

# Making IT happen

IDA scholar Tan Xue Shan learns there is more than one path to success after studying overseas



## Hazel Tan

IT IS tough winning one scholarship, but being awarded two puts Ms Tan Xue Shan in a league of her own.

Ms Tan was awarded her first scholarship from Singapore Management University (SMU) after graduating from Nanyang Polytechnic with a diploma in Business Informatics in 2007.

In 2008, while she was still completing her Bachelor of Science (Information Systems Management) degree at SMU, she applied for a second scholarship — the National Infocomm Scholarship (NIS) offered by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) under the Singapore Management University-Carnegie Mellon University Fast Track Programme.

The 25-year-old recalls: "I went through multiple rounds of rigorous reviews and interviews with SMU, IDA, interested companies as well as Carnegie Mellon University (CMU). To my surprise, I landed a new scholarship and became an NIS SMU-CMU Fast Track Programme scholar."

That marked the start of a challenging infocomm learning journey for her.

She says: "While it was a conscious decision to apply for the scholarship, the scholarship offer was a serendipitous event that provided me with the opportunity to discover my passion, enhance my capabilities and explore the various career options in the infocomm industry."

Ms Tan graduated with a Master of Science in Information Technology (eBusiness Technology) degree from CMU last year.

She says the programme's focus on a project-based curriculum enabled her to acquire extensive academic knowledge and equipped her with practical skills including project management, cross-cultural team collaboration and presentation skills.

"I am very appreciative of the opportunity to further my education in CMU, a world-class university with renowned professors and passionate students from all over the world."

"One of the most important things I learnt is the importance of discovering your passion and creating an impact in the world using your acquired capabilities."

"Regardless of the disciplines each of them come from, and whether professor or student, everyone is looking for some way to contribute and to leave a legacy in the world."

## Redefining success

Her overseas experience also made her realise there is more than one path to success.

"Growing up in fast-paced Singapore, there always seemed to be a publicly recognised 'best path'."

"My experience in the US taught me it is important to take a step back, to look at the possible alternatives and reflect on what you really want to do and be," she adds.

Currently serving out her four-year bond at NCS, a leading infocommunications technology service provider, Ms Tan is a digital strategist consultant, responsible for organising and analysing consumer facing online experiences to create efficient workflows, provide customer insight and solve problems.

## Mentor guidance

Each NIS scholarship holder is assigned a mentor to guide him in job rotations and to create a career roadmap.

Ms Tan is in the midst of working out her career path with her mentor before deciding the specific industry and job role she wants to take on in the future.

With the rapid evolution of new technologies and the growing prevalence of social media, a job like Ms Tan's is expected to grow in demand.

Those who wish to apply for IDA's NIS should "stay passionate and motivated and work hard, play hard".

You should also make new friends, learn and share knowledge, says Ms Tan, adding: "Grab hold of all learning and playing opportunities, especially when you are in CMU."

Explore, experience and discover new things about the country, the industry on a global scale and most importantly yourself, including your life and career goals."