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US, European multinationals and NTU to Gain from collaboration



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Companies looking to collaborate with students and academics at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) will get a helping hand in the set-up of projects like commercial research laboratories, joint centres and research institutes.

A new initiative, the Global Alliance of Industries@NTU (Gain), will coordinate these efforts as part of the university's goal to deepen connections with industry, NTU said yesterday.

It will also work to match multinationals with NTU's experts in various fields such as healthcare, engineering and technology.

Such connections between industry, government and academia are necessary to support Singapore's vision for an economy driven by innovation, said Minister of State for Trade and Industry Low Yen Ling yesterday.

The event, which was organised by Gain with the American Chamber of Commerce and European Chamber of Commerce, brought together representatives from 20 American and European multinationals, including French cosmetics company L'Oreal and American technology firm IBM, to explore possible tie-ups with the university.

Ms Low, who is also Minister of State for Culture, Community and Youth, added that such collaboration is vital to enhancing companies' access to innovation and key markets.

She said: "I urge the local enterprises, researchers, and industry partners to tap these platforms (like Gain), to enhance the transfer of business capabilities, knowledge and networks."

NTU president Subra Suresh opened the event with a speech, which included how American space research institution Nasa had its roots in such a collaboration between the public and private sectors.

He added that one of NTU's strategic goals is to have the output that comes out of its research labs scale with the help of industry and the support of the Government.

Two companies that already have commercial labs in NTU - American technology company HP and German automotive firm Continental, gave presentations where they spoke about how their tie-ups with the university had given them access to expertise and resulted in patented innovations.

Dr David Woon, co-director of the Continental-NTU Corporate Lab, told The Straits Times after the event that Gain has helped the company match with experts they would otherwise not be familiar with, as well as with other firms.

On the NTU lab that was set up last year, Dr Woon said: "Continental is very close to the experts at NTU's engineering schools, but if we want to work on a project in something like healthcare, Gain can link us with the right professor."

Yesterday's event ended with a panel discussion, moderated by NTU senior vice-president of research Lam Khin Yong, where Ms Low, European Chamber of Commerce president Federico Donato and American Chamber of Commerce chair Lisa Liaw discussed the importance of discovering new products and businesses, as well as new ways of doing business in keeping the economy dynamic.
