



Celebrating
60
YEARS | Because of my
EISENHOWER FELLOWSHIP...



PHILIP YEO, 1987, SINGAPORE

Chairman, SPRING Singapore

“Invest in your young people. Nurture and develop them to be future leaders. They will bring your country to the next level of progress.” This is the advice Philip Yeo offers to new Fellows, with the track record to prove it.

In 1986, one year before he would travel to the U.S. for his Eisenhower Fellowship, Yeo was appointed Executive Chairman of the Singapore Economic Development Board (EDB), with the task of restoring the manufacturing sector, encouraging export-oriented services, and building up small and medium enterprises to counteract Singapore’s first recession (1985-1986). At that time, two future Eisenhower Fellows from Singapore (David Lim, ‘00, and Tan Chin Nam, ’95) joined Yeo as director of planning, and managing director at EDB, respectively. By 1988, Singapore's economy was repaired and full employment restored.



Of his fellowship, Yeo says, “I wanted to learn the functioning of public and private R&D in America and to search out lessons that could be applied to Singapore to upgrade from a skill/capital-intensive economy to a knowledge-based economy in the long term. During my 11 weeks with EF in 1987, I visited institutional, academic, and corporate research laboratories in 52 cities in America.”

Energized by his success in turning the economy around and inspired by what he had seen in the U.S., Yeo longed to do more. In late 1989, he proposed to the Singapore Government the creation of a public research and development facility which could help to support the building up of private R & D capabilities. The National Science and Technology Board (NSTB) was established in early 1991.

In 2001, Yeo took on the appointment of Executive Chairman at NSTB. He refocused the NSTB in two key areas: biomedical sciences research and the development of human capital. The name of NSTB was changed to the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR).

A “next-generation” science park, Biopolis, was soon formed. Construction began in December 2001 on a three million-square-foot complex of 12 integrated research buildings for biomedical research. State of the art facilities now house leading international pharmaceutical companies and researchers in genomics, nanotechnology, bio-informatics and other cutting edge disciplines. Yeo’s 1987 EF “classmate”, Alfonso Vegara of Spain, became a key member of his international advisory team which planned the integrated community for living, working, and playing in the growing complex. By 2012 a 500-acre, One North Complex was created which now houses Biopolis, Fusionopolis, and Mediapolis. Fusionopolis promotes the fusion of science, arts and business and Mediapolis’ goal is to evolve into a new media city.

A*STAR launched a National Science Scholarship program to fund the overseas and local training of 1000 Ph.D. scholars over 10 years (2001-2010). The first batches of PhDs have returned and are now guiding the younger researchers.

Not one to be content with slowing down after these considerable achievements, Yeo’s current activities include township development projects in Brazil and Asia, in collaboration with fellow Fellows, Alfonso Vegara and David Lim.

Leaders bettering the world around them.

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