YALE-NUS COLLEGE

38 professors in inaugural faculty

CONNECTICUT – A group of 38 professors have been handpicked to introduce the liberal arts to Singapore, as the Yale-NUS College officially announced its inaugural faculty.

According to the Yale Daily News, seven faculty members of the new college have previously worked at the National University of Singapore (NUS) and three have served as Yale faculty.

The faculty members hail from 19 different places. Among them, about half are American while six are Singaporean or permanent residents.

Social science professor George Bishop, who heads the NUS Psychology Department, is one of those on the team. Prof Bishop has taught at NUS for 21 years and will maintain a concurrent appointment there.

According to the Yale Daily News, Yale-NUS will offer about 16 majors. Faculty members do not belong to traditional academic departments but are instead divided between three divisions: Sciences, social sciences and humanities.

Since the college was announced about two years ago, some students and faculty have criticized Yale-NUS over concerns of an alleged lack of political freedom in Singapore.

Prof Bishop told Yale Daily News that he finds the criticisms levelled at Yale-NUS “somewhat overblown”.

Singapore is “changing rapidly”, Prof Bishop said, adding that he and guest speakers have been able to criticize government policies.

Assistant Professor of humanities Andrew Bailey said he was initially deterred by concerns over freedom of expression.

“One thing that helped assuage my worries was actually visiting Singapore and talking with local students and faculty about the academic climate there,” he said.

“It’s much more free and open than the critics will admit.”

Meanwhile, Yale-NUS President Pericles Lewis — writing in a guest column for the Yale Daily News — said he was “hooked” on Singapore after two visits — in 1994 and last year.

He said: “Singapore continues to evolve. Conversations are deepening on issues concerning homosexuality, journalistic practices and multiparty elections.

“Yale’s agreement with NUS and the evolving norms in Singapore create the basis for making liberal education a reality.”