

Annex A

College of Integrative Studies (CIS) first cohort AY23/24 - Student Profiles

Jamie Yau (Singaporean, 20 years old)

- Co-founded *Empathly*, an AI that detects hate speech online
- A passionate champion of societal causes such as online safety, entrepreneurship and youth development
- The youngest writer to contribute to *The Birthday Book** 2022
- Describes herself as a “vicariously curious optimist”



SMU undergrad Jamie Yau (second from right) co-founded *Empathly*, an AI to detect hate speech online.

Why set up an AI to detect hate speech?

“My intrinsic motivation to co-found *Empathly* stemmed from my personal experience of being cyberbullied in Secondary school. I wished to support youths, including my younger sibling and juniors, and help them to feel safer online. *Empathly* is an AI that uses behavioral nudges and back-end filters to combat hate speech online.

Through this journey, I have gained a profound understanding of how to advocate against online hate. Many Singaporeans are receptive to this issue and keenly aware of its impact. To foster a safer internet, I believe in the power of storytelling and nudging. Stories can move and inspire people by sharing impactful experiences. Nudging serves as a constant reminder to be kind and empathetic online, fostering lasting behavioral change.

This initiative has not only highlighted areas where Singapore can further enhance its online safety protocols but has also fostered a greater awareness of the need for security within online communities. I envision individuals and communities collectively making efforts to be more mindful in safeguarding our online spaces, creating a more conducive digital environment for all.”

Thrilled to be the youngest writer for *The Birthday Book 2022*

“Although the opportunity to be part of a national book thrilled me, I also felt the pressure to ensure my story left a meaningful impact on its readers.

As I engaged in conversations with my mentor, I realized that the best way to narrate my journey with *Empathly* was to be authentic in sharing my experiences with readers. Working with The Birthday Collective

was an incredibly enriching experience. Engaging in conversations with 56 other writers in the project was fascinating and eye-opening. This project has also given me the opportunity to join the organising team for the second edition of The Birthday Collective's Fellowship programme.”

Passion for social causes, with a focus on AI safety, entrepreneurship and youth development

“Online Safety is a cause that is close to my heart. Growing up with Nintendo and iPads, I grew to love social media and the digital space. Yet the experience of being cyberbullied in secondary school alerted me to its dangers. Since developing *Empathly*, I’ve continued advocating for online safety by working with Cyber Youth Singapore, a youth-led non-profit organisation. I co-lead the partnerships division, where we forge meaningful partnerships that contribute to our core mission.

The second area I'm passionate about is Entrepreneurship. My journey began with an enriching internship at Enterprise Singapore's Startup Division, followed by three exciting years in Singapore Polytechnic's School of Business. These experiences provided me with invaluable opportunities to delve into the world of business and entrepreneurship, honing my skills along the way. Engaging in numerous startup conferences and events further fueled my passion, and co-founding *Empathly* was a significant milestone. This venture allowed me not only to celebrate my successes but also to take immense joy in witnessing and supporting others on their entrepreneurial paths.

Third, I believe strongly in youth development and non-profit work. Having benefitted richly from youth development activities, I am inspired to do the same for others. I was designated one of Singapore's top 30 young leaders by the Halogen Foundation, a youth development foundation. During my management internship with the foundation, I had the privilege of being mentored by Halogen's CEO, Ivy. This was an enriching that broadened my perspective. I now prioritise a rewarding career, over a one that pays well.”

Why College of Integrative Studies (CIS)?

“I chose CIS for three reasons: flexibility, community and the edge it offers.

First, flexibility: CIS allows me to reach my three interest areas of Tech, Business and Social Sciences (Sociology, Philosophy, etc.). There are no existing (educational) paths that integrated all three and CIS allows me to build my own path.

Second, community: CIS allows us to engage consistently with professors and seniors. That is a huge plus, as it allows me to be a part of a pioneering community pursuing an unconventional educational pathway in Singapore.

Third, the CIS competitive edge: In my view, CIS outranks local and overseas universities’ programmes in terms of mentorship, community and flexibility. These are areas most important to me when selecting an educational institute.”

Career / future plans

“I’m looking forward to exploring roles in partnerships and engagement in the social and business sectors. I envision working with social enterprises or in roles which promote Corporate Social Responsibility. Being someone who enjoys the company of others, I feel these are areas best suited to leverage my strengths.”

**The Birthday Book is an annual publication that examines emerging challenges and opportunities for Singapore.*

Leon Lee Jia Xu (Singaporean, 21 years old)

- Self-described introvert with a passion for social causes, particularly championing inclusivity for the underdogs
- Joins SMU from Hwa Chong Institution (HCI), where he served as Community Service Director in the HCI Interact Club
- Developed strong leadership qualities as platoon commander during National Service
- Was an active participant in the *Youth Ecosperity Dialogue 2023*, a platform which explored key challenges and opportunities in sustainability and regional prosperity in Asia



SMU undergrad, Leon Lee, champions inclusivity for underdogs. Here, he is pictured at the CIS Freshman Orientation Camp in July 2023.

Passion for championing inclusivity

“In working with different types of beneficiaries such as people with intellectual and/or physical impairment, low-income groups, and migrant workers, I realised the diversity of needs in our community. These experiences convinced me of the importance of inclusivity, even more so as Singapore continues to prosper. I also learnt to be more receptive to new ideas when working in diverse teams, as individuals may approach a problem from different angles. As every member has something unique to contribute, an inquiry mindset and flexible thinking can help us avoid tunnel vision and overcome bottleneck situations.”

Motivated volunteer with a heart for empowering youth

“While I’ve worked with many beneficiaries in the past, my passion lies in youth empowerment. I believe as leaders of the future, it’s never too early for youths to start making a difference, no matter how small. I’ve been described as curious, observant and passionate. In my view, these are important elements of being an effective leader and a volunteer.

I’ve had the opportunity to develop these qualities since I was in secondary school, when I led a project (Project Hear Me Out) to raise funds and awareness for the Deaf and Hard-of-hearing community. Currently, I’m part of “Jalan Journey”, a social enterprise that helps youth develop better understanding and empathy for vulnerable groups in society through gamified virtual learning experiences.

Why College of Integrative Studies (CIS)?

“I chose CIS because I have diverse interests, ranging from political science to economics to data analytics. At present, I am exploring different fields to understand the career options available, and CIS’ interdisciplinary and open-ended curriculum allows me to make the most of that process.”

CIS D3 Programme – the deal clincher

“I’m looking forward to exploring all that CIS has to offer under the D3 programme* and learning with my peers. I’ve heard so much about the various initiatives that have been painstakingly planned for us, so it’s exciting to finally get into the thick of action.”

Career / future plans

While I’m still exploring different options, at present I am interested to work in (or perhaps to start) a social enterprise where I can give back to the community.

***Deferred Declaration of Degree Programme (D3)**

The D3 Programme (D3) allows students to defer the declaration of their degree programmes, giving students a chance to take their freshman year to explore their interest across disciplines, and declare their degree programmes only at the end of their first year.