To Alumni or Not?

Should you join your university alumni after graduation? Read on to decide.

By Low Lin Fhoong

Connections, connections, connections. Our frenetically-paced world is all about connections these days. Be it mobile phones, the Internet, networking with business associates, or keeping in touch with your loved ones, it certainly pays to be connected.

And one good way to stay in touch is through your university alumni. The National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), and Singapore Management University (SMU) are three local institutions with their own alumni and clubs.

National University of Singapore

Every NUS graduate who has studied at least one semester qualifies automatically for the alumni — no registration or membership fees are required. Alumni privileges include the AlumNUS Card, a privilege card offering a range of benefits and discounts at participating merchants, and AlumMAIL, a complimentary lifelong email account that allows you to stay in touch with your university pals. Alumni can also be updated on the latest happenings and developments in NUS via the AlumNET website and the quarterly publication, AlumNUS magazine. To keep overseas alumni in the loop on what’s happening in Singapore, the Alumni e-Community allows them to stay connected through the e-groups, forums, e-Library portals, and alumni directory. For those looking to support a worthy cause, NUS Alumni debit and credit card services, which are partnered with DBS and Standard Chartered Bank, will channel a percentage of card spending into financial support schemes for NUS students.

For an all-rounded alumni experience, join the National University of Singapore Society (NUSS), the oldest and largest local alumni organisation. Illustrious names like Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong count among its 12,000-strong membership. Besides opening doors for its members, the NUSS also boasts the biggest number of clubhouses among the three alumni – Kent Ridge Guild House, Suntec City Guild House, and Adam Park Guild House. Facilities at the clubhouses run the gamut from swimming pools, restaurants to jackpot rooms. NUSS’ calendar of event and activities also includes yoga classes, kids’ chess competition, diamond appreciation sessions and wealth management talks.

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Nanyang Technological University

On the other hand, NTU's Alumni Club incorporates graduates from NTU, National Institute of Education (NIE), NUS and international universities. The 3,000-member club recently underwent a revamp, with a new clubhouse located at one-north, Buona Vista. The spanking new nine-storey building houses facilities like restaurants, conference rooms, ballrooms, a swimming pool, gym & wellness centre, tennis courts and even a childcare centre. One unique feature of the clubhouse is the Aspara Garden Spa – an open concept, garden spa (the first in Singapore) with pavilions and an outdoor Jacuzzi set in lush greenery.

Looking to be an entrepreneur? The Business Incubation Centre has five business suites for young entrepreneurs and tech entrepreneurs to build and nurture their businesses. For those who need more help, the monthly Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Clinic features guest speakers who will provide advice on starting up your own business, identify and evaluate problems in management, banking and finance, and help solve issues like time management and setting goals. Besides talking shop at events and networking sessions, alumni members can unwind at weekly social dance nights, join the photography clinic, or immerse in the Peranakan experience with trips to Malacca.

Singapore Management University

Given SMU’s newness to the scene, its alumni association was only set up in 2005. However, its city location certainly makes it attractive to its alumni. All graduates awarded with an undergraduate or postgraduate degree(s) from SMU are eligible to apply for the SMU Alumni Association (SMUAA) Ordinary membership. Two membership plans are available to SMU Alumni: Silver and Gold at affordable rates. Members can use facilities like the gym, swimming pool, library and enjoy discounted parking rates. Fresh graduates will be provided career services support for a year. This includes access to OnTRAC, its online career portal and invitations to job opportunities from SMU’s business partners. Alumni members can also catch up on quarterly get-togethers, network and build industry contacts at events, learn new skills at professional development courses and relax at movie screenings, overseas trips and sports activities. As with all alma mater, the university’s SMU Alumni Scholarship Fund aims to provide at least one scholarship to aid a student with his studies each year.
Harry Foo
Professional stage emcee & entertainer with events management company, EVO Communications

NTU alumni member Harry Foo, 36, joined the alumni club after graduating from the Civil & Structural Engineering faculty in 1996. “One of the main reasons I joined the alumni club was because I want to maintain ties with NTU and its alumni members.” In particular, he wanted to keep in touch with his engineering course mates as he developed a “special sense of belonging” after having served as the president of the Civil & Structural Engineering Club in his third year.”

Besides allowing him to meet with new and old friends, joining the alumni has provided many business opportunities, with alumni members linking him to their corporate events and projects. Career opportunities abound as well, as Harry recalls, “I was awarded a scholarship by EDB & NTU to pursue a Technopreneurship & Innovation Program (TIP) in 2005. The programme was designed to train entrepreneurs in biotechnology startups, and it included a six-week immersion in Seattle, where I won the 1st prize of $15,000 in the Seattle Business Plan Competition. The prize money really came in handy for my fun and unforgettable wedding ceremony at the famous Wedding Chapel on The Riviera, in Las Vegas. With the TIP experience as a springboard, I am now about to launch my own biotechnology firm, making it my second business venture.”

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<tr>
<th>UNIVERSITY ALUMNUS</th>
<th>FEES</th>
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<tr>
<td>NTU Alumni Club</td>
<td>Entrance Fee: Ordinary membership: $800 Associate membership: $1,200 Monthly Subscription: $80 (principal member), $10 (spouse member) • The alumni club membership is a life membership. • Applicants can choose to pay the entrance fee in full or by a 12-mth interest-free instalment plan (NTU Alumni Club – OCBC Platinum Card)</td>
<td>• Car park • Yunnan Garden Chinese Restaurant • 8th Degree Restaurant &amp; Lounge • Alumni Ballroom • Integrated Family Fun Pool • Tennis Courts • Aspara Garden Spa • Gym &amp; Wellness Centre • Multi-purpose Hall • TV Room &amp; Reading Room • Conference &amp; Meeting Rooms • Agape Infant / Child Care &amp; Enrichment Centre • Business Incubation Centre</td>
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<td>NUS Society</td>
<td>Entrance Fee: $3,000 (for Ordinary and Associate Membership) Monthly Subscription: $47.25 • NUSS Ordinary Members are eligible for the NUSS DBS Platinum Credit card membership card (terms and conditions apply) with annual card fee waiver for as long as they remain members.</td>
<td>Kent Ridge Guild House: • The Bistro • The Bar • The Terrace • The K Room • The iPortal • Function Rooms • Jackpot Room • The Play Room • Swimming Pool • Tennis Courts • Fitness Facility</td>
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<td>SMU Alumni Association</td>
<td>One-time Admin Fee: Silver Membership: $5 Gold Membership: $30 Annual Membership Fee: Silver: $20 Gold: $120</td>
<td>Adam Park Guild House: • Restaurant &amp; Bar • Fruit Machine Room • SMU Gymnasium • Rooftop Swimming Pool • Sauna • Sports Halls • Li Ka Shing Library • Seminar Rooms • Preferential Parking Rates • Wireless Internet Access</td>
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