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THE SCALE CONNECT

Everything started when I received the offer letter four months ago. It was overwhelming at first, and then all the preparation kicked in with hard deadlines. I had to push myself i.e., compulsory online courses for Python and Llamasoft, making substantial progress in my research project and the research poster. However, as I looked back now, it was all worth the hard work.

During the three weeks of SCALE CONNECT, 175 students from 40 different countries in the Supply Chain and Logistics Expert (SCALE) network gathered at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Boston, to learn about supply chain, to network, and to work together in teams. It was a once in a lifetime experience for a lot of us. We met and learned from so many talented people and bright minds from around the world. The programs were well-packed in 3 weeks and enabled us to get the exposure to the latest research and trend in the supply chain, learn how to pitch our ideas, network with other SCALE students, learn from the industry leaders and experts, learn how to grow our career, and hone our leadership skills.

Python and Llamasoft

Thanks for the preparatory online Python course because it helped me to follow the teacher better during the actual class. It has equipped me better to solve complex supply chain problems in the real world. Although it was just a scratch of the language, it built the interest and foundation for me to enhance my skills and knowledge in Python programming. The same goes for Llamasoft, where big companies are using this software to generate different scenarios and compare the disparate impacts on supply chain cost. It was great to know such software is available and is capable of running simulation for a complex network.

Shark Tank Competition

One of the most memorable activities was the shark tank competition, where we were divided into a team of 4. We had to address a supply chain problem and pitch our ideas to the judges to get funding or buy-in. I had a great groupmate from diverse backgrounds and countries, namely Germany, India, and Mexico. We generated different ideas during the brainstorming session and finally agreed on a topic about sustainability - Returnable packaging in the E-commerce industry (Amazon). We managed to make it to the finals but did not get enough votes to win a place in the top 3. It was, however, an invaluable experience for me to present in front of 175 MIT students and judges. Besides, it was great learning with my teammates on creative ways of presenting an idea and engaging with the audience.

Leadership

The leadership sessions were very beneficial to improve our soft skills. The strength finder session where we identified our five strengths was particularly useful to understand the different advantages of ourselves and others. Another meeting with Diane Darling regarding how to work a room taught me to communicate and network with other people more confidently. Some notable points from here were that 55% is body language, 38% is voice tone, and 7 % is the word used is a noteworthy point.

Speaker series and Supply Chain topics

During the speaker series, we were able to listen to talks from supply chain leaders from the top companies in various sessions i.e., Michelle Livingstone from Home Depot, Karl Siebrecht from Flexe, Lynn Torrel from Flextronics, etc. The multiple topics discussion from their roles and responsibilities, time management to specific topics such as reverse logistics, sustainability, etc. Apart from this, Yossi Sheffi's sharing about his book "Balancing Green" is provoking yet supported with astonishing facts. There was a lot of sharing of the latest research work from the researchers at MIT as well. All of these talks were inspiring to me while realizing how vital the supply chain has become today.

Industry visit to Walgreens and Quiet Logistics

The visit to Walgreens was an eye-opener experience as I got to see how the highly automated DC was able to serve more than 1000 retail locations across the States. DC also takes pride in its inclusiveness culture, as 45% of their employees are with disabilities. Another industry visit to Quiet Logistics as a 3rd party fulfillment (3PF) was also spectacular. They used their self-developed Locus robot to speed up their fulfillment tasks. These robots are agile and intelligent to receive an order from the user and move to the specific location of the SKUs for picking by personal. The picking accuracy of this process is at a remarkable 99.99%. It was an excellent experience for all of us, where both companies answered our questions and shared the details of their operations.

Research Fest

Another key highlight of the SCALE CONNECT was the Research Expo. It was remarkable to see so many people took their time to explore students' researches by going from poster to poster. There were professors, researchers, industry leaders, and students. We were also able to explore what projects our peers were working on, which was quite insightful to see where the supply chain industry is heading.

The moment that touched my heart was the closing speech by Dr. Josue. He inspired us with his youth story to believe in oneself, stepping out of our comfort zone, and as future talents in the supply chain field, we have to think that we can change something in the world or our organization.

Three weeks of SCALE CONNECT could be very intense. The first week would be tough fighting jetlag, the amount of knowledge transfer, the concentration required at each session, the assignments to be submitted daily, yet at the end of 3 weeks, you will be surprised at how much you have gained. Besides, I did have the time to visit Boston city, Harvard, and other attractions in the US. The January weather in Boston is very different from Malaysia, so one thing I learned was also to keep warm, stay hydrated, and I always had my lip balm with me because of my dry lips. Finally, I would like to thank MISI and the organizer of SCALE CONNECT for providing us such a wonderful time in SCALE CONNECT 2020!

3 positive key highlights

1. Shark tank competition was very beneficial for us to learn how to brainstorm ideas with others and how to sell our designs. It enables us to think like an entrepreneur and pitch the ideas to all stakeholders.
2. Python is one of the essential computer languages nowadays. I learned that a lot of companies are using Python to do data analysis. It is instrumental for the students to be equipped with Python knowledge.
3. I can broaden my views from working together with peers from another SCALE network. Due to different backgrounds and cultures, we had different perspectives on a topic, but it was fulfilling when we were able to come out with a plan and work towards it jointly.

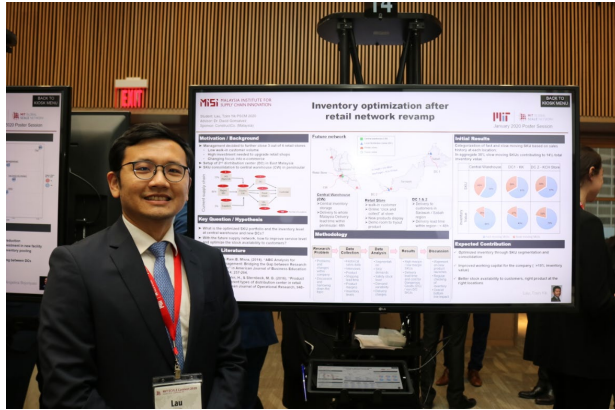
Quote: "We met and learned from so many talented people and bright minds from around the world. The programs were well-packed in 3 weeks and enabled us to get the exposure to the latest research and trend in the supply chain, learn how to pitch our ideas, network with other SCALE students, learn from the industry leaders and experts, learn how to grow our career, and hone our leadership skills."



With shark tank team



Celebrating Chinese New Year in Boston



During Research Expo



Photo session in front of MIT Dome