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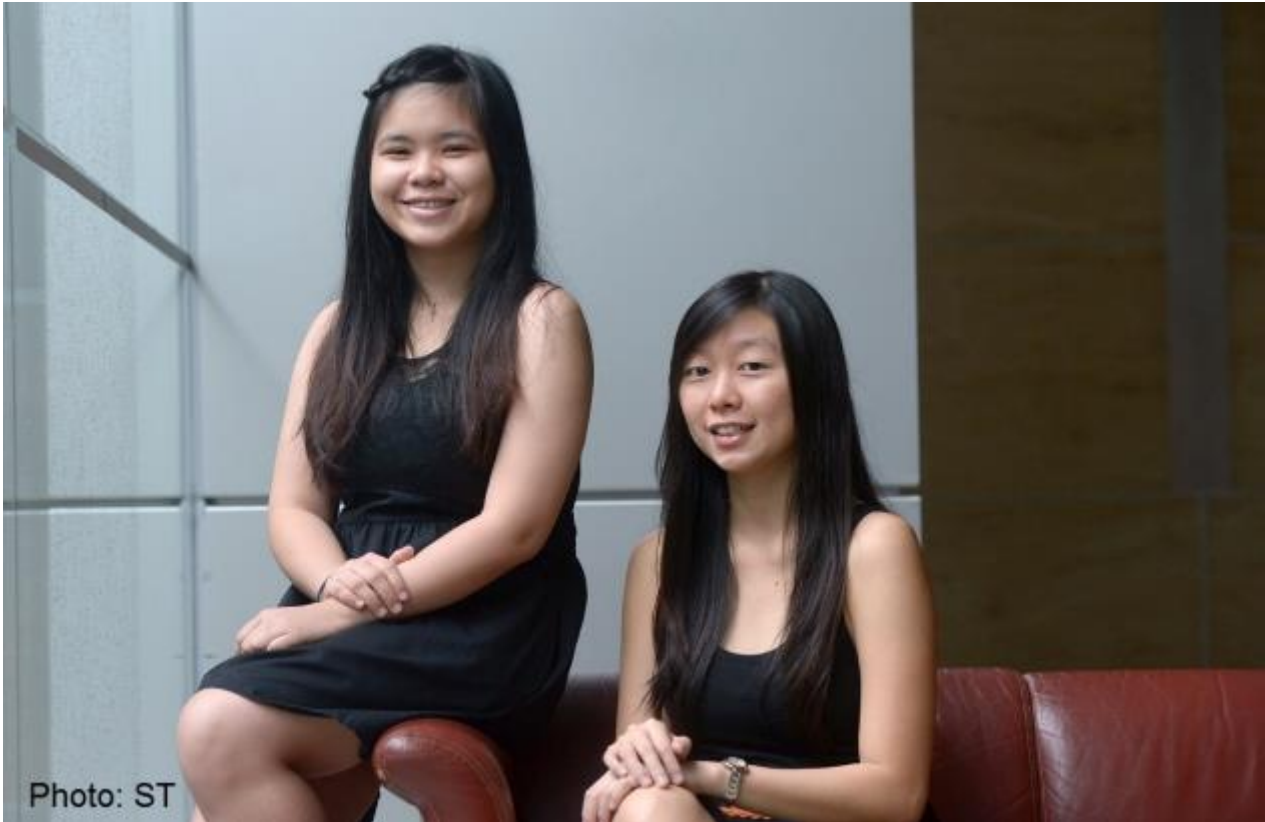
Date: 2 January 2015

Headline: More undergrads seeking financial aid, and getting it

More undergrads seeking financial aid, and getting it

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More undergraduates are seeking help to pay tuition fees and other expenses, and receiving it.

Five universities here handed out more scholarships and bursaries last year than they did three to five years ago, with some nearly doubling the amount of aid.

This comes after the Ministry of Education (MOE) extended its bursaries in 2011 to post-secondary students in the bottom two-thirds of households. This year, it further raised the monthly household per capita income cap from \$1,700 to \$1,900, allowing more needy students in publicly funded universities to qualify.

Universities have also received more support from individual and corporate donors, and, in turn, have given students more aid.

The National University of Singapore (NUS) has gone a step further, by starting more schemes to channel more funds towards needier students. Before 2011, its students from households with a monthly per capita income of about \$500 could each receive \$3,250 in bursaries annually. Today, they can each get between \$5,000 and \$9,000 every year.

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The number of applications for bursaries and scholarships at NUS, Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Singapore Management University (SMU) has risen by around 30 per cent to 50 per cent in the last four to five years.

Universities have responded by giving more. NUS, for instance, more than doubled financial aid from \$5 million in the academic year (AY) 2011 to nearly \$10 million in AY2013. The AY for universities here, except the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), starts in August and ends in July the following year.

NTU gave its students about 5 per cent more financial support in the last three years, while SMU disbursed \$11.3 million in scholarships and bursaries in its financial year (FY) 2013, up from \$7.9 million in FY2009. Its FY is from April to March the following year.

SMU's dean of students Ong Siow Heng said all students who apply and meet the criteria will be awarded bursaries, while about 60 per cent of scholarship applicants are successful.

SUTD and the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) have also received, and given, more support. SIT has received more gifts and donations. Its students now have five times the number of private awards and bursaries available to them than they did a year ago.

NUS provost Tan Eng Chye also said donations enable it to support more students. It received \$144.7 million in FY2013, up from \$94 million in FY2009.

More schemes have been added, said Professor Tan. Since 2012, NUS students living on campus can tap residential programme bursaries. NUS also started a sports scholarship in 2011 and a performing and visual arts scholarship this year.

The extra support is a relief for many students. Ms Madeleine Liou, 22, a final-year student at NTU's school of chemistry and biological chemistry quit waitressing part time after getting an MOE bursary. This gave her \$800 each in her first two years in NTU, and \$2,000 each in the last two.

The daughter of a senior technician and housewife said: "This helps a lot, because I can work less often and have more time to study."

SMU student Subadevan Mahadevan, 25, has received awards such as the Mahendra Misra Scholarship, which helped to pay for tuition fees and expenses, such as food and transport.

The son of a taxi driver and housewife, who worked in a bar before entering university to study sociology and political science, said: "If I had a massive amount of debt, it would be difficult to pursue graduate studies."

Ms Chelsea Cheang, 20, a second-year social work student at NUS, received the Wan Boo Sow & Annie Tan Bursary, which pays her tuition fees and gives her \$7,900 each year. Her father was a clerk and her mother, a nurse.

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She said: "The extra cash is a relief for my family, especially because my parents are retired."

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More help to chase university dream

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

Last year, it received about 5,000 applications for financial aid, which covers mainly bursaries. This is up from about 3,600 in 2010.

It had 3,300 scholarship applications this year, up from 2,300 four years ago.

It gave 4,566 scholarships and bursaries to students in the 2013 academic year (AY), up from 2,611 in AY2009.

NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

The number of students applying for its scholarships has risen by about 35 per cent, from 5,230 in 2010 to 7,000 this year.

It gave \$12.8 million worth of scholarships in its financial year (FY) 2011. This grew to \$18.8 million in FY2013.

It also handed out \$22 million in bursaries to 6,200 local students in FY2014, up from \$15 million for 5,200 students in FY2013.

SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY

Its number of applications for bursaries jumped from 676 in AY2009 to 1,500 in AY2013.

Scholarship applications also increased from 1,212 to 1,395 during the same period.

It gave out 2,316 scholarships and bursaries in AY2013, up from 1,479 in AY2009.

SINGAPORE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN

It gave out \$286,900 in 99 bursaries this year, up from \$57,550 in 23 bursaries two years ago.

This year, it handed out 82 scholarships, up from 77 in 2012. It has given an average of \$1 million worth of scholarships in each of the past three years.

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SINGAPORE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

It doubled the number of bursaries and awards given to its students - from 48 in FY2013 to at least 94 in FY2014.

It gave 15 scholarships in FY2014, a slight increase from the previous year's 10.

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