

Finding Solutions Through Tech And AI

SMU Global Impact Scholar Gigi Teo is able to stay nimble in an uncertain world

BY AUGUST CARLOS

The pandemic drastically changed classroom dynamics in 2020, pushing students to adjust to a new learning environment.

But Singapore Management University (SMU) Global Impact Scholarship recipient Gigi Teo has adjusted well, managed to thrive and even made an impact in a year when most people were forced to stay indoors.

She's currently working on her Bachelor of Science (Information Systems) degree at SMU, with majors in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Business Analytics. She is expected to graduate in July 2022.

Among her achievements last year was completing two internships, one of which was done remotely at real estate group CapitaLand, as a data science intern.

Despite not being physically present in the office, she was still able to make her mark. She developed an optical character recognition solution, or a system that recognises text in images and documents, to automate the extraction and processing of data from CapitaLand's monthly utility bills.

"This was my first internship dealing with AI. It helped to fuel my interest in the field and affirmed my choice for my first major," she says.

Being nimble amid changes

As an SMU Global Impact Scholarship recipient, Ms Teo also had the opportunity to do overseas community service.

In May 2019, she and a group of fellow scholarship recipients embarked on a project to empower the people living in the Vietnamese village of Hua Tat in the northwestern province of Son La. Hua Tat is known as a stop-

over for local tourists heading to Moc Chau, a plateau destination popular for its cool temperatures.

Her group's project aimed to help the village develop its community-based tourism through providing English and financial literacy lessons as well as boosting the online presence of homestay owners.

However, due to the pandemic last year, Ms Teo and her group were not able to fly to Vietnam to check on the progress. Instead, they took the project online in December. "It's now running under new leaders, to whom my team and I handed over our project efforts," she says.

Ms Teo says her scholarship helped her prepare for this new normal. In particular, her exposure to interdisciplinary SMU-X modules and projects (which aim to solve real-world issues faced by organisations) primed her for life in a world that is best described by the term VUCA, which stands for Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous.

"I am also able to develop the necessary skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking to adapt, navigate and thrive in this new normal," she says.

■ Visit <https://smu.sg/sc3> for more information.



SMU Global Impact Scholarship recipient Gigi Teo completed an entire internship in 2020 remotely, and even came up with an artificial intelligence system that helps to automate the company's processes. PHOTO: MAX CHAN

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Ms Gigi Teo, SMU Global Impact Scholarship recipient

FINDING INSPIRATION

SMU Global Impact Scholarship recipient Gigi Teo discusses the role models who motivate her

• **Mulan**

Ms Teo considers the fabled Chinese woman warrior as inspirational. Instead of presenting herself as a damsel in distress, Mulan was courageous, independent and vulnerable at the same time.

• **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

Ms Teo was struck by the Nigerian novelist's essay, "We Should All Be Feminists". She notes that the novelist gently nudges and persuades readers to pursue gender equality, instead of impelling them to do so.

• **New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern**

Ms Teo says that the New Zealand Prime Minister's stellar leadership during the pandemic demonstrates that leadership should not only encompass assertiveness and strength, but also empathy and kindness.