



With the new study lounges and other interactive spaces, working together to get projects done will be a lot easier for SMU students (from left) Elliot Braet, Subramaniam Narayanan, Nur Dini Haziqah Mohd Sukri and Clarabelle Koh Pei Lin, who have signed up for the university's new politics, law and economics major. BERITA HARIAN PHOTO

Students get new learning spaces at SMU campus

Enhanced facilities will ease space crunch at its city campus amid rising enrolment

Amelia Teng

Excavators and other heavy machinery are busy at work at the Singapore Management University (SMU) campus in Bras Basah, now being redeveloped and expanded to ease a space crunch.

But students starting there on Monday will already have more elbow room in the form of some new study lounges and seminar rooms. This is because the first phase of the \$20 million, two-year redevelopment work, which started in August last year, has been completed.

Altogether, the new facilities will boost seating capacity by over 500, to meet greater demand for study

spaces. Students will also have an expanded three-storey fitness centre that can accommodate 180 users.

The plan drawn up when SMU opened its doors in 2000 was for 6,000 students, but enrolment has since grown to 9,300, including postgraduate students. It will take in about 1,980 students this year.

Existing space in the concourse areas has already been converted into two 70-seater seminar rooms.

Six study lounges seating 375 have been added to provide more space for group discussions and studying. They come with white walls that double as writing surfaces for brainstorming, as well as group, individual and counter-type seating.

In recent years, SMU has under-

taken other initiatives as well to create more space for students. They include renovating the Li Ka Shing Library to increase seating capacity and leasing the former MPH Building to create a 24-hour learning space called SMU Labs.

Under the second phase of the redevelopment, a 280-seater, open-air amphitheatre will be ready by the first quarter of next year. Located on the lawn between the National Museum of Singapore and the Singapore Art Museum, it will be used for open-air performances.

Besides new teaching spaces that can cater to about 430 students, a co-curricular activity centre with a glass facade will also be created as a common space for students.

SMU president Arnoud De Meyer said in a statement yesterday: "I'm very pleased that we have managed to develop and execute a very creative and innovative plan to opti-

mise our space within the many urban constraints that we face."

Mr Andrew Fong, 24, who is starting his fourth year studying economics at SMU, said: "Space constraints became more telling as the years went by. SMU Labs eased the crunch a bit, but opening up new study spaces is always good.

"We have a lot of projects and it's more convenient to meet on campus than at someone's house."

Freshman Elliot Braet, 21, who is reading politics, law and economics, a new SMU course this year, said: "The study lounges allow students to be more comfortable and encourage more interaction, especially with SMU's strong project culture.

"I look forward to meeting people with different ways of thinking in this new environment and the new course."

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