

## SURVEY ON SCHOLARSHIPS

# More top students opt for PSC awards

With lean times, 37 per cent choose local varsities

MORE top students here are opting for Public Service Commission (PSC) university scholarships, according to a recent survey by scholarship portal BrightSparks.

The PSC manages the slew of study awards for the public sector, which is Singapore's biggest employer.

The results of the BrightSparks Scholarship Rankings & Career Survey 2009 also showed that the percentage of top students keen on working for the public service grew from 23.3 per cent to 33.8 per cent this year.

Said Mr Lim Der Shing, director of Jobs-Factory which manages the portal: "The Government has stepped up on hiring despite the economic downturn, which could be a key reason for more top students considering a career in Public Service than before. The private sector may also be perceived to offer less job security currently."

The PSC emerged as the scholarship provider of choice with 56 per cent of the top students, while the National University of Singapore came in second.

Coming in third was the FIREfly group of government organisations – the human resource collaboration among statutory boards under the Ministry of Trade and Industry, such as the Economic Development Board and Singapore Tourism Board.

But when it comes to which industry they'd rather have a career in, banking and financial services is top of the list – the current turmoil in the sector notwithstanding. A public service job comes in a close second, while airline/travel ranks third.

A top scorer at Raffles Junior College last year, Mr Wang Yong Jin applied for a PSC scholarship. He dismissed the suggestion that he is joining the public service for the "iron rice bowl".

### TOP STUDENTS: WHAT THEY PREFER

- One-third expect a starting wage of \$2,501 to \$3,000
- More than 40 per cent of those keen on PSC scholarships would prefer to work in the Ministry of Education
- 35 per cent would choose the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Top five courses of study: Business Administration/Management/Studies; Engineering; Accounting; Economics; Sciences/Applied Sciences

"My parents run a business so if I wanted security, I'd join them for work," said the 19-year-old. "The PSC is an established scholarship board which has a track record of grooming applicants."

Armed with nine distinctions, he plans to read economics at Harvard University or Stanford University after his National Service stint.

The survey also found that students are being more prudent in these lean times: 37 per cent of respondents said they would apply only to local universities, up from 32.5 per cent last year.

The number opting to study at foreign institutions fell from 8.3 per cent to 4.8 per cent. This could be because "local universities are able to offer students a cheaper, but not necessarily less attractive option, in the current economic recession", said Mr Lim.

The BrightSparks Scholarship Portal has, since October 2004, served as a one-stop site for scholarship research and applications.

All 84 scholarship providers in Singapore, both government and non-government, use its services.

A total of 3,252 students participated in the survey, which for the first time included International Baccalaureate Diploma graduates.