

SIT to offer 3,500 places by 2020 and launch own degrees

By **PRISCILLA GOY**

THE Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), slated to become the Republic's fifth autonomous university, will offer 3,500 places by 2020 to meet the demand for university places.

That will more than double its current enrolment of 1,500 students a year.

SIT, which currently offers niche degree programmes in fields such as aerospace systems with 10 overseas university partners, will also launch its own degree programmes by 2015. These could be in areas such as hospitality and logistics engineering.

To gear up for the new programmes, it has ramped up the hiring of faculty and expects to have 40 to 50 staff by 2015.

SIT president-designate Tan Thiam Soon announced details of its expansion plans for the first time yesterday.

The university, which caters mainly to polytechnic students, announced in 2009 that its intake would go up to 2,000 in 2015.

To accommodate the larger intake, SIT may look for a bigger campus, said Professor Tan.

SIT is scheduled to have its own campus in Dover by 2015, where the Singapore University of Technology and Design and the former headquarters of the Institute of Technical Education are now located.

Prof Tan was speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony for a new SIT satellite campus at Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP). Currently, SIT operates on a decentralised campus model. NYP is the

fourth of SIT's five satellite campuses built within polytechnics.

"Our current... poly buildings were conceptualised during the period when we thought we were taking in 2,000 students. We'll need the space for the additional 1,500 students by 2020," said Prof Tan, who will become SIT president on Feb 1.

The expanded intake will help Singapore meet its target of raising the cohort participation rate from 27 per cent to 40 per cent by 2020, Prof Tan added, referring to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's announcement last year to boost the number of degree places. The cohort participation rate refers to the percentage of students in an age group that enters university.

At last year's National Day Rally, PM Lee announced that 3,000 additional university places would be made available each year by 2020, bringing the total number of places to 16,000. The bulk of the additional places will come from SIT and SIM University.

Yesterday, Prof Tan also gave more details on the degree programmes SIT is looking to offer.

While it will continue its tie-up with overseas universities, SIT will move towards the new model of either running degree programmes "100 per cent SIT on its own" or developing joint degrees with partner universities.

But SIT will maintain its emphasis on combining work and learning. Students will alternate between semesters of full-time study and relevant paid work.

Prof Tan is in talks with industry partners and response has been "positive".

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