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Green ambitions
SUTD scholar Li Yiyang is on a quest for environmental sustainability

by Narendra Aggarwal

The Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), a new player on the local university scene, has been drawing a lot of interest with its interdisciplinary education approach and its collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in the United States. For the pioneer batch of SUTD scholars, Li Yiyang, 22, a recipient of the SUTD-Industries@Singapore Scholarship is studying for a Bachelor of Engineering with a major in Engineering Systems and Design and will graduate next year.

“I was attracted to SUTD's interdisciplinary education and unique pedagogy, as well as the opportunity to be involved in active learning. My other attraction was the natural choice for me. Furthermore, this exclusive opportunity to be part of a new and emerging university has also been very appealing,” says Li.

Having completed three terms, he is glad that this broad foundation has allowed him to look at problems and solutions from various perspectives, such as technological, social and aesthetic. He adds, “I look forward to using the interdisciplinary skills to tackle environmental problems on a macro scale. I hope to be in a better position to contribute to complex 21st century problems.”

Li is passionate about environmental sustainability— in particular, waste minimisation by focusing on reducing and reusing, as well as in greener public transport, especially cycling.

As he graduates, he hopes to be actively involved in exploring and implementing solutions to environmental problems, and look forward to a possible career in industry to work on such issues as the National Environmental Agency (NEA), Public Utilities Board (PUB) and Land Transport Authority.

Among his memorable experiences were going on a fully funded 10-week exchange programme to MIT in the United States. He says, “Apart from the planned programme, there were also frequent opportunities to interact with entrepreneurs through seminars and company visits where I learnt to look for ‘value in context’ in, for instance, broadening my perception on things that aren’t immediately obvious. Things like the potential of innovations that can arise from interdisciplinary inspiration— something as ubiquitous as Velcro was inspired by seeds clinging onto dog fur. Moreover, having the potential of innovations that can arise from interdisciplinary inspiration— something as ubiquitous as Velcro was inspired by seeds clinging onto dog fur.

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Broadening perspectives

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Being constantly engaged

Besides the environment, Mr Li’s other passion is music. “I choose this pillar as I hope to learn the skills to tackle environmental problems on a macro scale. It offered me the opportunity to look at how to think of problems and solutions from a city-wide, and possibly even a regional or global perspective. I am excited at the opportunity to be in a better position to contribute to the sustainable world, “ he says.

Of the six focus tracks within the course, Mr Li is likely to pursue the energy and environment track as the subjects will provide him with tools such as life-cycle analysis, multi-objective decision-making and systems and control engineering to design systems and processes. “With the skills that I will develop from the offered track, my education at SUTD, I hope to contribute towards altering and preventing current unsustainable environmental problems.”

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