

TAN CHIN TUAN FOUNDATION BOOSTS LIBERAL ARTS LEARNING

The Tan Chin Tuan Foundation (TCTF), established in 1976 by the late banker and philanthropist Tan Sri (Dr) Tan Chin Tuan with the objective of sharing with society the rewards of a highly illustrious career, has been unwavering in its support of the National University of Singapore (NUS).

The Foundation most recently became a Founding Benefactor of Yale-NUS College when it made a gift to establish the Tan Chin Tuan Professorship in Chinese Studies as well as the Tan Chin Tuan Chinese Culture and Civilisation Programme for undergraduate students. One of the many elements of the Programme will be Chinese language immersion courses in China and Taiwan in 2014.

Here, Ms Chew Gek Khim (84), Deputy Chairman of the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation, talks about why the Foundation supports Yale-NUS.

What prompted the Foundation to support Singapore's first liberal arts college?

We believe that a liberal arts education is very beneficial to the individual. In the early years, Singapore had a high unemployment rate and the key focus as a country was to ensure that there were jobs for our people. At that time, our people needed to have specific technical, vocational and professional skills in order to be employable.

Today, many other countries provide similar technical, vocational and professional skills, and in order to be internationally competitive we need to ensure that in addition to these technical, vocational and professional skills, our people must be able to offer something extra. This something extra should,

hopefully, come with the provision of a liberal arts education - the ability to think creatively and critically, to be able to solve issues when they arise and have a macro perspective of the issues, as well as to be able to grasp and handle complexity.

Why did the Foundation feel that Yale-NUS was a suitable place for a Chinese studies programme and Professorship?

Yale University was the first US university to offer Chinese studies because of its links with Peking University. Consequently its links with China and Chinese studies go back a long way.

One of the key tenets of our gifting is that there should, ideally, be a multiplier effect. Given that TCTF has historically supported Chinese studies in Singapore and beyond, we thought that this gift would not only leverage Yale's strengths but that the Foundation might be able to create a multiplier effect by focusing on Chinese studies as the linchpin connecting the different tertiary institutions supported by the Foundation. The Foundation has gone on to link the people involved in the projects we support so that they might collaborate, mutually access and share information, thus benefitting the students and faculty in all institutions involved.

What are the Foundation's hopes for graduates of Yale-NUS?

We hope that Yale-NUS will produce well-educated individuals who, in turn, will contribute to society to make the world a better place. We also hope that these people will be a compliment to the institution that they graduate from and that the Yale-

NUS community will be one that fosters friendships and encourages our young people to be more international in their outlook. These are essential qualities because we believe that the new world will be far more international and cross-cultural skills will be a necessary skill set. ■



Ms Chew Gek Khim (front), Ms Chew Gek Hiang and Mr Chew Kwee San, Council Members of the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation.