In savvy, business wise too

New tertiary school promises that of its students

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Dr Miller said: "Besides giving it importance and prominence to make it a separate school, it also gives us more flexibility to cater to the needs of students and serve the objectives of the school and recruit and develop faculty. Information technology is so fundamental to all aspects of management that it warrants the formation of an institute that works for SIS into its own programme," Dr Miller added.

SIS students can expect to learn about business processes and to apply that knowledge about business goals to e-business solution design and architecture. Through cross-faculty projects with students from the other three schools, SIS students can go through design and problem-solving scenarios where they look at the strategic business issues and values, define a solution architecture, and then actually deploy their ideas to see how it works out.

Explaining the need for professionalism with IT/business management cross-disciplinary skills, he said: "The IT world is not run by IT specialists. For most part, the functional business manager has some kind of business improvement or new strategic business initiative to launch such as a new product or service or create a new capability some degree of cost reduction.

"They don't start with an IT problem, they start with a business problem, and then they say: how do I do this?" he said. "So, you have a unified team of business people and information technology people, and they work with other IT specialists who can work out the details of the IT solution. Today you need the multidisciplinary skills of people who have the experience to work in this kind of fields.""

Other than core subjects that all SMU undergraduates take, SIS students also have IT foundational courses such as Database Theory and Applications and Introductory Programming.

To understand the roles that technology plays in today's business environment, students also have to take business and technology interface subjects and electives to gain a basic competency in business theories, concepts and working tools essential in the modern business environment.

A 12-week minimum internship is a required part of the SMU experience. "We will be placing students in multi-national corporations, large and small Singaporean establishments and even in overseas companies, in the Asian region," Dr Miller said.

"What's really important in this programme is the way we integrate business content with technology content. We use first-rate business people to teach business content, and we have first-rate application-oriented technology people to teach technology content. And we work together in a multidisciplinary way to bring together the business and the technology." SIS will take its first intake of fifty to 100 students in August, and expects to have some 500 undergraduates and postgraduates by 2006.

Given the "different" sort of students that SIS attracts, "the school would be a very encouraging to people who want to try out new ideas, and new kinds of career paths," said Dr Miller.

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