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Lingnan University grooms social innovators

Lingnan University students have gained new perspectives of society as a result of the successful introduction of Service-Learning projects.

With the motto of “Education for Service”, Lingnan University (Lingnan) is a liberal arts university that offers programs for whole-person development to nurture students’ sense of social responsibility. Starting with the 2016/17 academic year, Lingnan has made the Service-Learning (S-L) course compulsory for all students, with the objective of nurturing innovative problem solvers, effective communicators and opportunity makers.

As many class participants of the S-L courses have already graduated from Lingnan, positive outcomes of the courses are gradually manifested in the students’ career paths. Gladys, a Lingnan graduate, approves of the learning outcomes of the S-L course, and explains how her current job in a start-up firm tests to her skills as an innovative problem solver.

As there is currently no effective cure for dementia, Gladys is working on innovative smart products with a view to alleviating the burden of this disease on the community. As an integral part of her Brainastic App project, she is running iPad classes to teach the elderly how to use the App. In this context, she finds the communications skill learnt from the S-L course to be especially useful.

“The elderly are not familiar with new technology, so it takes time and patience to explain the App to them, step by step,” she says. “As I was given plenty of opportunities to express myself in the small-class learning environment of the S-L course, I have mastered the skills to communicate with people of different age groups and from all walks of life.”

Another graduate, Pui Yan, also applauds the learning outcomes of the S-L courses. “Aside from acquiring knowledge in a chosen discipline, it is important for us to build up our self-confidence,” she says. “Through hands-on practice in leadership and public speaking in the S-L courses, I have been transformed from a shy girl to a convincing speaker.”

The S-L courses also encourage students to create opportunities to realize their beliefs and ideas. Pui Yan felt that local teenagers are only lukewarm in volunteering work, so she joined the Student Take Initiative Rally (STIR) to launch the first conference on volunteerism in 2016.

“Charity is an act of kindness, but it should be carried out in a sensitive manner so that we do not cause harm to the needy unintentionally,” she observes. “As not a lot of community groups pay enough attention to this aspect, I saw the necessity for the public to discuss volunteerism in greater depth.”

The forum turned out to be a great success, as Pui Yan made sure there were plenty of opportunities for lively exchanges. “Looking back at the process of how we strived to organize the conference, I think we have benefitted from the concepts of making opportunities that we learned in the S-L courses,” Pui Yan concludes.



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