

# GRADUATE STUDIES NEWSLETTER

BY THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Issue 1 - September 2021

## MESSAGE FROM SUTD PROVOST

BY PROFESSOR PHOON KOK KWANG

### Greetings to our SUTD Community!

I am very pleased to share my thoughts and some plans ahead in this inaugural issue of the SUTD Graduate Studies Newsletter.

SUTD was founded in 2009 as a distinctive niche university to advance knowledge and nurture technically grounded leaders and innovators to serve societal needs. We are proud to attract a diverse and dynamic group of students, both undergraduates and graduates, who share our can-do spirit of solving complex real-world challenges with a unique blending of disciplines, and a shared purpose to apply our talent to contribute to A Better World by Design.



We are living in interesting times. Many of us are working from home. Many of us have not travelled for more than one year. Some of us have not seen our loved ones for close to two years. Nonetheless, the challenge is not adapting to the pandemic as it will surely go away eventually. The challenge is that the pandemic has accelerated the pace of technological innovations and applications that is re-defining the way we live, work, and learn and perhaps more fundamentally, questioning the meaning of what is human. Some say that we are at the threshold of a second Renaissance. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned in its latest report that prolonged warming beyond 1.5C could produce "progressively serious, centuries' long and, in some cases, irreversible consequences". We are living in interesting times, because the stakes are high. The future can be very good or very bad, but each and every one of us acting in concert for a better world can tilt the balance towards a future that is more sustainable and just. After all, our innovations are centred on human needs and our actions are driven by our values.

SUTD faculty members and graduate students constitute a creative force for good through what we do for research and education and through our substantive engagement with many like-minded partners that share our mission. I am heartened to see many of you working passionately to contribute to a better future. The University and the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) are working as hard to support you so that you can pursue your big ideas that will benefit society. We build the launchpad for you to shoot for the moon.

We would like to share two exciting initiatives that are coming your way. One, SUTD has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with NUS to collaborate in the areas of innovation and enterprise. We are exploring with NUS to establish a joint research Commercialisation and Venture Creation Programme for graduate students and researchers from SUTD and NUS to collaborate together. Two, the University will be launching our SUTD Sustainability Plan that articulates an exciting vision on how we can: (1) nurture leaders that will act and harness the collective will of the community to act, and (2) co-create impactful and lasting solutions with an alliance of partners in support of the Singapore Green Plan and the larger UN Sustainable Development Goals. We will be sharing more details with you in the near future. We will be inviting all of you to a fireside chat "Conversation on SUTD Sustainability Plan" to invite your inputs and participation.

Stay healthy, stay safe and I wish you all the best!

# FOREWORD

BY PROFESSOR ASHRAF KASSIM,  
ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR GRADUATE STUDIES



## Greetings from the Office of Graduate Studies!

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Graduate Studies Newsletter.

It is my pleasure to introduce our new newsletter, which will serve as a platform to help SUTD graduate students stay connected, get to know each other better, and be kept informed of relevant events & developments.

Our graduate programmes play a pivotal role in SUTD's focus as a specialised and research-intensive university with a multi-disciplinary human-centric and design-focused curriculum. SUTD graduate students play an essential role in contributing to the goal of making "A Better World by Design" through solving critical real-world challenges and pushing forward the frontiers of Science & Technology.

Graduate education in SUTD began in 2011 with the launch of the MIT-SUTD Dual Masters programme. Today we have currently over 500 active graduate students in 10 graduate programmes and over 620 alumni who are making an impact in their chosen professions and helping to make the world a better place.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about many challenges, but has given us time to pause, reflect, and discover more meaningful goals to pursue for ourselves and for the community. The SUTD community of students, staff and faculty have been adapting well. We at the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) will continue to work together with you to ensure a safe, supportive, and enjoyable environment for all graduate students to fulfil your aspirations. Let us all stay safe, support each other, and continue to build a community that we will be proud of.

We hope that you will find the Graduate Studies Newsletter to be informative and interesting. Feedback, suggestions and contributions to improve the newsletter are most welcome (please send them to [gradoffice@sutd.edu.sg](mailto:gradoffice@sutd.edu.sg)).

Keep healthy and stay tuned for more exciting content in the upcoming issues.

Wishing you all the best!

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## Stay Connected with Us!

 [SUTD.edu.sg/Admissions/Graduate](https://SUTD.edu.sg/Admissions/Graduate)

 @SUTDGrad

 SUTDGSA

 SUTD

 [gradoffice@sutd.edu.sg](mailto:gradoffice@sutd.edu.sg)

## STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT



*In this issue, we chat with Srilalitha Gopalakrishnan, a PhD Student from the Architecture and Sustainable Design (ASD) Pillar who was recently elected as President of the Singapore Institute of Landscape Architects (SILA).*



### **Please tell us about yourself**

I am a landscape architect with over 15 years of professional experience with diverse projects across Singapore, Malaysia, China, Hong Kong, and India. I have worked with Tierra Design in Singapore for over 11 years, winning several accolades for many of my projects. In 2013, my project, Park Royal-on-Pickering, swept the top design awards in Singapore, winning the President's Award for Design of the Year. My strong belief in integrated landscape design as an effective solution for sustainable high-density urban environments motivated me to pursue a PhD in Architecture and Sustainable Design at the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD). Under the guidance and supervision of Professor Thomas Schroepfer, my research focuses on the increased benefits of integrated landscape design in high-density urban environments and the development of strategies towards evidence-based design practice for economically and socially sustainable urban design solutions. I have been serving on the Council of the Singapore Institute of Landscape Architects (SILA) under various executive roles since 2012 and was recently elected as President for the 2021 - 2023 term.

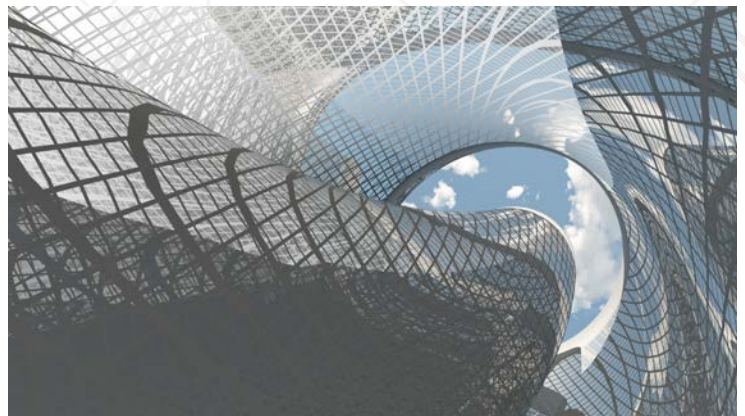


### **Could you share with us your roles and responsibilities as the President of SILA ?**

The President's role involves taking the profession forward towards the Institute's visions and working closely with the Council to address the professional interests of the members. I chair SILA's Leadership in Design Strategic Pillar to create and promote the integration of urban environments and complex natural systems through responsible, innovative, and resilient designs. In addition, I also represent SILA at various national level committees and strategic planning groups.

### **How would you describe your SUTD experience?**

SUTD's PhD programme provided me with a platform to explore the possibilities of how the arts and science of landscape architecture can converge and diversify into a sea of opportunities. What I enjoyed the most is the collaborative approach between the different pillars, where individual research becomes part of a more extensive multi-disciplinary study. It allowed me to understand and explore new perspectives for analysis and find new overlaps in urban studies. Besides gaining new skills and insights from the academic perspective, I have also gained rich insights on leadership, teamwork, communication, and collaboration, which are essential for my new role as the President of SILA.



### **What are your career goals / future plans ?**

I look forward to combining my rich practice experience of over 15 years with the systematic and analytical research skills gained during my PhD programme towards innovative urban research studies applicable for future planning and designing high-density sustainable, and liveable cities. I also aspire to contribute towards building the future generation of professionals by mentoring and sharing the valuable insights gained from my rich practice experience and extending my research explorations into applied design methodologies. Finally, I hope to continue contributing to raising the quality and standards of the landscape architecture profession through SILA and being an integral part of the sustainable and resilient Singapore journey. 🙌

*In this issue, we catch up with Dr Shane Kyi, a PhD (EPD) Graduate, September 2020 who is currently a Research Fellow at the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD).*



### **Please tell us about yourself**

My name is Shane Kyi, a Research Fellow working in the Aerial Innovation Research (AIR) Lab at SUTD led by Professor Foong Shaohui. I have a long history with SUTD. I was from the pioneer batch of EPD undergraduate students when SUTD started its curriculum back in 2012. Upon graduation in 2015, I went to work at HOPE Technik for a year before deciding to pursue a PhD and dive into the world of scientific research. Fast forward 4 years, I completed my research work and earned myself a round hat. However, I felt that there was much more to continue exploring in this research field which led myself joining SUTD as a research fellow in the same Research Lab.

### **Share with us your roles and responsibilities in your current employment and what do you hope to achieve?**

In postdoctoral positions, researchers function more independently as compared to being a PhD student. Researchers conduct highly specialized and advanced experiments, publishing results in well reputed scientific journals and conferences. Grant proposal writing, networking and liaising directly with funding agencies are also part of the job scope.

I would love to publish my new research in high impact research journals, gain experience on grant proposal writing, and find ways to use the new technologies that my colleagues and I had developed in real world applications.

### **How has SUTD PhD Programme prepared you for your career?**

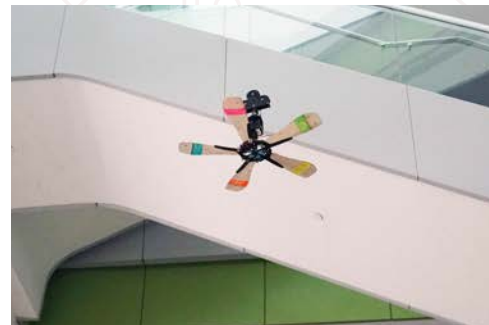
SUTD PhD Programme has equipped me well for my current role. The experience of PhD students largely depends on the mentorship they were given. In SUTD, there are a lot of really good and caring Professors. It also provided me with adequate international exposure during my exchange in Aalto University (although it was unfortunately shortened due to the pandemic) and various international conferences that I had the chance to attend.

### **How would you describe your SUTD experience?**

SUTD has a unique edge on empowering and promoting resourcefulness, self-learning and entrepreneurship. The labs are very well equipped to conduct research. My most memorable experience of SUTD is with its people. SUTD comprises of very knowledgeable and caring faculty, friendly admin staff, and resourceful students.

### **What are your career goals / future plans?**

I wish to bring the research and technologies that I have been working on to real world applications and solve real world problems. For example is the maple seed inspired “drone” devices that we have created. We hope that the devices will be able to tackle climate change problems that the world is facing today.



### **Any words of encouragement to SUTD graduate students?**

The Graduate student life can be tough for some, with the requirement to publish your research at reputable journals and conferences. In order to go through this experience, I believe consistency is key. Graduate students have to consistently put effort into research, network, and collaborate. Taking one step at a time, you will be part of a journey that will take you for miles. All the best! 🎓

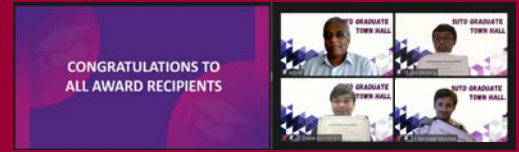


# EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



## GRADUATE TOWN HALL

The successful run of our first virtual Graduate Town Hall was held on 9th April 2021, bringing together members of the graduate community. We had the opportunity to celebrate graduate students' achievements and were given an insight to some of our graduate students' exciting journey in the past year. A series of Best Thesis Awards were also presented at the event to recognise exceptional work from Masters by Research & PhD graduate students and to encourage the highest levels of scholarship, inter-disciplinary research and innovation particularly in design practice & the social arena. Congratulations to all award winners!



## SUTD-SMU VIRTUAL POSTGRADUATE CAREER FAIR



The SUTD and SMU Virtual Postgraduate Career Fair (Industry 4.0) took place from 5th May 2021 to 9th May 2021. The Career Fair was attended by over 100 participants from local universities where they interacted with different companies such as A\*STAR, Lazada and many more. There were more than 70 job opportunities; virtual interviews and live chats were also conducted on the virtual web platform.

This event was supported by the National Research Foundation (NRF), Singapore, and in collaboration with SUTD, SMU, and Economic Development Board (EDB).

### FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS:

“ Good Visibility of recruiters who are online and Information uploaded by companies ”

“ Able to access the portal anytime & from anywhere ”



## SUTD THREE MINUTE THESIS (3MT®) COMPETITION

The 3MT competition helps to focus students' research communication skills. In a 3MT competition, graduate students need to effectively explain their research in three minutes in a language and presentation style appropriate for a general audience. We are pleased to announce that the SUTD judging panel has selected the following Top Three Winners of the SUTD 3MT Competition who went on to represent SUTD at the Singapore 3MT Competition. We are also pleased to share that Sareh Vafakhah will represent SUTD at the UQ Asia-Pacific Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) Competition! Congratulations to all Winners and let us cheer on Sarah!



Sareh Vafakhah, EPD  
(SUTD People's Choice award)



Wong Yu Bing Yvonne, ASD



Samarakoon Mudiyanseleage Bhagya Prasangi Samarakoon, EPD

# GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

## BEST THESIS AWARD 2020



**OUTSTANDING THESIS AWARD**  
**WU WEIKANG**

Ph.D. thesis titled:  
Symmetry-Protected Novel Topological  
Semimetals/Metals

## DESIGN PRACTICE AWARD

### SHANE KYI HLA WIN

Ph.D. thesis titled  
Design, Development and Control of  
Samara-inspired Autorotating Wings for  
Aerial Payload Deployment



## INTER-DISCIPLINARY & SOCIAL INNOVATION AWARD

### BARNABÉ MONNOT

Ph.D. thesis titled  
Efficiency, Regret and Inequality in  
Decentralised Systems



## THANK YOU GSA EXCO 2020/2021!



Harry Lim



Ryann Sim



Yvonne Wong



Elif Aydin



Hitesh Bhardwaj



William Siew



Vishaka Weerasinghe

Throughout the years, the Graduate Student Association (GSA) has been playing a key role as representatives of the SUTD graduate student community, addressing their concerns and planning events to foster stronger bonds among graduate students who come from various backgrounds. In addition, the outgoing GSA EXCO 2020/2021 collaborated closely with the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) to launch several new initiatives including: "Dialogue sessions with SUTD faculty members", "Virtual Writing Room", "Virtual Runs" and "IG Meme Competition" which were well received by the community. A big THANK YOU to all the members of the GSA EXCO 2020/2021 for their hard work and contributions to the graduate community!

## GSA HAPPENINGS

### WELCOME THE NEW GSA EXCO!

The Office of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Student Association Exco 2020/2021 are excited to introduce

# GSA EXCO 2021/2022



- Event Director**  
Murali Krishnan
- Outreach Director**  
Rajesh Kumar
- Finance Director**  
Arturo Castillo
- President**  
Chadurvedi V
- Vice President**  
Kenny Ong
- General Secretary**  
Yangfeng Ding
- Academic Director**  
Thileepan Stalin
- Media Director**  
M Sougantika

Stay tuned for exciting initiatives coming your way!

Contact Us:  
[gsaexco@sutd.edu.sg](mailto:gsaexco@sutd.edu.sg)

## UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COURSES

Enrolment starts on 6 September 2021 via MyPortal - [myportal.sutd.edu.sg](http://myportal.sutd.edu.sg)

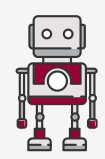
### PRESENTATION FOR IMPACT



This course covers the essentials of good presentation, techniques to design compelling presentations and speeches. Walk away with skills to plan and deliver presentations and speeches with more confidence and greater impact.

Contact us at [pdcourses@sutd.edu.sg](mailto:pdcourses@sutd.edu.sg)

### ROBOTICS FOR PROFESSIONALS



This course offers a hands-on experience at the intersection of machine learning, artificial intelligence, computer vision and control theory. It introduces the fundamentals of developing systems which can sense, plan and act in the world.



Scan to visit our website

## WELL-BEING TIPS

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected our lives one way or another. Keeping in touch and connected with the people we care about seems to be a significant topic in recent times, especially for international students who have chosen to pursue their Post-graduate journey at SUTD, Singapore. With more than a year into the "new normal", we have all become masters of the video call. Find out more ways in which you can connect with your loved ones around the world through our well-being tips below.

Explore the following ways to stay connected with one another.



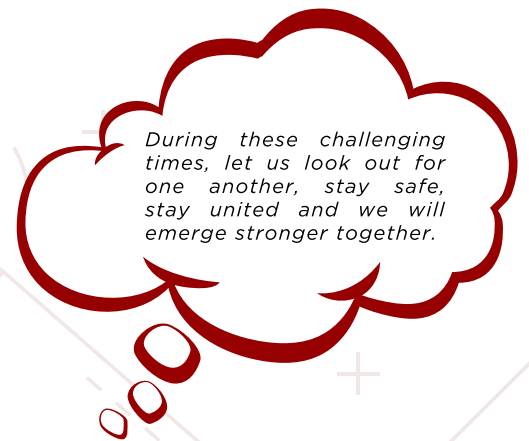
Suggested activities include:

"Host a Movie Night" - House Party, Netflix Party, Disney+ GroupWatch

"Set a Play Date" - Psych, Skribbl.io, Codenames, House Party, Spyfall

"Pledge to a Good Cause Together" - giving.sg, sgunited.gov.sg, redcross.sg, comchest.gov.sg

**Please be reminded to adhere to the safe distancing measures and current group size limit when carrying out the above activities.**



## OUR GRADUATE PROGRAMMES

### MASTERS



DUAL MASTERS IN NANO ELECTRONIC ENGINEERING & DESIGN



MASTER OF ENGINEERING IN INNOVATION BY DESIGN



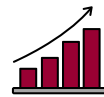
MASTER OF ENGINEERING (RESEARCH)



MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE



MASTER OF SCIENCE IN SECURITY BY DESIGN



MASTER OF SCIENCE IN URBAN SCIENCE, POLICY AND PLANNING

### Ph.D.



ENGINEERING DOCTORATE



SUTD - NUS JOINT PhD PROGRAMME



SUTD PhD



Email us at:

Master Programmes: [gradoffice@sutd.edu.sg](mailto:gradoffice@sutd.edu.sg)

Ph.D. Programmes: [phd@sutd.edu.sg](mailto:phd@sutd.edu.sg)

Stay tuned for more exciting content in the upcoming issues!