

# It pays to be hospitable

Ms Serena Lim aims for a top-flight career in the hotel industry

by mike lee

UNIVERSITY freshman Serena Lim envisions running a world-class hotel of the calibre of top establishments such as Starwood and Four Seasons. And she has already planned how to make this dream come true.

Currently studying for a Bachelor of Science in Hotel Administration, with a major in hospitality management, at the local campus of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), Ms Lim is among the pioneer batch of students admitted to UNLV through the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), which selected her for a bond-free scholarship.

Established in 2009, the SIT provides industry-focused degree programmes targeted at growth sectors of the economy, in partnership with local polytechnics and reputable overseas universities.

It was only after doing many part-time jobs since Secondary 4, ranging from clerk to receptionist, salesperson to telemarketer, usher to waitress, that Ms Lim discovered where her interests lay.

She says: “I realised that I don’t really like a desk-bound job. At the front desk, you get to meet different people every day; there are different challenges which I really like. At the end of the day, what makes me happy is when my customer walks away with a smile.”

After completing her A levels at Jurong Junior College, she enrolled in Temasek Polytechnic’s Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Business programme to learn more about the industry.

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— Ms Serena Lim (above right)

At the polytechnic’s satellite campus The Tourism Academy @ Sentosa, she beefed up her knowledge on topics related to food and beverage, events and resorts.

An internship with Universal Studios Singapore to plan and prepare for its launch gave her valuable training, as did a stint in guest relations with the luxury resort ONE°15 Marina Club.

Then the time came to decide whether to join the workforce full-time or further her studies. She was offered places to read business at National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University, but decided hotel management at UNLV.

She eventually chose to go to UNLV. Being selected for the SIT scholarship was another factor that sealed the deal. Says Ms Lim: “Going to UNLV was like a stepping stone for me. It felt like the right thing to do.”

The SIT scholarship is awarded to outstanding first-year students pursuing their first degree with SIT and its overseas university partner. UNLV’s programme gives students a broad-based business background pertaining to the hospitality industry. It comprises of hotel and business core subjects, besides general education classes.

A hospitality internship, plus separate accumulation of 1,000 hours of work experience are among graduating requirements. Towards the end of the degree, students attend a module at the home campus in the United States.

Studies are not the only thing this scholar is busy with. She helps SIT with student recruitment events such as fairs and open houses, and coordinating with student helpers on various matters.

While she enjoys time with her family and hanging out with friends, she also sets aside quiet time for reading and self-reflection.

With credit transfers from polytechnic, it will take Ms Lim just two years to complete her degree. She hopes to land a management trainee position with an international hotel group.

Her advice for those who wish

to follow in her footsteps: “You will definitely need to have the passion and be willing to learn. Don’t worry about setbacks or obstacles that come your way, and don’t let society decide what you should do. “If this is what you want, go for it!”



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