

SIM GE students get academic boost through learning resources

written by Sheryl Khor

Gaining The GLOBAL EDGE With LEARNING SUPPORT

Starting out in a tertiary institution can be a little daunting, with many challenges to face both in terms of academic learning and navigating the wider world of possibilities. At SIM Global Education (SIM GE), students are offered a helping hand through a range of resources, workshops and consultations specially catered to enhance learning and independence. As Dr Aaron Tan, Director, Teaching & Learning Division, SIM GE explains, "Other than acquiring deep competencies in their chosen field, learning to learn is an equally, if not more important, ability that we want our graduates to possess. At SIM GE we advocate a learning-oriented teaching approach which fosters self-regulation of learning in the students rather than over-depending on external regulation." This emphasis on independent learning also helps students to gain confidence and the ability to excel when they step out in the workforce.

The Learning Development department supports students in their learning journey through four main avenues – Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL), Professional Skills Development, Workshop Series and Consultation Services. The PAL programme is a well-received and unique student-to-student support network that provides academic assistance for selected modules. It encourages collaborative learning where the PAL leaders – senior students who have completed the modules with excellent grades and have undergone facilitation and leadership training, help to facilitate learning through group discussion and sharing of learning strategies to tackle challenging concepts.



Student Learning Centre

ACADEMIC PEER-SUPPORT

Fabian Ng, 25, who is pursuing a Psychology degree at SIM-University of Wollongong, has been a beneficiary of the PAL programme; both as a learner for one semester in August 2014, and as a leader since August last year. "As a first year student, I enjoyed the open concept of discussions which differs from a typical lecture environment. We could easily learn from other students and benefit from the experience of our seniors," he enthuses. "Now as a PAL leader myself, I enjoy the challenge to share with others the knowledge I've gained, while honing my communication and facilitation skills which are a necessity in the global workforce."

For Chen You Wei, 23, a third-year Communication student at the University at Buffalo (UB), The State University of New York, serving as a SIM-UB PAL leader has also been a good platform for him to develop his communication and interpersonal skills. "The PAL sessions have trained me to become a better communicator by being a more confident speaker as well as a better listener. I have learnt to present my ideas clearly and communicate with my PAL learners to address their concerns and ensure that the objectives are met," he says. Besides

facilitating PAL sessions since 2015, You Wei is now helping to mentor new PAL leaders.

In terms of academic writing skills, both Fabian and You Wei also found the Student Learning Centre consultation sessions to be beneficial. "The drop-in sessions were where I could learn relevant study skills and gain some useful tips on how to write more effectively," notes You Wei. Students can work with advisors during the consultation sessions to improve their academic writing and oral presentation skills, or attend complimentary workshops to improve their study skills and personal effectiveness. "I found the 'Power Up Memory Principles' workshop to be most interesting in that I learnt useful techniques in a light-hearted way," relates Fabian. "A useful trick that I learnt was to create stories around difficult concepts, and this is an academic skill I now use in my coursework and the PAL sessions that I conduct."

HOLISTIC LEARNING

Other than academic-related skills, students are also offered professional development workshops on effective communication skills, digital literacy and even financial analysis. The Analysts Training Programme, for example, is a hands-on training



Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL) in session

programme that prepares students to be able to function effectively in most entry-level analyst jobs with minimal supervision.

Students are also able to experience a truly holistic education through participation in the various clubs and societies amidst SIM GE's global student population. "I am thankful to be able to interact with my peers from all over the world, each with their own unique cultural experience which shapes the way they think and what they value," says You Wei, who is currently the President of the UB Student Council. "Through the various large-scale events my team and I have organised for our culturally-diverse student population, I have become a better team player and learned how to be more adaptable while juggling my various commitments and responsibilities," he adds.

SIM GE is also seeking to bolster students' 21st century competencies required by employers through its learning development and professional development programmes, with greater use of blended learning, online learning, gamification and adaptive learning, explains Dr Tan about the education strategies the institution is adopting in the new global economy.

"The employability of our graduates will remain a key focus of SIM GE and we will continue to strengthen and stretch our industry linkages to ensure our graduates are well sought after by employers both locally and overseas." ▲