INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Having been the recipient of an NTU scholarship herself, alumna Ms Fenny Maynard (EEE/2002) believes in the transformational power of education.

In the fickle ebb and flow of the markets, two investments never go out of style: property and education. This is a maxim that Ms Fenny Maynard saw lived out in the life of her mother, and one she hopes to pass on to her own daughters.

A manager of a 55-man team at real-estate investment group Walton International, Ms Maynard made a S$100,000 donation in 2012 to start the Fenny Maynard Bursary Fund.

“As a general practitioner, my mother saw patients from all walks of life. She observed that those who were successful all had property investments in their portfolio,” Ms Maynard said. “I also saw that she sacrificed a lot for our education, putting aside money for us even though her finances were tight as a single parent.”

Though she did not originally intend to study overseas, the 1998 racial riots in Indonesia propelled Ms Maynard to seek out opportunities in Singapore. After securing a scholarship which gave her “a new lease of life”, she arrived at NTU and embarked on a course on electrical and electronic engineering.
FINDING HER FOOTING

However, studying in Singapore was not all smooth sailing for Ms Maynard. “When I came to NTU, my eyes were really opened,” she mused. “This is real life: having to compete with so many incredibly hardworking and smart people, while budgeting your own expenses and looking for opportunities to earn points [to stay in the hostel] at the same time.”

In fact, Ms Maynard received a warning letter in her first semester over her academic performance. Her examination results subsequently improved and she has fond memories of her time at NTU, particularly of the times shared with her hostel mates.

“To save as much money as possible, we would gather to share our food rather than eat off campus. Some of the food would be close to the expiry date, having been brought along from when we first arrived in Singapore. It was great fun coming up with creative ways to cook at these ‘expired food parties’, and thankfully, none of us fell sick!” she shared with a laugh.

A LEAP OF FAITH

It was a bold move for Ms Maynard to switch from a salaried engineering job to a fully commission-based career in property sales. However, her training in engineering still came in handy, giving her a rigorously quantitative perspective when it came to scrutinising each investment.

Looking back at her time at NTU, Ms Maynard recalls that she constantly sought out opportunities to better herself, attending courses and seminars on different aspects of personal growth. “NTU has many avenues for you to pursue your interests outside of your studies. I would encourage students to participate in as many activities as they can during their time at school; they are a great platform for networking and building your contacts.

“But the number one way to improve yourself is to find a good mentor, and for that you need to be open to feedback and willing to change,” she added. “This is crucial for your personal growth, and success only happens when you have significant personal growth.”

THE GIFT OF EDUCATION

Ms Maynard’s drive for success is also motivated by a desire to pay it forward. While applying for jobs in 2002, she came across an article in NTU’s alumni magazine that featured a Nanyang University alumnus who had donated S$50,000 to the University.

“The donor, who happened to be of Indonesian descent like me, really inspired me. I had experienced firsthand how that amount of money can make an impact on a person’s future,” Ms Maynard revealed. “But you need to do really well in life to be able to give that much, so it motivated me to do well in my career and make the gift of education that I received worthwhile by paying it forward.”

Describing how education is a “launchpad for a better future, a better career and an even better family life”, Ms Maynard said she felt compelled to help disadvantaged students get a head start in life. “Imagine if your own child was in that situation, wouldn’t you wish for somebody to come and sponsor the child?” she asked.

“For me, if I am able to touch just one life, be part of someone’s success or inspire someone to give back to society, this gives me a deep sense of fulfillment.” Ms Maynard concluded. “I would like to encourage all fellow alumni to do their part, to give back to our alma mater no matter what the amount is.”