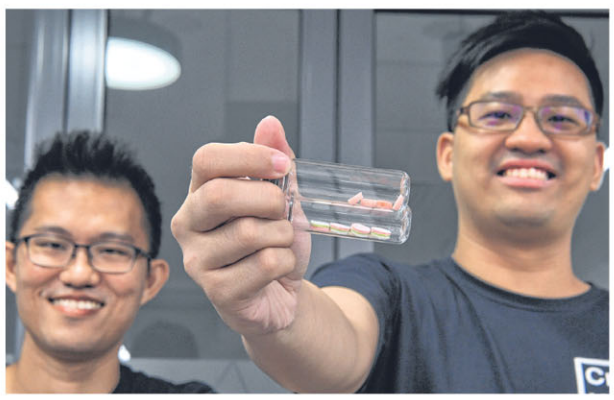
Source: *The New Paper,* p10
Date: 13 December 2019



Craft Health has raised $950,000 in funding. It was started by two pharmacy graduates who discovered the technology to 3D-print pills, which can combine several medicines in one pill.
TNP PHOTO: **MARK CHEONG**

NUS helps PhD students turn ideas into reality via Grip

Programme guides postgrads, researchers in creating their own deep-tech start-ups

SANDRA DAVIE, SENIOR EDUCATION CORRESPONDENT

Most PhD students go on to become academics or research scientists in universities or industry.

At the National University of Singapore (NUS), though, several are turning their research ideas into inventions and aiming to become entrepreneurs through a programme that guides postgraduate students and researchers in creating their own deep-tech start-ups.

Launched in September last year, the Graduate Research Innovation Programme (Grip) is part of the NUS strategy to grow entrepreneurs and deep-tech start-ups for Singapore.

NUS deputy president of innovation and enterprise Freddy Boey said these are companies based on cutting-edge, disruptive technologies that solve urgent problems.

Interested postgrad students and researchers with a good idea or invention can apply for Grip.

Selected teams spend 12 months gaining entrepreneurial skills and experience through workshops, mentorships, industry linkages and incubation support. Each team will get funds of up to $100,000 from NUS and have opportunities to pitch its start-up to external investors.

NUS has committed $25 million to Grip, with the aim of co-creating 250 companies over five years.

Professor Boey said more than 40 teams have graduated from the programme, with several securing significant funding of up to $1 million.

Among them is Craft Health, started by two pharmacy graduates who returned to NUS for their PhD studies. They discovered the technology to 3D-print pills, which can combine several medicines in one pill, with different dosages and release times. It has raised $950,000 in funding.

"We hope many of these Grip start-ups can become successful deep-tech companies and create innovation-based jobs in Singapore, as well as produce a sizeable number of entrepreneurs for the economy," said Prof Boey.

Prof Boey noted that NUS has about 10,700 students pursuing PhDs and master's degrees. He said many research students are often working on breakthrough technologies for their theses. Their ideas and inventions can be developed further and brought to market.

Among those riding the new wave of entrepreneurship is Dr Jia Zhunan, 26, who came from China to study at NUS and co-founded Breathonix. Her firm is working on technology that can detect cancer through a patient's breath.

Dr Jia said: "I thought I was going to end up a research scientist, but NUS made me see the potential of converting my idea into an actual invention that can help save lives."

sandra@sph.com.sg

FOR MORE, READ THE STRAITS TIMES