Graduation ’08
Journeys to Success

United in the Land of Smiles

A Direct Plunge into Poly Life
Offered by Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) in collaboration with Newcastle University and Singapore Polytechnic (SP), the new Bachelor of Engineering in Naval Architecture with Honours programme is purpose-built for graduates of NP’s Diploma in Marine & Offshore Technology and SP’s Diploma in Marine Engineering. It offers them a seamless progression to a prestigious overseas degree course without having to leave Singapore.

Made possible under the Ministry of Education’s Polytechnic-Foreign Specialised Institution (Poly-FSI) initiative, the two-year honours programme will set sail in September 2008 with an initial intake of 60 students.

Graduating in 2010 with a specialisation in either Marine Engineering or Offshore Engineering, the pioneer batch will then be ready to jump aboard the booming maritime industry as highly skilled, sought-after professionals. Mr Chia Mia Chiang, the Principal of NP, hopes that the collaboration “produces top-quality graduates who will, in time, make their own mark to propel the marine and offshore industry to greater heights.”

While NP and SP will co-teach some of the modules, Newcastle University, also known as the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, will assume leadership in designing and delivering the innovative undergraduate programme.

Professor Ella Ritchie, Newcastle University’s Pro-Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for teaching and learning in Newcastle University, elaborated: “The curriculum is designed to cater for needs identified in the Singapore economy but is based on existing, highly successful provision at Newcastle. It will be developed in exactly the same way and to the same standard as if it were taught at our home campus.”

Upon completion of their programme, successful candidates will receive their award from Newcastle University which is a member of the United Kingdom’s elite Russell Group of 20 internationally recognised research institutions.

This is the second degree programme approved by MOE under the Poly-FSI initiative.

The first such tie-up was a collaboration between NP, Wheelock College and the Regional Training and Resource Centre in Early Childhood Care and Education for Asia to offer a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Educational Studies and Leadership. NP is also actively pursuing other potential degree programmes in niche areas such as advertising and integrated marketing communications, and film and TV.
From January 2010, primary school leavers will have yet another pathway to choose from, when the Ministry of Education’s (MOE) new School of Science and Technology (SST) welcomes its first batch of students.

Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) is delighted to be a part of the landmark initiative to inject greater choice and diversity into the secondary school education landscape. With its strong expertise in applied learning and established links with industry players, NP will be able to provide expert input for the SST and add value to the students’ learning experience.

Primarily, the School can leverage on NP’s expertise and resources when addressing key issues such as curriculum planning, pedagogy training, staff recruitment as well as overall campus design and development.

The SST, which offers a four-year programme leading to the Singapore-Cambridge GCE O-level examination, will be able to enhance its students’ learning experience by offering new O-level Applied Subjects developed by NP, in addition to current O-level subjects.

Additionally, the polytechnic will second some lecturers to the School to facilitate delivery of the curriculum as well as work with the School to provide professional development programmes for teachers.

With its extensive experience in hands-on and experiential learning, project work and industry attachments, NP is also perfectly poised to provide a range of pedagogical approaches that can be adapted and employed by the school.

SST students can also leverage on NP’s specialised laboratories and other facilities for their investigative assignments and project work, as well as access its host of student activities for their learning enhancement.

Ngee Ann to play a vital role in Singapore’s new School of Science and Technology.

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Hosted by Thailand’s largest Non-Governmental Organization, the Population and Community Development Association (PDA), the students were beneficiaries of a landmark collaboration between Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) and National Junior College (NJC).

The first of its kind between a polytechnic and a junior college in Singapore, the collaboration was geared at enhancing student talent development in both institutions through overseas study trips.

“Essentially, the trip aimed to encourage learning through diversity,” said Mr Chia Mia Chiang, Principal of Ngee Ann Poly. “We wanted to force the students out of their comfort zones, and heighten their awareness that others may think and act differently from themselves and their classmates. It will give them a head-start in being able to embrace and deal with diversity.”

The joint initiative is open to students from NP’s Talent Development Programme (TDP) and students from NJC. The TDP is geared towards identifying and grooming top students at NP for leadership and their future careers through a suite of programmes. The tie-up opens up opportunities for them to engage in discussions with officials from organisations like the World Bank and United Nations agencies to broaden their political, economic and social perspectives.

Sharing her experience, Jasmine Tan, 18, a second-year Tourism & Resort Management student at NP’s School of Business & Accountancy, said: “Through the interactions with the NJC students, we learnt to appreciate the differences in our working styles. The JC students, for example, tend to be more extensive in their research and it was interesting for us to work together.”

Up next is a joint community service project that will take the students to an Asian country.

By Nur Aniszah bte Sapari, Business & Accountancy Student

United in the Land of Smiles

In March 2008, 11 Ngee Ann scholars and 10 National Junior College students converged in a celebration of diversity – a visit to Bangkok for a look behind the scenes at agencies such as the World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO.
New ‘O’ Level Subject

To meet demand from Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools looking to reinvent themselves, Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) will be conducting a new O-level subject – Media Studies in Chinese – for SAP students from Chung Cheng High School and CHIJ St Nicholas Girls’ School.

Announced on 11 February 2008 by then Minister of State for Education Mr Gan Kim Yong, the programme will be introduced in 2010. Mr Gan commented that this move comes as an undertaking to keep SAP schools relevant and able to fulfil their original mission of nurturing bilingual and bicultural students steeped in the Chinese language and culture.

In recent years, SAP schools have come under increasing pressure from other schools offering higher-level Chinese classes. The new applied subject will give SAP school students an edge as they study topics such as the social impact of the Chinese mass media and learn to make their own short films.

The new subject will be reflected in the students’ GCE ‘O’ level Examination Certificates and recognised for admission into junior colleges and polytechnics.

Soon, students pursuing a Diploma in Marine & Offshore Technology or a Degree in Naval Architecture at Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) will have the opportunity to learn about the latest jack-up rig designs using a state-of-the-art Keppel FELS B-class model, donated by Keppel FELS and AE Models. The model is noteworthy as it sets the benchmark for drilling rigs of its class in the industry.

At the handing over ceremony on 31 March 2008, Mr Woon Kok Meng, Director of Ngee Ann’s Mechanical Engineering Division, said: “We are grateful to Keppel FELS and AE Models for sharing their technology. Such collaborations are important in keeping our students abreast with the latest in industrial practices.”

Adding to this, Mr Michael Chia, Executive Director of Keppel FELS, expressed his delight at the model being used to “help prepare future engineers and naval architects for the industry.”

Mr Michael Chia, Executive Director of Keppel FELS (left) with Mr Woon Kok Meng, Director of the Mechanical Engineering Division. In the background is the Keppel FELS B-class model donated.
Journeys To Success

As the names of the 2008 Top Graduates from Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) are announced by the Registrar amid roaring applause, one thing becomes clear: their joyful reactions to winning might be the same, how they got there is a different story.

Josiah Ng Chenghan

Ngee Ann Kongsi Gold Medal & Lien Ying Chow Gold Medal
Film, Sound & Video, School of Film & Media Studies

Other awards: The Shaw Foundation Gold Medal & Prize, Cathay Organisation Film Prize, Media Development Authority Prize, Gold Certificate of Achievement in CCA

All it took was one taste of filmmaking and he was hooked. Having produced his first documentary on Chinese opera when he was 15, Josiah Ng knew that NP’s Film, Sound & Video course was where he wanted to be.

Yet, it was a choice that was met with disapproval from relatives. “They wondered why I chose a poly when I qualified for a JC. Not much was said but I could sense their silent disapproval. So, I worked hard to prove them wrong,” said Josiah.

Having bagged both the prestigious Ngee Ann Kongsi Gold Medal and Lien Ying Chow Gold Medal, he has now certainly earned the right to hold his head up high.

Jeffrey Holmberg

Tay Eng Soon Gold Medal
Mechatronic Engineering, School of Engineering

Other awards: Motorola Gold Medal & Prize, AEM Holdings Prize, Gold Certificate of Achievement in CCA

As a child, Jeffrey Holmberg was every parent’s nightmare. Wasting time at the arcade, catching fish and fighting with his older brothers, studying was the last thing on his mind.

As a result, Jeffrey was posted to EM3, and subsequently, to the Normal (Technical) stream of Bishan Park Secondary School. It was here that his life turned around, when he unexpectedly won a prize for doing well in a Mathematics test.

“Many years ago, the mechanical pencil gave me the impetus to change my life and succeed. Now, the Tay Eng Soon Gold Medal will spur me on to even greater heights,” said Jeffrey.
Passion is infectious and Kenny Koh can attest to it. In 2006, Kenny got the once-in-a-lifetime chance to meet Bill Gates, when he and his fellow course mates from NP’s School of InfoComm Technology won the National Infocomm Competition.

Recalling the occasion, Kenny said: “I could not believe I was in the same room as one of the most successful men in the world. It was a huge privilege to hear him share his vision of the industry.”

Now 20, Kenny reflects the passion shown by the founder of Microsoft: “IT is so pervasive today and I want to be a part of it as much as I can.”

It is a love affair that can be traced back to when Kenny got his own computer at the age of 11. Freed from sharing the machine with his family, he dived into cyberspace with gusto. As his knowledge grew, his interest grew and it was only natural for Kenny to turn to the poly route after his O-Levels.

“NP’s Information Technology course was ideal as it enabled me to learn a lot of practical skills, which I knew would come in handy in my future career,” he said.

Making use of the opportunities provided to exercise his skills, Kenny teamed up with another student in his final year to write a software programme to help tourists find their way in Singapore.

Kenny aims to pursue a degree in IT and become a consultant in the field. Meanwhile, he is happy to bask in the limelight after winning the coveted Lee Kuan Yew Award. “I feel very honoured to be selected. But this is just the beginning of another chapter in my life and I will continue to pursue my passion for IT.”

PRISCILLA NG LIU YI
Lee Kuan Yew Award
Logistics Management, School of Engineering
Other awards: Caterpillar Logistics Gold Medal & Prize, YCH Group Prize, Gold Certificate of Achievement in CCA

While other girls flock to Vivo City for the best buys, Priscilla Ng has another reason for visiting the mall – to catch a glimpse of the bustling port next door.

With such appreciation for logistics management, it is no surprise that Priscilla, 20, consistently topped her cohort every semester. Yet, she credits her success to discipline and proper time management. Telling herself, “If you fail to plan, your plan will fail,” Priscilla juggled her studies with active participation in community service, both locally and overseas.

In January 2007, Priscilla joined fellow students and the staff of SBS Transit in cleaning buses to raise $3,000 for needy children.

Several months later, in September, she flew to Vietnam with other students to help out at a foster home for children affected by Agent Orange, a toxic herbicide used during the Vietnam War.

Further down the road, Priscilla wants to do more for others by helping in the rehabilitation of convicts. “I really hope to be a prisons officer one day. I want to lead convicts to the right path and in so doing, become a better person myself,” she said earnestly.

Meanwhile, she aims to pursue a business degree and is ecstatic about being one of the winners of the Lee Kuan Yew Award.

“This award proves that I have the ‘can do’ spirit and will motivate me to achieve more in future. At the same time, I also hope to use my abilities to help others find and fulfil their goals in life,” she said.

KEVIN CHIN WEE MIN
Lee Kuan Yew Award
Multimedia & Animation, School of InfoComm Technology
Other awards: MDA Gold Medal & Prize, Adobe Prize, Gold Certificate of Achievement in CCA

“When I was young, the internet was young,” said Kevin Chin, remembering the birth of his interest in infocomm technology. As the field developed and with the growth of multimedia and animation, Kevin saw the opportunity to marry his interest in IT with...
his passion for traditional art. "I then knew that it was what I wanted to do," he said.

At NP, he got to bolster his passion with the right skills. "The modules NP offered are what I would need as a multimedia developer. Aside from acquiring the relevant technical skills, I learnt the business side of things as well. I was also given ample time to explore, analyse and solve problems on my own," said Kevin.

Since joining the polytechnic, Kevin has been putting his expertise to good use as a freelance multimedia artist. So far, he has handled about 10 projects for local clients.

Money, however, is not the key driving force for his work.

"Last year, for instance, I did some photography and photo editing for the Singapore Association for the Deaf. I consider it a community service and was only too glad to help," he said.

Commenting on his future plans, Kevin said he hopes to pursue a communications degree and, of course, continue honing his IT skills.

Meanwhile, he is filled with a mixture of shock and happiness at being one of the winners of the Lee Kuan Yew Award.

"I feel very humbled to be selected from such a distinguished group of candidates, and will certainly work even harder to live up to the prestige," he said.
Diploma in Biotechnology
15. CIPTO
• GlaxoSmithKline Gold Medal & Prize
• MP Biomedicals Asia Pacific Prize

Diploma in Biomedical Laboratory Technology
16. WENDY LOW MEOW HONG
• NUH Gold Medal & Prize
• Beckman Coulter Singapore Prize
• Genecet Biotechnologies Prize
• National Cancer Centre Prize
• Siemens Healthcare Solutions Diagnostics Prize
• Singapore Association of Clinical Biochemists Prize

Diploma in Early Childhood Education
17. SARAH YU XINHUI
• MCYS Gold Medal & Prize
• RTRC Asia Prize

Diploma in Health Sciences (Nursing)
18. CHEW BOON YEN
• SingHealth Gold Medal & Prize
• National University Hospital Prize
• Provider of Contents & Information Prize
• SATA Prize

Diploma in Mobile Business Solutions
19. CASSANDRA GOH ZHI XIAN
• IDA Gold Medal & Prize
• SingTel Prize

Diploma in Mechanical Engineering
20. VIJAIKUMAR S/O RANGABASHAYAM
• Lim Teck Lee Gold Medal & Prize
• IES Award

Diploma in Product Design & Innovation
21. ABDUL RASHID B BASIRON
• Amtek Gold Medal & Prize
• The Singapore Mint Prize

Diploma in Marine & Offshore Technology
22. KYAW KHAING THEIN
• Keppel Offshore & Marine Gold Medal & Prize
• Association of Singapore Marine Industries Prize

Diploma in Quality Management & Engineering
23. LEE ZONG JING
• Dr A V Feigenbaum Gold Medal & ST Microelectronics Prize
• Baxter Healthcare Prize

Diploma in Engineering Informatics
24. LIM XIN WEI
• IDA Gold Medal & Prize
• Leica Instruments Prize

Diploma in Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering
25. OH CHAN LOONG
• Shell Gold Medal & Prize (LSCT)
• Croda Singapore Prize
• Focus Science Technology Services Prize
• Lonza Prize

Diploma in Horticulture & Landscape Management
26. LIN RUIFENG
• Lady Yuen-Peng McNeice Gold Medal & Prize
• Mirage Design Landscape & Contract Prize
• NParks Prize
• Tropical Environment Prize

Diploma in Biomedical Science
27. DARREN CHUA WEIQUAN
• Applied Biosystems Asia Gold Medal & Prize
• Singapore Association of Clinical Biochemists Prize

Diploma in Aerospace Technology
28. ROMAN
• European Aeronautic Defence & Space Gold Medal & Prize
• EADS Prize
• The Institute of Materials (East Asia) Prize
ON AIR

CTV

Meeting with local celebrities, working with industry experts, travelling overseas on projects with MediaCorp and watching your work being broadcast on national television – these may seem like the work of media veterans, but for the Campus Television crew members from NP’s School of Film & Media studies, it is all part of the learning process.

In just 12 months, the campus television (CTV) station run entirely by third-year Film & Media Studies (FMS) students, has seen a dramatic increase in opportunities for its students to showcase their talents, mostly through collaborations with industry partners such as Channel U.

Most recently, the CTV crew was asked by Channel U to direct three music videos for the local pop song writing competition, “S-POP Hurray!”

“We were asked to produce the music videos within two weeks, and the students worked hard to brainstorm and produce the videos in just 10 days,” said Mr Jonathan Foo, the lecturer-in-charge of CTV. He added, “It was a wonderful opportunity for CTV students to produce music videos with MediaCorp.”

This achievement came hot on the heels of another significant CTV milestone when MCM student Shawn Tan, who was CTV’s General Manager, was sent on an all-expenses paid trip to South Australia with MediaCorp news producer Maggie Chong in February this year.

Helping Chong shoot and direct new stories for Channel U’s and Channel 8’s news programmes, Shawn said that “the industrial experience forced me to step out of the comfort zone of being ‘just a student’ and lock in the mindset that I am someone who can produce work that meets the industry standard.”

With the exposure, both Shawn and Cyrus have been approached by potential employers. “Both of them have been headhunted and offered employment contracts,” said Mr Foo. “It shows that our students are capable of work that far exceeds expectations, and with collaborations such as those we have with Channel U, our students are exposed to even greater learning and employment opportunities.”

Mr Robin Yee, Deputy Director of FMS, added that the school “trains students to hit the ground running with realistic projects and external clients in many of our modules...even when they are students, they can produce work of professional quality”.

Like CTV, the other media companies operated by FMS students, such as radio station Heatwave and TriMedia Publishing that publishes the campus newspaper, serve clients ranging from the Prime Minister’s Office to President’s Challenge and other MediaCorp arms.

The CTV crew has just embarked on a 10-day trip to Beijing to film news snippets on the Beijing Olympic Games 2008. Other FMS students on the trip are producing articles commissioned by several magazines, including Lime and Simply Her, a coffee table book and a Chinese Opera resource.

By Joyce Peh, Film & Media Studies Graduate
Voicing it out on Capital 95.8FM

Listening to the radio might be easy but being a speaker on a radio show is an entirely new can of worms. Or so attested Annabel Lim and Chang Cheng Yao, two third-year Chinese Studies (CHS) students who were selected by their lecturer, Mr Lee Kow Feng, to appear on a weekly radio talk show on Capital 95.8FM.

Other students might have found the studio experience to be daunting and stressful, but not these two budding radio personalities. “It is fun! I get to listen, think and share on topics that matter to young people like myself,” said Cheng Yao. Annabel added that one of the most interesting parts of being on the talk show was getting different perspectives from people of all walks of life: “Di Cong [DJ Daryl Ong, host of the programme] would challenge our stand and make us think deeper about what we say. It is both exciting and insightful.”

It may seem like a glamorous role, but the two girls pointed out that being on the talk show would not have been such a walk in the park, if not for the relevant modules that were taught in school. Modules such as Speech Communication, Radio Production, Global Issues and Presentation Skills in Chinese have prepared the students well for the radio industry. “I took Radio Production in school and by being on this programme, I got to learn what it is like, to actually be on-air,” said Annabel who believes that the experience will help open opportunities for her in the local media industry.

Mr Lee, the lecturer-in-charge, commented that the School of Humanities (HMS) had chosen to collaborate on the radio show because of its relevance to the CHS course of study. “The diploma we offer in Chinese Studies covers two aspects: the teaching track as well as the media track. Going over to 95.8FM for live shows will give our students a chance to see how the actual Chinese media industry works,” he said.

By Joyce Peh, Film & Media Studies Graduate

SPECIAL MENTIONS

• Two groups of final-year students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) walked away with top prizes at the Polytechnic Student Research Programme (PSRP) Award Presentation Ceremony on 11 March 2008. They represent the best among a total of 81 projects undertaken by more than 240 students from NP, Temasek Polytechnic and Singapore Polytechnic.

• Congratulations to Adjunct NP Lecturer Toh Poh Joo who completed the gruelling 250km Atacama Desert Race for charity in April! In all, the 1995 Ngee Ann Kongsi Gold Medallist managed to raise over $52,000 for The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund.

• Outwitting the competition, NPs engineering staff and students walked off with a slew of top honours at the Singapore Robotic Games 2008, including coming in Champions of the Autonomous Sumo Robot and RC Sumo Robot categories.

• Clinching the title of Overall Champion for SAFRA Radio’s first nation-wide Campus Reporter Competition is second-year Chinese Studies student, Chang Cheng Yao.

• Representing Singapore at the 4th ASEAN PARA Games 2008 in Thailand was Psychology & Community Services student Jason Oh. He won the bronze medal in the Boccia competition.

• 18 Grams of Love: a film by NP alumni Han Yew Kwang, Director, and Lau Chee Nien, Producer, came in second in the Junior Jury Award category and won third prize in the Public Award for Best Film category at the 13th Lyon Asian Film Festival in France. The film also picked up the Public Award at the 5th International Film Festival Ofensk in Poland.

• Still on the filmmaking front, NP alumni Boo Junfeng and Sharon Loh picked up awards for Best Director and Best Cinematographer, respectively, at the Silver Screen Awards in April. Their film, Keluar Baris, also won Best Singapore Short Film.

• Emerging as National Champions for the second time in the National Infocomm Competition 2007/08 for the ITe-Poly-U league was our very own School of InfoComm Technology! The results come at the end of an intense year-long competition circuit which saw more than 2,000 students from various educational institutes participating. The prize includes a study trip for six people to visit Silicon Valley.
Two years ago, if someone had told 21-year-old Wu Qi, a final-year Chinese Studies (CHS) student, that she would soon join the ranks of local authors with their own published titles, she would have called them “crazy” and dismissed the idea.

Now, Wu Qi knows that the idea is not that far-fetched at all. She achieved the dream of every aspiring author when her first novel, titled “Midsummer House”, hit local bookshelves in November 2007.

The book unravels a poignant tale of love, friendship and the relationship between children and their parents and is told through an unusual medium that draws upon both comic books and traditional novels. It has been described as “a novel by the young, for the young and of the young.”

“I don’t usually like reading but this book is like a comic. It uses emoticons, which is very refreshing,” said Chua Chie Ling, a NP student who read and enjoyed the book.

Yet, the process to becoming a published author was not without obstacles. Lacking experience, Wu Qi stumbled when searching for a publisher. “I emailed my draft to many local publishers…[and] got rejected several times. Some told me that they only published textbooks while others just ignored my email,” she said.

Finally, she found a publisher who expressed interest in the book, but the journey did not end there. “Even after selecting my publisher, I was involved in the layout of the book. I even had to find the cover page artist myself!” Wu Qi recounts.

In all, the 284-page book took Wu Qi over a year to write and prepare for publication. Her persistence paid off as she was rewarded with praise for her writing. “As her maiden work, this is a beautiful piece of writing,” critiqued Dr Nan Zhiguo, a lecturer with the School of Humanities.

So what kept Wu Qi going? “I love writing. Although there were problems along the way, all I wanted to do was to complete the book,” she said.

Similarly, second-year Accountancy student Yalin Tian showed that passion for the written word will take one a long way. Last year, the 19-year-old made waves when she won the Singapore Tertiary Chinese Literature Award for “Escape” – a 7000-word novel she penned in just two weeks. It’s a mind boggling feat but she attributes it to sheer enthusiasm: “I lose track of the time whenever I’m writing. I can be writing at 5 or 6am and not feel tired!”

The competition Yalin won was organised by the National University of Singapore Chinese Society, Nanyang Technological University Chinese Society, and Fujian Hui Guan, to encourage students to express themselves creatively in Chinese.

Her winning piece, “Escape”, explores themes such as religion, morality and human hypocrisy. “I was trying to express a few ideas taken from the Bible…to give [my] readers a greater understanding of the small transgressions that most of us are so used to committing that we forget that they are wrong,” Yalin explained.

In that vein, if pride is such a transgression, then both Yalin and Wu Qi show exemplary levels of humility, with the latter musing: “I’m not a novelist. I’m just a person who enjoys writing.”

By Cheryl Hoon, Film & Media Studies Graduate
With the start of the new academic year in April, two additional shuttle bus routes started plying the roads, transporting Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students to school in air-conditioned comfort. A free service provided by NP, the new routes operate from the bus interchanges in Tampines and Woodlands.

These bus routes are a welcome addition to the existing lineup of shuttle services from Clementi MRT station, Jalan Anak Bukit and Hougang Interchange.

Samantha Tan and Connie Chan, first-year Chinese Studies students, agreed that the new shuttle service from Tampines was a timely addition to the existing shuttle services as "it’s convenient and helps save money" and means that the both of them “don’t have to squeeze on to public transport in the morning.”

Waiting for the Tampines shuttle at Tampines Interchange, third-year Electrical Engineering student Phang Alfred added, “The new shuttle service makes it easier for the ‘Eastsiders’ to get to school on time. It actually allows me to catch a few more winks in the morning.”

Going the extra mile with New Shuttle Services

Everyday, from 23 March to 18 April, excitement was the order of the day as Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) welcomed its latest batch of freshmen with myriad orientation camps, competitions and performances.

The festivities included a Sports Camp, Student Union’s Camp and an inter-school telematch called Fun 2008. There was also a CCA Fiesta, where freshmen could learn more about and sign up for any of the 100-over CCAs that NP offers, as well as a high-tempo pop concert put up by NRA, NP’s award-winning hip-hop dance group.

Highlighting NP’s commitment to continually improving facilities for students, the start of the new school year also saw NP Principal Mr Chia Mia Chiang opening a new students’ lounge, called OurSpace@72. Located at Block 72, the lounge features chic interiors in which students can study or unwind. With food and drink vending machines, a TV room and a games room, OurSpace@72 has already become a prime hang-out location for current NP students.
Before Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) had even begun welcoming its 2008 batch of freshmen, it had already started preparing some 97 students for a taste of the “Ngee Ann Learning Experience” through the Ngee Ann Preparatory Programme (NPP). Organised for students enrolled under the Direct Polytechnic Admissions Exercise (DPA), the eight-week programme featured a variety of activities, both on and off campus, which immersed them in the unique learning experience that NP offers.

To prepare them for the rigours of the polytechnic education ahead, the students took four modules from the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) and one foundational module from the course they were enrolled in.

“It is pretty different from secondary school,” said 17-year-old Glenn Lee of polytechnic education. The Business Studies student, who was previously from Kent Ridge Secondary School, was referring to the projects and presentations that the students had to do in their various modules. But in spite of the jam-packed schedule, Glen was quick to point out that he was enjoying his new and exciting student life tremendously.

Besides, DPA students like Glen will go on to enjoy an increased amount of free time over the next three years of their diploma programme, as a result of accumulated credits through the NPP.

What is the Direct Polytechnic Admission (DPA) Exercise?

Implemented in 2007 by the Ministry of Education (MOE), the DPA exercise seeks to “give the polytechnics greater flexibility to select students on criteria other than examination results, thus allowing a wider range of talents to be recognised.”

Through the DPA, students who are interested in, and who have the aptitude for applied learning can secure places in the polytechnic courses of their choice before taking their GCE ‘O’ level examinations. Successful applicants will then join the eight-week Ngee Ann Preparatory Programme.

According to the MOE, each of the five local polytechnics will admit “up to 2.5% of their Academic Year 2008, or about 100 students per polytechnic on average,” through the DPA exercise.

Malcolm Ng, 17, a former Commonwealth Secondary School student, feels glad that he made that choice to enrol in the Diploma in Electronics and Computer Engineering through the DPA as he now has an edge over “most people who wanted to keep their options open.”

Besides “having a head start on the rest of the school”, in the words of 17-year-old Mass Communication student Sarah Raziff, the DPA students also conceded that they were a “very pampered” lot.

In addition to their very own sports camp, the DPA students were also treated to a movie screening and buffet lunches. The icing on the cake came in the form of a three-day Overseas Adventure Camp in Kota Tinggi, Malaysia.

By Hong Yu Qing Amelia, Film & Media Studies Student
From PSLE Failure to PR Success

Embodying the adage that failure is merely a stepping stone to success, NP alumni Alvin Pang proves that even a primary school drop out can achieve the highest honours, with nothing more than an iron will to succeed.

Being named “Asia Pacific PR Student of the Year” at the Asia Pacific PR Awards 2007 might have come as a surprise to Alvin Pang, but many others were not surprised at all. After all, the 30-year-old has been one of Ngee Ann Polytechnic’s (NP) top graduates, walking away with the Lien Ying Chow Gold Medal at the 2005 Graduation.

Yet, what some people might be surprised to know is that Alvin has never been to a secondary school. “Some of my peers in this audience still think I am kidding when I tell them that I didn’t come from a secondary school. I failed my PSLE and started working thereafter,” he revealed in his valedictorian speech in 2005.

Working when others his age were studying, Alvin’s responsibilities got only heavier after he lost his father at the age of 19 and inherited a massive medical bill. It was then that he realised that without education, his prospects were quite bleak.

Working during the day and attending night classes, Alvin completed his N- and O-levels in record time and qualified for NP’s Diploma in Mass Communication. Giving up his full-time job, Alvin supplemented the scholarships he received by giving swimming lessons, earning just enough to support himself and his family.

Despite these difficulties, Alvin was positive about the experience: “I think the setbacks helped. In fact, I’m thankful for them! Everything I faced helped build a stronger me and made me more resilient. When I was at Ngee Ann, tight deadlines and study stress seemed trivial compared to the other challenges I’d experienced.”

“Ngee Ann helped as well. Lecturers like Ms Jenny Low and Ms Veronica Leng, always gave me the impression that they wanted to help me to succeed. From the first day that I met her, Ms Leng was there to help me, whether in or out of the classroom. When my family needed medical subsidies, she helped by calling the hospital and speaking to the doctors. When I needed time off to settle my family matters, she would tell me to concentrate on that and not worry about deadlines,” Alvin divulged.

Upon graduation, Alvin went on to study Business Administration at the National University of Singapore, where in his final year, he took part in the Asia Pacific PR competition, organised by leading public relations firm, Weber Shandwick.

“I took part because the competition allowed me to combine my skills in mass communication with business know-how. However, I didn’t realise how big the competition would turn out to be!” said Alvin. “When I went for the awards ceremony in Hong Kong, it was this grand black-tie event. It was like the Oscars of the PR industry in Asia,” he added.

Currently working as an Associate with Weber Shandwick, Alvin is also focused on developing his non-profit organisation, I-Cube. Founded by Alvin and an NUS classmate about three years ago, the organisation runs motivational talks and seminars for troubled youth.

It is a cause close to his heart, as we discover that Alvin is also a registered volunteer with the Singapore Boys Home. But why does he do this?

The answer can be found in the conclusion to his valedictorian speech three years ago:

“I wish for none of you to waste the years that I had wasted. It was a journey of hardship filled with obstacles. I had procrastinated, learnt it the hard way and paid a hefty price. I urge you to seize the day, so that in retrospect, there will be no regrets but only pride and gratification.”

By Jeremy Boo, Mass Communication Student