



President Tony Tan (right), who is also NUS chancellor, at the inauguration of the Yale-NUS College yesterday. With him are (from left) Mr Wong Ngit Liong, chairman of NUS Board of Trustees, Yale-NUS College president Pericles Lewis and NUS president Tan Chorh Chuan. ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH

Yale-NUS students 'anything but kiasu'

College head says Singaporeans hunger for learning that spurs critical thinking

By **AMELIA TENG**

IS A liberal arts education too lofty and "risky" for Singaporeans, who are typically known as a practical and "kiasu" lot?

Yale-NUS College president Pericles Lewis has been asked this many times since Singapore's first liberal arts college was announced in 2010.

Fear of losing - otherwise known as being kiasu - was one concern raised by educators and parents here, he said yesterday. They feared this might put people off enrolling in the new college, a tie-up between Yale University in the United States and the National University of Singapore (NUS).

But Professor Lewis disagrees. He said its first batch of 155 students are "anything but kiasu".

Sixty-two per cent of them are Singaporeans. The rest are from countries such as the United States, India, China, Malaysia and Canada.

Prof Lewis added that Singaporeans, and Asians more broadly, have a great hunger for learning that "truly encourages critical thinking". He was addressing about 500 students, parents and guests yesterday at the inauguration ceremony for the highly anticipated college.

President Tony Tan Keng

Yam, who is also NUS chancellor, was present at the event at NUS University Cultural Centre.

To mark the occasion, each parent institution presented the college with a set of 50 books, some of which were written by their alumni.

Yale-NUS College, which has promised a broad-based education merging East and West, will "augment the work of its parent institutions", said Yale president emeritus Richard Levin. He added that both Yale and NUS can "learn from the innovations of Yale-NUS College, and draw upon its advances in curriculum, extra-curriculum and pedagogy".

NUS president Tan Chorh Chuan said the college "marks a new beginning for education in Singapore" and provides an option previously "unavailable in this part of the world".

The college, he added, can be "a model for others, particularly in Asia" and contribute to the "future of higher education".

It is based temporarily at the NUS University Town campus until its permanent facilities in Dover Road are ready in 2015.

Students take common courses in the first two years and focus on a major in the third, choosing from 14 subjects such as urban studies and economics.

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