

4 May 2015

LKY School Professors Lead In Teaching Innovation And Excellence

Two professors from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy receive the Annual Teaching Excellence Award for their dedication to the field of education.

On 4 May 2015, at the Annual Teaching Award Ceremony at the National University of Singapore (NUS), two professors from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKY School) were presented the Annual Teaching Excellence Award (ATEA) alongside their peers from various departments.

The awards serve an integral function for NUS as an institution of higher education as they provide affirmation of the teaching practices that the university aims to strive for. The ATEA identifies educators who can facilitate learning that is of value beyond the specific disciplines of the professors, as well as help students expand ideas, mindsets and mental capacities outside the boundaries of profession-specific knowledge.

Two professors from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, Associate Professor Zeger Van Der Wal and Assistant Professor Ora-orn Poocharoen, were recognised this year for their teaching achievements.

Professor Zeger Van Der Wal, a lecturer in the areas of organizational values and culture, integrity management, performance management, and work motivation, teaches public management across all the programmes at the LKY School. His approach to education is partly shaped by his ideal classroom setting, which he believes needs to be student-centric, highly interactive, and tackling problem-specific issues rather than concepts. Implementing this ideal is not the easiest, as in the case of student-centrism. For him, this requires that “pressing questions from the students or unclarities about the dynamics of organizational culture - and how understanding and leveraging these dynamics makes them better future public managers - guide the discussions and take-aways, rather than all the content I desperately want to get across.”

Professor Ora-orn Poocharoen teaches public administration in theory and practice, and conducts research on comparative public management, network management, human resource management and urban governance. Her perspective on being an effective educator is shaped by how she can prepare students for a constantly changing future. "Many of my students are mid-career managers in the public or non-profit sectors and they come with a wealth of real-world experience. My role is to help the students see how their experiences fit into larger frameworks in the field of public administration and management, which in turn helps them to make sense of their own contexts and see how they can better solve public policy problems" says Prof Ora. She creates numerous opportunities for peer-to-peer learning to help with her classroom objectives, such as utilizing TED Talk-style presentations, small group discussions, and plenary sharing sessions.

In addition to enhancing theoretical knowledge, she also supports each student's learning journey to become effective leaders by guiding them to improve their emotional intelligence levels. "Students need to learn to be better listeners, especially given the advantage of hearing experiences from their highly-diverse peers," says Prof Ora. "In being better listeners, they become more patient and aware of what they should be grateful for. These qualities, I think, do help them to be of better service to their communities and society at large."

The LKY School prides itself on the quality of its faculty, which consist of academics with degrees from prestigious universities all over the world in fields such as economics, political science, international relations, urban studies, public policy, and public management. They are also able to bring to the classroom a wide range of experiences from their distinguished careers as policymakers and planners, public sector leaders, diplomats, media professionals, and politicians. Coupled with a curriculum that spans across multiple disciplines, and complemented with case studies and a problem-based learning approach, the LKY School aims to raise the standards of governance throughout the region, improve the lives of the people in the region and, in so doing, contribute to the transformation of Asia.

About Prof Ora-orn Poocharoen

She received her PhD in Public Administration from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University. She has a Master of Law from University of Tokyo in Political Science and a Bachelor of Law from Hitotsubashi University in International Relations, Japan. Prior to joining the LKY School, she taught at Chulalongkorn University, where she was deputy head of the Public Administration Department in the Faculty of Political Science.

From 2009 to 2011 she held the position of Assistant Dean (Student Affairs) at the LKY School and committee chair for the Master in Public Administration program. She is on the board of several journals, including International Public Management Journal.

About Prof Zeger Van Der Wal

He obtained his PhD in Public Administration *cum laude* (with distinction) from VU University, The Netherlands, in 2008. In that same year, he was awarded the National Postdoc Award from the Netherlands Institute of Government (NIG). He worked at the VU University as Assistant Professor from 2008 to 2012. Before he entered academic life he worked as policy maker for the Municipality of Amsterdam, and later as project assistant for the province of Southern Holland. Zeger received his Master's in Political Science from the University of Amsterdam in 2001. He is concurrently holding the position of Assistant Dean (Research) at the LKY School.

About Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy

Part of the National University of Singapore, the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy was established in 2004 with the mission of educating and inspiring current and future generations of leaders to raise the standards of governance in Asia, improve the lives of its people and contribute to the transformation of the region. With over 400 students spanning 80 countries, the School's unique Asian focus allows students to experience public policy education in a distinctively global environment. The School has a number of research centres and institutes that contribute both to scholarly inquiry as well as policymaking, and frequently plays host to distinguished speakers and visiting scholars. For more information about the School, visit www.lkyspp.nus.edu.sg.

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