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In continuation of our student interview series, we interviewed recent SMU grad, Michelle Lim Si Jia. Michelle earned a Bachelor of Accountancy with a second major in Finance. Not only did she choose SMU for the challenge of seminar-style courses, she was also able to use her time at SMU to secure multiple internships. For those considering SMU, Michelle's story can be insightful.

What influenced you to pursue your degree? What excites you intellectually?

To be very honest, prior to receiving my A-level results, I had the intention to pursue a degree relating to healthcare. It was only much later that the idea of studying Accountancy occurred to me. After discussing with my family and consulting various working adults, I made the decision to pursue an Accountancy degree as I was pretty good with numbers and enjoyed Mathematics during my junior college days. I was also attracted by the various job prospects available for Accountancy graduates. I love learning new things, especially when I can see how they relate to or are relevant in the real world. I also find it extremely satisfying when a difficult concept finally clicks in my head and ties in with my existing knowledge.

Did you consider any other schools? If so, why did you ultimately choose SMU?

Like many others, I considered pursuing my higher education at the Singapore Management University (SMU), National University of Singapore (NUS) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU). While all three universities have their own advantages, I eventually decided on SMU for its interactive learning pedagogy, as I knew that I prefer and find more value in “seminar-style teaching”. Even though I am not outspoken by nature, I chose SMU knowing full well that it places a high focus on class participation and project work. While challenging, being placed in such an environment—where you frequently have to articulate and present your ideas and thoughts—inevitably builds up one’s self-confidence in public speaking. This training ground that SMU provides allows you to hone your communication skills and, thus, prepares you for a smooth transition into the workplace, where such skills are pivotal for success.

How would you describe your experience in your programme at SMU?

While the academic rigour at SMU is definitely tough, it helps to build one’s tenacity, resilience and grit. Besides, should you need help, most professors are approachable and very happy to impart both textbook and real-world knowledge. SMU seniors and alumni have also been of tremendous help in providing school and career advice. Apart from academics, SMU has also given me countless opportunities to pursue my interests: be it participating in various local

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and overseas community service projects, taking part in local and international student exchange programmes, signing up for competitions and various events—the list goes on. The past four years in SMU have been incredibly fulfilling for me and if I had to do it again, I would still choose SMU.

What has been your favourite course so far, and why?

I really can't decide on one! That being said, the courses most enjoyable to me are those that were conducted by professors who are not only good in the subject area, but also very passionate about it. Beyond just preparing students to sit for examinations, these professors are concerned with increasing our understanding and interest in the course. Their enthusiasm permeates the class and because of that, I was able to catch a bit of their passion.

What type of co-curricular activities are you involved with?

Two co-curricular activities that I was actively involved in were Uni-Y SMU and SMU Cru. Besides having friends whom I can fall back on and share my vulnerabilities with, these clubs also provide me with a platform to give back to society—something I firmly believe in. It brings me happiness to be able to serve alongside friends who have the same heart for the community!

Have you had internships? If so, how did you search for internship opportunities?

I have taken part in two internship programmes thus far. SMU has an online platform, Ontrac, which is a great starting point for students looking to apply for not just internships, but also jobs, information sessions, and the like.

How has SMU helped prepare you for this type of career?

Aplenty! I am grateful to the SMU School of Accountancy (SOA) for constantly improving the curriculum in order to make us future-ready. An example of this would be the introduction of various data analytics modules just this year. Also, I really appreciate that SMU SOA is always working to obtain as many accreditations by professional industry bodies, as well as exemptions from examination modules for qualification programmes, as possible. Additionally, with the "Modified Term 2" option offered by the school, SMU SOA students are able to take part in internships during the audit peak period (December to February) to fulfil the manpower needs of accounting firms. All these efforts make an education at SMU SOA so much more valuable and improve our marketability to future employers.

How are you financing your education? What resources did you use to learn about financing options?

SMU regularly sends out emails on the various financial assistance schemes available, which I take note of and apply for. Through this means, I was blessed with a scholarship for both my penultimate and final years in SMU.

If you are using education loans, how did you learn about different lenders? Are you happy with your decision to get a loan to pursue a degree?

SMU has a website to inform readers about the various education loans available. Before signing the loan contract, students (and their respective guarantors) are fully informed about the contract terms, allowing us to focus on pursuing our education and enjoying all that SMU has to offer, without having to fret over any uncertainty pertaining to the loan.

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Are there any resources that would help you with career development that you're not currently getting?

There is none that I can think of! SMU has given me invaluable help in figuring out my career path. The school has a dedicated career office, the Dato' Kho Hui Meng Career Centre, where students can go for career coaching, resume checking or interview preparation. Each student is assigned to his/her personal career coach and from what I have experienced, they are professionals who are very willing to share their industry knowledge and help you navigate through your career choices.

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

I see myself pursuing a career in a company that I am able to add value to.

The article ValueChampion Student Interview Series: Michelle Lim, SMU originally appeared on ValueChampion's blog.

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