

TEACHING & LEARNING

# Designing the Future: NTU D-School Empowers a New Generation of Youth in Southeast Asia

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Chen Yu Hsuan leading a two-day Design Your Life teacher training workshop in Malaysia.

In September 2024, *Design Your Life*—a flagship course innovated by the College of Design and Innovation at National Taiwan University and its Stanley Wang D-School—was offered on the international stage. Arranged by the PathFinder Life Design Association in partnership with the NTU Alumni Association in Malaysia, the program presented life design education in Malaysian classrooms, reaching more than 300 secondary school students and engaging 30 local educators in meaningful professional exchanges.

At the heart of the initiative was a simple but powerful insight: across borders, young people are asking the same questions.

Who am I? What should I pursue? How do I navigate an uncertain future?

Chen Yu-Hsuan, co-founder of the PathFinder Life Design Association and program leader, observed that the problems faced by students in Malaysia are



Chen Yu Hsuan (left), who exhibited the project at Huashan 1914 Creative Park, posing with industry mentor Hsiao-Ping Huang.

strikingly similar to those encountered by their peers in Taiwan—confusion about identity, direction, and life’s possibilities. That common experience of uncertainty ensures the course’s relevance beyond cultural and national boundaries, positioning *Design Your Life* as a universal framework for self-discovery, reflection, and intentional decision-making.

The program was supported by Taiwan’s Ministry of Education under the Taiwan Global Pathfinders Initiative (TGPI). Prior to departure, Chen conducted six intensive training sessions at the Stanley Wang D-School, preparing a cohort of university students to serve as facilitators. Afterwards, these student volunteers actively participated in the Malaysia workshops, ensuring pedagogical continuity while fostering authentic, peer-driven engagement—an approach that resonated with the young participants.

This forward-looking initiative was expanded. From July 26 to August 10, 2025, the PathFinder team conducted five additional workshops at Malaysian secondary schools and visited three institutions of higher education there. By leading hands-on activities and providing reflective tools drawn from *Design Your Life*, the program sought not just to empower the students but also to better understand how youth across cultures negotiate personal aspirations within their diverse social and educational contexts.

The journey was formally launched with symbolic support from the NTU D-School leadership. Former dean Pei-Zen Chang presented the team with a ceremonial flag as Associate Dean Shenglin Elijah Chang offered words of encouragement—celebrating the program as a living extension of the D-School’s transdisciplinary vision and global commitment.

The impact of the Malaysia program continued well beyond the classroom. Following the exchange, Chen Yu-Hsuan was selected as a 2025 TGPI Youth Dream Builder and presented the project at an exhibition held at Huashan 1914 Creative Park in Taipei. The exhibition transformed lived experience of the program into public dialogue, presenting a physical *Life Design* handbook, reflective writings, and documentary footage from the journey.

Visitors—students, parents, and educators alike—were warmly invited to engage in the process of life design themselves.

Together, these efforts signal a growing movement, one in which education is not confined to knowledge transfer, but becomes a tool for self-authorship, global connection, and purposeful living. Through *Design Your Life* flagship, NTU D-School is not only exporting a course—it is cultivating a shared language for navigating life in an increasingly complex world.



The program team joined the Annual Meeting of the NTU Alumni Association of Malaysia, and presented certificates of participation to teachers who completed the training program.