

IT IS UNIVERSITY'S FIRST FULL SPORTS SCHOLARSHIP

# SMU LAUNCHES SPORTS SCHOLARSHIP IN YIP'S NAME

## Paralympic swimming champ honoured by the gesture, wants to fight for more causes

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**SINGAPORE** – When she started swimming at 12, making an impact on society was one of the last things on Yip Pin Xiu's (picture) mind.

But after winning three Paralympic gold medals, the para-athlete, who has muscular dystrophy, and took up swimming to strengthen her muscles and for fitness, has come to realise that her successes can be a platform to help others and generate awareness of issues.

For example, Yip's two-gold haul in Rio, along with best friend Theresa Goh's bronze-medal feat, reignited a national debate on whether able-bodied athletes and para-athletes should be rewarded equally for their medal-winning achievements at major Games.

Likewise, the 24-year-old's achievements have also spurred Singapore Management University (SMU) to launch a scholarship in her name, which was announced yesterday at their annual Leadership Symposium.

The bond-free Yip Pin Xiu Scholarship includes a full tuition fee waiver and a Growth Opportunities Allowance component that allows "outstanding" national athletes to enjoy leadership and personal development programmes. While it is one of more than 100 scholarships available to SMU undergraduates, it is SMU's first full sports scholarship.

Up to two such scholarships will be given out each year. The scholarship is open to all first-year students only and commences next August.

Professor Lily Kong, provost and Lee Kong Chian chair professor of Social Sciences at SMU, hailed Yip as "not only an ambassador for sports, but a role model and inspiration to all Singaporeans".

"For these reasons, SMU has named a scholarship after Pin Xiu, to recognise her strife and personal journey, work and contribution to her sport, SMU and Singapore," she said in a statement.



PHOTO: SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY

### KEY DETAILS OF THE SCHOLARSHIP

- Open only to incoming students every year, who are outstanding athletes and have "potential and plans" to continue to represent Singapore.
- Open to students from different physical backgrounds.
- Key eligibility criteria: sports excellence, good character and conduct, hard work, perseverance, humility, others before self.
- Up to two awarded a year.
- Funded by SMU. All tuition fees (S\$11,300-\$12,500 per student annually, based on freshmen entering SMU in 2016/17) waived.
- Growth Opportunities Allowance capped at S\$12,000 over four years.
- Application window has opened; scholarship to commence August 2017.
- More information at: [smu.edu.sg/about/financial/scholarships](http://smu.edu.sg/about/financial/scholarships)

Yip, a Social Sciences undergraduate, who will start her final semester next month, said yesterday that she did not imagine having a scholarship in her name even after she won her golds in Rio.

"I think this is the (kind of) impact that comes along with the wins," she said. "It's not something I thought about before, but I understand that through these, people manage to find gaps in society that need to be

bridged. As an athlete, I believe our job is to show results, so that the rest are able to leverage on those results to fight for these kinds of causes (like helping athletes and equality issues).

"But now, having produced results and understood that these are the gaps, I also want to play a part to help to bridge them."

Yip, who was told of the scholarship by SMU after returning home from the Paralympics in September, said she was "very honoured" to play a part in helping recipients reach their "full potential".

"It can help give fire to their passion for a bit longer, knowing they are not alone on this journey. Support (for athletes) is very important," she said.

She explained that athletes do not just train, but also have to go for "things in between", such as recovery, nutritionist and physiotherapy appointments, which can be a challenge when trying to balance those with school commitments.

"You have to do all these to be a better athlete," she said.

"It (the scholarship) is a form of helping the athletes and I'm very proud that SMU is doing this, even though they are not a sports school... it is a huge step for sports in Singapore."

Professor Ong Siow Heng, SMU's dean of students, noted that SMU has always had national athletes in its midst and believes that the scholarship will aid those looking to further their education at the school.

"We are very flexible in accommodating athletes' needs to train at the very top level and, at the same time, receive a holistic education and balance their work and exams," he told TODAY, citing how Yip had been granted a leave of absence since December 2015 to train for Rio.

"So the time is right to offer a couple of sports scholarships — for any degree in SMU — for Singaporeans."

Yip, who will major in political science, also took part in a plenary discussion at the symposium, along with Denise Phua, MP for Jalan Besar and the Mayor of Central Singapore District and Jason Wong, board chairman of Focus on the Family Singapore.

Yip added: "I still wouldn't call myself a leader, but I will say I (now) fight for causes I am passionate about, things that mean (a lot) to me — and I don't have to be called a leader to do that."