

Aiming for the stars in education

ERC Institute constantly strives for excellence in the highly competitive education industry

GROOMING students into success stories – a simple yet lofty vision. The education provider ERC Institute believes in delivering on its vision so much so that, over a period of eight years, its students intake has soared from a paltry 40 to 3,000 this year.

Founded as ERC in 2003 by a group of Singaporean entrepreneurs, this private education institution was given a grant by the EDB under the SEEDS programme to incubate firms. It evolved to form ERC Institute (ERCI) 4 years later.

Its students are enrolled in certificate, diploma and advanced diploma courses, through to bachelor's and master's courses with university partners such as the University of Greenwich – in the areas of entrepreneurial management, tourism and hospitality management, finance and wealth management and business psychology.

"We want to be a premier institute that provides a holistic education with an entrepreneurial orientation in Singapore," says chief executive Andy Ong, who believes that entrepreneurship is best imparted with a good mix of academia and professional training.

Besides classroom structured entrepreneurial training, students are exposed to seminars, events and CEO forums as well as professional and personal development courses, networking sessions and market intelligence updates.

The CEO himself personally mentors students with viable business plans to be budding entrepreneurs. Through the parent company, these students are also given access to angel funding and coaching.

"Having a vision is very important and every start-up should have a vision to create value. The money is secondary and it will come if you have your vision and you are able to create real value," says chief operating officer Ong Han Boon.



(From left) Diploma in Enterprise Development graduate Robin Su, MBA in Tourism and Hospitality student Sunil, ERCI staff member Thai Ailing and MBA in International Business student David Lim. PHOTO COURTESY ERCI

To realise its vision, the founding members of ERCI "identified and produced an in-depth 10-year strategic plan that covers topics ranging from expansion of assets and facilities; student and industry commitment; culture of customer service to a strong reliance on technology as a multiplier for operation and service", explains Mr Ong.

"We have invested heavily in technological companies to give us that edge, and we have also developed highly successful work committees to take ownership and spearhead quality assurance in the areas of academics, student services and even EduTrust certification maintenance," he adds.

It is not surprising then that ERCI has been winning accolades and garnering certifications almost from the word go.

In 2005, it was awarded CaseTrust Certification and it received the Singapore

Service Class Award in 2009. Last year, it was awarded EduTrust Certification (4 years) by the Council for Private Education, which acknowledges that ERCI has attained a high and comprehensive standard in corporate governance and administration, academic processes, student protection, support services and financial viability.

ERCI is currently aiming for the stars – it hopes to attain the EduTrust Star Award – in time for its 10th anniversary in 2013.

This award acknowledges outstanding performance in the areas of academic development and commitment. The fact that no other private education institution has ever achieved this award does not seem to daunt Mr Ong. If anything, it is testament to ERCI's strong commitment to constantly strive for service excellence in this highly competitive education industry.