NTU’s new course aims to change image of engineers

From geek to biz whiz

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GROOMING top engineering students into business-minded leaders is now the mission of the Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

Soon, the stereotype of geeky engineers who are inept at interacting with people and obsessed with technical details will be replaced by a new generation of engineers who may become chief executives and chief technology officers of the business world.

Students taking NTU’s new live-in Renaissance Engineering Programme (REP) will graduate with two degrees – the Bachelor of Engineering Science and the Master of Science in Technology Management – in 4 1/2 years.

Professor Bertil Andersson, the NTU president-designate and provost, said that given "pressing global issues", there is a need for engineers to have "interdisciplinary studies and research grounded in engineering".

He said: "The programme integrates the disciplines of engineering science, business management and liberal arts to educate future leaders."

Students get to spend a year in a top overseas university, on top of internship opportunities in Silicon Valley – home to many of the world’s largest technology corporations.

The University of California, Berkeley (UC Berkeley), is NTU’s first overseas partner for the REP.

Professor George W Bresnahan, UC Berkeley’s executive vice-chancellor and provost, said his university is honoured.

He added: "UC Berkeley and NTU share a commitment to prepare leaders for our globally interdependent and technologically-driven economy."

"The students in the REP will benefit from their time at Berkeley and in Silicon Valley, and we will benefit from their drive, talent and diverse perspectives."

In school, seminars will be held with a focus on small-group learning and e-learning rather than the traditional lecture-tutorial format.

Students will be taught by professors from NTU’s College of Engineering, Nanyang Business School, College of Science, and the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.

Beyond on-campus learning at NTU, students will do their research projects in multinational companies such as KBR, Keppel Corporation, Roche and SingTel.

Professor Er Meng Joo, the programme director at NTU, said: "Students will be paired with mentors – faculty, captains of industry and successful entrepreneurs – who will provide them with pastoral care and career guidance."

He said there has been an enthusiastic response from top junior college and polytechnic students. However, only the cream of 50 students from this year’s cohort will be accepted into the programme.

Big dreams

One applicant, Sabareesh Nair, 19, has a GPA score of 3.99 in his electrical and electronics engineering diploma course from Singapore Polytechnic.

He said: "I believe that the programme will provide me with a holistic engineering education, which will equip me to solve problems in this ever-changing globalised world, and bring me a step closer to my dream of becoming a technopreneur."

Miss Tee Mei Yi, 21, who dreams of setting up an engineering business in the green energy sector, has a perfect GPA score of 4 in her chemical and biomolecular engineering diploma from Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

She said: "The cross-disciplinary approach will equip us to be better able to solve unexpected problems in other areas."

"The best part about the programme is the one-year overseas study and internship. The opportunity to be immersed in an environment of advanced technology and strong entrepreneurship is invaluable."

The annual tuition fee for this programme is $16,000 for Singaporeans, $30,160 for permanent residents and $27,520 for international students.

Students and their parents can find out more about the REP and other undergraduate courses at NTU’s Open House at its Yunnan Garden Campus tomorrow.

Talks will be held in Lecture Theatre 19A (North Spine) at 11am and 3pm.