

Doing research to **BENEFIT** patients with dementia

Russell's SIM-UB Communication & Psychology degree helps further his career in psychology and neuroscience



PSYCHOLOGY is an intriguing subject, about the human mind and how people behave. My course in Psychology taught me to appreciate both the individual and society as a whole," says Russell Chander, 27, Senior Research Assistant at the National Neuroscience Institute.

Russell, who graduated in 2013, specialises in dementia research. In his student days at SIM-University at Buffalo (UB), The State University of New York, he showed a strong interest in social psychology and in

abnormal psychology. In his current work on dementia, he is able to mesh both interests. "My research is about dementia in elderly patients. I assess their memory and ask questions on how their memory slips away gradually," he says. "Singapore society faces the prospect of an aging population where dementia will be a big issue."

He hopes his work can be of benefit to these patients. "I do want to further my career in psychology and neuroscience, and do a combination of clinical work and research. My current job is certainly a step

in that direction in being a research job that still has a good amount of clinical exposure with patients. Essentially, my career goals revolve around helping people that need help, even if some of them don't have the insight to recognise that they do," he adds.

Studying at Buffalo

In his Junior College days he wanted to be an engineer but he soon discovered that Psychology was more intriguing. "Of all the subjects that I considered, Psychology appealed to me the most as it addressed my

interest in knowing how people think and react. The more we understand how and why we think and feel the way we do, the better we can improve on it.

"I also took up Communication as a second major partway into my first year as the course material covered a lot of skill sets that I thought were useful for any person. These skills include public speaking and writing. This programme took me out of the purely knowledge-based system that I was used to, and placed me in a system that nurtured critical and flexible thinking, communication, and presentation skills. These are skills that have served me well inside and outside of campus."

Studying at SIM-UB gave Russell the opportunity to meet instructors and students from the US and other countries. "I've learnt a lot from their shared experiences and cultures, and I've learnt to be more culturally accepting and tolerant," he adds.

As a student Russell participated in the SIM Psychology Society. "It was during this stint that I got to meet other individuals

who have similar aspirations and interests in Psychology. I also managed to get an internship that helped me get a better feel of what I wanted to do after graduation."

Besides the Psychology Society, Russell also served as president of the SIM Muay Thai club. Through Muay Thai, he kept himself physically fit, as well as learning more about teamwork, leadership, and camaraderie with fellow practitioners.

Enjoy school

"Enjoy your time in school!" says Russell to those who are struggling with textbooks and assignments and mugging for exams. "Take this opportunity to experience as much as you can in an effort to find yourself and get to know the kind of person you want to become. We should be open to taking such measured risks at any stage of our lives, but it's significantly easier to do so while you're still in school."

This year sees one of the largest SIM-UB graduating cohort of close to 500 students. The commencement ceremony will be held on 24 July.

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