Yale-NUS adds 10 professors to staff

Faculty count now at 50, selected from over 2,500 applications

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SINGAPORE’S first liberal arts college has drawn another 10 academic staff, bringing its faculty count to 50 as it prepares to welcome its inaugural batch of students in August.

Among the 10 to join the Yale-National University of Singapore College of Liberal Arts are educators who are giving up positions at top institutions, including liberal arts colleges in the US.

They include Professor Robin Hemley, an award-winning writer who headed the non-fiction writing programme at the University of Iowa. At Yale-NUS, Prof Hemley will be in charge of building the writing programme, which includes creative writing and covers both fiction and non-fiction.

The university has also hired Prof Scott Cook, an expert in the study of pre-imperial Chinese texts and early Chinese intellectual history with emphases in excavated bamboo manuscripts and musical thought; Prof Jay Garfield, who specialises in philosophy and Buddhism; and Prof Michael Maniates, who will play a leading role in the college’s environmental studies course.

Prof Cook and Prof Garfield have also been named the inaugural holders of two named professorships. Prof Cook will be the Tan Chin Tuan Professor of Chinese Studies, while Prof Garfield will be the Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Professor of Humanities.

Prof Cook said he was excited to play a role in shaping the college’s “one-of-a-kind curriculum”. Prof Garfield believes Yale-NUS “could be a unique contribution to the world academic community”.

Yale-NUS president Pericles Lewis described the faculty as an “impressive group” who bring decades of relevant liberal arts teaching experience and impressive research profiles to the college.

They were selected from over 2,500 applications.

Yale-NUS’ establishment has courted controversy, with some members of Yale University concerned about restrictions over issues such as academic freedom.

The college has plans to hire a total of 100 faculty members over the next few years. It is now holding its final admissions exercise for its first batch of 150 students.

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.

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

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