

Savouring sweet success

Sheer perseverance and family support is what helped two graduates attain their goals.

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TWO graduates from UCSI University have beaten the odds and, through hard work and determination, plus the support of family and friends, have triumphed in their studies.

For 23-year-old Tiew Kee Yee, being wheelchair-bound was no barrier to academic success. He recently graduated from UCSI University with a degree in accounting.

As for Thaalthitha Naidu, her parents, Suranthiran Naidu and Adele Jasintha Indra, both retired school teachers, spent the bulk of their life savings on their daughter's medical degree.

Their sacrifice paid off as the 25-year-old not only graduated with first class honours, but was named valedictorian of UCSI's graduating class of 2014.

Thaalthitha and Kee Yee were among the 1,508 graduates who received their scrolls during UCSI's 27th convocation ceremony.

Kee Yee, who was born with spinal muscular atrophy (type two), which causes his muscles to weaken, was also the recipient of UCSI's Chancellor's Gold Medal Award.

The inaugural award seeks to honour graduates who excel academically and display outstanding personality traits.

"I am grateful that my efforts were recognised by the university," said Kee Yee, the eldest of four siblings.

He added that he is especially grateful to his mother, Sia Bee Eng.

"My mother enrolled me in this university because it was the most disabled-friendly campus she had seen in Kuala Lumpur.

"I would not have been able to complete my education journey or be here today to receive this

award without her," he said.

While he now has a motorised wheelchair which makes getting around easier, Kee Yee shared that things were less convenient when he first enrolled in college.

"Luckily, I had friends who were there to assist me," he said.

Thaalthitha, who hails from Sungai Petani, said that she too has benefited from supportive family and friends.

"I wanted to choose a more affordable study option. However, my father encouraged me to go after our shared dream of me becoming a doctor, as he felt like I was capable enough to complete the programme," she said.

Although Thaalthitha wanted to be dancer when she was younger, she has no regrets about her eventual career choice.

"Sure, I like having fun, but studying medicine has required discipline on my part. Besides, it's been ingrained in me that I can always do better, so that's what I strive for," she said.

"My parents have been a constant source of motivation, being there for me through all my failures."

On top of being a slow learner, Kee Yee claims that he was a passive and pessimistic child.

"I realised that I had to change my negative attitude and be positive," he said.

He added that he paid attention in classes, reviewed the materials whenever he could, and never failed to ask questions during tutorials.

Aside from his studies, Kee Yee was also active in the university's faculty projects and extra-curricular activities.

With the help of his mentor Dr Chong Aik Lee, whom he met through an enrichment programme, Kee Yee founded the

Accounting & Finance Student Association. He was also the club's first president.

"It's been a comprehensive platform for students to know more about the accounting and finance industry, while complementing the university's curriculum," he said.

Kee Yee also noted that the club activities have helped cultivate soft skills, adding that this would help make his peers more employable.

UCSI University vice-chancellor and president Senior Professor Datuk Dr Khalid Yusoff said that graduate employability has become a major concern for universities these days.

"We strive to create an environment where the teaching staff are actively connected to and work with the outside world for the benefit of students," he said.

"We also ensure that students complete their placements at related companies from the first year."

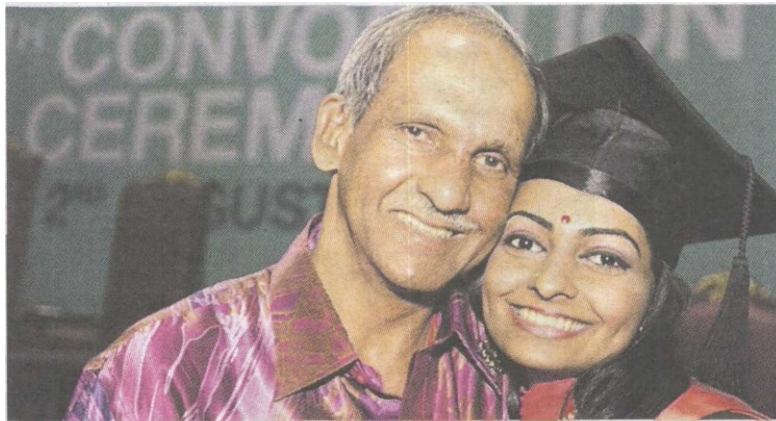
Thaalthitha, who is active in sports, has already mapped out her plans for the future.

"Right now, I'm waiting for my posting to a government hospital. Once that's over, I intend to specialise in paediatrics," she said.

UCSI University chancellor Tan Sri Dr Abdul Rahman Arshad said that graduating from university might seem like the end of the education journey for some.

"This might be the end of schooling for some of you, but the world is constantly changing. Tomorrow could present a challenge that would require more knowledge, determination and perseverance.

"You graduates are now citizens of the world. Don't stop learning!" he said.



That's my gal: Proud father Suranthiran with Thaalitha after the ceremony.



Smart and able: Kee Yee (left) his brother Kee Siang, and their mother.