

SIT may offer own degrees by 2015, says new head

President-designate: Degrees will not overlap with partner universities'

By STACEY CHIA

THE Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) may offer its own degrees by 2015. These may be in the public transport, shipping, and marine industries.

SIT's new president-designate Tan Thiam Soon told The Straits Times yesterday: "We want to look at areas that we know are important to Singapore... and where there is a large number of polytechnic students."

The details are being discussed with the Education Ministry, but the proposed degree programmes will follow an applied degree model in which students alternate between semesters of full-time study and relevant paid work, the university said.

"We're not talking about a clearly divided wall... The study and work will be integrated."

Professor Tan, 56, a former vice-provost for education at the National University of Singapore, was appointed SIT's president-designate on Sept 1. He will officially take over from founding president Tan Chin Tiong, 63, next February.

Set up in 2009, SIT currently offers only degree programmes awarded by overseas schools, such as the Technical University of Munich and the University of

Glasgow, in fields like chemical engineering and aerospace systems.

Such two-year programmes attract mostly polytechnic upgraders, who make up about 95 per cent of the university's roughly 1,300 new students every year.

Prof Tan said these partner programmes will still be offered when SIT awards its own degrees.

SIT has been designated as one of two new universities - the other being SIM University - to add places for Singapore's degree hopefuls.

By 2020, another 3,000 undergraduate places are expected to be on offer, raising the annual number of available university places from 13,000 to 16,000.

Elaborating on SIT's cooperative education programme, Prof Tan said students may have to take one or two online modules while they complete the work component of their course.

"It's not an attachment... you actually work; you'll be holding a proper job," he said.

Industry players could also support the school by nominating their best employees who are polytechnic graduates to study for a SIT degree.

The professor of civil engineering said that what they do at work can be part of their final-year project, and that the school has ap-



SIT's president-designate Tan Thiam Soon said the university will offer degrees in fields important to Singapore, and which will be distinct from the programmes it conducts with partner universities. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

“
NO DIVISION
 We're not talking about a clearly divided wall... The study and work will be integrated.

— SIT president-designate Tan Thiam Soon, on the proposed degree programmes that will follow an applied degree model in which students alternate between semesters of full-time study and relevant paid work

within polytechnics, is scheduled to have its own campus in Dover, where the ITE Headquarters and the Singapore University of Technology and Design are located.

Campus planning could start around the end of next year, Prof Tan said.

He added that SIT will look into offering degrees that do not overlap with those of its partner universities, such as shipping and port operations.

As for the types of students the school will be looking for, he said polytechnic graduates will still be the main target group, but A-level students who enjoy practical skills learning are welcome too.

He said: "I used to joke that Singaporean students are on autopilot: If you get this grade for A-levels, you go into law; get this grade, go to medicine, (but) today, when there are so many graduates, if you don't have a bit of zest in what you're doing, it's not going to work."

stacey@sph.com.sg

proached some industry partners such as those in the engineering and early childhood sectors.

SIT, which runs its programmes on satellite campuses