

# US varsity ends SIT tie-up and may pull out of Singapore

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AN American university is ending its tie-up with the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) after what it claims was a disagreement over fees.

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas, said it had asked – unsuccessfully – for more money to run its popular hotel administration degree course here. SIT described it as a non-renewal of a five-year contract between them.

The move has led to uncertainty among those enrolling this August as part of the final batch of 150 students. Though teaching is due to continue until 2015, they fear their education may suffer.

The university has also said that it is considering pulling out of Singapore, which would make it the second to do so in just a few months.

In November, New York University Tisch School of the Arts announced plans to shut its cam-

pus here by next year because of financial problems.

Mr Richard Linstrom, associate dean at the Singapore campus of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and managing director, said it decided to end the tie-up after SIT refused its request for higher fees. He would not reveal how much more it had asked for.

The university's William F. Harrah College of Hotel Administration is ranked among the best in the field in the United States. In Singapore, courses are currently held at a campus in the National Library Building. International students pay about \$70,000 for a three-year course. SIT students finish it in about two years. Their fees, subsidised by the Government, are about \$20,000.

Mr Linstrom said the consideration to pull out of the Republic had nothing to do with the news last year that the university was considering bankruptcy in the US to meet a funding shortfall of US\$47.5 million (S\$58 million).

SIT president Tan Thiam Soon said the non-renewal of the contract would give it a chance to evaluate new options for its hospitality programme.

The school, which takes more than 90 per cent of students from polytechnics, has been designated as one of the Republic's two new universities to boost the number of higher education places.

Professor Tan assured students that it will continue to run a hospitality management degree programme from 2015, either by partnering another top-ranked institution or going at it alone.

Mr Linstrom said that while the university would like to keep its presence here because of the gaming industry, it has to be sustainable. He added that a decision will be made by the middle of the year.

In the meantime, it will continue to offer “a high-quality degree programme” with “no diminution of resources”.

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