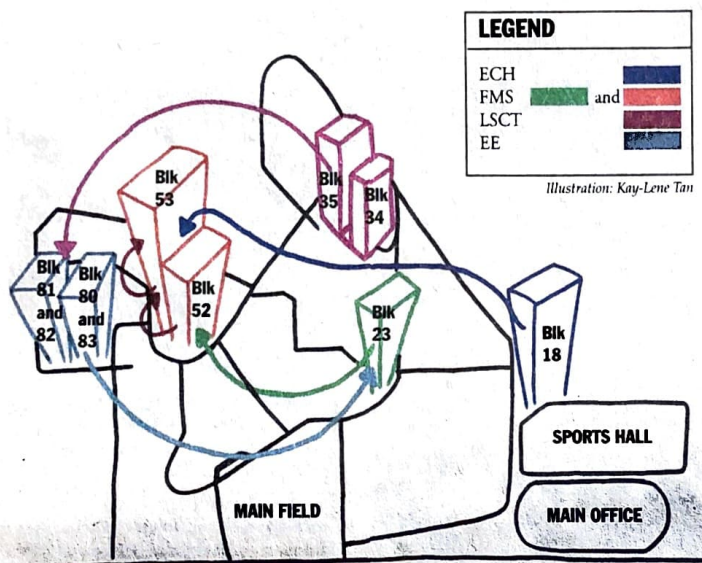


The Great NP Reshuffle

Adding to the physical changes Ngee Ann Polytechnic has undergone over the past two years, several schools have been relocated to create an enhanced polytechnic environment. REHANA JAFIR and KAY-LENE TAN find out more...



In an effort to make better use of Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) resources, staff and students of four schools were and will be relocated to new premises, causing mixed reactions among their staff and students.

Those involved are from the School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology (LSCT), the Early Childhood Education Programme (ECH), the School of Engineering (SoE) and the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS).

Mr Mui Cheng Hock, 53, Director of the Estate Management Office (EM), said the move was introduced to maximise the use of space within NP and to meet the changing focus of polytechnic education.

"Engineering used to be the core of [polytechnic] education [and] most of our resources were catered towards the engineering faculties. Right now though, the other aspects of polytechnic education are growing too, and we have to make changes to cater to other schools as well," Mr Mui explained.

He added that in line with the increasing attention given to the life sciences industry in Singapore, NP's LSCT would need more space to accommodate their new Health Sciences diploma, starting next academic year.

NP Principal, Mr Chia Mia Chiang, 52, explained that the bigger picture behind the moving was to "refresh, renew the campus and keep up with changes".

A happy outcome of the recent reorganisation of SoE, he said, was "we freed up the equivalent of four blocks for other schools to use". Facilities were then moved sequentially as one move made way for another.

What looks to the outsider as a case of office musical chairs is actually, "A systematic identifying of needs, seeking the relevant funds [from the Ministry of Education (MOE)] after putting up proposals," Mr Chia added.

Mrs Ang Beng Wah, Director of the Finance Office, revealed in an e-mail interview that NP

has spent "\$1.3 million to accommodate the changes in the School of Engineering", adding that "\$5.3 million has been set aside by MOE for the School of LSCT and FMS" relocation plans.

LSCT confirmed that at least \$1.5 million had been spent on moving the school's laboratories, while it will cost FMS about \$1.4 million to relocate their facilities, including existing television and radio studios at Block 27.

While this looks like a lot of expense, Mrs Ang said, "But compared to our original plan to construct two buildings to house FMS and LSCT, at an estimated cost of about \$33 million, the relocation seems a much more prudent move."

Mr Chia stressed that this expenditure is not at the expense of the regular running expenses of the polytechnic.

The relocation initiative began in the first half of 2003. Coinciding with the SARS zoning procedure, FMS staff moved from their office at Block 23 to both the third floor of Block 52 and sixth floor of Block 53, occupying office space vacated by IS lecturers there who were relocated to the respective schools they served. When the FMS office consolidated in level three of Block 52, the displaced IS staff moved back to their old office.

NP is more than midway through the move, with the School of LSCT, staff of Quality Management Engineering (QME) and the ECH Programme slated to move before the start of the 2006 academic year.

EE: Block 80, 81 & 83 to Block 23

While some schools get more space, others, like the Electrical Engineering (EE) Division of SoE, must adjust to a smaller site at Block 23.

EE's Deputy Director Mdm Lim Geok Choo, who is in her mid-40s, said that while it was a culture shock in the beginning, staff and students are adjusting to the new location.

"Initially, it was quite difficult for us, as we are quite used to the privacy [of Blocks 80,

81 and 83]. We even had our own study areas that were extremely spacious. We even had our own canteen almost—the SIM cafeterias were a favourite among the staff and students."

Second-year EE student Ridza Mohd Sham, 23, agreed. "The surroundings over at our old blocks were much, much better. It was really the best place. It was just us. Over here now, we have to share some facilities with other courses even." EE shares three laboratories with the Electronic & Computer Engineering (ECE) Division.

Mdm Lim also revealed that the labs at Block 23 were slightly smaller and the EE technicians had to plan meticulously to ensure the new labs could accommodate all their equipment.

Still, the EE move now puts the division closer to the heart of campus. "Back at the old blocks, we would hardly even go to the Library or the sports stadium, but now, it's so much more convenient," Mdm Lim commented.

Moving to a smaller site is no indication that the engineering divisions are suffering, she said, adding that the EE student base has always been strong, and university intake and job demand for engineering students have always been good.

"It's just right now, the interests of the students are changing, and they have a wider selection of courses to choose from."

LSCT: Blocks 34 & 35 to Blocks 80, 81 & 83

Dr Hedy Goh, a senior LSCT lecturer in her early 40s, said, "We are all looking forward to moving into our new area. Over here [Block 35], we are quite restricted with our [laboratories] and classroom spaces."

"Our Horticultural and Landscape Management (HLM) students sometimes have to make trips down to the Botanical Gardens to have tutorials, because we simply do not have the space to have our own garden [in NP]."

LSCT's new location allows for five more labs and a proposed garden at Carpark H, giving students a "complete learning environment".

Some students were not too excited about the move, but saw its necessity. Rao Danxian, 18, a second-year Biotechnology (BIO) student said, "It's necessary because [LSCT] is expanding. I was not totally excited about the move at first because I have fond memories at our old site. But the move will be good for our future students coming in."

Another second-year BIO student, Ng Yan Jun, 18, said, "I initially did not like the idea at all. [Blk 80, 81, 83] are isolated and it will cause a lot [to rebuild] our greenhouses at [blk 34]. But now I realise we'll have a better food selection [with] Galileo cafe and the SIM cafeteria."

FMS: Block 23 to Block 53 Level 6 to Block 52 Level 3, to Block 53 Level 7

FMS staff may finally have a place to call home after moving three times in two years.

Some of the staff, originally working at Block 23, moved to Block 53, level six in 2003. The following semester, they joined most of their colleagues at the third floor of Block 52.

This semester, that group moved once more,

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In a State of Flux



LOOKING BEYOND GRADUATION: Working, learning and growing together, Team Tribune 2005

BY BRENDAN ANG
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) seems to be in a constant state of change. A new cohort begins their Polytechnic life every year as another one leaves.

In less than a week, final-year students will bid goodbye to NP as they graduate with their diplomas after three years of tears, sweat and (hopefully not) blood.

Over the past year, Tribune has documented NP's many changes, physical and otherwise – everything from its curriculum to façade, from news of a possible fast food outlet to the huge savings on the NP electricity bill, to the construction of the Convention Centre and

Teaching Hub, and much more.

And things continue to change. Even now, as Tribune goes to print, a few schools across campus have moved to new locations and some others are slated to move later in the year.

Apart from physical transitions, NP has also moved towards an even more open learning environment with staff and students being able to access course materials from other modules and even other schools, like NAFA.

Change is a part of our lives. While there is security in living a predictable life, the unpredictable events are the ones that force us to grow. Each member of the Tribune team has learnt to work with one other, dealing with each other's schedules and personalities. One has to be flexible when working in a pressure cooker environment like Tribune but it has also forced us to be 'hot' and ready for the job market.

Having to search for news around campus for an entire year, we have evolved from being almost ignorant about NP to knowing it like the back of our hands. The names of courses, divisions and Co-Curricular Activities (CCA) now roll off our tongues easily.

Our goal was to be the voice of the campus and this was only made possible with the many

staff and students who crossed our paths. Our thanks to everyone at NP who has grown more open towards us as a campus newspaper. Over the past year, we have had enhanced communication channels with the Students' Union (NPSU), which led to us covering more student-related stories and issues.

As the academic year comes to a close, and so too, our polytechnic lives, we will go our separate ways, some to study, some to work, but for about half of us, to serve the country. Nothing is certain as we leave the comforts of school, but our experiences here have certainly steered us for the outside world.

Just like news on campus is ever-changing and always exciting, we leave NP knowing that things never stand still – in school, and in life. From the very first day we enrolled to our very last day in school, Ngee Ann Polytechnic and our lives are evolving. We are honoured to be part of this constant change and its entire experience, and we wish NP all the best.

Look out for the next issue of Tribune in July. A new team, a new direction, a new Tribune.

Yours Sincerely,
Team Tribune 2005

Tribune is a publication by third-year Print Journalism students of the Diploma in Mass Communication course in Ngee Ann Polytechnic

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Tribune, April 2005

Getting Discounts With Your Student Card

BY GARY LIM
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students are not grabbing the opportunity to save some money by utilising the discounts under the yearly Prestige scheme implemented by the NP Students' Union (NPSU).

By flashing the NP student card before payment, one can get up to 40 per cent discount at outlets run by 53 companies all over Singapore, including the Muslim-Thai food chain Al-Ameen and Toni & Guy Hairdressing, both popular with students. The benefits also extend to dental care and pet care.

The scheme is in its fourth year since its launch in 2001 and its aim is still to "get as many privileges as we can for the students", explained Sophia Chen Ying Yu, 19, a final-year Electronic & Computer Engineering (ECE) student, NPSU Welfare Secretary and project manager for the Prestige scheme 2005.

However, most students could only vaguely recall the scheme, citing lack of publicity and the impracticality of bringing around the discount booklet that lists the stores and their discounts.

Madelyne Kok Shu Hui, 19, a final-year InfoComm Technology (ICT) student added, "People will not really take notice of all the shops in the small [Prestige] booklet." At the same time, she said that participating shops also do not make their scheme known, so NP students are not aware of their discount privileges when they visit them.

Fazly Jumadi, 20, a final-year Mechanical Engineering (ME) student, felt that most students will be "too lazy" to refer to the Prestige scheme booklet to check if a shop is a partner of the discount scheme.

Still, NPSU is determined to make the Prestige scheme work, despite the glitches. For instance, only eight out of 2004's companies renewed their participation for 2005.

Desiree Tan Yee Hui, 19, Prestige Card project manager for 2003 and 2004, revealed that not many companies have renewed their

participation for the past few years. Most of them said it was because of poor response from students, while others went out of business.

Sophia mentioned that there were instances where students were pointed to "lousy" deals. She cited an example of some students going to a gift shop only to be led by the staff to discounted items which they thought were unattractive.

For the scheme this year, NPSU worked hard to secure 53 corporate partners, including the eight that renewed participation, since November 2004. They achieved more than their target of 50 companies. Most of the companies are new to the Prestige scheme.

Sophia reiterated that student feedback was needed so that the NPSU could target companies that the students wanted. The NPSU is aiming for quality, not quantity, she said, adding that the union had yet to get enough "quality" sponsors or established companies as the task of getting them to join was challenging.

"It's very hard to get big companies," said Sophia. She recounted how a popular clothes chain would only participate in the scheme if its direct competitor took part.

According to Sophia, silver accessories shop Perlini's Silver and street clothes store 77th Street were also among the companies that viewed competition with business rivals as their main motivation for participating.

All is not lost, though. While the rejections from big companies were "very disappointing and very hurtful", Sophia managed to convince established companies like GNC, a health supplements company, and ice creamery Venezia Gelato Italiano to come in as partners.

"Small shops are easier to approach than big companies [who] tend to decline as there are constraints," she said, implying that decisions had to be made carefully by larger companies as they have an impact on their image and reputation. On the other hand, small shop owners or new start-ups joined the scheme as an opportunity to promote their brand.

"I am giving it a try to see how it goes," said Mr Terence Ong Hock Kim, 29, owner of



CLUB PRESTIGE: Students can enjoy up to 40 per cent discount at some stores with their student card. (Picture: Gary Lim)

My Shop, a new women's apparel store at Bugis Village. Mr Ong is offering a 10 per cent discount on all items in his shop except mini skirts. He added that his main aim was to publicise his shop and increase sales.

Besides having an attractive list of external companies, ME student Fazly felt the scheme should extend to services on campus. "Why don't they use it in school?" he asked, saying that being able to use the Prestige scheme when buying computer accessories and laptops, and using photocopying services would be beneficial to students and shops here.

Students' past grouses over the lack of publicity for the Prestige scheme spurred Sophia's team to better publicise it this year. They organised the Prestige Road Show at the Atrium from 16 February to 18 February, where 12,000 Prestige booklets detailing the participating shops and respective discounts were handed out. There was also a bazaar of 20 stalls, most of which were among the 53 companies that had joined the scheme this year.

A game show and lucky draw were some of the road show highlights, with Creative Technology and Leisure Quest sponsoring the main prizes of MP3 players and Wild Wild Wer theme park passes respectively. Goodie bags were also given out to students who spent \$10 and more. ■

Event Listings

BY BERNARD LIM
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Chocolate Talk and Tasting Party

Learn more about the history of chocolate, the growing of cocoa beans, the process of chocolate making from the people at The Cocoa Tree, a chocolate shop. Participants will also get to sample a range of chocolates and buy some at discounted prices.

Date: 2 April

Time: 10am – 1pm

Venue: Ngee Ann Alumni Clubhouse

Prices: \$20 (NAA member & spouse)
\$25 (Non-NAA member)

Virtuoso XII @Victoria Concert Hall by NP Strings

Enjoy an evening of classics with NP Strings as they perform Antonio Vivaldi's 'Four Seasons', Scott Joplin's 'The Entertainer', Johann Sebastian Bach's 'Gavotte' and more at their annual performance. NP Strings are performing at the Victoria Concert Hall for the first time.

Date: 10 April

Venue: Victoria Concert Hall

Prices: \$10

Singapore Robotic Games 2005

The Singapore Robotic Games 2005, also known as the Robot Olympics of Singapore, is a chance to witness competitors from various tertiary institutions pit their robotic skills against others in 14 exciting events.

Date: 3 May – 5 May

Venue: NP Convention Centre

NP Youth Expedition Projects

The School of Engineering (SoE) is organising a Youth Expedition Project (YEP) to Sumatra, Indonesia to provide help to the victims of the Asian Tsunami. Some 60 students are headed to Banda Aceh. At the same time, 175 other students will be going to Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, East Malaysia and Cambodia for other YEPs.

For more information, visit <http://www.np.edu.sg/sdar/>

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

to the seventh floor of Block 53. Despite having had advance notice of the move, some staff and students still felt harried with the timing of the shift in January, hot on the heels of the NP Open House, the common test week, as well as the Singapore Youth & Media Conference (SYMC) organised by FMS students.

Director of FMS Dr Victor Valbuena, in his late 50s, explained that the shift had to take place during the break for very good reasons.

"There are so many relocations going on, and we had to follow a timetable [of relocation] which concerns other schools. If we don't [shift], there will be implications of holding back schools [in the relocation plan]," he explained.



WHAT A LOAD: While necessary, moving took a toll on staff, students and the movers. (Picture: Chen Wei Lin)

On top of moving the staff, he also had to worry about extensively renovating the former ME workshop on level one and relocating the facilities such as television studios, the radio studio and a sound stage all in good time for the next academic year. [See FMS Under One Roof story on Page 4 for more information.]

There was also the issue of needing to spend the MOE grant for the move by 31 March, the end of the 2004/2005 financial year, said Ms Kristin Suaw, the Administrative Manager of FMS, who is in her early 40s.

Her impression of staff reaction, however, was that, "Overall, everyone is cooperative and the moving is quite smooth."

Peter Li Jianliang, 23, was perplexed by the numerous shifts of the FMS office.

The final-year Mass Communication student (MCM) said, "[The FMS] office has shifted three times within the same building. We are mass communicators, not nomadic tribesmen."

Others like Koh Kuan Hua, 20, a second-year Film, Sound & Video (FSV) student was pleased with the move, noting that, "It's much more convenient, as now, our lecture theatres are closer to our work stations and our editing rooms. All our facilities have become much more accessible and we don't have to travel all over the campus just to get our work done."

What's next?

Mr Chia said that the next to move under the plan are QME, into space vacated by LSCT, and ECH, most likely into Block 52.

Mr Mui said that the move for ECH, possibly the last involving the academic schools in this phase of planning, is scheduled to be completed by the start of the 2006 academic year.

After that happens, NP is likely to see most of the student clubs and societies being concentrated around Block 18, where ECH is currently sited, added Mr Chia.

This would bring them closer to the sports facilities of the campus, making these more accessible to them. ■

NP-NAFA Tie-up to Marry Technology With Design

BY RAJA NUR ASHIKIN
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In a bid to integrate Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) technological expertise with the artistic flair of the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), the two schools signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 15 February allowing for student and staff collaboration.

According to Mr Choo Thiam Siew, President of NAFA, the main reason for this partnership is that "the boundaries between applied arts and technology are becoming less distinct".

He added that products now must be both technologically sophisticated and "aesthetically appealing", believing that a good blend of both aspects, will give products an edge.

NP Principal, Mr Chia Mia Chiang, 52, said in his address at the signing ceremony, "We provide the platform for our students and staff to cross-fertilise their ideas across disciplines and the integration of left and right brain thinking."

Mr Chia added that the collaboration will benefit NP students from the new Diploma in Product Design and Innovation (PDI), training them to create "products that look good, work well and sell in the market".

NP lecturers can expect training in areas like Art Appreciation, Sculpture Design and Making, and Graphic Design, while NAFA staff become skilled in areas such as Computer Aided Design, Rapid Prototyping and Product Design.



TECHNOLOGY MEETS ART: NP Principal Chia Mia Chiang and President of NAFA Choo Thiam Siew strive to bring aesthetic elements to technological innovation. (Picture: Raja Nur Ashikin)

Students from both institutions will also participate in joint projects like producing space-saving furniture in July.

As details are being worked out, students in NP and NAFA don't know what to expect.

Vincent Lin, 21, a second-year School of Visual Arts student from NAFA said, "We are only an Art school. I think it's important to teach and learn from each other in order to produce better things."

Nicole Watt, 18, a first-year Electronic & Computer Engineering (ECE) student from SoE admitted, "... merging art and technology will

probably make the product that we come up with look better."

One such "art meets technology" innovation introduced during NP and NAFA presentation was NP's Smart Vending Machine, which dispenses printer cartridges and boasts minimalist design and ergonomic features. It also features technological advances such as cashless payment as well as central and remote monitoring.

Mr Chia added, "We look forward to the results of engineers and artists working together... Through this synergistic partnership, they can be catalysts to start a new creative renaissance." ■

Young Talents Market Their Life Sciences Products



POTENTIAL YOUNG SCIENTISTS: The Government's push for excellence in the life sciences has paid off for the winning bio-entrepreneur team from Dunman High School. (Picture: Gillian Wu)

BY GILLIAN WU
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The third Life Sciences Product Business Plan Competition saw budding secondary school bio-entrepreneurs invent products that could one day become commercially viable.

The competition, jointly organised by the Schools of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology (LSCT) and Business & Accountancy (BA), drew 55 teams from 37 secondary schools.

LSCT focussed on research and development in life sciences products while BA trained participants in the business aspects.

Dr Phang Chiew Hun, Deputy Director of LSCT, who is in her early 40s, said, "It is a form of outreach to the secondary schools and also to instil... the need to be entrepreneurial."

The competition began on 12 January with participating teams each submitting an executive summary report to propose their business ideas. This led to the semi-finals a week later at the Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) Convention Centre with a "Show and Tell" session, where each five-member team presented their life sciences invention for judging.

Eventually, six teams, including Raffles Girls' School, Singapore Chinese Girls' School, Tanjong Katong Secondary School and Ngee Ann Secondary School, and their varied inventions make it to the finals.

The response to the finals was overwhelming. The 450-strong audience proved too large a crowd for Lecture Theatre 26, forcing some students to sit along the aisles.

The Dunman High School and Hwa Chong

teams emerged winners with their novel and practical ideas. Each team won a cash prize of \$1,000.

"Our participants are getting better and we see an increasing number of groups participating. Furthermore, the judges of this year's competition [awarded] two top prizes as they felt the standard was very high," shared Dr Phang.

The Dunman High School team investigated the effects of natural food substances, such as lemon and orange, on inhibiting the growth of bread mould.

"It's been a good learning experience for them. A lot of teamwork is involved [and] they learn how to resolve problems, tolerate and accept each other," said Mrs Shu Yuen, Dunman High's teacher-in-charge, who declined to reveal her age. Chua Si Hui, 16, the school's team leader agreed, "The competition was a good experience and my team mates and I have enjoyed exploring life sciences, it's fun!"

The Hwa Chong team, on the other hand, looked at ornamental fish and how to remove nitrogenous wastes that result in many fish deaths when they are transported.

As these inventions have some level of commercial viability, Dr Sushila Chang, Director of LSCT warned bio-entrepreneurs to "protect their ideas or inventions with their knowledge of intellectual property" and not show off.

With the competition having yet another successful run, Dr Chang, who is in her early 40s, said the event was "reassuring", as she encouraged entrepreneurship among young Singaporeans in the field of life sciences.

"Life sciences is the buzz these days. It is a major pillar for the new economy and there is a call for entrepreneurs," Dr Phang added. ■

FMS Under One Roof

BY GARY LIM
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Staff and students of the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS) will have their production facilities and equipment storage rooms clustered in Blocks 52 and 53, instead of being spread across the campus in Blocks 27 and 53, by the new academic year.

The Principal of Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) added that FMS had been allocated about \$2 million by the Ministry of Education (MOE) for this relocation/refurbishment, the highest development grant FMS has received in the last five years, said Mr Chia Mia Chiang, 52.

"The grant is high as FMS is one of the most expensive departments [in NP] to maintain," said Ms Kristin Suaw Lay Ang, Administrative Manager of FMS. She added that the television and radio facilities that students use are difficult to relocate, as well as, test for workability.

The shift includes the consolidation of television and radio equipment cages, store rooms for equipment and the Mass Communication (MCM) cage in Block 27 and the Film, Sound & Video (FVS) cage, mostly at the former ME Workshop at Block 52 level 1.

The television journalism studio and the sound stage, currently at Blocks 27 and 54

respectively, will also be relocated to the same place. This will make room for the creation of a new television studio at the current sound stage at Block 54.

FMS Director Dr Victor Valbuena, who is in his late 50s, shared that FMS students can expect better coordination and greater communication with staff because of the consolidation. There will also be more efficient usage, maintenance and monitoring of facilities and equipment.

Lee Fengnian, 20, a second-year MCM student remarked that the shift would also give students of MCM and FSV, both FMS courses, "a sense of belonging".

The consolidation of facilities to a single location will also save time. "With everything under one roof, students don't have to run from Block 27 to Block 53," said Ms Suaw. "There can be more interaction [between MCM and FSV students] and maybe more creativity."

These major infrastructure changes were made to support the recently revised curriculum and timed to occur before the start of the next academic year.

Dr Valbuena promised that it will be some time before the next period of "renewal and assessment of curriculum" will necessitate any further changes.

"We have a good setup now and things are starting to settle in," he said.

IS Prepares Students For The Workplace

BY CELIA CHAN
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The School of Interdisciplinary Studies' (IS) recent ISconnects! The Workplace workshops were aimed at helping Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) final-year students make the transition from school to working life.

Ms Elizabeth Mary Thorarajoo, 44, an IS lecturer who helped organise ISconnects! said, "Most of the third-year students are going straight into the workforce. So, by holding a seminar, we hope to help them understand the job market well and get a good perspective on it."

This is the first time that IS is catering an event, within the annual workshops, specifically for graduating students. The seminars were conducted at the ISpark studio at Block 53, level 4, and Lecture Theatre 26 between 16 February and 26 February.

There were 13 different workshops in all, categorised under three main themes: Dress Smart, which helped students work on their image, Search Smart, which guided students on how to select a suitable job, and Work Smart, which taught students how to apply their personal skills in their jobs.

Guest speakers engaged to lead the workshops included past and current IS lecturers with relevant industry knowledge. NP graduates were also invited to share their experiences.

The overall coordinator of ISconnects! The

Workplace, lecturer Mrs Esther Goh-Tan Joo Kee explained that the idea for the workshops came about because while students often had their reasons for wanting a job, they rarely thought about what employers wanted in their staff. "We want people from the industry to come in and share their industry perspective so that students will get a balanced point of view."

Response from participating students was good and Mrs Goh, who declined to reveal her age, said, "The talks have been pretty well attended and students have really benefited. We've received positive comments."

She added that, judging from the good response, IS might bring back the event with the same theme next year.

Students who attended the workshops agreed that they had gained from it.

Final-year Electronic & Computing Engineering (ECE) student, Wee Zong Ren, 25, who was initially apprehensive about attending the workshops, conceded that he had picked up some important pointers.

"The talk prepared me for working life in the sense that now, I have an idea of what to expect. Even though I haven't experienced the job interview or working life yet, I can [anticipate] what's going to happen," he said.

However, Zong Ren also brought up how the workshops could be improved. He said, "[There's] a lot of talking so it gets dry. Maybe they can have more colourful pictures or Powerpoint presentations."

Keeping Abreast of Cancer

BY JASMINE TEO
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) first Breast Cancer Awareness Day drove home an important message to female students and staff. That the killer disease can strike anyone, anytime.

The event held at the Atrium on 7 February, was jointly organised by final-year Mass Communication (MCM) students taking the Conventions & Exhibitions module, and the Breast Cancer Foundation (BCF), a non-profit organisation promoting breast cancer awareness.

In Singapore, an average of three new cases of breast cancer are diagnosed each day. While the event was targeted at NP staff aged 40 and above as they are most at risk of developing the disease, Ms V Prema, 40, manager of Awareness & Education at BCF, said that they also "did not want to leave out the younger ones".

In a bid to attract NP students, colourfully painted murals were brought in and campus radio station Radio Heartwave was also roped in to help liven the atmosphere.

There were display boards telling people about breast cancer and video screenings on how to do Breast Self Examination (BSE). Female students could watch the video in privacy under an enclosed tent.

The organisers took an interactive approach by teaching participants how to accurately detect lumps through the use of breast models. The first 100 participants to come forward received a goodie bag sponsored by Wacoal, while those who attempted the breast cancer awareness survey were entered into a lucky draw and received a yellow scented candle as a souvenir.

There was also a Pink Ribbon Treasure Hunt, where participants had to search for five pink ribbons – the international symbol representing awareness and hope for women living with breast cancer – hidden around the Atrium. The lucky winner won a TianPo pendant worth \$188.

This turned out to be Tay Kai Boon, 18,



A WOMAN'S BREAST FRIEND: The BCF offered subsidised mammograms on campus. (Picture: Jasmone Teo)

a first-year student from Early Childhood Education (ECH), who took part because she was "attracted by the prize and free gifts".

To reach out to staff who are 40 and above, a booth was also set up for them to sign up for mammography screening in the BCF's Mammobus parked at the Atrium. Each screening would have cost them \$105 but with the subsidy, they only needed to pay \$50.

The reaction from students was generally positive with 80 percent of the goodie bags given out. Kaithri Krishnaveni, 20, one of the student organisers, said that the poorer response could be due to "the two-week [study and common test] break and the Lunar New Year, which took place along the same week as the event".

Since the event took place on the first day after the break, "very few people seemed to know about the event". Still, "the girls who came were quite cool about it, even when it comes to touching the breast models in public".

A handful of male students also visited the exhibition booth and filled up a paper quiz. Antti Vaananen, 25, a Finnish exchange student from Mechanical Engineering (ME), said he "did not even look [at what was on the posters]" and "just did the quiz for fun".

Strangely, it was the female students who were too embarrassed to get closer. A final-year student from Building Services Engineering (BSE), who declined to reveal her name, said she was "scared of what my friends would think if they spot[ted] me at this exhibition".

Monitoring Our Hearts

BY VICKNESH VARAN
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One lecturer and five academic researchers from the Division of Electronic & Computer Engineering (ECE) are working on Singapore's first cardiac monitoring device to help heart disease patients.

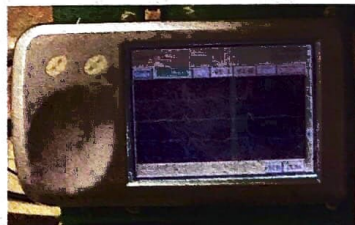
ECE students first conceived the idea of the Personal Cardiac Telemonitoring device (PCT) 10 years ago as a final-year project. However, its manufacture only started two years ago when ECE received funding from the Economic Development Board (EDB), A*Star and the Singapore Totalisator Board.

Mr Johnny Chee, 52, Principal Lecturer of ECE and the leader of the team working on the PCT, explained that it was only two years ago, when Nextwave Biomedical Pte Ltd, a company that designs and develops medical devices, approached Mr Chee that they agreed to commercialise the PCT.

"One of the leading causes of deaths is cardiovascular disorders," said Mr Chee. According to the Ministry of Health, coronary heart disease is the second highest cause of death in Singapore. "If we can come up with equipment that can alleviate this, we might save some lives," added Mr Chee.

Mr Damian Lim, 30, Nextwave's Business Manager for the PCT project, revealed that his company is planning to sell the device to hospitals for approximately \$2,000. He explained that it would then be up to the hospital to either sell or rent the PCT to patients.

Patients at risk of coronary heart disease can use the PCT to monitor their heart signals daily without visiting their cardiologist. The cardiologist will decide beforehand how often



HEART TO HEART: The Personal Cardiac Telemonitoring device (PCT) helps heart patients keep tabs on their condition. (Courtesy of Mr Johnny Chee)

the patient has to use the device.

According to Mr Chee, the PCT, which is as light as a Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), will record the electrical signals from heart contractions via electrodes stuck on the body. The heart signals will then be saved and displayed as waveforms on the PCT's LCD screen.

In order to get information about their current heart condition, patients upload the PCT readings onto the website via a USB port.

The website, to be managed by Nextwave Biomedical, will generate a report within minutes to let patients know if their heart condition is stable or nearing a critical stage.

These reports will also be sent via e-mail to the patient's cardiologist, who will contact them for a check-up, if needed.

The local medical community has expressed interest in the PCT. The National Heart Centre will organise a six-month clinical trial later this year, on selected patients.

"Ngee Ann Poly has the capabilities and expertise [to] come up with some interesting innovations that are useful to society," Mr Chee added. "I think this raises the profile of Ngee Ann and shows that it is a technically credible organisation."

Students to Get Better Service And Prices For Notebooks

BY KARIN XIAO
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students will soon be able to buy a greater variety of notebook models at competitive prices and enjoy better after-sales service when the new notebook tender takes effect next academic year.

In all, eight companies responded to the Teaching & Learning Centre's (TLC) invitation to tender: Toshiba, IBM, Hewlett-Packard (HP), Fujitsu, Dell, Acer, NEC and Apple. The last four are bidding for the first time. Of these eight, at least two vendors will be selected.

The existing tender held by Toshiba and IBM will end on 31 March and the new vendors will take over on 1 April. The tender results were not known at press time.

The new tender offers more benefits to students. For one, it aims to procure notebooks at the lowest prices for NP students. "We try to get competitively-priced and well-known notebooks for students," said Mr Ch'ng Beng Hin, 53, Deputy Director of TLC.

He added, "Notebooks have become a commodity. So, this time, we evaluated the vendors based on the services they can provide for the students."

For example, the new tender requires vendors to provide after-sales service such as notebook repairs, either on campus or directly at the customer's home. As students spend only about 30 weeks a year in school, providing direct customer service will be especially useful to them during the holidays.

Mr Ch'ng explained, "Students always crowd at the Computer Service Centre at the start of the semester. This service would add tremendous value for the students."

The new vendors will also be required to

service the notebooks by the next business day. If they are unable to do so, they have to loan the student a replacement notebook for free until the student's own notebook is fixed.

Currently, students have to wait up to three business days to get their notebooks fixed. And they will only get a replacement notebook after the three days, if their notebook is still not repaired by then.

Mr Ch'ng compared the new and more competitive services to those offered by mobile phone companies. "In the past, you'll just buy the most fanciful phone. Now, you'll look for one that offers good service or you'll walk away."

There is a downside, however. The new services are only available to students who purchase a notebook from the school vendors from the next semester.

Muhammad Zaid bin Razman, 17, a first-year Mechatronic Engineering (ME) student who bought his notebook from school, felt the new tender was unfair to students who had already bought their laptops.

"It will only help the first-year students coming in," he said. "That's because the school has the condition that only one laptop can be bought by [each] student in school."

Zaid suggested that the school change the one-notebook-per-student policy to a trade-in scheme where existing notebooks can be traded in for new ones with a cash top-up to make up the price difference.

Mr Ch'ng clarified that students can buy more than one notebook from school. But the subsequent one will not come with software, due to legal issues. "The school buys software licences according to the number of students in school. So, if the students buy another notebook, they will have two copies of the software."

Students who bought their notebooks during



NEW NOTEBOOK TENDER: Notebook buyers in the next academic semester will enjoy more options and better service. [Picture: Chen Wei Li]

the previous tender will still be able to get their notebook serviced in school. However, the existing service terms, such as three business days for repairs, will still apply for those notebooks.

And unlike the old tender, where each vendor was only allowed to offer four "approved" notebook models to students, vendors will now be able to offer more models.

Mr Ch'ng added that the school will approve these new models quickly to allow vendors to compete with each other "on the spot" as they rush to meet their competitors' prices.

Muhammad Dzul Fazly Ahmad, 18, a second-year Marine & Offshore Technology (MOT) student was in favour of this. "First of all, the price wars [between the vendors] will help bring down the price. Secondly, the vendors will come up with other laptops to compete with the

rivals... so they will be forced to provide better laptops to the students."

Goh Wee Wah, 18, a first-year Building & Real Estate Management (BEM) student, did not buy a notebook from school due to the limited choices the current vendors offered. However, he said that if the notebook he liked was available to students next semester under the new tender, he would consider buying it. "But [I] will still have to refer to the price," he said.

Mr Ch'ng revealed that he also hoped to offer a polling system for students to rate the quality of their notebooks.

Getting such feedback would be useful for new students who want opinions on which notebook model to buy.

"This will be something from the students to the students," he added. ■

More Industrial Exposure For Students

BY KARIN XIAO
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As early as the next academic year, the Industrial Attachment Programme (IAP), a six-month internship previously offered to 16 courses in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), will be implemented in eight more courses, replacing the original two-month Industrial Training Programme (ITP).

While ITP is done in the second year, IAP is undertaken by students in their final year.

Tribune found out that the Schools of Business & Accountancy (BA), Film & Media Studies (FMS), InfoComm Technology (ICT) and Engineering's (SoE) Building & Environment (BE) and Quality Management & Engineering (QME) courses will be making the switch. The other schools and divisions will be unaffected.

This decision was made independently by the respective schools to provide students with more industry-based experience as well as to give them more options in their course of study.

School of Business & Accountancy (BA)

Currently: IAP is only offered to Accountancy (ACC) and Business Information Technology (BIT) students in the final semester of their third year. It is compulsory for ACC students, but BIT students can choose either IAP or ITP in their second year during the semester breaks.

Banking & Financial Services (BFS) and Business Studies (BS) students all do ITP in their second year.

From Academic Year 2005/2006: IAP will be available to all BA students on an optional basis, to be done in the final semester of their third year, according to Mr Paul Tan, Cooperative Education Manager from BA, who is in his 40s.

How the syllabus will be affected: "In terms of professional training or the rigour of the diploma, [students] won't be missing out on anything," said Mr Tan. Students who choose not to do IAP in their final semester will, instead, take five BA modules in place of IAP.

What students say: "I think it's better as some students may want to go out to work in the industry and some students may want to stay in school to study," Lim Sinhui, 18, a second-year BIT student.

School of Engineering (SoE)

Currently: All Building & Environment (BE) students in SoE do either IAP or an In-House Project (IHP) in their final year. QME students do ITP in their second year.

From Academic Year 2005/2006: No change until the 2006/2007 academic year. Mr K S Periasami, 57, Coordinator of IAP and IHP, said in a phone interview that IAP and IHP changes were in progress and were not confirmed.

For QME, there is also no change until the 2006/2007 academic year where students will undertake IAP. At press time, QME was unavailable for further comment.

What students say: "I think it's too long for a

student but it's also good because you can gain more experience." Joyce Beh, 21, a final-year QME student.

School of Film & Media Studies (FMS)

Currently: All FMS students undertake ITP in their second year.

From Academic Year 2005/2006: No change until academic year 2006/2007, where students can choose between IAP or an Industry-Based Project (IBP) in either semester of their final year. Mr Herald Bangras, 41, Lecturer and ITP/IAP Coordinator for Mass Communication (MCM), said in an e-mail reply that IBP can be "any project that is done in the school or organised by the school".

Why: Feedback from companies in the industry. "Companies prefer to take in interns whose internship periods are longer, [for example], four to six months," said Mr Bangras.

How the syllabus will be affected: According to Mr Patrick Cheng, 38, Lecturer and IAP Coordinator for Film, Sound & Video (FSV), FSV students doing IAP or IBP will be given "20-odd credits to offset for that semester". Mr Cheng also said they will do less modules, with some being "waived". Actual changes have not been confirmed.

What students say: "While you might learn more on the job and even get to take up bigger responsibilities for a six-month attachment, I find that two months is sufficient for you to gain

experience in the real working environment. A two-month attachment also gives you more time to learn in school." Vivien de Rozario, 20, a second-year FSV student.

School of InfoComm Technology (ICT)

Currently: All ICT students undergo ITP in their second year and take up a Final Year Project (FYP) in their final year.

From Academic Year 2005/2006: ICT will merge ITP and FYP into a five-month Internship Project. "The students will do their final project in an external company," said Mr Terence Choo, 40, Lecturer and Deputy Manager of ICT.

Why: "This internship will provide the work experience that many of our students who are doing their current final-year project will not get," said Mr Chan Kim Loy, 50, a Senior Lecturer who is in charge of IAP. He also added that it is being implemented as part of the overall restructuring of the course.

How the syllabus will be affected: Mr Chan reassured concerned students that "the change to internship project does not affect the syllabus". He added, "Essentially, students will still be doing the required number of modules in the course."

What students say: "It may be quite tough. Some people might feel that it is difficult to work and do FYP. The company won't hire you just to do a project. They will definitely ask you to do other stuff as well." Madelyne Kok, 19, a final-year Information Technology (IT) student. ■

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GES 2004 Shows NP Grads in Good Demand

BY KARIN XIAO
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Graduating students of Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) have a better sense of how much pay they can command with data from the Graduate Employment Survey (GES) 2004 released on 25 February.

One of the aims of the GES is "to help students and graduates [make] informed employment and career, and study decisions", said Ms Lynn Foo, Manager of the Organisational Development (OD) Office, who is in charge of the GES.

"The Graduate Employment Survey is conducted to find out the employment status of our recent graduates and their views on [the] NP learning experience," she added. The GES is jointly conducted by four polytechnics: Nanyang, Ngee Ann, Singapore and Temasek; it attracted over 9,000 respondents last year.

Ms Foo, who is in her 30s, added, "Both current students and graduates have a better feel of the job market, in terms of the employment rate as well as the starting pay." This year's cohort of graduating students is mostly concerned about being able to find a job after NP.

Noorzakiah Bte Ismail, 20, a final-year Chemical Engineering (CE) student, hoped to find a well-paying job after graduation. "My main concern is whether I [can] find a job that I like doing. And of course, the pay matters. It's a mixture of being scared and nervous because I'm uncertain [of] what the future might bring."

Andy Soh, 19, a final-year Building & Real Estate Management (BEM) student is hoping to further his studies overseas with an advanced diploma after he completes his National Service (NS), but may be forced to seek employment.

"If I really cannot find a job, there is always an option to sign on [with] the Army. But that is my last alternative."

However, according to GES 2004, students have little reason to be pessimistic. The survey revealed that nine out of 10 graduates last year found a job within five months of graduating,

with over seven in 10 getting a full-time job.

Male students headed for National Service (NS) in coming months can also take heart. The survey found that nine in 10 males found jobs post-NS, with eight in 10 finding full-time employment.

The 2004 findings are similar to the 2003 results. Then, the GES found that 8.9 out of 10, and 9.2 out of 10 economically active fresh, and post-NS graduates found jobs respectively, indicating a consistent demand for polytechnic graduates in the workforce.

Aside from being able to find a job, students were also worried about salary.

"I am concerned about what kind of experiences I can draw from work and how much salary I can earn," said Solomon Tham, 24, a final-year Business Studies (BS) student who completed his National Service (NS) before entering NP.

The GES 2004 showed a slight drop in the average monthly gross salary for fresh and post-NS graduates.

Graduates in 2004 earned about \$50 less than their 2003 counterparts, with an average monthly gross salary of \$1,618. The pay difference was more significant for post-NS graduates. They earned \$1,946 in 2004, a drop of \$196 in average monthly gross salary from the 2003 cohort.

But students should not be too concerned. Ms Foo noted that the "slight dip in gross salaries", tended to be balanced by an "increase in basic salaries".

Gross salary is basic pay plus overtime pay and commission, implying that while the variable 'extras' that led to a higher pay cheque were lower, basic fixed pay was now higher.

Looking at basic salary alone, GES 2004 showed that graduates received an average monthly basic salary of \$1,505 in 2004, compared to \$1,458 in 2003, up by \$47. The average basic monthly salary of post-NS graduates, however, increased marginally from \$1,756 in 2003 to \$1,763 in 2004, a mere \$7.

"This shows that polytechnic graduates are still earning a respectable salary," said Ms Foo.

Students like Sherlyn Lim, 19, a final-year

BS student, however, are not worried about their job prospects. Instead, they are more concerned about deciding what to do after they graduate. "There are so many jobs available every day [in] the classifieds," she said. "I am more worried that I don't know what kind of job I want to do or what kind of industry I want to go into."

For students who are unsure about what to do after graduation, Ms Foo said that the GES also showed the average pay people in different industries earned. This could help graduates decide which field they wanted to work in, if salary is an important factor.

She also stressed the importance of students' participation in the GES and made a call for current students to be responsive when the survey

comes around again. "It is very important that our current eligible graduating cohort of full-time diploma students make an effort to respond to our next survey... [in] November this year," she said.

Noting that it was the healthy response of the last graduating batch that resulted in current graduating students getting a good picture of the employment market, she added, "Their active participation is crucial to ensure that the results we bring to them will be accurate and reflective of the true market situation."

Students can access the GES 2004 findings at http://www.np.edu.sg/corpcomm/media_newsrm/release_index.html#news6. ■

**Starting Salaries of Polytechnic Graduates
in 2004 According to the Graduate Employment Survey**

Category Discipline	Fresh Graduates	Post-National Service Poly Graduates
	Gross Pay	Gross Pay
Accountancy, Business, Finance & Law	\$ 1,555	\$ 1,953
Built Environment	\$1,550	\$1,880
Chemical & Life Sciences	\$1,637	\$2,017
Engineering (Electrical & Electronic)	\$1,628	\$1,953
Engineering (Mechanical & Manufacturing)	\$1,697	\$2,014
Information Technology	\$1,581	\$1,830
Maritime	\$1,665	\$2,015
Media & Design	\$1,592	\$1,854
Health Sciences	\$1,748	\$1,758
All Courses	\$1,618	\$1,946

Source: NP Organisational Development Office

NP Renews Its Singapore Quality Class Status

BY GILLIAN WU
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Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) was re-certified a member of the Singapore Quality Class (SQC) in February, having continuously met the award's standards since 1999, with a long-standing goal to constantly improve as a business.

The SQC is awarded by SPRING Singapore (Standards, Productivity and Innovation Board) every three years and aims to recognise organisations that have achieved business excellence in accordance with the SQC Business Excellence Framework, which includes leadership, planning, information, people, processes, customers and results.

This is the second time that NP has been re-certified: once in 2001 and this year. While the SQC was previously renewed every two years, SPRING Singapore extended the certification to last a three-year period as of 2001.

In all, 407 organisations in Singapore have SQC certification this year.

While figures were unavailable for the number of organisations who applied for certification this year, Mr Kelver Choo, a Project Manager of the Organisational Development Office (OD) who is in his 30s, believes that it's not the number, but the fact that NP belongs to a "class of organisations that demonstrate business excellence", that is important.

"Receiving the award shows that we're excellent in the quality aspect and that is important for us," he said.

The process of achieving better business results is managed by OD, as they are responsible for NP's strategic planning, the Quality Management System (QMS) and secretarial support for higher management.

Mr Choo emphasised the effort that led to NP's SQC re-certification. "All these do not happen overnight," he said, adding that there was a need to sustain the processes put in place through the QMS and ensure that everything was in place.

Even though NP is an educational institution, Mr Choo reiterated that it is looked upon as a business with some 14,000 customers – students

– as its main focus.

As such, there was a need to ensure customer satisfaction as the end result and, at the same time, provide a rich and total learning process.

As with all learning processes, "getting the award is not important, it is the process of achieving it that matters", reminded Mr Choo.

He also said that every student and staff member had a part to play in contributing to NP's goals of achieving high standards of business excellence.

Mr Choo, a former Quality Management & Engineering (QME) lecturer, added that while students may be less involved in the implementation process, they helped by giving regular suggestions and feedback about NP through IDEAS, the student suggestion system. The OD uses this as a platform to check if objectives are being met.

For example, the free shuttle bus service which ferries students from Clementi Interchange to NP every morning, was an IDEAS suggestion that was implemented.

In addition to giving feedback, students can lend a hand in spearheading activities that care

for the environment and community, as a form of contribution to the QMS.

While these may seem insignificant, they have helped NP to be re-certified.

Mr Choo added the NP has "matured" since its first SQC certification in 1999. "We are more student-focused and conscious about what students want," he elaborated.

Chee Peiwen, 20, a final-year Quality Assurance Engineering (QAE) student, agreed. "There are better facilities now than in my first year. The Library revamp has given it a refreshing new look."

Following the SQC renewal, OD is expected to have its ISO 9001:2000 certification renewed in June. Awarded by SPRING Singapore, it recognises an organisation's QMS standards.

In addition to the two awards, NP was also given the People Developer Award, which recognises human resource development, in 2003. ■

The IDEAS Student Suggestion System can be accessed at http://www.np.edu.sg/home/feedback_ideas.html

Wrong NS Deferment Dates No Cause For Concern

BY ELLYAS DZULKIFLI
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Inaccurate deferment dates of some male students caused a number of them to worry about having their National Service enlistment dates delayed.

However, as Tribune found out from Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) Academic Affairs (AA) Office, there is nothing to worry about, as the inaccuracy is normal, due to ever-changing student data.

Deferment dates of up to one year after their expected graduation dates were noticed by some male students who received their medical letters much later than their peers. A medical letter is a notice sent to male students by the Ministry of Defence (Mindef) about eight months before their enlistment date. The letter, which requires students to undergo a medical examination, allows Mindef to assess their roles in NS.

It is regular practice for AA to defer male students from NS at the beginning of their first year in NP, according to Ms Veronica Hong, 28, an AA Officer. This deferment lasts until they graduate from their courses.

However, Ms Hong explained that volatile data, such as a student having to repeat a module in his final year, or not getting the marks in for his job attachment, might affect his deferment status. Each student's deferment status is reviewed every semester.

But Ho Weimin, 19, a final-year Information Technology (IT) student, dismissed the possibility, saying, "Six whole classes, cannot be [that] all [of us] repeat."

Weimin, who was one of those alarmed, said that he had confirmed with six out of 10 IT classes, that they had gone to the AA Office at different times last November and discovered that they were similarly deferred to April 2006 date, instead of April 2005, which is when they are expected to graduate.

"We first realised something was wrong when we asked around and found out that everyone else had already got theirs," he said.

Outside of IT classes, Ong Kang Hong, 20, a final-year Engineering Informatics (EI) student was also affected.

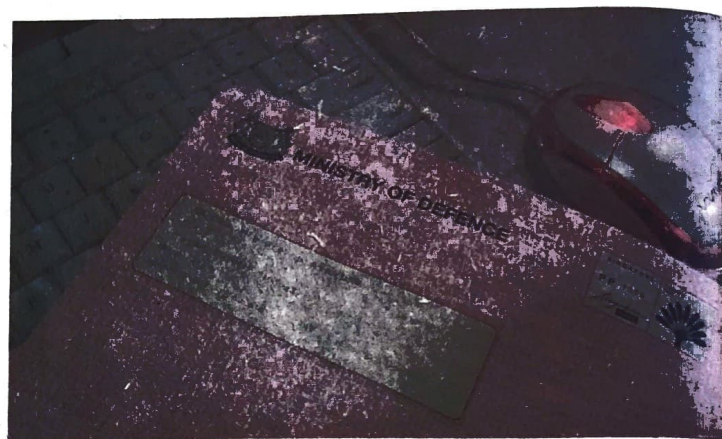
"Yeah, we were all very *gan cheong* (flustered, in Cantonese) when we did not receive our letters... some of us only got it in January this year," said Kang Hong.

However, the AA Office assured students that the date they receive their medical letter did not play a part in determining which batch of NS recruits they will be in. This is because recruitment and the medical check-up occur in two separate stages.

They also emphasised that no NP student has ever had his enlistment delayed as a result of this system, as the data is regularly sent to Mindef for updates.

Ms Hong clarified that student data being updated constantly would cause the projected deferment dates to fluctuate.

The AA Office explained that data was very dynamic for reasons including the late submission of academic results, the results of year three attachment programmes and expected project submissions. Sometimes even the removal or



CALL FOR CHECK-UP: When the Central Manpower Base Medical Examination letter came late for some students, they assumed it was due to an administrative error. (Picture: Chen Wei Li)

addition of modules to a course affected the data being reflected.

The AA Office said that this could explain why students who were neither repeating modules, nor doing their ITP at semester's end, were affected.

The Office also stressed that they are "working closely with the Central Manpower Base (CMPB) on a regular bi-monthly basis" to help Mindef keep track of the frequent data updates to the NP AA system.

As to whether the IT deferment was an

isolated case, AA stressed that the changing data affects the whole of NP and there is no way to know if it has happened to other courses.

However, Weimin was quick to point out, "What if we receive the medical check-up letter a year late? Won't that affect our enlistment?"

AA reiterated that there was nothing to worry about, reassuring concerned male students by advising them to check the NPAl system frequently to ensure that they have been deferred correctly, and to take note of, and report any discrepancies to them. ■

MeL Opens up For All

BY ROGER LOW
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For the first time, Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) offered a new learning channel for students and staff to view module contents of other Schools and Divisions in NP via the Mobile e-Learning (MeL) Blackboard system.

The open-viewing feature allows them to see "whatever the lecturer [from the same or another school] has placed under the module material area", said Mr Lim Peng Heng, 44, Manager of MeL Systems & Infrastructure Support under the Teaching & Learning Centre (TLC).

These materials can include handouts, lecture notes and web-based materials such as Macromedia Flash presentations.

The feature was made available on a trial basis from 16 February to 31 March to "allow the lecturers to embrace" such a change on the MeL Blackboard, said Mr Lim.

Mr Ch'ng Beng Hin, 53, Deputy Director of TLC, said in an e-mail reply that during the trial period, TLC will be looking to see if students "are checking out IS [Interdisciplinary Studies] modules before module enrolment" and if students are exploring module contents that were previously not available to them.

TLC will also be evaluating if NP staff use the feature "to learn from one another" in aspects such as "content presentation". He added that if the trial gives TLC some indicators of these aspects, it will have "a more assured basis to decide whether [it] should be a permanent feature".

Mr Murray Stuart Bourne, Educational Development Officer of Educational Staff Development (ESD) under TLC, stated through an e-mail that the open-viewing feature "will be turned on for all modules - it will be up to the

lecturers to turn it off if they so desire".

"Currently, we can only access modules that we are directly enrolled in either as an instructor or as a student," explained Mr Bourne, who declined to give his age. "The new system will extend [their access]."

He revealed that the concept of an open-viewing platform was not unusual. "This idea of open course materials has been promoted by Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for some time, in their 'OpenCourseWare' initiative." According to the MIT OpenCourseWare website, such an initiative is to provide an "open educational resource for faculty, students, and self-learners".

The open-viewing feature also means that a first-year student can download notes that are available to a third-year student, even if they are from different schools.

Mr Ch'ng said in an e-mail to staff members, "It will also encourage students to make more informed choices on their module selection as well as to enable them to refer to contents of modules that they are not currently taking, if the need arises."

Ms Anna Ng, 27, a School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) lecturer, said, "I feel sometimes that other Schools are not very clear about what we are doing [at IS]. She hoped that the open-viewing feature would bring about "a greater awareness" of what IS offers to students.

Having open access means students are better equipped to choose their electives. Mr Bourne said that students often choose elective modules, with very little information.

"If they can see what is involved in that module, via MeL, they will get a better idea of the suitability of the module for them."

Koh Shiang Loong, 20, a final-year Accountancy (ACC) student, said, "What I know [about Electrical Engineering] is superficial, so

maybe if I can download their notes and have a look... I can have a deeper understanding of their modules."

The new initiative may also help foster better ties among NP students.

Kristen Soh, 18, a first-year Marine & Offshore Technology (MOT) student, said, "We don't usually know what our own friends from other courses are doing." Kristen is keen to use the platform to learn about what goes on in the courses her NP friends are taking.

Kalpna Venkatachalam, 19, another final-year ACC student, agreed saying she would now be able to participate when her friends from other schools talk about their work. "At least I know something about their course [rather] than to stay blur about it," added Kalpna.

For Lim Lishan, 17, a first-year ACC student, having access to learning materials outside her course may spur her to expand her knowledge - if she sees something from other schools that interests her, she will be motivated to learn more about it independently.

"The hardworking [students] can choose to learn more than what their course curriculum had specified. The weaker students can bear reference to the materials of past modules to enhance their learning," said MeL Systems & Infrastructure Support Manager, Mr Lim.

Not only can students learn more, they can learn more easily as well. Chen Kai Zhe, 19, a final-year Electronic & Computer Engineering (ECE) student, said that he may not have to go to the library to look for books that are related to a subject outside of his curriculum if prepared notes are already available through MeL.

"The notes are compiled in a way that is easy to read and absorb. The main points are mentioned and the examples given are for you to learn faster and easier," he said. "[It's] better than thick reference books."

Having open access may also help lecturers. Ms Ng said that it would be "a good way" to help her to improve her teaching.

"I would love to look at how the other lecturers teach their modules and what kind of materials they have prepared for the students," she said. "I can learn from them, in terms of teaching materials."

For Mr Victor Tan, 47, a School of Engineering (SoE) lecturer, the open-viewing feature allows him to learn about how other Schools use MeL to get their students interested in their modules.

"I would like to look into the School of BA [Business & Accountancy] because it is related to the module that I am teaching... [which is] a management module. I would like to learn from the BA lecturers," he said.

While module contents may be openly shared, the initiative does not apply to the discussion boards on MeL.

Mr Bourne explained, "Discussions are a very important part of the learning process online. In the discussions, students are encouraged to work on problems, discuss issues and reflect on their learning."

"However, discussions are regarded as 'private' since most of us would not want some stranger eavesdropping on our inner thoughts. So the discussion boards will not be opened up for general access."

However, Ms Ng still hopes to see some form of interactivity.

"We can have a discussion forum to exchange views and ideas about the modules that the other schools are offering, as well as to get feedback on the modules that we are offering," she said.

"Although I am not sure how open the lecturers in NP are [about that], because it means that your modules are actually put under criticism." ■



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New Safeguards Against Underaged Drinking

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Just weeks into opening its doors in mid-February, the Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) Alumni Clubhouse's Halo Bar has been told to start serving alcohol only from 6pm and reminded they cannot serve alcohol to students under the age of 18.

The new rule, instituted by the Alumni Clubhouse was put in place to prevent underaged drinking by students during campus hours.

Prior to this ruling, booze had been served from 3pm on weekdays when Halo Bar, with a capacity of 150, opened. Tribune also learnt from a tip-off and discovered on two visits to the bar that students were not asked for any identification to prove that they were of legal drinking age.

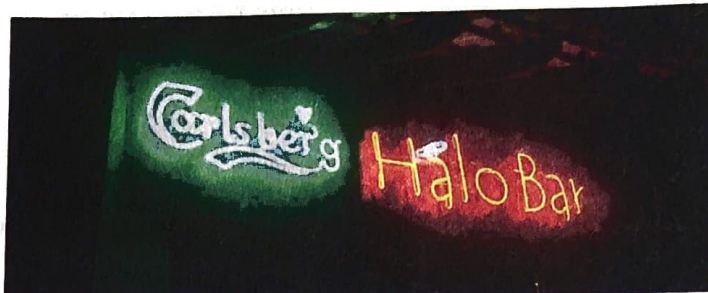
Under the Customs Act, it is an offence to serve alcohol to anyone under 18, or for that person to purchase alcohol. Those guilty of these offences can be fined up to \$5,000.

Besides flouting the law, Ms Mariam Nohamed Sali, a Student Development & Alumni Relations (SDAR) officer said students should not be giving a poor impression to patrons.

"We would not want students to misbehave themselves in front of these people," said Ms Mariam, who is in her 30s.

During one of Tribune's visits, Bar Manager Mr Brian Phua, 29, confirmed that the bar does not check every customer's identity, but students who came in groups and "look too young" would be asked for identification. "If we check everyone's IC, the mature crowd will feel offended."

When Tribune spoke to Ms Jody Tan, the



BARRING THE YOUNG: The Alumni Clubhouse pub cum KTV is now off-limits to those under 18. (Picture: Brendan Ang)

Clubhouse Executive of NP Alumni clubhouse, expressed surprise that no checks were made by Halo Bar prior to serving students' alcohol.

"I will tell them [the bar staff] to check their ICs," said Ms Tan, who is in her 30s, especially worried that underage students who look mature could then purchase alcohol.

"I definitely don't want that to happen. Firstly, it's the image, secondly, it's not right," she said.

Mr Phua said that besides alumni, the bar's target audience includes NP and Singapore Institute of Management (SIM) students.

"However, our primary audience is still alumni members because students don't have much spending power," he said.

The bar offers a standard bar menu, including cocktails and bottled liquor. A mug of Carlsberg beer at Halo Bar costs \$5.80, about \$2 less than prices on Orchard Road.

Although Mr Phua said that the clubhouse compound "belongs to the Ngee Ann Alumni",

the Director of the Estate Management Office (EM) clarified that the land is only leased by them from NP. Mr Mui Cheng Hock, 53, however agreed that the management of the "Alumni Clubhouse doesn't come under Estates".

At press time, the Clubhouse was putting up notices around its premises to inform students below 18, they cannot enter it at any time, while those 18 and above can only come in after 6pm.

Ms Mariam added that students misbehaving, for example, using clubhouse facilities exclusive to the alumni like reading room or card room Clubhouse executives will record their particulars and forward them to the Student Services Office (SSO). She also proposed that campus supervisors or EM guards patrol the clubhouse.

Mr David Lui, 56, Director of Student Services Office (SSO) further added that students found violating the entry ban rule, will be issued a caution. Subsequent offences by the same student will be brought to the disciplinary committee.

However, at press time, details of what action the committee will take have not been finalised, said Mr Lui, as the committee has yet to meet to discuss the issue.

Mr Lui stressed that he would prefer to educate students instead of employing campus supervisors or using punishments.

"We need to educate them to get them to understand why certain things are not allowed," said Mr Lui, explaining that the new move to put up the notices around the clubhouse constitutes a form of public education.

Some parents remain concerned. Mrs Olga Perera, 47, a parent of an underage student in NP, dislikes the idea of having a bar in such close proximity to the campus.

"I don't think it's right because I don't approve of alcohol even [for] those above the age limit," said Mrs Perera.

She cited peer pressure, immaturity and the 'cool' factor as reasons that will pressure young ones to consume alcohol.

Ms Tan reassured Tribune that the clubhouse will do its best to ensure no incidents of underage drinking take place.

According to her, the fact that the NP Alumni Clubhouse, which has 1,600 members, does not fall under NP jurisdiction was not a license for it to disregard legitimate concerns.

"Anything that happens on our side, we [clubhouse] should be responsible... this is a clubhouse, but it's still Ngee Ann Poly," Ms Tan admitted.

At press time, Tribune understood that Halo Bar has implemented the policy of checking students' identity before selling alcohol. ■

Call Your Lecturer Through Your Laptop or PDA

BY SHEREENA SAJEED
shereena_tribune@yahoo.com.sg

Some 600 staff and students from the School of InfoComm Technology (ICT) will now be able to communicate with each other on campus via phone calls, and view video and data, through new wireless Internet Protocol (IP) Telephony technology.

Although the project was launched for staff last December, students have been able to use it only since January.

Tan Shuren, 18, a second-year Information Technology (IT) student said, "It's cool because you can call your lecturer using your laptop."

Wireless IP Telephony allows users to make phone calls anywhere within the Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) campus via their laptops. Imagine being able to find out when a lecturer is free, look up his extension number, then click on numbers on your laptop to make a direct call.

According to Ms Angela Wee Li Kwang, Director of ICT, who is in her 30s, NP is the first local tertiary institution to adopt and implement wireless IP Telephony on a large scale real-life environment for both staff and students.

During the trial run, Cisco Systems, a leading supplier of networking equipment and a network management provider, loaned NP \$200,000 worth of networking equipment, while NP invested close to \$350,000.

The money was used to buy hardware and software, including the upgrading of the network infrastructure, purchasing new IP Telephony networking equipment, purchasing IP phones, voice-mail software and licences.

Mr Ng Poh Oon, 38, a lecturer in ICT and the Project Manager for the IP Telephony Project, noted that the new technology could also be used to "broadcast important messages"



IP PHONE SOFTWARE: Hurray for lower mobile phone bills, ICT students can now make phone calls via their laptop. (Screen shot of the IP phone)

just like a public announcement system. The message will be able to reach the recipient and those in the vicinity of an IP Phone, directly and more quickly than other systems such as Mobile e-Learning (MeL).

IP Telephony also allows users to access IP Telephony applications like the staff or student information system and an ICT internal room booking system, both created by then second-year ICT students during their Industrial Training Programme (ITP) in 2004. This is more convenient than the current NPal booking system, as users can book a room for a future meeting right away, using an IP Phone.

"These applications have improved efficiency and simplified a few tasks," said Mr Ng. He pointed out that staff in ICT "are still adopting new habits and adapting... it has changed how we

perceive using phone calls". He added, "Dialing numbers is no longer punching out the digits on the old phone, but clicking buttons on the screen using a mouse."

Sangar s/o Annadorai, 18, a second-year Information Technology (IT) student who uses the technology, explained that ICT students only need to register their laptops and contact details with the school. With that, they can use their laptops or Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) to get lecturers' information.

Microphones attached to their laptops allow them to dial an internal phone extension and become connected to the staff member through the latter's own laptop or PDA, wherever they may be in school.

Mr Ng added that as lecturers would now be readily contactable, they can be "more efficient

and responsive to students' needs".

Mr Wu Woon Foong, 42, Manager of ICT IT Support Group attested to that, saying, "As I am very mobile within the two blocks in ICT, the wireless IP phone does improve my work. [The] Wireless IP phone enables me to answer and make calls anywhere within ICT premises. Basically, it serves the same purpose as a GSM mobile phone except that air-time is 'free'."

"[The] missed call list also allows me to know the called parties that I missed." Missed calls with NP extensions and caller ID will appear on a laptop that has Cisco IP Communicator software installed.

Benjamin Lim, 19, a second-year Multimedia Computing (MMC) student and an IP telephony user, felt the new system was "very useful and convenient" for communication purposes.

Potential future campus applications such as digital surveillance can also be seamlessly integrated into the existing infrastructure and will be more cost effective. Digital surveillance uses a digital camera to capture, transmit and record videos, while conventional surveillance cameras use analog technology.

ICT staff are currently in talks with staff from the School of Business & Accountancy (BA), Diploma in Electronic & Computer Engineering (ECE) and Multidiscipline Engineering (MDE) division to further explore project developments for IP Telephony.

When he heard about the negotiations involving his lecturers, Lee Gim Yuen, 19, a final-year ECE student said, "It would definitely be more convenient..."

Carter Huang Yu, 20, second-year Business Information Technology (BIT) student, added that "it will definitely be something good because it will improve the lecturer-student communication". ■

Get Job Help in Ngee Ann Poly (NP)!

NP has an avenue for current students as well as graduates looking for a job. Graduates simply need their student numbers to login. Their online Job Placement Service is available anytime and is open for companies to post notices and advertise job vacancies. Upon registration, the applicant's name and contact number will be forwarded to the respective companies, who will then contact the applicant directly. The website can be found at http://www.np.edu.sg/ss/job_placement.htm

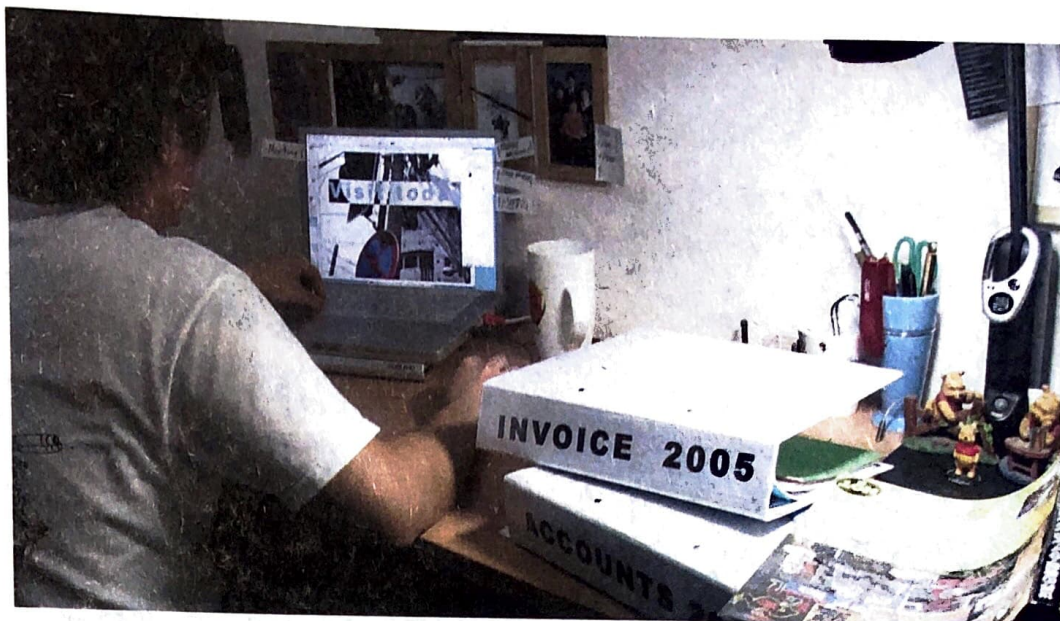
Popular Jobs For Temp Staff

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Translator
Journalist



Picture: Leonard Goh

Freedom To Live your Life

by SHEREENA SAJEED

Becoming a freelancer or a temp worker are good alternatives to full-time employment – especially if you're unsure about what you want to do.

Gone are the days where a temporary (or temp) job was seen as a stop gap measure until your dream (and permanent) job came along. What was once something only a student would do to earn extra money has become a viable employment option for graduates – and not just until the 'real' job comes along either.

Instead of working full-time for a regular employer, some graduates are taking the road less travelled and becoming 'permanent' part-timers.

Kaarthikka d/o Meganathan, 20, a second-year student at the Singapore Management University (SMU) plans to work in various temp jobs after she graduates to "explore the different options before deciding on a particular full-time job".

Employers win as freelancers and temp staff cost the company less and fill in for seasonal demand. Most companies pay an hourly rate, allowing part-timers flexibility in deciding how much they want to work.

Cheryl Ann Lee, 20, a Marketing and Business Developer for Hip Hop Club (HHC Regional) that hires freelancers to design event logos or banners, and writers to contribute to their magazine, said, "It's expensive to have full-time staff on your team. With freelancers, we don't have to provide health benefits and such, so, in that way it is more cost-effective."

"Also, with freelancers, we get more choices when it comes to choosing people with different abilities and talents. In that way, we can hire people to suit the project that we are currently working on."

Recent graduates also get to show how responsible and mature they can be, and get to network and hone their professional skills, while making a living.

Companies can check out potential talents and test them before offering them a permanent position. Even if there are no full-time positions, if a part-timer proves to

be competent, responsible and efficient, the firm may open up one for them.

Ms Catherine Yeo, 38, Recruitment Manager of Singapore Human Resource Institute, said besides the more popular freelance jobs in the consulting sector, there are less specialised openings for "temporary receptionists or secretaries".

Temp staff often have to be able to start immediately. You should also be able to commit yourself for the period the company needs you, added Ms Yeo.

Freelancing: Footloose and Fancy-Free

A freelancer sells his services to employers without a long-term commitment to any of them. He is considered self-employed, typically working different jobs on a project-by-project basis, according to the McGraw Hill Telecommunicator's website.

Aaron Tan Wei Sern, 26, who conducts IT courses for secondary schools, freelances "to earn extra cash and at the same time keep up my skills". He graduated from Nanyang Polytechnic in 2000 and now gets his clients mainly from referrals, as well as from design companies. He said he loves freelancing as it allows him to explore his interests.

Erman Abu Bakar, 19, who is serving his National Service (NS) as a graphic designer for the Singapore Police Force, is a freelance photographer, illustrator and videographer. He added that people freelance because "they want to try being their own boss and explore the fields before setting their mind to go into the industry".

It's an unpredictable life which could see a freelancer working at an office one day, and working out of their own home office the next day, communicating through the e-mail or fax machine. But since they work from home, they also save a fair bit on transport and meals.

What it Takes

Ms Lee said a good freelancer must have "creativity, responsibility, diligence, commitment and loads of potential".

Discipline is also crucial. One must be able to manage his/her workload, and get things done without relying on supervision

from others. Said Ms Yeo, "One must be able to manage their time efficiently and deliver what they are told to."

Project rates also vary across the industry. Freelancers can charge an hourly rate or a per-project fee, so a fair bit of negotiation skills are needed to not get ripped off.

The downside

A major problem could be the long wait for payment from some companies. Because a freelancer is not on the regular payroll, you may have to wait until the project is over before getting paid. This can be a long wait if a project is several months long, so it's best if you have several projects spread out to sustain you.

If you have heavy financial commitments, it can also get stressful if you don't have a steady stream of clients and projects.

Erman feels that there is also a perception that "if you are not attached to a company, you are not professional". He also feels that one cannot expect much from freelancing because the market is too concentrated with freelancers already.

"You can't expect the well-known companies to hunt you down unless you are extremely good at what you do as a freelancer," he said.

Protect Your Rights

Ms Murjiana Haq, 60, a lawyer who specialises in Intellectual Property, cautioned that freelancers should know how to protect themselves against being cheated.

If a freelancer has a prospective client in mind, he should write a "simple engagement letter once there is an agreement between him and the client".

Include details like your name, IC number and addresses, as well as the job description, fee, method of payment, start and completion date of the job and who the copyright belongs to. This letter should be signed by both parties.

Murjiana stresses that the person who signs the letter must be "an authorised person representing his/her company". The letter need not be written by a lawyer but one may have a witness while signing it. ■



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Making The Cut

BY GARY LIM

Perfecting the art of writing an impressive resume and acing a job interview are keys to snagging that job.

The route to getting a good job has remained unchanged for years, with job seekers sending in resumes and then waiting with fingers crossed for a job interview.

But while the job offer remains in the company's hands, getting a job isn't a game of chance. It often lies within the job hunters' control to present the best possible picture of themselves.

This means writing a good cover letter to reflect what an asset you'll be to the company and updating your resume to communicate how qualified you are for the job. A well-written resume can lead to a job interview, and later, a job.

To do that, job hunters must be well-informed, know themselves and differentiate themselves to stay relevant and employable.

This is all the more important as the job market is no longer limited to Singaporeans but open to regional students from India, China and Malaysia, some of whom have lower salary expectations. Employers are looking for a competent person with the necessary traits and communication skills to fit into the culture of the company.

So, while having the right qualifications puts students in the running for a job, being able to communicate how one's value to the company is even more crucial.

Resumes & Cover Letters: More Than Just Words

One of the primary ways in communicating this lies in a person's ability to write good cover letters and resumes. "Resumes and cover letters are a marketing tool that should be able to highlight the qualities of a candidate," said Mrs Esther Goh, the Academic Manager of Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS).

She created the Job Preparation module for final-year students.

Mrs Goh, who declined to reveal her age, added that one of the biggest mistakes applicants make is failing to distinguish themselves. These two important tools allow you to introduce yourself and make an instant impression. Letters full of grammatical mistakes and typo errors, and those that don't give the reader a glimpse

into your personality, won't make the cut.

While there's a general move towards more informal writing and even e-mail resumes nowadays, letters written in an overly informal manner, such as those using SMS language or slang, can be off-putting.

While it's expected that a resume would include a candidate's academic distinctions and grades as "proof of one's hard work, self-motivation and strengths", those less academically inclined need not be disheartened.

They can "sell" the skills and experience gained from joining Co-Curricular Activities (CCA) in NP. Mrs Goh encouraged graduating students to highlight leadership and organisational skills gained from them.

"Use verbs like 'lead' rather than 'train'," she continued. "Employers are looking for key words to see if you had initiated something new or led a group of people rather than be a member."

Although stating one's good traits may spruce up his or her resume, be careful not to come across as "egotistic" instead of confident, Mrs Goh warned. ■

7 Things to Avoid on The Job

BY ROGER LOW

You've aced the interview and got the job. But do you have the smarts to blend in? Tribune lists six things you should avoid doing to not start off on the wrong foot.

☑ Toilet Breaks Every 30 Minutes

Unless you've a medical reason – a weak bladder – for frequent toilet visits, you may come across as skiving from work. Your colleagues may think that you're off to chat, especially if you're seen carrying your mobile phone with you. Returning and reeking of cigarette smoke is another dead giveaway.

Ms Tiffany Tan, 24, an architectural designer, remembers a chronic 'disappearing' colleague in the public sector. The said colleague would go to the restrooms "two to four times a day" for naps up to 30 minutes each time. This person would also "pretend to run errands" while out on coffee breaks. If you've a legitimate need to be away, just let your superior know – most bosses are sympathetic to personal emergencies, as long as they don't become a regular occurrence and you can still meet your deadlines.

☑ Saying "I'm New"

This may excuse you from initial mistakes, but will sound lame very quickly. Don't let pride stop you from asking questions, though. And if you make a mistake, don't ignore it, especially if you have accidentally set the photocopier to churn out 1,000 copies instead of the intended one copy.

Julie Hamamoto, who's in her 20s and who worked as a translator at Panasonic Semiconductor, shared this piece of advice in a phone interview, "If you make a mistake, don't be afraid to admit it. Just apologise, and learn from it."

☑ Don't be a Smart Aleck

After the first few weeks, you may impress your superiors enough for them to entrust you with a project to oversee.

While you want to show your independence, it'd be a mistake not to update your supervisor about your progress. No boss enjoys getting a 'surprise' on the day of your presentation or deadline.

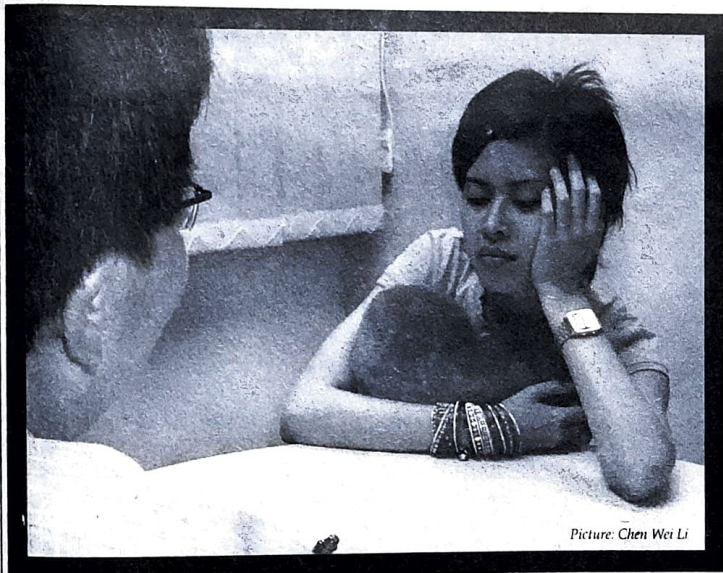
Remember you're still learning how the company works, so it helps not to have a big ego about your abilities.

☑ Slave to Messaging

Wear yourself if you're hooked to instant messaging networks (MSN Messenger, ICQ etc) or Internet Relay Chat (IRC) at home. Bosses frown on these. At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Protocol Directorate – which handles visiting dignitaries – employees are "banned" from using them or installing such programs in office computers, said Mr Tang Kin Ho, 26, an Assistant Protocol Officer.

CONTINUE ON PAGE 14

Dressing to Fit The Bill



Picture: Chen Wei Li

Here's a quick guide to wearing the right clothes for the job interview.

1. Consider the type of industry, the size and culture of the firm, and the position applied for, advised Mrs Sally Chew Puay Huang, who declined to reveal her age. The Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) lecturer teaches business etiquette and image.
2. Professional jobs like accounting or law usually require more formal dressing compared to the smart-casual dress code of the civil service and the informal dress policies of creative jobs.
3. Women should wear skirts for "a sense of femininity", advised Mr Lim Horng Dar, 30, an Assistant Vice-President for Deutsche Bank.
4. Get the look right. A business outfit teamed with a loud belt or casual shoes is undoubtedly a "mismatched combination", said Mrs Chew. Go for 'safer' colours like blue, gray or light pastels. ■

The Job Interview: Making an Impression

Mrs Esther Goh encouraged interviewees to be "friendly but not familiar." Even when the interview seems informal, interviewees must remember they are securing a job, advised the Ngee Ann Polytechnic lecturer who created a Job Preparation module.

It's a "fatal mistake" to give the interviewer a "get, get, get" impression. Mrs Goh said that interviewers don't appreciate self-centredness: Show what you can offer instead of get from the company.

"They [employers] want people who have not just pure confidence but confidence backed by ability," she said. "However, avoid being negative by qualifying your every statement with 'I can do, but...'"

Employers may also ask difficult questions

to see your response. These may touch on your weaknesses rather than achievements. Mrs Goh advised students share the lessons they've learnt from overcoming them, or the positive changes made in their lives.

Unlike in America, there're no restrictions on the kind of questions an employer here can ask at an interview.

Some employers may take advantage of this by asking personal questions like sexual orientation and religion. If this happens, you can either decline to answer or, better yet, deflect the question politely.

"Do it subtly, giving a brief answer to hint that the question is not relevant," Mrs Goh advised. "You can say, 'I do not think that it would affect the way I do the job'." ■



Picture: Chen Wei Li

Get The Job You Want - Quickly

BY NURUL-QURSYAH ISMAIL

Job-hunting can be messy business. To save time and effort, Tribune looks at various job avenues.

Besides looking in the newspaper recruitment pages, fresh graduates can turn to other employment avenues like job matching agencies and job portals to find a suitable job after graduation.

Depending on the number of applicants a company receives from its paper ad, you might hear from them two weeks later at the earliest. Why not register with employment agencies for job matches, and access job postings yourself, for a quicker response?

Employment Agencies

In-house consultants pair job seekers with compatible jobs based on "a client's specifications", said Ms Caroline Cheong, administrator of employment agency Global21 HR Consultants, in an e-mail.

Ms Cheong, 26, said that her company serves a large database of clients, ranging from "banking [and] finance, logistics and warehousing, IT and engineering [to] FMCG (fast moving consumer goods sector)", who constantly have vacancies.

Job seekers simply register at the employment agency with their resume.

"Once they meet [the] clients' criteria, [our] consultants will contact them to share more job information and to forward their

job application to our client," she said.

Online Agencies

Many employment agencies are taking the online option as technology makes it faster and more accessible for both employer and job seekers to contact each other, said Mr Jimmy Teo, 28, Corporate Recruitment Manager of Permanent Personnel Services (PPS), in a phone interview.

The job seeker registers online for an account to upload his/her resume or browse job postings. He will then be informed about suitable job matches and be able to keep track of his job applications.

When a job match is made, the applicant will be interviewed by the agency. A face-to-face interview is essential to find out more because "personality is a basic [criteria] of applying for a job", said Mr Teo.

He also said that if it turns out that the applicant's qualifications are not directly suited to the job, the employment agency usually steps in to mediate, ensuring that the applicant's interests are taken into consideration as well.

These services are free for job seekers as the "main idea" is to help these people find jobs, Mr Teo added. Instead, recruitment

agencies get a commission from the company for every job match, added Ms Cheong.

Job Portals

Graduates can also look to job portals or online classifieds.

These offer direct communication between employer and job seeker, bypassing employment agencies completely.

A company can post available jobs online or advertise with a portal like JobsFactory, to reach out to job seekers and access their resumes, or respond to their job searches.

Portals like JobsFactory are an advertising medium for employers, according to its Director Mr Lim Der Shing, 29. He claimed that JobsFactory had "the largest database of fresh graduates jobs" and said it was the "first company to offer a suite of career services targeted solely at fresh graduates".

Classified Ads

Classifieds are a one-way static method for employers to advertise available jobs. This most established way means employers don't have immediate access to resumes.

These Classifieds usually have a short description of the qualifications and type of employee sought after. ■

How to Become The Next Samuel Chia

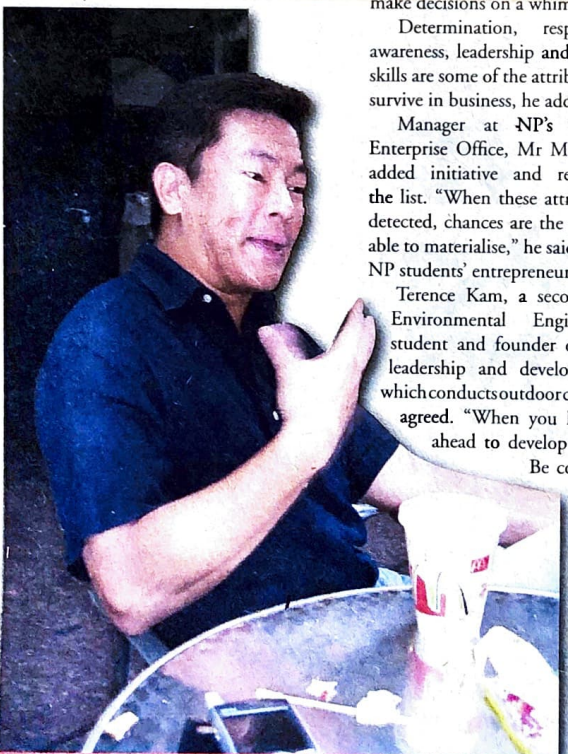
BY MD NAJEEB

Despite the numerous perks associated with becoming an entrepreneur, such as getting rich quickly, graduating students need to be aware of the pitfalls of running their own businesses.

The successes enjoyed by local entrepreneurs like Charles Wong, director of shoe boutique Charles & Keith, are well-known.

Students may be tempted by these successes but the road to success is far from easy as these pioneers show.

Picture: Md Najeeb



Personal Attributes

Mr Samuel Chia (below), 38, director of the NYDC chain of cafes, and President of the Young Entrepreneur's Organisation, which counts members like Charles Wong and Elim Chew, said, "You have to ask yourself if you're ready and you should never make decisions on a whim."

Determination, responsibility, self-awareness, leadership and decision-making skills are some of the attributes one needs to survive in business, he added.

Manager at NP's Innovation and Enterprise Office, Mr Max Lam, also 38, added initiative and resourcefulness to the list. "When these attributes are clearly detected, chances are the project would be able to materialise," he said. Mr Lam guides NP students' entrepreneurship ventures.

Terence Kam, a second-year Civil & Environmental Engineering (CEE) student and founder of Vantage 21, a leadership and development company which conducts outdoor camping activities, agreed. "When you have an idea, go ahead to develop and establish it.

Be consistent in what you do. Do not give up halfway and do whatever it takes," he stressed.

Calculate Risks

It's an attractive prospect to be able to run a company and

oversee a stable of employees, but the flipside is one has to consider the issue of job security and risks.

"It is definitely difficult and risky for someone who has been on a regular monthly income to just drop everything and venture into being an entrepreneur."

One should also understand that it will take at least six months, before the new business begins to make money.

Do the Legwork

Vantage 21's Terence strongly encouraged NP graduates to get some work experience first before venturing into business, so they can "get more ideas" about the market.

Graduates who have business start-up ideas should invest the time and energy to do background research. Mr Lam, however, felt that while there are merits in getting a good job and learning as much as possible before venturing into something new, it is possible to venture out on your own if you have what it takes.

Know the Industry

NYDC's Mr Chia emphasised that having good knowledge of the industry you want to do business in is needed before any venture can begin. He added that while one can have "determination" and be incredibly "gung ho", being "impulsive and not mentally prepared" is a surefire way to failure.

"The bottomline is you have to be truthful to yourself and ask, are you really ready?" he reiterated. ■

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13
6 Things To Avoid On The Job

"My workplace has very high security," he added, as confidential information can be leaked through such programs.

If you think no one will be wiser, don't forget you can be detected when the company server reports unauthorised activity from your computer. The computer, after all, is for you to do your work, not tend to personal matters. It's a better bet to stick to e-mailing, and be sure to type in the right e-mail address so your boss won't receive something from you, bitching about him.

☒ Mobile Disco

Your ringtone may remind you of your sweetheart or a funky cartoon but it's the last thing your co-workers want to hear.

Mr Shawn Soh, 24, a personal banker with Overseas Chinese Banking Corporation (OCBC), related in a phone interview how his colleagues were more than taken aback when they heard an "unprofessional" ringtone from a new employee's mobile phone.

In his case, it was also bad for business. "Whenever it is ringing, the customers are shocked," lamented Mr Soh, referring to the mismatch in the tone chosen and the serious banking environment he works in.

It's considered polite to turn your phone to silent/vibrate mode in the office, to maintain an environment where people can work and not be distracted.

☒ Exercise Tact

You may quickly notice things you don't like in your new workplace, such as the company's policy of making the women wear business suits, or it not allowing you to eat your takeout lunch in the office conference room. Instead of lamenting to your colleague, who could turn out to be your boss's spy, keep your opinions to yourself—at least for the first few months.

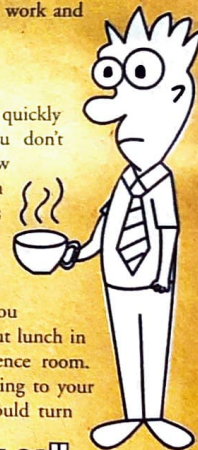
When you've graduated from freshie, you can bring up your concerns tactfully to your boss or HR manager, though by then, you may already have become used to these company policies.

Still, how open you become even later "depends on the company's culture", said Mr Justin Tan, 27, who is an auditor with PricewaterhouseCoopers.

"In a conservative company culture, one might be better off keeping his thoughts to himself as management may frown upon any honest criticism or observation.

"On the other hand, in an open, friendly company culture, honesty might be well received and appreciated."

Here's a tip: Observe your superiors and colleagues. ■



You call this coffee?!!

Illustration: Karin Xiao



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佳节的一份异国温情



温玉娘女士(中)和建筑与地产工程系的师生一同过团圆饭,庆祝农历新年。(照片:李慧芳)

李慧芳报道
hfang@msn.com

一群从义安理工学院建筑与地产工程系(Building & Environment)的国际学生虽然在异乡,但是还能在农历新年时感到佳节的温暖。

2月17日傍晚,大约60名BE名的学生和讲师们群结队到本校附近的肥雄海鲜小厨享受丰富的团圆饭。

建筑与地产工程系BE的主任,温玉娘女士以英语表示:“我们每年都会主办团圆饭聚会,让他们在农历新年时不会感到那么寂寞。”据本报了解,这样的团圆饭聚会是在4或5年前开始主办的,而每年都在不同的地方举行。

何进成讲师,40岁,是建筑与地产工程系BE国际学生的军师,是这次团圆饭活动的负责人。他以英语说道:“我们办这项活动的原因是为了表示我们对他们[国际学生]的一种关心。”

当天的团圆饭,在肥雄海鲜小厨空调的店面里坐满了六桌,学生和讲师坐在一起,大家有说有笑,非常热闹。除此之外,他们也享用了炒面、炒饭、以及其他美食。

受访的国际学生都对这项活动有很好的评语。来自马来西亚的钟汶豪,20岁,正在念土木工(Civil & Environmental

Engineering)一年级的他以英语说道:“我觉得这样蛮好的,来自不同国家的学生一起共进晚餐。以后有机会的话,我会再参加!”

中国江苏的张丽芬,20岁,说道:“不错啊!因为过新年嘛,大伙儿都在一起。”在念CEE二年级的她,是第二次参加这种活动。

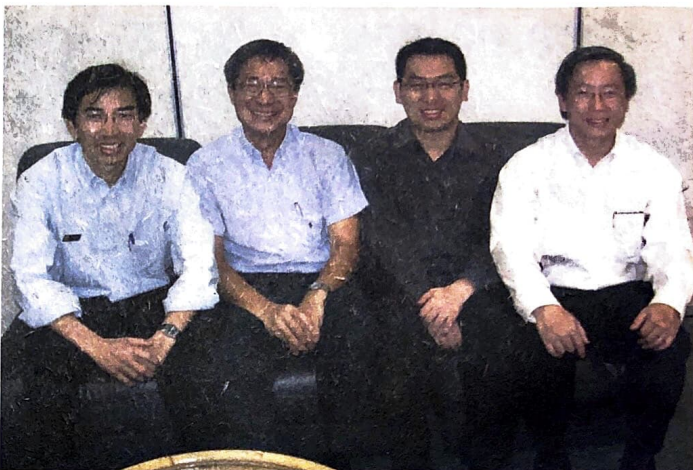
其实,在这50位学生中,不是每位都是国际学生。何讲师说:“我们欢迎本地学生来参与这项活动,因为他们[本地学生和外国学生]都是朋友,最好大家都能在一起享受一番。”

潘奕晖,18岁,一年级的学生,是当晚其中一位和国际学生打成一片的本地学生。对于团圆饭活动,他说:“很好啊,大家可以聚在一起...[也可以]结交新朋友。”

除了在佳节时与朋友以及讲师聚一聚,国际学生认为参加这样的活动也有其他的好处。20岁的二年级学生,Diep Thi Thuy Linh,以英语高兴地说:“我从来不知道我的部门有其他来自越南的学生,今天很特别,跟大家接触后居然发现了!”

对于念建筑与地产工程企业管理系(Building & Real Estate Management)一年级,21岁的Vu Dinh Thang来说,参加这次团圆饭活动让他有机会品尝新加坡的食物。这位越南的同学对本报透露,这是他第一次在新加坡吃火锅。

青年远征计划转向印度洋海啸灾区救援



义安理工学院YEP的负责人老师们开会。(照片:李慧芳)

李慧芳报道
hf_vicissitude@yahoo.co.uk

自印度洋海啸灾难的发生后,新加坡国际基金会(Singapore International Foundation)便将属下81%原定的YEP队伍转向受海啸袭击的地区伸出援救计划。因为这个缘故,义安2005年派出的23支团队将会有4支团队会到那些地区去帮忙救灾。

义安理工学院YEP的负责人高级讲师杨永辉透露:“十一月份是学校假期,有些团队队长已经在那个时候到指定的国家考察,了解民情。”

虽然如此,想要成为救灾队伍的一份子并不简单。负责带领这4支救灾队伍的队长们,是经过SIF严格的选拔过程才顺利被选中的。所有的队长和队员都必须经过一番辅导才可以参与这项计划。杨讲师觉得这次参与海啸镇灾队伍的成员们与其他YEP队伍的最大不同点在于他们的心态。

他说:“所有的成员都是作了十足的心理准备,目的是到受影响的灾区去尽一份力。哪怕是微不足道的帮助,只要是那么小小的贡献,他们也愿意参与。”

当然除了这4支特殊的YEP队伍之外,我们校也有一些学生队长将会带领到发展中国家如柬埔寨去作义工。虽然不是受海啸影响的地区去救灾,不过他们同样的也会为不幸的孩童作出意义非凡的贡献。

林文汉,20岁,三年级电子工程学的同学,也是这次的学生领袖,说:“在Cambodia就有那么一间rehab centre是专收留这些孩童的。不过那些孩子从来都没有一个像样的游乐场供他们玩耍。这次到那里的目的是希望建立一个拥有心灵治疗效果的游乐场给这群不幸的孩子度过童年。”

即将要毕业的文汉,学校的课业肯定很繁重,不过他接着说:“那边的孩子基本上是通过虐待,又或者是被地雷弄伤过的受害者。也有其他孩子是无家可归的,所以他们个个都是流浪街头长大的。”

当他和他的队伍了解了那里的民情后,更是启发了他们非去不可的决心。虽然文汉觉得无法参与海啸镇灾队伍的工作有些遗憾,不过他相信接下来应该还会有更多的队伍被派去进行其他的重建工作。

杨讲师从事教育工作已经超过十年,与他接触过的学生是数不尽的。负责一年级的学生,可以说是看着同学们在义安的三年学习生涯成长的。从一开始就负责

“哪怕是微不足道的帮助,只要是那么小小的贡献,他们也愿意参与。”

—YEP的负责人高级讲师杨永辉

YEP的他,认为过去的九年给予他最大的推动力就是能够在带队的短短十八天里看到自己的学生迅速成长。

杨讲师说:“YEP让来自不同家庭背景的年轻人一起在异乡相处十八天。最大的收获就是可以看到同学们如何在相处的过程中互相礼让和接受彼此的弱点。”

“接下来SIF对于YEP的活动会有什么计划还不清楚,如果YEP还会持续的话,我相信自己还是会参与的。”

有话说!

有话不怕说,就怕没得说!Tribune每期都会以街坊的方式征求您对一些热门时事话题的意见和看法。

在去年底,新加坡政府宣布了一个全新的计划,我们可能在不久的将来就可能在这片国土上,拥有一间全新的赌场。现在街头巷尾都在谈论这个热门的话题,有些宗教团体已经表明立场发言说,他们非常反对在新加坡建立赌场。在这期的Tribune,我们针对这个非常热门的话题,在校内的四周与义安的学生们探讨一下这个问题:“你赞成在新加坡设立赌场吗?”

“我赞成,因为新加坡是个开放的国家,我们有那个能力开赌场,为何不呢?关于那些可能导致的负面问题,这不是开赌场的问题,而是他们自己本身的决定。”

—张凯强,19岁,二年级商务系

“我不赞成。我觉得这样会损坏我们新加坡美好的形象。很多人会因为赌场在新加坡,而染上赌博的坏习惯。”

—黄俊贤,21岁,三年级工商资讯科技系

“我不赞成,因为我觉得如果新加坡人要赌的话,他们也是会去云顶赌的,所以在新加坡建个赌场,让他们在这里赌,好过他们去云顶赌。”

—陈丽晶,19岁,二年级商务系

“我不赞成在新加坡设立赌场,因为这样很多新加坡人会受不了赌场的诱惑,而染上赌博的坏习惯。”

—李耀文,21岁,三年级电子工程系

“当然可以建啊!那些说不要建的人,只是少数吧!那些所谓的坏处,政府是可以用条例来制止的。”

—赵家福,18岁,二年级商务系

“我没意见。建的话,很多新加坡人会到赌场上瘾,但是不建的话,新加坡将会失去很多收入。这真的很难取舍。”

—陈维安,20岁,三年级化学工程系

“我不赞成,因为那是非常不健康的。赌场的设立,会导致家庭的破裂,这也会间接影响社会的治安。我了解如果新建赌场的話,这会吸引更多游客来新加坡,但是我觉得我们的政府真的不需要去赚这种钱。”

—蓝俊杰,19岁,二年级工商资讯科技系

“我觉得建赌场真的不错,因为在新加坡的生活压力真的太大了。如果能去赌场玩玩,这一定能减压。”

—杨芸婷,19岁,三年级生物科技系

青少年远征计划简史

义安理工学院(义安)自1996年就参与类似青年远征计划(YEP)的活动。义安是第一所学府开办了这类青少年参与的义工活动。新加坡国际基金会(SIF)成立于2000年后,它们便以义安与它们一起合作,朝向共同的目标前进。

来自电子电脑工程的陈进财讲师表示说的:“YEP的成立是为了鼓励那些生长在新加坡的青少年成为社会上更积极的一份子。”

陈讲师认为目前还有很多学生并不了解YEP的真正目的。他时不时会听到学生问他作义工为什么还需要付钱,这根本不合逻辑。

陈讲师说:“我们希望学生可以通过这样的活动让他们体会到自己其实是多么的幸福。希望通过YEP,学生可以体会到当地人的生活习惯和文化背景,那么从中可以改变自己的人生观。”

“我希望这些年轻人可以趁年轻有能力的时候为发展国家作出有意义的贡献。”

义安每年派出10至20支团队参与YEP。

“与艺共舞”



文艺社团之一——新加坡的雅乐乐团 (照片: 郑爱王摄)

郑爱王报道
ajing@gmail.com

成立有25年历史的义安文艺社团(CASSC)在最近办的演出里,最受观众喜爱的表演是由舞蹈组呈献的“欢乐的泼水节”。

今年的表演取名为“艺韵之声——与艺共舞 Serenade”,是在2月18和19日,LT 26举行。这是文艺社团的第21年的表演。义安文艺社团是由义安理工学院五个艺术团体组成,它们分别是华乐团、口琴组、舞蹈组、舞台组以及合唱团,在两晚的演出中轮流上台表演。

深受观众喜爱的“欢乐的泼水节”项目,是以舞蹈的方式描述泰国人普天同庆的泼水节情景。舞蹈组的表演者穿着华丽的服装,以优美的舞姿把舞蹈呈献给观众。

这项节目的一个特别地方是在舞蹈即将结束时,表演者把舞蹈带到观众之间,而且还把糖果撒给观众,仿佛就是用糖果来取代水。

正在商务会计系(School of Business & Accountancy)念一年级的吴凯婷,17岁,以英语说道:“我喜欢因为这项节目是有关泼水节,觉得很特别,也喜欢那扔糖果的部分。”工程系(School of Engineering)的

蔡伟健,17岁,说:“最后的舞蹈也不错,很特别。”

演出较特别的,是两项特备节目。其中一项特备节目是由五位表演者来唱表演。他们以美妙的歌声轻唱“沙滩”和英文歌曲“Hold Me”。另外一项特备节目是口琴组何中荣老师的独奏项目。他在两位学生的伴奏下,为观众吹奏了几首旋律优美的曲子。虽然表演前有些技术问题,但是还是受到观众们的喜爱。

这次演出的筹委会主席是22岁,就读电子工程系(Electrical Engineering)三年级的徐大维。目前也是文艺社团副主席的他透露,今年文艺社团还特地搜集以前的旧照片,把它们制成一部短片。观众在表演开始前,便能欣赏到这部大约十分钟的短片。短片除了呈现文艺社团表演时所拍过的照片,还记录了这次表演者排练时的精彩幕后花絮。

除了以上的舞蹈项目和两项特备节目之外,其他节目包括了文艺社团的华乐团、口琴组、合唱团和舞台组为观众表演耳熟能详的曲子和歌曲,以及幽默有趣的默剧。

对于为什么这次的演出取名为“与艺共舞”,大维说:“我们每次到会所的时候,我们就好像每天跟艺术接触到... 感觉好像是在和艺术跳舞。”

“网”住你的职业

陈心瑜报道
uynix2003@yahoo.co.uk

举办了四年的网络职业展2005(eCareerFair),今年将会提供超过220份工作以及1200个职位空缺给义安和其他四所理工学院的学生们申请。别于去年的网络职业展,今年的工作位子比较多,而且有更多的公司参加了这个专为理工学院学生所提供的网络职业展。

在二月十四日拉开序幕,长达大约两个月的线上活动,是由成立六年的JobsFactory与义安理工学院联手举办的。这次的职业展举办的主要目的是要帮那些即将要毕业的学生,寻找适合他们的理想工作。JobsFactory的营业经理黄小宁,29岁,在受访时说道:“这次的网络职业展有一千多个工作位子让有兴趣的学生来报名。今年我们希望至少能有一万个学生[来报名]。”

身为这次网络职业展的其中一个负责人,义安学生辅导员连美凤,以英语说道:“这次会跟JobsFactory再次办网络职业展,因为他们的公司在市场已经有一定的基础了,他们跟很多大企业都有合作,所以这样能提供学生们很多选择。”

JobsFactory也在The Straits Times(海峡时报)登了职业广告,黄小宁说:“这次会在报纸上打广告,原因是因为网络职业展不止要吸引即将要毕业的学生,我们也希望能吸引那些已经毕业几年的理工学院学生。我们有一些职业空缺是为了他们而特别设置的。”

的。”

在去年六月毕业的义安商务系学生,20岁的林淑慧受访时说:“我刚辞掉工作,希望可以利用这次的机会,找到适合自己的工作。我是在上个星期六,翻看The Straits Times(海峡时报)的Recruit(招募职业版)时,看到关于网络职业展的消息。”

黄小宁说道:“这次学生的反应都还蛮热烈的,像是有一个助理工程师的位子,在第一个礼拜内,我们就收到50、60个申请表格。”她也提到“现在的学生都比较实在,多数会申请那些跨国公司的职位,而那些制服团体,例如新加坡民防部队(Singapore Civil Defence Force)就会比较少人申请。”一些比较受欢迎的职位是助理工程师(Supporting Engineer)以及执行企业管理员(Management Trainee Executive)。

20岁的三年级商务会计系学生,陈建富,说道:“我不会参加的,因为觉得对我来说,没什么用。我毕业后,还得当兵啊!我觉得这样的职业展,目标市场应该是对准那些即将要毕业的女生,或是那些当兵男的男生。但是我觉得宣传做的很不错,因为我收到学校寄来的,关于这个eCareerFair的信。”

对于那些积极寻找工作的学生,黄小宁提了个建议,她说:“有很多学生上网找工作的时候,尤其喜欢随便乱点click(按),什么职位都去申请。如果我是那间公司的负责人,在挑选收到你的申请时,我会觉得你很不诚意。”

“心”的感受

陈心瑜上
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在一个习惯以英语为主的社会里,华语很容易就变成了“二等语言”。当我的朋友们知道我热爱这拥有五千年历史的语言时,都感到很讶异。曾经还有人质问我,华语在现今的新加坡社会里,还存有商业价值吗?也许是从小受父母的熏陶,也许是自己对这语言有莫名的喜爱,我就是喜欢华文华语。我从不嫌弃自己是华人或者会期盼自己是拥有蓝眼睛、金头发的洋人。我也不会像现在多数的年青人一样,为了不会讲几句华语,而感到自卑。没有其他的理由,只能这么说,喜欢就是喜欢,是不需要理由的。

因为这样,也让我有机会当上了华文编辑。从小就喜欢写华文小品的我,终于能随着我的兴趣,去实现我从小梦想了。平淡的校园生活突然变得充满挑战。虽然在这过程中遇到非常多的困难,但是老师以及朋友的帮忙与指导下,我能继续的走下去。尤其要特别感谢我的好友兼编辑慧芳,如果没有她的友情与鼓励,这条路可能就没这么平坦了。

现在义安多了一个中文专业课程,我真的非常的高兴,因为这也为那些喜欢华文的学生们开拓了一片新的天地。展望未来,华文华语的未来命运会是如何,谁都很预料。我真诚的期盼,华文华语能在义安大放光芒,让大家也能因为这文化感到自豪,为自己身为华人而感到骄傲!■

流“芳”百世

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“岁月的细水慢慢流,流到了别离的时候...霓虹灯然大喜,我们的步履有方向...”这个学期转眼就快过去了。就有如歌词所写的,我很快就要和同学们说声“再见”了。唯一可惜的是我无法和大多人一起参加毕业典礼,正式为三年的求学生涯划上完整的休止符。

一份好的刊物的制作过程不是一朝一夕的。幕后工作的辛酸更不是常人所能理解的。很多时候人与人之间关系也有可能是在制作的过程中因意见不合而闹僵。

彻夜不眠,感冒伤风,有时候就连续吃饭的时间都觉得是太浪费了;这一切的“症状”为的就是要赶稿,为的就是希望刊物出版后可以获得好评。

接过华文编辑的工作是一个挑战,参与两校之间的交流计划也是一个挑战。人在一生中必须面对不同的挑战来磨练自己。每当看到辛苦努力后的成果都会拍拍自己的肩膀,告诉自己:“这一切都是值得的。”

目前身在浙江大学城市学院的我,心情是带着沉重与思念的。心里老是放不下在新加坡未完成的刊物;同时也非常想念家人和朋友。

多么希望可以和大家一同跑完这接下来的几个星期,但可以到这里交流是一个难得可贵的机会。而且我相信在这十四周里,肯定会获得前所未有的人生经验。■

创意大比拼

陈心瑜报道
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今年的新加坡机械比赛2005(Singapore Robotics Games 2005)将会是最后一年举办Gladiator(战斗机器人),一项非常受学生欢迎的比赛组合。

从明年起主办单位将以全面自动化的Robot Sumo Competition(摔角机器人比赛)取代利用键盘操纵的摔角机器人。

一年一度的新加坡机械比赛2005将在5月3日至5日,在义安理工学院的大礼堂举行。拥有11年历史的新加坡机械协会(Singapore Robotic Games Society),创办比赛的主要目的是为了要灌输大众机械自动化的功能,也要教导人们了解机器人除了担任工业职务,它们也能做其他新奇的活动。大会也希望利用这次的比赛,促使年轻的大工程能有创意的设计,以及让他们有个施展才华的舞台。

这项比赛也开放给其他国家的参赛者来一决雌雄。前年的比赛,韩国便派了由小学生组成的参加队伍来新加坡参赛。41岁,来自新加坡国立大学的茹春盛,是新加坡机械协会的行政兼财政人员。他受访时,以英语说道:“我们非常欢迎国际队伍来参加我们的比赛,虽然每年都会有很多国外的学生申请参加,但是很可惜,他们往往最后都会因

为经费不够,而放弃参赛。我们是个志愿团体,所以没那能力资助他们来新加坡参赛,有兴趣的学生们都得自付全程的旅费。”

今年的主办单位阵容相当强大,共有28位来自不同大专学府的讲师组成。其中的新加坡机械协会委员之一,义安理工学院的讲师,蔡树人在受访时以英语说道:“这次会选择在义安举行,原因有两个:第一是要减少开支。我们去年是在Downtown East举行比赛,那时他们免费让我们借用场地,但是今年当我们询问时,他们要收费。第二是义安给了一个非常低廉的价钱,这样也能义安理工学院打响知名度。”

14项不同组合的机械比赛将分别在三天的时间举行,然后选出冠军季军。几项比较受学生欢迎的项组合包括了-Micromouse Competition(微量滑鼠竞赛)、Open Category(公开组合)以及Robot Soccer Competition(机器人足球比赛)。

决定参加这次机械比赛的三年级机械工程系的李奕文武,21岁,说:“我们的机器人已经完成了,现在只剩下一些修补工作以及要勤奋练习怎样的操纵它。”

近年来,学生对这个比赛的反应都很热烈。在公开组合的比赛里,甚至有小学生也把他们的机器人送来参赛。蔡树人讲师说道:“虽然大多数的时候,这些小学生都没有得奖,但是他们的精神非常值得鼓励!”■

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NP Triumphs at Funkamania Competition

BY CELIA CHAN
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The New Revolving Age (NRA) Dance Club scored a coup for Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) when it broke the universities' stranglehold on the first prize at the inter-tertiary Funkamania dance competition, held on 28 January at Ngee Ann City.

The annual hip-hop dance competition started in 1993 and is considered particularly challenging for polytechnics.

Samantha Lee Qian Hui, 19, President of NRA Dance Club and a second-year Business Studies (BS) student, said, "NP is one of the first few [polytechnics] to win Funkamania... So, the win is considered quite a breakthrough."

Last year, the competition was won by the dance team from Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

This was the second year NRA Dance Club took part. Unlike last year, where they sent just one team, this year's competition saw three teams – two senior and one junior – vying for the top prize. The senior teams comprised dancers who have been in the club for over two years and who possess stronger dance techniques.

Although all three teams made it to the finals, it was the senior team, NRA Altitude, who emerged as winner.

The three teams, who intensified their training sessions three months before the competition, were ecstatic about the win.

Sharlene Ann Poh Su-Lin, 19, a second-year Information Technology (IT) student from NRA Altitude, said, "The training took up a lot of time



NRA AT FUNKAMANIA: The New Revolving Age (NRA) Dance Club is the first polytechnic to win Funkamania. [Picture by: Celia Chan]

and we had to make certain sacrifices too, so it's good to see our effort was not wasted."

However, the win came as a surprise to fellow team member Yvonne Yeo, 18.

The second-year BS student, who will take over as the club's president in April, explained, "I didn't expect us to be placed first. Not that I didn't have any confidence but there were stronger teams out there."

Founded four years ago by a handful of hip-hop dance fans, the NRA Dance Club has grown from having less than 10 members, to boasting 70 regular members.

In the initial years, the dancers were hesitant

about participating in dance competitions. It was only after they established themselves that they decided to give inter-school competitions a shot, entering their first two years ago.

Even with the Funkamania win under their belt, NRA Dance Club is determined to reach newer heights.

Samantha said, "Funkamania might be prestigious but there is still a lot of work ahead. I don't want the win for Funkamania to become a barrier for us to keep improving ourselves."

In line with that, there are plans to bring 10 members to Hong Kong for dance training this April. Hong Kong was chosen as a training

destination because the club believes the hip-hop culture there, and in Taiwan and Japan, is more established, compared to Singapore, where the dance industry is relatively young.

Yvonne also added that NRA Dance Club is considering opening its membership to people outside of NP, potentially enlarging their talent pool significantly.

She said, "There have been outsiders who have asked to join the club but we can't allow that now, so it's quite sad."

"First, I'll have to hold a discussion with my advisor to see whether the idea is feasible. Then, we'll see how it goes." ■

Dressed For Success

BY NORJAHAN MAKMON
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The low attendance at the Dress Sense and Deportment workshop organised by the School of Engineering (SoE) on 5 February turned out to be a blessing in disguise as each participant ended up with a personal grooming consultation.

The workshop is aimed at equipping participants with the skills to make good first impressions by dressing right and carrying themselves well. Students were taught to coordinate colours effectively, maintain good posture and pick appropriate fashion styles to suit different occasions.

"[The workshops are] good for job interviews, receptions, functions. How you dress, how you talk, how you walk. Not many of them know these, so this is very useful," said organising lecturer, Mrs Lee Lee Jong, from the Building & Environment Division (BE) of SoE.

It is open to all BE students and is usually held only once in the academic year, accepting up to 20 participants, at a cost of \$3 a person.

The overwhelming response to a previous workshop held in September 2004, prompted the school to organise a second workshop, the first time they have done so.

Mrs Lee added, "We had well over 40 students the last time. We had to tell [the additional students] to not come. That's why we organised a second one this year."

However, attendance this time was poor as only seven of the registered students turned up. Mrs Lee attributed the low turnout to a case of

bad timing and poor memory.

"It's right after their common tests, so they tend to forget," she added.

However, the low turnout allowed for a more personalised and interactive session.

Instead of getting general information, each participant received tips and suggestions catered to their individual needs from the speaker, Ms Marion Nicole Teo, 36, Managing Director of The Leading Image, an agency specialising in image enhancement.

At the workshop, the former Miss Universe semi-finalist critiqued each participant's style of walking, commented on mistakes they made and gave advice on how to improve.

Participants also received one-on-one advice on colour coordination, with suggestions on what to retain, avoid and adopt.

Ms Teo explained, "We wouldn't be able to do that if there were 20 to 30 [students]. It's the reason why [the workshop] is usually draggy."

Participants agreed that the topics covered were helpful.

Second-year Building & Real Estate Management (BEM) student, Tan Shu Yi, 18, said, "It's very enriching. I think it'll be useful to me in future."

The other participants declined to comment on the workshop.

The Dress Sense and Deportment workshop is part of a series of workshops aimed at creating an awareness of various skills that might come in handy for students.

Other workshops in the series cover topics like effective communication skills and dining etiquette, among others. ■

hype 20

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Runners Fell Dragon Boaters in Polympics 2005

BY ELLYAS DZULKIFLI
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The third Ngee Ann Polympics games, which ended on 26 February, saw first-time participants Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) Track team snatching the gold from two-time winners Ngee Ann Dragon Boat (NPDB) team in the premier event, Blaze the Race.

This year saw nine clubs participating in Polympics 2005, which consisted of a series of sports events that lasted from 14 February to 26 February. The nine clubs involved were Swimming, Track & Field, Dragon Boat, Badminton, Basketball/Captain's Ball, Volleyball, Squash, Canoe Polo and Floorball.

Organised by the Track & Field team, Blaze the Race was a crowd favourite. The running event consisted of the 4 x 100m, 4 x 200m and 4 x 400m relays. A new category, the 4 X 1.1.2.4 medley, where four runners take turns to run two 100m laps, one 200m and one 400m lap, was added this year.

NPDB have been previously undefeated in all medal standings for the Blaze event since the games carnival's inauguration in 2003.

Even before the race, Thirumaaran s/o Arivazhagan, 20, an organising committee member, said the runners were confident of breaking NPDB's dominance.

"It's just like if you ask non-dragon boat



YIELDING TO RUNNERS: Dragon Boat's Faizal Mokmin accepting his second place trophy. (Picture: Ellyas Dzulkifli)

rowers to row for you, the result won't be the same as actual rowers... we are confident that we can win," said the second-year Aerospace Technology (AT) student, who also ran in one of the races.

"They [NPDB] might win trophies, but I don't think they will make a clean sweep of it anymore," he stated.

The runners were buoyed by the 4 X 100m heats on 22 February, where only two of NPDB's five teams made it to the finals.

However, Thirumaaran said that NPDB was expected to sweep the new 4 x 1.1.2.4 event, as they had five teams participating in it, but that they would face competition from the NP Biathlon Team, who also took part.

"All in all, 34 teams are participating [in] Blaze the Race," said Thirumaaran. He explained that the majority of the teams were from NPDB, who fielded an average of three teams in every event, while Track had three teams in the 4 x 100m race, and a team each in the 4 x 200m and

4 x 400m events.

According to him, the other teams were open ones, formed among friends with no affiliation to a particular Co-Curricular Activity (CCA).

The morning downpour on race day, 26 February, turned out to be showers of blessing for the Track team. When the rain stopped in time for the race, the Track team went on to sweep the 4 X 100 race, winning all three positions, and the top prize for the 4 x 200m and 4 x 400m events.

NPDB came in second in the 4 x 200m and 4 x 400m events. Thirumaaran's prediction also came true as NPDB won the 4 X 1.1.2.4 medley race. Two Track teams came in second and third.

Blaze the Race was a learning experience for NPDB. Member Faizal Mokmin, 23, a final-year Biotechnology (BIO) student commented that the race was "well fought".

His teammate Ng Yong Keng, 23, a final-year Mechanical Engineering (ME) student, added that the results were somewhat expected, "I didn't think we'd do well in the 4 x 100m, but at least in the 4 x 200, 4 x 400 and the 4 x 1.1.2.4 [medley], we won something."

Although there were more participants this year, compared with the previous year, Thirumaaran expressed hopes that more people would take part next year.

"Hopefully, more CCA groups will join, otherwise, it's just like a two-horse race between track and DB." ■

EE Making the Right Moves

BY KAROL ANN TAN
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STRATEGIC PLAY: Increased participation at the Ngee Ann Chess Open 2005 made for more challenging play. (Picture: Karol Ann Tan)

Final-year students from Electrical Engineering (EE) dominated the top spot in all three categories at the Ngee Ann Chess Open 2005, held from 22 February to 26 February.

The three students who won were Zhang Shou De, 22, Wang Ming Zhu, 23, and Chew Xiu Wai, 20, in the Chinese Chess, Weiqi and International Chess categories respectively.

"I'm happy to win the competition, as the competitors this year were tougher than last year," said Shou De.

Weiqi champ Ming Zhu said, "It was more difficult this year, as I did not know any of the competitors, and I wasn't familiar with their playing style."

Not only were the competitors more skilled, there were many more of them. The competition at Block 73 saw 76 competitors signing up, double the 36 participants in the previous year.

Luthaniel Pok Chee Kian, 21, Chairman of the competition and a final-year Quality Management & Engineering (QME) student, said the jump in participant numbers was due to "increased publicity".

He explained, "There wasn't any big-scale publicity last year as the seniors did not want

to do too much PR." Luthaniel added that last year's team felt it would add to their workload.

With the objective of talent-spotting potential players for recruitment in the Institute-Varsity-Polytechnic Games (IVP), the club felt justified in stepping up its publicity campaign this year by setting up booths, sending out e-mail and even, making announcements through campus radio station Radio Heatwave, said committee member Sun Min Sheng, 21. The second-year QME student was in charge of publicity.

"The first and second-year students are quite powerful, so Ngee Ann has hope for its IVP."

Chew Xiu Wai, 20,
Final-year Electrical Engineering student

Based on the level of competition, Xiu Wai concluded, "The first and second-year students are quite powerful, so Ngee Ann has hope for its IVP."

The extra effort put into publicity also saw a staff lecturer participating for the first time. The competition had always been open to staff, but no one had ever responded.

Mr Janne-Michele Heikkila, 30, a lecturer from the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS), said he decided to compete in the International Chess category after he "received an e-mail from the Chess Club".

"I only started playing chess three years ago. Of course, I don't hope to win the competition, but I hope to win one or two of the games," said Mr Heikkila.

He eventually won two of the three matches he played. ■

Women's Soccer: From Second Best to Second Last

BY RAJA NUR ASHIKIN
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The Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) women's soccer team fell from a laudable second place finish in last year's Institute-Varsity-Polytechnic Games (IVP) to nearly last position this year, ranking fifth out of six teams. The Institute of Technical Education (ITE) team eventually took first place.

NP's team lost nearly every game this season, save for the last match, which pitted them against first-time entrants Singapore Management University (SMU), on 4 February.

Women's soccer captain Pamela Lim, 19, a final-year Business Studies (BS) student acknowledged that the team had the "upper hand" because SMU have never participated in IVP before.

NP salvaged its pride by beating SMU 1-0 on home ground, but this was scant consolation for the team's two goals over the two-week match season, which did not raise its standings.

The six teams took turns to host the matches and the women got off to a bad start when they lost their first game, 2-0, to Nanyang Technological University (NTU) on 31 January, played at NP.

Their morale dipped even lower with their second game, a 10-0 defeat to Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP). They lost again subsequently, 2-0 to the National University of Singapore (NUS), and 7-1 to the ITE on home turf.

Mr Gopinathan Retnam, 34, a Student Development & Alumni Relations (SDAR) Officer, said that it was difficult to maintain the standard of the team's performance because the team changes every year, and the quality of the players will vary.

He said, "If we're lucky and we get a batch

of good players, our performance will be better. Sometimes, a few national players can make all the difference."

Team president Nithya L. Krishnan, 21, a final-year Building & Real Estate Management (BEM) student agreed.

She said, "ITE always wins because most of their players are national players. So, it's not fair because most of the good players are there."

Nithya also added that there were a few factors affecting the team's performance this semester. "Firstly, our players lack experience. Only four out of the 15 players are seasoned players. The level of commitment was very low and we also lost a lot of good players." Those players had graduated.

The women's team was also hampered by a lack of a professional coach. Their previous coach had left due to other engagements with the women's National Soccer team. This resulted in Melissa Yap, 21, a player who graduated from Early Childhood Education (ECH) last year, stepping in as the new coach.

"Melissa is an excellent player," Nithya said. "But coaching is about understanding a player's strengths and maximising it."

Ms Yap was not available to comment as she left for further studies in Australia shortly after the season ended. The team is now awaiting the appointment of a new coach.

"I think that we can do better next semester. This season, a lot of us have no experience. At least by next year, we would have trained more," said Munah Sativan, 19, a first-year Electronic & Computer Engineering student (ECE) and one of NP's midfielders.

She also added that the recent IVP letdown has led the team to develop a bond that will help them better interact with one another on the field in future. ■