Why SMU students signed the oath

A group of 25 MBA students from the Singapore Management University – more than half of the 2009 graduating batch – became the first in Singapore to sign the MBA oath when they graduated last December.

Melody Zaccheus talks to three of them.

Eshwari Shunmuganathan (right)

Miss Shunmuganathan faced many difficult decisions in her former job as an operations manager, but one was particularly taxing.

She had to decide whether to promote an employee, even though she knew he might leave the company in six months.

Miss Shunmuganathan, 29, who is now a regional project manager at a multinational corporation, had to consider several factors.

“Was it right to deny him the promotion?” she wondered.

“And if I gave it to him, would he be motivated to stay? Should I award it to the next best candidate?”

Eventually, she decided to do what was right.

“I realised that the outcome – whether he left or not, was not that crucial. My job was to award the promotion to the most deserving candidate and he fit the bill.”

To keep her focused when dealing with similar challenges, Miss Shunmuganathan decided to sign the MBA oath.

Chan Ching Jwee (above, right)

Mr Chan, 35, spearheaded the drive to push his peers at the Singapore Management University to sign the MBA oath.

“The content of the oath was something we already believed in,” said the assistant vice-president of the IT department at OCBC Bank.

Ethical dilemmas often surface, he added.

Yvonne Ho (right)

Miss Ho, 35, said that the points in the oath are practical and relevant to her work today.

Now the associate director of the office of advancement at the Singapore Management University, which handles fund-raising, scholarships and professorships, she said that she has a lot of responsibility on her shoulders and cannot afford to take short-cuts.

“I have to act as a dutiful steward of the funds that are contributed to the SMU community,” she said.

“For instance, if we need to award a scholarship meant to help students with financial needs, my colleagues and I go the extra mile to ensure we interview every candidate thoroughly and check up on their backgrounds comprehensively so that the award is given to the most genuine individuals.”