



Media Release

Developing Global Citizens with the SMU Advantage

- SMU undergraduates' rising interest in global exposure underscores highest record in number of exchange applications received
- SMU students have the advantage of taking 10 or more pass/fail modules
- Experiential learning is redefined for future readiness

Singapore, 22 April 2015 (Wednesday) – Despite international student exchange being a voluntary programme and students managing rigorous curricular studies, the application rate for SMU undergraduates seeking to go abroad for international exchange has hit record numbers this year. Almost 900 applications – the highest absolute number and largest percentage jump for any semester – were received in the first half of 2015 for the Fall 2015 Exchange. This represents an increase of 30 per cent compared to the corresponding numbers in 2014.

The take-up rate for student exchange forms the highest percentage across the different types of overseas exposure. The proportion of SMU students gaining global exposure has been rising steadily, with some 86 per cent (or almost nine out every 10) from the graduate cohort in 2014 having experienced at least one form of overseas programme.

For the graduating cohort of 2014, some 60 per cent of students had gone on international exchange, which translates to over 1,000 students each year. In comparison, only 37 per cent of students went on international exchange in the first graduate cohort of 2004. While the 2014 graduate cohort size had grown to almost six-fold of that of 2004, the percentage of students going on exchange had almost doubled in comparison to 2004. The scale of the programmes and student take-up rate are now comparable with universities that have been around for much longer.

Ms Bernadette Toh, Director of SMU Office of Global Learning, said, “The interest in overseas exchange has reached a new pinnacle this year. The overwhelming applications, despite immersion opportunities being voluntary, strongly attest to the quality of SMU’s global exchange programmes, holistic support from the University, and rich offerings from reputable partner universities. Students clearly see the benefits and importance of global exposure and reflexive learning through real-world experiences and SMU’s internationalisation approach. Increasingly, more of our undergraduates are keen to have multiple overseas experiences.”

The SMU Advantage

Students have the advantage to take more than 10 pass/fail modules that count towards graduation – via exchanges, summer programmes, study missions, and capstone courses. From the common curriculum, undergraduates also have the option to be exempted for up to

six courses (three from Foundations, and three from General Education). These pass/fail modules give students more freedom to take courses beyond their usual classrooms, understand real-world problems in larger context and look at practical solutions through different perspectives, as well as pocket colourful life lessons through experiential journeys.

Some students enjoy the exchange so much that they go on a second exchange programme, summer programmes, as well as study missions. They are able to do so because SMU strongly encourages students to venture abroad, and offers numerous options for global exposure with breadth in choice and depth in multiple disciplines. The University also provides holistic support to students to make these global experiences safe and rewarding.

Transformative Education and Future Readiness

A number of employers, especially multi-national firms, find that students with global exposure are more employable and fit in more easily. With increased globalisation and diversity at the workplace, graduates with global experiences display more confidence, adaptability and cultural intelligence. The willingness to embrace diversity and inclusion, changes and challenges are advantageous for job prospects.

Exchange programmes can also complement career aspirations and help students advance towards their work goals. Some students bag internships, interviews and job offers while overseas.

The advantageous career prospects add to the conventional yet fundamental benefits. For many students, going overseas is a life-changing experience that broadens their horizons exponentially and helps in character-building. Fostering new friendships and building a network of international connections is another benefit. An overseas venture allows students to look at homeland in a different light, and they often gain a greater sense of appreciation of home only after having been away for a period of time. It could be their first chance of learning to adapt in a completely new environment, and to explore the world and new cultures. It pushes them out of their comfort zone to also develop a new awareness of others and themselves.

These are crucial in equipping students to be more work- and future-ready.

Professor Arnoud De Meyer, SMU President said, “SMU is aiming to have 100 per cent of our students experience some form of global exposure. We believe that the world classroom enriches and redefines experiential learning, and students become better global citizens through an SMU education. The University’s vision for global learning is to continuously build the SMU advantage for students to better cope in an increasingly globalised world. SMU believes in transformative and all-rounded education, developing student leaders who can embrace diversity and adversity, and lead and contribute their best to the world.”

Interesting, Unique Courses and Experiences during Exchange: The World Classroom

Criminology, White Collar Crimes, Adolescent Gang Intervention, Murderers and Medical Detectives. Creative Wordmaking as a Vehicle for Innovative Thinking and Product Development. Genetics in Sport Science. Gastronomy and Sustainable Eating. These are some of the many unusual university courses overseas that probably are seldom heard of here, not to mention being undertaken.

There are diverse partner universities, which attract and draw students in different ways. From the most respected universities with long traditions and outstanding academic excellence, to new universities offering innovative learning approaches and pedagogies; highly specialised courses to multi-disciplinary programmes; academic studies, research and projects, to exciting non-academic activities, there is a broad range of out-of-the-world experiences that cannot be found at home.

Students who strive for academic excellence have the opportunity to go to more than one prestigious university. It is possible to attend a semester of exchange at say Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania in the United States, and head to Pembroke College of the University of Cambridge in United Kingdom for summer study in another term, for example.

Outside the academic route, there are many novel experiences to surprise and nurture the young adults. A student visited Chernobyl in Ukraine, while on exchange in United Kingdom, as part of his travel bucket list. Those who head to Bifrost University are provided with a car free of charge during the exchange period, to travel within Iceland. It is not surprising for students to eat whale meat, or deer meat hunted by fellow Icelandic classmates.

In China, some SMU undergraduates recently had the opportunity to meet internationally-renowned business leaders Jack Ma, Mark Zuckerberg and Tim Cook. A student won a university singing competition despite not having participated in one before. She joined the university female soccer team, helped some youths who wanted to establish startups, and travelled to hometowns of local friends made during the exchange.

A student who went on a symphony performance trip in China while on exchange in Taiwan, came home inspired, and would be utilising his key learnings from the trip to help organise a symphonic band performance tour to Prague.

Partner Universities: Expanding Footprint around the World

SMU has built a strong student exchange programme with valuable university partners over the last 15 years. Global exchange programmes over the years have developed rapidly and steadily in both the quality and quantity of programmes, to enhance students' learning experiences.

SMU currently offers opportunities with 219 international partner universities in about 50 countries. As of 15 April 2015, there have been six new partnership agreements, and seven expanded partnership agreements this year.

From just two overseas university partnership agreements when the University first started in 2000, to 80 in 2004 when SMU saw its first batch of graduates, the number has since hit 242 by the end of 2014. In 10 years since its first graduating cohort in 2004, the number of partnership agreements attained has more than tripled, and is comparable with universities established for much longer.

Over 63 per cent of SMU's international partner universities have at least 1 business accreditation, and 32 have triple-crown accreditations (only 67 business schools in the world have received the triple-crown accreditation status to date, from AACSB, EQUIS or AMBA).

In sum, these partnerships translate to greater, quality choices for students in their overseas exchange ventures, which help to enhance their experiences and learning outcomes.

SMU's Holistic Support on Global Learning

The University provides significant support so that global experiences are safe, informed and rewarding. SMU's comprehensive support includes advice and services to exchange students, driven primarily through the Office of Global Learning (OGL). Besides assisting students on application, placement, academic, immigration, accommodation and paperwork matters, the Office organises a series of student mobility initiatives and the University renders financial aid in numerous forms to lower the barriers and better ease students into the global learning journey. Specialised support and dedicated resources are provided to those with special needs, to put diversity and inclusion that the University advocates into practice.

True to the University's interactive pedagogy and blended learning philosophy, a number of these preparatory activities are highly engaging – Peer Advising Sessions for informal sharing and networking, and ASK OGL, amongst others. OGL even goes to the extent of selecting students to join global conferences on international relations, where students are put at the forefront of learning development, seeing the actions, and hearing from university partners. These first-hand experiences help them develop better appreciation of their future global exchange journeys, through better understanding of the support and issues behind international programmes such as global exchange. Social media and peer-to-peer conversations have also made immense impact on information sharing and in increasing the appeal of global exchange.

The internationalisation approach is unique and holistic. Taking the view that integration begins on campus, students are encouraged to embrace diversity and inclusion right from the start, with dedicated support from OGL's International Student Experiences team and a full support unit under OGL looking after diversity and inclusion for the University. This foundation helps get students into the right mindset before they eventually embark on global journeys.

Other Types of Global Exposure

An increasing number of students go on multiple global exposure programmes over the course of their undergraduate studies.

For those who are unable to go for a full semester's exchange, it is increasingly popular for students to go on 4-week summer study programmes that are shorter.

Besides overseas exchange, summer programmes and study missions, other forms of global exposure include overseas internships, competitions, community service, academic and co-curricular activities.

There has been a healthy increase in the number of students participating in the overseas community outreach projects. This stood at 24 per cent of the graduating cohort in 2004, and grew almost 2.5 times to 59 per cent of the graduating cohort in 2014.

Regular business cultural study trips take place every year, where international students lead and organise trips to their home countries for local students to gain better appreciation of diverse cultures and business environments, with support from the University.

For more information on SMU's list of partner universities, please visit the SMU website:
<http://www.smu.edu.sg/programmes/exchange-programme/welcome>

About Singapore Management University

A premier university in Asia, the Singapore Management University (SMU) is internationally recognised for its world-class research and distinguished teaching. Established in 2000, SMU's mission is to generate leading-edge research with global impact and produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy. SMU education is known for its highly interactive, collaborative and project-based approach to learning, and for its technologically enabled pedagogy of seminar-style teaching in small class sizes.

Home to over 8,300 undergraduate and postgraduate students, SMU comprises six schools: School of Accountancy, Lee Kong Chian School of Business, School of Economics, School of Information Systems, School of Law, and School of Social Sciences. SMU offers a wide range of bachelors, masters and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with the six schools, as well as in interdisciplinary combinations of these areas.

SMU has an emphasis on generating rigorous, high-impact, and relevant multi-disciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance. SMU faculty members collaborate with leading international researchers and universities from USA, Europe, China and India, as well as with partners in the business community and public sector, through its research institutes, centres and labs. SMU's city campus is a state-of-the art facility located in the heart of downtown Singapore, fostering strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community. www.smu.edu.sg

Media Contact:

Charlene Liew
Assistant Director, Corporate Communications
Singapore Management University
DID: 6828 0020
Email: charleneliew@smu.edu.sg