



President Tony Tan Keng Yam receiving a Patron's Day mascot to mark SMU's anniversary. With him is student Joseph Tng, chairman of the organising committee of the event. ST PHOTO: LIM SIN THAI

# SMU conducts more national-level research

## Urban living and ageing population among its large-scale projects

By AMELIA TENG

HOW do 50,000 marathoners affect traffic patterns in a city? What do people do to prepare their finances for retirement?

These are among the large-scale studies that professors at Singapore Management University (SMU) have taken on recently.

As SMU turns 15 this year, its president, Professor Arnoud De Meyer, yesterday said it will play a larger role in national-level research on topics such as urban sustainability and ageing.

It received \$60 million in research funding last year for such projects, up from \$15 million in previous years.

SMU is now involved in 10 large-scale research projects.

One that looks at crowd man-

agement and how people move in urban spaces is being conducted at a \$54 million centre, which it set up with the Agency for Science, Technology and Research and electronics firm Fujitsu last year.

Funded partly by the National Research Foundation, the centre aims to use Singapore as a "living lab" to come up with solutions for problems faced by highly urbanised cities.

Another study, funded by the Ministry of Education, will look at how Singapore is dealing with its ageing population. The \$10 million project will survey 10,000 households on their retirement and savings plans in July.

"As a young university... we used to be very discipline-oriented," said Prof De Meyer.

"We all know that the real-world problems are not discipline-based... but it is usually an interaction of different problems from different disciplines.

"The idea is to have many more of these large contracts, where we mobilise groups of faculty around problems that are aligned with the needs of Singapore."

He said PhD and undergraduate students will be involved in some of these projects, such as by collecting data.

Prof De Meyer said SMU will also continue to improve its learning model, which involves small class sizes and project work.

The university will introduce real-world projects into modules, and create more physical space for students to work together.

At SMU Labs, students this month started taking courses focused on solving real-world problems.

Housed at the former MPH

Building on Stamford Road, SMU Labs are not standard classrooms.

Instead, there is a white room where students can scribble ideas on the walls and floor, a meeting room filled with beanbags and another with sofa beds for power naps.

Prof De Meyer hopes SMU can play its part as a "city campus" by working with the museums in the area.

Yesterday, 4,000 students and staff celebrated the university's Patron's Day – which marks its anniversary – at its Bras Basah campus with a carnival and music performances.

The event was attended by SMU's patron, President Tony Tan Keng Yam, and former heads of the university, including founding president Janice Bellace, who is now with the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business in the United States.

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