

# Master of her destiny

**W**ith outstanding grades, strong leadership skills, and lots of heart, Sharon Phoon from Malaysia and three other international MBA students from Singapore Management University (SMU) were each awarded the MasterCard MBA Scholarship for Women 2013.

Unlike the past two years, when two recipients were selected, as per the agreement with SMU, MasterCard decided to allow for four recipients this year instead of two, in response to the number of excellent applications.

The other awardees are Liliia Shamsutdinova (Russia), Marie-Adelaide Mol (France) and Ritika Sharma (India), who have all received S\$20,000 (RM50,000) scholarships, as well as enrolment in an internship programme with MasterCard.

Phoon's road to recognition began when she stumbled upon the MasterCard MBA Scholarship for Women 2013 while she was applying for her MBA programme at SMU.

"I submitted an essay for the first round of selection before attending a panel interview chaired by MasterCard Corporate Communications group head Georgette Tan as part of the second round of selections. Thereafter, I waited for two months before the official announcement of the winners. It was definitely a nervous wait for the announcement. When I got to know I was selected as one of the recipients, I was beyond joy!" exclaimed Phoon.



(L-R) Shamsutdinova, Sharma, Phoon and Mol

"Being the first Malaysian to be awarded the MasterCard MBA Scholarship for Women since its inception two years ago, it is definitely a dream come true. I am very thankful to MasterCard and am deeply honoured to be one of the recipients this year.

"This recognition will further motivate me to serve more people in my community and beyond. I hope this will also inspire more Malaysian women to step forward, love people and serve the community."

Born to a family of four, Phoon's parents played an important part in shaping her life, as they were both educators, teaching her the true meaning of education.

"Education, as my parents used to say, needs to be 'built on a foundation of character' and 'is more than outcomes but also the effort and process.'"

The Kedah-born scholar invested her

time and gave up a corporate position in the oil and gas industry to live her passion of educating children and youth by teaching at a local polytechnic a few years ago.

"As a lecturer in a local tertiary institution the past couple of years, I had the chance to mould young lives and impact youths through classroom lessons, service learning trips and para-counseling work outside lesson time.

Her dedication to community service and education has paid off, with Mastercard's nomination for the Scholarship. Phoon encourages women from all background to apply as this scholarship is

specifically for women.

"MasterCard supports women's empowerment in advancing their education, professional goals and their desire to positively impact their communities. No effort is too small or insignificant to be considered. Also, stay true to one's passion to serve the community whether or not it is duly recognised," said Phoon.

Phoon is now in her third week of the internship programme with the MasterCard Singapore office, working alongside the Strategy/Business Planning and Corporate Communications teams, which she finds enriching. FocusM



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