



page 16

# theSun careers

Every third Wednesday of the month

## Study to **suit** the way you live

**F**OR many of us, the thought of studying amidst the demands of family and work can appear daunting, if not possible. Asia e University (AeU) understands juggling work, life and study can be complicated. That is why it developed an online learning platform that fits study around a person's working life and lifestyle.

AeU MBA graduate, Swa Lee Lee knows this all too well.

After completing an undergraduate degree and working for a few years, Lee Lee realised she needed more business knowledge to take the next step in her career, so she started a Master of Business Administration (MBA) at AeU. After beginning her MBA, she finally graduated in September 2014. During that period Lee Lee had a child, now aged five,

### > AeU's self-paced learning offers you the freedom to fit your studies around your life

and grew professionally from a role as an assistant manager to a manager in one of the private universities in Malaysia.

So how did she managed to juggle her study, family and career?

#### She paced herself

When Lee Lee was considering her further study options, flexibility and extensive-excellent learning resources were important considerations. Using AeU's personalised online learning platform, myPLS gave her the opportunity to complete subjects, at times that suited her.

"I only planned to complete two or three subjects per semester," she

says.

Because Lee Lee took it slowly, she had the advantage of completely focusing on every subject she completed.

#### Online community

Although Lee Lee was completing her study at home, she didn't feel isolated because she had the support of staff and students through myPLS she had access to. 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 says and in particular she highlights the "online



AeU MBA graduate and current PhD student, Swa Lee Lee with husband and daughter.

discussion space", which operated as an open tutorial environment, rather than a one-way dialogue from lecturer to student.

#### Sometimes deferring was essential

Circumstances changed over the two years Lee Lee studied. "One year into the course I fell pregnant with my first child," she recalls. Lee Lee completed two subjects during her pregnancy and deferred for a semester.

Lee Lee acknowledges that it requires patience and fortitude to finally reach the finishing line and that many people may be tempted to give up at the first sight of difficulty. "I had my fair share of 'turbulence' in my MBA journey but I was lucky as they occurred mainly during the initial stage of my study," she says.

Being realistic during times when her priorities changed helped her to get through the process. "You need to set clear expectations for yourself," she adds.

#### When things don't go smoothly

Proper time management played a crucial role in helping Lee Lee to successfully juggle her commitments.

When her child was sick, taking time off work to care for her and then returning to an increased workload from the office often affected 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, Lee Lee hardly had time for herself. So most of her revision and assignments were done after midnight.

"It was extremely difficult at first. Managing work-related matters and family obligations while studying was a real challenge for me but eventually, I learnt 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," she says.

"My dream would not have become a reality without the encouragement of my husband and child. They were very supportive of my academic endeavour. I used to have this nagging feeling that I was neglecting them. But their reassurance put me at ease.

They knew that the degree meant a lot to me, so they always tried to motivate me whenever I was feeling down," reminisced Lee Lee.

Lee Lee says that understanding how to manage free time helped her to find a balance between expectations.

#### Proudest moment

Lee Lee received her scroll at AeU's 4th Convocation in 2014. According to her, it was a memorable moment that brought tears to her eyes.

"I was overcome by emotion when I saw my late father excitedly stood up and applauded with pride when I entered the hall to go on stage. And I saw my whole family including my little daughter waving to me and brimming with joy. That was my proudest moment that I will cherish," she smiles with tears of joy.

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

#### Being focused

Postgraduate study should be carefully considered before taking the leap. Lee Lee says people should think about what their motivation to study 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.

However, the 2014 convocation does not mark the end of Lee Lee's life as a learner because she is currently pursuing her studies in PhD (Business Administration) at AeU. AeU's unique, flexible approach to learning means working students need not put their life on hold to get a qualification.

"Balancing work and study was not easy. More so, if you have a family that demands your attention. But if I can do it, so can you!" concluded Lee Lee with a smile.

There are three intakes annually; January, May and September. However, for all postgraduate research programmes, intakes are open throughout the year. For more information, visit [www.aeu.edu.my](http://www.aeu.edu.my), email: [enquiries@aeu.edu.my](mailto:enquiries@aeu.edu.my) or call toll free 1-300-300-238.