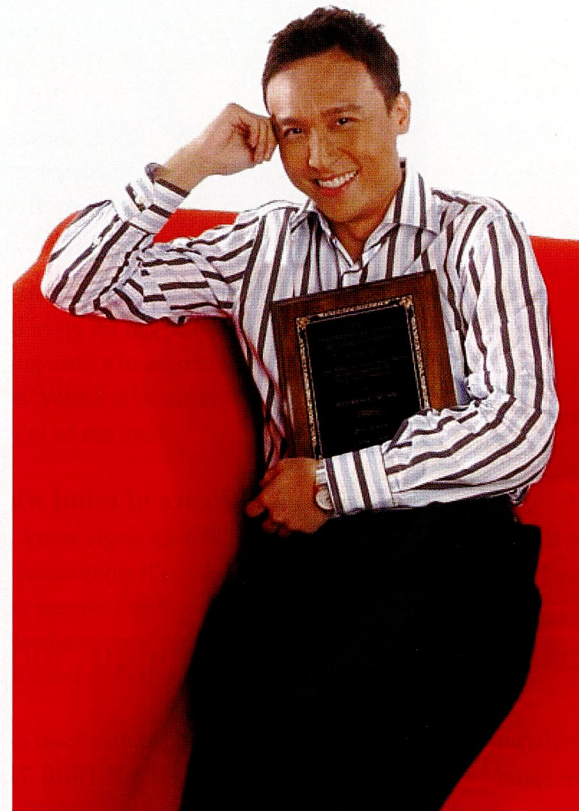


Earnest Reuben Goes to Athens

The NUS Alumni Office plays a key role in Reuben receiving an award for a research project on organisational resilience.



Athens, named after the goddess Athena, was a powerful centre of learning that nurtured Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. Last August, the 3,000-year-old city was the perfect setting for Reuben Ng, psychology major and business minor from the University Scholars Programme, to receive an international award and present two papers to psychologists from around the world.

He certainly did Singapore and NUS proud by being the first undergraduate and youngest person ever to win the coveted Seisoh Sukemun/Bruce Bain Early Career Research Award (2005-2006). His trip was made possible by the NUS Alumni Office's Student Financial Assistance Programme.

At the invitation of the International Council of Psychologists, he presented the research for which he won the award. The research for the Singapore Police Force (SPF) was on the importance of building organisational resilience as a way for security forces to cope with stress to achieve greater success.



Reuben presenting his award-winning paper.

"A resilient organisation is one that is capable of responding rapidly to unforeseen change and consequently to emerge stronger. Building resilience is paramount to the SPF given the challenges brought about by global terrorism and the soon-to-be-built Integrated Resorts," explained Reuben.

Researchers have found five factors characteristic of resilient organisations. Out of these factors, two have emerged relevant to the SPF – communication/openness and management commitment. "This does not in any way suggest that the SPF is lacking in these areas," Reuben emphasised, "it simply means that if the SPF wants to build its organisational resilience capacity for greater success, it can consider focussing on these two areas."

Elaborating on the consulting project he did for the SPF, Reuben suggested that the SPF could enhance current channels of internal communication, in particular formal and informal avenues for feedback. Security forces, in general, needed to look towards being more agile in internal communication. "Communication agility is going beyond top-notch communication systems. There must be an environment of openness, the willingness to share ideas and the ability to do so. All these must be engendered."

Despite the tight schedule at the 64th Annual Convention of the International Council of Psychologists, Reuben found time to sip cherry juice, try all sorts of nuts that Greece is famous for and roam the labyrinths of Athens. "Athens is so old, I can feel its soul," he quipped. Reflecting on the ancient statues and pillars of the Acropolis, Reuben felt that there was "beauty in ageing."

Indeed, ancient Greece gave Reuben many things to ponder but more importantly, the conference opened his eyes to what was missing in psychology. "A lot of good research is being done but not much of it is communicated to the public and even less of it is applied. I hope to plug this gap," Reuben stated simply.



Receiving the award has whetted Reuben's appetite to do more applied research that is useful to society.

Most importantly, the experience has strengthened Reuben's resolve to make a difference through research. He has done other research – designing programmes to help youths cope with negative emotions and understanding human attraction for better matching in dating agencies – which he hopes will benefit society.

For his deep desire to make a difference, Reuben was featured in *The Straits Times*' annual listing of top young achievers, "25 Under 25 to Watch". He has also been featured in *The Business Times*, *Lianhe Zaobao*, *TODAY*, NUS' online Research Gallery and newspapers in Japan.

"Since primary school, I've always wanted to make a difference in the lives of others. I hope to do this through research and application," Reuben quietly avowed. The NUS Alumni Office is glad to have contributed in some way to his mission.