



# Drawn to economics and data science


NUS's good mix of courses and internship opportunities in Silicon Valley make the NUS Global Merit Scholarship stand out

By Bryant Chan

Going to a different country, learning about its working culture and seeing how different it is from here will give you a much broader perspective.

**MS HU TONGYU**  
Recipient of the NUS Global Merit Scholarship

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**A**fter graduating from Dunman High School in 2021, Ms Hu Tongyu found herself at a crossroads.

She had received acceptances to three major local universities with accompanying scholarships – all of which would relieve her from her part-time jobs and allow her to focus solely on her studies.

However, it did not take long for the 19-year-old to decide on the National University of Singapore (NUS). The Bachelor of Science (Honours) with Major in Data Science and Economics Cross-Disciplinary Programme offered under the NUS College of Humanities and Sciences really piqued her interest.

“There are many good reasons why data science and economics are put together in such a way,” says the first-year student.

From her point of view, a pure economics degree can be overly theoretical and she believes that economics should not be isolated from statistics. With NUS’s blend of data science and economics, she thought their academic programme struck a good balance, which was what convinced her to pursue it.

The school’s flexibility in course curriculum also allows her to take a minor in entrepreneurship – a field that she hopes to explore in the future.

“What made the offer even more attractive was the NUS Global Merit Scholarship, the university’s

top-tier scholarship that is only awarded to a select few every year.

Among the scholarship’s many benefits, the guarantee of a Student Exchange Programme with a partner university was one of the things that caught Ms Hu’s attention.

**An eye-opening experience**  
In particular, she was determined to participate in the NUS Overseas Colleges (NOC) programme, a study-abroad curriculum that is heavily focused on entrepreneurship. NOC participants get to choose from one of 16 locations around the world.

Ms Hu has her sights firmly set on one place: Silicon Valley in California, a region known as the world’s technology hub. She is scheduled to go for her NOC programme in her third year. “We can learn from them, find out what they think and bring something useful back to Singapore,” shares Ms Hu, about the heart of technology.

“Going to a different country, learning about its working culture and seeing how different it is from here will give you a much broader perspective.”

Ms Hu was inspired to seek a broader perspective after doing a 10-month stint with the Youth Corps Leaders programme in Singapore that had her volunteering with underprivileged households.

She passed by these homes on her way to church every week, but it was not until she started her work with Youth Corps Singapore that she discovered the everyday realities of the people living in the area.

She recalls looking away in shame as some of the young people told her that they walked an hour to get to school – rain or shine – because they could not afford to take public transport.

“These teenagers were just 14 or 15 years old, but they were living such starkly different lives from mine,” she says. “I saw how helpless they were. It made me want to do something for them.”

Ms Hu aspires to use her experiences overseas, coupled with her knowledge of economics, to one day influence existing government financial aid policies. In doing so, she hopes that underprivileged families can better utilise these avenues and take advantage of funding that is available to them.

As an NUS Global Merit scholar, she finds herself on track to make a difference and looks forward to meeting other like-minded scholars.

“Don’t hesitate to apply for the scholarship,” says Ms Hu. “The important thing to know is what you are passionate about and why you want it.”

“Above all, just be true to yourself. You won’t regret it.”