

From poly to Yale: NUS student's Ivy League journey

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When Nicolaus Fernandez stepped into the National University of Singapore (NUS) Business School two years ago, the former polytechnic student did not expect to attend an Ivy League institution too.

This year, Mr Fernandez, 24, clinched a coveted place in the Yale Visiting International Students Program (Y-Visp) along with fellow Business School students Qiran Low, 20, and Lim Tzwei, 23.

The trio will reside and study with full-time undergraduates from Yale University as part of a year-long honours programme, which selects students from six partner institutions worldwide.

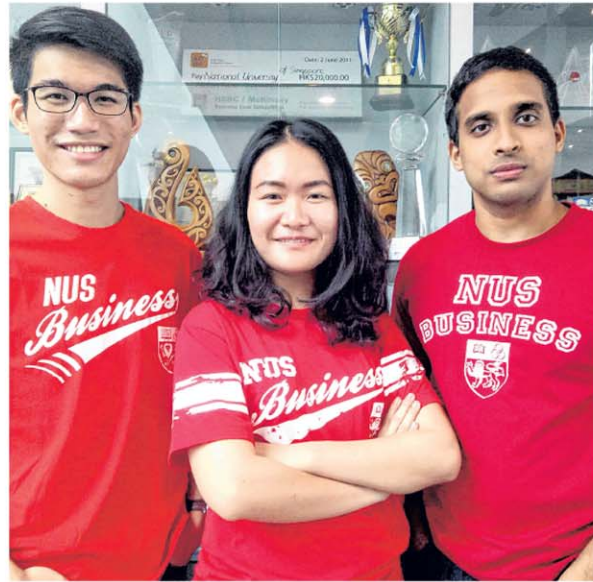
The partnership with NUS was initiated in 2011.

The students will be the first in five years to qualify for the programme from NUS Business School.

For Mr Fernandez, snagging the spot was a personal achievement.

He was interested in business from an early age.

“When I saw my sister’s projects and presentations for her business management course, I realised I could excel in this



(From left) Lim Tzwei, Qiran Low and Nicolaus Fernandez .

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field,” he said.

After scoring below expectations in the O-level examinations, Mr Fernandez entered Nanyang Polytechnic to study business management. After his graduation, he focused his attention on NUS Business School.

“I heard about how students participated actively in their classes, and I wanted to be taught in this model,” he said.

University life came with its own challenges.

Mr Fernandez initially felt intimidated by his environment and the interactive model, believing his opinion would not matter.

“Freshman year was hard for me, I doubted my abilities

as a student from a polytechnic background.

“My professors helped me understand concepts I did not know previously, and their teaching style made sure I did not fall behind.”

During an overseas exchange and internship fair in school, Mr Fernandez came across the opportunity to apply for Y-Visp.

He said: “The process was challenging. We had to submit references and essays, followed by two rounds of interviews. I was elated to be selected.”

He is currently interning at a marketing consultancy and working as a waiter in his free time, hoping to save enough and travel through North America during his year there.

Ms Low hopes to broaden her experience beyond business subjects and pursue courses on art and economics during her time at Yale.

Mr Lim, who organised one of the first camps in NUS that catered to disabled students, looks forward to this new opportunity.

“The programme has a multicultural community and will allow me to form bonds within and outside the classroom,” he said.

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