Live and learn in UTown

New NUS residential college takes a leaf from Ivy League’s book

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SINGAPORE — Come August next year, some 2,900 students will work, study and play in the National University of Singapore’s (NUS) University Town (UTown) now being built at the former Warren Golf Course in Clementi.

UTown is the university’s first residential college which NUS hopes will redefine the way students live and learn on campus. By then, two undergraduate residential colleges, a graduate residence and an education resource centre will begin operations.

Open to freshmen and existing students, the residential colleges will each house 600 undergraduates who will stay for two years. The graduate residence has room for 1,700.

Taking a leaf from Ivy League colleges, UTown combines the convenience of campus living with a multi-disciplinary academic programme, said NUS’ deputy president (academic affairs) and provost Professor Tan Eng Chye yesterday.

The selection for UTown will be selective and course intensive, but there will be no difference in tuition fees.

“The key thing is we’re trying to match the students’ interests. Hence, University Town is really targeted for a special type of student who finds informal learning in a residential setting useful,” said Prof Tan.

Students already in NUS will continue to attend classes at the Kent Ridge and Bukit Timah campuses to fulfil their academic requirements for the NUS undergraduate curriculum.

Each UTown college, which costs $60 million to build, will however customise its academic and curricular programmes to facilitate an “engaged and stimulating leaning experience in comfortable residential settings”. Class size will be small, allowing for rigorous interaction between students and lecturers.

“The learning is going to be done in small groups — 12 to 15 people — that is a very engaging form of learning and students would also benefit from the diversity as it will enrich them,” said Prof Tan.

Each college will have a Master, who will be supported by a team of faculty fellows, graduate tutors and staff. There will also be customised academic programmes focusing on writing and critical inquiry.