

SMU plans campus revamp to add buzz, ease space woes

\$20m plan includes a fitness centre, a co-curricular centre and amphitheatre

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THE Singapore Management University (SMU) yesterday announced plans to redevelop its city campus to ease its space crunch, and add a buzz to the civic district.

The \$20 million project, which will start in August and end in 2017, will add more teaching and learning spaces.

Its centrepiece is a 240-seat amphitheatre for outdoor performances on the green space between the Singapore Art Museum and the National Museum of Singapore.

A three-storey fitness centre and a co-curricular centre will have glass facades and look out into the campus green.

The university is also studying

the possibility of a jogging path around the campus green, which will be open for public use.

SMU president Arnoud De Meyer said the university was committed to providing adequate and flexible learning and teaching spaces, as well as places for collaboration and recreation.

The campus plan was drawn up 15 years ago, when the university was started, and had aimed to cater to 6,000 students. But the number of students has since swelled to 8,800. As a result, some programmes are conducted in the evenings and on Saturdays.

SMU has in recent years added more spaces for group study and project-based learning around the campus. One notable addition was the old MPH building in Stamford Road, which was converted last year into a 24/7 space called the

SMU Labs where students can interact and work together. The facility provided another 450 seats over three levels.

Professor De Meyer noted that a key feature of SMU's campus is its "porosity", with the public having access to the ground and basement levels. The campus green is already used for events such as the Singapore Biennale and Singapore Night Festival.

He said SMU was committed to keeping its campus accessible to all. In fact, he believes that the new facilities, centred round the campus green, will allow the university to strengthen its engagement with the larger community.

He sees open-air performances "of all kinds" taking place in the amphitheatre, which will not only be a stage for SMU's students to showcase their talents, but also cater to public performances.

"By 2017 when the project is completed, I envisage that the campus green will be a 'playground' where students,

stakeholders and members of the public will interact and mingle... through performances, fitness activities and sports," he said.

"I am confident that SMU Campus Green can become the pulsating heartbeat of the Bras Basah precinct once again."

Mr Ashvinkumar Kantilal, group chief operating officer of Ong and Ong, the architectural firm awarded the project, said the design is "sensitive" to the surroundings. The co-curricular block, for example, will be curved to ensure that the trees on the campus green are not affected.

Students welcomed the addition of new spaces and facilities.

Ms Carol Tan, 19, who will be entering SMU this year, said she picked the university because of its city campus.

"I went for a walk around and it was a hive of activity. With the redevelopment, I expect there will be more things happening," she said.

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An artist's impression of the co-curricular centre and amphitheatre on the campus green, which the school hopes will become a hive of activity. SMU is also considering a jogging path that is open to the public.

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