August 2011 start for UTown at NUS

Undergrads will live and study in pioneer residential colleges

BY LEOW SI WAN

FROM August next year, students of the National University of Singapore (NUS) will be the first to find out what it is like to study and live in residential colleges here, the way students do in Oxford and Cambridge in England, and in leading liberal arts colleges in the United States.

A pioneer here of small-group academic learning in comfortable residential settings, NUS’ University Town (UTown) will begin with two as-yet unnamed residential colleges, each taking in 600 students spanning the academic spectrum of the university.

Students must gain admission through decent grades, an essay and interview.

UTown, on the grounds of the former Warren Golf Club in Clementi Road, will also have a graduate residence for up to 1,700 students and an education resource centre comprising a lecture theatre and seminar rooms, among other facilities.

The extension to the Kent Ridge campus was announced five years ago to allow more students to experience campus living. The residential colleges combine living and learning, and allow interaction with students from all over the world.

Announcing the details at a press briefing yesterday, deputy president of academic affairs and provost Tan Eng Chye said the residential colleges would see students learning and living side by side with their professors.

Undergraduates, who will live there for at least two years, will take three academic modules each year offered by the residential college and taught on its premises. The six modules make up 15 per cent of the 40 modules most NUS students must offer.

The 21-storey colleges, which cost $60 million to $70 million each to build, will have single and double rooms, a dining area, lounges, a community hall and seminar rooms.

About 200 to 230 places will be reserved for freshmen, with the rest for existing students, who can start applying at the end of the year, while freshmen will apply next year.

Currently, there are 7,000 beds at NUS’ halls of residence and Prince George’s Park. Accommodation fees for students in UTown are likely to be higher than the $1,000 to about $3,000 that hostellites pay each semester currently.

To ease the traffic of students and faculty between UTown and Kent Ridge, a vehicular and pedestrian bridge spanning the Ayer Rajah Expressway will be completed early next year.

“The facilities in UTown are available to all NUS students,” said Professor Tan.

Two more residential colleges will be ready in 2012, followed by a sports complex. The 19ha campus will be completed in 2013.

NUS students are looking forward to the opportunity offered by UTown.

Second-year accounting student Sandra Ching, 21, said: “It sounds very interesting. I am keen to see what it is like, and find out how much it will cost before deciding if I will apply to live there for my final two years.”

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