

INTERNATIONAL ENTERPRISE SINGAPORE

EXPANDING SINGAPORE'S GLOBAL REACH

With a small domestic market, international trade continues to drive Singapore's economy, and this puts the country at the forefront of the global marketplace. Leading the way in expanding Singapore's global footprint is IE Singapore, the government agency charged with growing our nation's external economy through the overseas growth of Singapore companies and trade promotion.



By Julailah Wahid

With one of the world's highest trade-to-GDP ratio at almost 300 per cent, it is evident that trade plays an important role in Singapore's market-based economy. To ensure that our economy remains vibrant, stable and globally competitive, Singapore continues to look at growth beyond its domestic economy.

Enter International Enterprise (IE) Singapore, the government agency that drives our country's external economy. Led by a vision to develop Singapore as a thriving business hub with Globally Competitive Companies (GCCs) and leading international traders, IE Singapore strives to groom the global business leaders of tomorrow through a holistic array of learning and developmental opportunities.

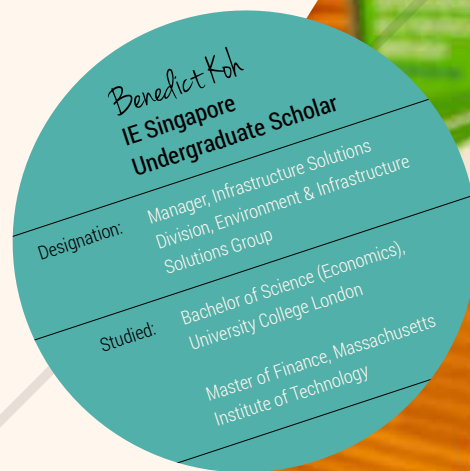
AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING CAREER

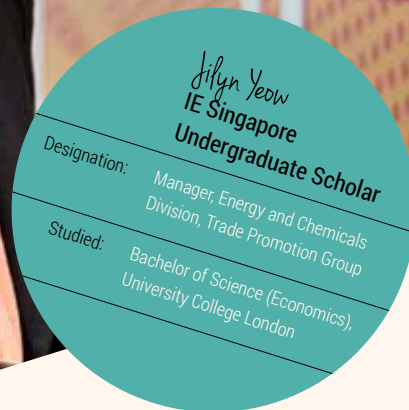
After all, a career with IE Singapore gives one the rewarding and exciting opportunity to contribute to our nation's development as a global business hub. It was this golden opportunity that spurred 25-year-old Jilyn Yeow to take up the IE Singapore Undergraduate Scholarship.

"I find it meaningful to be able to partner homegrown GCCs and help put them on the world map. The role of IE Singapore in

strengthening the Singapore brand ensures that we maintain her competitive edge in today's globalised world," says Jilyn.

As Jilyn shares, GCCs are key industry players on the global stage and very important in developing Singapore's economic resilience and strengthening the Singapore brand. Through IE Singapore's Global Company Partnership and Market Readiness Assistance, enterprises are given a leg-up in expanding their global presence. When Jilyn joined IE Singapore over three years ago, she was thrust into the Technology Business Group, where she partnered homegrown enterprises in penetrating overseas markets. In her first mission to Los





Angeles, she introduced local media companies to the US film market. The trip was an eye-opener and an exciting experience for everyone involved. In fact, one local company was so impressed with the burgeoning Hollywood film industry that they decided to set up operations in the US shortly thereafter.

Today, Jilyn is globalising Singapore's presence in a different way. As a Manager in the Energy and Chemicals Division of the Trade Promotion Group, Jilyn attracts global commodity traders to establish their international headquarters in Singapore. While her previous appointment involved taking local companies global, Jilyn's current role now sees her promoting Singapore as a global hub for commodities trading.

Jilyn says, "What I enjoy most is that every day presents new challenges and opportunities. We get to take on varied roles, learn about different industries and stand alongside C-suite executives, world leaders and top government officials. This definitely keeps things interesting!"

SPRINGBOARD TO THE WORLD

Indeed, the opportunity to gain extensive industry exposure at such a young age is an exciting prospect, and one that fellow IE Singapore scholar 25-year-old Benedict Koh relishes as well. Although Benedict has only been with IE Singapore for a year, the University College London (UCL) graduate already has a headstart in an international career.

Benedict read Economics at UCL and interned at IE's Middle East Group and New York Overseas Centre. Benedict injects, "I had the privilege of working on major international projects and interacting with foreign dignitaries, which for an intern, was a truly humbling and enriching experience!"

Currently a Manager in the Environment and Infrastructure Solutions Group, Benedict works with Singapore-based companies to develop strategies to build their presence overseas.

"There really is no 'typical' day at work. On some days, we could be devising strategies to help grow our industry, and on others, we could be organising international forums or planning overseas missions," says Benedict.

To gain international exposure, IE Singapore provides officers with overseas posting opportunities within its network of 37 overseas centres, which spans across developed markets in Europe and North America as well as high-growth emerging markets in Middle East and Africa. During such in-market postings, officers will gain first-hand real-world exposure, from business development and engagement of high-value contacts to the running of the overseas centre's operations.

Jilyn knows all about the importance of being well-versed with foreign markets. Her portfolio largely comprises energy and chemical companies from China; hence, having a strong command of the Chinese language and knowledge of the Chinese market enables

her to interact with business partners more effectively. To this end, Jilyn frequently attends workshops and courses to further hone her business acumen. She has even attended the International Business Fellowship Executive Programme, organised in collaboration with Shanghai Jiao Tong University, to learn more about the business environment in China.

"Visiting successful Singaporean companies in China is also a great way to develop my understanding of the Chinese market and the challenges that local businesses there face," adds Jilyn.

To help incoming staff assimilate into the fast-paced and dynamic working environment, IE Singapore also puts them through an intensive Global Executive Programme (GEP). The GEP, designed and conducted in-house, trains new officers in the basics of business etiquette, corporate finance and business plan assessments, which are especially useful for officers with little business background. The programme essentially brings new recruits up to speed on the latest knowledge and competencies required for their work and familiarises them with the organisation's various functions.

"During the final phase of GEP, I visited the Guangzhou Overseas Centre with a group of colleagues. Not only did I get to interact with local and foreign businesses in that region, I also had the opportunity to visit the Sino-Singapore Guangzhou Knowledge City – a collaborative effort between Guangzhou and Singapore to develop a unique, vibrant and sustainable city that is highly attractive to both talents and knowledge-based industries. The experience proved to be exceptionally insightful and valuable to my current portfolio in the Environment and Infrastructure Solutions Group," explains Benedict.

A TRULY GLOBAL BREED

Through short-term market attachments, job postings and personal sharing by overseas colleagues, IE Singapore strives to groom officers to be globally ready leaders.

"The learning curve at IE Singapore can be steep, but as long as you have an entrepreneurial mindset and a passion for international business, you will find yourself thriving here," says Benedict.

At the same time, operating in rapidly-evolving environments also means that IE Singapore officers have to be flexible, forward-thinking and innovative. As Jilyn points out, "Our clientele comprises companies from all over the world and who have diverse business needs. Being adaptable is thus important as each market has unique nuances and goals. Ultimately, it's about balancing expectations, speaking the right language and communicating with the end goal in mind – the greater good of Singapore." ■