

# Transcending Boundaries: Four Days in Singapore

*by Michelle Lennox, WACE Director*

## Standing on the outdoor

deck of the Asian Civilisations Museum, conference delegates caught up with one another, made plans for the days ahead—or became fast friends after knowing each other for only a few minutes. Good company, good food, and good wine along the scenic Singapore River was the atmosphere that opening night of the WACE 15th World Conference on Cooperative Education.

And our Welcome Reception hosts were just that: welcoming and receptive, which guests were soon to learn—if they did not already know—is customary of the Singaporean culture. The World Conference theme, “Transcending Boundaries: Work Integrated Learning for the Global Economy,” accurately portrayed the mood amongst guests and hosts alike during this four-day event, as boundaries certainly were transcended—and perhaps even removed—as global delegates united, sharing a common purpose.

Christopher Resto from MIT summarized his conference experience as such: “At MIT, we are currently in the process of expanding opportunities for students to work abroad and the World Conference connected me to great people who can help us make that happen.”

The WACE 15th World Conference on Coop-

erative Education was held jointly by Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and the World Association for Cooperative Education (WACE) from June 26-29, 2007 at the Suntec Convention Center in Singapore. The Organizing Committee consisted of rep-



representatives from both NTU and WACE: Meng-Hwa Er, Provost of NTU, served as the Organizing Chair; Dr. Paul Stonely, WACE CEO, served as the Co-Chair; and others on the Organizing Committee included Mr. Ng Boon Hwang, Director of the Office of Professional Attachments at NTU; Ms. Mei-Eng Chong, Assistant Director of the Office of Professional Attachments at NTU; and Dr. Stephen Lee, Associate Professor at NTU, just to name a few of the dedicated individuals who made the 15th World Conference a success.

Tuesday, June 26, marked the beginning of the festivities, as the sponsoring NTU offered a variety of site visits to accommodate those arriving early to Singapore. These site visits included trips to: Port of Singapore Authority (PSA), The Tiger Brewery, NTU, and Nanyang Polytechnic.

With esteemed guests such as our Guest of Honor, Minister Kim-Yong Gan, Minister of State from the Ministry of Education & Ministry of Manpower in

keynote speakers drawn from industry, government and educational institutions. Their active participation in the conference clearly demonstrates the partnerships required for effective Work Integrated Learning, and the benefits to all groups in a highly competitive global environment.”

Professor Goulter’s Welcome Address was followed by Dr. Guanng Su, President of NTU. The World



Gathered at the Asian Civilisations Museum were the esteemed guests and World Conference organizers (from left to right): Mg. Ng Boon Hwang (NTU); Dr. Richard M. Freeland (WACE); Professor President Ian Goulter (WACE & Charles Sturt University); Dr. President Guanng Su (NTU); Dr. Minister Wichit Srisa-An (Ministry of Education, Thailand); Dr. Paul J. Stonely (WACE); Mr. Satish Pradhan (Tata Group); Mr. Meng Hwa Er (NTU); and Dr. Stephen Lee (NTU).

Singapore; and Minister Dr. Wichit Srisa-An, the Minister of Education in Thailand, World Conference delegates’ attention was certainly held as the opening ceremonies began on Wednesday, June 27.

Professor Ian Goulter, President of WACE and Vice-Chancellor & President of Charles Sturt University in Australia, delivered the first portion of the Welcome Address and has remarked: “An outstanding aspect of the World Conference was the combination of high profile

Conference Guest of Honor, Minister Kim Yong-Gan, then delivered the final portion of the Welcome Address.

Conference delegates were fortunate to have four Keynote Presenters throughout the three-day event, the first of whom was Ms. Geok-Choo Ho, President of Singapore Human Resources Institute. Conference delegates were again enlightened with a corporate perspective when Mr. Krishen Mehta, a Senior Partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers in Japan, delivered his Keynote



**“I believe there is no more powerful form of organized education than the one we are here to consider and improve.”**

*Richard Freeland  
WACE  
President Emeritus*

Address, ending the first portion of the World Conference.

The remainder of Wednesday was consumed by concurrent sessions, which included a plethora of presentations for delegates to attend. And with more than 270 participants from 26 countries, the discussions were certainly varied and numerous.

After a full day, World Conference delegates were quite anxious to engage in a social outing that evening, and what better place than the Asian Civilisations Museum, a British-colonial styled museum which was formerly the government offices of the British government. Delegates had the opportunity to participate in a walking tour to the museum, led by NTU students, and for those opting not to walk, a coach service was provided.

Upon arriving, guests were immediately enticed by the warm atmosphere. Mr. Ng Boon Hwang and Dr. Paul Stonely delivered a light-hearted welcome, and Mr. Tony Kerrison from Merrill Lynch in New York, the sponsor and host of the evening’s reception, said a few words as well. At the conclusion of the reception, many guests opted to venture off to the variety of restaurants and pubs across the Cavenagh Bridge, while others dined at the elegant Fullerton Hotel.



Mr. Satish Pradhan, Executive Vice President, Group HR of the Tata Group in India, captivated his lunchtime audience on the second day of the World Conference—even though lunch would not be served until the conclusion of his Keynote Address—a sure sign of his effectiveness.

The night was left open for World Conference participants to do as they chose, and with so many attractive options and so little time, it was not at all difficult to find something interesting! The Great Singapore Sale took place during the World Conference week, but if guests were not interested in shopping, no problem! The Night Safari, which included a live animal show and tour of the Singaporean rain forest, was close by; the Singapore Zoo was another option for animal-lovers; and there was also the Esplanade, where guests could enjoy the performing arts, the waterfront view, and the delectable food choices at near-by Glutton Square.



At far left, Dr. Paul Stonely, WACE CEO, presents to Mr. Krishen Mehta, a Senior Partner at PricewaterhouseCoopers in Japan, a token of appreciation for delivering his Keynote Address.

Left, corporate panelists from around the globe discussed work integrated learning from their companies' and countries' perspectives.

Dr. Richard Freeland, President Emeritus of both WACE and Northeastern University, delivered the fourth and final keynote presentation on Friday morning, in which he reflected on his years as president of Northeastern University and the ways in which cooperative education evolved during his presidency.

A less formal, more interactive portion of the World Conference ensued with the Corporate and University Panels, during which the panelists introduced the philosophies of their companies or universities and answer audience questions. But the World Conference wasn't over just yet.

No, the World Conference was not officially over until delegates departed the Dinner Banquet, held in Suntec's Ballroom, which included an eight-course Chinese meal and a variety of dance performances from many local ethnic groups, dazzling both the delegates' taste buds and sight.

The Dinner Banquet opened with Paul Stonely's Opening Remarks—which he delivered in Mandarin! The night also included the WACE Awards Ceremony, featuring the John A. Curry Employer Award, which

was presented by Ms. Helen Oloroso from Northwestern University to Mr. Adrian Jefferies from BP Castrol U.K., who believes that “A successful co-op placement is a tripartite alliance between academia, industry, and the student, and that each parties must possess commitment, passion, and the ability to learn from each other.” The Awards Ceremony also featured the Donald MacLaren Award, which was presented by Dr. Christopher Pratt from WPI to Dr. Neil Ward from the University of Surrey; and two student awards, presented to Mr. Ng Kiok Wee and Mr. Quek Shiwei Benny, both NTU students.

The night concluded with conference delegates waving glow-sticks, swaying alongside each other, and singing along together, bidding each other farewell. But during a World Conference in which so many boundaries were removed, delegates were not so much saying “goodbye” to each other as they were saying “see you soon,” as the bonds that were formed will continue and grow and develop. Individuals from around the globe united for that week in Singapore with strings attached—forever forming a web and strengthening work integrated learning everywhere.