

GYSS 2023 and its role in attracting talented foreign researchers Singapore

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Max Fong at GYSS

Since the coronavirus hit, the Global Young Scientists Summit (GYSS) has been held virtually instead of via in-person sessions in the previous two years. This year however, the alleviation of the impact of coronavirus made it possible for the summit to be held physically at the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) from 17 to 20 Jan 2023. While there were some online participants as well, over 400 young scientists from 106 institutions across 32 countries made their way to Singapore to participate physically in the panel discussions and presentations. While this year's summit also showcased presentations on various scientific research and development as usual, there were some topics that was not on scientific research itself, but rather the relationship between science and diplomacy, as well as effective science communication. In recent years, there has been much fake news being spread across the internet and social media, causing great societal harm especially in the case of the COVID-19 vaccination, where even politicians shared untruths about the vaccination and led to many preventable deaths, bringing to light the increasing importance for scientists to communicate accurate scientific information to the public in an effective manner.

Organized by the National Research Foundation (NRF) of Singapore in partnership with various local research institutions, GYSS is an annually held summit where hundreds of top-class young scientists gather in Singapore every year. It features plenary lectures by various distinguished scientists including Nobel laureates, Fields Medal, Millennium Technology Prize and Turing Award recipients, and provides a platform for discussion and interaction between leading minds in the world.

While GYSS presents an excellent opportunity for scientists to expand their research networks and explore new ideas, it also forms part of the Singapore government's strategy to attract foreign talented researchers to live and work here. When the summit was first conceptualized in 2013 by Dr Tony Tan, chairman of NRF at the time, there were 3 main objectives, to inspire the next generation of scientists, to build a strong global research network for researchers in Singapore and to introduce the research and development landscape in Singapore and attract researchers to live and work here.

Throughout GYSS, the Singapore government establishes their support for scientific research funding and showcases relevant infrastructure such as research institutes and laboratories in Singapore to young scientists from around the world. At the opening speech, the NRF Chairman DPM Heng Swee Keat in his opening speech stressed that in his previous time as the Minister of Finance, he ensured that the government budget was sufficiently allocated to research funding and also encouraged the young scientists to experience Singaporean culture such as hawker food. To this end, each participant was also given an EZ-link card containing 10 dollars, allowing them to easily use the efficient local public transport system and experience more regions in Singapore and the local lifestyle during their stay. Research institutes and laboratories in Singapore were also introduced to the participants by the researchers at those facilities themselves, shedding light on the equipment and research environment in Singapore as well as the variety of research that is being done here. It can be said that the promotion of the local research and development landscape through such methods to attract foreign talented researcher is part of the reason why Singapore has been able to rapidly grow and become a significant presence in scientific research despite being such a small country.

All in all, despite spanning just four days, GYSS was an extremely memorable event for the participants. Many said that they were inspired in their interactions with Nobel laureates and was glad to have taken part in the summit and connect with so many like-minded scientists from different countries and cultures.