

SCHOLARS' CHOICE: Part 2

# Turning His Passion Into Purpose

Smart Nation Scholarship recipient Chu Wei Hao believes a career in technology holds the foundation to building a future-ready Singapore

BY CHEW HUI LING

For many of us, the Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated our dependence on technology in the way we work, live and play. And as technology becomes an integral part of our lives, even post-pandemic, tech skills will be in demand more than ever.

"Learning how to live in a digital world is important. I believe a rise in the reliance on technology has proven the need for Singapore to be ready for the future, and marks the start of the transition towards a digitally-empowered nation," notes Singapore Management University (SMU) undergraduate Chu Wei Hao, 24.

Mr Chu's interest in technology started when Singapore first announced its plans to develop a Smart Nation in 2014. At that time, he was keen on technology, but saw it merely as a hobby. For example, in his spare time, he would learn how to create apps and games by following YouTube tutorials.

The tourism and resort management diploma holder began researching potential careers in the information and communications technology (ICT) sector, and decided to pursue it academically after completing his national service.

#### New possibilities ahead

Mr Chu found out about the Smart Nation Scholarship through the BrightSparks portal and SMU's e-mail collaterals. He also attended SMU's virtual open house which included a sharing session conducted by the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA), which provides the scholarship.

"IMDA plays a huge role in the cyber-security defence of the telecommunications network infrastructure in Singapore, and also provides programmes and initiatives to upskill Singaporeans to be digitally ready for the future," he says.

Mr Chu was awarded the scholarship in 2018, and began his undergraduate studies at SMU to pursue a Bachelor of Science (Information Systems).

Currently, he is serving his internship at IMDA's Digital Services Lab. He has been involved in artificial intelligence-related projects and attended courses to improve his technical expertise and expand his knowledge.

While his hospitality background has equipped him with essential business and people management skills, Mr Chu feels that an ICT career path allows him to be part of a wider community that creates solutions for others — all while being at the forefront of exciting new research opportunities.

"As an IT professional, I would become more of a creator than a consumer," he explains of his aim to contrib-

ute to Singapore's Smart Nation vision and shape the country's future.

"I find joy in creating something of value that can benefit the lives of people and businesses around me. It helps me to think more logically and become more

organised, as those are necessary skills in this field."

His advice to aspiring tech leaders? "Don't be afraid of getting stuck mulling over the plethora of technological areas to choose from. Build and break things. Understand how it works and

get better at it. Create things that interest you because you will come to enjoy it."

■ Visit <https://smartnation.gov.sg/scholarship> for more information.



Mr Chu Wei Hao's interest in technology started when Singapore first announced its plans to develop a Smart Nation in 2014. PHOTO: MAX CHAN

#### NOT JUST A HOBBY

##### 1. Independent learning

Mr Chu Wei Hao learnt to create simple games by following tutorials on YouTube, and even made his own iOS and Android mobile apps.

##### 2. Game on

He participated in the DSTA TIL Hackathon 2020 and got into the semi-finals with his team.

##### 3. Discovering AI

During his internship at the Infocomm Media Development Authority, he worked with artificial intelligence engineers on interesting projects such as face mask detection.