

SCHOOL OF ARTS PRESS



SUNWAY UNIVERSITY | APRIL 2021



SOAP

School of Arts Press

ABOUT US

The School of Arts at Sunway University offers a variety of disciplines, ranging from Advertising and Public Relations to Design, Architecture, Film Production, Theatre and Music.

School of Arts Press (SOAP) is Sunway University's School of Arts monthly newsletter in which we highlight and provide information on student and staff achievements, past events as well as a notification platform for upcoming events.

ISSUE HIGHLIGHTS

In this month's issue, SOAP highlights the various achievements of SOA students & staff, the efforts put in by the SOA lecturers during online classes and more!

School of Arts Press —

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CONTENTS

- 01. Message from the Dean
- 02. Congratulations 'Umbrella' Crew!
- 03. Dr. Pauline's Latest Publication in ISEAS Perspective
- 04. Higher Education & Student Engagement in Times of Crisis
- 05. Dr. Catherine Leads Consultancy Project with Sunway Malls
- 06. Oxbridge Essay Competition
- 07. Teaching Behind the Screen: A Lecturer's Perspective
- 13. ART: UNLIMITED
- 17. Life After SOA: Karyn Tan

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

I don't know about you, but I chuckled in a very condescending way last year when people kept talking about the "Spanish Flu" and the fact that it lasted two years – "That could never happen in the 21st Century!" I'm a lot less condescending now!

Check out this month's student works in the Art: Unlimited Series below. And, speaking of student works, it seems like one of our student film productions wins an international award almost every month – congratulations to the crew of "Umbrella" for winning the People's Choice Award for Best Drama at the Argo Shorts.

Also, see below for some interesting perspective on what it is like teaching to a mostly blank screen, as many students prefer to leave cameras off for personal reasons when in the home.

Please forward this email to anyone who would be interested in receiving a monthly review of upcoming events and past successes in the SOA. Links to subscribe or unsubscribe are included in the email.



Professor Donald Bowyer
Dean of School of Arts

Congratulations 'Umbrella' Crew!



Another proud moment for the School of Arts and Sunway University!

"Umbrella" by the Digital Film Production (DFP) students from the Department of Film and Performing Arts (DFPA) has won the People's Choice Award for Best Drama at the Argo Shorts.

Congratulations to the entire team of Umbrella and may your win continue to inspire others!

You can watch this award-winning short film, [here](#).



Photo Source: Sunway University, School of Arts Facebook

Dr. Pauline's Latest Publication in ISEAS Perspective

Digital media is an integral part of politics in Malaysia, having become an essential communication channel for both the government and the opposition, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Pauline's publication titled 'Digital Media: An Emerging Barometer of Public Opinion in Malaysia' was published on April 1st by ISEAS Yusof Ishak. Topics that were discussed include: Digital Media in Malaysia Today, Online Reputation and Digital Presence, and Young Voters in the Next General Election.

Congratulations to Dr. Pauline on your well-deserved achievement! Click [here](#) to read her full publication.



Photo Source: Dr. Pauline Leong



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pauline Pooi Yin Leong has more than 15 years of teaching and academic experience in universities. She received her PhD in Political Communication from Monash University and her Master in Communication from Nanyang Technological University.

Higher Education & Student Engagement in Times of Crisis

by Prof. Bradley Freeman

Professor Bradley Freeman, Head of the Department of Communication, recently gave the Keynote Address at the Tenth International Conference on Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education. The American University in Beirut hosted the virtual conference in April with scholars participating from around the globe.



This year's conference theme focused on "Higher Education and Student Engagement in Times of Crisis." The conference provided opportunities for faculty to discuss experiences with online learning during the past year and to share best practices that they found to be effective. Throughout the conference's many sessions, faculty built relationships with their local, regional, and international peers.

Professor Freeman's Keynote Address represented a tracing of his journey with online learning, from taking an online class called "The Sociology of the Internet" during graduate school, participating in a MOOC in 2008, to developing and teaching an online course in 2015. He also provided a review of the research in blended learning over the past twenty years, with a special focus on studies published in the past year during the pandemic.

Conference sessions dealt with many different topic areas, including Assessment of Program and Course Learning Outcomes in Higher Education; Community-Based Learning; E-learning and Pedagogy; Teaching, Learning and Assessment Procedures in Higher Education; and Writing Instruction and Research in Higher Education.

This conference, and others like it, are an important way that faculty members can meet and exchange ideas to improve the student learning experience. Many lecturers present at conferences throughout the year – why not ask a lecturer what their last presentation was about and where it was held?



Professor Bradley C. Freeman is Professor and Head of the Department of Communication, School of Arts at Sunway University. Prior to this, he was Professor of Communication & Information Studies at the Mohammed Bin Rashid School for Communication at the American University in Dubai and Assistant Professor at the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

Dr. Catherine Leads Consultancy Project with Sunway Malls

'Employer Branding' is a consultancy project with Sunway Malls, one of Malaysia's leading retailers. The project has a value exceeding RM50,000.

Led by Dr. Catherine Lee from the Department of Communication, the project duration will run from March 2021 to October 2022.

This project will cover:

- 1.Brand perception research
- 2.Strategy planning and implementation of communication campaign with BA (Hons) in Communication students under her supervision

Good luck and congratulations on the project, Dr. Catherine!



Dr Catherine Lee is Senior Lecturer at the School of Arts, Sunway University and has more than 19 years of teaching and research experience in higher education. She has published extensively in local and international peer-reviewed journals as well as presented at local and international conferences.

Oxbridge Essay Competition



Photo Source: Sunway Oxbridge Essay Competition Website

The Sunway-Oxbridge Essay Competition is a project organised by Sunway Group, Sunway Education Group, Monash University, Jeffrey Cheah Foundation, and the Oxford and Cambridge Society Malaysia. The competition is endorsed by the Ministry of Education Malaysia and is in partnership with Sunway Pals.

The competition is open to all Form 1-5 Malaysian students who are not undertaking international syllabi. There are 3 age-based categories with varying word limits. This event has been running for the past 7 years and this year a new category was added to include secondary school teachers!

For this year's competition, Year 2 and Year 3 students from the School of Arts were invited to judge the preliminary round of Category A. Sixteen students were enlisted to shortlist the top 100 essays submitted by thousands of applicants ranging from 13-15 years of age.

The participants of the competition were asked to write how they would improve the state of online learning in light of the many challenges faced by students nationwide. Within a short span of 6 hours, the team of judges were able to narrow down and find the best of the submitted essays. As no comments or feedback were required, the marking process was smooth and quick.

Twenty-six winners in total from Category A (13-15 year olds) and Category B (16-17 year olds) will receive cash prizes, Sunway bursaries and Sunway Pals points in addition to certificates and trophies. The winner of Category C (secondary school teachers) will receive a brand new laptop among other tokens of appreciation.

Read more about the competition [here](#).

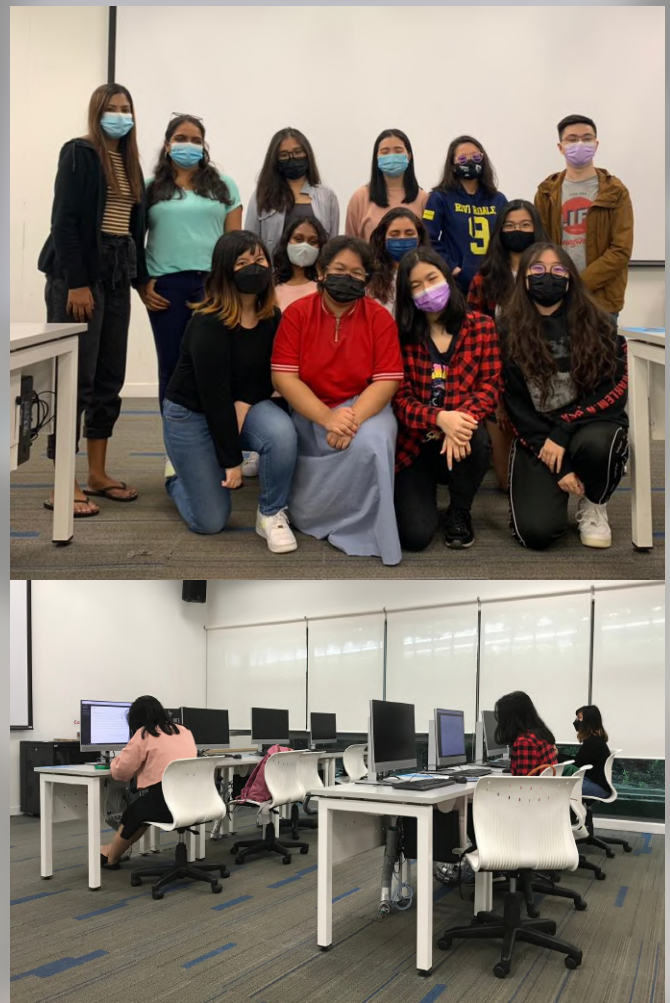


Photo Source: Qarlene Rishiq

TEACHING BEHIND THE SCREEN:

A Lecturer's Perspective



In the past year, there have been dramatic changes in the education system and the way teaching and learning is conducted. While students have struggled with studying online, many teachers have also wrestled with the heavy toll of distance learning.

We want to highlight the efforts of a few lecturers from SOA based on their experiences of teaching behind the screen.

MR. LYON LAXMAN



Photo Source: Qarlene Rishiq

Personally, I have enjoyed teaching remotely and while I did miss lecturing physically, I actually prefer to teach online. I enjoyed not having to travel to and from campus plus I have access to the internet from my home, making it easy to get work done. As for now, having 'hybrid' classes is really a win-win in my opinion.

I am fortunate to have a strong background in IT that helped me catch up and adapt much quicker than others. There are so many lecturers who had to learn how to conduct classes without the proper equipment or knowledge at the start of the pandemic.

"I hope more support is given in the future to those who need it, especially since we are more prepared now than we were one year ago."

However, having little to no human contact does get difficult. Even though everyone attends class, very few students leave their cameras on throughout the duration of the lesson, which I don't blame them for either because if everyone switches on their camera then the quality of call or meeting gets disrupted.

Although going online has improved the attendance rate and lessened my waiting time for students to submit their work, I am unable to know if they are following the subject and understanding the content being taught. In comparison with having face-to-face classes, doing things virtually make it tougher to monitor the progress of the pupils.

What I think can be done to improve the standard of online learning might be to get the students to show themselves more, maybe by switching on their cameras for a few minutes at the beginning or the end, to encourage them to focus and pay attention, rather than just going back to bed after logging into the virtual classroom.

Another suggestion would be to improve the attendance-taking method as the entire process takes time. Something more effective that can be done to replace it would be having a system that is able to automatically track the students when they enter the meeting or write their names in the chat box. It would be helpful if the chat is downloaded in an excel format so that lecturers like myself are able to keep track of attendance more efficiently.

Despite the many challenges we all have faced, I am blessed to be able to keep my job as many people around their world became jobless very quickly at the beginning of the lockdowns and whatnot. My occupation as a lecturer helps me to learn something new everyday, about myself and my style of hosting classes, from the comfort of my own home. The way I see it, online teaching is the way of the future and if we don't improve ourselves then we cannot guide the generations to come. I am also grateful to my family for keeping me motivated.

On a lighter note, my most "peculiar" experience while teaching behind a screen was probably the times I had muted myself by accident and continued speaking without realising I was talking to myself the whole time. I have also had students enter virtual class without muting themselves, which sometimes leads to me overhearing them having fights with people they are with or saying things about me, unaware that I can listen to everything.

I look forward to continuing doing things online because in all honesty, I do not see life on campus resuming back to the way it was just yet. I do not mind the hybrid classes as they are a good way to move forward, but I do wish we as lecturers had more flexibility and were able to decide which sessions we can do physically or virtually. I am also hoping to reconnect with several of my fellow colleagues whom I have not met in over a year.

Who knows, maybe SOA or Sunway will initiate a hybrid degree concept for students based on individual availability to attend classes from their own homes in other states or countries, or come to campus if able. Of course the payment of fees will be more expensive if on-site resources are used and etc ... but it's just something to think about for now.

MR. AMIRUL IDLAN MUKHTAR



Photo Source: Mr. Amirul Idlan

My experience of teaching behind the screen was overall quite interesting. As this is the first time I have had to teach online, the part I personally enjoyed most was how easy it was to access information to aid my classes.

"The ability to show my students images, videos and variations of sound at the click of a few buttons really helps enhance their learning experience."

On the other hand, doing anything online requires a stable internet connection which is always a problem for both me and my students. Some days, they can't hear me while some days I can't hear them. Another issue I faced while lecturing from a distance was being unable to physically demonstrate certain skills or techniques to the class. Teaching interior design virtually also restricts me from being able to physically mentor the progress and growth of my students.

Something odd that has happened to me during this time was having to host a class while driving. It wasn't my ideal choice but due to an emergency I was dealing with, it had to be done. That experience made me realise how we can truly adapt if the situation calls for it and multitask when necessary. As the saying goes, desperate times require desperate measures!

At this particular point in time, motivation is a tricky topic because of the uncertainty of the current situation in our country with the pandemic. We never know what could happen in an hour from now, much less tomorrow. However, something that does energize me is the willingness and commitment of my students to push past what is ongoing. They truly work hard and put in a lot of effort to constantly improve themselves on a daily basis.

In terms of what can be done to improve the quality of teaching and learning behind the screen, I would suggest a form of investment to be made to purchase extra gadgets or hardware such as desk visualisers or tablets to help both students and teachers with online classes. As someone who is finishing his PhD, I look forward to seeing more inventions and technology-based advancements being implemented to improve the future of virtual studies.

I truly hope that we are all able to continue powering through life despite the virus and everything that it entails. It hasn't been easy and while things might not get "better" any time soon, it is essential for us to bear with it and not allow the pandemic to pull us away from what we need to get done.

DR. DUSAN PETKOVIC



Photo Source: Dr. Dusan Petkovic

Of course everyone is dealing with their own set of struggles, and for me, the experience of teaching online has been a stressful one. From the viewpoint of a lecturer, the whole process of everything being moved virtually happened in levels. We started out in a state of shock and then moved on to disaster management and then moved on to adapt to how the pandemic will have effects on education in the long run.

Generally, one cannot avoid the sense of loss when it comes to interaction with students. What was once a regular occurrence on a daily basis has now become something we must avoid. I believe interaction is the heart of university, so I was not going to let online learning become a glorified YouTube tutorial because it takes away the whole essence of teaching and learning.

Being from the film department, my colleagues and I are naturally tech savvy so it was quite easy for us to come up with ideas and instant changes to be made as

we were able to immediately identify what did and did not work for us. I can't imagine how challenging it must have been for lecturers in other other courses that depend on face-to-face classes and rely heavily on physical demonstrations to carry out their syllabi.

Having to restructure a programme that is highly hands-on was tough, especially as programme leader, I had to lead the whole team doing so. Fortunately, both the lecturers and students were determined to make the best of the situation which made the shift much more manageable. Filmmaking is a team sport and while it is important for us to understand the digital paradigm, interaction between humans is paramount so discovering new, innovative ways to implement the syllabus is essential.

With all this and more that was happening, having two young kids at home that needed to be homeschooled just added to the difficulty of the ongoing situation. Plus, certain elements of our personal lives had to be sacrificed and for me that meant having students contact me at all hours of day, sometimes even at 3am or 4am.

"Despite all this, my one and only motivation are the students I teach. They have always been my driving factor and they always will be."

Personally, I don't have a teaching background but when I met the students here at Sunway, they really blew me away. I know pursuing a career in the arts sector is often discouraged especially among local families, so I am truly inspired by their tenacity and passion.

My colleagues and I always do our best to put the students first, and while it is tiring it is also rewarding. As personable as we are, they are also very intelligent and continue to impress me on a daily basis.

However, I do think more initiative needs to be taken to improve the platforms that are used because students and lecturers alike are dealing with personal issues, such as mental health, and having systems that function poorly or have bad service can make things extra hard. It is important to have a sense of what the current generation is comfortable using so they can actually remember and implement what is being taught.

We are also quite student-centered and switched platforms to Zoom, even before it was officialised by the management, mainly because of how accessible and frequent students use it. We have also utilised twitch and discord for discussions, and on some occasions even used games like among us to reinforce the lesson.

Moreover, I think formality within the context of a digital classroom doesn't work well and I often encourage my students to interrupt me to ask questions or give feedback. By implementing 'inverted classroom' structure, I am able to guarantee a connection instead of isolation. In my opinion, teaching for hours and expecting 100% focus from the students is not effective. As the projects given are more outcome-based, I prefer to keep lectures and assessments to a minimum so we have more time to have open discussions about their progress while deadlines are kept flexible as well. I also require my students to have their cameras on as I prefer to speak to faces on a screen instead of walls.

Something I find funny is when my students upload funny pictures of me while I'm lecturing and post them on social media. They don't expect me to find it but it's constantly funny to see bits of me floating around on the internet. Another thing my students do is make stickers or memes of me, that are positive and not offensive, so it definitely helps to lighten the mood.

I hope students continue to find ways to congregate and organise themselves. If they are unable to understand the power of society, then university as a whole will lose relevance. This is where students learn how to be intelligent citizens of the world, they come together to improve soft skills, learn networking and management, which are all crucial parts of campus life.

Minus the previous year of mayhem, everything to do with digital and technological development has provided a steady flow of knowledge. Information is interchangeable due to the natural pivot of human interests, but if students lose the essence of university and are unable to maintain a sense of community whilst online or not, then the whole point of attending is pointless.

That is what I hope for.

ART : UNLIMITED

**ART: UNLIMITED IS DESIGNED TO SHOWCASE THE ART
MADE BY TALENTED MEMBERS OF THE SOA.**

**ART IS NOT CONFINED TO A CERTAIN STANDARD AS
THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF DIFFERENT
INTERPRETATIONS OF ITS CREATIONS AND**

**THIS MAY COME IN THE FORM OF PHOTOGRAPHY,
PAINTINGS, POETRY AND MORE.**

WE WELCOME ALL WORKS OF ART FOR THIS SECTION.

WARM TONES

WONG SU YEN, MALAYSIA

Department of Design Communication



Fashion is an art form that can be expressed in many different forms. Some choose to do it via design, some choose to model, some choose to style while others like me have chosen photography. Usually, I love working with bright colors. This time however, I decided to use warm tones as my main point of interest while using fashion. I'm proud of how well the images turned out and am definitely looking forward to playing around with more variations of warm shades in the future.

BRIGHTER DAYS

AHMAD HAZIM, MALAYSIA

Department of Film and Performing Arts (Digital Film Production)



I find that no matter how much I believe in my own independence, sometimes moments just unconsciously arrive when I am at the peak of my happiness, and this is when I'm with my beloved companions. Family. Partners. Friends. Heck even pets.

I would not smile as brightly as I did in this picture if I was alone. That's why I believe memories are the most beautiful thing. No matter how much has changed throughout your pathway in life, nostalgia could live in you forever if you let it, and you could replay those memories again in your heart.

Fortunately, those memories now come with visual aids in the form of digital photos to remind us and keep track of 'when and where', as compared to only relying on your consciousness of those moments. This picture is a snippet of me when I am experiencing one of those beautiful moments.

BEDROOM EXPRESSIONS

ZARIFAH BINTI MOHD ARIFF, MALAYSIA

Department of Communication



My inspiration varies, which is why my finished product is always different from the last. Although most of it comes from friends and magazines, my diverse life experiences in school and university also play a part in inspiring me to create my version of art.

Making these edits allow me to explore my creative potential without boundaries. I mostly use Photoshop or Procreate, among other software. The results of these edits are from hours of playing around with the images and what I think I can add that complements it best.



LIFE AFTER SOA SERIES: **Performer, Editor & Dancer**

Featuring Karyn Tan





Photo Source: Karyn Tan

This month's issue of Life After SOA features Karyn Tan Khai Rin, a Diploma in Performing Arts 2019 graduate. Being an introvert, she found it difficult to present herself in front of other people, but after joining the drama club in her high school, she discovered her love for acting and performing. Since then, her interest in performing arts grew and eventually led to her decision to join the Performing Arts course here at SOA.

"The lecturer that inspired me the most was Kelvin Wong, who led and guided us throughout our theatre project for Semester 3 titled, 'Bloodbound'." This project changed Karyn a lot as a person and a performer, allowing her to experience multiple difficulties along the way while she and her classmates slowly built their theatre performance from scratch. Under Kelvin's guidance, the Bloodbound team had to come up with ideas related to family. "I would say that the preparation process was a rollercoaster ride," from coordinating schedules with teammates, to rushing to finish their tasks before the deadline, to comforting each other when they came to a

standstill, to eating spaghetti from Pink House (a cafe near Sunway University that was still operating in 2017) when brainstorming ideas.

Karyn also mentions that she would even stay at the Rooftop Theatre until late at night with her teammates, while crying together out of nervousness when a performance date was nearing.

"I can't pinpoint which exact moment was the most memorable for me, because the whole semester was indeed magical," as she explains how this course had changed her from being an introverted person who couldn't talk confidently in front of a group of people, to opening up and becoming a performer in theatre. "It was a breakthrough for me." The sudden emptiness that she felt after everything was done and dusted truly symbolised how important and memorable that semester was to her — in changing herself, going through new experiences, building unbreakable bonds and pushing her limits.



Photo Source: Karyn Tan

Another significant chapter in Karyn's university life was when 15 of her classmates, herself included, decided to perform several soundtracks from 'The Greatest Showman' for the annual Freshies' Night. "This was the highlight of our university life because I could really feel that we were all in this together as we met up after class almost everyday to dance, practice, discuss formations and transitions, and choose costumes." She remembers feeling excited when they finally got to rehearse in their costumes the day before the event. Despite being busy completing their assignments, focusing on the performance felt like taking a break where they could have fun and express themselves.

Another instance where Karyn has pushed herself in trying new things was when she participated in Sunway's Got Talent (2017 and 2018). "I managed to get into the Top 20 through dancing to K-pop songs but didn't get to go into the final round. Nonetheless, it was still a great experience!" Being someone who always hesitates to join competitions, Karyn felt great when she finally encouraged herself to go beyond her limits,

"I was timid, but after meeting all these people that influenced me in moving forward, I've managed to change myself to be more open to people and opportunities thus improving myself as a person," Karyn explains that as a whole, Diploma in Performing Arts has inspired her to get out of her comfort zone.

“

I definitely did not regret joining (Diploma in Performing Arts) at all. It was a beautiful chapter in my life for me. - Karyn

”



Photo Source: Karyn Tan



Photo Source: Karyn Tan

As to what she is doing now, Karyn is currently working as an editor in a film company. She admits that this shift in career path was not originally planned, as she truly loved performing in the theatre. However, it was in the interest of time that made her change her mind.

Upon interning at a theatre industry in her last semester, Karyn had the opportunity to become a stage manager for a show that was a collaborative project between two theatre companies in separate countries; meaning she got to travel to Singapore for work. Therefore, this was an eye-opening experience for her to experience working in different environments and with different people. However, because she is a dancer as well, this meant that working in theatre would cause her dance practice to clash with nightly theatre rehearsals. And that is why she made the decision to shift from the theatre industry to film instead.

The video editing classes in the course actually inspired Karyn to pursue her current career as a full-time (for almost 2 years now) video editor. Other than that, she is also pursuing a career as a dance instructor, where she aims to teach dance classes at night and during the weekend. "It might seem a bit too busy for me sometimes but in the end I still continue because I couldn't give up on any side. I want to continuously improve in both fields."

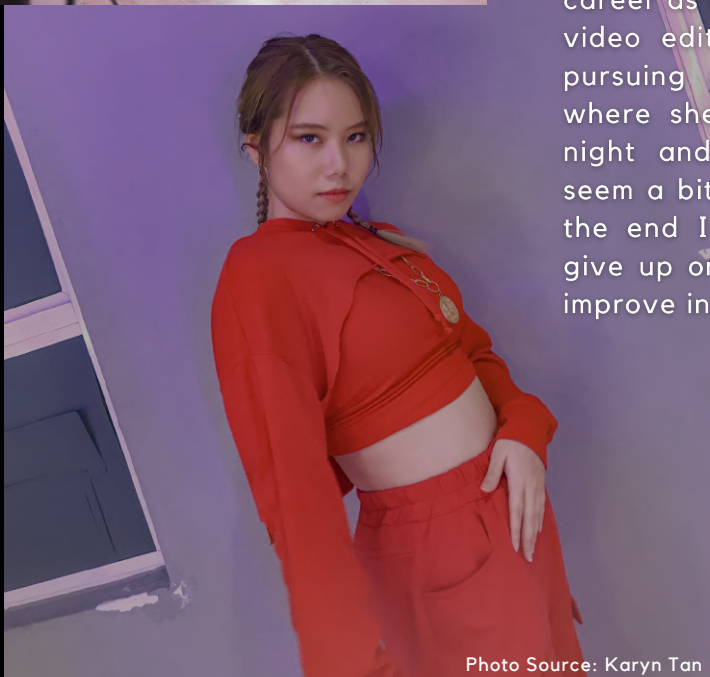


Photo Source: Karyn Tan



Photo Source: Karyn Tan

Studying performing arts in SOA has taught her a lot about teamwork, from organising projects in film or theatre, to learning how to handle things professionally and systematically. All those experiences from assignments made her realise the important aspects of working together to get a job done. To Karyn, lecturers play an important role as well, whereby some of them shared their stories and experiences from working in different industries, gave encouragement and advice on how to handle problems, and provided a clearer path in life for the students.

In terms of future goals, Karyn says that "Recently, I've just decided to shift my priority to focus more on dancing instead of editing. But I still won't give up on either side because I love doing both!". That being said, her ultimate goal is to simply enjoy what she does and be happy with the outcome. She also wants to be financially stable and have a healthy relationship with herself because she tends to place work over self-care sometimes. Once she finds a balance in life, she aims to grow better as a person by improving herself and striving for the best!



Photo Source: Karyn Tan