NTU to kick off scholars programme

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SINGAPORE — Amid the growing competition among universities, the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) has introduced a scholars programme which it hopes will help “attract the creme de la creme of post-secondary students”.

The NTU University Scholars Programme, which was announced yesterday, will kick off in August with an inaugural batch of 50 undergraduates.

Selected students from junior colleges and polytechnics will be invited to participate in the programme. The selection will be based on merit, said NTU, which has started work to identify potential scholars.

Under the NTU programme, which is similar to the National University of Singapore scholars programme, participants are required to complete the modules for their majors but are given a special range of electives to choose from, including medical humanities and population studies.

And apart from being guaranteed overseas exposure and accommodation at NTU hostels, the NTU scholars will be given opportunities to interact with invited Nobel Laureates and take part in leadership development camps.

Speaking at a press conference yesterday, NTU provost Freddy Boey said its scholars programme aims to attract top students who would otherwise go abroad to study.

On why NTU was behind other universities in having such programmes — NUS launched its scholars programme more than a decade ago — Professor Boey said: “There are good practices around the world and it is no surprise that good universities aspire similar things ... Different universities evolve (at) a different part of the curve.”

The NTU scholars programme comes at a time when the Singapore university landscape welcomes several new entrants.

The Singapore University of Technology and Design will take in its first batch of students in April; The Yale-NUS College for liberal arts education is also starting recruitment next month and the college will open officially next year.

Prof Boey reiterated that the objective of NTU’s new scholars programme was not to compete with the other universities here for students.

Rather, by seeking to attract top students, NTU will raise its standards further and this will benefit the rest of the university community, he said.

Victoria Junior College student Fiona Chong, 18, who is waiting for her A-Levels results, welcomed NTU’s initiative. However, she was not sure if it was attractive enough to convince those who are bent on getting the overseas study experience.

She said: “The primary factors in choosing a university would be on the courses and reputation of the university, having such a programme is just a bonus.”

Meanwhile, NTU said yesterday that it is raising its intake for the coming academic year — starting in August — by another 50 places, to about 5,930.

Responding to Today’s queries, NTU director of admissions and financial aid Lalit Goel said the university has put in “additional resources” to increase the number of existing scholarships by some 20 per cent, or about 70 more scholarships.

He added: “The actual number of scholarships awarded is dependent on the quality of the applicants. All deserving students who need financial assistance can be assured they will receive one from NTU if they meet the scholarship requirements such as strong academic merit, good co-curricular records and leadership potential.”