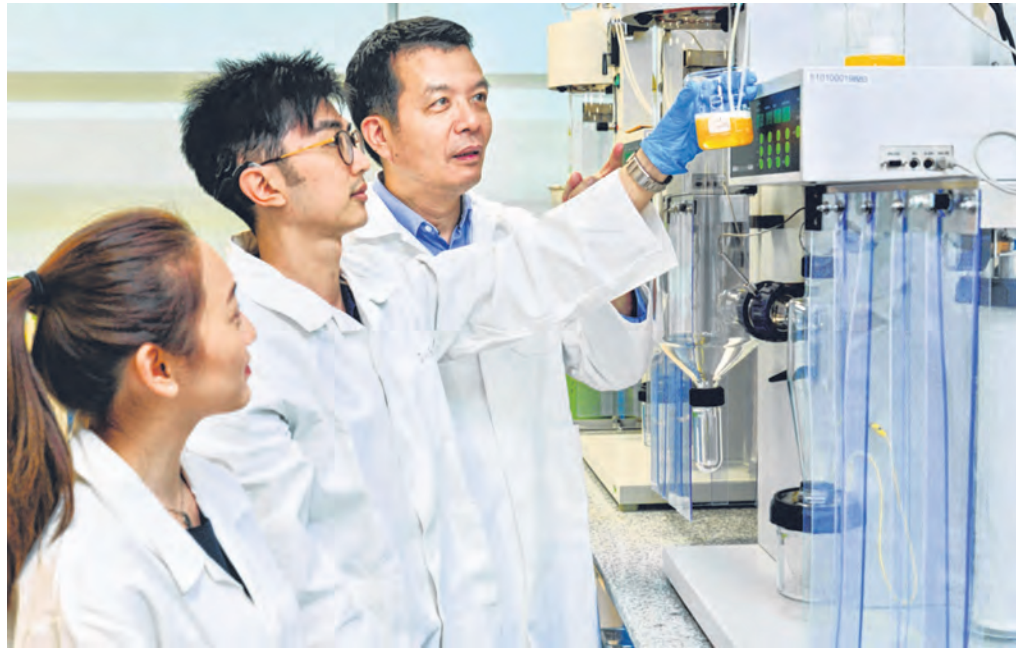


NTU on the hunt for top minds in food science



NTU's Food Science and Technology programme director William Chen, researcher Jason Quek and student Verene Chou doing an experiment on fruit juice. PHOTO: NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

Students accepted into its programme from this year will get Nanyang Scholarship

Samantha Boh

Singapore imports 90 per cent of the food it consumes – everything from chickens to bean sprouts – so naturally, food security is a major concern, not just for the Government but the scientific community too.

Recently, scientists at the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority turned okara, the by-product that is produced when turning soya beans into soya milk, into tasty “meat” floss.

The desire to attract some of the best minds to the field to discover ways to produce food more efficiently, sustainably and safely, while reducing wastage, has seen Nanyang Technological University (NTU) elevate its Food Science and Technology programme to lure the top A-level, polytechnic and International Baccalaureate performers.

Only 30 students will be offered a place in the 2017 intake and they will be given the prestigious Nanyang Scholarship. They will have their tuition fees fully covered and receive an allowance of \$6,000 per academic year, among other benefits.

The Deputy Provost (Education) of NTU, Professor Kam Chan Hin, said: “The elevation of our Food Science and Technology programme to a scholarship programme reflects our efforts to attract the best students to this increasingly important field to address new challenges in food security.

“With its interdisciplinary approach, the programme aims to produce the much-needed skilled manpower to help ensure Singapore’s food industry is future-ready.”

Currently, 143 undergraduates are enrolled in the programme, which was started in 2014 in partnership with Wageningen University and Research (WUR) from the Netherlands – a top agriculture institution.

The students major in bioengineering, chemical and biomolecular engineering, biological sciences or chemistry and biological chemistry. Those who are accepted this year will have the opportunity to go on a six-month exchange programme at WUR or undertake their final-year research project under the joint supervision of NTU and WUR professors.

This is on top of a two-week immersion programme at WUR, where half the time will be spent on laboratory practicum lessons and the other half on visits to food companies.

There is a separate food science degree programme offered at the National University of Singapore (NUS) and diploma programmes offered at several polytechnics.

NUS said its food science graduates are among the most employable across all courses, and, on average, those with an honours degree get a starting pay of \$3,300 a month.

An NTU-WUR PhD programme was launched last year and a joint master’s course is in the pipeline.

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Number of students who will be offered a place in the 2017 intake of NTU’s Food Science and Technology programme.

143

Number of undergraduates currently in the programme.

Specialist in the field

Wageningen University and Research (WUR) is a Dutch college and research centre that specialises in life sciences, formed through a collaboration between Wageningen University and the Wageningen Research foundation.

Its areas of focus in education and research include food and food production, sustainable use of natural resources, and health.

The university has 11,000 undergraduate and graduate students from 125 countries, and more than 1,900 post-doctorate candidates.

The research centre has more than 2,400 full-time faculty and staff, and had a turnover of €314 million (S\$469 million) in 2015.

WUR ranked top in agriculture and forestry, and sixth in environmental sciences in the QS World University Rankings by Subject released this week, and the 65th best university in the 2017 Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

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