

News

Poly reject gets first-class honours in university

Indonesian youth chosen as NTU's Nanyang Business School valedictorian

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SIX years ago, he left Bintan, Indonesia, as a 17-year-old to pursue his education in Singapore. But he met with rejection from four of our five polytechnics.

His senior high school certificate from Indonesia was not good enough, and he was not offered a place.

Singapore Polytechnic (SP) was the only one to give him a break and allowed him to sit for its entrance tests.

Fast forward to three years ago.

Mr Iwan Yuliyanto graduated as one of SP's top students, with a grade point average of 3.98.

He was also offered a scholarship by SembCorp Industries to read accountancy at Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

Fast forward again to last month.

Mr Yuliyanto, 23, was nominated as valedictorian of NTU's Nanyang Business School (NBS), after graduating with a first-class honours degree.

Not even he would have dreamt of this outcome.

Not after having to work two part-time jobs, at Subway and Starbucks, when he was in SP just to pay his school fees.

Lost 30kg

He weighed 105kg when he first came to Singapore.

But within 1½ years, he lost 30kg due to the stress of juggling schoolwork and two jobs.

He wanted to pursue a degree in accountancy at NTU, but history repeated itself, and he was rejected twice.

He was offered a place to read economics instead.

But Mr Yuliyanto remained unfazed.

"I appealed and managed to get an interview with the associate dean," he said. "She agreed to give me a place to study accountancy."

Mr Yuliyanto, who used to call home crying, started in NTU in 2009.

With the scholarship from SembCorp Industries, his financial troubles eased, and he could focus more on his studies.

But that did not mean that he spent all his time in his room.

He kept himself even busier by taking part in co-curricular activities (CCAs) and hall activities.

"Back in SP, I had to survive just to make ends meet, and I didn't really have a chance to contribute to the school," said Mr Yuliyanto, who is now a finance executive at SembCorp Industries.

"At NTU, I wanted to make full use of my time, take part in CCAs, and contribute to NBS and society."

During his time at NTU, he organised charity projects to raise funds for a children's home.

He also took the initiative to set up the NBS Exchange Club to help overseas exchange students have a more comfortable time in Singapore.



TNP PICTURE: MELISSA CHUE

"Earlier this year, I lost my wallet while playing badminton with my friends, and Iwan made the effort to go to every faculty office to look for it. He even offered to lend me money."

— Mr Tan Thiam Kee on his roommate, Mr Iwan Yuliyanto (above)

The club did welcome overseas exchange students at the airport and helped them check into the hostel.

Mr Nicholas Ee, who works at NBS' undergraduate programmes office, said that Mr Yuliyanto has good leadership qualities.

He said: "Iwan displayed a lot of charisma by rallying the local and overseas exchange students to get the whole network going."

Even though he received a monthly allowance of around \$650 from his scholarship, Mr Yuliyanto still worked on weekends as a waiter during his first 1½ years in NTU.

He said: "Besides saving, I also wanted to give money to my mum."

His mother, a housewife, is his source of inspiration and motivation.

"I really want to do her proud, and hopefully, I can bring her over to Singapore one day too."

He was popular among his schoolmates.

Mr Tan Thiam Kee, Mr Yuliyanto's roommate at the student hostel, said: "He is smart, friendly, and is always very willing to help his friends out."

"Earlier this year, I lost my wallet while playing badminton with my friends, and Iwan made the effort to go to every faculty office to look for it. He even offered to lend me money."

Miss Soh Jia Juan, Mr Yuliyanto's schoolmate in both SP and NTU, said: "He's a born leader and shows maturity in the way he thinks and handles conflicts."

"Together with another friend, we went for a graduation trip to Taiwan, and he was the entertainer of the group. He is really jovial and humorous."

On his dreams, Mr Yuliyanto said: "I will fulfil my bond with the company, and I hope to pursue an MBA."

"I'll also like to open a food and beverage business in the future and set up an SP scholarship as I want to give back to the community."