UniSIM to boost enrolment

2,000 more places to meet surge in demand due to rise in govt subsidies

BY SANDRA DAVE  
SENIOR WRITER

SINGAPORE’S only university aimed at working adults is to boost its number of students to a record 12,000 this year.

SIM University (UniSIM) has experienced a surge in interest due to an increase in government subsidies for workers going back to school to pursue a degree.

About 400 more people than last year applied for its January intake alone. To meet the higher demand, UniSIM plans to raise its total enrolment from 10,000 to 12,000 over the next six months.

UniSIM president Cheong Hee Kiat said the rise in applications was due to Singaporeans' growing aspirations and the increase in tuition subsidies last year.

Workers pursuing part-time degrees at UniSIM and the three publicly funded universities now have 55 per cent of their fees paid for, up from 40 per cent before.

“This means a student enrolled in a three-year course costing $30,000 could end up paying just around $14,000,” said Professor Cheong.

Many also found that their career chances improved as a result of their studies.

A third managed to switch jobs within two years of graduating, and 60 per cent moved to an entirely different industry.

UniSIM also looked at the various skills required by preschool teachers and found that there were no courses for those who taught in Mandarin.

Polytechnic diploma-holder Lee Xin Yu, who works as a sales coordinator, said she signed up for an aviation business degree at UniSIM because of the heavily discounted tuition fees.

She was also attracted to the course because it is run in partnership with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, a leading American aviation and aerospace college that supplies more graduates to major airlines than any equivalent programme worldwide.

Ms Lee, 21, said: “Embry-Riddle is about the best there is out there. And to think that with the government subsidy, I will have to pay only $48,000 in fees over five years. If I were to head to the United States, it would easily cost five times more. It’s a good deal.”

Business development manager T. Vijayakumaran, who is taking up a mass communications degree, said the government subsidy is a big help.

The 33-year-old polytechnic diploma-holder said he picked UniSIM because its courses are tailored to the needs of students who have to balance work and study.

UniSIM, Singapore’s first privately funded university, is spending $300 million on new premises to meet higher enrolment numbers.

Its parent company, Singapore Institute of Management, unveiled a development masterplan under which 56,000 sq m will be added to its Clementi campus by 2014.