

are recording

well thanks for the introduction dr uh lucas i thank you for sending us the bio it was very helpful uh do you wanna uh begin by kind of giving us a more extended version of that you i think you went to aus in 2016 and graduated in 2020 right correct correct so yep go ahead yeah yeah so like i mentioned in my bio i studied the bachelor of environmental studies there so basically so actually that is quite a new program in nus as well i think it was established only in 2011. the aim of the program basically is to try to tackle the upcoming environmental challenges in this age and my experience at nus is we did quite a wide variety of modules like for example economics and geography biology and all that so to sort of get a wider perspective as to how we can solve for this environmental challenges yeah and then we also had some some classes where it was just our the modules was only for our course only for environmental studies yes and i also went on to overseas um exchange you can call it exchange programs like i mentioned in my bio yeah is that the aus oversea college or is that a different program uh no no that and oh that's a different program so one of it is the summer summer exchange program for that one i applied for it by myself yeah and the other one is uh sorry how how did you get funding for that the universities uh have funding for you to do that or you pay on your own pocket so for the summer exchange program i i i paid for my own pocket for that one because that is uh something that we choose to go on our own so it was like where did you where did you go uh remind me i went to a south africa oh okay wow pretty far so one is south africa where's the other one philippines the other one is philippines yeah right so that's it sorry for hacking yeah so the philippines one is something that everyone in my course will go for so basically we we go there to sort of get a first-hand perspective about some of the environmental issues in the philippines and do some field work and that one i i i believe it is partially subsidized by the university yeah okay okay right uh why you chose south africa it's also a very interesting choice compared with you know europe europe or north america yeah true so personally for me like i wrote in my bio because i've always been interested in all this like natural sciences and plant stuff so south africa is quite a good place to explore that because naturally they have a lot of biodiversity

right right yes that's true now uh how did you you know this is well to me at least uh your career is a is a somewhat uh unusual one um i don't know how many students entering nus is so driven by their concern about the environment you obviously were and still are

how did that intellectual curiosity it must come from that how did that intellectual curiosity and the concern for humanity um

how did you grow that passion right so regarding that because i mean from young i had been exposed to quite a lot of all this like i've been exposed quite a lot to the natural environment um yeah like last time in secondary school i would go with my dad like to hike at the nature parks around singapore and all that so i would say it started from quite a young age like maybe when i was about 10 yeah when i was about 10 something like that so it started i think it was just because i have been exposed to all this like natural environment so i'm just naturally more curious and inquisitive about them

so when it comes to environmental science and you know protect the environment and climate change it's a global topic as we know but different regions are also being impacted in different ways right correctly asia has a unique way of being influenced by global warming compared with african continent compared with north america yes

so you are you studied at the one of the top if not the top asian universities what is your perspective on the way they teach you uh to become a professional in this field do you feel like it is pretty consistent with how you know north america and european are learning the same field or do you feel like there's something unique and more asian to the program you're studying at the u.s and how are they different

so i would say that definitely the program at nus gives a more local perspective for example some of the some of the environmental legislation that they teach are like the local ones but likewise there are also broader like global climate regulations that they also bring in as well so there's this combination of both local and global perspectives and in terms of comparing to other universities so

for example um okay i'll compare to philippines since that's the program that i went for overseas i believe it's a bit different because in the philippines um their environmental studies related programs would be a bit more hands-on and more of a first-hand experience because they do have the large areas of natural environment that they can actually like sort of practice their environmental management skills in so for singapore it's a lot is a bit more um like not not as hands-on definitely as compared to the philippines so this is kind of partially limited by its uh limited like land space and sea space correct correct right and to compensate that the u.s try to bring you to places like countries like singa philippines so that you can get there yes experience correct there are also other programs for like if you take certain modules there are some where you go let's say thailand or costa rica or something like that right so that's how they try to make up for it do you feel like it's working do you think they are efforting trying to making up to you know singapore's confined space and do you think the u.s effort in trying to bring it to different places working out or do you feel there are certain limitations to it

definitely from the learning perspective it's working because it's quite a fresh experience for most of us but unfortunately i think after we graduate because we don't if you stay in singapore you definitely don't get the experience to sort of go further in all these like more hands-on areas of environmental management so after a while we might lose the skills that we picked up from those experiences right so you're saying the like the education part uh works fairly well but what happens after that is once you enter the workforce and then because singapore is kind of small geographically just doesn't have that many kind of positions uh where or you can be hands on yeah that's right

have you considered seeking opportunities in a larger region like the actual asean region

i mean definitely that can be considered in fact for example in my field which is agritech i mean there are job openings as well in all around the world that are quite interesting so i might consider them in the future right you know you know uh don't know uh about four or five years ago gave a speech uh at a conference that i organized and that speech sort of uh startled me what he said basically he said the following i can send you my impression of what i wrote later on uh he basically say that singapore is a small country both land wise and population and as nus continues to grow in quality and so on at some point there are outstanding graduates will have difficulty finding because it is so small you know it's only what 5 million people it is so small that the opportunities may not be there for these truly outstanding graduates and so he said that one of his passion is to encourage the alumni students who graduated from nus to seek seek jobs or seek careers outside of singapore um and find the best job anywhere in the world and do the best job you can or she can and then eventually come back to singapore and and help nus and singapore in general so it was a quite a eye-opening speech that he gave now in your case obviously you know for example uh as we continue to confront the climate change uh as uh as the uh as the ice cap in in the north it continues to uh continues to melt the sea level is going to rise uh and maybe significantly and at some point some areas in singapore may be underwater uh yeah it is something of worry right uh yes environmentalists i mean it is it's not something that you can say well you know it will not happen it will happen and therefore how does nus as a great university pursue this kind of serious human existential challenges that's what we want to understand about nus

so you're meaning more more like how does it have to tackle all this yeah how does others how does the nus teach you as a student about the the level of seriousness about climate change especially when the country is small and so you don't see the necessary changes except when it hits you if the water really rises too much

right so

so a question is more like how does nus like emphasize the severity of this let's say climate crisis or any other global crisis right yeah yeah how after all that is part of the so-called globalization now correct

so let's say in my

for my course i mean by like i

so so they do try to make like this um like to make this environmental prices seem more relevant to us i think by for example they

bring in quite a lot of current affairs i mean definitely you know that's the aries conference and all the conferences and so in that aspect they sort of highlight how current and ever ever changing situation is so in that aspect it does help us to understand the seriousness on the global scale [Music] so they do so they they actually engage with you not just teaching courses but also narratives with you about the seriousness of the problem correct correct and this is

done by bringing in the current affairs related to the topic especially for climate change definitely there will be new updates all the time and also they do bring in guest speakers as well that are experts in their own field so this way we get from all over the world from all over the world yeah yeah so this way we do get a more accurate perspective in certain aspects of let's say environmental issues that these speakers are the expert rather than just our lecturers might not be the expert right right sorry one quick question going back to what you said earlier you said you went to philippines but other students could go to other countries there are a few countries of options is that right yeah so it depends on what model you take some some model you go to other countries yes what other countries are that you're aware of that your students can go to so i was aware of sri lanka thailand costa rica yeah i think it's this tree

so that's pretty much uh spread out on the globe yeah yeah and uh once you get to that country in new york it's philippine uh you guys work with a local university to carry out the rest of the program yes yes we work with a partner university so when we work with the partner university definitely they are the local professors and teaching assistants there as well who will facilitate the cause how how long do you stay there

this one it depends the philippines won i think three weeks yeah i i think it's mostly about maybe two weeks to a month something like that south africa south africa i went for i went for i think about a month which which which is your partner university in south africa so in south africa i i went for my exchange at Stellenbosch university okay stalin brush okay very good yeah yeah yeah and in philippines philippines

let me see if i can record the name let me do a quick google

i know it's in bohol but i'm not sure of the exact name whether it's where where is it in manila

um

now um yeah so the nus assists you in making contact with these universities so that your visit can be seamless right yes that's right i see so nus really help you in uh in developing these things enthusiastically i would say right yeah yeah wow that's important yeah and i mean like for example like max mentioned there's the nus overseas college as well so that one i didn't attend but my friends who did it it's also pretty it's a pretty similar experience for them that is more like than sort of an internship at another country and like yeah so there are so there are different types of exchange programs as well so is for example they're good to learn but the answer is to go there to work and get the internship experience

did you find your own school in south africa or was it already on the u.s list of partner schools the south africa one was yeah it was on the list so the did you take a course and get a credit or just you just spend the summer there as a result yeah so so so i took the course there and i managed to solve get the credit so i took one last course at nus okay and that's was that an already approved course for exchange credit or did you apply for that uh so that that was a sort of a new course so i had to sort of like apply for the credit by myself i see i see but the nus is

very flexible in that yes yes that's remarkable yeah that's remarkable nus didn't give you uh administrative difficulties in doing things like that yeah

uh how many of your peers that you're aware of like when to oversee exchanges like you what person would you say

so it's a i would say a pretty significant amount of step about maybe 50 percent oh wow yeah how big was your class so my my cohort had 50 54 people it's quite a small course okay so something like 20 25 people went yes wow so yeah but i say we so we went on different solve different programs like i said some went for the nus overseas college which is more like a work experience some went for the semester program which they stay there for about they they study there about maybe three months and of course go for the shorter ones like let me okay

do you is that is any of us trying to uh get more students to go overseas or is this something that students find it interesting and are doing it themselves

um [Music] so so all these overseas programs are optional but i think by offering such a wide variety of programs in terms of the location the cost of the program as well as the duration of the program definitely naturally more people will take it out because there's a lot of sexy

right right so your program like as you mentioned your bio is a multi-disciplinary in nature correct correct how did the u.s approach that because as darshan told me many times multidisciplinary is easier said than done so in your experience how was it done and how are they trying to improve it so how it's done is like okay so for example for other degrees right maybe if you are doing just like let's say chemistry so most of the classes you take will be within the chemistry department but for this environmental studies program because i think they wanted to let us see from

from like multiple perspectives so they would incorporate courses from for example the school of public health there's like a school of arts and social sciences school of life sciences and they would try to bring in an environmental slant into the modules from all these different schools

so for example we do have we do have this module called environmental public health so basically they would get the lecturer from the school of public health to to teach us the class and it's pretty relevant because definitely with all this like global warming an environmental crisis naturally there will be more public health issues as well i mean like for example covid is one of them right right yeah and uh you did a honors thesis as well at that last year right yes yes can you tell us a bit more about that experience uh how uh yeah how was that experience and were you able to come up with your own research project do you work with the professor

okay so for okay so for nus like um for my program i think about half of us did this honesty system

and i mean nus made it quite quite easy for us to do our honors thesis like for example if you want you can initiate your own project so you can just go to any of the professors and go and discuss with them about the topic or alternatively if you are not very sure what you want to do some of the professors already have topics that they will suggest to you so for mine i was i i sort of had a idea in mind so i went to approach this professor that i knew was quite good with plant plant sciences yeah and she gave me some ideas and that's how i came up with this honesty spider

yeah and then so for my honest thesis there's uh field work and the lab work so that's both sides to it and i i mean the the lab facilities at us are pretty good i mean we have our own like lab space and all that and the the equipment is pretty much our own love for that for that period that we are working right on our own assistance it's not like we have one equipment that we have to share among like maybe seven or eight so even as an undergrad when you are doing your honors thesis you are able to have access to those cutting edge equipment to your own correct oh wow at least it wasn't in very high high demand there was sufficient supply like right we didn't have to rush our work when using those equipment right right and now you have graduated you said you're working in a high-tech farming company yeah yeah that's right uh before we get into a company i guess my question is did you was that your interest when you first entered the us like do you know what you want to do when you first entered the us or did you discover that while studying at the u.s

[Music] so before i

okay so before i started at nus i was already quite keen on something in the environmental sector or natural sciences related work but

yeah i mean to actually go down to do aggregate to do agritech i think i sort of discovered that along the way yeah so i roughly knew what i wanted to do but the past two years helped me to narrow it down right can you tell us a bit to your about your current job uh what do you do yeah sure so right now i'm basically doing uh production and plant science at this at this local farming company called light leaf and so basically what i do there is we do um planting trouts for example to test out new varieties of crops or to see how we can maximize the growth of the crops in an urban urban environment like that in singapore so that is the plant science part and then i also manage the production so for example like the how much we we should produce every month and how to schedule the manpower and maybe production inputs such as the fertilizer the the seeds and all that kind of stuff so is your market exclusively in singapore yeah yeah it is in singapore i see i see how big is your company i think that's about 20 20 people right now i see so it's still kind of like a startup phase of the company right right i see i see and how do you find like are you using knowledge you are learning from university or are you more applying the you know the transferable skills uh like how how did what you learn at the university helping you at your current job right now

so

definitely not the not i mean some of the knowledge is transferable from some of the modules but definitely not more so for example

okay so one of the things is that our firm we are trying to calculate the carbon footprint of the firm and to check whether it's actually a really sustainable operation so definitely my time at nus has helped me with this and also because i i'm the only one in my company who did environmental studies so it is quite a valuable skill to have but are there other knowledge that you learned at a university that is already becoming obsolete and you know not up to date given how fast this field is changing

[Music] i mean given that i graduated about a year ago not not at the moment right

so um what is your you know as nus becoming so renowned in the world right and you look back in your university career and as well as the career now you're pursuing how does nus impact your life if you summarize it within a sentence what would that be

i would say nus has definitely helped me cultivate a more global point of view

and that's important and in what way do they do that with you you know uh directly having faculty professors telling you that or just by osmosis you get the feeling that nus has that general narratives among everyone

hey sorry could you repeat your question again yeah what i'm interested is you know this uh the idea that you obviously because of what you do uh and singapore being such a small country yeah you almost have to think globally yeah you know just because you solve singapore's uh climate change problem it's not going to help the world right correct just and yet nus how does nus in put that sort of global view into into the universities throughout and make it such a exciting place or is it an exciting place yeah yeah it is so so i would guess this sort of a com it's a combination of all the experiences i talked about just now for example the guest speakers from [Music] all over the world who are experts in their own field and also definitely the accessibility to going for overseas programs and also i think one last thing is that our own our own professors they are from quite a diverse background and a lot of them previously maybe they studied or taught in let's say canada or uk or other places so naturally when they teach the class they do share their experiences and it does give us a more wider perspective

so it's a combination of all these experiences at different levels

going back a few years early because i mean right now you you study the us but when you apply to universities what other universities did you consider and apply to singapore

so locally i applied to smu ntu and nus and overseas i applied to [Music] i applied to university of manchester and university of sterling and university of i forgot whether it's glasgow or edinburgh but either one of them you did not apply to any american university uh no i didn't apply at that time uh and did you consider them or are you never interested in them what's uh how did you

approach which are universities to apply right so for that because um so i was actually planning to study sort of like a

related course overseas but because the cost of starting overseas is higher so so definitely if i do a study overseas i will need a i will need a scholarship for that so so the government government agent she had like a list of like sort of like uh recommended universities for certain courses that i was interested yeah right so this was some of the universities that they suggested for the course that i was keen on oh so the government suggested that if you are interested in environmental science theater school that you can apply or they suggested that you get scholarship in our school you can apply uh so so i think the way they phrase it is like okay so actually the ones i applied overseas was not environmental studies it was aqua culture and horticulture and plant science so the way they face it is like some of our scholars who studied this course they applied like this university of that university right so it was very small as a as a suggestion i see i see

and uh why did you end up choosing aus is it because it's it's a i mean cause that's one thing obviously and uh i guess what's caused the major consideration or another considerations too yeah i think the cost was the major consideration right yeah that makes sense because singapore government do subsidize quite a bit for your you or tuition well if you study yes definitely and if i had started in the uk would have been the living expenses as well wow right right okay

was there a lot of international students in your class

[Music]

so international students i would say

okay maybe not a lot of international students but they were

but the local students came from quite a white background for example i mean some of us came from like the usual singapore junior college colleges and all that and but there were some who came from like sort of like private schools that do the international international vessel the ib program yeah yeah yeah and also i would say

yeah so and some came from the polytechnics as well so there was quite a diversity in terms of that right yes yeah and i mean some uh i i wouldn't say international students like naturalize singaporeans what about malaysians what about malaysians so there was there was one one malaysian and one one vietnamese in my class

and uh

do you know where uh or some of your like you know classmates working right now are most of them working in singapore or they work in different places



so oh yeah so most of them are working in singapore and for the yeah so for the two international students i told you about one of them went back to vietnam the malaysian is working in singapore and quite a few of my friends they went overseas to pursue their masters right right yeah okay that's good to know uh also just to dash and feel free to ask any question otherwise i'm just going to keep going i i want to learn a bit more about you know your definition of class because yesterday we talked to someone from uh the university scholars program where they have their own residential uh format what is that class looks like for you uh and do you guys spend four years together or is it course based yes so this is interesting because our our okay our core size is particularly small and we have a lot of common modules so that's why our course or our class is quite highly knead together

so it's about like how many people you said 54. so 54 people study environmental studies correct every year and although although it's multidisciplinary meaning you guys can study classes from different schools uh you guys still share the courses together

um okay so sort of so for example let's say in an average semester if we take five modules right so let's so let's say maybe we have two two common modules that all 54 of us stick together

and let's say in these two modules maybe one is taught by school of public health and one is stopped by school of life of life science for example isis yeah and then the other three modules we can pick whatever we want from like a certain list

i see it's like a list of electives and within this list of electives there are modules from different faculties as well right right so that's roughly how it works right and now that you've graduated uh how are you guys keeping in touch with each other uh how do you feel about this aos alumni community after you graduate

um so honestly i'm not really that active in the nus alumni like club if there is but within our own course we do have a whatsapp group we used to meet more frequently but but that was before kovitt right yeah so i think the last time like before kovac sort of did a barbecue at somebody's house right i mean because it's a small cause it's not that hard right right and solve yeah right

okay uh darshan i don't think i have any questions i don't have any either can you

can you summarize for us your feeling of nus as a final comment

you mean nus in general well whatever you like you know after all it has changed your life right yeah yeah and usa

hello hello oh it's awesome sorry i think the connection was bad system oh don't worry okay yeah but to summarize so [Music] yeah i would say like from what i see nus is always changing and improving itself and that's good because it's important to stay relevant

okay very good professional phone can you hear us i think his connection was yeah and when you say it's always changing and improving itself did you felt that change yourself or are you more observing it i i did feel it because in terms of like my own course when i went from year one to year four so if you remember just now i told you there's a list of electives that we can take right right so every year they do try to improve and bring in new electives that we can take to sort of stay relevant right

so you you do feel like they're intentionally trying to keep up to date yes yes

sorry i i was i had wi-fi problems so uh i lost the connection for for about a minute or so so okay some notes here basically to answer your question about the feelings uh of ios lucas shared that i think i'm quoting that what he sees in the u.s is always changing and improving itself because it's very important and uh he not only kind of saw that he'll he also experienced that you know across his four years uh the list of elective courses they can take kept changing have been updated so was that some good summarization of what you said lucas yes yes i think that's pretty good thank you very much lucas okay thank you thank you thanks wt thanks

by the way uh your last name is j-i-a-n-g and your father's last name is c-h-i-a-n-g yeah yeah

okay that's interesting all right goodbye thank you thank you bye-bye