

NUS sees more students opting for nursing

Rising demand attributed to changing public perception of the profession, higher starting salaries, job fulfilment

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With her straight As, former Dunman High School student Lim Xin Min stood a good chance of landing a place studying medicine at the National University of Singapore (NUS). But the 19-year-old opted for nursing instead.

She is among the growing number of young people choosing to study nursing at NUS, which received 2,200 applications this year – an increase from 1,730 applications two years ago.

Another indication of the growing popularity of nursing: Of the 2,200 applicants, 940 of them had listed nursing as their first or second choice, compared with two years ago when about 600 had listed nursing as their top two choices.

To cater to the higher demand, the NUS Alice Lee Centre for Nursing Studies has increased its intake of students from 155 last year to 235 this year. It is looking to increase the number further to 300 over the next few years.

Professor Emily Ang, head of

NUS Nursing, attributed the increased demand for its Bachelor of Science, Nursing degrees to the changing public perception of the nursing profession.

“It is largely a result of concerted efforts... in promoting greater public awareness of nursing as a challenging and fulfilling career,” she said, adding that it helps that nursing graduates have comparable, if not slightly higher, starting salaries compared with their peers graduating from other degree courses.

Last year’s graduate employment survey saw nursing graduates start off with median monthly salaries of \$3,500 for those with honours, and \$3,400 for those without honours – higher than the \$3,360 median salary for graduates across all degree programmes.

“We hope to groom a generation of ‘thinking’ nurses and develop future nursing leaders who can take on key roles in hospitals and clinics,” she said.

Ministry of Health (MOH) chief nursing officer Tan Soh Chin said MOH was encouraged by the trend of more students choosing nursing.

The increased interest in nursing comes at a time when the Govern-



From far left: Ms Lim Xin Min, Mr Tan Jung Howe and Ms Nur Diyana Sapri are among the growing number of young people who are showing an interest in the nursing profession. NUS has seen increased demand for its Bachelor of Science, Nursing degrees. PHOTO: NUS

MORE DIRECT CARE TO PATIENTS

I drew a list of pros and cons and nursing, for me, offered more pros, most of all to offer more direct help and care to patients.



MS LIM XIN MIN, a straight-A student from Dunman High School who chose nursing over medicine.

2.2k

Number of applicants for the NUS nursing course, an increase from 1,730 applications two years ago.

235

Intake of nursing students at NUS this year, up from 155 last year.

38

Number of male students taking up nursing this year. This works out to 16 per cent, compared with 10 per cent two years ago.

ment plans to add 30,000 more healthcare workers – including doctors who specialise in geriatric medicine and highly trained nurses capable of helping clinics in primary and community health settings – by 2020 to cater for Singapore’s ageing population.

Ms Tan said today, nurses enjoy greater career advancement, with more upgrading opportunities.

She noted that MOH has reached out to secondary school students with information about healthcare and nursing careers, as well as engaged parents and family through the Care To Go Beyond nursing publicity campaign.

The efforts seem to have worked with school-leavers like Ms Lim.

The MOH scholarship recipient said her interest was sparked while on an attachment with Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

“I saw for myself what it is that nurses do, and realised that not only was it a fulfilling and challenging profession, but also one that offered variety,” she said, referring to the different tracks that nurses can progress to, including the management and research tracks.

Polytechnic graduate Tan Jung Howe, 22, listed nursing as the only course in his university application.

He is part of an encouraging trend of more male students taking up nursing. About 16 per cent or 38 of the students taking up nursing this year at NUS are male, compared with 10 per cent two years ago.

Mr Tan said it was his experience as a combat medic during national service that convinced him to choose nursing.

For Meridian Junior College student Nur Diyana Sapri, 19, her interest in the profession started much earlier. “I had to care for my ailing grandparents (during my) primary school days and realised I like caring for people.”

Besides NUS, the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) also offers a two-year degree in nursing with the University of Glasgow – aimed at polytechnic nursing diploma holders. SIT said it had also seen more applicants – a 27 per cent increase from last year. As a result, it has increased its intake from 55 last year to 64 this year.

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