

## Narendra Aggarwal

WHILE there are many master's programmes, few cater for a specific functional role within an organisation, says Mr Henry Toh (below).

However, one that does is Singapore Management University's (SMU) new Master of Science in CFO Leadership (MCFO), says Mr Toh, who enrolled in the pioneer batch of the programme in August 2013.

"This course aims to train and equip participants towards the CFO role in today's dynamic business environment," says Mr Toh, vice-president, treasury, at Clifford Capital, an associate company of Temasek Holdings that specialises in providing long-term project financing for the infrastructure and utilities sectors.



PHOTO: HENRY TOH

"The real benefit is that the programme equips you with the knowledge and the skill to know the issues you will face in your job and how to manage them or work with people who can manage them," adds the 39-year-old.

"It can be applied to a treasury function or even an IT function. And, if one day, a company trusts me to make me its CFO, I know I am well equipped to assume that role."

His company sponsored 40 per cent of the \$55,000 course fee, with only one condition — that he graduated.

Not only did Mr Toh successfully complete SMU's MCFO programme in July last year, he also won the Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants' Gold Medal for Best Student.

He has more than 14 years of experience with multinational companies, as well as local-listed companies in the finance and real estate sectors.

## Industry insights

Developed with insights from eminent industry leaders, the SMU MCFO is the first distinctive postgraduate degree programme designed to develop CFOs and finance leaders.

The programme equips participants with the broad competencies required to manage the complexities of the finance function in today's organisations.

Mr Toh says he benefited by attending SMU's MCFO programme as it "dissects the role of a CFO in today's organisation into various aspects", such as financial reporting, capital markets, strategic management and soft skills.

Each of these modules aims at "building up knowledge for a particular situation faced by a CFO at one point or another", he says.

Adds Mr Toh: "For me, the biggest benefit was that a lot of course time was allocated to practitioners to

# Designed to groom finance chiefs

SMU's new master's programme dissects the role of a CFO, with skills applicable from IT to treasury functions



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— Mr Henry Toh, vice-president, treasury, Clifford Capital

share their experience in their various areas of expertise. While a big part of the knowledge gathering can be found in textbooks, instructors with actual sectorial work experience and information sharing with the practitioners made the learning more enriching."

SMU's MCFO programme develops a critical thinking approach in each participant, for instance, to unmask what is not obvious in a situation, and make decisions with "all data points considered".

Mr Toh remembers a case study from class in which a manager took the blame for a mistake instead of firing his staff.

The result: The trust and reputation the managers earned led to staff members putting more into their work, leading to better productivity.

"Remembering the case study, recently I decided to take the bullet myself instead of letting it hit another team member," says Mr Toh, adding that the team now appreciates the importance of paying attention to detail.

## Master of Science in CFO Leadership, Singapore Management University

It is the first postgraduate degree in Singapore specially designed to develop CFOs and finance leaders, says Singapore Management University (SMU).

The programme equips students with broad competencies required to excel in today's challenging business environment.

Its curriculum anchors on three key pillars of the CFO function in today's modern organisation — controllership, corporate finance, and leadership and strategy.

The programme is best suited for either newly appointed CFOs or experienced executives who show potential to become CFOs or finance leaders in the future.

The part-time programme can be completed in six academic sessions over 18 months.

The average age of the class, comprising CFOs, finance directors, financial controllers and directors of business units, is 42 years.

Next intake: August 2015. Course fee: \$55,000. For details, e-mail [mcfo@smu.edu.sg](mailto:mcfo@smu.edu.sg) or call 6828-0610.