

Inspirational Sparks

Hallmarks of Success



My Second Chance

By Michelle Lim



When I first stepped into Millennia Institute (MI) (former Jurong Institute) in 2003, I thought that my participation in the academic “paper chase” was over. Having been through many setbacks in the Singapore education system which I deemed as experiences that I would try my best to change if I were to be given a second chance, I would like to change my fate as being a MI student. I badly wanted that opportunity to do so. That was exactly how I felt when I stood outside the gate along Toh Tuck Road on the first day of school. It was really ironic that today, when I am asked where the best memories of my teenage years were formed, the answer that comes to mind will be from MI.

I will not say that the failure to do well enough to get me into a junior college was the motivating factor for my determination to make it to a local university. In fact, the failure was like an irremovable stain, the incessant comparison to my brother who was achieving spectacular results in his studies by my parents had intensified the belief that I was a lost cause. I lost confidence and faith in myself during the first half of my Pre-University One. I was simply contented with meeting the minimum requirements in my tests or examinations as long as that would “prevent” any of the teachers from meeting my parents. These sloppy attitude and laziness transpired into many ‘counselling’ or ‘thrashing’ sessions where many people in Millennia Institute became important characters in this chapter of my life, especially teachers who specifically lent a hand and picked me up when I fell.

I would say that teachers like Madam Shamala and Mrs. Burton (she has since left the school), who were my home tutors in PU1 and PU2 respectively, paved the way for the re-construction of my faith in my own academic capabilities by never failing to reiterate their support and confidence in me. There were many instances where I had talks with my subject tutors and they never ceased to encourage me. In retrospection, I cannot single out one such session and use it to signify my turning point for there were far too many.

It is often said, “You reap what you sow.” One such instance would be the achievement of an A2 for my mother-tongue (MT) ‘AO’ level paper in PU2. It made me realized that with determination and hard work, anything was possible. Of course, I have to thank Madam Ong Chai Hong who constantly breathed down my neck, hounding me for my Chinese assignments which I always did not complete as I hated the subject then.

One day, Madam Ong told me that she believed I was capable of a distinction for Chinese. The fact that I was letting myself down by simply giving up without a fight and with disappointment written on her face, proved to be a wake-up call for me.

From that moment, I made a commitment to put all my efforts into my studies with the aim of gaining entry into university. For once, I had decided, I wanted to make my teachers proud of me and most importantly, I came to realize that the second chance which I wanted on the first day of school was in fact given to me at Millennia Institute.

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Unfortunately, I am not one who can handle stress very well. My hard work, expectations and long hours of study have inevitably brought along stress and anxiety. The night before my ‘A’ levels Economics paper, I was hospitalised for an over-dosage of paracetamol, a result of a pounding headache caused by the fear of not able to finish my revision for Economics; my weakest subject. I was on the verge of giving up and had decided not to sit for the examination the following morning.

The next morning, an early visit from Madam Zarina and Madam Lee Siew Leng (my home tutor in PU3) - a few hours before the paper changed it all. I could still vividly remember Madam Zarina’s chat with me that dispelled whatever uncertainty I had. I was convinced to take the examination on that day. Come to think of it, I am glad that I did not give up back then for I would not have been where I am now. Thank you, teachers!

The teachers not only helped me to excel academically but they have imparted to me many life lessons that I will carry with me. As I continue on my life journey, I am well-equipped to face any challenges that I will encounter along the way. It was an experience I would not change.



A current member of MI Alumni Association 2007/2008, Michelle Lim graduated from the former Jurong Institute (JI) Class of 2003. Currently Michelle is in her second year Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), National University of Singapore (NUS). We wish Michelle all the best in her future endeavours.