Eee Grad won NTU Alumni Service Award

Interview with Mr Inderjit Singh, MP for Ang Mo Kio GRC, and recipient of the NTU Alumni Service Award.

(1) What is your motivation for continued involvement in the NTU Alumni?

Since a student, I have been involved in serving the student body and doing my part to build up the university. Being a pioneer and having a joint responsibility of building it up as it is, just a physical building in one of a reputable institution is one of my key motivators. I feel that all of us have a role to play and it was a sense of ownership and a sense of challenge which drove me to be continued to be involved in the matters of the university. The NTU Alumni, and the NTU EEE Alumni are some of the organisations through which I am able to achieve my objective of serving and contributing. I played key roles in getting some of the students’ bodies started, for example, the Students’ Union, the EEE Club and a few others, and I wanted to continue to do my part after graduation.

(2) Why should EEE graduates reach out to impact on their community and society?

It is really a joint responsibility for all of us, students, staff and the alumni to ensure that EEE and NTU continue to have the good reputation and good standing in the world. Directly or indirectly, we will be affected by how the world views NTU and all the schools within it. And when we interact with others from around the world, it is always useful to have good credentials, including coming from a reputable university. This is one level of impact. The other issue is one of contributing to society. Since the school of EEE and NTU have played an important role in our lives and have contributed to our success, we should have a sense of obligation to give back to the university and to society in general.

(3) How, and in which areas, can EEE graduates make contributions to their society and community?

After so many years, we are seeing many alumni who have been very successful in both their careers and in making contributions to society and community. Starting with all the volunteers who have served and are serving in the alumni, there are also many who have been involved in various professional, volunteer and grassroots organizations.

(4) In entrepreneurship, an EEE graduate could possibly provide jobs by employing hundreds of people. Should every EEE student consider seriously a career as an entrepreneur, instead of merely preparing himself or herself to be employees?

Becoming an entrepreneur is not everyone’s cup of tea, especially in a downturn like the one we are seeing, but I do encourage all who have the inclination and passion of creating businesses and of exploring converting their ideas into something big to try to do so. The environment in Singapore is fast changing and is becoming more conducive to encourage would-be entrepreneurs to give it a try. I see Singapore’s future depending more and more on an entrepreneurial economy as opposed to a corporate-based economy. The faster we can make the transformation the better will be our future. I therefore hope more of our EEE students and graduates will be willing to take up the challenge to become entrepreneurs.

Having said that, I do not see why anyone cannot act as an entrepreneur within a company which they may work for. I did the same when I worked for a multinational. It did not stop me from creating new ideas and business opportunities for my company. I believe everyone can think entrepreneurship and in the case of employees, they should be ‘intrapreneurs’.

(5) What steps can an EEE student take to begin to emulate you as a role model in terms of service to community and nation?

There is no short cut to achieving what each one of us want to achieve – it’s all hard work and creativity. Whether as an entrepreneur or as an employee, we have to do our part. I have always believed in having an all round approach in life. In school and in the university, I believed in a rounded education, participating actively in the academic as well as the non-academic areas. To me, while academic excellence is important, it is not the only thing needed for a successful life. I feel being involved in activities, community service and volunteer work, while in school is very important. Among others, leadership skills get developed better through non-academic activities.

Similarly, while I worked hard at my company as an employee and also when I got involved in starting-up and growing my companies and I still work hard today in the companies I founded, I also found time to serve the community, society and the nation through many channels. I got involved in community service in the area I lived in, starting up alumni’s and at the national level serving a number of committees. Until today, I continue to do that. While life becomes a stretch, I enjoy serving the society and community and at the same time, making my businesses successful. It is tough, but it is all worth it. So I call on everyone to focus on doing all round things, especially, in giving back to society in anyway they can, especially in volunteering their time for some worthwhile activities which can benefit others. If we can think along the line of benefiting others, I am sure we ourselves will feel happy and fulfilled.

(6) What activities could the NTU-EEE Alumni organize to motivate EEE students towards more community involvement?

The alumni are focusing on building networks among our alumni. We feel that the most significant thing we can do is to create that network, whether for business or for engineering expertise sharing or for social and contact building. Our activities will be focused along this line and for this objective. Once we can establish a strong network of alumni, we then will go towards doing something for the community and society. It is a long journey which has to get started. We hope we will be able to reach out to many of our alumni and help build up a strong alumni network and a strong alumni association. Getting the school of EEE as well as the students involved will be also and important objective because we feel that that a strong partnership of all associate with the school of EEE and with NTU will be necessary to achieve success.