Singapore, 13 June 2005

NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY TO DEVELOP SOLUTIONS FOR PEOPLE WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES – MOU signed with The Society for the Physically Disabled to advance R&D in Assistive Technology

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and The Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) today to jointly pursue and promote research and development in Assistive Technology (AT).

Assistive technology refers to devices which assist people with disabilities to enhance their independence and improve their quality of life.

This is the first MOU that SPD has signed with a university. NTU was a natural choice due to its strength in engineering research and its focus on developing applications that meet real-world needs.

Under this MOU, NTU’s Biomedical Engineering Research Centre (BMERC) will collaborate with SPD’s Specialised Assistive Technology Centre (ATC) and Community Research Network (CRN), to jointly develop relevant and affordable AT systems.
Areas identified for development include:

a) Computer Access – hardware and software systems to assist people with physical disabilities to use a computer.

b) Mobility Aids – systems that improve the mobility of physically disabled people.

c) Alternative and Augmentative Communication – devices that enable and enhance verbal and written communication capability for those who have verbal communicative difficulties or speech impairments.

d) Environmental Assistance - Systems that can assist people with physical disabilities to reintegrate into society, normal daily living and working environments.

To complement the MOU, NTU’s annual “Engineering Innovation and Design” competition included an AT category for the first time. Eight projects were submitted under this category. The project teams worked with SPD to create simple and effective solutions that will improve the daily lives of physically disabled people. Some of the projects had undergone actual trials at SPD to ensure its relevance and applicability. (Please refer to attached factsheet for further information on the competition.)

“We believe that technology can both enable people with physical disabilities and level the playing field for them. Our Specialised Assistive Technology Centre is building research networks to develop the area of assistive technology locally. With the collaboration with NTU, we look forward to more affordable and better suited devices being developed that help people with physical disabilities in Singapore,” says Ms Chia Woon Yee, Director (Technology), SPD.

Says Professor Michael Khor, Director, Office of Research, NTU, “We are excited about this MOU with The Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD). This collaboration capitalises on NTU’s expertise in Assistive Technology research and development. At the same time, it allows us to apply our knowledge to benefit society.”

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About Nanyang Technological University

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) is an established international institution in tertiary education.

Our university has a distinguished lineage with roots that go back to 1955. We began as Nanyang University, a private university set up with donations from people of all walks of life, from Singapore and the region. The university grounds, Yunnan Garden Campus, was donated by the Hokkien Clan Association as part of this campaign.

We were reborn as Nanyang Technological Institute, established on the same campus in 1981 with government funding to educate practice-oriented engineers for the burgeoning Singapore economy. In 1991 we became Nanyang Technological University with the absorption of the National Institute of Education.

Today, we are a research-intensive university ranked among the top 50 universities in the world. We have a strong engineering college ranked among the best globally, a business school with one of the top 100 MBA programmes in the world, an internationally acclaimed National Institute of Education, one of the best communication and information schools in Asia, and a biological sciences school at the forefront of Singapore’s life sciences initiative.

Undergraduate enrolment will swell from 17,500 to 23,500 with the establishment of three new schools – the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, School of Art, Design and Media, and School of Physical and Mathematical Sciences.

A traditional strength of the university is the high employment rate and high remuneration received by its graduates. The university is now in the process of realising its New Undergraduate Experience initiative with a comprehensive curriculum, wide choices of options for students, vibrant campus life and international experience. Strong international relationships and collaboration programmes is a hallmark of the university. This includes the Singapore-MIT Alliance, Singapore-Stanford Partnership, Cornell-Nanyang Institute of Hospitality Management, Singapore – University of Washington Alliance in Bioengineering, Global Immersion Programme with Peking University, Tsinghua University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, University of Washington and Georgia Institute of Technology, among many other programmes in US, China, India, Japan and Europe.
For more information, visit http://www.ntu.edu.sg/

**About The Society for the Physically Disabled**

The Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD) is a voluntary welfare organisation working in partnership with people with physical disabilities. Through programmes and services that encompass rehabilitation, vocational training, education, employment, assistive technology and social service support, we seek to develop the potential of people with physical disabilities to the fullest, so that they can be self-reliant and independent.

SPD’s Specialised Assistive Technology Centre (ATC) provides comprehensive services in Assistive Technology (AT) for all people with physical disabilities, and staff of other voluntary welfare organisations. Our Centre conducts assessments, and provides consultation and training in AT, demonstration and loan of AT devices and IT training for people with physical disabilities. We collaborate with other organisations and engage actively in Research and Development (R&D) of AT-related projects, through the Community Research Network (CRN).

For more information on SPD, visit www.spd.org.sg.