

# Bright job outlook for grads

100% employment for SMU's new grads; more firms take part in job fairs at NUS, NTU

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JOB prospects are looking bright for university graduates this year, with a Singapore Management University (SMU) survey showing its class of 2004 having scored a 100 per cent employment rate.

In another upbeat sign, employers are also going out in a big way this year to recruit students from the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

Two-thirds of SMU's pioneer class of 309 business management students were polled in its first employment survey.

Of the 184 graduates who responded, all said they had landed jobs within six months of graduating, with more than half reporting that they had found jobs even before graduation.

They were snapped up by the banking, financial, accounting, consulting and service sectors. Three-quarters of the students received two or more job offers.

Their average annual starting salary was \$32,500.

SMU's first employment survey comes two or three weeks ahead of those by the NTU and NUS, which are also expected to show much improved employment rates for their graduating students of 2004.

Last year, they reported an employment rate of about 76 per cent for their class of 2003 finding a job within six months of graduating.

The average annual starting salary then for NUS graduates was \$28,322, with NTU graduates slightly ahead at \$29,685.

The figures point to improving job prospects for graduates following the slump in 2002.

SMU's president Howard Hunter said the 100 per cent employment rate of his graduates was gratifying, especially given that nearly three-quarters of them had secured a job within a month of graduation.

He saw it as an endorsement by employers of SMU's "hands-on, team-oriented, project-based learning".

Miss Adele Teo, 24, was one SMU graduate with multiple job offers. She turned down nine in favour of a job as an operations executive with Barclays Bank.

"I started applying for jobs months before I sat for my examinations, because I was worried about the job market," she said. "I was pleasantly surprised to end up with 10 job offers, which I could pick and choose from."

Another SMU graduate, Mr Leonard Lim, 25, who joined investment bank UBS as a management associate, credits the university's seminar style of teaching and compulsory company internships with helping him in his job hunt. "The small seminar style of teaching forces you to think on your feet and speak up. I felt it gave me the edge over the many others who competed for the same job at UBS."

But employers are also eyeing graduates from NUS and NTU, with both universities reporting an increase in the number of companies taking part in their annual career fairs targeted at graduating students.

At the NUS fair, which begins today, the 90 booths set up by 63 companies represent the largest showing since 1996. Many of them, including Toyota Motor Asia, SingTel and Credit Suisse First Boston, are taking part for the first time.

NTU also saw an increase by more than 60 per cent in the number of companies on the lookout for potential employees. Among those represented were Citibank, Great Eastern Life Assurance and Singapore Press Holdings.

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