Now, a 10-minute walk to campus

SMU students set to move into residence apartments

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SINGAPORE Management University (SMU) student Claire Shen, 23, used to spend at least 90 minutes on the bus and train travelling to school from her Tampines home. Starting next semester, she can walk to class, a journey that will take her no more than 10 minutes.

Later this month, Ms Shen, a third-year psychology and marketing major, will be one of some 260 students who will move into her university’s new residence apartments, located along Prinsep Street.

“I applied to stay here because I want to spend more time on campus, and be near to all the facilities. I didn’t want to waste so much time on the train,” said Ms Shen.

The three blocks of furnished apartments were formerly Housing and Development Board flats built in 1952. After all the previous residents moved out four years ago, the Government allocated the blocks to SMU for the university to refurbish earlier this year. The Ministry of Education picked up the $13-million renovation tab.

Singaporeans like Ms Shen will be a minority at the residence apartments, as SMU is giving priority to international students, who are expected to make up more than 90 per cent of the total occupancy. Each apartment will have at least one senior student – Ms Shen being one of them – to guide the younger and newer students.

SMU counsellor and adjunct professor Timothy Hsi, who is also a “housemaster” living on site with the students, said his role as a guardian-cum-mentor would include working with the senior students to create a “vibrant living environment” for all. “This apartment is more than just a room and bed. We want the students to have fun and live together as one big community,” he said.

With most of the 48 apartment units already booked, SMU president Howard Hunter said the university is currently in talks with several government agencies to possibly allocate more flats in the vicinity to be converted into apartments.