SMU winner hopes to start fund for needy students

BY JANE NG

WHEN Singapore Management University (SMU) undergraduate Chen Huifang was giving tuition thrice weekly to fund her living expenses, she was managing only Bs in her exams.

But when she received a bursary and was able to cut down on the hours spent giving tuition, her grades improved.

Now, the third-year accountancy student has landed another financial lifeline — the Ee Seng and Claire Lim Accountancy Scholarship — and hopes it will allow her to spend even more time on her studies.

The scholarship is funded by SMU alumnus Darren Lim, an investment banker who has pledged to donate $4,000 every year from his pay cheque. The fund is named after his parents.

The 24-year-old's initiative was held up by the Prime Minister in his National Day Rally speech as a gesture which would help build strong bonds among Singaporeans.

For Miss Chen, 21, the eldest daughter of a taxi driver and housewife, the $4,000 will go towards paying part of her tuition fees and her living expenses during her exchange programme in Barcelona, Spain.

The young woman, who is doing a double degree in accountancy and business management, leaves tonight for the programme funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

She said she decided to apply for the scholarship from SMU to help ease the financial burden on her father — her younger sister has just entered SMU, and her brother is still in Secondary 1.

"My dad slogs for 12 to 15 hours almost every day, doing night shifts as a taxi driver. It’s not easy on him," she said, adding that he also supports two of his siblings.

Receiving the scholarship is also an affirmation of her achievements, said Miss Chen, who is in SMU's audit team and Netball Club and keeps her grade point average above 3.5.

Of her meeting last week with Mr Lim, her benefactor, she said she wants to continue the legacy started by him: "It won’t just end here. I hope to build on this and bring it to greater heights. I hope to start a fund for future students when I start working, specifically for exchange programmes because many needy students don’t have the means to go on such exchanges."

Her plan shows the very multiplier effect Mr Lim had hoped for when he started the fund.

He said: "It would be good if this keeps going on and it becomes like multi-level marketing — in a good way. It will only continue to benefit Singapore."

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