A SLICE OF S-L

My Smart Ah Ma Project. Involving over 1000 Year 1 engineering students. Tied to the module, Engineering and Society (ESOC). Let's find out what went on behind the scenes for this Service-Learning experience, co-designed by School of Engineering (SoE) and Office of Service-Learning (OSL).

A key academic learning objective of ESOC – to enable students to understand the importance of evaluating community needs so as to be able to propose suitable engineering solutions.

CHALLENGE
Identifying a suitable project for a large cohort, that would address both learning objectives and community needs

Breakthrough: With the Smart Nation & Digital Government Office (SNDGO), we co-developed My Smart Ah Ma Project – students teaching seniors how to use 8 government apps. The project met a national aim to narrow the digital divide, community partners' interest to help seniors in digital literacy skills, and ESOC's learning objectives.

CHALLENGE
Managing logistics and partners

Solution: A working committee was formed to look into managing logistics. The SACs were divided into 5 clusters, each assigned a SoE liaison staff. A Whatsapp chat and weekly meetings enabled us to share best practices and feedback, and facilitate continuity from one class to the next.

CHALLENGE
Getting community partners

Solution: We approached eldercare and senior activity centres (SACs), targeting those with branches, to make it easier to spread our reach. 13 SACs came on board.

CHALLENGE
Facilitating & grading reflections

Solution: SoE lecturers had a 2-day training programme that mirrored what students would experience. This equipped them to better understand the elderly community and facilitate students' learning with tools such as DEAL reflection model, assessment brief, reflection samples with suggested grading etc.

CHALLENGE
Ensuring student and community voice

Solution: Students were given the leeway to design bonding and app teaching activities. Seniors were consulted on the apps they wished to learn; they could also practise and seek clarifications from one session to the next.

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NEXT STEPS

- Evaluate the feedback and strengthen the team's next S-L module
- A study to better glean what makes for impactful S-L in engineering modules
- A possible integrated project with School of InfoComm Technology, to re-design the apps to make them more user friendly for the elderly

Service-Learning
Ngee Ann Polytechnic