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Inter-University Network (IUN) - a collaborative platform for undergraduates to advocate for policy issues

IUN will prioritise mental well-being, support for vulnerable university students, employability, and environment and sustainability issues

An Inter-University Network (IUN), the first student union collaboration representing 65,000 students across five student unions¹, was launched today to advocate for issues faced by undergraduates. Under the IUN, student union leaders will recommend possible policy initiatives to the Government for consideration, facilitated by the National Youth Council (NYC). As a start, the IUN's priorities are to build better mental health support systems in Institutes of Higher Learning (IHLs), followed by support for vulnerable university students, employability concerns, and environment and sustainability issues. Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth & Ministry of Trade and Industry, Mr Alvin Tan highlighted this new initiative during the annual Inter-University Dialogue, *RejUvenation*.

Working together to improve mental health support

2. As its first initiative, the IUN will be working with clubs and interest groups in six universities² to understand common mental stressors experienced by undergraduates, existing prevention and intervention mental health support for students in their respective universities, and possible gaps in such support systems. The IUN will also be evaluating the impact of mental health stigma in attitudes and behaviours common to university students, such as delivering on commitments, hustle culture³ and help-seeking⁴. The findings from the inter-university collaboration, known as UCare, will be

¹ National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore Management University (SMU), Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), Yale-NUS College

² National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore Management University (SMU), Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS), Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT)

³ *Hustle Culture* is defined as an organisational culture where productivity, jobs, and working hard is prioritised over other aspects of being human, such as mental health, good relationships and happiness

⁴ *Help Seeking* is defined as the behaviour of energetically seeking help from the health care services or from trusted people in the community

shared with university administrations, government agencies, as well as undergraduate student leaders who have an interest in mental wellbeing issues. The IUN will propose recommendations in a written report and present their findings at a mental health forum later this year.

Deepening collaborations between student unions and strengthening youth leadership

3. The IUN also aims to foster knowledge sharing on student leadership between the student unions. This could include:

- a) Sharing with one another about successful collaborations with university management to advance goals of the student government and its constituents;
- b) Learning about different, yet effective, internal governance practices and processes among student union counterparts;
- c) Best practices in resolving campus-related issues undergraduates are prone to encounter, such as academics, accommodation, transport, and food options.

4. “I commend the student unions for coming together to support their peers more effectively by strengthening student networks, knowledge sharing across universities and building civic capacity. In the spirit of providing opportunities for youths to be heard, be empowered and be the change, the Inter-University Network will provide recommendations for the government to consider on issues that matter to youths, and the National Youth Council will facilitate the interface with government agencies,” said Mr David Chua, Chief Executive Officer of NYC (全国青年理事会总裁蔡大卫).

5. “The IUN provides an avenue for university undergraduates to partner with the government to co-create solutions for concerns we share. Coming together shows our commitment to advocate for youths and effect change, and will provide a unified youth voice for policy recommendations,” said Sarah Chua, President of SUTD Student Government 2022. -University Dialogue, *RejUvenation*. Appointment to IUN members.

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About the IUN

The Inter-University Network (IUN) is a network of youth representatives from NUS, NTU, SMU, SUTD, and Yale-NUS. They represent their respective student governments as well as the interests of the undergraduate populations that they lead and serve.

About the National Youth Council

At NYC, we believe in a world where young people are respected and heard, and have the ability to influence and make a difference to the world. Together with our partners, we develop future-ready youth who are committed to Singapore by instilling in them a heart for service, resilience and an enterprising spirit.

Factsheet about the Inter-University Network (IUN)

The Inter-University Network (IUN) is a network of youth representatives from NUS, NTU, SMU, SUTD, and Yale-NUS. They represent their respective student governments and the interests of the undergraduate populations that they lead and serve. Its objectives are two-fold:

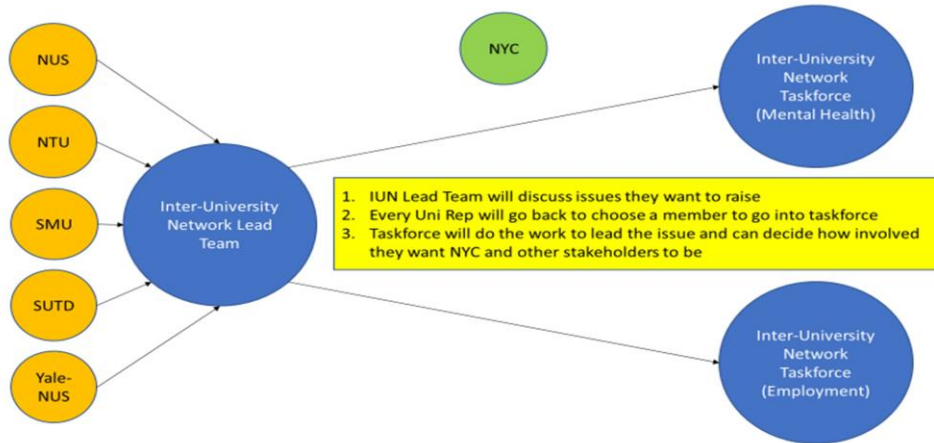
- 1) To foster knowledge sharing and management pertaining to student leadership, alongside collaboration between the student unions.
- 2) To advocate for a national focus on certain issues that impact the entire undergraduate and young adult population, by tapping on the strength of this collective entity of unions.

It is in this manner that the IUN brings the universities together, to represent, protect, and empower the interests for undergraduates and youths on a national level. With the support of the National Youth Council (NYC), the IUN aims to advocate for youth voices in government programmes and policies.

The aim of IUN will be primarily focused on knowledge management and national collaboration between universities as laid out in objectives (1) and (2).

- a. The key deliverables of the IUN will be to build on existing platforms of collaboration such as Inter-University Dialogue, which is currently executed on a rotational basis by a main AU (SMU -> NUS -> NTU -> SUTD).
- b. Each AU will also perform the duties of Honorary General Secretary, which include minute-taking and being the key liaison with NYC throughout each IUN cycle.
- c. They will focus on strategic partnerships and collaboration with youth organizations, including SUs.
- d. They will gather data on sentiments from the undergraduate student population in the AUs, guide and match each other to relevant resources or connections.
- e. They will submit policy papers and recommendations that are beneficial to the undergraduate population, when necessary.

NYC will support the IUN by providing insights to the government's direction and focus on national initiatives or multilateral university programmes. NYC will also assist in knowledge management and research, and partner the IUN to submit policy recommendations to relevant government agencies and stakeholders, when required. IUN members will be engaged on discussions on national issues and how it may affect youth.



A diagram of how the IUN would work with NYC, if convened for potential issues.

Profile of IUN Representatives

Ayyappan Madhumitha

Vice-President, Yale-NUS Student Government

“The Inter-University Network represents the pinnacle of youth leadership in Singapore. At Yale-NUS Student Government, we have continually advocated for the diverse interests of our student body. Through the IUN, I am excited to take our advocacy efforts a step further - to empower and amplify the voices of undergraduates all across Singapore.”



Madhu is Yale-NUS College’s representative for the Inter-Uni Network, while also serving as the Vice-President (Student Affairs) at the college’s Student Government (StuGov), where she oversees matters concerning wellness, equity & inclusion and academics. Before taking on her current role, she was also the Director of Wellness at StuGov.

Madhu is an Anthropology major who is also pursuing the Yale-NUS & Duke-NUS Liberal Arts and Medicine program, aspiring to become a neurologist in the future.

Denyse Tan Jia Wei

President, Yale-NUS Student Government

“The Inter-University Network (IUN) serves to empower youths to step up on causes that youth are passionate about, to make meaningful change in society. It is my hope that IUN can tap into existing support and partnerships with key ministries, industries, and stakeholders to collaborate and catalyse solutions for the future.”



Currently pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Urban Studies at Yale-NUS College, Denyse is the Yale-NUS Coordinator for the Inter-University Network (IUN) and President of the 8th Yale-NUS Student Government. As the co-founder of Afterhours Study, she aims to create accessible, inclusive and affordable co-studying spaces for students in Singapore. Her recent appointment as Country Representative for the ASEAN University Student Council (AUSCU) has expanded her regional knowledge by connecting with other ASEAN youth to exchange ideas and views.

V Dhanraj
President, NTUSU

“Considering that NTUSU has implemented initiatives targeting issues essential to undergraduates, such as equal opportunity education, mental health, transport, and food options, the IUN marks the next step – to drive policy change on a national level.

Hand-in-hand with other universities and the National Youth Council, we aim to champion interests and uplift outcomes for Singaporean undergraduates and the youth population at large.”

V Dhanraj is the NTU Coordinator for the Inter-University Network and concurrently serves as the President of the 31st Nanyang Technological University Students’ Union (NTUSU). A third-year Public Policy and Global Affairs student in Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Dhanraj recently completed an internship at the Emerging Markets Division (South Asia Desk) at the Ministry of Trade & Industry, Singapore. He is presently the Country Representative for the ASEAN University Students’ Network (AUSN) and was the Economy Spokesperson for Singapore at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Voices of the Future conference in 2021. He is also regularly involved in community service, including volunteering at Meet-the-People sessions since 2015.



Tanay Bharadwaja
Transport Policy Executive, NTUSU

“Collaborating with other student unions of the universities in Singapore will give NTUSU access to greater opportunities in inter-university events, and allow us to draw lessons and amplify strengths of the other student union bodies in Singapore, to better the student experience as a whole.”

Tanay is the NTU representative for the Inter-Uni Network and concurrently serves as the Transport Policy Executive in the 31st Executive Committee of the Nanyang Technological University Students’ Union (NTUSU). He oversees the feedback and improvement of the transport network in NTU, one of the key pillars of student policy in NTUSU. Tanay is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence at NTU’s School of Computer Science and Engineering, under the Public Service Commission (Engineering) Scholarship.



Lee Yat Bun
President, NUSSU

“There are issues I see within NUS that applies to all undergraduates and youths around Singapore. IUN serves as the opportune platform for student unions across Singapore to come together and tackle issues beyond the scope of their individual universities. Hopefully, through collaboration and a collective voice, we can do more things together.”



Lee Yat Bun is a sophomore at the National University of Singapore (NUS) School of Computing pursuing a Bachelor of Computing in Computer Science. In the University, he holds the appointment of President of the National University of Singapore Students' Union (NUSSU). Student welfare and representation are a few key areas he oversees. Previously, he was also the President of the NUS Students' Computing Club, a constituent club of NUSSU. Yat Bun is interested in the areas of Algorithm & Theory, Parallel Computing and Networking & Distributed Systems.

Sean Pang Kai Xiong
Policy Director, NUSSU

“The IUN will serve to harness the power of peers and collaborative learning, drawing from lessons across universities and student unions. We seek to deepen existing collaborations and jointly advocate for issues that youths are passionate about.”



Sean is the NUS representative for the Inter-Uni Network and also serves as the Policy Director at the National University of Singapore Students' Union (NUSSU), under the 43rd NUSSU EXCO. He oversees policy-related work, including the drafting, monitoring, conceptualisation and implementation of policies for the student body. Prior to University, he worked at the Milken Institute Asia Centre - a nonprofit, nonpartisan economic think tank.

Tan Jia Wei Sara
President, SMUSA

“Together with the various representatives in the IUN, we see the concerns youths face today as opportunities to create for tomorrow. With aims to lead the changes through knowledge-sharing and active engagement with the people we serve, SMUSA will provide our utmost support to this collaboration.”



Sara is a sophomore at the Singapore Management University (SMU)'s Lee Kong Chian School of Business pursuing a Bachelor of Business Management and President of SMU's Students' Association (SMUSA). She coordinates and oversees the department secretaries and constituent body presidents to ensure that the student life in SMU is vibrant.

Sara is interested in the areas of human resource management, finance, sustainability and sports.

Chan Juun Kit
Vice-President, SMUSA

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. This adage holds immense relevance to what the IUN stands for and what we hope to achieve. Together, we can achieve a greater impact for the benefit of the Singapore university population and beyond.”



Juun Kit is a sophomore at the Singapore Management University (SMU) pursuing a Bachelor of Social Sciences majoring in Politics, Law and Economics and Health Economics and Management. As Vice-President of the SMU Students' Association (SMUSA) he handles the internal affairs and the welfare of the members in SMUSA, and assists the President in the coordination and strategic direction of SMUSA.

Juun Kit is passionate about the subjects of history and politics and loves to read as a hobby.

Chua Yi Qi Sarah
10th President, SUTD ROOT

“The IUN provides an avenue for university undergraduates to partner with the government to co-create solutions for concerns we share. Coming together shows our commitment to advocate for youths and effect change, and will provide a unified youth voice for policy recommendations.”



Sarah is the SUTD Coordinator for the Inter-University Network (IUN) and President of the 10th SUTD Student Government (ROOT). She is a sophomore pursuing a degree in Design and Artificial Intelligence.

Motivated to bring happiness in the mundane school life, Sarah is inspired to lead activities that are invigorating to connect with others, especially in SUTD, a small and tight-knited community.

Sim Yu Hui Kellie
Vice-President (Operations), SUTD ROOT

“Through the IUN, undergraduate university student union leaders like myself will get a chance to advocate for other youths and create change for a better world. By learning from each other, our youth leaders will be able to amplify and improve outcomes for fellow youths across Singapore.”



Kellie is SUTD’s representative for the Inter-Uni Network and Vice President (Operations) in the 10th SUTD Student Government (ROOT). She oversees volunteerism and mental health efforts while coordinating internal ROOT affairs. Kellie is a sophomore on the SUTD-Duke-NUS Special Track pursuing a degree in Computer Science and Design.

Off campus, Kellie is involved in startups, having co-founded SAGE, a platform that aims to foster the sharing of experiences, and as a Software Developer in Kura Kura, a journaling app that supports youth in their self-awareness journey. She also recently joined YCS’ Project Re:Ground as a Community Peer Supporter.