



FEATURED BLOGGERS

Residential Living: Vice Rectors

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By Catherine Sanger, Vice Rector of Cendana Residential College

Students often get asked why they chose Yale-NUS, but as a staff and faculty member, I chose Yale-NUS as well. Actually, ‘chose’ is not the right word. I stalked. Around this time two years ago, I was approaching the end of my PhD program in IR at the University of Virginia. I knew I would have to start applying for jobs in a year’s time and that I wanted something outside the traditional tenure-track model found at most major universities. I was searching for the next step— a new challenge, a new city, a new job. It just so happened I was also searching for something to read, and picked up *The Economist*. In it, I found an article on new models in higher education and one of those models was Yale-NUS. It was everything I was looking for. A new institution in which I could grow professionally and make a difference personally. A liberal arts curriculum, something that I had experienced as a student in college and something that I value as an educator and that I want to see made available world-wide. And to top it off, the college was in Singapore— a place I had visited ten years ago, and to which I had longed to return. I emailed the President, the Dean, and a handful of other administrators at the college: “I am here. I am great. I want to work with you.” I started checking the Careers

page...monthly, then weekly, then daily. And then it appeared... The Vice Rector position: “For leadership of our residential college system, Yale-NUS College seeks outstanding teacher-scholars who are eager to devote their energies to the academic, personal, and social development of undergraduate students.” Sold! I applied immediately. Two Skype interviews, a week long on-campus interview, and some nail-biting later—I am the Vice Rector of Cendana Residential College at Yale-NUS...But what does that mean?

As a Vice Rector, I wear many hats at the college. As one of the primary academic advisors of students, I spend a lot of time working with students discussing the curriculum, course selection, and selecting a major. Because the college is still new and in the process of growing and defining itself, I also spend a lot of time discussing and developing academic regulations and support systems for our community with faculty and staff. Beyond academics, as a Vice Rector I play a large role in the residential life at Yale-NUS, living in the college with students, and working closely with the Dean’s Fellows who are heavily involved with supporting student groups and programming. As you can probably tell by now, wearing this many hats can be energizing and exhausting all at once. For example, I started today by meeting with about ten students, mostly to discuss course and major selection as well as study strategies that will help them manage their academic demands. I then met with fellow staff and faculty to discuss grading and honors policies before catching up with two Dean’s Fellows to talk about plans for our common lounges and enhancing the residential experience, health, and wellbeing of our students. As I type this, I am currently surrounded by about 300 cupcakes in my office which will soon be devoured by students at our Vice Rector-sponsored monthly birthday party to celebrate all the students with birthdays this month.

While it can be a bit dizzying at times, being a Vice Rector at Yale-NUS has far exceeded the hopes and expectations I had when I first picked up the Economist and read about Yale-NUS. In my role, I often get asked why I think residential life is important for the growth of students and the community. I think the residential life at Yale-NUS is vital to the college because we ask a lot of our students in and out of the classroom. We ask them to take intellectual and social risks— to push themselves beyond their existing comfort zones as they consider new ideas, new perspectives, and new cultural and social experiences with peers from all around the world. Living together in a residential college creates support for students as they engage in these endeavors and helps build a community where students feel supported not just by the college but also by each other. As a residential staff member, I constantly run into students in the lift, at the dining hall, and over the weekend. For me, having the chance to engage with students outside of the classroom setting makes it easier to gauge how students are doing and

be responsive to their needs. The residential life at Yale-NUS helps create and support a community that extends well beyond academics, providing students with the opportunity to develop and deepen their understanding not just of course material, but also of each other and the world in a way that makes them better communicators, better problem solvers, and better citizens. I'm proud to be a part of it!