LEADING THE QUEST FOR SUCCESS

by Julailah Wahid

At DigiPen (Singapore), students are equipped with valuable skills that give them an edge in the realm of computer science. Two graduates share how DigiPen (Singapore) has prepared them for their careers in the digital age.

TANG TIEN WEI KEITH

Technical Manager, NCS

Bachelor of Science in Computer Science in Real-Time Interactive Simulation graduate from DigiPen (Singapore)

Those who lived through the '90s might remember playing popular games like *Final Fantasy*, *Super Mario*, and *Command & Conquer*. For Tang Tien Wei Keith, these games not only defined his childhood but also became a catalyst for him to venture into computer science.

While serving in the National Service, Keith discovered DigiPen (Singapore) through a newspaper advertisement which his mother had spotted. He tells us, "I couldn't find a field of study that I was truly interested in pursuing until I stumbled upon DigiPen (Singapore)'s offerings!"

As for fellow alumnus Yap Teng Hong, he learned about DigiPen (Singapore) while attending the school's information session with his friends. Teng Hong, who enjoyed studying computer programming in polytechnic, was attracted to the specialised curriculum offered in the Bachelor of Science in Computer Science programmes.
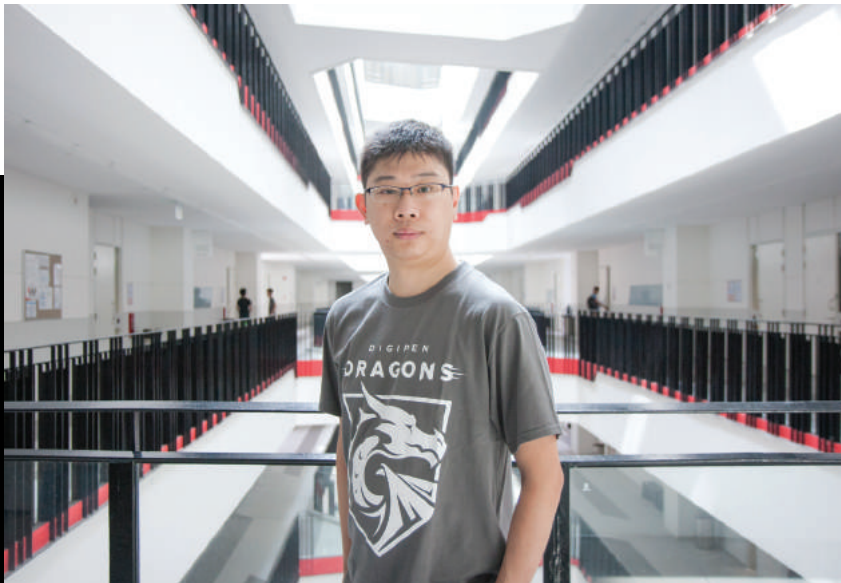
"I found the curriculum to be sophisticated and in-depth compared to what other local institutions had to offer. While the curriculum is solely dedicated to computer programming, it also teaches students essential components of computer science," shares Teng Hong.

UNITING LIKE-MINDED TALENTS

Located in the SIT@SP building, the DigiPen (Singapore) campus features computer labs, industry-standard equipped classrooms and modern studio facilities, such as acting and animation studios for game development.

The institution ensures that students have access to diverse resources and up-to-date equipment. This includes PC workstations which are equipped with industry software for 2D and 3D animation production, and development tools for game engine creation. DigiPen (Singapore) is essentially a playground for gaming and programming enthusiasts.

Indeed, both Keith and Teng Hong thoroughly enjoyed the campus life at DigiPen (Singapore). Keith says, "You won't get bored here! Plus, the school has excellent professors, like Michael Jahn, who are always there to guide students. I also had the pleasure of being taught by two professors who are the Chief Technology Officers of their own companies. Gaining industry insights from them was definitely a unique learning experience."

YAP TENG HONG

Senior Simulation Executive, PSA Corporation

Bachelor of Science in Computer Science in Real-Time Interactive Simulation graduate from DigiPen (Singapore)

Nodding in agreement, Teng Hong adds, "The professors and lecturers here are approachable and willing to stay beyond classroom hours to help us. There is also a friendly rivalry among peers. While we were all competing academically, we remained helpful and supportive towards each other."

In addition, the alumni maintain a network to stay in touch with their peers and lend support to current students. They also have the opportunity to attend events, participate in guest-lectures, and share their work experiences with current students.

GAINING AN INDUSTRY EDGE

Through coursework and project-based learning, DigiPen (Singapore) strives to develop the foundational knowledge and practical skills of its students. The benefits of its comprehensive pedagogy became apparent in the working world to both Keith and Teng Hong.

As a Technical Manager at NCS, Keith works on Serious Games, particularly defense-related simulations for government projects. His main role involves communicating with clients to understand their needs and requirements.

"I find that DigiPen (Singapore) has a much stronger focus on practical skills. The students are required to do software projects, which span between one semester and an entire year. I had the opportunity to work on really large and complex projects, which match in intensity the ones I handle at work. This is not something that every student [in other schools] gets to experience! DigiPen (Singapore) places heavy emphasis on computer graphics," says Keith.

Similarly, Teng Hong's role as a Senior Simulation Executive at PSA Corporation also involves a consultative approach. Using simulation software, Teng Hong solves the issues faced in port operations. He is tasked to assess possible solutions and collect input to build a simulation model, after which, he tests possible solutions and provides appropriate recommendations.

On how his undergraduate education has prepared him for work, Teng Hong says, "DigiPen (Singapore) has equipped me with valuable skills and knowledge in computer science and programming languages. The challenging assignments allowed us to learn more about computer architecture and how to maximise its potential. We also did many presentations, which honed my pitching and communication skills."

MORE THAN JUST GAMEPLAY

Through a holistic approach of academics, applied learning, industry knowledge, and multi-disciplinary collaborations, DigiPen (Singapore) inspires students to explore scientific and creative possibilities. Students are empowered to become leaders and originators in the areas of digital media, simulation, and interactive computer technologies.

For those ready to take the plunge into the world of game development and computer science, Keith highly recommends DigiPen (Singapore). "It is a good place to gain practical skills and in-depth knowledge. With that said, you have to invest plenty of time and effort into your assignments. As someone with no background in computer science, I found the first few semesters to be rather challenging. The trick is to attend all your classes and stay passionate," says Keith.

Teng Hong wraps up with his own piece of advice: "You need perseverance and commitment. In fact, on my first day here, Professor Prasanna Ghali advised those who were not serious about the programme to take a withdrawal form. Due to the intensity and scale of the projects, you might have to endure many sleepless nights – but it's all worth it!"