

STUDENTS WITH A HEART ON CAMPUS

SIM-RMIT University students operate charity bazaar to raise funds for children's home





Vibes Issue 12 Editorial Team
From left, Francis Chin, Jolene Lee, Judy Wong, Aaron Tan and Lydia Irene Yeo

Foreword	03
Education Focus	04
SIM Focus: Doing well in studies with PAL	06
HR Focus: How to zap the generation gap	08
Campus News	10
SIM Partner: Crossing borders with understanding	12
Personality @ SIM	
· Su Zhen's knock-out power	13
· Beyond academic excellence	14
· Min's student life infused with music	15
Alumni	
· The spirit of enterprise	16
· Dynamo in school and at work	17
· Lifelong learning is but a stepping stone	18
Contributors	19



Massive Open On-line Courses or MOOCs were perceived to be the next wave in networked learning. The underlying principle was to leverage different teaching tools and methodologies such as blended learning, open educational resources and crowd-sourced interaction, to support learning anywhere across the globe, free to the learner and at little infrastructure cost to providers.

By 2012, most of the top universities in the West were putting their contents online. With global student registration figures for MOOC courses at well over 5 million, MOOC is here to stay and education providers who perceive this development as a threat can't ignore or wish it away.

Can MOOCs be the answer to obtaining an education? The original MOOC offerings were open source and free, yet they were perceived to be of high quality because the contents were developed and presented by professors from MIT, Harvard, Stanford and other elite universities. With such contents made accessible to people regardless of location or background, many do see MOOCs as the answer to the monetary concerns described above, and this could help explain

the phenomenal enrolment rates over the past two to three years, although the rosy picture is dimmed somewhat by the high dropout rates.

The jury is still out on whether MOOC can be a successful way to get an education. This leads to the dilemma on what MOOC is good for to the individual. Is it just to accumulate trivial information? Is it to acquire a skill set that would be recognised by employers in one's career advancement?

The research article on MOOCs in this edition of VIBES provides a comprehensive background on its development, impact and some pointers on how you as a lifelong learner can utilise this huge online resource for your own development.

Judy Wong
Director
Business and Marketing Relations
judywong@sim.edu.sg

VIBES serves as a platform to highlight the achievements of SIM Global Education (SIM GE) students, alumni as well as campus trends and happenings to industry partners and fellow students. VIBES is a bi-annual publication by SIM GE. The featured articles are written by SIM GE students who are undertaking the various programmes offered by our partner universities:

- IMI International Management Institute, Switzerland
- RMIT University, Australia
- The University of Manchester, UK
- The University of Sheffield, UK
- The University of Sydney, Australia
- The University of Warwick, UK
- University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, US
- University of Birmingham, UK
- University of London, UK
- University of Southampton, UK
- University of Stirling, UK
- University of Wollongong, Australia

On cover: Students with a heart on campus

Singapore Institute of Management Pte Ltd (SIM), 461 Clementi Road, Singapore 599491
Copyright © 2014 SIM Global Education. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or part without permission is prohibited.
Design Agency: www.tool.com.sg | Printer: KHL Printing

TO KNOW EVERYTHING UNDER HEAVEN VIA MOOC



Without leaving the house,
One understands the world.
Without looking out the window.

One sees Heaven's way.
The further one goes, the less one knows.
[Dao De Jing chapter 47]

不出户，知天下；
不窥牖，见天道。
其出弥远，其知弥少。
[道德经47章]

Could Internet broadband connection worldwide turn Laozi's ancient maxim into reality? Without putting a foot outdoors, could one possibly know everything there is to know about the world?

The answer appears to lie in MOOCs or Massive Open Online Courses, an innovation that rides on fast Internet connection to spread knowledge freely and openly. It all began in 2008 when universities started uploading their curriculum contents online, with the objective of providing tertiary education at different levels to people in any location. By 2012, MOOC implementations reached a crescendo when universities in North America and Europe competed among themselves to put their intellectual treasure troves online for the world to read and learn.

But learning is more than reading what's on your screen. Whether you're a student or a casual surfer, you can benefit only when you are engaged in the learning process. This could include exchanging e-mail messages with fellow students (preferably reading the same course material at the same agreed time although in different parts of the globe), posting questions to the tutor or lecturer supervising the course, and submitting your assignments on time.

Background on MOOC development

The term "MOOC" was first mentioned in 2008 by Dave Cormier of the University of Prince Edward Island and Bryan Alexander of the National Institute for Technology in Liberal Education in response to a course called Connectivism and Connective Knowledge. Since then, a number of technology platforms have been developed to host and channel the course contents. Among the big name universities that entered the foray was Stanford University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard University.

In late 2011, for instance, Stanford launched three courses: The first, Introduction to AI, by Sebastian Thrun and Peter Norvig, quickly reached 160,000 students. The announcement was followed within weeks by the launch of two more MOOCs by Andrew Ng and Jennifer Widom, also resulting in high enrolment figures.

With the publicity and momentum, Thrun started a company called Udacity and Stanford professors Daphne Koller and Andrew Ng launched Coursera. In the space of less than two years, Coursera became the largest commercial-based MOOC provider, claiming 7.1 million users in over 640 courses from over 100 institutions (as of April 2014).

Expressing concern that online education is heading towards commercialisation, heavyweight MIT created the not-for-profit MITx in March 2012. Harvard and the University of California, Berkeley, joined the initiative which was renamed edX which offers "great online courses from the world's best universities", without asking a cent from learners. More top-named universities joined the edX initiative, including University of Texas System, Wellesley College, Caltech, UC at Berkeley,

University of Chicago, University of Queensland, Georgetown University and Beijing University.

In November 2012, the University of Miami launched an online middle and high school college, known as Global Academy, its online high school. The course became available for high school students preparing for the SAT Subject Test in biology.

2013 saw even more new MOOC platforms launched. In January Udacity (which is a for-profit setup) launched its first credit-based MOOC, in a tie-up with San Jose State University. This was a different approach from the original free arrangement where you could acquire knowledge but with no credit.

Many universities today view MOOC as the "next big thing" in education, and they are scrambling to be part of the action. Dozens of universities in Europe and Asia have announced partnerships with the large American MOOC providers.

High drop-out rates

A growing concern about MOOCs is that although tens of thousands enrol, a very small proportion actually complete the full programme. However, such embarrassing statistics were seldom published and whatever figures we see are just guesstimates.

Reports on the Internet suggest a completion rate ranging from 10 percent or less. Katy Jordan, a graduate student at the Open University made an attempt in 2013 to compile completion rate data from 19 Coursera courses, three edX courses, one Udacity and one MITx (precursor to edX) course.

Katy's conclusion is that while enrolment has reached up to 230,000, the more typical size is 20,000 students. Completion rates can approach 40 percent (and occasionally exceed it), although most MOOCs have completion rates of less than 13 percent (source: www.katyjordan.com/MOOCproject.html).

Learning outcomes in MOOC

How do you know that you have mastered a subject or have attained a certain level of competence in it? A human professor or tutor can question you, check your assignment and grade your exam answer sheets to come up with a fairly accurate assessment. But when you are one of several thousands studying online with little or no face-to-face interaction with the teacher, assessing your subject mastery becomes problematic.

Shanna Smith Jaggars, assistant director of Columbia University's Community College

Research Centre, carried out research comparing online-only and face-to-face learning in studies of community-college students and faculty in Virginia and Washington states. She found that in Virginia, 32 percent of students failed or withdrew from for-credit online courses, compared with 19% for equivalent in-person courses.

One solution to improve academic performance is to offer a blend of online and human interaction, known as "flipped classrooms". Students watch lecture videos online at home but come to school to work on projects and interact with the teaching faculty. This blended approach is said to even improve student performance in traditional in-person classes.

In some MOOC programmes, students are required to begin with self-assessment surveys and videos. They have to answer questions like, "What do you think it takes to be successful in online education, and do you feel that you are ready for it?"

Another way to improve grades is of course to make students pay. Coursera found that students who paid US\$30 to \$90 were substantially more likely to finish the course. The fee was to confirm that they took and passed a course.

MOOC pioneer and Coursera founder Andrew Ng – who once studied in Raffles Institution in Singapore – says charging for content would be a tragedy. But premium services such as certification or placement could be charged a fee. Course developers could charge licensing fees for educational institutions that use its materials. Introductory modules can be free to attract new students, with fees for subsequent modules.

There're of course some critics of MOOC. Cary Nelson, former president of the American Association of University Professors claimed that MOOCs are not a reliable means of supplying credentials. "It's fine to put lectures online, but this plan only degrades degree programmes if it plans to substitute for them," he observes.

Sandra Schroeder, chairwoman of the Higher Education Programme and Policy Council for the American Federation of Teachers comments that MOOC students are not likely to succeed without the structure of a strong and sequenced academic programme.

The jury is still out on whether Massive Open Online Courses can indeed fulfil Laozi's historic statement that without leaving the house one can know everything there is about the world.



RMIT students attending a PAL leaders' workshop to learn facilitation skills

DOING WELL IN STUDIES WITH PAL

In SIM Global Education's Peer Assisted Learning, students guide students to academic excellence

Doing well in examination requires more than reading and memorising contents from a textbook or lecturer's notes. Often, students need smart study skills, and what better way to acquire them than from other students who already have excellent academic results?

This is the operating principle of student-assisted and student-led study sessions, an informal group study scheme which differs from the traditional peer tutoring approach.

Today, Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) can be found in many universities so the methodology itself is not new as it derives from an American model, "Supplemental Instruction", first devised in 1973 at the University of Missouri, Kansas City. At SIM Global Education (SIM GE) the methodology has been carefully contextualised,

derived through an evidence-based approach, to specifically meet the learning needs of our students.

Pilot scheme on Mathematics

SIM GE launched its pilot PAL scheme in September 2013. The first group of 140 students focused on a specific study subject, University of London's (UOL) Mathematics I. It was led by 28 students who have already done well in this subject.

Dr Phil Stephenson (PhD, Pure Mathematics), SIM GE's Head of Assessment and Senior Lecturer, helped develop the PAL student leaders' guide to Math I, as well as acting as their consultant.

Dr Stephenson says the student leader would present a

problem to the group, and encourage them to come up with their solutions. The problem-solving process would be made as interactive as possible, as the leader asked for suggestions at each stage of the solution.

A second PAL group, this time of 27 students doing Psychological Statistics, was also started, says Lai Fook Ming, SIM GE's Head of Learning Development, the department responsible for helping students "learn how to learn".

Fook Ming who underwent specialised training in this area, says the other study sessions to be launched are UOL's Macro-economics and Statistics II, and RMIT University's Macro-economics and Business Statistics.

"PAL is not remedial study," says Fook Ming. "It was not just weak and average students who signed up, but also those who were satisfactory in their studies and aiming for academic excellence."

As for the PAL student leader, he or she must meet several criteria, including excellent academic performance, and the ability to communicate and express themselves. Personality-wise, they should also be friendly and able to show empathy.

The PAL leaders undergo a two-day workshop where they learn how to facilitate group discussion, how to elicit answers and how to ensure contributions from all students in the group.

"Besides being a skilled moderator, the leader has to help the rest in unpacking difficult concepts. He or she may know the answer or explanation but it is more effective and meaningful if the students come up with the answers through their own effort, instead of sitting back to receive them. Of course if the answers are incorrect, the leader is present to explain why it is wrong," says Fook Ming.

Students who have gone through the PAL programme say it made them learn in depth instead of simply memorising formulas.

Facilitators, not tutors

Recognising the challenges of having to adapt quickly to university life was what inspired PAL leaders Adriel Ong Shao En, 23, and Jasmine Liew, 21, to share their experience. Both emphasised that they saw themselves as facilitators of learning and not tutors.

Jasmine and Adriel both said that during PAL study sessions, learners do most of the discussion while the leaders guide the latter's thought process thus making it an efficient two-way learning experience.

Jasmine, who helped with the UOL Math I programme, believes that small study-group sessions is the perfect platform for her juniors who are less outspoken and too reserved to clarify their doubts in crowded lecture hall settings.



PAL leader Jasmine Liew, explains to VIBES student reporter Zulhilmi Zainal that her role is that of facilitator, not tutor

The 2nd-year UOL Mathematics and Economics student also says a peer-to-peer learning network will help pique the students' interest in subjects that they have earlier find challenging. "Whenever the students found certain concepts continually hard to comprehend, I told them that I too found them difficult once," says Jasmine.

"Having volunteered as a PAL leader for a while, I have developed my own methodology in coaching them on techniques to study for exams, and I always began each session with topical reviews."

Adriel, a third-year Wollongong Psychology student at SIM GE, sees PAL as an enriching opportunity because taking part itself reinforces his own interest in psychology.

Having done well in his Statistics and Research Design module, he decided to help others overcome the fear of numbers, hence his participation in the PAL session on Psychological Statistics. He made it a point to prompt his study group members to arrive at solutions or to gradually understand the concepts themselves, instead of instantly providing them with answers or explanations.

The sense of fulfilment and the facilitation skills they acquired are among the rewards both PAL leaders cited as their motive for leading their fellow students. Both Adriel and Jasmine urge more senior students with excellent academics results to come forward so that the range of subjects offered under PAL can be expanded from the current six.

Jasmine believes the basic willingness to embrace differences and help others tide over their challenges can help build a more well-bonded and supportive student community. Adriel adds that such a programme can help foster an excellent culture of peer networking that SIM GE graduates can relate to in the future.

— PAL leaders' interview conducted by VIBES student reporter Zulhilmi Zainal

ZAP THE GENERATION GAP: HOW TO WORK WITH DIFFERENT GENERATIONS WITHOUT GOING CRAZY

The Challenge

Imagine this. You've called a team meeting. You're planning your strategies and projects for the next quarter. You notice that after the first 15 minutes, Jonathan and Rachel, both in their twenties, have pulled out their phones and seem to be texting. You're perplexed, because up until this point, they both seemed to be totally engaged and have been offering great ideas.

You're not quite sure what to do or how to handle it. Should you ignore it? Confront them in the meeting? Speak to them about it privately at a later time?

Later that afternoon, Joseph walks into your office. He's 58, and has been with your company for 18 years. "I was looking forward to my new role, but I found out the project leader is only 27 years old. That's younger than my kids! When I went to talk with him about the project, he seemed to dismiss my years of experience, saying he was looking for fresh, creative ideas. What makes him think that just because I've been around a while, I don't have any fresh, creative ideas?"

Does this sound familiar?

Generational clashes are becoming more prevalent and are presenting challenges in many organisations. There's lots of misunderstanding and miscommunication. We see conflict caused by negative stereotypes, biases, differing communication preferences, and just plain viewing things from different perspectives

Teamwork suffers. Communication suffers. Productivity suffers. Performance suffers.

In today's tight labor market, it's imperative that organisations leverage the talents of every employee and be seen as an employer of choice for all generations.

How Do You Do That?

Each generation grew up in different times, had different formative experiences, and matured in different cultural contexts.

When I speak to organisations, there are five strategies I recommend that they implement to create organisational cultures and work environments where people of all generations can thrive.

1. Equip Your Managers to Provide Customised Leadership

Back when I started doing leadership training over 20 years ago, things were simpler. Leaders had their "management style" which they applied to everyone. Leaders told their employees what to do, and their people did it, no questions asked.

The days of "one size fits all" leadership are over. The days of "command and control" are long behind us. In today's world, leaders must learn to establish a team culture that gets the best from every individual, regardless of generation.

Leaders need to connect, and they need to communicate. They need to know each of their team members as individuals. What are their goals? What motivates them? How can they best utilise their strengths? How do they like to be recognised? How do they like to be rewarded?

Productivity and loyalty are not a given. Leaders need to be able to inspire, to get buy-in, to create collaborative work teams, to have multi-channel communication, and to help their people reach their full potential.

This requires leadership that is customised for each individual, no matter what generation they belong to.

2. Educate Your Workforce

If you want a highly engaged, highly productive multi-generational workforce that is able to work together effectively, you want to provide your people with education and training.

They need to develop an awareness of their own preconceived notions and biases. They need an understanding of generational differences, and a commitment to welcoming points of view and perspectives that are different than their own.

They need to know about each generation, how each generation perceives the other generations, the challenges those perceptions can create, and how to take positive steps toward working across generations.

Giving your people the knowledge and tools they need to communicate and work with people of all generations will pay off in higher productivity, more creativity and innovation, less conflict, and increased commitment to their jobs and to your organisation.

3. Set Up or Enhance Mentoring Programs

Often, we think of mentoring as an older, more experienced, more established employee mentoring a younger, less seasoned employee. Certainly, seasoned professionals can mentor newer employees. They can pass on institutional knowledge, explain the "unwritten rules," and introduce the mentee to influential people in the organisation. This is very valuable.

Yet, let's broaden our thinking about mentoring. Younger employees bring a lot to the table. They bring new perspectives, creativity, social media savvy, technological expertise, and more.

"Reverse mentoring" enables us to pair these younger employees with older mentees.

"Mutual mentoring" pairs people who have something to offer each other with the expectation they will mentor each other.

One of my clients is a baby boomer department head at a large university. He has made several comments in front of his staff that indicate an insensitivity to gender diversity and to creating an inclusive culture. Minority students feel less than welcome in this department.

One of the professors on his staff is a younger Latina woman who recently received tenure and has been promoted to the leadership team of the department. She needs mentoring on leadership and on University politics. He would benefit from mentoring on diversity and gender issues. They are a perfect "mutual mentoring" relationship.

4. Customise Communications

One of the most troubling things leaders think is that if they communicate things once, their people have "got it." They couldn't be more wrong.

Each generation has different communication preferences—from email to text messaging, to one on one, to team meetings, to all employee town hall meetings.

Traditionalists prefer face-to-face or written communication. They often feel "no news is good news." They prefer more formal communications.

Baby boomers like meetings—lots and lots of meetings. Consensus building is important to them, and they like to be in person to do this.

Generation X likes email. It's efficient. They don't want to waste time. They want to get to the result quickly. They do not want to waste time in meetings unless it's absolutely necessary. Generation Y lives and breathes technology. They're looking for instant, real-time communication. They'll text. They might send an email. They like constant feedback.

Leaders need to be able to communicate with impact for all generations. Organisations need to review their communication processes ensure they engage people of every generation.

5. Customise Career Paths and Benefits

People from different generations have different needs and preferences when it comes to education and training, benefits packages, and career paths. You want to make sure that you're taking this into account as you design these strategies and programs in your organisation.

What Now?

It really comes down to education and customisation. Evaluate your organisation or your team against these five strategies. Where are you doing a great job related to your multi-generational workforce? Where could you be doing better? What action will you take?



AVA DIAMOND

Ava Diamond is an expert in employee engagement, and works with everyone from executives to the front line to create aligned, focused organisations where people are passionately committed to results. She speaks on such topics as: being a leader people want to follow, leveraging a multigenerational workforce, leading change, employee engagement, and success strategies for women.

Ava's background includes ten years as a HR manager and OD consultant with a U.S. based global Fortune 50 computer company. She has also served as an executive director of a nonprofit, and has owned her speaking and training firm for 19 years. She holds a Masters Degree in Management and Organisational Behavior.

She can be reached through www.avadiamond.com, or at ava@avadiamond.com



Creative design to communicate
More than 500 visitors to the National Design Centre in Middle Road were treated to a feast of graphic art by 62 newly-minted graduates of SIM-RMIT University's 12th Bachelor of Design (Communication Design) programme. Under the theme, "Tictalk: Tweaking Thru Time", the designers presented creative works through posters, infographic illustrations, specially-bound books and art albums, cartoons, mini-sculptures, and self-made stationery and knickknacks.



STUDENTS WITH A HEART

SIM-RMIT University's Student Council led a fund-raising project - Project One Heart - for the Singapore Children Society (SCS) in March 2014. They raised about \$5,000 through the sales of school bags, travel bags, customised badges and SCS merchandise.

The student leaders and volunteers, led by council president Joyce Sup Yee Hua (in pink blouse) also organised an afternoon of fun activities and snacks for children from SCS' Henderson Student Care Centre.



Real-time training in trading
With the launch of the Financial Training Centre on the SIM campus on 6 June 2014, students of SIM Global Education now have the opportunity to perform hands-on training in real-time trading activities in foreign exchange, securities and derivative instruments. Equipment in the centre includes a Bloomberg terminal to provide financial data on real-time quotations and historical information for market analysis.

Pulling strings
Founded in 2009, the SIM String Ensemble is made up of over 20 talented and passionate musicians, many of whom are qualified music teachers. The Ensemble has built a reputation of musical class and excellence through various engagements in major school events and external performances.



Scholars in sports and learning
35 scholarships were awarded to deserving new and existing students. An award ceremony was held for the scholars who have achieved academic and sports excellence and demonstrated leadership qualities both in and outside the classroom.

CROSSING BORDERS WITH UNDERSTANDING

How to win friends and influence others is a valuable skill not just for sales people. It applies to understanding people of different nationalities, cultures and historical backgrounds. Given the rising tensions across borders in many regions, maintaining international relations is even more crucial, in order to reduce mistrust and prevent conflicts that may cost lives.

Individuals who have a good knowledge of IR (as International Relations is popularly known in academic circles) are in demand, not just by public agencies, but multinational corporations and any organisation that has dealings with more than one country.

According to IR Professor Chris Alden of the London School of Economics and Political Science, people and nations often make decisions not rooted in rational thinking. Countries are historical constructs, and they make choices based on events and situations of long ago, he says. They seldom share a common definition of issues, which often lead to unforeseen political consequences.

Recognising the need for skilled IR practitioners, SIM Global Education and the University of London are offering a BSc (Hons) in International Relations. The programme studies not just the role of states but also a wide range of international actors, from international organisations to multinational corporations and from civil society groups to terrorist networks.

Understanding cross-border, international issues

This programme aims to engage students critically with the range of materials about contemporary international relations. The students will gain a critical understanding of the core literature and main theoretical issues in the field of International Relations.

The study of IR is ideal for those who wish to be equipped with sufficient knowledge of international relations to understand the cross-border and international dimensions of their own chosen field. It provides them with a framework for understanding the international aspects of problems such as environmental degradation (think of the haze from forest fires that affect neighbouring countries) and economic globalisation.

"Some of my former students work for development-

based businesses such as NGOs and even international charities run by private philanthropists," says Professor Alden, referring to those who graduated in the UK. In Singapore, the first intake starts in August 2014. "MNCs too need IR graduates who not only understand cross-border cultural and ethnic sensitivities but also possess the business skills of working in an international setting. These individuals have an unbeatable repertoire of skills."

Graduates of this programme will be prepared for a career in governing bodies, international organisations, business and media. Graduates may secure jobs as business analysts, foreign correspondents and public relations executives.

Course coverage

This full-time direct honours degree programme taught at the SIM Campus, covers 12 full units over three years. Besides the introductory modules in IR and Political Science, the subjects also include International Political Economy, the study of international organisations, foreign policy analysis, and security in international relations.

At SIM Global Education, students have the opportunity to expose themselves to real international events. In February 2013, for example, a team of full-time students accompanied by their International Relations lecturer, Dr Teo Kah Beng, attended the Harvard National Model United Nations (HNMUN) in Boston, Massachusetts. The purpose of the conference was to allow students to learn and practise international relations.

At HNMUN, delegates gain insight into the workings of the UN and the dynamics of international relations by assuming the roles of UN representatives and members of other international bodies and national cabinets. HNMUN is indeed an exciting opportunity for students to debate issues that confront world leaders and to test their ideas and proposals against competing ideas and proposals. The students also learnt to work with others who are equally motivated and passionate about the topics of debate and to respond to global concerns.

The world is flat, and we're all neighbours from Brasília to Baghdad to Beijing. Studying International Relations helps us understand cross-border sensitivities, reduce tension and minimise conflicts.

SU ZHEN'S KNOCK-OUT POWER

By Boo Yi Lin

She was a knock-out at the Tae Kwon Do Open Championship in March 2014 at Nanyang Technological University. Leong Su Zhen, 26, an SIM-RMIT University student, won her gold medal (Under 56kg category) with a knockout against her NTU opponent.

Su Zhen, 26, who has been practising Tae Kwon Do since Primary School days, and holds a Black Belt 3rd Dan (a rare accomplishment even for men), helps out regularly at the SIM Taekwondo Club. She believes participation in sports and other CCA activities is important as it allows students to interact with one another and develop social and leadership skills.

Her own skill in the martial art is the result of long hours of training, comprising twice weekly sessions in the evening at SIM, twice weekly sparring sessions at the Singapore Taekwondo Federation premises and her personal daily training (to gain speed and explosive power). She constantly challenges herself to beat her previous timing and personal best.

"Once, I vomited 3 times due to the intense cardio workout, but my coach kept on shouting at me to keep going and I managed to continue on" says Su Zhen, when she was asked to describe her experience. "At times when you feel like giving up, you just stick to the momentum and follow through the process," she adds.

Tae Kwon Do, she says, has helped built her character and gave her a strong personality.

Besides punching, kicking and other martial arts activities, Su Zhen is pursuing a Bachelor of Business (Accountancy) programme, which she aims to complete in two years due to exemptions from certain modules. She holds a poly Diploma in Telecommunications and has worked in the telecommunications industry in satellite transmission for two years before enrolling in the degree programme.

Her work experience makes her appreciate the opportunity to

upgrade her academic qualification. Describing her previous job as "too niche", she feels that her current Accountancy programme would give her the chance to pursue her career goal of becoming an accountant.

"I hope to be working in a managerial position and leading a team that can help the company achieve its goals. I want to be part of a company's growth, to be involved with the CEO and senior managers," she says.

Besides books and figures and assignments and examinations (academic demands are almost endless), Su Zhen is involved in the SIM Tae Kwon Do Club, coaching and gives pointers to other members in their practice sessions. CCA participation is important, she says, because it allows students to interact with one another, and learn and develop social and leadership skills.

"Just as in secondary school, SIM should perhaps consider making it compulsory for all students in its campus to join at least one CCA," she suggests.

Su Zhen's own competitive spirit and her striving for excellence in both her sport and studies would surely see her go a long way in life and career.



BEYOND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

By Alan Lee



Aspiring business consultant Chia Yong Hong believes that if you have an idea but your client doesn't understand it, then the idea is lost. "A good idea is no good if people don't understand or accept it," says the 25-year-old SIM GE scholar, adding that he once worked as an intern with a project team of consultants where they have to come up with ideas for the client.

"After generating the idea, you and your fellow consultants have to follow up by developing solutions. So your most important task is to get the client to understand and accept your idea first. If the client doesn't appreciate it, then the idea is wasted."

Excellence in studies & CCA

Yong Hong, who is graduating this year from SIM-RMIT University's Bachelor of Business (Economics & Finance), achieved more than just high academic grades. The course has taught him how to integrate both the qualitative and quantitative approaches to business organisation. Through class projects and the period serving as an intern, he learned to germinate new ideas and bring them out to clients in a way that they could appreciate the benefits.

Yong Hong was the recipient of the SIM GE Scholarship and served as president of the Scholars Network which organises networking events and industry dialogues. Yong Hong was one of the student drivers for both the 2013 and 2014 CEO Dialogue sessions where all students were invited to listen and engage with top business leaders.

In the past year, Yong Hong was also vice-president

of the SIM Investment & Networking Club (INC). He worked with other student officials to publish a newsletter and run club events in partnerships with financial institutions with the goal of promoting financial literacy among students.

Promoting financial literacy

Early in 2014, he and other INC leaders organised the annual SIM INC Youth Financial Symposium that attracted close to 600 participants, including students from the other local universities. He also helped organise the symposium earlier in January 2013. Speakers at these talks were from financial institutions such as Bloomberg Institute and OCBC Securities.

When on the subject of business and being multi-lingual, Yong Hong has the intention to take up Spanish as a third language. While he feels that every entrepreneur should be well versed with economic theories and the use of qualitative economics and quantitative finance would better evaluate any business, communication of ideas and information is the core foundation in any business.

Yong Hong is also musically inclined. He plays the Chinese bass fiddle (Zhong Hu), and has performed with the Singapore Youth Chinese Orchestra at events in the Esplanade, and the Singapore Conference Hall. Apart from performing, he indulges in watching theatre arts and orchestras to cultivate his mind.

After his studies, Yong Hong looks forward to a career in banking or management consulting. Over the longer term, he hopes to set up his own firm.

MIN'S STUDENT LIFE INFUSED WITH MUSIC

By Mardiah Fatim

A hectic schedule gives Min Ng a sense of satisfaction. The double major undergraduate at SIM-University at Buffalo who is also president of the SIM String Ensemble, has been juggling her time between books, lectures and playing the cello at campus events.

Min, 23, aspires to be a clinical psychologist because of a deep interest and big heart for those who need support and help. Hence, she hopes to get a Masters after her basic degree. Psychology has always been a subject of deep interest to her.

Min is also fortunate to have discovered a passion for music at a very young age. She went for her first piano lesson when she was 7, and has since then picked up other instruments such as the guitar and cello throughout her Secondary school days. Her supportive parents don't mind her playing the cello at all hours at home, on top of the weekly three hours she practises with the String Ensemble on campus.

"I love gathering everyone in the ensemble to play together," says Min in her role as the current president of the group. She has performed in the ensemble's annual symphony concert in 2013 at the Esplanade, and in 2014 at Republic Poly hall, both under the baton of SSO conductor Chan Wei Shing.

"Besides the annual concerts, my fellow musicians and I were also involved in playing at the annual graduation ceremonies held by the University of London, RMIT University and University at Buffalo," Min says. "We also played at the SIM Scholarship awards ceremony in mid-2013." Her most memorable occasion was the SIM University Convocation dinner on Oct 18, 2013, graced by President Tony Tan.

"Other memorable performances included playing in the stage production, Chapters of Love, by the SIM Film & Performing Arts Society in January 2014, and during the SIM GE Open House in March. Our ensemble were also invited to perform at various community centres. There were occasions when I had to perform three nights in a row!" she remarks.



"Despite the tight schedule, I enjoyed the experience as it gave me exposure on stage, and built my confidence. I also learnt the importance of time management as I juggled my studies and my musical commitment."

Commenting on the CCA events at SIM campus, Min says, "The vibrancy of student life programmes at SIM will stay with me as precious memories, long after my student days."

Accelerated learning

Min is taking a double major in Psychology and Sociology at SIM-UB (University at Buffalo, the State University of New York). "I choose the programme for three reasons," she says. "It allows me to complete my degree in an accelerated mode of only three years. UB is ranked among the top universities in the world. Finally, the timetable is flexible, allowing me time for both studies and music."

She also points out that studying in SIM is much cheaper, and at the same time she gets the same curriculum and quality of teaching as the students in the Buffalo campus in New York.

THE SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE

Young Entrepreneurs on their cafe business

By Corinne Ng

From their humble beginning as a standalone hotdog kiosk in late 2008 to 2009, to the popular campus cafe today that is Cupplets Cafe & Bakery, Ernest Tan and Samantha Quek, both 25, have certainly upped the ante since their budding days as entrepreneurs. The dynamic duo, graduates of SIM-RMIT Bachelor of Business, came from knowing nothing about baking to owning this gem of a cafe offering a host of delectable treats, both savory and sweet. They are proud to call themselves joint owners of the quaint cafe establishment nestled in a hideaway location at Ngee Ann Polytechnic's Sports Complex and swimming pool area, a space they affectionately call "home away from home".

The cafe's name Cupplets, is derived from its original word, Couplets, meaning "a pair of successive lines of verse, especially a pair that rhyme and are of the same length."

The journey has not always been a bed of roses. Sam candidly shared that the journey has been a steep learning curve, coming from a background with no prior experience but somehow, they felt a strong connection in running the hotdog stand Smooch Cafe and now Cupplets, and have never stopped since then. They understood the importance of learning a skill, which translated into baking for Sam and coffee making for Ernest. Initially, they started out with a Facebook Page primarily to showcase their bakes, and when the tender to run a space at Ngee Ann came up a year later, they took the opportunity and never looked back since. Ernest shared that everything required a leap of faith, not knowing what the income would be, but still they invested their heart and soul into the business. Their respective parents are extremely supportive of their endeavor, offering the occasional advice and their valuable two cents worth. There was initial apprehension of the opportunity cost of running a business versus choosing to pursue a career in a corporation post graduation. However to Sam and Ernest, it is passion and dedication that keeps them going. With a smile on their faces, they say "When we see growth in the business, the rest does not matter."

Some business and life lessons that Ernest and Sam have learnt when running a business are that one has to be able to grow a thick skin to withstand harsh critics and scrutinise every detail meticulously. Also, feeling good about oneself and being confident is key and that it is favorable to adopt a hands-on approach to running any business, with growth as the focus. Also, a business owner has to understand that not everyone will be empathetic or understand but one has

to shoulder on. Every single day is a new experience, and they are constantly anticipative and excited at what the future holds. According to Ernest, "Learning never exhausts the mind" and this saying holds true for them, and "By opening oneself to changes and learning new skills one will grow as a person". Also, he emphasised that one should never be afraid to learn more about his own self and there is no single fixed attribute, but rather a combination of qualities that complement a business.

The cafe owners' advice to aspiring entrepreneurs at SIM Global Education is to "Just do it". In Ernest's words, "It will be difficult, but it is a love-hate relationship of sorts, and you will hate to love it. You want to be able to see the whole journey through till you complete it." "The definition of success is an intrinsic value nobody can put a limit to, you just have to focus on what you do, knowing that it is something you want to do for the rest of your life." He adds. The measure of success, to them, is personal sense of fulfillment and satisfying one's heart's desire. As for Sam, she adds that it is important to not be restricted by society, not let detractors put you down and also not to think that any endeavor is hopeless. "Each of us has a dream inside of us, don't hide from it and don't be afraid to choose one of many routes. You can be a high achiever and still lose your soul, so personal growth and achievement is important as well."

On up-and-coming plans for the near future, Ernest shares that his dream for Cupplets is for a bigger space to materialise, one that incorporates different communities of local crafters in a single compound.

Indeed, Cupplets Cafe is a strong testament of Ernest and Sam's brainchild and hard work, and it certainly is a business venture poised for success.



DYNAMO IN SCHOOL AND AT WORK

By Goh Jia Qi

"If I didn't do well last month, I can't sleep, but keep thinking how to make up this month. If I have done well this month, I can't rest too because I may not do well next month."

So says Aw Mei Shan, 28, a highly-driven individual in both her studies and work.

In school, Mei Shan was the top student in her SIM-RMIT University's Bachelor of Business and Marketing cohort, graduating in 2008. At work, she handles sales at MediaCorp, working with clients in the travel industry, learning new things and impressing her clients with her knowledge of marketing principles and practices.

The challenge for her as Senior Account Manager is to build a relationship with the clients by helping them not just in their marketing but also in their television production, radio commercials and other advertising solutions. Most of these are small and mid-sized firms who do not need specialised staff to handle marketing operation, so she has to pitch in with advice on the nitty-gritty details of their business. This develops "kumcheng", she says, an important Hokkien business term for relationship underpinned by trust.

"I also have to manage my bosses' expectations," says Mei Shan. "If, for instance, I could not hit the previous month's target, I have to assure them that at least I'm meeting my daily quota now and that I am confident in meeting my long-term targets."

Meeting expectations at both ends of the work spectrum takes its toll. "In sales, stress builds up because I'm assessed every month based on hard figures. I can't be complacent even when I'm doing well."

The question is how Mei Shan handles the stress accumulated during work? One answer is to go punch and kick somebody or something, as in the sport of kick-boxing, or to run and swim or simply dance and do aerobics.

"I signed up for a gym membership and three times a week, I'm practising these rigorous exercises. I'm a workaholic but when I work too much, my mind needs to be refreshed with physical activity."



Her driven work attitude was already evident in her student days. "RMIT's study format included a lot of projects. I was particularly proud of one where I had to stand in front of over a hundred other students to present a marketing distribution strategy of an actual Australian and New Zealand brand."

The emphasis on project work helped her develop "people" skills since she had to work in a group, and negotiate with team members on who was to do what. Her academic success was due to consistent hard work, which applies well to her work. "To be a top student, you must study consistently all the time, and not just before exams. You cannot procrastinate. After a lecture, you must follow-up immediately with further reading and revision on your own. I revised my lessons every night, from 8 to 10pm.

"The same — Don't Procrastinate principle applies to my sales work. After meeting a client or a prospect, I follow-up straightaway with an e-mail and calls to meet up again.

"Preparation is the secret of success. Good luck comes only to those who are well-prepared. If you're not ready, opportunities will just pass you by," she adds.

"I've been in sales for six years. Despite the stress, I still want to be in this profession for the next 3-5 years. It is different from a 9-to-5 office job such as marketing. Sales is challenging and I hope to move up into a leadership role when I can mentor somebody," Mei Shan adds.

LIFELONG LEARNING IS BUT A STEPPING STONE TO SUCCESS

Business owner and interior designer Tan Heok Seng tells about upgrading himself constantly

By Mabel Yeo

Everything that you have learned will always be useful in the future. That is the credo of interior designer and business owner Tan Heok Seng. The insight dawned on him after having worked in multiple industries over the past 30 years and taking up numerous academic and professional courses to further his skill sets.

Being a pragmatic person, Heok Seng realised that after leaving secondary school, it would be hard for him to gain employment without further studies. This prompted him to sign up for the Mandarin Business Studies diploma and Sales & Marketing diploma courses at the Singapore Institute of Management. In those days in the 1980s, SIM was the only tertiary institute which offered courses in Mandarin for working adults who were unable to make it into local universities.

Heok Seng recalls that he was among the first cohort of 140 students enrolled with the Mandarin Business Studies programme. At the end of two years, only 40 out of the original 140 students completed the entire course and graduated. Many of the students were working adults with families, he says. It was challenging for them to set aside time and energy to attend night classes after a long day at work. Moreover, the students would also have to do school projects too.

What got Heok Seng past those difficult days was the main motto that underlined his sentiments at the time, which was that there was “nothing to lose”, as he was starting from the bottom. This tenacity served him well, as he went on to enroll in many other subjects such as interior design and landscaping. He also quit his job with a construction firm to start an interior design company with two other partners who were also fellow alumni of the SIM Mandarin courses.

Heok Seng says the two SIM diploma courses taught him many things about starting up his own business and how to market his company’s services. Many of the skills that he learned are still useful today even as he handled many design projects of his firm, Aurora Design and Contracts.

The company has since expanded from a tiny office



in a village district to a multi-level office with its own carpentry factory in the business district of Woodlands North.

However, the business success he now enjoys has not changed Heok Seng’s outlook. When not working, he continues to attend weekly calligraphy classes. Having started calligraphy writing in primary school, he cites the discipline and concentration of practising calligraphy as one of the reasons for his perseverance in learning. It also provides inspiration for his interior design ideas.

Another credo for Heok Seng is to give back to the society. Heok Seng volunteers as part of the School Advisory Committee for Ahmad Ibrahim Primary School.

Surprisingly, the primary school is not his alma mater. He accepted the invitation to serve as a way of volunteering in the community, by offering advice and his services to the school as needed. He is also active in the SIM Mandarin Business Graduates alumni club, where they organise activities and events catering to the 250-strong graduates, hoping to inspire future graduates to contribute to their alma mater in return.



Boo Yi Lin, 20, is currently a first year student at SIM- University of London, doing a Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Business. Yi Lin is passionate about dance and hopes to further her studies in London after her degree.



Mardhiah Fatin, 22, third-year-SIM-University of Wollongong Bachelor of Science (Pyschology) student is a passionate community volunteer. She likes to read and to write. Fatin acquired the skill of baking at a young age.



Alan Lee Heng Wai, 24, a second year student in the SIM-University of London Bachelor of Science (Economics), loves to play the piano. The piano plays a huge part in his daily routine and he hopes to be able to perform on a regular basis.



Muhammad Zuhilmi Bin Zainal, 23, a student from SIM-University of London, pursuing his Bachelor of Arts (Economics), has great interests in culinary arts and global politics. Zul has diverse interests since young and has held several major leadership positions in secondary school and junior college.



Mabel Yeo Yao Ling, 22, second year student in the Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) Honours programme by SIM-University at Buffalo, The State University of New York is an avid social media user who loves to read and write. She has a Diploma in Business IT from Singapore Polytechnic.



Goh Jia Qi, 22, SIM-University at Buffalo, Bachelor of Arts (Communications), seeks to discover new learning opportunities and broaden his horizons. He desires to travel the world and pen down the roads less travelled. Jia Qi enjoys music, reading and video games.



Corinne Ng is a first year undergraduate currently pursuing her Bachelor’s Degree in Business at SIM-University of London. Her interests include journalism, public relations, as well as beauty and fashion.



Audrey Lim, 20, currently pursuing her Bachelor of Arts (Communications) in SIM-University at Buffalo, The State University of New York, has an interest for musicals, baking and rollerskating. Having organised conferences in her CCAs, she intends to make use of these experiences in the events management industry when she graduates.

SIM JOB FAIR 2015

March 2015, SIM Headquarters



With over 110,000 graduates to date, SIM Global Education offers employers opportunities to reach out to prospective employees through various platforms such as SIM Job Fair, internship programmes, company recruitment talks, SIM's career portal hosted by JobsCentral, and many more.

If you are an employer and would like to participate in the SIM Job Fair 2015, contact Career Services at careersvcs@sim.edu.sg or 62489204.