



Tertiary institutions such as (from left) SUTD and Yale-NUS College emphasise international experience and exposure. PHOTOS: SUTD, YALE-NUS COLLEGE

Education across boundaries

Singapore's new universities are emphasising interdisciplinary curricula to equip their students for the rapidly changing world

BY JOSHUA WONG

THE rise of new institutions of higher learning in Singapore utilising cutting-edge pedagogy is giving students the opportunity to develop new skill sets for a rapidly changing world.

Singapore's higher education landscape has undergone significant changes in the last few years, with new institutions emerging that aim to equip students with the knowledge and capabilities to tackle the increasingly globalised and interconnected world of the 21st century.

Two such institutions are the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), which enrolled its first cohort of students in 2012; and Yale-NUS College, an autonomous college within the National University of Singapore (NUS), which opened its doors a year later.

"Some key ingredients for a good education in today's rapidly changing world include having a hands-on and industry-relevant curriculum, a global perspective, quick adaptability to changing environments, being

able to work in diverse teams, critical thinking, effective communication, and solving unexplored problems," says Professor Pey Kin Leong, an associate provost at SUTD.

To meet these criteria, SUTD is striving to provide a hands-on, industry-relevant, multidisciplinary and design-centric education that is grounded in technology and design, says Prof Pey.

Centred around four "pillars" – namely architecture and sustainable design, engineering product development, engineering systems and design, and information systems technology and design – the SUTD curriculum allows students to gain a wide range of critical and problem-solving skills as they interact with each other across various disciplines.

The best from East and West

Yale-NUS College – a collaborative venture founded by Yale University and NUS – also views an interdisciplinary curriculum as important.

Its teaching model is based on the liberal arts system used in many American universities, including at Yale.



"With a curriculum that is interdisciplinary in nature, blending the best from East and West, coupled with our four-year residential learning and living model, the undergraduate experience helps nurture all-rounded, global citizens capable of critical and interdisciplinary thought," says Professor Tan Tai Yong, president of Yale-NUS.

Both SUTD and Yale-NUS also emphasise international experience and exposure.

SUTD, for instance, offers the Technology Entrepreneurship Programme, an

integrated undergraduate and master's programme which provides students with a one-year overseas experience in the United States and China.

SUTD is working to increase the number of overseas offerings available.

Yale-NUS, too, has an international outlook. Around 40 per cent of students from each cohort hail from outside of Singapore, and the college partners with overseas institutions in the US, Europe, Asia and Africa to provide study abroad opportunities for its students.