

STUDENTS TO BE MENTORED BY INDUSTRY PARTNERS, UNIVERSITY LECTURERS

SMU-X modules shift emphasis to self-learning, real-world issues

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SINGAPORE – The Singapore Management University (SMU) is rolling out six modules in the coming academic year, which starts in August, that lets students work with organisations on real-life issues, such as human resource management, to shift the emphasis from teaching to self-learning.

Those taking the 15-week modules, which will straddle disciplines, will be mentored by industry partners, as well as university lecturers.

Professor Arnoud De Meyer, SMU's president, said in a press release yesterday that the new concept of these so-called SMU-X courses is intended to "bring about a mindset change" by offering multi-disciplinary

and hands-on curriculum.

The six modules are intelligent accounting function, internal audit, global migration and human society, public policy taskforce, special projects with international organisations, and the science of happiness. Each module will have 50 places and provide credits towards the student's degree programme.

SMU Associate Director (Strategic Planning) Tan Gan Hup added that students today are concerned about issues beyond the borders of the faculties they are in. He cited global warming and ageing issues as examples of these multi-disciplinary issues and which require people to work together.

"So we reached the conclusion that a lot more collaboration can happen in the university (and) out of the univer-

sity," Mr Tan added.

Under a pilot of the science of happiness module conducted from August to November last year, for instance, five undergraduates worked with media company The Asian Parent to develop content on some of the latest research on the topic. The module aims to give students a foundation in the scientific literature on happiness and subjective well-being. One article they produced tackled the question "Can money buy happiness?"

For the module on intelligent accounting function, it will explore how technology can be used to carry out the professional service more smartly, quickly and creatively.

Associate Dean (Student Matters) Gary Pan said intelligent accounting function is an "emerging area" in the

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- Intelligent accounting function
- Internal audit
- Global migration and human society
- Public policy taskforce
- Special projects with international organisations
- Science of happiness

field and the idea came from the big push for Singapore to become the first "Smart Nation". "We thought 'Why not smart finance, smart accounting function?'" said Dr Pan, who is also Associate Professor of Accounting (Education)

Asked if SMU aims to offer more SMU-X courses, Mr Tan said while it aims to give every student a chance to experience such curriculum, not every module will be suitable. "We will have to find the balance but right now, our phase is to learn and grow. So there is no fixed number as yet but definitely quite substantial scaling," he added.

SMU is also enhancing its city campus, such as by introducing a 24-hour facility for students so that they have a space to work together with their project mates.

SMU Business student Justin Siau said the pilot programme he attended involved a more "holistic approach" of working together with professors and being able to discuss with his classmates. "People from different faculties, from different domains came in together to share," said the 24-year-old who will be graduating from SMU this year. "Everyone walks away with something from this experience".