NTU receives $4m gift from estate of philanthropic couple

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Nanyang Technological University (NTU) is the latest institution to benefit from the estate of an elderly couple who had donated millions of dollars to several causes.

The $4 million gift will help fund NTU’s development of teachers, with the introduction of scholarships for master degrees and grants for trainee teachers at its National Institute of Education (NIE).

The scholarships will be named after the couple: Mr Ong Tiong Tat, 74, who died in 2013, and Madam Irene Tan Liang Kheng, 73, who died in 2016.

The donation, which is being matched by the Government, comes three months after the estate gave $11 million to NTU’s Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine.

At a ceremony at NIE yesterday, Mr Tan Hsuan Heng, the couple’s nephew and the estate’s trustee, said his aunt and uncle had been influenced to give particularly to education and healthcare.

“A great teacher can change a student’s life. Teachers need to keep learning and growing,” added the 66-year-old.

The donations came from the $41 million sale proceeds of the couple’s house on a 40,000 sq ft plot in King Albert Park. It was sold after Madam Tan died.

Mr Tan told The Straits Times that about 70 per cent of the money has been donated to institutions, schools and organisations. These include the National University of Singapore (NUS), the law school at Singapore University of Social Sciences and the nursing school at Nanyang Polytechnic.

Needy students of Raffles Institution, Hwa Chong Institution and CHIJ Toa Payoh (Secondary) will also benefit from the funds.

About $700,000 was given as well to help primary and secondary students of Geylang Methodist School, which Madam Tan attended in the 1960s.

NTU president Subra Suresh, referring to the new endowment, said: “This generous gift will enable many vital activities that will nurture generations of Singapore’s future teachers and their students.”

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