SYSU TURNS 90

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Dear Readers,

Thank you for reading Sun Yat-sen University’s English-language newsletter, SYSU World. The newsletter aims to give readers a broader perspective on what is happening in Sun Yat-sen University by providing updates on the University’s current development and its future plans.

As the fresh fall air begins to blow across campus, there is an air of excitement as we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the founding of the University. This issue of the newsletter features a suite of pieces related to this momentous occasion. You can find an overview of the history of the University from its founding by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in 1924, an introduction to the SYSU Lions, the official mascots of the anniversary celebrations, and a detailed look at the alumni- and academic-focused events that are happening across campus. Also included in this issue is a look at cutting-edge cancer research being done by SYSU researchers, a profile of a group of German siblings studying at SYSU, and several stories in brief designed to give readers a comprehensive idea of recent happenings on campus.

The University is what it is today thanks to the endeavors of generations of faculty, staff, and students and the support of friends who care about the University and its future. We believe SYSU World will lead you to better understand and appreciate the scope of the University’s development. The future is bright; the next 90 years at SYSU promise to be even better than the last.
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Depending on the day, or perhaps on your frame of mine, the scene outside Sun Yat-sen University’s main gate resembles either an elaborately choreographed group dance routine or a heart-burn-inducing entropic free-for-all. Pulsing waves of motorbikes vie for street space with cavalcades of city buses and idling packs of Guangzhou’s omnipresent mint-green colored taxis, dashing pedestrians clutch bowls of freshly fried tofu or skewered wedges of lush tropical fruits as they race across the street, — the streets outside the University gate are perpetually awash in the sounds, sights, and smells of a restless city propelled forward by commerce and opportunity. But if you were to turn back the clock forty years, a much different scene would greet you. Pan Xiaoluo, a long-time SYSU professor and one-time SYSU student himself remembers a much different set of sights and sounds ringing the university campus: wide-open rice paddies, farmers pulling oxen to and from work, and a single city bus line that would trundle along the narrow road from the main gate toward Guangzhou.

This contrast illustrates the dramatic changes that have swept across the country, the city, and the campus since the University was founded ninety years ago. Dr. Sun Yat-sen himself, then actively involved in the fractious politics that characterized the period after the fall of China’s dynastic imperial system, founded the school as National Guangdong University and personally inscribed its motto. He founded the University to provide a comprehensive higher education system in Guangzhou (then known in the West as “Canton”), his home city. Even in the year of its founding, the University was already witness to history. The first ever National Congress of the Kuomintang (Nationalist) Party of China was held in a tower on central Guangzhou’s Wenming Road, a building which only months later became the centerpiece of the new university’s campus and is still featured in the University’s logo to this day. When Sun passed away the next year, the name of the institution was changed to Sun Yat-sen University in honor of its late founder.
However, the story of today’s university doesn’t necessarily start in 1924. Two institutions which are components of the modern-day SYSU can trace their roots back even further. Lingnan University was established in 1888 by Christian missionaries as Canton Christian College. The university has a tumultuous history, relocating to Macau, Hong Kong, and northern Guangdong Province at different times to escape Qing imperial and later Japanese imperial persecution. After the end of the war, the university was finally able to settle permanently back in Guangzhou and in 1953 was incorporated into Sun Yat-sen University as a constituent college. Today the University continues to thrive, hosting one of the top programs in China for economics, management, and finance.

Stretching back even further into the modern university’s history brings us to 1866, the year Bo Ji Medical School was founded in Guangzhou. Bo Ji was the first institution of Western medicine in all of China, and counted Dr. Sun Yat-sen himself among its early students. After going through a series of name and locational changes, the institution developed into the independent Sun Yat-sen University of Medical Sciences, which gained national prominence as a leading research and treatment center. In 2001, the school was reconstituted as Zhongshan School of Medicine, a constituent college of SYSU.

Despite the myriad of changes in name, location, and constitution, there is a single, unifying thread that connects today’s institution to the school founded ninety years ago by Dr. Sun: a spirit of progress, optimism, and scholarship that has proven its resilience time and time again. From the pastoral scenes of yesteryear to the commercial frenzy of today, the entire university community treasures the storied history of SYSU and together looks forward to discovering what the next ninety years hold for this remarkable institution.

Source: http://zssom.sysu.edu.cn/eng/History/Index.aspx
"SYSU Lions" Unveiled as University’s Anniversary Mascots

As celebrations for the 90th anniversary of the founding of Sun Yat-sen University continue across campus, the University has unveiled the “SYSU Lions”, the official mascots of the anniversary festivities. The five Chinese-style lions are depicted in five different poses, each representing an element of the University’s motto. The motto, which was personally inscribed by Dr. Sun Yat-sen himself and is based on five couplets of Chinese characters, translates into English as “Study Extensively, Enquire Accurately, Reflect Carefully, Discriminate Clearly, Practice Earnestly”. Each mascot’s pose corresponds to one phrase in the motto, ranging from a lion receiving a diploma to a lion leaping through the air. The ceramic lions were first conceived of as sketches, before being made into three dimensional computer models. After that, they were cast in clay, glazed, and finally fired in a kiln, giving them a distinctive green or red sheen reminiscent of Chinese-style roof tiles.

Beyond the university motto, the inspiration to use this particular animal as a mascot comes from an iconic stone lion that sits outside of Martin Hall on SYSU’s south campus. The lion pre-dates even the founding of the University itself, and was placed in its current location by Mr. Chung Wing Kwok, the first president of Lingnan University. Lingnan University was founded in 1888 and was later incorporated into SYSU as Lingnan (University) College, a constituent college of SYSU. The statue was originally located in central Guangzhou and was moved to the campus in the early 20th century. “Guardian Lion” sculptures, valued for their spiritual and aesthetic properties, have been found in China dating back over two millennia to the Han dynasty and are used to this day to symbolically protect the gates and entrances of important buildings.

Adding another level of symbolism to the choice is the similarity between the characters and pronunciations of the Chinese words for “lion” (狮子) and for “teachers and students” (师子), shi zi). On the next page, you can find images of all five SYSU Lions.
Boxue Lion

Shenwen Lion

Shensi Lion

Mingbian Lion

Duxing Lion
As a part of the ongoing activities commemorating the 90th anniversary of the founding of Sun Yat-sen University, a bevy of internationally renowned scholars and academics has gathered on campus to participate in SYSU’s Yat-sen Distinguished Scholars Forum. Speakers invited to take part in the Forum hail from countries across the world and specialize in a range of academic disciplines. Most notable was the participation of several Nobel Prize winners, all of whom used the Forum as a platform to give public lectures to the SYSU and wider community on their respective areas of expertise.

On the afternoon of October 24, 2014, Professor Robert C. Merton, 1997 Nobel Laureate in Economics and School of Management Distinguished Professor of Finance at the MIT Sloan School of Management at MIT, gave a lecture entitled “Systemic Risk Measures for the Financial System: A Finance Approach” at Swasey Hall on SYSU’s South Campus. In the lecture, Prof. Merton used network theory and econometric techniques to measure connectedness in macro-financial systems. Through data analysis of 17 sovereign states, 63 banks and 39 insurance companies, he advanced a theory of unified macro-finance framework targets. He received the Nobel in Economics for pioneering a new method to determine the value of derivatives.

Swasey Hall. In a wide-ranging and accessible lecture, Prof. Lehn started from the origin and evolution of the universe, explaining how matter became complex, and stating that "The essence of chemistry is not just to discover but to create novel expressions of complex matter; The book of chemistry is not just to be read, it is to be written; the score of chemistry is not just to be played, it is to be composed." Dr. Lehn has been Professor at the Collège de France in Paris since 1979. He received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1987 for his work research on “molecular recognition, i.e. the way in which a receptor molecule recognizes and selectively binds a substrate.”

Three weeks later on November 5th, Professor Jean-Marie Lehn, 1987 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, gave a lecture titled “Towards Complex Matter: Chemistry? Chemistry!”, also at Swasey Hall. On November 10th through the 12th saw a trio of lectures by Nobel laureates as part of the Forum. On November 10th, Stanford University Professor of structural biology Michael Levitt, 2013 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, presented a lecture entitled “Birth & Future of Multiscale Modeling of Macromolecules”. The lecture took place in the Administrative Building on SYSU’s East Campus and was hosted by Professor Li Mengfeng, Vice President of SYSU. Prof. Levitt discussed his work in computational structural biology by placing it in a historical context. He began with the discovery of the double helix model of DNA and proceeded to
trace the history of essential discoveries in the field. He concluded with a projection about the future of the structural biology, including a discussion of likely applications in fields such as medical science and public health. Prof. Levitt has been a Professor at Stanford since 1987 and is a member of both the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. He received the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2013 for "the development of multiscale models for complex chemical systems."

The next morning on November 11th, Prof. Roger Kornberg, 2006 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, gave a lecture at the Science Building on SYSU’s North Campus entitled “Basic Science: Back to the Future.” Prof. Kornberg reviewed the history of microbiological research and introduced the process and rules of genetic transcription, especially new findings in related fields and the process of new discoveries. Beyond a discussion of his area of expertise in particular, Prof. Kornberg also urged students in all fields of science to pursue their passions and dig deep into research areas in which they are interested. Prof. Kornberg has been a Professor of structural biology at Stanford Medical School since 1978. Like Professor Levitt, he is also a member of both the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2006 for his studies of process by which genetic information from DNA is copied to RNA, "the molecular basis of eukaryotic transcription."

The morning of November 12th saw the Scholars Forum play host to yet another Nobel Laureate, this time for work in physics. Samuel Chao Chung Ting (丁肇中), professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and recipient of the 1976 Nobel Prize in Physics, delivered a lecture entitled “Searching for the Basic Structure and Origins of the Universe.” Prof. Ting was the lead scientist involved with a project designed to look for answers to just those questions. He is the principle investigator for the Alpha Magnetic Spectrometer (AMS) experiment. The AMS is mounted on the International Space Station and is designed to gather data and perform experiments aimed at answering the most fundamental questions about our universe. Prof. Ting also encouraged potential researchers to have confidence in themselves, and to have open minds when approaching new research and experimental problems. Born in the United States, Professor Ting moved as a small infant back to his parent’s ancestral home in China’s Shandong Province. He moved back to the United States to pursue higher education and has been teaching at MIT since 1969. He was the first ever Nobel Laureate to give his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in Mandarin Chinese.

The lectures were well attended not only by representatives of SYSU’s student body, faculty, and leadership, but also by diplomatic, industrial, and government figures from across the province. The lectures were also live broadcast to all four of SYSU’s campuses by the SYSU Television Station and Yat-sen Online Lectures program. The Yat-sen Distinguished Scholars Forum is an ongoing lecture series. The next issue of SYSU World will include additional coverage of lectures from Nobel laureates and other leading figures that will be given as part of the Forum.
Alumni Carnivals Held on Campus

Sun Yat-sen University recently organized a series of Alumni Carnivals to coincide with celebrations for the 90th Anniversary of the university’s founding. The four carnivals, one on each campus, were considered the main events held to welcome alumni back home to share in the university community’s happiest moment. The festivities on the south campus featured 120 pairs of alumni spouses, many of whom could be seen dressed in tuxedos and white gowns. Couples old and young enjoyed their time on the campus, reliving the days when they first found their love at SYSU. Also in attendance were well-known members of the faculty, former school administrators, and many other alumni there to wish the couples well and enjoy in the festive atmosphere.

SYSU Alum Liu Juntao can still remember the first time he laid eyes on his classmate Zhou Yuxiang. Entering study at SYSU in 1952, the couple shared a table in an introductory organic chemistry class. As Mr. Liu recalls, there was no shortage of suitors for the young Ms. Zhou’s affections. “She was definitely the most beautiful girl in our department. Many boys wanted to chase her.” Eventually they were both assigned to work in Beijing and Zhou finally worked up the courage to tell her: “You could look for someone else, but you’ve already found me.” The couple, now in their eighties, is still married to this day.

This is just one of the many humorous and heartfelt anecdotes that were relayed among the revelers at the carnival. Even though alumni are scattered across the country and around the world, every SYSU graduate share a common link which was on clear display during the carnival festivities: warm memories of their days on campus and an enduring spirit of camaraderie.
Cancer-killing Virus Discovered by SYSU Scientists

SYSU scientists have extracted a virus known as M1 that could kill cancer cells without harming normal cells, giving hope for future research and development of cancer therapies. A research team led by Yan Guangmei (pictured), a professor from the Zhongshan School of Medicine, found the virus, which is endemic to a certain kind of mosquito in the tropical Hainan Province. It is hoped that the virus can kill or curb the growth of cancer cells without adversely affecting healthy tissue.

Dr. Yan is one of SYSU’s most distinguished scholars. After completing his PhD at the Sun Yat-sen University of Medical Sciences, he received an international fellowship allowing him to travel to America to undertake postdoctoral work at the National Institute of Mental Health. He worked in both academia and the private sector in the United States before returning to Guangzhou to take up a professorship of pharmacology at his alma matter, SYSU’s medical school. He is also appointed as a vice president of the University. He has received a myriad of national grants and awards and has published over 160 academic papers. Additionally, Dr. Yan has obtained eight patents as the lead author.

This most recent discovery was published in the October edition of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America. Animal tests found that the M1 virus worked well on cancer cells of the liver, bladder, colon and rectum. Prof. Yan’s group has applied ex vivo experiments to primary human tumor surgical samples to further validate the effectiveness and specificity of the above oncolytic virus. Researchers are hopeful that the findings can have profound significance in the development of new targeted anti-cancer drugs for personalized therapy.
Five German siblings, Four studying in SYSU

Christian Rommeswinkel was enrolled at School of Chinese as a Second Language, SYSU.

He became the fourth child of his family to study at SYSU.

At the age of eight and a half he became a Formula race car driver.

This extremely handsome boy has been modelled for many websites and magazines as a part-time job.

"My eldest sister improved a lot while studying in SYSU".

To Christian Rommeswinkel, he always knew that he and SYSU would cross paths. His eldest sister, Renee Rommeswinkel graduated two years ago from SYSU. Mariel Rommeswinkel, his second eldest sister and his youngest sister, Adrianna Rommeswinkel are also attending classes at SYSU. Only his third eldest sister, Rachel Rommeswinkel chose to study at Xiamen University.

Christian chose to study at SYSU because of his eldest sister. "My sister studied at SYSU, from the time she was enrolled and until she graduated, I saw a very big change in my sister; her personality developed a lot," Christian said.

Mandarin so fluent that he can "argue" with his sisters.

Christian started to attend primary school in Dongguan where he came into contact with friends who only spoke Mandarin. But at home, he would use English to communicate with his parents. Christian said, "At home, my sisters and I would argue in Mandarin, because my parents don't understand Mandarin."

Siblings are very competitive.

Christian likes the atmosphere of his family because all his siblings are competitive and always want to win. "After my eldest sister graduated, she found a very good job working for an international shoe company in Shenzhen.

The children in our family secretly compare themselves with each other, which led to being even more mesmerized by all aspects of SYSU."

At the age of eight he started driving Formula race cars, even though he couldn’t reach the pedals.

Christian has over ten years of experience in the driver’s seat of a Formula race car. At the age of three and a half, his dad bought a go-kart track in Thailand for the family to support this hobby.

Christian's love for speed has always entranced him. When he was eight, he started driving Formula and has competed in many competitions, becoming "the youngest formula driver in history".

Because of Christian's love for racing, he often went to the Zhuhai International Circuit (ZIC) to race. In 2009, Christian attended an international competition in Beijing and his performance impressed the organizers a lot. Christian said he will continue to drive race cars in the future, however, because of some financial challenges now he is unable to race Formula cars.

Source: Guangzhou Daily, 2014-09-02 Page A15
Written by: Xu Jing
Translated by: Mariel Danielle Rommeswinkel
Edited by: Wang Dongmei
The 2014 edition of the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) university ranking tables has recently been published, with SYSU seeing another large leap in global rankings. Just four years ago, the university was outside of the QS top 500. Now, QS places the university at 321 overall, good for 9th among mainland Chinese universities and an improvement of 63 places over the 2013 rankings. QS ranks over 3000 higher education institutions based on six criteria: academic peer review, faculty student ratio, citations per faculty, recruiter review, and international orientation.

Sun Yat-sen University president Dr. Xu Ningsheng recently led a delegation of academics, administrators, and officials on a trip to the United States. President Xu accompanied Zhu Xiaodan, Governor of the People’s Government of Guangdong Province, to high level meetings at Stanford University. The Stanford delegation included university President John Hennessey, as well as two recent Nobel Prize winners in Chemistry and one recent Nobel winner in Medicine. The two groups of representatives discussed furthering collaboration, especially R&D collaborations in the fields which are important to the development in Guangdong, and the construction of an innovative mechanism for integrating industry, university, and research.

Sun Yat-sen University has announced the establishment of a nation-wide Alumni Association in Japan. The Japanese association joins a network of over 150 existing SYSU alumni organizations across China and around the world. A press release announcing the establishment notes that Japan is one of China’s most important neighbors, sharing cultural ties dating back millennia. The release also notes that Dr. Sun Yat-sen himself had a strong relationship with Japan and Japanese revolutionaries, using the country as a safe haven while being persecuted by Qing dynasty authorities. The Japanese chapter is headquartered in Tokyo (pictured).
The Guangdong Association of English Writing was founded on November 2, 2014 at Sun Yat-sen University. The Association is a joint project of SYSU, South China University of Technology, and Guangdong University of Foreign Studies. To herald the Association's initiation, forty-eight deans and teachers representing twenty-five institutes of higher education in Guangdong Province convened on the Lecture Hall of the School of Foreign Languages in SYSU’s South Campus to discuss the state of English writing education in the province. Topics covered include resource development, teaching, and assessment methods, all with the goal of producing top-quality English language writers in colleges and universities across Guangdong. Also discussed were the short- and long-term goals of the brand-new Association. GAEW is a branch of National Association of English Writing in China (NAEW), which was jointly initiated by Tsinghua University, Peking University, Nanjing University, Fudan University and Sun Yat-sen University, and founded in Nanjing University on November 30th, 2013.

Dean of Sino-French Nuclear Institute visits Exhibition in Paris

Professor Wang Biao, Chinese Dean of the Sino-French Institute of Nuclear Engineering and Technology, attended the first ever World Nuclear Exhibition in Paris from October 14th to 16th. The exhibition featured nearly 500 exhibits about nuclear energy technology and research and hosted over 72,000 attendees from 71 countries. Dean Wang met with Manuel Valls, the prime minister of France, who praised the cooperation between China and France on the issue of nuclear technology and energy. This cooperation is represented by the Sino-French Institute, which is a jointly established, degree-issuing research institute founded by Sun Yat-sen University and a consortium of French nuclear energy experts organized by the polytechnic institute in Grenoble. France is a global leader in nuclear power, which accounts for over 70% of the energy consumed in the country. Dean Wang used his time at the exhibition to attend expert panels and to give a presentation about the Sino-French Institute and nuclear engineering education in China.
SYSU Launches Official Social Media Accounts

Sun Yat-sen University is pleased to announce the creation of our official social media accounts; you can now connect with SYSU on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. These accounts offer brand new platforms for past, current, and future members of the SYSU community to engage with and learn more about the University. The theme our social media outreach is “SYSU World”, which reflects the important role these accounts will play in opening dialogues with a diverse international audience. Log on and follow our accounts to get up-to-the-minute information and news about happenings at the University. These platforms will host images, videos, blog posts, news updates, and much more. They will also be a great way to interact and engage with the university community.

SYSU Holds First Advisory Board Inaugural Meeting

On November 11th, 2014, the inaugural meeting of the first ever Sun Yat-sen University Advisory Board was held in Swasey Hall on SYSU’s South Campus. The Advisory Board is a senior consultative body founded to provide advice and counsel for SYSU’s decision making. It is comprised of personnel from a wide range of backgrounds, including academic experts from many fields, SYSU alumni, and prominent members of the society. Over forty board members present at the meeting gave their opinions and suggestions on the development of the University. Some suggestions discussed at the meeting include placing emphasis on an interactive, student-centered teaching style and using SYSU’s strategic location in Guangdong province to encourage academic innovation.
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