

## **Always a step ahead**

A PUB scholarship gives engineer Vivian Noo a good start in her career

By Mary Lim

FOUR years before Ms Vivian Noo reported for her first day of work at the Public Utilities Board (PUB) last August, she had been kept informed of upcoming projects and developments at the organization.

In addition to job attachments, she also did an internship at a global water treatment consultancy firm.

As a PUB Overseas Undergraduate Scholar, Ms Noo had many opportunities to get to know her colleagues, way before she embarked on the organisation's corporate familiarization programme for new staff.

Through various workshops, camps and activities, she was able to establish and strengthen her bonds with other PUB scholars.

Says the 23-year-old: "The four-year introduction and familiarization to the organization and people provided for by the scholarship gave me a head-start in my career."

"This, together with the term break attachment, during which I was exposed to different departments, helped me make a more informed decision in my preferred posting when I eventually started working at PUB."

She says she was attracted to the PUB scholarship because more than providing her with the opportunity to study overseas, the organization was open about her choice of courses.

A former science student from Victoria Junior College, Ms Noo graduated with a Master of Engineering (mechanical engineering) from **Imperial College London** last year.

The four-year course covered foundation courses (such as stress analysis and mechatronics), advanced topics (such as aircraft engine technology and computational fluid dynamics), as well as subjects and electives such as people management and organizational skills, English literature and Spanish language.

She says: "I chose the **Imperial College London** because of its reputation as one of the world's best universities for engineering."

“I enjoyed the in-depth curriculum, which also featured application of knowledge through interesting activities such as free rides up the London Eye to learn about the mechanism behind the Ferris wheel, and armchair-building competitions between tutorial groups.”

“Nonetheless, an overseas education is more than just studying in an overseas institution. It is also about character building. Having to fend for myself in a foreign country enabled me to gain independence and confidence.”

In July 2006, Ms Noo completed a six-week internship at the United Kingdom office of the Water Department of Black & Veatch (B&V), a leading global engineering, consulting and construction company.

The experience, she says, gave her a useful understanding of the industry as a whole, especially the role and relationship between consultants, contractors and clients.

And since there was already a working relationship between PUB and B&V, it provided her with not only a deeper knowledge of how PUB works but also prepared her to forge a more effective relationship between the two companies in future.

“Professionally, I was able to apply the engineering design skills I had acquired and learn more than what I already knew. I also contributed to projects which involved the sizing of pumps and attended site visits to various waterworks and wastewater treatment plants.”

“Personally, I was deeply moved by the professionalism and enthusiasm of the engineers whom I worked with. Their willingness to share their experience and knowledge also helped enlighten and prepare me for my career ahead,” she says.

Now an engineer at PUB’s Water Supply Plant, her key responsibility is to provide technical support to the waterworks and look into the maintenance of the mechanical plants and equipment to ensure their availability and reliability.

She also explores new and innovative equipment and operations that can improve facilities and functions.

And Ms Noo clearly relished it. She says: “I like it that I get to utilize what I studied in my profession. I enjoy the sense of satisfaction whenever I apply my technical knowledge to solve problems at work.”

“Still, with the constant advances in technology, it is important to keep up through continuous learning.”

[Source: Private Sector Scholarship in The Straits Times, 7 March 2008]