University Town to admit students next Aug

By LEE U-WEN

THE National University of Singapore’s (NUS) new extension campus – called University Town – will admit its inaugural intake of students next August.

For the first of a three-phase opening, the university will launch two residential colleges with 600 beds each and a graduate residence that can accommodate 1,700 students. Another two colleges will follow in 2012, while plans are on track to open an Education Sports Complex a year after that, said NUS deputy president of academic affairs and provost Tan Eng Chye.

Speaking at a media briefing yesterday, Professor Tan described the 19ha University Town as a “first-of-its-kind educational experience” for Singapore students who wish to live and learn together with students and their professors under the same roof.

Modeled after the residential colleges of Oxford, Cambridge, Stanford and Harvard universities, each residential college will have its own academic tone and identity, shaped by a Master – typically a senior academic at the university – who will get to live in the college with his or her family, together with other faculty fellows, graduate tutors and staff.

While the cost of living in the residential colleges is likely to be 10 to 20 percent higher than what students currently pay today to stay on NUS’ Kent Ridge campus, Prof Tan assured that tuition fees would remain as they are.

“We are mindful of the costs, and they should not be too high,” he said. “Our President (Tan Chorh Chuan) is already going to donors to persuade them to donate to University Town, and the government has been very generous in providing us funding.”

There is enough land to build up to eight residential colleges, but much will depend on how much money is available, said Prof Tan. Each college costs nearly $70 million to construct.

Building work is still ongoing at University Town, which sits on the site of the former Warren Golf Course, just opposite the Kent Ridge campus and the NUS High School. A vehicular and pedestrian bridge spanning over the Ayer Rajah Expressway will link the two campuses.

Existing NUS students will have the chance to apply for a spot in University Town at the end of the year, while others entering as a freshman can do so next March. Prof Tan said that prospective students should ideally be performing fairly well in their studies, and he hoped to see a “good mix of local and foreign students” in each of the colleges.

Students at University Town will get exposure to a core curriculum of at least three modules: a writing programme, freshmen seminars and a multi-disciplinary module focusing on global issues in an Asian context.