

Student juggles studies and love of the circus

SINGAPORE – If not for the Direct Polytechnic Admission (DPA) exercise, 20-year-old Jonathan Goh would not have been able to pursue his passion of circus arts and work towards realising his dream of starting a circus arts company.

Jonathan, who was first mesmerised by a fire-spinning performance when he was 10, joined a group to pick up the act and has since expanded his repertoire to include juggling and acrobatics.

Now, as a committee member managing the Bornfire Community Circus, Jonathan also organises annual circus arts festivals and helps out at monthly arts events with the Kallang Community Centre. “I’m very passionate about the circus arts, so the main thing I feel I need to do now is grow the community,” he added.

When the time came to make a decision about furthering his studies, Jonathan was keen on the Diploma in Arts Business Management offered at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, but he knew his O-Level results would not be able to meet the cut-off grade for the course. “Without DPA ... I would have been in an arts school or some other course that I’m not really interested in,” he said.

Jonathan is the kind of student the Ministry of Education aims to help with the expansion of aptitude-based admissions into polytechnics and universities based on non-academic achievements.

During his polytechnic admission interview, Jonathan said he prepared photos of his performances and teaching, as well as letters of recommendation from his teachers, Bornfire mentor and Kallang CC chairman.

Ms Theophila Chua, Course Chair for the Diploma in Arts Business Management, said one reason the school accepted Jonathan’s application was because of his unique interest in developing circus arts, an industry that is still in its infancy.

“We could see that exposure to the arts could increase his potential



PHOTO: ERNEST CHUA

and understanding of where circus arts fits into the industry. We want to support young people who want to do something different and innovative in the arts as we believe that this helps with the development of the industry,” said Ms Chua, who was on the panel that interviewed Jonathan.

She added that his involvement in Bornfire Community Circus showed his ambition was “not just talk and had clear direction”.

Now into his second year of the diploma course, Jonathan said it has helped him learn more about managing different types of businesses and events. “I want to start my own circus festival and manage my own group in the future. So with this diploma, it would provide me with more exposure to different management styles in the arts,” he added.

Meanwhile, 24-year-old Seah Koh used his achievements and experience in two tech companies to secure a place at Singapore Management Uni-

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Jonathan Goh (picture)
ON THE DIRECT POLYTECHNIC ADMISSION EXERCISE

versity’s (SMU) School of Information Systems through the Discretionary Admission Scheme.

Mr Koh, who was from Ngee Ann Polytechnic, wanted to merge his diploma background in real estate and passion for technology into a career as an urban planner.

“The future of urban planning is probably going to be more anticipatory of the needs of citizens ... Things like these would require technological knowledge and technical skills,” said Mr Koh, whose plans were almost derailed when his first application to SMU was rejected.

“(Enrolling in SMU) has helped in the sense that it’s given me formal training in technology ... I’ve always either learned everything from friends or through Google or web tutorials, but I’ve never formally taken the time to learn the basics. And this is what I’m doing now, shoring up my foundations,” he added. **LAURA PHILOMIN**