross border support, funding and learning.



Enabling entrepreneurs and innovations to scale globally

BLOCK71 in Vietnam is the latest extension of NUS' global network of entrepreneurial gateways to overseas hubs, enabling NUS start-ups and technologies to gain access to new markets, and vice-versa, to promote access to education and innovation programmes in NUS for Vietnamese students and entrepreneurs.

Set up and managed by NUS Enterprise in collaborative and strategic partnerships with corporates and government agencies, BLOCK71 taps on the synergies derived from the deep experience of NUS Enterprise, widely acknowledged as the engine behind Asia's leading university-based entrepreneurial ecosystem, and Becamex's track record as a leading developer of industrial infrastructure in Vietnam with access to seven business parks and over 900 corporate partners.



BLOCK71 supports entrepreneurs by providing:

- ➔ **Access to global networks:** NUS Enterprise and Becamex have a comprehensive network, including investors, corporate partners, mentors and industry. Singapore start-ups can gain easier market access, and Vietnamese start-ups can leverage upon NUS Enterprise's entrepreneurial hubs in the US, Indonesia, China and Singapore, to venture into these markets;
- ➔ **Incubation support:** NUS Enterprise organises a range of support programmes to help entrepreneurs kickstart and develop their ideas in new markets and industries;
- ➔ Opportunities to pilot and test business ideas and technologies;
- ➔ Opportunities to participate in entrepreneurial initiatives such as business competitions, validation programmes, talks and conferences, and other start-up related events; and
- ➔ An ecosystem and community – A strong start-up community provides synergies and opportunities for collaborations. It also enables sharing of best practices. Regular start-up events and activities are organised at BLOCK71 to strengthen the community further; and
- ➔ Access to education programmes in technology innovation and entrepreneurship at NUS such as full-time Master of Science programmes and the NUS Technology Access Programme, where participants can tap on NUS intellectual property to move their innovation ideas into viable deep-tech start-ups.

BLOCK71 takes its name from its birthplace – the Block 71 building within the Ayer Rajah industrial estate in Singapore, where a disused industrial building was transformed into a renowned landmark for innovation through championing the aggregation and growth of the local technology start-up community. In addition to Singapore, BLOCK71 has been established in San Francisco in the US, Jakarta, Bandung and Yogyakarta in Indonesia and two locations in Suzhou, China.



Start-ups at the inaugural InnoXJogja 2020 held in BLOCK71 Yogyakarta.

InnoXJogja is the largest-scale virtual innovation and technology festival and showcase in Yogyakarta. Organised by BLOCK71 Yogyakarta, a partnership between NUS Enterprise and Salim Group, the inaugural edition of the event, InnoXJogja 2020, was held from 17th to 20th November 2020.

Supported by NUS Enterprise, Innovation Factory, and the Office of Communication and Informatics of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, the event also collaborated with the following six universities and incubators:

- ➞ Creative HUB Gadjah Mada University (UGM)
- ➞ Centrinio Duta Wacana Christian University (UKDW)
- ➞ AMIKOM Business Park - Amikom University
- ➞ Innovative Academy Gadjah Mada University (UGM)
- ➞ Inkubasi Bisnis & Inovasi Bersama Islamic University of Indonesia (UII)
- ➞ Jogja Digital Valley

InnoXJogja 2020 was successfully conducted in four days, with over 15 panel discussions, and the presence of more than 50 distinguished speakers and five VCs from Asia. More than 1000 participants attended, including representatives from corporates, investment firms, educational institutions, government agencies and start-ups from seven different countries.

The event opened with a welcome address by Sri Sultan Hamengkubowono X, Governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta. In his speech, the Governor addressed the need to embrace technology and innovation, while remaining true to the roots and traditions of the people. He also highlighted efforts made by the local government to spur innovative efforts in Yogyakarta.

Professor Freddy Boey, Deputy President (Innovation & Enterprise) at NUS, also graced the event with a welcome message. He shared NUS' efforts to promote innovation through signature programmes like the Graduate Research Innovation Programme (GRIP), and highlighted the significance of BLOCK71 in the ASEAN region and congratulated BLOCK71 Bandung and BLOCK71 Yogyakarta on their second year anniversary.

Throughout the event, participants witnessed panel discussions around topics such as Balancing Innovation & Tradition, The Marriage of Startups & Corporate Innovators, and Funding Opportunities in Yogyakarta on the Main Stage. Simultaneously, partner universities and incubators showcased their innovative efforts in the fields of Agritech, Sustainability, Medtech, Social Startups, Gaming, and the Creative industry.

The event culminated in a Startup Pitch Arena, where 11 start-ups pitched before a panel of three VCs for the coveted prize of Startup Champion of InnoXJogja 2020. The eventual winner was Wujudkan, a start-up that focuses on climate change adaption by providing technologies that allow people to consume sea water while at the same time conserving water.



MARITIME START-UPS

On 17th November, the fourth edition of Smart Port Challenge (SPC) - came to a wonderful close with its Grand Final that saw eight shortlisted start-ups make their pitches in front of judges and guests. Singapore-based BeeX took the top prize, while FUELSAVE from Germany came in second and Vulcan AI from Singapore won third prize. Judges also gave a Special Mention to Groundup.ai for being “very close”!

Jointly organised by the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA), NUS Enterprise and TNB Ventures, the challenge aims to find innovative solutions to issues faced by the maritime industry. This year’s edition saw 16 maritime partners offer up 17 innovation opportunities, or challenge statements. From the pool of 187 innovative proposals submitted by start-ups around the world, 16 stood out and advanced to PIER71 Accelerate, an intensive 6-week market validation and customer discovery programme. Held completely online this year due to COVID-19, the programme offered participants access to masterclasses, workshops, virtual networking sessions with maritime corporates, industry veterans, a pool of mentors, PIER71 alumni and more. At the end of that, they pitched in front of a panel of judges and only 8 were selected to go into the Grand Final.

Streamed “live” to an online audience, the Grand Final was opened by Guest-of-Honour Mr Chee Hong Tat, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Transport and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Mr Chee gave an overview of the maritime industry and the three broad categories of forces that impact it, namely disruption, digitalisation and decarbonisation. He mentioned that “to turn these three Ds from challenges to opportunities, innovation must continue to be the central focus of our maritime ecosystem, and our key value proposition as a maritime hub.”

Director of NUS’ Industry Liaison Office Ms Irene Cheong, echoed similar sentiments and shared some examples where start-ups have applied NUS technology to the maritime industry. She went on to mention a few other initiatives aimed at developing deep-tech and industry-relevant programmes.

“

PIER71 has been an extremely comprehensive accelerator for start-ups, providing them with access to a wide range of propositions to maritime corporates. We are thankful for the support and guidance. The win is a great encouragement to continue to build the ecosystem to improve underwater inspections.”

Grace Chia
CEO of BeeX

The three winning teams were chosen based on their proposed solution, industry-impact, team compatibility and viability of business model and were awarded cash prizes of SGD10,000, SGD5,000 and SGD3,000 respectively. This is in addition to the unquantifiable benefits of SPC in the form of access to a broad network of maritime corporates, industry veterans and VC partners, as well as ongoing support from within the ecosystem.

A recording of the event is available at <https://spc2020.pier71.sg>.



GEARING TOWARDS DIGITALISATION

BeeX, FUELSAVE, Vulcan AI emerge
as winners of PIER71's Smart Port
Challenge 2020

eleration programme, helping us refine our value
ankful for the mentorship, networking opportunities
t to our team, and we look forward to working with the



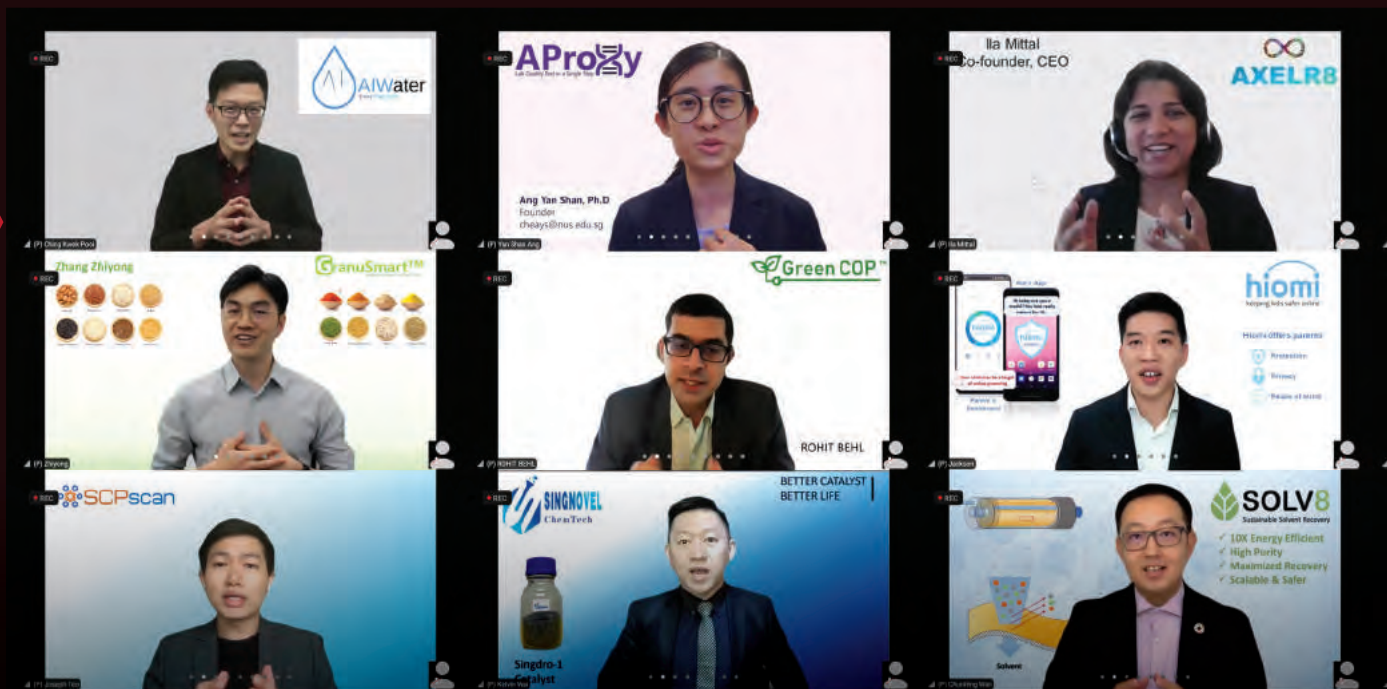
Winner, BeeX Autonomous Systems, Singapore



1st Runner-Up, FuelSave GmbH, Germany



2nd Runner-Up, Vulcan AI, Singapore



A VIRTUAL FIESTA OF DEEP TECH

While 2020 has undoubtedly been a challenging year, endless possibilities for start-ups to innovate and develop new solutions have also been created.



It also heightened the critical and urgent need to move technology to the battlefield against COVID-19, from online transactions, digitalisation, viral screening, vaccines or robotics.”

Prof Freddy Boey
NUS Deputy President (Innovation & Enterprise)

Through the adversity, 18 teams have pressed on through the first three months of the Graduate Research Innovation Programme (GRIP). Under the intensive “Venture Hothousing” component of the programme, the teams developed and fine-tuned their research-based innovations into scalable and investible deep-tech start-ups.

On 16th December, in the first ever Virtual Lift-Off Day, the teams presented to an audience of over 400 investors and VCs, corporates, governments and institutions from 18 different countries. Designed to create connections and interactions between the participants, the event consisted of one-minute pitch presentations, virtual booths, and Live Chat and 1-to-1 meeting functions.

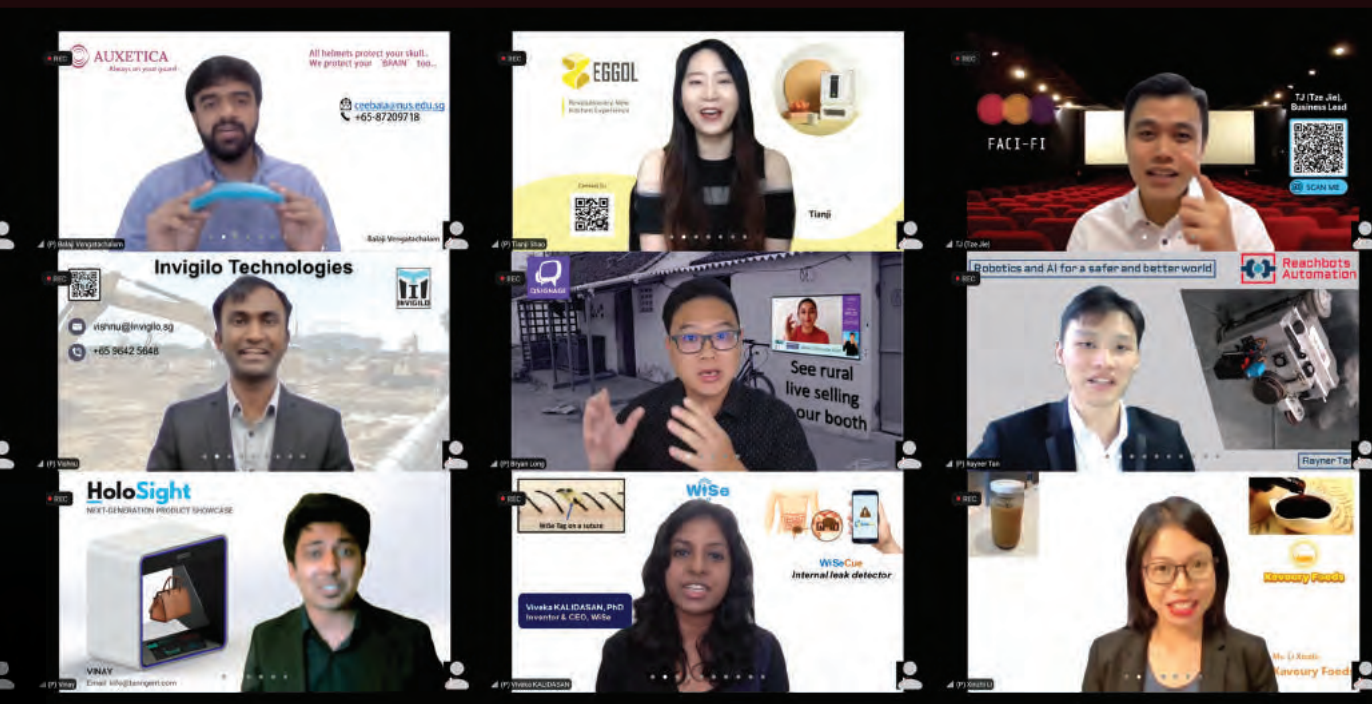
Irene Cheong, Director of the NUS Industry Liaison Office, hosted the opening event, where she shared with the audience a new programme by the NUS Centre for Additive Manufacturing to support deep tech prototyping using 3D printers, as well as a new video series called 8 For 8, which casts the spotlight on the amazing people in the GRIP community.

We were also graced by the presence of NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye, Provost Professor Ho Teck Hua and NUS Deputy President (Innovation & Enterprise) Professor Freddy Boey.

Prof Boey in his opening address spoke about how innovation through technology has become the world’s topmost priority. He shared how the team is now working on a start-up CEO list, and also his plans to expand the Minimum Viable Product Studio initiative, both of which will serve to provide greater support to future GRIP teams. He also shed light on the University’s plans to accelerate innovations in food technology, including a new 9000 sq. meter building next to the Temasek Life Sciences Laboratory which will focus on research and innovation in food science and technology.

To date, 80 teams have participated in the GRIP programme. Our Run 4 start-ups will be further incubated by the University to strengthen their footing in the market in the next nine months. We are excited to see how these teams will continue to flourish.





DEEP-TECH START-UPS

↑ NUS GRIP Run 4 Lift-Off Day showcased 18 teams with innovative solutions.

Teams that presented:

AIWater

utilises both the power of AI and traditional process models to improve and optimize wastewater treatment plants.

AProxY

delivers lab quality immunoassay with the speed and simplicity suitable for point-of-care test.

Auxetica

Brain Protection System (BPS) enhances the protective performance of a helmet by replacing the conventional EPS liner with a collapsible cellular liner.

Axelr8

an AI enabled e-Sourcing platform where engineers, designers and procurement professionals can deconstruct a product into three-tier Bill of Material (BOM).

EGGOL

is a fully automated, multirecipe egg cooking machine, which works similarly as an automatic coffee machine. Customers get their favourite egg dish at the press of a button.

FACIFI

is a full AI media technology solution that allows full, photorealistic control of faces in video and animation.

GranuSmartTM

provides an easy-to-use solution capable of performing multiple tests simultaneously, thus enabling fast, cost effective and accurate testing to be carried out.

Green-COP

technology utilises its patented and efficient catalytic process to break down cell walls and release fully soluble lignin from residual biomass.

Hiomi

monitors activities on mobile devices for potential safety concerns and signs of suicidal ideation, so that busy parents can have peace of mind.

Invigilo Technologies

aims to enhance safety by utilising video analytics and IoT technologies.

Qsignage

QTV product is for interactive live selling powered with edge AI, a first of its kind in the rural market.

Reachbots Automation

provides the industry's highest payload, modular mobile robotic solutions for constrained environments and mission critical tasks at half the cost and double the efficiency.

SCPscan

is a diagnostic software tool for commercial airconditioning systems.

SINGNOVEL

ChemTech provides value-adding and sustainable solutions for petrochemical processes.

Solv8

offers a sustainable membrane filtration technology to separate and recover high-purity solvents without the usage of heat, which significantly reduces energy costs and carbon emissions.

HoloSight by Tanngent

is a smart holographic platform that allows brands to engage prospective customers using interactive 3-dimensional product displays.

WiSe

is a wireless sensing platform technology and solutions provider.

Xavoury Foods

aims to serve as a platform with its patented foodtech solution to transform underutilised meat byproducts in the global multi-billion meat industry into savoury food products with customised flavour and taste.



Master of Science in VENTURE CREATION

The most immersive graduate degree programme that combines **experiential learning** with the academic rigour of Asia's top university.



Transform
mindsets

Innovate
corporates

Access
IP and technologies

Network
for market access

Launch
ventures

Mentorship
in business
development

Accelerate
ideas into solutions

The NUS MSc (Venture Creation) is a one-year full-time programme that provides you with the skillsets and opportunities to bring your start-up ideas into fruition. It is a one-of-its-kind Masters programme that provides an immersive start-up internship experience, and hands-on venture creation with support and guidance to maximise the chances of success.



Find out more

Visit our website
bit.ly/NUS-MScVentureCreation

Or email us at
pgc@nus.edu.sg

Supported by:
NUS Enterprise
enterprise.nus.edu.sg

Administered by:
NUS School of Continuing and Lifelong Education
scale.nus.edu.sg

SWITCH 2020

The innovation and start-up scene in Singapore continues to stay vibrant amidst the pandemic – as proven by the success of the annual Singapore Week of Innovation and Technology (SWITCH), which ran virtually from 7 to 11 Dec 2020, alongside the Singapore Fintech Festival (SFF).

NUS Enterprise and the NUS Industry Liaison Office, the entrepreneurship and innovation arms of the University, participated in various areas of the global event which featured exhibitions, conferences, workshops, lab crawls and partner activities such as SLINGSHOT, a start-up pitching competition, and TechInnovation, a technology-to-industry-matching platform.

NUS Village, one of the 10 digital villages within “Online City” featured 50 virtual booths that were specially curated to showcase signature programmes and start-ups. Also in the spotlight were start-ups from NUS’ incubators and accelerator programmes (BLOCK71, ICE71, PIER71, THE HANGAR, NUS Enterprise@Singapore Science Park) as well as GRIP (Graduate Research Innovation Programme). A few key programmes were also featured at partners’ digital villages and buildings such as:

- ➡ BLOCK71 under the SLINGSHOT building
- ➡ BLOCK71 under the JTC building
- ➡ JUMPstart programme and its portfolio start-ups under the Health and Biomedical Sciences Hub building
- ➡ NUS Enterprise@Singapore Science Park and start-ups under the Innovation Made Real@Singapore Singapore Park building
- ➡ Venture Building Programme under Innovation SG building

Mr Hui Kwok Leong, Acting Director (Ecosystem Development) of NUS Enterprise, highlighted a combination of factors that are powering NUS’ innovation & enterprise ecosystem at a panel session focused on the Singapore start-up ecosystem. These include research commercialisation of the University’s IPs, nurturing local talents and their skills development, creating ventures and supporting them through grants, localised incubation, acceleration as well as geographic market and industry access.

Elaborating on NUS’ experience in bringing deep tech start-ups to internationalisation, Mr Hui added, “NUS has helped over 80 start-ups to land in Suzhou and nearby surrounding cities. We also established Innovfest China in 2015, an annual conference



Mr Hui Kwok Leong (Top & Centre), Acting Director (Ecosystem Development) of NUS Enterprise, at the panel ‘Internationalisation of Deep Tech’

comprising a technology showcase and opportunities for start-ups to seek potential partners, relevant government support and grants in this part of China.”

Mr Hui, who straddles between Singapore and China due to his second role at NUS Research Institute (NUSRI) in Suzhou, also shared an additional pro tip: for venturing into China, start-ups must have a ready prototype to garner interests and secure grants.

Further strengthening Mr Hui’s point on research commercialisation of the University’s IP, the NUS Industry Liaison Office presented 13 technology offers for interested tech seekers. Showcased at TechInnovation, these ranged from a wearable sweat sensor for health monitoring to a reconfigurable hybrid robotic gripper.

SLINGSHOT 2020 took on a high note with the Top 100 Global Start-ups pitching through online live-streaming from all over the world -- including 10 NUS-affiliated start-ups. Keyless, an ICE71 start-up in the cybersecurity industry, emerged as second runner-up for this year’s SLINGSHOT competition.



ENTREPRENEUR LINK: FROM SEA TO SAIGON

In July, we hosted Enterprise Singapore (ESG), Tech JDI, TRIVE, Quod.AI and Becamex IDC for an Entrepreneur Link panel on the Vietnamese start-up ecosystem. The event showcased venture opportunities in Ho Chi Minh City, and highlighted why the tech-savvy Southeast Asian city is a market to keep an eye on.



BLOCK71 Saigon

Meet The Panel

- **Government perspective:**
Leon Cai, *Regional Director (Vietnam), Enterprise Singapore (ESG)*
- **Venture Support perspective:**
Frank Lee, *Managing Director and Founder, Tech JDI*
- **Investor perspective:**
Leck Ting Yan, *Partner, TRIVE*
- **Startup perspective:**
Hervé Vũ Roussel, *CEO and Co-Founder, Quod.AI*
- **Local Institutes of Higher Learning / Corporate perspective:**
Hanh Nguyen, *Director, Becamex Business Incubator, Lecturer at Eastern International University (EIU) and Programme Lead, BLOCK71 Saigon*

Moderator:
Sazali Johari,
Programme Director, BLOCK71 (SEA) and NUS Enterprise

Here are the takeaways:



Talent

Finding and retaining tech talent has been a longstanding gripe of start-up founders in Singapore. The solution may lie in Vietnam: Frank from Tech JDI estimates that building a team in Vietnam costs less than half of what it would in Singapore. Additionally, local talent is young and of a good standard, with public universities and private institutes continuing to groom engineering talent at an impressive rate.

However, as Hervé from Quod.AI pointed out, there is a gap in the maturity of technical talent. They have largely been trained to work on specific tasks for foreign companies, and a lot more work is needed to upskill hires into full stack developers and product managers. TRIVE Partner Ting Yan echoed this sentiment, advising Singapore founders to be willing to invest in people and systems building in order to scale.



Technology

Healthcare and education are two sectors with long-standing infrastructure challenges and evergreen demand - which translates into opportunities for start-ups.

According to Leon from ESG, entering the Vietnam market with a start-up in these “conditional sectors” will be tricky. Categorising yourself as a healthcare or education provider, instead of a technology company, may mean navigating a web of requirements on staffing,

clinic operations and equipment standards, or even having a physical campus. It is crucial to find a trusted local partner, business consultant and a lawyer to translate and keep abreast of these policies.



Market Access

Start-ups often use the strategy of securing their first one or two mid-sized customers to enter a market. With Vietnam, consider taking a different approach. If you are building a tech team in the country, see that as one foot in the door. Leverage your team already on the ground to validate and localise your product. Start-ups like Shopback, which launched their product for the Vietnam market in 2020, did so only after running their tech team in Vietnam for the past few years.



Funding

If you're a Singapore-based company, it is strongly suggested that you start fundraising from Singapore instead of looking toward Vietnam. This is because funds tend to be headquartered in Singapore anyway, which is why Vietnamese start-ups also often anchor themselves in Singapore. Singapore has built up a regional ecosystem with mentors, angels, and investors who are experienced in regionalisation or internationalisation. It is a tried and true approach to use Singapore as a hub to get connected to the global and regional markets.

► Tips From Our Panelists:

“

Be a participant, attend networking events, and learn the language.

Leon

“

Know regulations, be flexible, and understand how people work on the ground.

Frank

“

Learn about the culture. Invest in your team. Show that you care..

Herve

“

When borders reopen, physically come to Saigon! Connect with people, connect with BLOCK71.

Hanh

BREATHONIX DEVELOPS 60-SECOND BREATH TEST FOR COVID-19

↑ Breathonix founders Dr Jia Zhunan (L) and Mr Du Fang with NUS Deputy President (Innovation & Enterprise) Professor Freddy Boey (R).

Testing for COVID-19 is vitally important to curbing the spread of the virus as well as helping to facilitate the safe re-opening of businesses and the resumption of travel. But current Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) testing, involving the use of nasal swabs, can be painful and expensive, with results only available in a few days.

Luckily, there is an alternative option on the horizon: in October, NUS spin-off Breathonix revealed a one-minute test that can detect COVID-19 via analysis of the Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) present in a person's exhaled breath.

The groundbreaking technology, believed to be the first in Asia, has huge potential to aid in mass screening for the disease given its ease-of-use and real-time results. In contrast to the nasal swabs, the breath test is non-invasive and does not require specially trained staff or laboratory processing.

“**[Breathonix] demonstrates the huge potential of Singapore's home-grown technologies and deep-tech start-ups. NUS is proud of the progress Breathonix has made since its inception, and we look forward to seeing their technology being deployed in Singapore in the near future to protect the health and well-being of the community.**”

Prof Freddy Boey
NUS Deputy President (Innovation & Enterprise)
In an interview with NUS News

A pilot clinical trial of Breathonix's technology, conducted with the National Centre for Infectious Diseases (NCID) and involving 180 patients, showed over 90% accuracy with sensitivity of 93% and specificity of 95%. Further validation work for the technology is planned before a potential roll-out in high-traffic areas, such as Singapore's airport and foreign worker dormitories. Breathonix was founded by NUS

graduates Dr Jia Zhunan and Mr Du Fang, the latter of whom is also an alumnus of the NUS Overseas Colleges (NOC) programme. Breathonix also recently graduated from the NUS Graduate Research Innovation Programme (GRIP), an initiative that encourages NUS' graduate students and researchers to form deep-tech spin-offs based on university technologies.





TRAIL
BLAZERS

MAKING SOFTWARE DEVELOPERS ACCESSIBLE TO THE WORLD

Wonderlabs.io's team in Vietnam

BLOCK71 Saigon, located in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam works towards assisting and providing technology-focused start-ups with new business opportunities. Wonderlabs.io, an emerging start-up in the field of Human Resource (HR) services, has recently decided to venture out into Vietnam's dynamic and flourishing market.

The Journey into Vietnam: Market & Business Opportunities

The business connections aided by BLOCK71 Saigon, as well as the burgeoning software and engineering talent in Vietnam were some of the main reasons for this venture. Additionally, several schools in Vietnam work towards producing software development talents, making it an excellent hub for the HR services provided by Wonderlabs.io.

Founder and CEO Keith Tan also highlighted that the bigger pool of talent in the Vietnamese market has helped them meet client requirements. This is in comparison to other countries where they operate including Singapore, Hong Kong, and Australia.

Wonderlabs.io's Global Footprint

350+
talents



6
countries



9
cities



6
timezones

But the journey of venturing out into a completely different territory was no bed of roses. There were challenges and several legal hoops such as language barriers and the changing legal system that the team had to overcome and adapt to. Nevertheless, tackling these challenges throughout their journey proved to be an indispensable learning curve for the team.

Tips for other Singaporean Start-ups Looking to Expand to Vietnam



Don't be so rigid and think there is a 100% right answer to everything – as it is in Singapore. In Vietnam, trust is a valuable currency. Hiring a local expert as your trusted business partner is key when expanding in the market. Many Singapore companies are already in Vietnam – one of the largest ones is CapitaLand. Working with these companies first in the Vietnamese landscape will give you an insight into the inner workings of the market."

Founder & CEO, Keith Tan
Wonderlabs.io

In addition, start-ups with ideas in innovation and technology can always rely on the support of BLOCK71 to gain access into the Vietnamese markets.



PARTNERING TO BOOST SOCIAL INNOVATION

↑ (L to R): Prof Chee Yeow Meng, NUS Associate Vice President (Innovation & Enterprise); Prof Freddy Boey, NUS Deputy President (Innovation & Enterprise); Mr Jack Sim, Founder of BoP Hub; and Ms Liu Yan, Project Lead of BoP Hub at the MOU ceremony.

Social innovation in Singapore has been given an added boost with a new initiative by NUS Enterprise and the Base of Pyramid Hub (BoP Hub). The two parties signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 26 Nov to collaborate on the Joint Initiative of Social System Innovation (JISSI).

Professor Freddy Boey, NUS Deputy President (Innovation & Enterprise) and Mr Jack Sim, Founder of BoP Hub, signed the MOU at a ceremony held in The Hangar by NUS Enterprise.

Work for the joint initiative began in early October 2020. The team successfully organised an information session on 12 Nov that featured a panel of speakers from diverse portfolios sharing on the 17

Sustainable Development Goals, multi-generational employment and jobs, AgriTech, renewable energy and water and sanitation. Separately on 20 Nov, feasible social solutions were showcased via a virtual event titled 'Jack and the Beanstalk: Rethinking Social Innovation for Optimal Impact'.

These events reached out to the NUS community and provided them with a platform to connect with JISSI to develop their innovative ideas. JISSI also offers mentorship in three sectors -- food and agriculture, renewable energy, and water and sanitation -- to NUS graduates from 2018 to 2020 who are interested in participating in the NUS Resilience and Growth Innovation Challenge. BoP Hub has released five problem statements for participants to work on. All eligible NUS graduates

are welcome and encouraged to work with the JISSI to submit group proposals. Groups that clinch the grant will receive up to SGD50,000, with each member receiving a monthly stipend of SGD1,200.

Through this collaboration, NUS Enterprise and BoP Hub will provide:



Mentorship, incubation support and resources to scale and grow social projects and start-ups initiated or formed by members of the NUS community.



Multidisciplinary programmes to help those from the NUS community take their first steps towards creating impact-driven enterprises.



Support for corporates with social impact objectives and Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) goals.



MAKE A DIFFERENCE, CHANGE OUR WORLD

The Philip Yeo Initiative (PYI) recently announced its seventh batch of PYI Associates for the Philip Yeo Innovation Fellows Programme 2020. The NUS Faculty of Engineering (FoE) and NUS Overseas Colleges (NOC) Silicon Valley (NCSV) alumnus Vishnu Saran is the first ever Philip Yeo Grant recipient to also bag the title of a PYI Associate.



“The Philip Yeo Grant has allowed me to interact with many ambitious and driven people, giving me the motivation to keep going harder despite any obstacles I face in this tough and arduous entrepreneurial journey I have chosen.”

- Vishnu Saran

Vishnu embarked on his entrepreneurial journey in January 2018, when he flew to Silicon Valley as part of the NOC programme. Here, Vishnu was given the opportunity to intern at Nelumbo Inc – a California-based start-up - while taking up modules at Stanford University. The NOC programme exposes

NUS students to the breadth of the entrepreneurial scene of notable start-up cities around the world, providing opportunities to both intern at a local start-up while receiving an entrepreneurship-centred education at partner overseas universities for up to two semesters.

As a recipient of the Philip Yeo Grant, which grant awardees up to SGD5,000, Vishnu was able to enhance his NOC experience by taking part in several paid networking events, hackathons and conferences during his stint in NOC Silicon Valley. He fondly recounts that attending a TechCrunch conference in Silicon Valley – where he met many inspiring and like-minded entrepreneurs with whom he is still in touch with – was one of his most memorable NOC experiences. As a recipient of the coveted Philip Yeo Grant, upon returning to Singapore, Vishnu also received the exclusive opportunity to meet with Mr Philip Yeo and the larger PYI Community to network and learn from one another. Reflecting on the opportunities he was able to pursue as a result of the grant, Vishnu remarks that its most rewarding gift is the connections he was able to forge within the entrepreneurial ecosystem.

The Philip Yeo Initiative (PYI) is a ground-up movement, administered by the National University of Singapore, to honour Mr Philip Yeo's contributions and to create an organised platform for him to continue to do what he does best – develop people and talent. Encapsulated by the tagline “Make A Difference, Change Our World”, PYI has two focal programmes – the Philip Yeo Innovation Fellows Programme and the Philip Yeo Grant.



“A key takeaway from my discussion with Mr Philip Yeo is that we should always invest time and energy knowing what our passion and purpose is, as that is what truly drives one to achieve great things.”

To find out how you could be a part of this community, visit:

- www.philipyeoinitiative.sg
- <https://www.facebook.com/PhilipYeoInitiative>
- <https://www.instagram.com/philipyeoinitiative/>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/philipyeoinitiative/>

The Philip Yeo Grant is one of the many awards and scholarships offered by NUS Overseas Colleges (NOC). Check out other awards such as Jane Sun & John Wu Sunshine Award, Young Technopreneur Award (YTA) and many more: bit.ly/NOCAwards



A PITCH NIGHT TO REMEMBER!

The close of October saw great news for Team Vide, ConcreteAI and HomePal - the top three teams of N-House's¹ illustrious Pitch Night. They were among ten finalist teams who were shortlisted to pitch their solutions at the Zoom event, to a panel of esteemed judges, fellow presenters and remote viewers.

As N-House's signature event, the goal of Pitch Night is to nurture student entrepreneurs by providing an opportunity for them to pitch their start-up ideas, receive valuable feedback from expert judges and stand a chance to receive support from NUS Enterprise to fast-track their projects. What is unique about N-House's Pitch Night is its emphasis on "idea creation" as opposed to being a showcase for already-refined solutions. As such, the event is open and favourable to budding, young teams with a vision and in search of professional advice to get them started.

This year, Pitch Night featured a notable judging panel that comprised industry-experts Lauren Teo (Associate, Cocoon Capital), Kristav Childress (Mentor-in-Residence, NUS Enterprise) and Goh Yiping (Partner at Quest Ventures).

Teams were selected based on how well the problem-need was articulated, the effectiveness of the proposed solution, its competitive advantage, the proposed business model, and the quality of the pitch, among other criteria. Out of the ten teams that took part, three managed to stand out and impress.

¹ N-House is the NOC-managed entrepreneurship-themed residence in NUS that is aimed at harnessing the entrepreneurial spirit of NOC alumni to foster a vibrant community of student entrepreneurs.

{ 1st Place: Team Vide }



⬆ (Clockwise from Top L) Tiffany Lee (Biomedical Engineering, Y4, NCST), Yeoh Ze Yong (Environmental Engineering, Y4, NCST, N-House Resident), Fionna Chew (Data Science & Analytics, Y4, NCST) and Joel Loong (Computer Science, Y3, NCST) of Team Vide.

Vide's Pitch Story

The spark for Vide was first ignited when Tiffany, Fionna, Joel and Ze Yong were in Stockholm, under the NUS Overseas College (NOC) programme. During a late-night Zoom call, the foursome found themselves on the topic of expensive shipping fees and the inconvenience that follows. Overhearing their conversation, Tiffany's sister joined in and shared about her experience with group-ordering K-pop merchandise, where fans pooled their orders to split the costly shipping fee.

Despite its good intentions, she explained the hassle that the ordering system afforded, including having to fill in forms and regularly track emails from Group Order Managers. Having been introduced to this fan-created system of group-ordering and seeing room for its improvement, the team birthed Vide, a group-order marketplace that provides fans a seamless and hassle-free means of group-ordering merchandise online.

As Pitch Night champion, Vide was awarded SGD20,000 Google Cloud for Startup Credits, one semester of permanent space in The Hangar as well as a free one-hour UI/UX consultation session with Reassemble, a Singapore-based UX design consultancy. The team is currently in the process of developing its platform and is working towards a beta-launch by year-end.

Stay tuned to Vide's developments:



https://www.vide.sg/?utm_source=nus&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=nhouse_pitchnight



https://twitter.com/Vide_SG



<https://www.linkedin.com/company/vide-sg>



ConcreteAI's Pitch Story

ConcreteAI was birthed at a hackathon attended by two of its members, Peter and Isaac, during the NOC Israel programme. There, the challenge statement they tackled was on designing a new generation of concrete sensors for the construction industry. This issue was brought to light by a couple of large construction firms who stated that the current concrete sensors fall below standard despite their large market need.

Seeing the gap in the market and the opportunity it presented, Peter and Isaac roped in Qingyang and Xi Yi to help further their vision of empowering the construction sector with better Internet of Things (IoT) solutions. Specifically, the team aims to shorten the construction cycle, reduce the amount of concrete used purely for testing, and increase overall productivity in the construction sector. They strive to do this via an AI powered sensor that is embedded in a concrete structure to measure the early age development of in-situ concrete strength directly from the jobsite in real-time, therefore reducing manpower usage and improving productivity.

{ 2nd Place: Team ConcreteAI }



As first runner up, Team ConcreteAI is entitled to a free one-hour UI/UX consultation with Reassemble to further develop and refine its solution. The team launched the first iteration of its Market Value Proposition (MVP) in December and looks forward to conducting trials with some of its potential customers.

[Clockwise from Top L] Chang Qingyang (Civil Engineering & IDP, Y4, NCIS), Ooi Xi Yi (Computer Engineering & IDP, Y4), Peter Lim Yun Han (Material Science Engineering & IDP, Y4, NCIS, N-House Resident) and Isaac Siow (Civil Engineering & IDP, Y4, NCIS) of Team ConcreteAI.

{ 3rd Place: Team HomePal }



HomePal's Pitch Story

Falls are the leading cause of hospitalisation among the elderly, with almost one in three reporting to have fallen in their homes in 2019. Addressing the dire need to ensure the safety of the elderly is HomePal, a digital friend that aims to improve the quality of life of the elderly. HomePal does this via a privacy-protected home system that identifies falls and enables early response by alerting caretakers first-hand if anything is amiss.

The team comprising Hong Wei, Jia Wen, Hoi Bing, Geneve and De Jun initially banded together in September to tackle Housing Development Board (HDB)'s Cool Idea Hack 2020, a hackathon organised by HDB and StartupX, an innovation, venture and start-up enabler, to improve the former's living spaces.

Since then, with the support of various mentors from both N-House and StartupX, the team has managed to

[Clockwise from Top L] Kor Jia Wen (Materials Science & Engineering & IDP, Y4, NCSG), Tan De Jun (Industrial & Systems Engineering, Y3, NCSG), Geneve Chua Zhi Qi (Food Science and Technology, Y4, NCSG), Chen Hong Wei (Mechanical Engineering, Y4, NCSG) and Lai Hoi Bing (Industrial Design, Y4, NCBJ) of Team HomePal. All of them are N-House residents.

refine its business model and link up with several interested partners. Emerging as one of the hackathon's top 12 teams and having clinched third place at Pitch Night, HomePal has received positive responses from eldercare facilities to testbed the solution. The team now has its eyes set on building its MVP, to successfully bring HomePal out into the market.

Keep updated on HomePal's developments here:

<http://bit.ly/home-pal>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/homepalsg/>

homepalsg@gmail.com

2020 IN REVIEW

2 020 was dominated by COVID-19, with the pandemic pushing healthcare systems to the brink, grinding the global economy to a halt, and ending the lives of more than 1.5M people around the world. But crisis yields opportunity, and our community rose to the occasion to quickly develop and deploy new solutions addressing multiple aspects of the pandemic.

Here are just a few of the stories which made headlines over the year:

➔ GRIP and NOC alum start-up Breathonix developed a 60-second breath analyser that can detect the presence of COVID-19 in just a minute.

➔ Two research teams at NUS revealed three swab designs that can be manufactured locally via injection moulding or 3D printing in high volumes and at low cost.

➔ The Ministry of Health (MOH) deployed former incubatee Biofourmis' platform to remotely monitor the health of COVID-19 patients.

➔ NOC alum start-up Seventh Sense AI developed AI-driven facial recognition and fever detection solutions that have been deployed in Singapore's shopping malls and healthcare facilities, eliminating the need for manual screenings.

➔ StaffAny, an NOC alum start-up and BLOCK71 Singapore incubatee, launched the CICO (Clock-In, Clock-Out) Global app to help companies in the Asia Pacific region re-open safely and efficiently as lockdowns were gradually lifted.

January



Singapore President Mdm Yacob ➔ visits BLOCK71 Yogyakarta

☑ NUS Enterprise entrepreneurs lunch with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

February



☑ All NOC students recalled to Singapore due to COVID-19 pandemic

March



NUS launches Resilience & ➔ Growth Initiative

April

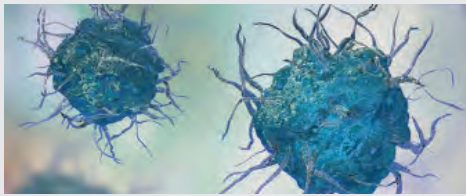
☑ BLOCK71 Bandung incubatee Cashlez IPOs in Indonesia

May

ICE71 holds Demo Day for ➔ Accelerate Cohort 4

June

July



📌 NUS spin-off Nkarta IPOs on the NASDAQ

August



NUS Enterprise partners with Enterprise Singapore for Venture Building Programme

September



📌 KIMIA wins local James Dyson Award

October



Opening of BLOCK71 Saigon 📌

November



📌 BeeX wins PIER71 Smart Port Challenge 2020

NUS GRIP Run 4 Lift-Off Day held 📌

December

Top Funding Deals Amongst NUS Enterprise and NUS Industry Liaison Office Start-Ups in 2020

USD
290M

Nkarta (IPO)

USD
104M

Unum Therapeutics
(Private Placement)

USD
110M

Carro (Debt Financing &
Equity Funding)

USD
100M

Biofourmis
(Series C)

USD
108M

Cogent Biosciences (fka
Unum Therapeutics);
(Upsized Underwritten
Public Offering)

**based on public news sources*

The Year in Numbers

13 IPOs, mergers
or acquisitions



> SGD1.75B secured in publicly
disclosed funding by
our start-ups & spin-offs
(including exits, grants,
competitions, etc.)

NEWSFEED



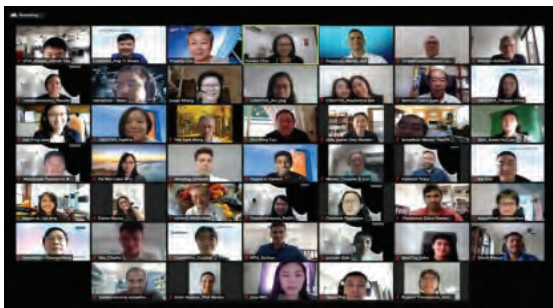
↑ In October, The Hangar received a visit from Minister for Education Lawrence Wong and Ministers of State Sun Xueling and Gan Siow Huang. Hosted by senior leaders from NUS, the delegation was introduced to our various I&E initiatives and had the opportunity to meet with start-ups BeeX, Polybee, Breathonix, Roceso and Yonah.



📌 GRIP graduate and NOC alum company Breathonix revealed its 60-second breath test for COVID-19 in October. A pilot clinical trial of the test involving 180 patients achieved over 90% accuracy with sensitivity of 93% and specificity of 95%. The groundbreaking technology, believed to be the first in Asia, has huge potential to aid in mass screening for COVID-19 given its ease-of-use and real-time results.



📌 In October, NUS spin-off and NOC alum company Stratificare beat out 788 other applicants from 650 universities and 63 countries to win the inaugural DBS Foundation Social Impact Prize at the Lee Kuan Yew Global Business Plan Competition. The company was recognised for its work in creating the world's first severe dengue prediction test.



↑ In November, 19 teams showcased their technology commercialisation learning journeys at the Lean LaunchPad NUS Run 8 e-Final Presentation Day. The event was the culmination of the latest run of the 10-week programme, which aims to develop technopreneurial talent to drive innovation and enterprise.



↑ In December, 6 Korean start-ups from Seoul graduated from our NUS Enterprise Market Immersion Programme 2020, following 8 weeks of virtual incubation.

FLASH BACK



NUS ENTERPRISE EVENTS & ACTIVITIES: OCT - DEC 2020

Stay updated on our upcoming events at: enterprise.nus.edu.sg/events

OCT

- 01** GRIP Run 5 Info and Founder session with Aurorafood
- 01** ICE71 X BHA2020 Webcast: Hunting Cheese in Pandemic Pandemonium
- 02** SIA AppChallenge Startup Category Finale
- 05** PIER71 Explore: Round the Block with BLOCK71
- 07** Kopi Chat Da Bao with Dr Feng Mengling, FathomX
- 07** ICE71 X GovWare Focus 2020
- 08** PIER71 Explore: Fundraising for Maritime Innovation
- 12** PIER71 Explore: Introduction to NUS Tech
- 14-16** BLOCK71 Saigon Soft Launch Activities
- 15** PIER71 Explore: IP and Legal Framework
- 20** GRIP Make Final Pitch ICE71 X Right Hand
- 21** Cybersecurity Panel: The Front Lines
- 22** PIER71 Explore: Steering through Storms - How to emerge stronger in cises
- 26** PIER71 Explore: Intro to Accreditation · SG
- 27** Phoenix Webinar: Making sense post 2020 (Preparedness for Better Days Ahead)
- 28-29** NUS Enterprise Virtual Office Hours
- 29** PIER71 Explore: Ways of Working with Corporates
- 31** Negotiation with an Impact Workshop with Anuj Jagannathan

NOV

- 02-03** LLP Run 8 - Final Presentation Day
- 04** Kopi Chat Da Bao with NextBillion.AI
- 05** PIER71 Explore: Get Noticed - Marketing Best Practices
- 12** Kopi Chat Deep Dive - IOT in Smart Cities
- 13** PIER71 SPC2020 Closed Door Judging
- 17** PIER71 SPC2020 Grand Final
- 17-20** Inno^X Jogja 2020
- 19** Startup Hack Bootcamp by Scape and AWS
- 20** Jack and the Beanstalk: Rethinking Social Innovation for Optimal Impact
- 26** NUS-BOP HUB MOU Signing
- 27** #FridayLearnings Episode 2 with Sanchita RayL User Research for Product Design

DEC

- 01** Venture Building Run 2 Sharing Session
- 07** Future of Food - Alternative Protein
- 07-11** SWITCH / SLINGSHOT
- 08** NUS Venture Building Programme Sharing Session
- 09** Kopi Chat Da Bao
- 09** BLOCK71 Saigon Kopi Chat
- 10** PIER71 Year End Social
- 10** Path to Private Exchange Listing
- 16** NUS GRIP Run 4 Lift-Off Day
- 26** Founders' Spotlight 4



USEFUL
TINDER

BUILDING A HYPER LOCAL START-UP IN THE MAPPING INDUSTRY

Google Maps revolutionised the mapping landscape with the iPhone and became the gold standard for digital mapping more than a decade ago. Having been part of that team, and subsequently leading intrapreneurship at Grab, Ajay Bulusu was well-equipped to co-found NextBillion.AI, a B2B start-up which creates customised mapping ecosystems for companies.

On 4 November, we invited Ajay to speak on entrepreneurship and how AI can be applied to the mobility sector. Here are 5 key takeaways:

1

“The map gets stained the minute you make it.”

Mapping is highly complex as maps change dynamically due to events like road repairs and accidents. Hyper local mapping is even more specialised as it focuses on a particular location and vehicle type. For instance, food delivery services in Singapore’s CBD (Central Business District) only travel on footpaths or sidewalks—requiring a unique mapping model that can accurately predict estimated times of arrival.

2

“All geospatial AI requires is anonymised data from phones.”

A model is then built and data is placed on an open source API (Application Programming Interface) to provide a customised browsing or navigation system. While the use of API is commonplace, NextBillion.AI was the first to put out a large mapping ecosystem for large enterprises on their cloud.

3

“Entrepreneurship requires good timing, balance and humility.”

Timing is important as an industry needs to reach a certain level of maturity for a good product-market fit. Loved ones and key stakeholders in your life also need to understand that a significant amount of your time would be devoted to the start-up.

Moreover, a good balance of skill sets has to be present in the co-founding team as well.

4

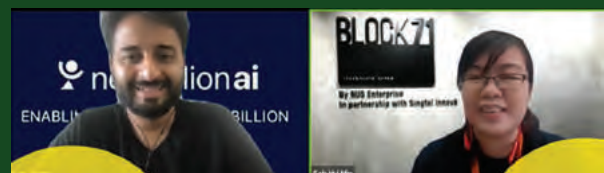
“Scaling across countries requires sufficient understanding of the selling process.”

It is crucial to understand cultural nuances and requirements of the selling process. For instance, in India SAAS has not been widely adopted and there are significantly lower numbers of searches for the term “software” than in the US. Thus, placing ads on Google and LinkedIn in India would not provide leads.

5

“Sharing your geo-information is not all bad.”

Geo-privacy is one of the biggest concerns about using AI in the geospatial industry. While Ajay understands concerns regarding location tracking and ethical uses of data, he highlights that a lot of contextual advertisements and offers for nearby events are curated based on where the device is located, providing more relevance for users.



📺 Ajay Bulusu, NextBillion.AI (L) with Soh Hui Min, NUS Enterprise (R).