

Getting them career ready

SMU offers its postgraduates career services and networking sessions for a competitive edge in the marketplace

A FEW months after she started her part-time Master of Professional Accounting programme with the Singapore Management University (SMU) in 2011, Ms Diana Chua proactively registered herself with the university's postgraduate career services centre for help with her career planning.

"It is important to understand what recruiters and hiring managers are looking for when evaluating prospective candidates. With that knowledge, you can learn to best position your competitive advantage in order to stand out among the talent pool," she says.

Ms Chua met with the university's career adviser to refresh her resumé and had an exploratory discussion about prospective career paths that could fit with her professional interests.

She was impressed with what the university's postgraduate career services centre, Dato' Kho Hui Meng Career Centre, had to offer.

"What really stands out about SMU's postgraduate career services is that there are dedicated career advisers who make every effort to coach and guide students individually regarding career matters, regardless of the programme they are in," says Ms Chua, who joined Total Oil as a product regulatory specialist, a month before graduation.

The 33-year-old used the career centre's one-on-one career consultation services to help her identify her motivations, career interests, personality fit and competency skills.

This, in turn, helped her to map out her career strategies, goals and development paths. She also participated in networking sessions and workshops organised by the career centre to stay abreast of the latest in the labour market.

Developing careers

Set up in 2012, SMU's postgraduate career centre has a team of dedicated staff, which oversees career services and career development for its postgraduate students. The centre stays closely connected with the corporate community through site visits, regular ongoing conversations, and recruiter group sessions on campus, to provide students with the latest and best information



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available to make informed career decisions.

The centre's "career development series" curriculum helps postgraduate students such as Ms Chua to develop career management skills, which are important for them to successfully manage their career paths.

Conducted through periodic workshops that cover career planning, job search processes, writing and interview skills, networking skills and strategies, the courses equip students with knowledge and skills that would increase their competitiveness in pursuing their chosen careers.

The university also maintains a dynamic online portal that lists career opportunities offered by its network of employers who are focused on recruiting SMU's postgraduates as interns or direct hires.

Mr Steven Burton, SMU's director of postgraduate career services, says the university's postgraduate programme portfolio and enrolment have grown substantially over the past couple years.

"A dedicated postgraduate career services team was identified as a vital component to support this growth and help assure their success," he says.

A key strength of the career centre lies in the relationships the university has built with more than

2,000 current and prospective recruiters across a wide range of industries including financial services, technology and the fast moving consumer goods, in Singapore, South-east Asia, China and India. This presents a huge opportunity to its postgraduates for networking and employment.

Mr Burton says the university expects to achieve even closer relationships with its corporate partners through collaborating on postgraduate recruiting opportunities.

"We also hope to achieve strong co-curricular student development and positive employment outcomes for our postgraduate students. Realising these achievements is further expected to enhance the reputation and image of SMU," he adds.

"The strong corporate network and the comprehensive, structured career development programme, plus one-on-one career advising that we provide have delivered strong results for our postgraduate students," says Mr Burton.

"For example, 90 per cent of our full-time MBA students who graduated in January last year were employed within six months of graduation."

— Hazel Tan