

05-27-2009 20:37

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## **Nat'l University of Singapore Boasts Quality Faculty**

By Kang Shin-who  
Staff Reporter

The National University of Singapore (NUS) said its world-class faculty is the driving force behind its strong global competitiveness and high international rankings acknowledged by international journals and institutions.

“We have put emphasis on recruiting better and better top professors over the past 50 years. Our school also has nurtured a creative environment where they can better research and teach as much as they can,” said Tan Chorh Chuan, 49, president of the school in an interview with The Korea Times in Seoul.

The largest university in Singapore placed 30th among the world's top 200 universities and fourth in Asia last year in the Times Higher Education Supplement's World University Rankings, up from 33rd the previous year.

He added that good professors are able to attract excellent students and the university also has a trusted faculty evaluation system. NUS has a long process in recruiting professors and a “tenure system” similar to universities in the U.S. “If professors fail to make good performances, we let them go. If you don't get tenure, you have to leave. Professors are evaluated in research and teaching by education experts, their colleagues and students,” he said.

The school's top educator visited Korea last week for annual networking meeting for “Universitas 21 (U21),” held at Korea University between May 20 and 22. U21 is an international network of 21 world universities in 13 countries, including the University of Melbourne, Australia, University of British Columbia in Canada and Waseda University in Japan, to facilitate collaboration and cooperation between the membership universities.

“I had very interesting discussions about university issues in the symposium. It was also a good opportunity to have network among senior people of the world universities,” Chuan said.

NUS has unique MBA programs with Korea University and Fudan University. Students of the program can select two degrees from those offered by the three schools. The three universities expect the program to maximize their strength; biotechnology at the Chinese university; the MBA in Korea; and finance in Singapore. Coincidentally, all the three universities were founded in 1905.

“We have a relationship for research collaboration with other Korean universities such as KAIST and Seoul National University,” he said.

### **Global Education Environment**

NUS has foreign students from some 90 countries, which make up 20 percent of the undergraduate student body and 50 percent of graduate students. The university also



Tan Chorh Chuan, president of the National University of Singapore, says his university has put emphasis on recruiting better and better top professors and its world-class faculty is the driving force behind its strong global competitiveness in an interview with The Korea Times in Seoul.

/ Korea Times Photo  
by Shim Hyun-chul

enrolls more than half of its students in overseas programs and many of them gain degrees from partnership universities.

“Our school offers a very global education environment. Our graduates have to learn how to live effectively in different cultures, so we have a diverse student body,” Chuan said.

NUS has some 40 double-degree and joint-degree programs with top universities internationally, allowing its students to study with the best professors in the world, while being exposed to various cultures.

He said the university can set its goals and strategies with full autonomy, which has driven the university to further development. Chuan also talked about the admission system of the university. NUS chooses 10 percent of students based on criteria other than grades.

“Even if your grades are a bit low, we take leadership, what you have done in communities and other talents into consideration for admission. It can make classes more diverse,” he said. “Our admission officers are also searching for top students around the world to make those students aware that NUS is an open, very good university.”

NUS has about 30 admission officers and it has made partnerships with top schools in many countries to attract good students. Chuan said the school has put a lot of effort into making its professional admission system fair and transparent.

Regarding Korean students, Chuan said they are hard working and very disciplined but their English skills need to be improved. “I think Korean people can be proud of tremendous achievements they have made so far. They should be very optimistic about the future,” he said. “I also want to encourage Korean universities to be more global.”

He stressed that university is not a place to deliver mere knowledge but to help and drive its students to be more creative and competent.

Chuan, an NUS graduate, is currently serving as deputy chairman of Singapore's Agency for Science, Technology and Research and he is working as a senior advisor to the Governing Board of Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School.

He started his medical career in 1983 and carried out his research training in the Institute of Molecular Medicine in Oxford, and obtained his PhD from NUS as well. He headed the department of medicine from 1997 to 1998 and was dean of the faculty of medicine from 1997 to 2000 and chairman of the NUH Medical Board during the same period.

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