UniSIM’s full-time courses will be flexible

Students can accelerate programmes by attending evening classes

By STACEY CHEA

Pursue a degree full-time, but enjoy the flexibility of part-time study. This is what SIM University (UniSIM) hopes to offer its students when it rolls out its full-time programmes in the next few years.

In an interview with the media yesterday, UniSIM president Cheong Hee Kiat gave a glimpse of how the private university, which currently offers only part-time degree courses, intends to shape its full-time offerings.

“The important thing is for us to have a curriculum that is flexible enough,” he said.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced last month that the Government will add another 3,000 undergraduate places a year by 2020. This will raise the university participation rate of each cohort from the current 27 per cent to 40 per cent, or from 13,000 places a year to 16,000.

The increase will be achieved by expanding programmes run by the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and UniSIM, which will be Singapore’s fifth and sixth universities respectively.

UniSIM, which caters mainly to working adults, will also take in fresh school-leavers for its full-time programmes.

Prof Cheong said the university is still in talks with the Ministry of Education to work out the details, such as what full-time courses it will offer and how these will be rolled out. But flexibility will be a key consideration, he said.

For instance, full-time students may be required to take some common subjects across their degree programmes in their first year.

Prof Cheong said this will give students the option to move on to something that they discover is their passion later on. Full-time programmes are likely to be in the non-science and technology areas, he said. This is to avoid overlapping too much with SIT’s programmes. UniSIM currently offers courses in fields such as psychology, business and social work.

“We will be different from SIT, but we will all generally be in the industry-oriented direction,” he said.

Like SIT, UniSIM’s full-time programmes will include a work-study component which will be kept flexible. Students will be encouraged to do at least one semester-long work attachment, but they can choose to do more if they wish. A student may only complete one attachment, he said.

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Prof Cheong said that as UniSIM gears up for its full-time programmes, it will also need to build on existing industry ties.

He said UniSIM has already started talks with industry partners — including industry associations and statutory boards — from the part-time programmes.

“Within our student population of about 4,000 students a year, there are many of the private universities are the best,” he said.

UniSIM, which is located on Clementi Road, is expanding its campus with another three buildings, which will be completed by 2014, but additional infrastructure will be needed for its full-time programmes.

It currently offers 35 academic programmes and takes in about 4,000 students a year, with a total student population of about 12,000.

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Prof Cheong says UniSIM’s full-time programmes are likely to be in non-science and technology fields, to avoid overlapping too much with those of the Singapore Institute of Technology. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO