

DRIVEN to serve Malaysians, Gan Chern Xun defied the odds when he was offered a spot in Stanford University in the United States. The selection process to enter the prestigious institution, which has a transfer acceptance rate of about 1.15%, is **extremely competitive**.

But the 19-year-old from Kuala Lumpur is **excited** to be pursuing his dream. "When I logged on to the varsity's student portal, confetti 'rained' on my computer screen. **"I was euphoric**. It took a while to calm my racing mind before **I realised that I'd been given the opportunity to study** what I'm **passionate about – policy research, analysis and econometrics**," he shared.

Gan, **whose father is retired and mother a housewife**, will be starting his undergraduate degree in political science and public policy in the coming academic year. **On the lookout for scholarships to support his studies**, Gan plans to major in areas related to data science, representation and governance. He already has plans to pursue a masters degree.

Despite a keen interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), Gan found himself veering towards politics during the 2016 US presidential elections. He observed how factors such as demographic changes, cultural division and rhetoric could influence the progression and voting patterns in the elections. "I saw similarities in Malaysia and was interested to see how our socioeconomic, cultural and political makeup can influence policy making, how we compare with other countries and how we can move forward as a nation.

"Many Malaysians seem disillusioned with how politics is in our country. "I'm hoping that by studying political science, I can understand why this is the case and how it may be possible to bring about equitable governance and trust for the rakyat. I also want to learn about the systemic issues and the sociopolitical contexts that may aid or hinder such efforts," he told StarEdu.

Through his interdisciplinary education at Stanford, the older of two siblings looks forward to formulating policies that promote transparent and integrous governance. He wants to pursue a career that would involve research, public service and education, so that he can revamp the way Social Studies and History are taught in national schools.

"I want to use my education at Stanford to benefit Malaysia, " he enthused.