

One in 10 offered place at Yale-NUS

Dean of admissions says inaugural batch of 150 will shape school's culture

By GRACE CHUA

THE new Yale-NUS liberal arts college is looking for risk-takers, which is why just one in 10 applicants has been offered a place so far.

The number of applicants for the first of four admission exercises was in the high hundreds, believed to be about 800. Of those, 40 per cent were shortlisted for interviews, though the administration did not give exact figures.

"We turned down a student at Yale-NUS who was accepted at Yale," said Mr Jeremiah Quinlan, dean of admissions at Yale-NUS.

Mr Quinlan explained that the college, which will open in July next year, was seeking "risk-takers", people with a "daring streak" for its inaugural batch of 150, as these students will shape the school's culture and traditions.

Yale-NUS is a collaboration between the prestigious Yale University in the United States and the National University of Singapore (NUS).

Mr Quinlan said that the applicants were of high calibre, with some weighing offers from the University of Chicago, Princeton University or Swarthmore College. All are top schools in the US.

Among those offered places were students from top schools like Hwa Chong Institution and Anglo-Chinese School (Independent), both Integrated Programme schools.

About 50 of them spent this past weekend first at Hangout Hotel at Mount Emily, then at University Town at the NUS campus.

The weekend's roster of activities included sample classes, an alumni panel, an address by NUS president Tan Chorh Chuan - and informal chit-chats into the wee hours of the morning, the students said.

They have until June 1 to decide if they want to take up the offer, but at least a handful have already made up their mind.

Mr Chong Woon Han, 22, is one. The Anglo-Chinese Junior College top student, who earned seven distinctions in the A levels, signed on the dotted line almost immediately after he received the offer in March, and is keen on studying philosophy, politics and economics.

"Yale-NUS is a fusion of East and West," he said, when asked what appealed to him.

"I'm interested in comparing the West and the East in terms of political structure and developments."

The Malaysian citizen has been a relief teacher here since graduating in 2010. Next month, he will set off for Britain on a two-year church mission, and matriculate in 2014.

Mr Quinlan said he was not worried about falling short of the admissions target. Earlier this month, the Singapore University of Technology and Design said it had admitted only 340 students - falling short of its target of 500.

He added: "Given the strength of the applicant pool in this inaugural round, I'm confident we will have more than enough to fill the inaugural class."

While three more admissions exercises will cast the net farther afield, to the rest of Asia, Africa and Europe, the majority of students will be from Singa-

pore, he added.

Miss Lim Kar Min, 19, who was also offered a place, said the controversy over the Yale faculty resolution had not deterred her from applying.

Last month, the faculty of Yale's undergraduate liberal arts college voted to endorse a resolution expressing concern about political and civil rights in Singapore.

Miss Lim pointed out that of some 1,100 faculty members at Yale College, just 100 voted for the resolution.

"Singapore's changing pretty quickly... it's something that maybe (the faculty) don't know much about," she said.

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Students (from left) Ijechi Nwazuzu, 19, whose father is originally from Nigeria, Chong Woon Han, 22, Daniel Soo, 20 and Lim Kar Min, 19, are among those who have been offered places at Yale-NUS. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN