

Fun projects with grandpa inspire dream to be architect

Undergraduate is one of 351 students and working adults to receive iBuildSG awards

Michelle Ng

As a child, Mr Benjamin Chong, 23, used to watch his grandfather fix home appliances and make toys out of scraps of wood.

The creative and problem-solving aspect of these projects, coupled with his love for maths and science, inspired him to do a degree in architecture and sustainable design at Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD).

He was one of 351 students and working adults who received an award at the iBuildSG Scholarship

and Sponsorship Ceremony held at SUTD last Thursday.

At the event, Second Minister for National Development Desmond Lee highlighted the importance of attracting and retaining talented people in the built environment sector. He said the Government has

partnered industry players, academics and the unions to come up with major blueprints to transform industries within the sector, which include construction, real estate and environmental services.

These industry blueprints include plans to adopt new technologies, he said, citing how innovative

building technologies incorporating 3D printing, drone-based photography, machine learning and robotics are out on the horizon.

"All these sound very high-tech, but the future has begun to appear today. This can be possible only if we have a strong pool of professionals with the relevant skills and the willingness and culture to collaborate with one another," said Mr Lee, who is also Minister for Social and Family Development.

Mr Chong, who is now in his third year in SUTD, is more certain than ever that he wants a career as an architect.

"It's very fulfilling when you see your project come together at the end of the day," he said.

To better prepare students for industry internships, the Building

and Construction Authority (BCA) has also launched the Built Environment Formation Programme.

The four-day programme includes training workshops, industry-sharing sessions and site visits. The first run, supported by 22 industry partners, took place last month with close to 60 participants.

Over the next five years, around 2,000 interns will benefit from the programme.

Mr Lee also presented the iBuildSG Young Leaders' Advocate award to four people for their contributions in mentoring the next generation, through industry initiatives and career talks as part of a programme.

One of the recipients was Ms Ong Yan Xiang, 36, senior principal engi-



Mr Benjamin Chong received the BCA-Woha iBuildSG Undergraduate Scholarship yesterday, while Ms Ong Yan Xiang was one of four people given the iBuildSG Young Leaders' Advocate award. PHOTO: BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION AUTHORITY

neer at CPG Consultants, who has been in the industry for 13 years.

She said: "In the past, we never had such programmes to prepare us for our internship, so this will give students an even earlier kick-

start in the industry. Hopefully, this makes it more attractive for more people to join and stay in this industry."

ngmich@sph.com.sg

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