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NTU builds state-of-the-art science facilities to boost learning and research in basic sciences

Students who wish to pursue a degree in basic sciences and mathematics can look forward to state-of-the-art facilities, touted to be the best in the region, when NTU’s School of Physical & Mathematical Sciences’ (SPMS) new building is completed in 2007.

The groundbreaking for the building took place earlier today. The building, which consists of three interconnected annexes, will house the School’s three Divisions - Chemistry & Biological Chemistry, Mathematical Sciences, and Physics & Applied Physics. When completed, the building will provide 38,000 square meters of space to house 300 faculty and staff members, 500 PhD research students and teaching facilities for 2,000 undergraduates.

Each annexe is specially designed to fit each Division’s unique needs. The design of the building also facilitates multidisciplinary collaborations while promoting excellence in our core areas.

The Chemistry & Biological Chemistry annexe is modelled after the new Oxford Chemistry building, reputed to have the best safety features by industry standards in the world. The annexe will be well-equipped for interdisciplinary research with emphasis on synthesis, molecular design, and catalysis; biological chemistry; interfacial science and new materials. The building will also house cutting edge equipment including state-of-the-art nuclear magnetic resonance instruments and mass spectrometers.

A special feature of the Mathematical Sciences annexe is the well-placed interactive meeting spaces that are known to provide the best environment for learning and research by facilitating faculty-faculty, faculty-student, and student-student discussion on mathematics and statistics problems. Unlike traditional mathematics departments, we have incorporated modern laboratories and computing facilities to do cutting-edge
teaching and research on modern multidisciplinary application areas in bioinformatics, biocomputing, finance, digital media etc.

The Physics and Applied Physics annexe has many specially-fitted facilities which provide an environment for learning the core principles of physics, as well as for students to acquire mechanical, electronic, software, engineering, design and resource management skills.

Professor Lee Soo Ying, Dean, SPMS, says, “Students at SPMS enjoy more than just a high-tech building which provides the best possible environment for our students to pursue their studies and conduct research in science and mathematics. The School offers the only direct B.Sc. Honours programmes in Singapore in the following majors: Chemistry & Biological Chemistry, Mathematical Sciences, Physics, Applied Physics, and Physical Sciences. The curricula are constructed from top universities overseas. The undergraduate and graduate education will also be enriched through interaction with eminent scientists and mathematicians under the NTU Institute of Advanced Studies for the fundamental sciences.”

Other features of the programmes include offering students the unique chance of doing a concentration in important sub-fields. Professor Lee elaborates, “The focus of Chemistry & Biological Chemistry is on synthesis, catalysis, medicinal chemistry and green chemistry. For Mathematical Sciences the concentrations are in mathematics of information and communication, and computational mathematics. In Physics & Applied Physics, the concentrations are in nanotechnology, optical technology, semiconductor technology, and biophysics. These areas of focus are specially chosen to be relevant to the current and new industries in Singapore and the region. Such focus will then allow, for example, our chemistry graduates to be competent to synthesize new drug candidates; our mathematics graduates to apply mathematics to an increasingly information-intensive environment; and our physics graduates to apply their critical analysis skills in a variety of important scientific sectors.”

“We have also incorporated a half-year industrial internship programme for our undergraduates that can be carried out locally or overseas. We are confident that our graduates will be highly sought after and be able to find rewarding jobs.”

SPMS took in its pioneer batch of 182 undergraduates and 40 PhD research graduate students in July 2005. The unique programmes have attracted top students in its pioneer intake, including four International Physics Olympiad and two International Mathematics Olympiad winners.

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About Nanyang Technological University

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) is a research-intensive university with globally acknowledged strengths in science and engineering. The university has a beautiful garden campus and a distinguished lineage with roots that go back to 1955.
NTU's 12 schools span diverse disciplines – from engineering and the sciences to art, design and media. The university has a strong engineering college focused on innovation, 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. The Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies is a world authority on terrorism issues.

Ranked among the top 50 universities in the world, NTU has in place multi-country programmes and initiatives, many established through its strategic alliances with 300 institutions in more than 45 countries, including Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University, California Institute of Technology, Cornell University, Cambridge University, and Beijing University.

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