Does SMU really live up to all the hype? SMU students react

I can learn over beer with my professor

I refer to the Speakup column in The New Paper, “Does SMU really live up to all the hype?” (19 May). When I’m unable to get my questions answered during the fiercely competitive seminars, I can speak to my friendly professors after class over a cup of cappuccino, a pint of beer and even late at night on online chats. I count my professors as mentors and friends.

SMU’s pedagogy is the alternative to “mass-produce(d) generic graduates”. Inter-disciplinary courses encourage us to examine issues from different angles. Some people prefer two hours of droning, but I enjoy my three hours of exciting learning.

It is not possible to chart the SMU experience in just one semester. Outside seminar rooms, student life also contributes significantly to our learning. It might sound clichéd, but I proudly declare that we are different, that we mean business and we have the heart, mind, passion and soul for SMU.

— See Jingzhong

SMU gave me best education

It’s heartening to know that Miss Ng Chuin Song enjoys theoretical knowledge, but it upsets me to hear she was disappointed with SMU’s pedagogy. I don’t deny there are some students who speak up just to gain participation marks. However, the professors have repeatedly emphasised that the points will be credited only to students who make meaningful contributions.

While inter-disciplinary courses may seem disengaging as students will focus on what they know best, this does not happen exclusively in SMU. The courses allow different viewpoints to be aired instead of just students being spoon-fed.

The professors tailor their lessons to make them interesting and engaging, so students will develop an interest in and deeper understanding of the subject. While I do agree this is achieved at the expense of imparting theoretical knowledge, it does not necessarily mean that SMU students are less rigorously trained. We have assignments, projects and examinations, and if we do not have the required knowledge, we will produce mediocre results.

As a student who has been in SMU for four semesters, I think SMU did not fail to deliver. When it promises quality and a “different” student life, it aims to develop all-rounders who are trained analytically and creatively without compromising on theoretical knowledge.

I will not attempt to compare which university has a better education system, but I hope to address the negative impression Miss Ng has towards SMU. It has given the best education I have wanted.

— Haotanto Anna Vanessa

No one education system suits everyone

In order to evaluate SMU’s education system, we should first understand its objectives. The SMU system aims to educate students to become market leaders with broad-based knowledge that enables them to be effective and flexible in the competitive economy. As such, the system provides students with a realistic environment to develop their soft skills, which are critical for excelling in society.

Back in 2003, I was faced with a tough choice of enrolling in NUS’ Arts and Social Science faculty and SMU’s economics faculty. While an NUS degree sounded promising to me, I was drawn to the SMU’s small class size and seminar-style lessons. During my junior college days, I did not like the lecture-style lessons. As such, I felt SMU was more suitable for me. I have never looked back since.

It was unfortunate that Miss Ng Chuin Song had a bad experience in SMU. It just proves that no one education system suits everyone.

— Yam Yujian