

Ngee Ann Polytechnic accountancy student worked to support family while juggling studies

Bursary gives him a new chance at university

AUDREY LEONG

At 16, while his peers were fully focussing on their O levels, he was studying and working 50 hours a week as a retail assistant to support his family.

After he graduated from the accountancy course at the Institute of Technical Education (ITE), Mr Huang Po Hsiang applied for a deferment — not from the army, but from enrolment into the diploma in accountancy course at Ngee Ann Polytechnic so he could save up to pay for his first semester's school fees.

Once in the course, though he had a near perfect Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.89, he was not shortlisted for a scholarship. He lacked CCA points as he spent most of his free time working part-time as a swimming instructor and as a retail assistant in department store Robinsons to pay off his school fees.

He said: "Financially, there were a lot of limitations and this put me at a disadvantage, but I grew from them and came out stronger."

Last year, the 25-year-old, from a family of five, became one of 15 beneficiaries of the Institute of Singapore Chartered Accountants (ISCA) Cares, the charity arm of the national accountancy body.

The ISCA Cares Education programme awards bursaries to



PHOTO: ISCA CARES

"Every beneficiary counts, and no one should be deprived of a chance at education because of difficult financial circumstances."

— ISCA Cares chairman, Ms Lim Hwee Hua (above, with Mr Huang Po Hsiang)

needy youth completing their accountancy diploma or degree in a local polytechnic or university with a minimum 3.0 GPA (on the 4-point scale), and whose family's per capita income falls below \$625 a month.

This year, he will be receiving the bursary for the second time.

Beneficiaries receive \$3,000 in support of living expenses, plus up to 100 per cent of their

tuition fee for that academic year.

ISCA Cares said it "considers their financial circumstances first" when awarding bursaries.

ISCA Cares chairman Lim Hwee Hua said: "Every beneficiary counts, and no one should be deprived of a chance at education because of difficult financial circumstances."

Mr Huang, whose mother

works as an administrator and father in retail, says he is very happy and relieved to receive the bursary.

He said: "I'm very thankful for the opportunity to lessen my family's financial burden."

With the help of the bursary, Mr Huang hopes to be able to save for his university fees.

On top of the subsidies given to them, beneficiaries are paired with experienced mentors and are given an opportunity to undergo an internship at various corporations and the offices of corporate donors of ISCA Cares.

His mentor last year, Mr Yeo Ek Khuan, who has close to 50 years of experience in the accounting field, said he volunteered to join the programme to help the next generation of accountants.

Mr Yeo, an accountancy lecturer at the Singapore Institute of Technology, said: "As I have been helped by my seniors, I feel that it is only right to now come forward to help the future generations."

He said Mr Huang is a self-motivated individual who "has the determination to succeed".

Mr Huang aspires to be a Chartered Accountant of Singapore and go on to provide a "quality mentorship" to students who have gone through hardships like he did.

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