True to its corporate philosophy of engaging to serve and being a force for good, the NUS Business School Alumni Association (NUSBSA) has continued with the drive to invest in the lives and future of their business students. This year, NUSBSA took a step further in augmenting help for financially challenged students with the launch of the Student Experience Fund. This is yet another form of financial aid offered by the association, one other being the NUSBSA Bursary. The NUSBSA Bursary Award ceremony cum launch of the Student Experience Fund was held on Tuesday 4 Oct 2011, at the NUS Society Kent Ridge Guild House.

Now into its fourth year, the NUSBSA Bursary Awards help defray the cost of undergraduates' tuition fees and other study-related expenses. With a value of S$2,500 and with no bond attached, the bursary is a tremendous funding resource that helps needy students to ease their financial burden and worries.

In the past three years, the bursary has helped 35 financially needy students. Through the bursary and the generosity of the donors who have made it possible, these students have been given equal opportunity to study and graduate. This year saw another 12 students receiving the bursary awards.

Professor Bernard Yeung, Dean and Stephen Riady Distinguished Professor of NUS Business School, said, “With this bursary, these young men and women will be able to concentrate on their studies, instead of worrying about where their tuition fees and living expenses are coming from. Now, they can afford to cut down on their part time jobs, and take part in co-curricular activities that will enrich their out-of-classroom experiences instead.”

The act of touching lives and making a difference, the impetus behind the bursary awards, was clearly evident in the stories of personal trials shared by recipients of the bursary. In the case of Tan Lay Teng, a BBA Year 2 student, the help could not be more well-timed. In the space of a few years, her family had been hit by tragedy after tragedy. Already struggling financially, they lost their sole breadwinner when their mother passed away due to a rare blood disease, and just a few weeks ago, her father had a severe stroke resulting in a coma.

The bursary was thus an immense help in helping her manage the difficulties faced, beyond the financial assistance it provides. Said Lay Teng, “Besides helping us financially, I also see it as a form of
encouragement. Knowing that we still have many people who care for us, we will not be defeated so easily. Being on the receiving end of this meaningful cause, I am filled with gratitude. I will definitely contribute back to the society in future to improve the lives of less advantaged students. Hopefully this culture of ‘pay-it-forward’ will continue and benefit the future generations of students in many years to come”.

Recipients Ms Chng (BBA Accountancy Honours Final Year) and Siow Chuckie (BBA Year 2) share similar stories; their brave struggles to overcome the odds are humbling and inspiring. The bursary essentially alleviates their daily challenges—financial as well as emotional—and enables them to focus better on their academic pursuits.

For Ms Chng, this is her second year receiving the bursary and it has further helped her to broaden her outlook on life. She is heartened to see that so many donors have been forthcoming and generous to help, even though the students are strangers to them. In return, she is inspired and determined to further this cause and contribute to those who need help in future.

This year also saw the launch of a new fundraising initiative by NUSBSA: the NUSBSA Student Experience Fund. This Fund is designed to give a hand to financially-needy students who qualify for exchange programmes but lack the means to go. To date, the NUSBSA has raised S$278,700 for the fund, and this will be further increased after a S$1.5-for-$1 government matching grant, bringing the total amount close to S$700,000.

Business in this day and age is conducted across borders on a global scale and NUS Business School intends to give their undergraduates the best education by providing them with opportunities to immerse in programmes at foreign prestigious universities affiliated to NUS. Such exchange programmes will make it possible for students to be exposed to different cultures and experiences, to enrich their learning, help them to develop perspectives from a global standpoint, and deepen their knowledge and understanding of what they are studying. The overall goal is thus to develop students into all-rounded, globally-aware business leaders of tomorrow. And because of the spirit of giving personified by the NUSBSA Student Experience Fund, needy students will now have an equal chance to join their peers for impactful cross-border experiences.
Benny Lee, President of NUS Business School Alumni Association, shared personal life-changing experiences he had being the beneficiary of kindness from others. This has fueled in him the desire to perpetuate the altruism. Lee feels that by donating to this fund, he is merely repaying society.

Bobby Lim, a friend of the NUS Business School and donor of NUSBSA - Tai Sin Electric Limited Student Experience Fund, echoed this sentiment, saying that through being on the receiving end of financial aid, the deep appreciation these students feel will help them remember for a long time how their lives were changed, and how they in turn can change lives in future. This is what he hopes the fund will achieve.

Prof Yeung sums it up best by saying, “With your generous giving, you are leveling the playing field for our needy undergraduates, and creating opportunities for them to have the best university experience possible.” And this in essence is a gift that certainly creates an impact for life and for years to come.

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