

The Department of Japanese Studies held a dinner event for its graduating class of 2014 on Friday 25 July 2014, at Waraku Restaurant in Raffles City. The choice of venue was suggested by A/P Hendrik Meyer-Ohle, Head of the Department. The *izakaya* setting, it was hoped, would foster a more intimate dining environment in which participants could mingle and chat more freely with each other. Besides, this year's graduating class, department faculty and alumni from previous graduating classes were also invited to participate in the dinner. In all, fourteen students, alumni and faculty turned up for the dinner.

The night started off with participants arriving at the restaurant. As more familiar faces appeared at our table, jubilant smiles beamed and warm greetings were exchanged. All the students in the graduating class of 2014 had already gotten their first jobs, and eagerly shared their experiences of this new stage in their lives with each other as they conversed about their work responsibilities and workplace relationships.

The graduating class was soon joined by their seniors who had arrived from their various workplaces. For many, it was their first time meeting each other in a year. It was also their first time meeting the graduating class as working adults, rather than fellow students. Again, there were many friendly greetings exchanged as they caught up with each other's lives.

The attendance was complete with the arrival of A/P Hendrik Meyer-Ohle, A/P Thang Leng Leng and Dr Chris McMorrان to the venue. The graduating students and alumni were greatly excited to meet their mentors, some for the first time in years. Meeting their mentors outside of campus and lessons was also a rather fresh experience for most graduating students and alumni, but this did not affect the casual and laid-back atmosphere of the event.

The dinner kicked off with a toast led by A/P Meyer-Ohle, who congratulated the class of 2014 on their graduation, and extended a welcome to the alumni who had attended. Dinner was an ala carte style affair, with many Japanese side dishes, salad, sashimi, *okonomiyaki* and hotpot. All attendees thoroughly enjoyed the food and the style in which dinner was eaten, which reminded them of their own *izakaya* dining experiences in Japan on exchange programs and field trips. The communal nature of the dishes also encouraged much interaction between graduating students, alumni and faculty, and soon the table was filled with conversation chatter from all corners. Throughout the dinner, students and alumni filled in the faculty members on their work and future career plans, while A/P Meyer-Ohle, A/P Thang and Dr McMorrان updated students and alumni about their current activities and latest information about the Department and NUS.

A/P Meyer-Ohle was very encouraged at the warm response and participation for the dinner. "I think we had a very good evening, everybody seemed to really enjoy themselves," he commented. "It was great especially to provide this opportunity for the graduating class of 2014 to meet their senior alumni, so that they can get in touch with them and have access to more information and networks that will help them in future. Also, I hope that events like this dinner will help to keep alumni, young and old alike, in touch with the Department and NUS."

Graduating students Benny and Craig also thought fondly about the dinner. "I was very happy to be able to celebrate graduation with such a dinner. Also, it was wonderful to be able to meet some friends I

haven't seen in a while after my undergraduate days," Masters graduate Benny commented. "It was wonderful to be recognized for our efforts in such a manner. The food and company was great, and I was very happy to get to know some of my senior alumni too," Bachelors graduate Craig added. Their comments were seconded by alumni Elizabeth, who said, "It's always fun talking with my fellow classmates and professors."

Finally, the dinner ended with the presentation of Linus bears, kindly sponsored by the Office of Alumni Relations, to each graduating student. We hope that these bears will provide a fond reminder of students' experiences with the Department and NUS.

The Department would like to thank the Office of Alumni Relations and Dean's Office, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, for their generous sponsorship of departmental commencement events. We would also like to thank all graduating students and alumni who attended the event for spending their Friday evening with us. We sincerely hope that you will continue to remember the Department fondly, just as we are immensely honored to have been part of your various life journeys.

