

okay so um yeah so do i need to repeat what i just said or oh no no it's fine okay um yeah so the second part of the question was whether it's affected the way i run my business negativity right

right do you feel like there were things that you wish in the u.s would have told you you wish you could have learned that allow you to do like better now right i think the i mean the the the gaps in my education or the way i found them applying to my business is it's not not because of the the way the school was raised but but really because you know i had no i mean law school doesn't have i didn't take any business law modules so it was quite a shock to have to come up to speed on like very basic accounting rules and like reading financial statements um but then that's not so much a criticism of the of the law syllabus because obviously the loss in the business is geared towards educating lawyers right but more of the fact that my education my career path basically diverged from the from the legal path um the only other thing that i wish um the only other thing that that um i can think of where it has you know affected the way i run my business not as well is that as lawyers we're generally trained to be cautious to air on the side of caution but then as an entrepreneur as a business person you kind of need to err on the side of action rather than caution right you have to be bigger correct correct correct and then particularly because i was a disputes lawyer where i was accustomed to giving clients um advice as to how to get out of sticky situations such advice would always generally be to be safe do this right which doesn't really translate um to a business setting in terms of getting uh the most advantageous the most profitable outcome that's very interesting uh that the the challenge that you mentioned just now yes probably is the same challenge of any law graduates from any law schools from anywhere in the world yes that's true which is why i said that this is it's not it's not specific to the way the legal education the so in other words the singapore law school even singapore is a small country and aus is probably the only school that has a law school right and because ntu doesn't uh no that's not correct anymore we have you have you oh yeah okay all right there's a law school that has risen in the ranks very very quickly yeah um and i think that there is another law school it's a private law school um uh unison yeah singapore management by and large uh the law school in singapore will have to probably train you with understanding of the global legal issues right yes it cannot just deal with singapore you know unless you're a singapore criminal lawyer you almost have to understand how the international legal establishments work yes um well yes

that also depends i suppose on because law legal systems are very localized yes in the sense that if you even if you have an international contract right um the contract must be bound by the laws of a specific country right yes so the parties could say this contract is performed in hong kong therefore it is bound by the laws of hong kong even though the parties are in the states and singapore so as far as as far as the education is concerned i mean obviously the the the core modules are all you know predicated on educating the the singapore lawyer in terms of singapore law because that's where you expect them to practice i mean there are modules that uh talk about international law at large like international human rights law international humanitarian law space law and such but that's you know that is quite a specialized field of practice um in as far as providing like a global overview of global business is concerned um i did get a sense that that was something that was of emphasis um and we did like especially if you if

you took business law if you took international business law there was i mean introduction to things like the um the vienna convention on on uh

what was it now the vienna con the vienna convention on camera what's what it what what it's called anymore but like on purchase and supply uh that sort of thing um so those modules were offered but largely the the education was on was in the third was in terms of the singapore legal system

so for your business you i mean before you even joined your family business you had to travel uh very frequently to different countries hong kong and i would assume when you're in hong kong you have to deal with business uh across asia not just hong kong uh did the u.s get when you were educated in u.s did you get this kind of international exposure that allowed you to uh you know be

able to do your job later or is that something is that international horizon or something you gain after you go into the work during the work space there was that was something that uh i had i gained a lot of exposure from my time in nus largely because in my third year i took a year abroad and i went to the states so i i spent i mean nus in our third year offers a very extensive international exchange program is that the uh uh the oversea college yes it's it's um with partner universities all across the world all across the country all across the world so we have did you go to america did you go to a law school in the united states i did i went to washington university in saint louis ah okay okay yes okay so i was in washu yeah um which was a very interesting experience because the law degree in the united states the postgraduate degree right i it's a jd so you join us that's right jd program that they have i mean i participated in the jd because the law school does not exist in the undergraduate school in the u.s correct yeah so i joined the jd i was i joined the jd program for a year okay so generally uh law students in the u.s you know because my son is a lawyer so he's an nyu jd uh okay yeah the the law school the law students that you interact with in wash view uh probably tend to be older than you yes they were by law so unless of course they were like straight from there were a number of you know very high achieving individuals who like did three years in college and then went straight to yeah to law school right so in that case i mean we would we would be contemporaries okay because i had two years of two years of national service in singapore how do you how do you compare singapore's law school with american law school or washu law school

um uh in terms of let's see i have to think back because this was 20 years ago um 15 years ago uh i would say like in the in washi i found that the the professors um tended to be a lot more hands-off there was a lot more um the students learning was in their own hands they had to decide how much they wanted to learn and how much they wanted to beat up it wasn't the case where um you know you would be handheld i suppose largely because it's a postgraduate degree right so most of the students have had like some working experience they're older yeah so in that respect it was quite different

in terms of the knowledge of the professors or the quality of the students i found it largely comparable wash you had a very international population because they had this program that

allowed international llm students to credit that towards a jd in the end so it was a shorter time than just you know one llm one year and then three years of jd so there were a lot of international students particularly students from china um so it was very interesting interacting with with uh the chinese the chinese students are primarily for the llb uh mlb programs rather than the jd's i think well in washu it was quite different because the llm program at the end of the llm program they have they have the option of joining a truncated jd program so they have the option of then getting a jd if they do just one more year or two more years so a lot of the international students were there with that goal in fact nyu now has uh for a few years now has a llb jd program with nus yes that's right that's right yeah yeah i'm my son so that's one other way my son was actually considering coming to nus for a year but in the end he didn't do it oh i see

yes so um so the quality of nus in its legal training is on par with probably some of the best law schools in the world is that right yes i would definitely say that i think yes well that's

yeah the the one thing that the singapore that the nus law school of education has i really value um is the legal writing and the legal analysis module so that so you know because of that which basically teaches you the basics of research and applying your mind legal problems it allows you to approach any area of law and problem solve effectively so um even though you know i was sick i was significantly younger than some of my peers in in washington you know that skill did set me apart so like i took part in uh some of their moving mooching competitions i'm not sure if you're familiar with the term so mooding is like um like a debate club but it's in a legal context right yes yeah so um and in international law the most prestigious competition is called the jessup cup it's the jessup international law cup so um at washu they had a very open program where anyone could apply you didn't have to be a jd programmer you didn't have to be a jd student or a full-time student that you applied so i applied as an exchange student and i got in um you know and i represented washu and we you know advanced quite far in that competition and i and i credit that to the robustness of the legal writing and analysis program in nus

i see and i'm assuming that skill is still benefiting you now as doctrine said the ability to write is one of the most important skills one could have yes yes it's yes exactly it's uh it is very very important and i think it helps you in terms of like when you're drafting even if you're drafting an informal document or an email to um you know a supplier or a customer it if you can structure what you want to say in a reasonable logical manner you know you give them confidence that you have um you know you have a a strong reason for what you're doing and why you're doing what you're doing um and it gives them you know it puts them at ease

very interesting uh you have given it gives you a degree of professionalism you have you have given us a different perspective of nus right because well the other students or the other alumni are not from the law school and law law training from any country is always sets it apart from the other departments um yes i mean it is it's a very rigorous program and you know the interview process is well also the the the uh the demand on logic yes yes correct although although all

these american congressmen who are all lawyers seem to have no logic whatsoever but that's that's not there

i mean they you know the people like blinken all graduated from law schools in the us but somehow by the time they became politicians they have forgotten all the law logics well that's because politics is the business of staying in power which requires a different set of well that's a nice way of saying the politics is in this particular now at the moment the politics is your way through yes which is so you know by the rules of the game they are playing very well you know they have obviously analyzed the rules of the game and are applying it to their specific circumstances let me ask you the same question then uh i'm sure lots of singapore's politicians graduate from uh nus law school right after all actually uh well minister of home affairs is a lawyer yes yes uh there are yes he was from manus the minister of homophobic us yes yeah now why have they also fall into this trap

well that's a comment on the political situation in singapore right which is i i don't i which is a very different system than in the states um so i i can't i don't think that i i would say they fall into that trap

but at the same time you know politics around the world is ultimately yes it's about governance but it's also about maintaining a certain status quo exactly yeah exactly so you know that is that is the sum of politics right the business of staying in power

when you apply to schools did you consider other school or you only were looking for us and then that's the only one at that time right well well at the time i was also considering the uk universities okay um because they we the um the singapore the singapore legal association the bar recognizes um uk universities but but um certain uk universities but i mean law is a very localized thing and i felt like the best way to get an education in the singapore legal system is to be in a single law school right because ultimately i will be ultimately i would be practicing singapore law right right yeah uk and australia probably are both possibilities right yes we recognize also some australian universities less so than the uk but not so much as the canadian ones no no not the canadians i don't think we have any i don't think because i think the canadians the canadians are like the americans so you're correct people go into the jd program after undergraduate and it also depends on which part like for instance quebec is a civil law tradition as opposed to a common law tradition yes correct that french french legal system is called confusion [Laughter] uh anyway well i i think again you have given us a you know you're because you also have went to a u.s school for one year you have given us a perspective of nus from the legal training point of view a different perspective that we do i don't have until now right right uh two follow-up questions and then after that uh we're probably you know taking out enough of your time sure go ahead it sounds like you chose nus law school because you were thinking about doing law practice in singapore and that's not the route he is speaking did you plan to be part of the family business where you entered aus or was that an afterthought it was not part of the plan but it also wasn't an afterthought because it was something i thought about very very seriously um yeah it was it was a confluence of factors um i left practice after five years because um the life of a dispute's lawyer can be very difficult it's a very high stress

profession as you might expect um you know it's a it's a profession where clients come to you because the [ \_\_ ] has hit the fan um so there was some push factor but ultimately it was a pull factor because uh my brother had already joined the family business and there was a part of the family business dad you know he studied business in nus thank goodness because definitely needed someone with that background yeah uh yeah so it was more because there was a part of the business that we were contemplating that my father at the time was contemplating what to do with and you know there was an opportunity there so i thought it would be a pity after 30 years that we just you know closed that business so yeah if you guys have plans to expand it more internationally are you just going to try to go deeper in the current market um we are trying to do both so obviously e-commerce is a massive avenue of growth for us so with e-commerce international trade is basically just a question of figuring out logistics right uh yeah so that's it's both both uh uh areas of growth for us in in the process of doing our family business or previously have you engaged or interacted with other aus alumni in any sense um in a professional setting i'm sure i must have because there's so many nus graduates but i can't recall specifically i mean outside of engaging lawyers where we have you know we have where we've engaged lawyers or you know then yes i have encountered because they were my peers but uh in terms of business people hard to say actually i must have but i you know it's not like it doesn't it's not something that comes up in conversation are you from new york right because there's like too many of them in singapore yeah i mean there were for a long time there were only two main universities in singapore right yeah yeah that's right that's right so but although there are a lot of graduates from nus law school but uh from your observation they're not like u.s politicians where many of them came from local law schools singa singapore's singaporean who studied at us law school didn't many of them didn't end up in the political system is that the case uh i wouldn't say well actually how many we only have like three or four i think lawyers i mean yeah yeah it's yeah and also we have a lot fewer politicians than than in the states so so it's hard to draw that comparison but i mean percentage one i really wouldn't know but yeah there is not that trajectory i think it's not like people go into law school with the objective of then entering politics right right yeah also because in singapore like the politicians are um you know like the singapore pap has the singapore government has a very well established uh system of identifying talent from a very young age

yeah yeah okay i uh have a last probably one last question sure i would love to get your take on this um nus and we come back to nus and u.s is rising very quickly and it's uh in terms of its reputation it's now competing with uh universities in terms of reputation with with china's qinghua university for example and in the us yale university and so on right then you ask yourself well what is the difference between nus and these uh peers that they they need to compete with the difference is that these countries universities exist in big countries giant countries right countries that have a far bigger student population to tap into

and uh in fact places like uh harvard or yale they tap not only among the best in the united states but they have probably the best in the world so so but singapore on the other hand uh of course they're trying to do that too but singapore itself is not a big country so in a way what singapore is trying to do is to play a big country's game in a small country

and you might ask well what's the difference between say for example singapore and hong kong well hong kong of course quite recently had all the political problems but now that the political problem seems to have subsided i think what will happen from now on is the hong kong will be coming more and more like another major cities in china yes yes it's gonna be like shanghai or guangzhou yes right so then they are part of this big country so in a sense they can play the big country game well i'm asking you that well you went to indonesia a lot and and so on and of course singapore is part of asean right but asian is not like hong kong and china asean other countries they have their own ways and means um and so how do you think that nus in the long run can play this game

um to me the difference between the universities that you have mentioned um yale or ting ha any of the american universities or the english universities competition all the chinese ones is ultimately a question i think at this point of legacy so the value of a university is not purely in its education or the quality of its educators that's a huge part obviously but also in terms of its alumni and its networking right people go to business school for as much as the connections as they do for learning about how to read financial statements so to me the value of nus will increase as it becomes an older more venerated institution as its alumni grows stronger and as this alumni grows more diverse so there is a considered push obviously to put nus at the forefront of

the of international education or tertiary education by bringing foreign students in offering scholarships and i think that that's something that will bear fruit maybe not immediately but at some point in the future as the network gets stronger

so i think that that's probably uh the best bet in addition to you know what you would expect increasing the value of its faculty uh bringing professors in from overseas um yeah yeah well bringing professors from overseas i think uh singapore society can easily accept all right however can singapore and us bring in say something like 30 percent of its undergraduates from outside would the society accept that as a possibility i mean that's i don't think that's too far out of the of the realm of possibility as it is singapore's i mean singapore's residential population is significantly foreign anyways we have five and a half residents and only what three and a half of them are citizens so the idea of i mean and also singapore is a is a very young country built on immigrants right we're very very near to our immigrant roots very good most most people have have are one or two generations removed from coming from malaysia or china or indonesia or or india so i don't think it's something that is is completely outside the realm of possibility yeah but as with you know any as with any growing country or as as a city becomes more successful and as you know the population size increases there will be pressures like you will face xenophobia and all of that but that's all just half of the course i think i don't think that that singapore is predisposed to objecting or being resistant to to foreign students okay you know singapore has uh becoming an important international voice i'm i'm sure you recognize that uh you know people like uh kisho mo babani yes and uh professor wang for example you know these are these are international voice that you hear so i also tom tommy co uh one yes you know these diplomats yeah incredible uh and and even though it only has five million

people in the country that is when when you ask them how big is singapore you have to say high tide or low tide

you know you know you have to you have to admire singapore's voice you know after all ten nations in asean uh yeah singapore only has five million people and and those ten nations put together has 600 million people but yes but the singapore voice clearly punch above is is what is its strength and and some things they have done is right is that that i would uh agree with yes you know even though indonesia has 230 million people indonesia does not have the same voice as singapore

yes um yeah just suddenly yeah to a certain extent i suppose yes yeah yeah yeah and i mean at the same time singapore is on is on the global stage a lot more because it is such um you know it's it's uh it's becoming an international well it's still a regional financial hub but you know it is it's it's always put itself as an international city um you know it's a city-state it doesn't have a big hinterland no hinterland so uh it can only realistically survive if it views the entire world as you know as it's back yes yeah well i wouldn't want to say back here because it makes it has connotations of of you know superiority but it has to view the intent that the the the international community as its trading partners as its you know friends or yeah yeah uh last question um when you went when you graduated from ny uh and us which was 2008 uh seven 2007. at that time of course uh well china was important but by no means like today yes that's right and so the importance of china in singapore's perspective has clearly risen significantly in the last 13 14 years yes and and the record and places like universities like nus um will have to deal with the chinese in a way that it hasn't dealt with before in other words china is a complex nation we all know that very very very complex it has a complex history it has a complex uh societies and it is so important for nus to play not not to play but but to be able to maneuver in this convoluted and complex world yes do you see that your alma mater in us is able to uh to handle this complexity yes i i i do think so i mean we have uh within the context of the law school again um actually yeah uh we had quite a couple of we had quite a few um students from china um and i think that our faculty again this is the context of the law school is a very international

faculty

one of our we we study um different legal traditions one of our modules was you know different legal traditions in the world and obviously we studied the chinese civil law tradition and the french civil law tradition and in addition to the common law tradition so there is definitely based on the courses that are offered and and the the variety in terms of the diversity of the the faculty it's clear to me that i think i think that the the school has an eye towards

encouraging diversity and also bringing in viewpoints from global superpowers major powers like china um yeah so i think i am confident in fact yeah that the school can uh yeah great well i have no more questions yeah by the way i'm impressed by the windows view how high are you oh um i am on the 18th floor wow where do you live where do you live in singapore i live in uh newton so okay um this is this is a private apartment or this is part of the government housing this is a private account okay okay wow it looks impressive thank you

okay i have no more questions max well no i think this has been a really really interesting perspective that you're providing to us once we have the article we'll also share with you uh and hopefully you'll you'll like it too sure okay yeah and since we have your email if we have additional questions if you i hope you don't mind if we continue to ask you and bother you sure go ahead yeah thank you so much okay you're welcome bye