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THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

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## One in 2 students in Singapore to get subsidised degrees by 2020

By JOY FANG

COME 2020, one in two students from each cohort is expected to get either a full-time or a part-time government-subsidised degree education. That is, with the introduction of Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and SIM University (UniSIM) as Singapore's fifth and sixth universities.

SIT, which will become Singapore's fifth autonomous university, plans to strengthen its industry orientation through the Cooperative Education Programme to integrate meaningful work experience with academic-course requirements.

SIT will also start awarding its own degrees. It currently offers only degree programmes from its overseas partner universities.

As for UniSIM, it will offer full-time degree programmes for fresh school leavers, as well as working adults. Currently, it offers only part-time degree programmes.

The two universities provide niche industry-focused offerings that are different from those of the existing four universities, which is vital in this changing education landscape, said Education Minister Heng Swee Keat yesterday.

He said at a media briefing that universities here are currently more research-intensive.

He pointed out that the ministry has been "very careful (to ensure) that every university should...be distinctive (and)

...there should be a whole spectrum of universities".

Also present was Mr Lawrence Wong, Senior Minister of State for Education and Information, Communications and the Arts, who chaired the Committee on University Education Pathways beyond 2015 (CUEP).

Professional, managerial and executive-type jobs are the fastest-growing segment, rising from 27 per cent in 2001 to 32 per cent last year, Mr Wong noted. CUEP's recommendations were calibrated to ensure that there was no mismatch between the degrees that will be available and the needs of the economy, he said.

This is because the two universities cater to students with different learning abilities and preferences, he added.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong first made the announcements during his National Day Rally speech on Sunday.

He said that 40 per cent of each cohort, or 16,000 students, will get a shot at full-time degree programmes by 2020, up from 27 per cent now, or 13,000 students.

Some 10 per cent of each cohort will also take on part-time degree courses, up from 7 per cent.

SIT president-designate Tan Thiam Soon said he hopes that SIT will become an autonomous university in two years.

He said that the Cooperative Education Programme "can be a very important catalyst" in industries such as engineering and science, which need hands-

### WHAT TO EXPECT AT TWO UNIVERSITIES

#### Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT)

It will offer a Cooperative Education Programme, integrating work experience with academic courses.

Work experience will not just be an internship with limited roles. It will encompass wages with actual job responsibilities.

It will start awarding its own degrees.

Open to A-level, International Baccalaureate programme and polytechnic students.

#### SIM University (UniSIM)

It will offer full-time degree programmes that are subsidised by the Government, on top of its current part-time courses. It will remain a private university.

The programmes will be open to fresh school leavers and working adults.

Admission criteria will look beyond grades and take into account applicants' work experience and level of interest.

Government financial-assistance schemes will be extended to part-time degree-programme students, including Education Ministry bursaries, tuition loans and study loans.



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on and high-quality manpower.

The work-study programme will not merely be an internship with limited roles, but an actual job with wages and the chance to work on projects, he noted.

Mr Wong added that this "adds value" and will make students more highly sought after.

UniSIM president Cheong Hee Kiat said its full-time courses will harness the expertise of those who are working in indus-

try. The university is also considering allowing full-time students to take evening courses which are open to part-time students.

As to when people can expect the new initiatives to be rolled out, Professor Cheong said this would take time. "We need to look at industry...and how we can shape our programmes (to) fit its needs," he said.

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