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Headline: Well-rounded approach

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Mr Bon Seah (centre, seated in jeans) with his colleagues during his internship at Jinchuanmaike Metal Resources in Shanghai. PHOTO: BON SEAH

Singapore Management University promises a well-rounded education for its students
Bryant Chan
Mr Bon Seah is in a unique position: he has three families.

Apart from the relatives on the maternal and paternal sides of his family, he also treats his colleagues at the trading and risk control department of Jinchuanmaike Metal Resources in Shanghai, China, like his family.

“My manager was proud that I was treating my colleagues as family,” he says, beaming. “Not only did I improve my Mandarin substantially, but I also adopted their lifestyle and gradually came to understand how they viewed the world.”

Currently a final-year economics student at Singapore Management University (SMU), Mr Seah, 24, was seconded to the company as part of an overseas internship last year — a move that would end up changing his life.

Mr Seah gained valuable experience and knowledge during the three-month internship that he describes as “immensely rewarding”.

“Besides understanding more about commodity trading, I also developed strong analytical and cognitive skills, even when processing analytics was written in Chinese,” he says.

“I hope to bring the same attitude, hunger to learn and humility if I should work overseas again in the near future.”

Like Mr Seah, thousands of students are transformed by the SMU experience every year — developing a myriad of skills both hard and soft, and discovering unknown facets of themselves in the process.

Here are a few things SMU aims to do for its students:

BROADEN HORIZONS

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Every SMU student will have the opportunity to take part in the university's international exposure initiatives.

Whether it is an overseas exchange or internship, or a study mission, summer or community involvement programme, the university paves the way for its students to experience the world beyond Singapore's borders.

The institution boasts exchange agreements with over 240 overseas universities, in locations as varied as London, Sydney, Beijing and Istanbul, as well as short-term summer partnerships with Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and the University of St. Gallen, making its students spoilt for choice.



Ms Megan Foo, an undergraduate from SMU's Lee Kong Chian School of Business, on an overseas student exchange programme with the University of Minnesota last year. PHOTO: MEGAN FOO

SMU also offers flexibility for its students to explore different fields. For instance, Megan Foo, a final-year business student at SMU, spent last summer studying sound design for theatre at the University of Virginia under the US-Singapore Summer Exchange Scholarship Programme. Later that year, she spent a semester in the University of Minnesota studying marketing and mass communication.

While on exchange, Megan took a course in Sports Marketing where she networked with sports marketers of professional baseball teams. She fondly recalls the experience, "I was not only getting an insight into how marketing could be applied to sports but also encouraged to step out of my comfort zone to engage with actual movers and shakers in the industry."

BRING OUT HIDDEN STRENGTHS

SMU students regularly perform well in business and case competitions that pit their wits and strategy against competitor schools based locally and internationally. Case in point, SMU's business case club beat 11 teams from four continents at the RSM Star Case Competition, to bring home the championship title.

The university also has an excellent record at moot competitions such as the Price Media Law Moot Competition. It made history by being the only university to win the competition thrice, beating the competition's host Oxford University soundly.

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SMU has a wide variety of special interest groups, international and dance clubs, and sports and martial arts teams to choose from. Whether you are into hip-hop or muay thai, you are likely to find your preferred co-curricular activity.

The university is equally dedicated to making sure you develop your talents. Take for instance, information systems third-year student Darren Tan, who was always interested in streamlining processes through technology.



Mr Darren Tan (centre) during his internship at Mediacorp. PHOTO: DARREN TAN

Last May, SMU's Dato' Kho Hui Meng Career Centre which works with students to map out career preparation and supports students in their internships, facilitated his stint at the Digital Media department in Mediacorp.

The internship allowed Mr Tan to pursue his interest in designing automated systems for the company's websites.

EQUIP YOU WITH THE NECESSARY WORK EXPERIENCE

A key part of any university experience is the internships offered — an aspect that SMU delivers in spades.

Renowned among local universities for its commitment to local and international internships, the university is the first to make internships compulsory.

Every SMU undergraduate needs to complete at least one 10-week internship before graduation. Over half of them complete between two to six internships.

Its interns have been employed in over 10,000 partner companies in 21 countries. One out of four students receives full-time employment through internships — a testament to the quality of interns that the university produces.

In the Graduate Employment Survey 2017 released by the Ministry of Education, SMU graduates came out tops in terms of salary, with a median gross salary of \$3,910.

Ninety-four per cent of them found employment within six months of graduation.

PUT YOU ON THE PATH TO SUCCESS

SMU is dedicated to giving its students the necessary skills they need for the workforce.

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As part of their Finishing Touch programme, all freshman students have to complete two workshops in self-discovery and career planning.

In their second year, students must complete five more Finishing Touch workshops, including resumé writing, personal branding and networking, and interview skills.

Few other universities are as dedicated as SMU in making sure its students are adequately equipped to excel in the workforce upon graduation.

Fittingly, the institution is helmed by a man who has the best interests for his students at heart.

Speaking at an event on the future economy last October, SMU president Prof Arnoud De Meyer spoke at length about the responsibility of the institution in preparing its students for a world with inherently higher stress levels.

“Innovation, creativity, social intelligence, productivity pursuit... it will all require more resilience,” he said. “We need to mentally prepare and groom our students for such a world.”

Check out www.smu.edu.sg for more information on the university.