Details soon about NUS’ liberal arts college with Yale

DISCUSSIONS for the new liberal arts college by the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Yale University are on track, with NUS just weeks away from releasing full details of the tie-up.

NUS vice-president Lily Kong, who spoke to reporters after a press conference yesterday, said the steering committee is in the final stages of talks with Yale and could unveil details next month.

She said she is very encouraged that the International Academic Advisory Panel (IAAP) has thrown its support behind the collaboration, likening it to NUS being in a marathon and getting encouragement along the way. “I think they recognise that, strategically, it’s very important for Singapore as an addition to the landscape of higher education.

“We talked about how we might move ahead and they were quite categorically in full endorsement of the direction we are taking, and there’s no doubt about the value of this,” Professor Kong said.

Doubts about the collaboration, expressed in news reports in the United States in the last two months, swirled mainly around the Americans’ perception that there is a lack of academic freedom in Singapore and what it would mean to have Yale associated with it.

But when asked if there were any stumbling blocks to the collaboration, Prof Kong said the two schools have reached a good understanding and she is confident they will work through issues that arise.

The IAAP mooted the idea of a liberal arts college in 2007 as a way for Singapore to attract and retain top talent.

Dr Tony Tan, chairman of the IAAP, said such a college will complement the discipline-based programmes available, and broaden the range of educational offerings for high-potential students.

“The panel feels this is a timely introduction of a new educational model that will focus on broad-based learning and inculcating critical-thinking skills, which will prepare graduates for employment, public service and enrich the lives of others,” he said.

JANE NG

Professor Robert Brown, president of Boston University, speaking during an IAAP press conference chaired by panel chairman Tony Tan yesterday. The panel praised the Republic’s new educational institutions, with Prof Brown saying Singapore is “not playing catch-up any more” but “doing new things”. ST PHOTO: SAMUEL HE