

NTU students to get career skills boost

New programme to prepare them for world of work kicks off next August

By AUDREY TAN

STUDENTS of Nanyang Technological University (NTU) will get a leg up when they enter the job market, thanks to a new programme that will arm them with career skills and values.

The programme is mandatory, with 10 modules that will cover such topics as resume design and dressing for interviews.

It will be conducted over the four years of their study and was made possible partly by a \$12 million donation from philanthropist Margaret Lien, widow of the late banker and hotelier Lien Ying Chow.

Her donation, plus government funds, went into the building of a \$30 million career development centre, to be called the Margaret Lien Centre for Professional Success.

Said NTU's Associate Provost for undergraduate education Kam Chan Hin in a statement: "We'll begin working with students from their first year so they will be well prepared for the challenges of a dynamic global workplace."

The structured curriculum is a departure from the ad-hoc programmes offered previously.

What it covers is crucial as "first impression is very impor-



Philanthropist Margaret Lien has donated \$12 million for the building of a career development centre at NTU.

tant", said managing director David Leong of human resource firm PeopleWorldwide Consulting.

First-year engineering students will kickstart the programme next August as they belong to the largest of five colleges, with six schools. About 10,000 of them are expected to attend it by 2017, after which the programme will be rolled out at the other colleges. NTU has five colleges, including Humanities, Business and Science.

Said 18-year-old Leow Yixuan, who may apply to study bio-engineering at NTU: "I think it's good to have a head start in knowing how to carry oneself at work... and also (to ensure) less friction in adapting to working life."

Values such as integrity and resilience will also be taught through modules like "Rev up my professionalism", which aims to help students understand and apply values to ethical dilemmas.

Parents too are enthusiastic. Manager Amy Quek, 55, whose son is finishing his A levels, said: "To succeed in a career, character is important as it shapes the way you respond to the different challenges of working life."

The initiative comes amid a rise in demand for career services.

The NTU and National University of Singapore (NUS) are seeing more students seeking career coaching and advice.

The director of NUS Career Centre, Ms Corrine Ong, said demand for advice on internship and career options has doubled from two years ago. "In the past, (more sought) resume critique service."

This is similar to the situation at Singapore Management University, which has a mandatory career preparation programme. Its staff are increasingly "hard-pressed to keep career counselling sessions within the allocated time of one hour", said the director of its Office of Career Services, Mr Sim Cher Young.

✉ audreyt@sph.com.sg