$15,000 annual tuition fee at Yale-NUS

Food, lodging for liberal arts students will add another $3,500 to yearly tab

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A $15,000 PRICE tag has been put on the unique brand of education promised by the Yale-National University of Singapore College of Liberal Arts, which will enrol its first 150 students in August.

The annual tuition fee is almost double what Singaporeans pay for pursuing general degrees in NUS.

Yale-NUS students have to cough up another $3,500 a year, a 50 per cent discounted price, for board and lodging in the residential colleges in NUS University Town. The rest of the residential-living fee is covered by the college through community scholarships for all the students.

Three years ago, when then Education Minister Ng Eng Hen announced the setting up of the college, he said the fees were likely to be “very much higher” because of the small faculty-student ratio and broad spread of choices available to students.

Based on the full fee quoted for international students who do not want to take the Government’s tuition fee grant, The Straits Times understands that the Government will be spending close to $46,000 per student annually on tuition.

This means that local students are subsidised by as much as $31,000 a year for tuition.

A Yale-NUS spokesman said the fee is set by the college leadership and Ministry of Education.

Yale University’s undergraduate tuition fee is US$42,300 ($52,000) a year. The cost at other liberal arts colleges such as Pomona in the United States is also above US$40,000.

Still, the total sum of $18,500 a year here has made some students and parents hesitant to try for a place at the college.

It already has 60 students who took up places offered in the first round of admissions. Of the 1,800 applicants in the second exercise, 65 have been offered places and have until May to accept.

Said Ms Kiera Lee, 18, who changed her mind about applying to Yale-NUS after noting the fee: “I know the faculty, teaching and facilities are top-notch but I have to take a loan to put myself through university. I don’t want to be stuck with an $80,000 debt at the end of my degree studies.”

Parent Katherine Wong, 46, an accountant whose twin sons are heading to university, said: “My daughter is studying law in NUS and that is just $10,000 a year.”

In response to queries about the tuition fee, a Yale-NUS spokesman said students will have access to an education model that is unique here, and which is less expensive than that at other leading liberal arts schools worldwide.

The college has promised a broad-based education, with smaller classes and an intense residential experience to nurture graduates who can think deeply and across different disciplines. Classes will not have more than 18 students and the student-faculty ratio will be as low as 10 to one. In the first few years, it will be even lower, at three to one. For the research project in the final year, students will work one-on-one with a faculty mentor.

The college also said a slew of study awards and merit scholarships are available.

There are students and parents who feel that the fee is worth the price. Said Isabella Teoh, 19, who is waiting for her A-level results and hopes to enter Yale-NUS: “To me, $15,000 a year is a bargain price to pay for a top-notch liberal arts education.”

Students will graduate in four years with a bachelor’s in arts or science (honours) awarded by NUS but the scrolls will include the Yale-NUS College name.

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