



STATEMENT

1. On the evening of the 8th of February, 2017, between 8:00 PM and 10:30 PM, the Yale-NUS Student Government Council hosted a Town Hall at the Multi-Purpose Hall to discuss the Honour Code, Election Reform, and other Contemporary Issues concerning the student body, in the presence of the student body, and members of the faculty and administration.
2. First and foremost, the Council extends its deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to hosting the Town Hall. Thanks in particular to the Men's Basketball, Women's Basketball, and Floorball teams for adjusting their training schedules to allow us to use the space. The Council also wishes to thank the Infrastructure department as well as the Education Resources and Technology department, for aiding the Council in setting up the Town Hall.
3. The Council also sincerely thanks President Pericles Lewis, Dean Christopher Bridges, Executive Vice-President Tan Tai Yong, Executive Vice-President Kristen Lynas, and all members of the administration who attended the Town Hall and sought to honestly and productively engage with the student body.
4. We thank members of the student body, overseas and otherwise, who raised their questions on the floor and drove discourse during the entire duration of the Town Hall. You exhibited the manner of moral courage that makes Yale-NUS students who they are. We are grateful to every member of the student body who attended the Town Hall, in-person or online.
5. Several salient points came up over the hours of intense dialogue. Here are the main issues, and steps forward for each of them:

a. *Honour Code*

The Honour Code will be developed from the current raw form by the Dean of Students office, then amended by the Council to reflect the values of the student body it represents. This version will be made open to amendment, approval, and finally adoption by the student body. Residential College Councils will also be consulted in its drafting. Contact simmons.avery11@u.yale-nus.edu.sg if you would like to be involved.

b. *Election Reform*

The Constitution Review Committee, supervised by the Council, will try to make elections more competitive and more representative. The Committee shall constantly seek student body input, and the student body will be notified of any and all reforms before constitutional amendments are passed. Election reform is a pressing issue whose resolution will allow for subsequent Councils to be more effective in their operation. The Election Reform Committee, under the umbrella of the Constitution Review Committee, shall be releasing a signup form (tinyurl.com/jovcjth) for interested members of the student body to fill and seek a place on the Committee.

c. *Student Graduation Committee*

The *de facto* dissolution of the independent Graduation Committee worried the student body, and the Class of 2017 in particular. Students were concerned that their input was being set aside. Students asked the administration to explain the reasons behind this decision and guarantee their commitment to transparency and respect for the views of the student body, particularly the graduating class. Dean Bridges conveyed his conviction that the administration would not ignore the student body's views and opinions on the matter of graduation. Both sides are working to clear up miscommunications on this matter. The Student Graduation Committee will meet with Dean Bridges to further discuss and highlight student opinion on the coming graduation ceremony. Further questions were raised over the role, independence and possibility of a comprehensive listing of the various similar committees within the College, with suggestions for encouraging student participation made. The Council seeks to address these issues.

d. *YIRPA Suspension*

The student body expressed unease over what was seen as an untransparent process around the suspension of the Yale-NUS International Relations and Political Association. Questions were raised about the circumstances that led to YIRPA's suspension, and the broader circumstances that could lead to the suspension of any student organisation. Details surrounding YIRPA will be released once the administration's own investigation of YIRPA has concluded. The Council will seek further details of the administration's student organisations suspension policy and improved transparency.

e. *Events Approval Committee Policy*

Student concerns regarding perceived administrative heavy-handedness and ignorance of student opinion coalesced around the recently released Events Approval Committee policy. Many students expressed fear of diminished academic freedom and increased administrative interference with student organisations and private individuals alike. President Lewis stated that the policy sought to purely focus on events hosted by external parties, and not the internal events of student organisations. Such a policy is normal to educational institutions. One was not previously implemented because the College did not have a campus to apply the policy to. While accepting this, students pointed out that the Committee has no student representation and was formed months before being revealed, with no student input into its creation. The Council is seeking to improve student involvement in the document and is working with President Lewis and the rest of the administration – particularly the Dean of Students – to provide feedback and changes.

f. *Mental Health and Wellness*

In vulnerable and frank discussions about the state of mental health resources on campus, students expressed deep concern over the way administration handles mental health cases. The student body was particularly invested in learning more of the Yale-NUS contract with SACAC and sought a review of the administration's stance on mental health issues. President Lewis responded by assuring the student body that mental health would always remain a priority of the administration. The Dean of Students office will release more information on both SACAC and the subsequent movement to a panel of experts. The Council will work closely with the Dean of Students office and student parties—notably

ALOE—to closely follow the situation, provide information to the student body and feedback to the administration on its policies surrounding mental health.

g. *Increasing student input in major administrative decisions*

Members of the student body expressed their need for greater student representation in the decision-making processes of the administration, not just limited to the current concerns with graduation and events approval. Student presence in major administrative committees and decision discussions were proposed. The Council will advocate for greater student representation in the proceedings of major administrative bodies.

h. *Improving discussion platforms between students and administration*

The student body articulated a desire for improved platforms for communication with the administration. The Council is engaging in talks with the Education Resources and Technology department to develop a Yale-NUS College communication application for student use. Updates shall be released by the Council following upcoming meetings.

i. *The vision and culture of Yale-NUS College*

While immensely subjective, with every member of the student body owning a different perspective, discussions did revolve around what we as a student body want our vision and culture to be like. The Council among other things, is presently working on a thorough archive of College history, documents, and moments; the *YNCyclopedia*. On the administration's part, President Lewis will host a town hall soon to address the question of the College's vision, present and future.

6. In the coming days, the Council will vigorously advocate for the student body it represents. We will listen to every comment, every concern, and every question the student body has, be it for the Council itself, or the administration it works with. A list of deliverables towards this end will be released together with this statement.
7. Notwithstanding our uncompromising commitment to representing the interests of the student body, the Council will work to maintain a warm relationship with the administration to encourage productive engagement and tangible results. The Council will also work to curtail the perception of an autocratic institution and ensure that student

involvement is not localised or isolated to the issues discussed in the Town Hall, but stretches beyond it to encompass a wholesome atmosphere of advocacy and empathy.

8. The Council encourages students to maintain their momentum of opinion and activism. Make productive change by taking advantage of the constructive channels of communication and advocacy that are open for all. For instance:
 - a. Come to Student Council meetings (every Wednesday, 8:00 PM - 9:00 PM at Clasroom 14),
 - b. Provide feedback to the the Council through the feedback form (<http://tinyurl.com/yncfeedbackform>),
 - c. Attend the listening sessions and Town Halls which happen on a regular, if ad hoc, basis on various topic;
 - d. Follow the Council's weekly updates;
 - e. Make good use of the office hours offered by President Lewis, Dean Bridges, and the Council.
 - i. President Lewis: Thursdays 11-12, President's Office. Email for appointment: nicola.lim@yale-nus.edu.sg.
 - ii. Dean Bridges: Book appointment. Email for appointment: shirley.thia@yale-nus.edu.sg.
 - iii. Student Government: Wednesdays 12-1pm, all dining halls.
 - f. Take advantage of our *open jio* to approach any member of government at any time and speak to them freely
 - g. Next semester, run for Council office, nominate able members of the student body for Council office, and register to contribute your voice to the various Committees under the supervision of the Council - the Election Reform Committee is seeking public participants.

9. The Council lauds the student body for not only its inspiring engagement with these issues, but also for its civility and patience in addressing them. We reaffirm our intention to advocate for and represent the interests of the student body and shall continue to work for a community built through constructive dialogue, meaningful discourse, and, lest we forget, a culture of care.

The Yale-NUS College Student Government Council
February 10th, 2017