Vision for NUS: Moving up from good to great

It aims to grow 10 great programmes in 10 years, says president

BY MARIA ALMENOAR

A UNIVERSITY that is synonymous with ground-breaking research; a place from which other top universities try to poach its researchers; an institution with a name that features consistently among the top in global rankings.

This is the 10-year vision of Professor Shih Choon Fong, president of the National University of Singapore (NUS).

Calling it a move up for the NUS from a “good” to a “great” university, Prof Shih said: “As we pursue global excellence, our hearts are set on growing 10 great programmes or departments in 10 years, or G-10-10 for short.”

Prof Shih said this yesterday at the opening ceremony and celebration of the return of NUS to the Bukit Timah Campus.

The now restored campus houses the university's Law Faculty, the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, the East Asian Institute, the Institute of South Asian Studies and the Asia Research Institute.

Outlining his vision to reporters before the event yesterday, Prof Shih said the 10 areas had not yet been decided on.

But he added that NUS would likely choose and leverage on programmes which had already been identified as emerging fields.

These include environment and water, as well as interactive digital media. These areas are currently receiving funding from the National Research Foundation.

Other areas that NUS was keen to consider were nanotechnology, quantum information science and technology, and the life sciences.

“They are typical interdisciplinary fields that promise exciting science, creating new knowledge and knowledge creating high impact on society,” he said.

He said it was likely that in the next two or three years, a number of programmes on the G-10-10 list could be identified.

As for funding, the university already sets aside about $50 million a year for research and hopes to allocate more resources to areas which are “more promising” or “gaining more recognition”.

Besides speaking about the G-10-10 vision, Prof Shih also referred to the history of the Bukit Timah campus - then called Raffles College. This was where legal education in Singapore began 50 years ago.

The college, he said, held a special place in the hearts of those “who spent long hours studying and debating in the Upper and Lower Quads”, as well as “forging lifelong friendships over teh tarik and kopi susu at Pantai Valley”.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Law S. Jayakumar was the guest of honour at the event.

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