

University students less satisfied with staff

By **TEH SHI NING**

UNIVERSITY students here now hold a dimmer view of administrative and teaching staff than they did a year ago and are thus less satisfied with their universities overall.

The university sub-sector's Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore score fell 3.8 points to 66.7, pulling down public education's score to 67.5. The other two public education sub-sectors, polytechnics and the Institute of Technical Education, managed to maintain students' satisfaction levels from a year ago.

For students, quality is the most important of the three drivers which feed into satisfaction as measured in the CSISG model, the other two being expectations and value.

And though discontent with the quality of administrative and teaching staff was offset by greater satisfaction with campus facilities, leaving overall perceived quality unchanged, it still ended up lagging behind undergraduates' expectations, which rose year-on-year, said the Institute of Service Excellence (ISES) at SMU, which compiles the index.

Singapore Management University, whose score suffered the largest drop of 9.5 points, said it has "taken active measures to bridge the gap between our service promise and service delivery, to meet rising expectations."

Said Vice Provost (Undergraduate) professor Pang Yang Hoong: "Given the rapid growth of our student population and the diversity of our student body, we are cognisant of the importance of constantly improving our administrative services and student engagement processes."

The university has thus

rolled out a Business Process Improvement initiative to streamline administrative processes to provide better operational support to students "so that they can focus their time and energy on attaining academic excellence", she says.

Even with the sharp drop, SMU still posted a higher score than its peers. Nanyang Technological University followed with a score of 67.1, 1.6 points lower than a year ago.

NTU's Associate Provost in charge of undergraduate education, professor Kam Chan Hin, thinks that more

ence that will benefit and excite our students".

ISES academic director Marcus Lee says the CSISG provides just a snapshot of student expectations, perceived quality and satisfaction. "It is up to the university to uncover the tactical and actionable insights. Thus, engagement is key," he says.

In fact, universities have it easier than most companies do. "After all, it's a semi-captive audience and the university has all the contact and demographic information already," says Dr Lee.

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competition in the higher education sector has raised student expectations.

He says NTU will continue to emphasise good teaching. "Our priority is to attract and retain top faculty. Moving forward, junior faculty will attend courses on the basics of teaching, curriculum design and so on," he says

Despite the National University of Singapore (NUS) scoring the lowest mark of 66.1, 4.1 points lower than a year ago, Vice-Provost (Education) Professor Bernard Tan says the university remains focused on providing a "quality global education in a vibrant and student-centred environment".

Prof Tan sees the NUS University Town as an example of a "new model of living and learning experi-

NTU is actively doing so through university-wide student engagement surveys, says Prof Kam, citing its campus master plan as another example of something which incorporated the ideas of student leaders who were consulted.

Recent news that Singapore Institute of Technology and SIM University (Uni-SIM) will join NUS, NTU, SMU and the Singapore University of Technology and Design to bring the number of national universities in Singapore to six, may bode well for student satisfaction, Dr Lee says.

"If there are more choices, people will end up in a university more suited to them. Satisfaction will tend to go up as choices increase. This assumes that a high quality of education and teaching is maintained," he says.