

NTU graduates overcome disability, pressure to reach greater heights

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While on a field trip to Bali three years ago, the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) geoscience undergrad who uses a wheelchair had to sadly accept that she would not be able to join her classmates up a volcano.

But on the day of the hike, Miss Khoo Zhong Min found out her professors had made arrangements for a driver to take her up to the halfway point of Mount Batur.

Miss Khoo, 23, told The New Paper: "I was happy that I got the opportunity to go up the volcano, seeing larger volcanic rocks than those at the base and the direction of lava flow."

She graduated from NTU with honours (distinction) in environmental earth systems science, and attended her in-person convocation ceremony last Friday.

On Sept 17, NTU kicked off its

30th anniversary by honouring the achievements of the Class of 2021.

Miss Khoo suffers from a congenital spinal cord injury that has left her using a wheelchair since birth, but that did not stop her from making the most out of her university experience.

Apart from Bali, she also took a field trip to Batam, and was able to experience geological structures, landscapes and sedimentary units first-hand, while accompanied by her mother, who helped her move around.

SUPPORT

As a nature lover, Miss Khoo developed an interest in geography while in secondary school, and enrolling in NTU's The Asian School of the Environment was an easy choice for her.

Though she feels society could do more to help people with disabilities, she was impressed by the support she



received while at NTU, including the help rendered by NTU's Accessible Education Unit that supports students with disabilities and special needs.

Miss Khoo, who is hoping to find a job in an environment-related industry, said: "My classmates were always ready to lend



Miss Khoo Zhong Min (left) and Miss Leong Kit Yee graduated with distinction and merit, respectively, last week. PHOTOS: NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

a helping hand.

"For example, they would bring lab instruments to my table during lectures and tutorials. They, along with the professors and the school, helped make my university experience a fruitful one."

Also overcoming obstacles to reach greater heights is Miss Leong Kit Yee, who graduated with honours (merit) in chemical and biomolecular engineering and attended her convocation last Monday.

The 23-year-old, who scored

a 161 for her PSLE, struggled with mathematics in primary school. Thanks to the guidance of her maths teacher in the Normal (Academic) stream in secondary school, she eventually did well in the subject, getting into the Express stream in Secondary 3.

At NTU, after completing her polytechnic diploma, she felt the jump in difficulty of the topics and the workload, and the pressure was compounded by her heavy commitments in hall and faculty activities.

The stress would sometimes get to her and she would break down in tears.

But during those moments, she recalled how far she had come in her educational journey and used that as motivation to keep going.

Miss Leong, who is now a supply chain specialist, said: "Whenever it got overwhelming, I would think to myself, I did not work hard all my life just to not do well at this stage, and I persevered."

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