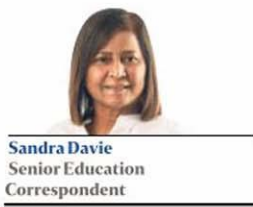




(Above) SMU students on a community-involvement project in Nepal in 2019.  
 (Left) Seminar-style teaching at Singapore Management University. PHOTOS: SMU, PROJECT NAMASTE

# The smaller university advantage

askST  
 you ask. we answer.



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**Q** I am leaning towards Singapore Management University (SMU), in part because it is a smaller university. But I may want to combine two majors or even two degrees. Would a smaller university like SMU restrict my choices of combining degrees?

**A** With about 2,000 new students each year, SMU has a much smaller intake compared with the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University, which each take in at least three times the number of students.  
 But a smaller university has its advantages.  
 For one thing, SMU guarantees that undergraduates can undertake a second major. Students can choose from more than 300 second-major combinations across the entire university. SMU also has more than 20 double degrees on offer.  
 Popular second-major combina-

tions include accounting and arts and culture management, psychology and analytics, and information systems and sociology.

Over the past few years, SMU has taken deliberate steps to launch interdisciplinary majors and tracks. This is to expand students' exposure beyond their primary discipline of studies. For example, many of its accounting students are now enrolled in the accounting data and analytics second major, which integrates data analytics and accounting practices.

SMU in recent years has also launched flexible work-study options for those who feel they would benefit by learning from selected top companies in key industries while studying full time. Such students will alternate between working at least four days at the host company and studying on campus for up to one day each week, for a period of six months.

The companies on the work-study programmes include Google and its partner companies offering a programme in data analytics. Separately, KPMG in Singapore has partnered the university to offer a cyber-risk and forensics work-study programme.

SMU's vice-provost (undergraduate matters) Venky Shankaraman said the university will launch more work-study programmes over the next few years as they have proven popular with students as well as employers who want to develop talents for the company and industry.

Prof Shankaraman said it is also a powerful way of learning.

"By alternating between class and work, they get to immediately apply what they are learning in the classroom. They see the relevance of what they are learning and apply it to solve problems," he added.

He said SMU pioneered an interdisciplinary common curriculum 20 years ago. It is built on three key pillars – capabilities, communities and civilisations.

Combined, they help to develop specific competencies and skills, promote understanding of the economic and technological systems in communities, and engage students in critical dialogue and problem solving.

Prof Shankaraman noted that the university's common core is different from other local universities, where the core curriculum modules are fixed and front-loaded.

SMU students get to choose from more than 50 modules across the three pillars of its core curriculum and they can take these courses and free electives across all four years of their education.

"It also aims to make our students digital savvy in lieu of this new economy and interesting modules include Digital Cultures, Big Questions and Can Machines Think?" he said.

He also noted another advantage of being a smaller university – all classes in SMU are small, interactive seminars in which students get to speak up and contribute to become confident and effective communicators. Employers have noted that SMU graduates are more confident and outspoken compared with their peers.

**Q** My son is keen on studying business at SMU, specialising in finance. Are the prospects still good for SMU students? He is interested in eventually working overseas. What else should he do to make that possible?

**A** Based on data captured in the latest annual graduate

employment survey, SMU graduates from the class of 2020 saw healthy employment and starting salaries.

Close to 94 per cent of SMU students found jobs within six months of completing their final examinations, with 72.2 per cent finding permanent, full-time jobs.

Fifty-seven per cent of the students were offered full-time permanent jobs before graduation. SMU has made internships a requirement as it has shown to boost job prospects.

In fact, for the class of 2020, among those who were on full-time permanent employment, 51.9 per cent were offered employment through internships.

The survey also showed that 82 per cent of SMU students completed at least two internships.

SMU also firmly believes in international mobility for students. It has a 100 per cent global exposure policy for its undergraduates, which means that every student gets to experience some form of global exposure during his or her time with SMU. This can take the form of an overseas community-service project; internships; a foreign-exchange programme; and an overseas SMU-X course, which involves projects aimed at solving real issues faced by organisations.

**Q** I am hoping to include one or two overseas stints during my four years of university. I had read about some interesting overseas experiences of SMU students, but am wondering if such opportunities are still being provided by the university?

**A** Global exposure is compulsory for graduation. Even with travel restrictions

imposed because of the pandemic, SMU has put in resources to offer its students learning opportunities that deliver these global exposure learning objectives without them having to travel overseas.

For example, for exchange courses last year – SMU worked with seven partner universities to offer seats for its undergraduates to undertake online courses at these foreign universities.

SMU has also pursued opportunities for its students to take on remote internships with overseas firms and community-service projects with overseas partners.

The university also responded to a few questions on financial help.

It has a range of financial assistance schemes and programmes, in the form of grants, bursaries, loans and awards.

Students can approach its Office of Undergraduate Admissions and Financial Assistance to identify appropriate help schemes.

One in three freshmen of the new intake in August could be awarded a scholarship or bursary by the university.

For overseas activities and programmes – including exchange programmes, internship, community service and study missions – SMU has more than 20 university-funded and donor-supported schemes that needy students can tap.

In addition, Singaporean SMU students can tap the SMU Overseas Student Programme Loan, which has no income criterion.

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• For more stories on how to help your child succeed in school and life, go to the Smart Parenting microsite at str.sg/smartparenting

## MANY FIRSTS, ONE GOAL

AT SMU, WE CHALKED UP FIRSTS SO YOU'LL BE SECOND TO NONE!

**1<sup>ST</sup> LOCAL UNIVERSITY TO PIONEER AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CURRICULUM**

It's our broad-based, flexible and rigorous curriculum, as well as interdisciplinary majors and programmes that transform you. And it all started here!

**1<sup>ST</sup> TO OFFER A GUARANTEED 2<sup>ND</sup> MAJOR**

Know a good deal when you see one. Gain more, get better equipped, be versatile and highly sought after.

**1<sup>ST</sup> CITY CAMPUS IN SINGAPORE**

The downtown vibe is great. But when you're so close to future employers, it's more than a foot through the door.

**#1 GRADUATES**

We produce future-ready, versatile and articulate problem-solvers. That's why our graduates are so highly sought after and get higher salaries.

**1<sup>ST</sup> WITH HOLISTIC ADMISSIONS**

You're more than just grades on a piece of paper. Your attitude and potential count for lots as well.

**UNDERGRADUATE**

HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT SMU'S UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES AND APPLYING TO SMU? Visit our website from 9am – 5pm, Mon – Fri, and pose your questions via Live Chat from the comfort of your home! Embark on your journey at [admissions.smu.edu.sg](http://admissions.smu.edu.sg) today. Applications close 19 March 2021.