For SMU students, the world is their oyster

I REFER to the suggestions by Mr Wayne Soon on how local universities can give undergraduates more global exposure ("Equip undergrads for exchange programmes"; ST, July 22).

The Singapore Management University (SMU) provides a premium tertiary education where students are taught by experienced faculty hired from prestigious overseas universities in a seminar-style environment. Students enjoy maximum personal attention in our participative American-style pedagogy which brings out the best in each of them by encouraging critical thinking and rigorous learning.

SMU, however, goes beyond bringing the world to our students' doorstep. Close to 40 per cent of them get the opportunity for a variety of global exposure. Many of our students spend a term or two in foreign universities under our overseas exchange programmes. By the end of this year, SMU would have signed partnership agreements with 100 foreign universities in all continents.

The situation in SMU is unique — every student who applies for overseas exchange will be granted approval. Many are also heading to non-traditional destinations like Mexico, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

SMU students also benefit from other opportunities for global exposure, such as internships in overseas companies, community service in foreign countries and work and travel arrangements to experience employment abroad. In 2002, SMU started a programme called Business Study Missions where students get to explore overseas business opportunities, write case studies on how business is done there and appreciate the cultural sensitivities in a foreign environment. Our students have gone on Business Study Missions to Silicon Valley, Spain, China, India and Thailand.

From the beginning, SMU has believed that overseas exposure challenges perceptions, enriches the mind and sharpens communication skills. It is an integral part of our degree programmes to steer our students towards divergence of thinking.

By the next one or two years, half of the SMU student population would have experienced some form of global exposure.

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