

Most local professorships are joint efforts

GIFTS of money are always welcomed by universities and, like their American counterparts, universities here are constantly on the lookout for alumni keen to give something back to their alma mater.

The Straits Times spoke to representatives of the three local universities and found that few professorships here have been made possible by donations from a single alumnus.

The National University of Singapore (NUS) said that it costs about \$4 million for a professorship and \$6 million for a distinguished professorship.

It did not provide a breakdown of which professorships had been set up by alumni. However, an NUS spokesman said there were 62 such named

professorships which had been established through gifts from private donors, made up of alumni, friends of the university, foundations and corporations.

Over at the Nanyang Technological University, it costs between \$2.5 million for a chair professorship and \$5 million for a distinguished professorship.

Most recently, the Tan Chin Tuan Centennial Professorship in Engineering was established by the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation with a \$5 million gift. Thanks to a dollar-for-dollar matching grant from the Government, that adds up to \$10 million.

A spokesman said: "So far, a number of alumni have collectively participated in charting an endowed professorship, but (there is) not one single gift from

(an individual) alumnus."

The Singapore Management University (SMU) has the shortest history among the local universities, with only five batches of graduates totalling 3,600 alumni since it was set up in 2000. So while it has professorships, it is not surprising that none has been established by an alumnus.

According to a university spokesman, typically the programmes in SMU are "set up by individuals who have distinguished themselves in their careers or corporations because of the large contributions required to set up professorships or fellowships".

She said: "Given the relatively short time our alumni have spent in establishing themselves in their careers, they tend to contribute towards supporting the student body through the setting up of scholarships."

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