

Juggling between family, studies and work

FOR many, the thought of studying while catering to the demands of family and work can be daunting, if not impossible. Asia e University (AeU) understands that juggling between work, life and study can be tough and has thus developed an online learning platform. AeU MBA graduate Swa Lee Lee knows this all too well.

> How to juggle work, family and further studies

After completing an undergraduate degree and working for a few years, Swa realised she needed to expand her knowledge in business to take the next step in her career.

She enrolled for a Master of Business Administration (MBA) at AeU and graduated in September 2014. During that period, Swa was blessed with a child, now aged five, and had progressed professionally from an assistant manager to manager at a private university in the country. How did she juggle her studies, family and her career so successfully?

> She paced herself

For Swa, flexibility and extensive learning resources were important considerations.

With AeU's personalised online learning platform, myPLS provided her with the opportunity to complete her subjects at times that suited her.

"I only expected to complete two or three subjects per semester," she said.

By taking it slow, she had the advantage of completely focusing on every subject.

> She got involved with the online community

Although Swa completed her studies at home, she did not feel isolated because she had the support of staff and students through myPLS.

Through the use of AeU's innovative technology, she was able to learn alongside other global professionals around the world.

"The capacity to engage created a sense of connection," she said.

In particular, she highlighted AeU's "online discussion space", which operates as an open tutorial environment rather than a one-way dialogue from lecturer to student.

> Sometimes deferring was essential

For Swa, circumstances changed over the two years of her studies.

"One year into the course, I was pregnant with my first child," she recalled.

She completed two subjects deferring her pregnancy before deferring for a semester.

She acknowledged that it required patience and fortitude to finally reach the finishing line and that many people may have been tempted to give up at the first sign of difficulty.

"I had my fair share of ups and downs in my MBA journey but I was lucky as they occurred mainly during the initial stage of my studies," she said.

Being realistic during times when her priorities changed helped her to get through the process.

> There were times when things did not go smoothly

Proper time management

played a crucial role in helping Swa to successfully juggle her commitments.

Taking time off work to care for her children when they fell sick and then returning to an increased workload from the office often had an impact on her ability to manage her study requirements.

Without a maid, she depended a lot on her husband to assist with the daily chores but even then, Swa hardly had time for herself. Most of her revision and assignments were done after midnight.

"It was difficult at first. Managing work-related matters and family obligations while studying was a real challenge for me but eventually, I learned to prioritise and plan my daily schedule. I completed my work during office hours and made sure that I spent quality time with my family. I'm thankful to have a supportive husband. He is my pillar of strength who gave me the encouragement to go on."

> She cherished her proudest moment

Swa received her scroll at AeU's 4th Convocation in 2014. She recalled that it was a memorable moment that brought tears to her eyes.

"I was overcome with emotion when I saw my late father standing up and applauding with pride when I entered the hall to go on stage."

"I saw my whole family, including my little daughter, waving to me and brimming with joy. That was my proudest moment which I will always cherish."

"My decision to enrol in the MBA programme was a life-changing one. Without the encouragement from my family, I don't think that I would have come this far."

> She focused on why she was doing it

The decision to enrol for a postgraduate study should be carefully considered before taking the leap. Swa advised that people should think about what their motivation is.

"Is it about ticking a box on your CV or developing yourself and your capabilities? When it gets tough, knowing why you're doing it will help you to stay on track," she reasoned.

Nevertheless, she added "You don't have to put your life on hold. I followed my passion but not at the expense of my family. You have to figure out how to make it work," she said.

AeU's flexible approach to learning means you do not have to put your life on hold to get a qualification.

Swa is currently pursuing her studies in PhD (Business Administration) at AeU.

"Balancing working and studying was not easy – more so, if you have a family that demands your attention. But if I can do it, so can you," said Swa with a smile.

AeU offers three intakes annually – January, May and September.

For all postgraduate research programmes, intakes are open throughout the year.

■ For more information, log on to www.aeu.edu.my, e-mail enquiries@aeu.edu.my or call toll-free 1300 300 238.



(Left) AeU MBA graduate Swa with her husband and daughters. (Above) Swa shares that her decision to enrol in the MBA programme was life-changing and she would not have gotten this far without the encouragement from her family.