

HOT NEWS

S'pore Institute of Technology plans campus HQ, new programmes

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SINGAPORE — The Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) plans to have its own campus headquarters to bring students together and is also exploring new degree options in line with possible expansion plans.

SIT president Tan Chin Tiong has mooted the possibility of new business-related programmes in the areas of banking, finance and accounting.

He also did not rule out the option of conferring its own degrees, as well as joint degrees with foreign universities and dual degrees, if its expansion plans go ahead.

Prof Tan shared these details with TODAY after Minister of State (Education) Lawrence Wong suggested, in a recent dialogue, the potential of the SIT having room to grow as a full-fledged university under the Government's plans to expand the university sector.

The SIT's immediate plan is to provide undergraduates with a full university life experience.

The two-year-old institution has campuses spread across the five polytechnics, and Professor Tan agreed that student identity was an issue.

He said: "When you have a distributed



Prof Tan (picture) said expansion could also mean leveraging on the SIT's existing programmes. But if the SIT is to confer its own degrees, the challenge would be to find niche areas that are not being catered for now.

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campus, there can be all kinds of problems. With poly graduates continuing to study in another poly campus, the perception is very different (as opposed to) going to a more mainstream university with its own campus."

Hence, the SIT is in talks with the Ministry of Education for a main campus by 2015. "Regardless of where you're studying at ... there will be opportunities for you to take classes at the main campus, so that there will be a home," Prof Tan said.

The proposal is for the coming campus headquarters to be large enough to hold sporting and club activities. Until then, the

SIT aims to foster student life through shared events such as overseas volunteer trips.

The SIT was set up to offer polytechnic graduates an additional route to a university degree. It differs from the other public universities here as it offers niche degrees through tie-ups with overseas institutions.

It is also known to have strong industry linkages as it is based on a practice-oriented curriculum model.

When it comes to rolling out more degree options, Prof Tan stressed that the degrees must be of high quality and able to meet the economy's demands.

Such degrees would also be based on existing polytechnic courses to ensure accelerated graduation.

Prof Tan, who reiterated the need to avoid duplicating the other local universities, added that the challenges in expansion include managing relationships with overseas partners and faculty recruitment.

He said expansion could also mean leveraging on the SIT's existing programmes. But if the SIT is to confer its own degrees, the challenge would be to find niche areas that are not being catered for now.

Despite the undergraduate focus, Prof Tan believes that the SIT can do more to provide continuing education for working adults, for instance, by offering night courses.

As it moves forward, the SIT will continue to look at ways to raise its profile and educate the public on the concept of a practice-oriented model.

"I'm quite optimistic ... The poly kids themselves are already quite different. You give them a degree that further enhances on an industry-relevant angle and there may be very interesting output from the system," said Prof Tan.

"In Singapore, you'll need to have a variety of options ... for a better mix of graduates to meet the economy's needs."