

World's best business professor teaching in Singapore's NTU



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Economist Intelligence Unit crowns professor Vijay Sethi.

Professor Vijay Sethi, 52, from Nanyang Technological University (NTU) is an information systems expert. He was awarded US\$100,000 prize after beating three other professors in a live “teach-off” in London. The four finalists were selected from 222 professors, nominated by students and alumni for the quality of their teaching, from 31 universities worldwide.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Business Professor of the Year award is the world’s only global contest to recognize and reward excellence in business teaching. Nominations came from leading institutions such as the Wharton School, Harvard Business School, and London Business School – by over 30,000 business students and alumni.

For the title, four finalists, picked by a judging panel helmed by The Economist’s business education editor William Ridgers, were put in a competitive teaching face-off. Each had 35 minutes to deliver their best lecture to a live classroom audience of undergraduate and graduate business students. Joining Professor Vijay in the finals were Professors Johanne Brunet from HEC Montreal, Darren Dahl from University of British Columbia and Kevin Kaiser from Insead. Professor Vijay emerged the winner based on votes by the classroom audience, who took into account the voting results of those watching online, in addition to their own opinions.

The EIU award marks a double win for Prof Sethi this week, as he had earlier received the Nanyang Award for Excellence in Teaching on Tuesday. The Nanyang Award recognises individual faculty who have exhibited excellent teaching practice and enriched the learning experiences of their students through their enthusiasm, care and close rapport.

NTU President Professor Bertil Andersson said, “Vijay took on some of the best teachers in the world and came out tops. He has done both NTU and Singapore proud. The real winner in NTU’s success in attracting world beaters like Vijay are our students who are taught by the best in the world.”

Professor Sethi’s winning lecture was based on the subject of digital networks and the dynamics of network-based industries.

He said, “I want to acknowledge the contribution of my MBA students here who were my listening post and coaches. They played a huge role in how the ideas were finally strung together in the presentation.”

Chair of the judging panel Mr William Ridgers said, “Vijay was clearly a very worthy winner. He took some complicated ideas and made them accessible and engaging to the audience.”

Professor Sethi said, “Winning the title is a culmination of decades of teaching and it feels great to be recognised on a global platform. More than that, I feel happy for the students whose trust and confidence I did not belie. The students believed in me and that is what got me to the Finals. To stand up and showcase the best of NTU and Singapore – I feel proud.”

Loved by students for his contagious passion and sense of humour, Professor Sethi teaches e-business and technological entrepreneurship classes for the Nanyang Master of Business Administration (MBA) programme, and information technology management to undergraduates. He is also deeply involved in preparing and coaching Nanyang MBA students for international business plan competitions.

Professor Sethi’s seminars are popular among students as he leads group discussions with deep analysis and insights that stimulate thinking and creativity. He has won several teaching awards, including NTU’s Nanyang Award for Teaching Excellence Award in 2013, and the Nanyang Business School MBA Teacher of the Year in 2011.

Professor Sethi said, “My aim is to make my students knowledgeable about the field I am teaching. I want them to know it inside-out, and this will make them confident. Ultimately, I want them to be passionate about learning and knowing whatever field they want to go into. If they feel we are passionate about our field, they will be about theirs.”

Professor Gillian Yeo, Interim Dean of Nanyang Business School said, “Vijay is an inspiration to students – and also to the rest of us educators as well. As dedicated as he is about his field of interest, he is even more passionate about nurturing his students, whether in the classroom or in one-to-one mentorships.

Professor Sethi holds a PhD from the University of Pittsburgh and is a member of Nanyang Business School's Information Technology and Operations Management division.

He specialises in strategic information systems planning, strategic information systems and information technology productivity. He also conducts research in multinational IT strategies and global information systems. Outside of academic research, he has worked with several companies in Singapore, including Abacus International and International Data Corporation, as a consultant and for executive education programmes.

Professor Sethi said, “Teaching changes lives. For some, it gets them their first jobs; for others, a career switch; and for many, it changes the way they think. It is making this difference that makes me passionate about teaching. Through teaching, we improve people's minds – the greatest gift we have. We are all what we are today because someone taught us, educated us. Teaching is my way of giving back.”

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