SINGAPORE : Singapore Management University has announced a 15 percent fee increase from S$6,500 to S$7,500 for this year’s incoming cohort.

However, it pledged that this new cohort would not face any more fee increases in their four years at the university.

The current batch of students is not affected by this fee hike.

SMU has cited rising costs and the need to attract the best possible faculty and produce high-quality research as reasons for the fee hike.

Education Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam has said gradual university fee increases are better as long as they reflect rising costs.

He was responding to NUS and NTU increasing fees by 3 percent next academic year, just after a 5 percent increase last year.

Mr Tharman emphasised that no deserving student would be denied a university education because of financial reasons.

He noted that both NTU and NUS had recently made substantial boosts to their financial assistance packages.

SMU also has a comprehensive range of financial assistance schemes and more scholarships are expected to be available this year compared to 2005.

Mr Tharman said: "It’s the fairest system we know of for delivering top quality in our tertiary levels. We spend one quarter of our education budget on universities, which is higher than most countries. I don't think we should take more resources away from the schools, the ITEs, the polytechnics in order to give more to the universities. Particularly because university students are likely to have higher lifetime earnings, a better system is to give them loans. Give those in need bursaries." - CNA/ct/ir