

dimensions where the corporations can plug in easily as well—through activities such as internships, consulting projects, and job opportunities.

The overall goal, he says, is to “make the boundaries of the university porous, so executives can flow in and faculty can flow out.” The result is a series of partnerships, projects, and research centers that bring the university much more than monetary support, including these initiatives:

Internship programs with MasterCard. The credit company offers between three and 11 internships every year to SMU students. Two of those internships come as part of a five-year-old program in which high-achieving female students receive scholarships from MasterCard, as well as internships with the company—and often, if all goes well, job offers, too. “Women are underrepresented in the banking and financial services sector, and through this program MasterCard is making a conscious effort to develop more women executives,” says George.

The scholarships aren’t just about money, he adds; they serve as an entry point for getting the company more engaged with the school. He says, “I tell corporations, ‘It’s great if you can give scholarships that allow individuals to go to school. But it’s even better if you give me a way to integrate them into your company and make them useful for you.’”

The BNP Paribas–SMU Fellowship Award. This award was co-funded by SMU and BNP–Paribas, one of the largest banks in the world, for a total value of S\$266,000 (about US\$197,000). It is bestowed upon finance faculty members to support their research in finance and financial markets.

The UOB-SMU Asian Enterprise Institute. United Overseas Bank and Singapore’s Ministry of Education provided funding to launch the institute, which is dedicated to helping small- and medium-sized enterprises overcome specific challenges. The bank

Two-Way Street

At SMU, relationship-building continues even through initiatives that aren’t part of fundraising efforts. For instance, the Centre for Management Practice provides another way for the school to develop close connections with corporations. The center produces case studies about Asian business and facilitates knowledge exchanges between executives and academics in ways that make scholarly research more practical and relevant. That’s because it provides opportunities for executives to spend up to three months on campus—and when they return to their home companies, they take a faculty member with them.

While on campus, the executives attend faculty seminars and brown bag lunches, sit in on classes, and become embedded in the SMU community. “We don’t close any doors,” says George. The executives also discuss with faculty the specific problems they’re trying to solve at their own companies and begin to jointly determine what challenges they might work on together. Each executive returns to the home company with a faculty member in tow—ensuring that SMU professors get a chance to work on real-world problems while also strengthening bonds between the school and the community.

uses its connections to bring in SMEs looking for assistance, and each one is matched with an SMU student acting as a consultant.

“The SMEs might ask, ‘Can you figure out a market entry strategy for us? Can you design an HR system? Can you refresh my marketing campaign and my social media campaign?’” says George. The companies pay a small fee and

students receive a small payment, but the benefits are far more than monetary, George emphasizes: The students gain real-world experience, while companies receive “very different, very practical insights from the students.” He estimates that students work on more than 200 SME projects a year.

The Sim Kee Boon Institute for Financial Economics. Designed to be a regional think tank devoted to financial markets, the institute was funded half by the Singapore government and half by private donors. It facilitates interdisciplinary research and education in financial markets, and faculty members have conducted research on topics as diverse as cryptocurrency and asset pricing.

All of these examples illustrate George’s attitude about the reciprocal nature of corporate fundraising. He says, “If I take corporate money, I always want to know what benefit the company will get out of the relationship, whether it’s a talent benefit or a brand benefit or a transactional benefit. The more I put on the menu, the better off those relationships are. I am always thinking about relationships, value, and opportunities.”

