Living and learning together in residential colleges

FOR the Yale-NUS undergraduates, a crucial part of the experience will be living on campus for all four years of their time there.

The residential college system is more than 70 years old at Yale University, where there are 12 colleges, each with its own identity and traditions.

The world’s oldest residential college system started at Oxford University in the 13th century.

At Yale-NUS, students are randomly assigned to one of the three residential colleges.

For now, they are living in the same block – residential college four – at the NUS University Town campus. Their own facilities will be ready in 2015.

By then, Yale-NUS will be sited next to NUS UTown at Dover Road. Each college will have its own amenities, including common rooms and a casual lounge space called a buttery, and house about 330 students.

The residences integrate living and learning, as students are housed with their professors. In the day, they interact over lunch at the dining hall. At night, they bond through various activities.

Apart from the three faculty members – president Pericles Lewis, rector Brian McAdoo and vice-rector Eduardo Lage-Otero – Dean’s Fellows will also stay on campus.

The 12 Fellows are recent graduates from various institutions around the world whose responsibilities will include mentoring new students, organising extracurricular activities and carrying out administrative work.

The three UTown residential colleges – Tembusu, Cinnamon and the College of Alice and Peter Tan – also have residential fellows who are members of the teaching faculty.

Rector’s Tea sessions will be held throughout the year, following the Yale model of having Master’s Teas, said Dr McAdoo.

At Master’s Teas, students get to mingle with guest speakers from outside the school who are experts in their own fields.

Among the upcoming guest speakers is Singaporean blogger Alex Au, who will be visiting the school in October.

Evening activities include sessions with an informal a cappella group – another Yale tradition. A movie night will be held once or twice a week, featuring shows that might relate to courses taken by the students.

Student Anne-Caroline Franklin, 20, an American, said: “After class, we still hang out and discuss issues, and we learn any time of the day or night.”

“The residences are where a lot of mingling happens. We also have a big whiteboard where everyone puts up notices of events and activities.”

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