新大2000多学生将住市区校园宿舍

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未来五年，新加坡管理大学将为至2500名全体外国学生和25%本地学生安排住进校园附近的市区宿舍。这个计划也将让新大所有本科生在学期间，有最少一年做寄宿生的体验。

新大校长霍华德·亨特（Howard Hunter）教授在市区校园开幕前夕接受本报专访时说：“我们这里原是个有历史渊源和多姿多彩文化景观的旧市区，我们希望大学进来了，更多学生住进来了，就能和纽约大学、伦敦大学等市区大学一样，为老市区增添活力和朝气。”

今年10月和11月，将有300名新大生住进森林广场后街（Short Street）经过整修的三座四层楼楼群。亨特希望能在五年内，住宿生的学生增加到2000至2500人。如果连同附近的南洋艺术学院、拉萨尔新航艺术学院以及其他私立学校的学生，他预期这一带很快会转变成青年人熙熙攘攘的大学城。

新大搬迁市区，亨特说：“作为一所年轻的商业大学，在市区上学才更能配合我们的形象和实质。这个位置让我们能和商界、政界人士近距离接触。学生到他们那里去实习，只需走几步路就到。他们来找我们，也很方便。再加上附近的博物馆、美术馆、新加坡艺术学校、南洋艺术学院、拉塞尔—新航艺术学院等营造的艺术氛围，将带给我们学生潜移默化的文化艺术熏陶。”

谈到新大的未来发展方向，亨特说，未来三四年后，新大教员将从现有的185人，增加到350人。这将倍倍增的教员人数，显然代表了新大大规模的扩展。

他说：“我们正考虑为本科生在五年内增设一两个新学院的事情。我们是专科型的商业大学，不可能增设工程学院或生命科学院，但这两个新学院将和我们现有院系相关，也许是国际关系，也许是法律，细节还在与教育部洽谈。”

他也透露新大有意设立“社会变革中心”（Centre for Social Innovation），灌输学生对国家、社会的责任感，关心种种令现代人忧心忡忡的课题如爱之病、禽流感、贫富、战争、饥饿等。

他说：“作为一所管理大学，我们有责任培养学生成为一个关心社会，有社会良心的经理和领袖。他们将不只重视金钱回报，还重视社会回报。我们的李光耀奖学金学生就是在这个理念下接受培训。他们日后不只要以盈利向股东交代，还要为社区为环境作出贡献。”

他透露新大正寻求基金会赞助设立这个中心。

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In the next five years, SMU will provide accommodation for 2,000 to 2,500 foreign students and 25% local students in the vicinity of the city campus. The plan is to let all students have the opportunity to experience hostel living for at least one year.

SMU President Professor Howard Hunter says on the eve of the official opening of the city campus, “This is a historic and cultural district and I hope that with SMU students arriving in the city, we can add vibrancy to the area just like New York University and the University of London.”

Come October and November this year, about 300 SMU students will move into three blocks of renovated hostels near Sim Lim Square at Short Street. Professor Hunter hoped that within five years, SMU hostels will be able to accommodate 2,000 to 2,500 students. Together with the nearby Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, the LaSalle-SIA College of the Arts and other private schools, the entire district will transform into a young university town.

“As a young management university, learning in the city fits our image and curriculum. This strategic location allows us to draw near to the business community and government authorities. Internships will be within a stone’s throw and it is much easier for the business community to come to us. The surrounding museums and arts institutions immerse our students in an intense environment of culture,” added Professor Hunter.

He disclosed that in the next three to four years, SMU faculty will double from the present 185 to 350. This is in line with SMU’s expansion.

“We are exploring setting up one or two new schools in the next five years. As a management university, we will not be building engineering or life sciences schools. The new schools will be closely related to business and could be international relations or law. We are still in discussion with the Ministry of Education,” he said.

Professor Hunter also revealed that plans are underway to set up a Centre for Social Innovation to train students in social responsibility on issues like AIDS, avian flu, poverty, war and starvation in the world.

He said, “As a management university, we have the responsibility to groom students into managers and leaders with a strong sense of social responsibility. They should not only look for financial returns but to give back to the community. Our Lee Kong Chian scholars are trained to have this mindset. They will not only be concerned with profits but also to contribute back to society and the environment.” SMU is looking for funding for this centre from a foundation.

Professor Hunter also wanted all SMU students to experience internship and immersion overseas. He said, “We have signed partnerships with 100 over foreign universities. Right now, 40% of students have the chance to go abroad for exchange programmes, internships and business study missions, lasting from 10 weeks to half a year. We hope that in the next five years, SMU can send 100% of its students overseas. Expenses will be high and a lot of fundraising is involved.”

HOWARD HUNTER: SMU STUDENTS TALENTED IN MATHEMATICS AND THE ARTS

Singapore students are strong in mathematics, skilled in the performing arts and knowledgeable in American history. This is a difference Professor Hunter observed between local and American students.

He said, “The general Singapore student has a stronger grasp of mathematics than their American counterparts. This is attributable to the good foundation laid at primary and secondary schools. America has good secondary schools but the average level is still lower than Singapore.”

Professor Hunter, 59 years old, completed his degrees in Yale and joined Emory University where he rose from associate professor to dean of the law school. Before he was appointed President of SMU last September, he was provost of Emory University. With 27 years experience teaching in the United States, he was able to see the difference between local and American students.

He said, “Singapore students are very focused and clear with what they are studying for. The school would need to broaden their horizons and widen their interests. On the contrary, American students have varied interests and the school would need to re-focus their attention every now and then.”

He is very impressed by the talents of Singaporeans in the various musical areas, from jazz, rock, percussion to traditional Asian music.

SMU REKINDLES CITY BUZZ

Today is the grand opening day for SMU’s city campus. In the last five years, SMU has broken through many boundaries and established its own unique SMU spirit which is confident and one that has the “dare to do” and “dare to dream” attitude.

SMU received S$2m funding from the late Laurence Moh to set up the Celia Moh professorship as a gift to his wife as a 40th wedding anniversary gift. In a short span of four years, SMU has seen 8,000 college students fighting for 850 places.

Last June when SMU faculty and students moved into Bras Basah, they carried with them the heavy mission to rejuvenate the entire district and inject it with youthful energy.

If a university has the duty to groom talent for the nation and produce leaders, then SMU is in a unique position because it is saddled with two important responsibilities not experienced by the other two universities.

First, SMU is the first government-funded private university. It opened new grounds, setting up a university model for the new century. SMU proposes novel, unconventional and hitherto unheard of ideas for varsity management, curriculum design, faculty recruitment and student development.

Second, SMU is the first university to occupy a city campus with the duty of reviving the civic district.

This evening while PM Lee officiates at the city campus opening ceremony, the guests will come with the hope and assurance that the city campus is a worthy investment and that SMU has proven itself with its brilliant performance.

In 2000, when Singaporeans were disturbed that the old National Library and Stamford Road would give way to the SMU city campus, there was debate about collective memory. Minister Mah Bow Tan then asked if this district really had no fond memories for himself?

He said that from 1960 to 1966, he was a student at St Joseph’s Institution in Bras Basah which was near the old National Library. He has left his footsteps everywhere.

However, he emphasized, “My memory is not reliant just on physical structures and buildings. What is more important is the surrounding atmosphere and environment. Stamford Road will be revived with the arrival of the SMU city campus.”
Eye-catching city campus

There has been news and attention about SMU since its move into the city last year.

17 trees were transplanted into the campus green when construction of the campus was near completion after being kept in a Lim Chu Kang nursery. The campus green was designed to integrate into the open concept of the campus, garnering an award from a local landscape body.

The city campus concourse and campus green have become platforms for various art exhibitions. Famous China writer Bai Hua has also spoken in the city campus under the Lien Fung Colloquium.

One downside is the collection of rainwater in an art installation in the campus green which could a hotspot for mosquito breeding.

KNTA Architect Mr Tan Teck Kiam once said, "We hope that the completed city campus will bring life into the area especially after dark. This is because the civic district is normally sedate in the evenings. Boston and Melbourne were revived after city campuses were built.'

This evening, the invited guests would undoubtedly witness all these.