Universities in scholarship war

Students spoil for choice as varsities offer bonanza of perks

LIN YANQIN
yanqin@mediacorp.com.sg

THE bonanza of grants and bursaries in the Government’s latest Budget may ensure that most Singaporean can afford a tertiary education, but for their part, local universities have more and more been dangling a no-strings lure of their own — bond-free scholarships — to hook the very best and brightest.

Take straight-As student Jo Tay. She had no interest in the idea of a bonded scholarship, because I wasn’t ready to commit to a career or company yet,” said Ms Tay, 20.

And so, when she was offered a bonded scholarship by Singapore Management University (SMU), she took the local route instead. “I liked the culture of the school, and it was an attractive scholarship that suited my needs. I like the freedom to choose what to do with my life after I graduate,” said the SMU Lee Kong Chian scholar Low Aik Meng.

Dean of students Low Aik Meng felt it was the trend for scholarships to go bond-free. “Our scholarship sponsors believe in the over-arching objective of supporting young talents and contributing to the economy as part of nation-building,” he said.

At SMU, all scholarships offered and administered by the university are bond-free. Individuals and private organisations sponsor some, while others are funded by the SMU faculty, staff and generous alumni.

NUS Global Merit Scholarship in 2005, and has also

“(IN JULY 2005) the doctor told us ‘Renal cell carcinoma. Stage Four. Incurable.’ I am sure he didn’t say it so bluntly, but that’s all I heard. ‘I had been given my death sentence. I felt blue. My wife and daughter broke down. I had to calm them. But they were inconsolable. I asked my doctor: ‘How long do I have? Be frank.’ He said: ‘Eight months to 12 months.’ My doctors said the treatment he would recommend could only prolong my life and maintain or improve my quality of life.”

Nithiah was put on two drugs — erlotinib and bevacizumab. Erlotinib, he took orally every day, and bevacizumab, intravenously every fortnight. “My doctor warned me of side effects. I said: ‘Go ahead.’

“The side effects were horrible. I had pimples all over my face. Then, there were the frequent vomiting, diarrhoea and a constant sore throat. I responded to the treatment initially, but the cancer progressed and the treatment could no longer help me. It was stopped.”

On Jan 19, 2006, Nithiah was started on a different course of medicines. Interferon and capetabine. Interferon was given by injection three times a week. The injection was through the stomach. Vinaila (wife), Yoge and Pravi (daughters) had to learn how to do it as they were going to be his caregivers. “It was torture.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6