Yale-NUS hires recent graduates as mentors

The 12 will live in its dorms and help new students adapt to campus life

By LESLIE KAY LIM

A GROUP of 12 recent graduates will set up residence at the Yale-National University of Singapore College when it opens its doors this August to act as mentors to new students.

Called Dean’s Fellows, they are being hired full time to live in its dorms and support the inaugural batch joining the residential college experience.

“They will be mentors living with Yale-NUS students to support them in all their endeavours, both inside and outside the classroom,” said Yale-NUS Dean of Students Kyle Farley.

He said they would play a “pivotal role” in Singapore’s first liberal arts college.

In an effort to create a diverse atmosphere, the college intends to recruit graduates from Yale, NUS and other liberal arts colleges as well as Singaporeans who have studied abroad.

More than 100 applicants from five continents have applied for the positions so far.

Ivy League universities and most of the top 10 liberal arts colleges in the US are represented, Mr Farley added. Yale-NUS declined to reveal the salary being offered for the post.

Dean’s Fellows will also collaborate with students and the faculty to organise extra-curricular activities, audit a class and help out in administrative offices on campus.

They will be living in residential college four in the NUS University Town until their own facilities are ready in 2015.

The three UTown residential colleges also have residential fellows, but they are members of the teaching faculty.

Many American universities adopt a practice of placing third- and fourth-year students in advisory positions, to live among their younger counterparts who are just starting out.

Some liberal arts colleges, like Middlebury College in Vermont, also hire recent graduates to live in freshmen halls and support student life in a full-time capacity.

Called Commons Residential Advisers, they are paid around $25,000 a year and get lodging and food. “They’re basically like an older brother or sister, and you can go to them to talk about issues,” said Mr Yuan Linh, who graduated from Middlebury last June.

The 25-year-old, who now works in community health care, said he would have been interested in applying to become a Dean’s Fellow had he had the chance, calling it a great transitional opportunity for recent graduates.

The Straits Times reported last month that Yale-NUS received 1,800 applications in its second admissions exercise. Sixty-five have been offered places and have until May to accept. The first exercise attracted 800 applicants, 60 of whom have taken up places.

Yale-NUS’ establishment has courted controversy, with some members of Yale University concerned about the restrictions like academic and personal freedom.

Temasek Polytechnic student Matthew Wee, 20, still has his heart set on applying to Yale-NUS next year. Attracted by the out-of-classroom culture, he said: “Schools should strive to create an experience for students.”