National sports gems
The largest so far
Continuing the Road to Success
is published four times a year. The name was selected by popular choice by the students themselves to represent a progressive Sunway College, an institution owned and governed by the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation. Since its inception in 1986, Sunway College has always been a leading private institution of higher learning, and it is forever escalating into the next level of excellence. UP or UPP stands for “Uniquely Purposeful Programmes”.

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Publisher : Sunway Education Group
Concept + Design : Yoong & Ng Consulting
Printer : Ocean Transfer (M) Sdn Bhd

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Cover Story
5 National sports gems

Hallmarks
3 The largest so far
4 Growing strong at 11

Alumni
10 Continuing the road to success
14 Life as a Nuclear Physicist
16 Math wizard in the making
18 The ultimate Cambridge experience

Happenings
8 Paving the way to Perth
9 Education should be free, really?
12 Sunway’s MUFY among the top

Social Responsibility
19 The first beneficiary
AT the recent graduation ceremony, Victoria University witnessed the largest number of graduands from its Sunway College cohort.

A total of 306 students received their Bachelor of Business degrees (245 from its campus in Bandar Sunway and 61 from the Johor Bahru campus). 30 students successfully graduated with their Master of Business Administration, while another four were awarded their PhD. To accommodate the large number of graduands, two rounds of ceremonies were held.

For these graduands, another journey has just begun as they venture out into the working world. A Botswana graduate commented that when she was undertaking the Professional Development units, she just could not fathom what she was being taught. Now that she is working with the National Bank in Botswana, she can finally appreciate how beneficial the course can be. Another graduand, initially very shy and weak in communication, has blossomed into a confident and articulate young lady who is pursuing a career in Marketing.

A touching moment during the graduation ceremony was when the Chancellor, George Pappas invited the graduands to stand, turn around to face the audience and clap their hands in acknowledgement of their parents and mentors.

Lenny Chiah, who is the General Manager for Sin Chew Online (Marketing), delivered the first Occasional Address in the first ceremony. She has always believed that there is no luck without putting in one’s efforts. “We must also remember to give back to society,” Chiah reminded the graduands.

In the Occasional Address delivered in the second ceremony, Elizabeth Lee, Senior Executive Director of the Sunway Education Group shared her personal experience with gliding. Delivering a powerful message, she said, “From up there among the clouds, I saw a larger tapestry of life, the different changing angles of the landscape. There are, therefore, so many different ways of looking at the same thing.”

“This vantage view brought home the point that before we assess and find a solution we need to first see the bigger picture, or see things from different points of view. This personal lesson from my gliding experience will not be easily forgotten,” she added.

Lee added that one must be humble and willing to learn from those younger and less-experienced. “If we have ‘bad breaks’, use them as a ‘break to observe, think and learn’, and lastly, we must empathetically care for those who are less fortunate,” she said.

The Valedictorian Speech was delivered by Liew Kah Chong. His was a brave and enthusiastic impromptu speech delivered straight from the heart. The initially nominated valedictorian, Chow Shiat Teen was most unfortunately taken ill on that day.

It was a solemn moment when the Vice-Chancellor and President of Victoria University, Professor Peter Dawkins read out the Charge to the graduates. They were charged to uphold their commitment to excellence, to use their knowledge and capabilities for the community and to make a difference to the world by modelling these values.

The graduation ceremony drove home the message that achieving a degree is not only about developing intellectually or obtaining a paper qualification, but also about nurturing humane qualities that will help us to selflessly and empathetically give back to society.
Hallmarks

GROWING STRONG AT 11

SUNWAY scholarship student, Soo Zuo Ping scored 88.85% in the recent batch of Foundation in Arts (FIA) students who graduated.

Zuo Ping, who will be pursuing the Bachelor of Science (Hons) Accounting and Finance at Sunway University, said that the programme had given him a broader understanding about life as a whole. “I never would have imagined learning about abortion in China and gun possession in the United States during my course of study with the FIA,” he said. “However, this enhanced my general knowledge and exposed me to issues surrounding the world.”

Alongside fellow student, Yap Nee Na, Zuo Ping also received the Special Award of Achievement in academic excellence for being a consistent student throughout the three consecutive semesters through determination in performance and leadership skills.

He was also recognised for his exemplary interpersonal skills and increased confidence since the first semester. Nee Na was awarded for her continuous academic improvement, outgoing and active nature and her ability to balance work and play.

The other two top scorers were Marcellina Ping Majin and Ng See Yong, who scored an average of 86.40% and 85.35%, respectively.

A total of 61 graduates received the Tan Sri Dato’ Seri (Dr) Jeffrey Cheah Continuing Scholarship. Tan Ai Wei, who scored an average of 84.5%, was a recipient of the continuing scholarship and the certificate of recognition, awarded to students for their contribution in various student activities carried out throughout the FIA programme.

During her speech, Ai Wei said: “A year ago, I was still aimless, lost and confused with life. I may not have made many right decisions in life, but my decision to do the FIA has certainly been the rightest and proudest decision of mine to this day. In merely ten months, FIA has moulded me to be a better person – academically, mentally and emotionally. I believe many of my course mates here would feel the same. We weren’t studying here at Sunway College, but we were learning life’s lessons. Our lecturers weren’t just the teachers; they were also our mentors and our friends. They did not merely teach or feed us information from textbooks; they guided us along the real path of obtaining life-long knowledge with such patience, in their very own unique ways.”

Darren Goh, Sandra Lee Wei Shan, Dyttesh Raaj Mohan, Darryl Wong, Lilian Binjan, Lee Boon Chai, Yap Nee Na, Bella Lorenza and Zaw Waiyan were also recipients of the Certificate of Recognition.

Ruma Lopes, Director of the FIA programme, said that despite FIA being a completely home-grown programme, it has helped change, remould and guide the students into being successful young people with a positive outlook in life. “We could not have reached that without you, parents who had faith in our programme,” she said. “And, to my students, remember that you are truly somebody today.”

This was the eleventh graduation ceremony for Sunway College’s home-grown pre-university programme, Foundation in Arts (FIA). A total of 121 students graduated.
NATIONAL SPORTS GEMS
The foil pointing at his opponent, Andrew Mok Vern-Han, fully attired with his fencing gear scored 15-8 against his opponent, Syed Aidiil Emir Putra to finish the 3-minute fencing competition during the recent SUKMA 2013 games.

The 18-year-old Gold Medallist who is currently enrolled in the Australian Matriculation Programme (AUSMAT) at Sunway College, beat Perak in the team event and KL in the individual foil event. He is now following the footsteps of his father, Mok Chek Wlong, once a national fencer who won several medals including the Kuala Lumpur XV SEA Games in 1989 and 1991 games in Manila, Philippines.

In January this year, Andrew took Gold in the Junior Men’s Individual Foil category at the National Junior Fencing Championships. He also bagged a Bronze medal at the Southeast Asian Junior and Cadet Fencing Championships a few weeks later. His winning streak continued over the weekend of February 23-24, as he took home another Gold medal in the Men’s Individual Foil competition at the Nilai University Fencing Competition. During the Commonwealth Junior Under-21 Fencing Championship Commonwealth Games at Jersey, UK in 2012, Andrew won a bronze medal for the country, where the winning host country, England bagged the Gold and Silver.

Another rising star, in the sport of basketball is Sunway’s ACCA student Koo Hui Zen, 21, who was recently recognised for her achievements representing Malaysia in Women’s Basketball. She played a key part of Malaysia’s Female Basketball team, which won a Silver medal at the ASEAN University Games in Laos last December. As a result, Hui Zen was honoured during the Sports Excellence Awards Ceremony, hosted by the Ministry of Higher Education.

On the football field, Carlos Benjamin Goonting plays the game passionately. Having just completed his season with the MPSJ team which unfortunately ended in defeat to the Football Association of Selangor (Super League) 2-1, the 20-year-old Canadian International Matriculation Programme (CIMP) graduate said he is undecided as to what he plans to do, but it is likely that he may continue for another season with the MPSJ team. “Meanwhile, I am taking a break, before deciding on my next move,” he said. “Like what my dad said, school can wait whereas opportunities in sports cannot, because we all know there is an expiration date for us footballers. I would say my legs would only last me another 15 years, at most. I hope to get the best of both worlds between studying and having a stable career in football. Football has always been my passion and I wish to play professionally in the future.”

Carlos could have easily been selected to join the national team in 2008, if he had not suffered from ankle and muscle sprains, which affected his performance during the selection process. However, after the stint with MPSJ, Carlos said he is full of admiration and gratefulness for coach, Muhammad Zaki Yusoff. “He was the one who scouted me and offered me a spot in the team,” he said. “I have nothing but utmost respect for the man. Although he is a strict coach and a disciplinarian, who prioritises the players’ fitness, Zaki is also sympathetic towards any injuries we might have.”

Meanwhile, another gold medalist, Gan Gang Wen, who recently completed his Monash University Foundation Year (MUFY) also carved a name for himself in the SUKMA 2013 artistic gymnasts representing Selangor. The 18-year-old Sunway College student has gone from winning a bronze in 2012 to becoming a gold medalist this year. “I have always loved gymnastics since I was seven,” he said. “In fact, it was my parents who first introduced me to gymnastics.”

Nigel Lim Wen Qiang, Selangor state Taekwondo athlete and another Sunway student, was also successful on foreign soil recently. The 19-year-old Foundation in Arts (FIA) and a former boy of SMK Batu Unjur in Klang took part in the Senior Male Fly category during the 17th Asian Cities Gold Cup Taekwondo Championship in Hong Kong in February this year, and emerged Second Runner-Up in an impressive performance which certainly bodes well for his future. He had also won Gold during a recent competition at UKM and another Gold medal in the National Circuit. “My father is both an instructor of taekwondo as well as my coach,” he said. “I have trained under him since I was six years old. As a coach, he is kind but he is also firm. He helped me make it through various challenges I faced. Whenever I am nervous, before a competition, he will help me relax before going into the ring. He also tells me what to do or what kind of style I should be using to fight with different opponents.”

Mark Dawson, Sports Advisor for Sunway Education Group, said that he sees a lot of potential in young people. “It is a matter of guiding them in both their sports and their studies,” he said. “My job is to help raise their levels of performance, while they cope with their studies. We hope
Keeping the Balance

Admittedly, it is not easy for the sportsmen and sportswomen to focus on both their sports and studies. This is where Dawson plays an important role to keep tabs on the performance of the students. “The college has raised its sports scholarships to 75% for National Athletes and 50% for State Athletes,” he said. “This shows that as an institution, we want to nurture great men and women in sports. The biggest challenge so far is making our students realise that campus life cannot all be about studies, taking part in activities such as sports can help relieve stress as well as teach many important life lessons.”

Some like Hui Zen, for example, said that she believes both her studies and basketball are equally important. “But now, it seems like my studies are more important because my ACCA classmates are too smart,” she laughed. “I have to work hard to become like them. In fact, I joined ACCA because I need the minimum of two hours every day. In Malaysia, it’s every player’s goal to get into the SEA Games team list.” Hui Zen hopes to graduate in 2015.

Academically, Carlos said that he hopes to do a programme such as the American Degree Transfer Programme, which will allow him to transfer to the United States. “It’s hard enough trying to keep up with school work on its own, but now that semi-professional football is in the picture, it has become more hectic trying to find a balance between the two,” he said. “Juggling between keeping my grades up to par and maintaining my performance on the team is really challenging as there are only 24 hours a day, and both of these take up a lot of time.” He spends an average of two hours on weekdays for his football training, with Fridays reserved for weekly league matches.

For Gang Wen, his only best answer currently about his future career is like most young people: “I will just go with the flow.” Although he has lost count of the number of medals he has won to date, the only child in his family spends a total of 18 hours a week practicing gymnastics. “Keeping the balance between studying and playing is an art which I have mastered since young. I have always been able to cope with the two,” he said. “But if you ask me about my career plan, I have to be honest. I have no idea at the moment except that I might go for a Bachelor of Business and Commerce degree at Monash Malaysia!”

Aiming for the highest

Carlos cited names like David Beckham and Cristiano Ronaldo when he was talking about role models. His own performance in football has also been very promising, in fact, he has been touted the ‘best player’ and ‘most promising player’ on many occasions. Besides winning the national league with Seafield twice in a row in 2012 and 2013, his biggest accomplishment so far has been the Nike’s “The Chance Malaysia” programme last year when he was one of the five winners out of approximately six thousand other participants from all over the country. These winners were then flown to Indonesia for the Nike “The Chance” South East Asia level. “Only one of the five would eventually win a chance to compete in the global finals,” he said. “Unfortunately, I came in second place.”

The former boy of SMK Seafield, Subang Jaya, who has started playing football since he was 10, said he is aiming high. He hopes to go to Portugal to play for the Luzo Football Club for at least four months. “However, that will be at my own expense and it costs about US$1,500 a month,” he said. “This was at the invitation of Fabio Santos, a Brazilian who works with Brazuca Soccer in Brazil. It is costly, so I would not be able to make it unless there is a sponsor.”

Like Carlos, Andrew is emulating his role model, Olympics 2012 gold medallist, Lei Sheng from China. He hopes someday he, too, could win Gold in the Olympics. “I believe I can achieve this in a matter of time if given more practice and opportunities for competitions,” he said, exuding a sense of confidence.
PAVING THE WAY TO PERTH

Imagine having a Nobel Laureate like Professor Barry Marshall and even a Western Australian premier, Professor Carmen Lawrence showing interest in you.

That’s the magical touch that StudyPerth’s seminar has achieved every year in its Career Exploration Programme for its Australian Matriculation Programme (AUSMAT) students. It is the personal touch and the special interest shown in the students that make them warmly welcomed to Perth, Australia.

What mattered more was when the Lord Mayor of Perth, Lisa Scaffidi visited Sunway College, and said, “Come to Perth!”

Scaffidi had led a delegation from several leading universities in Western Australia and officials from StudyPerth and various education-related departments.

This year’s theme, ‘Skills for a future world…..Is Passion or Hard-work more important for your future?’ aimed to inspire foundation year students on their future university course and career prospects.

According to the Senior Executive Director of Sunway Education Group, Elizabeth Lee, AUSMAT is a very popular university foundation course especially for those who aim to study in Western Australian universities. She said that it was an honour and a privilege to have the Lord Mayor of Perth attend the seminar together with some top executives from leading universities in Western Australia.

Sunway College is one of AUSMAT’s oldest partners in Malaysia with more than 25 years of relationship. “Our lecturers are top rated in ‘excellent teaching and assessment’ by the Curriculum Council of Western Australia’s Annual Examiners’ Reports. And our students have been ranked amongst the best in Western Australia and in the WA programme worldwide,” said Lee in her welcome speech at the seminar.

“Our students have gained admission into universities in Australia including the prestigious Group-of-Eight universities and many other countries around the world. The broad learning pedagogies prepare them well for university level studies and research, and allow them to branch out to many disciplines and specialisations,” she added.
EDUCATION SHOULDN'T BE FREE, REALLY?

Most definitely!

With strong and persuasive arguments, debaters from the University of Cambridge, Loo Han Rong, Ian Beh and Shawn Tan emerged as champions and walked away with the Goh Cheng Teik Cup.

The trio beat speakers from University of Oxford, Shivy Siva, Jish Lim and Halian Fadzli Shah, who debated on the topic, “The house believes that university education should be free.”

This was the fourth consecutive year that Sunway College is hosting the debate between Malaysian students from the two oldest universities in the United Kingdom. The debate in the past has always attracted a huge local audience due to the august status of the universities.

Chief Adjudicator of the debate and President of Harvard Club Malaysia, Tan Sri Dr Lin See Yan said the best speaker was selected independently of the team that won. “On each team, they had a personality that was different from the other,” he said. “Both individuals did well, but they appeal to different people. So, we have identified two individuals, Loo Han Rong, who was cool and calculated and Jish Lim, who was the politician, and decided that they both deserved to be the best speakers.”

The panel of judges comprised of Dr Lin, Margaret Kaloo, Founder and CEO of elc International School, and Ruma Lopes, Assistant Director, Pre-University Studies, Sunway College.

Sunway University, the Cambridge University Malaysia Society, Oxford University Malaysia Club and the Oxford & Cambridge Society Malaysia have an established relationship of more than two decades. One of the undertakings between Sunway University and Oxford & Cambridge Society Malaysia is to provide Sunway students with an opportunity to take part in their activities.

Senior Executive Director of Sunway Education Group, Elizabeth Lee said that debating is one of the many important activities held at these top-notch universities. “Both the Cambridge and Oxford unions are famed for their high quality and scintillating debates,” she said. “It is a platform to groom world leaders. The focus is on how students articulate the facts, exhibit their thought process, organise the method of presentation, mannerism, besides emphasising on both clarity of the message presented and impactful content.”

Among those present were 240 students from the Sunway Pre-University programmes; A-Level, Australian Matriculation Programme (AUSMAT), Foundation in Arts (FIA), Monash University Foundation Year (MUFY) and Sunway International School (SIS), 40 secondary school students from SMK (Perempuan) Pudu and 30 students from various other secondary schools in the Klang Valley.
CONTINUING THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

After his Malaysian Certificate of Education, Eric Chan Wei Chiang took up the Canadian International Matriculation Programme (CIMP) at Sunway College in 2000 where he obtained the Ontario Secondary School Diploma and the CIMP Certificate of Academic Excellence with Honours.
**In Form 5, Eric Chan skipped tuition class one day and went with a friend to Sunway College to enquire about the diploma courses available. From then on, he made up his mind that Sunway is the place to do his diploma and to pursue a degree in Biotechnology.**

**APPRECIATING** the high quality education of the international matriculation programme at Sunway, Eric Chan continued his undergraduate studies at the prestigious Monash University Sunway, where he graduated with a BSc (Honours) Biotechnology in 2004. The passion for scientific research drove him to proceed with his post-graduate studies after securing a scholarship from Monash. He became the first graduate of the School of Science to be conferred a Ph.D. (Natural Product Chemistry) in 2009.

As a student in Sunway, Eric Chan won a consolation prize of the Merck Young Scientist Award 2009 in chromatography. He became a Life Member for Academic Excellence, Monash University Chapter of the Golden Key International Honour Society since 2003, and a Member of the International Society for Mangrove Ecosystems (ISME) since 2009.

Dr. Eric Chan joined the Faculty of Applied Sciences at a local institution of higher learning since 2009 where he lectures chemistry to first year students. In recent years, he gained international recognition and won several awards. He is a Member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Journal of Intercultural Ethnopharmacology, a Member of the Advisory Committee of International Conference of Herbal and Traditional Medicine, October 2012, New Delhi in India, and a Life Member of Pharmacognosy Network Worldwide. In 2010, he was one of the recipients of the Prestige Top 40 under 40 Award, which honours 40 young men and women with outstanding talent in Malaysia each year.

Dr. Eric Chan has published more than 30 papers in International Refereed Journals such as Food Chemistry, LWT – Food Science and Technology, and Free Radicals and Antioxidants. His biography will be listed in Marquis Who’s Who in the World® 2014, the source for current biographical information on the lives of the world’s most distinguished individuals.

Dr. Eric Chan attributes his achievements to the premier college and university education he received at Sunway. He honours the Sunway road to success, and recommends it to all school leavers seeking tertiary education.
THE Valedictorian, Ian Patrick Santa Maria, has been described as an eager and enthusiastic young man, positive, always willing to help.

Currently, working on his childhood biography, the Monash University Foundation Year (MUFY) student, said that he will be heading to Monash University Sunway Campus to pursue his medical degree programme. Interestingly, he has his entire plan in life all chartered out.

“I have always believed in a holistic approach to health, with more emphasis being given to physical fitness as well as top quality nutrition,” he said. “Maintaining one’s health is the key to improving longevity.”

His game plan? “After completing my medical degree here in Malaysia, I will be heading to Australia where I hope to undergo my housemanship,” he said. “I believe there is a lot that I can learn from the Australian athletes and health experts, which would help in my personal mission of spreading fitness and nutrition to the masses. I might then stay on for a while in Australia, to gain experience and credibility. Eventually, I will return to Malaysia and Singapore to help people here to live a healthier lifestyle.”

Fellow student, Michelle Lai Tzi Huey was awarded the MUFY Excellence Award for her determination, drive and dedication, when she achieved the highest total score among all the MUFY providers, while Leonnie Lee Ket Lan received the MUFY Achievement Award, for being the student who not only excelled academically but also contributed significantly in extra-curricular activities.

They were among the prize recipients during the recent MUFY Graduation Night, where 250 students were awarded a certificate of completion from MUFY that bears testimony to their hardship and sheer determination.

Five Sunway College students scored an average of 91.25% to qualify for the coveted Monash University Malaysia Entrance Scholarships. A total of 13 of 22 Subject Awards were also bagged by Sunway students, who obtained the highest score in their respective subjects, for the June examination.

Sunway College has a record of 69 MUFY students, who gained admission to the School of Medicine at Monash University Sunway Campus.
This, according to Sunway Education Group’s Senior Executive Director, Elizabeth Lee, is attributed to the MUFY lecturers who have been inspiring and committed teachers, imparting knowledge and wisdom in their own unique way to shape successful students.

Quoting Helen Keller, who despite her disabilities became a prolific author, political activist and lecturer, Lee said: “Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”

Sunway students have always maintained an excellent track record of students’ academic success, with scores that often surpass those from other MUFY providers.

Being the 14th year since MUFY was first offered in Malaysia, Sunway College has become the most established provider of MUFY, which has the largest number of student enrolment, among all providers in Australia, Malaysia, China, Indonesia and Sri Lanka. In China, there are three new providers, namely Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hangzhou.

“I am especially proud of the fact that we have attained this position, but more remarkable is that we have maintained the standing for many years now, as the adage goes, ‘to be on top is easy but to stay on top is difficult’,” Lee said.

She had earlier congratulated the students for their zeal and passion, with which they have crossed the finishing line. “We hope the last 10 months have given you more than knowledge and wisdom, a memory worth a lifetime and lessons you can carry with you as you move forward in life,” she added.

Also present were Lee Weng Keng (Chief Executive Officer, Education and Healthcare Division), Phang Koon Tuck (Executive Director, Monash University Sunway Campus), Professor Mahendhiran Nair (Deputy President, Monash University Sunway Campus), Cheng Mien Wee (Director of Pre-University Studies, Sunway College & Executive Director of Sunway International School) and Lee Thye Cheong (Director, Monash University Foundation Year, Sunway College).
FORMER Sunway Australian Matriculation Programme (AUSMAT) student Lee Boon Quan is currently working at the Department of Nuclear Physics in Australian National University.

His research topic involves nuclear physics, atomic physics and medical physics.

According to Boon Quan, the research that he is working on may lead to the development of a new kind of molecular radiotherapy that is based on the interaction of Auger electrons with tumors. “Ideally, the Auger ‘electron-based’ therapies only damage the tumors but not the neighbouring healthy cells,” he said. “This is because Auger electrons travel very short distance in the order of nanometre due to their low energy, so they damage only the small volume in the immediate vicinity of the radioactive isotopes.”

Unlike the conventional ray, particles and neutrons, the Auger electron is generated from the atomic shells following the radioactive decay rather than coming directly from the nucleus; therefore they are usually low in energy in the range from a few eV to 100 keV and hard to be detected.

“My research group and I are building a theoretical model to describe the emission process of Auger electrons,” Boon Quan added. “Our goal is to replace the existing models which are not able to include the whole atom in their calculations and keep up with the advances in nuclear physics.”

What is exciting about the study of Auger electrons is that it allows him to get involved in many different disciplines from physics to medicine. “Sometimes I just love doing something that is interesting and vibrant,” he said, adding that in five years’ time, he would have completed his PhD. “Thereafter, I will probably join a research group (can be different from what I am doing) somewhere on the planet earth if I decide not to become a Medical Physicist in Australia. Maybe, someday, I will work as a researcher in Malaysia.”

With his knowledge in nuclear and atomic physics, Boon Quan would probably be able to apply it for the advancement of medical science. “I know that the public are scared when the word ‘radiation’ is brought up, so I also hope to help the public understand that nuclear and atomic radiations are not scary after all!” he laughed.

Two Sets of Learning Experience

According to Boon Quan, AUSMAT had helped him in the transition of learning style from high school to university. He said, “In high school, I always relied on school teachers in the process of gaining knowledge. During the year in AUSMAT, I was able to start learning independently with help from lecturers at AUSMAT. It gave me a glimpse of what university life is all about. At the university, lecturers will only guide you instead of spoonfeeding you. However, most of the researchers and lecturers in ANU are easy to get along with and they will not refuse to answer your question if you ask them properly.”

There are no regrets in choosing AUSMAT at Sunway and ANU. “My brother is now doing AUSMAT at Sunway as well. I encouraged him to join AUSMAT because I believe the benefits he will get at Sunway will help him in the future,” Boon Quan said.

ANU is also his best choice made. “To be honest, I feel that my supervisors and I are like brothers,” he said. “We always chat about something that is not related to academic and they always make themselves available when I have questions. If you would like to do research, then ANU is the place you will find your opportunity.”

ANU is located near the centre of Canberra and it is a place that provides students with a serene environment. Most of the cities in Malaysia are very crowded, but ANU in Canberra exudes a different feel. “It is true that Canberra is less vibrant than the other capital cities in Australia such as Melbourne and Sydney but it gives you an opportunity to understand the definition of serenity,” Boon Quan said. “At night, you are able to see our galaxy, the Milky Way at the Research School of Astrophysics which is located on top of the Mount Stromlo. This is the opportunity you will never get in Malaysia due to light pollution.”

Boon Quan has two publications to his credit:

Lee Boon Quan in front of the Department of Nuclear Physics in ANU.
FIONA Tay Ting Nuan was one of the two students from Catholic High School who emerged as champion during the Math & Logic Competition organised by Sunway College in 2009. She was sixteen back then.

Along with the championship, she also won a full scholarship to study the Cambridge A-Level at Sunway College, and completed with flying colours in July 2012. With A’s for all four subjects – Further Mathematics, Additional Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry, she was accepted into Oxford University to do her Master of Mathematics. Having completed her first year, Fiona returned for a three-month summer vacation recently.

Visiting her alma matter as the Welfare Officer of the Oxford University Malaysia Club, caught up with her.
Q: What is it like studying at Oxford?
A: University life is a big transition compared to school. It is the same at Oxford, as it is in any other universities. You are expected to be independent. However, a highlight at Oxford is that we have a great tutorial system like no other university. The ratio is one tutor to two students; there is therefore a lot of personal attention from the tutors.

Q: Where you are now, how many other Malaysians are pursuing the same degree?
A: We have altogether six of us. Technically four now two have since graduated. Although we are all from different colleges (Oxford’s collegiate system), we often see one another in lectures and get together along with other Malaysians for events and outings or even just dinner. The companionship of people who are also facing similar challenges is comforting when the going gets tough.

Q: Why did you choose Oxford? Was it difficult to get into Oxford?
A: Oxford is of course a well-known university with a rich tradition. I like challenges in life. People always tell me that it is difficult to get into Oxford. So, I set a target to enter Oxford myself, and I have achieved it. The process of application included having to sit for a Mathematics Aptitude Test in two hours. Once shortlisted, we have to attend an interview. In my case, since I was already touring Europe, I decided to fly in to Oxford where the interview was conducted. The idea of the interview was to assess the prospective student’s level of confidence and ability to vocalize their ideas. There is no right or wrong answers.

Q: You are expecting to graduate by 2016. What are your plans after you complete your Master of Mathematics?
A: I have not decided, but I may want to pursue my PhD. Therefore, I will have to decide when I come to the bridge.

Q: You have also done Thinking Skills while doing the A-Level programme. How has this subject, and A-Level as a whole, helped you with your preparations for Oxford?
A: There are fewer subjects for A-Level as compared to other pre-university programmes, but it also means that we have more time to have in-depth understanding of each subject. This is important, because at the university level, we are supposed to cover something thoroughly into a particular area of specialisation, as we move up in our academic ladder. Thinking skills taught me how to analyse things critically before formulating a logical explanation, which has been especially useful when solving problems in pure mathematics.

Q: While you were at Sunway, who were your favourite lecturers and why?
A: All of them! (Mr Yong Yau, Mr Lee Choo Sik, Ms Kalarani, Ms Chin Fui Leng, Mr Kingsley & Mr Leonard). The smaller class size and longer contact hours made it possible for lecturers to get to know the students better. This way they could identify our strengths and weaknesses in a subject so we knew what we could work on. I also liked how they would allocate time outside of the dedicated teaching hours for students to ask for advice. The mentor-mentee scheme was also very beneficial to me. My mentor, Mr Yong Yau, was very helpful as he patiently assisted me in my UCAS and scholarship applications.
IN the middle of a class, one of his lecturers threw a boomerang.

Stunned, Ng Zhu Shen listened on, as his lecturer explained the underlying theories and mechanism behind the weapon used by the Australian aborigines.

“This is how our lessons are taught,” Zhu Shen shared enthusiastically about his experience studying at Cambridge. “It is the best university in the world and the highlight would be its strong academic environment. We have lectures, practical and coursework to focus on, and are each assigned to a tutor to help us in our studies.”

Zhu Shen, a former Sunway A-Level student, was on a short break when he returned to Malaysia. He is currently pursuing a degree in Engineering at the University of Cambridge, where he hopes to eventually specialise in Mechanical Engineering.

“I have always thought that I would pursue my tertiary education in the United States, a place much suited for my personality. However, everything changed when my Cambridge acceptance letter arrived. Having known Cambridge to be a highly academic-focused institution, it filled me with great apprehension when I was actually offered a place to study there.”

Zhu Shen took it as a personal challenge that, if he could strive under the most rigorous academic environment, the sky would be his limit. “The initial weeks upon my arrival in Cambridge, I would check my student ID periodically, soaking in the euphoria that it was no mistake that I have made it!” he quipped.

Returning to Cambridge in October, Zhu Shen said the same challenges will persist. “I am now more equipped with the essential knowledge to excel despite the academic rigor in Cambridge,” he said. “The first year has taught me the value of unparalleled focus, productivity and understanding the crux of my learning materials.”

He has attributed his strong foundation to his Further Mathematics lecturer, Mr Yong Yau. “I was given the platform to explore and tap into my academic potential. It is not only the faculty that makes Sunway College special but the small student numbers also builds a supportive community,” he added. “This sense of collaboration creates an environment that promotes academic advancement that makes this programme unique in comparison to other colleges.”
REBECCA George Williams K John made history by being the first recipient of the Sunway Education Group–Elena Cooke Education Fund Scholarship, since it was first established in December 2012.

Hailing from Klang, Rebecca was selected to pursue the Certified Accounting Technician (CAT) course at Sunway College.

The scholarship is offered jointly by Sunway and BBGS Alumni Berhad, which had established the Elena Cooke Education Fund, in honour of the late Elena Cooke, a well-loved principal of Bukit Bintang Girls’ School in Kuala Lumpur. Sunway pledged RM500,000 worth of scholarships to be given to the needy and marginalised students, to pursue their tertiary studies at Sunway College or Sunway University.

The Fund was set up to help these students, particularly orphans, irrespective of their race, culture and religion, to obtain an academic or professional qualification.

To Rebecca, the scholarship, coupled with the opportunity offered to her at Sunway College, is the first step towards achieving her dream career as a professional accountant. She will be able to lift herself up from poverty and eventually attain financial independence when she completes her education. There will be years of hard work ahead, but Rebecca said she is determined to see her dream fulfilled one day.

Congratulating Rebecca, Elizabeth Lee, Senior Executive Director of Sunway Education Group said that she is proud of her. “At Sunway, we hope to be an enabler in helping her fulfil her aspiration and we will all support her throughout the way,” she said, after both she and Moey Yoke Lai, Founding Director of BBGS Alumni Berhad signed the scholarship agreement with Rebecca.

The witness for Sunway Education Group was Lee Siok Ping, Director of Student Services and the witness for BBGS Alumni Berhad was Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Hashim, Member, Board of Directors, BBGS Alumni Berhad.

Sunway Education Group and BBGS Alumni Berhad are inviting more applications for Sunway Education Group–Elena Cooke Education Fund Scholarships.

At the same time, donations in the form of cheques payable to BBGS Alumni Berhad can either be sent to the Elena Cooke Education Fund, No 33–2-B, Block C2, Dataran Prima, 47301 Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia or banked into the Maybank Account Number: 514123166380, followed by faxing a bank-in slip to fax No: 03-6157 0191; or e-mailed to: bbgs.ecef@gmail.com

The first beneficiary

Rebecca George (third from left) with her scholarship agreement. From left: Lee Siok Ping, Elizabeth Lee, Moey Yoke Lai, Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Hashim and Rebecca’s sister, Maria.
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Over RM100 million in scholarships awarded. More details at jeffreycheahfoundation.org.my