A Top Choice Poly
More high-scoring O level students choose Ngee Ann Polytechnic

On the Edge of Technology
Industry partners endorse our projects

The First Campus Media Conglomerate
The School of Film & Media Studies starts its own
What do a bunch of 18 year olds know about back pain? In the case of four final-year Mechanical Engineering students who developed a device for the Singapore General Hospital to help sufferers of back pain – quite a bit indeed.

Such collaborations with leading industry players help our students learn in a real world context, and in our feature special we shine the spotlight on our talented student innovators who have developed some nifty devices that have strong potential for commercialisation.

While we’re on the subject of learning in the real world, our School of Film & Media Studies has started its own media conglomerate on campus. m:idea, which is staffed by students, will offer external clients services such as editorial production, photography and filming. Learn all about what they can do for you in our article on this exciting new start-up.

There’s some truth about the early bird catching the worm. Some 129 freshmen who joined Ngee Ann Polytechnic via the Direct Poly Admission route got a taste of poly life ahead of their peers in our Ngee Ann Preparatory Programme (NPP). Read more about this unique programme that packs a punch, and received the thumbs-up from those who went through it.

On a lighter note, don’t we all love to read a classic rags-to-riches story? On our last page, we chat with alumnus Dennis Ng, who was once a part-time supermarket cashier in his teens, but with smarts and plenty of guts, now owns one of Singapore’s leading pet supplies companies. Now, that’s entrepreneurship!
A TOP CHOICE Poly

Three business-related courses from NP are the most sought-after among O level applicants

Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) has proven itself to be the top choice poly on at least three counts.

First, NP got the most popular vote, as the highest number of O level applicants put NP as their first choice at this year’s Joint Admissions Exercise (JAE).

NP also got the lion’s share of students who scored well enough to qualify for junior college, with a significant number scoring an aggregate of 10 points or better.

In addition, the three diplomas that garnered the most number of applicants across all polytechnics belong to NP’s School of Business & Accountancy (BA). These three most sought-after courses are International Business, Accountancy and Business Studies. Among them, International Business is one of the new courses that NP introduced this year.

Mr Philip Lau, Director of BA, said, “The keen interest in BA’s courses was evident during the Open House and JAE. Through their relatives and friends, many students have heard about how a BA diploma will prepare them well for a rewarding career and excellence in further studies.”

The School of Life Sciences and Chemical Technology (LSCT) also attracted top students with a single-digit cut-off point for both its Biomedical Science and Biomedical Laboratory Technology diploma courses.

Mrs Tang-Lim Guek Im, Director of LSCT, attributed the success of LSCT’s diplomas to the school’s proven track record.

“The fact that three of our own alumni have become the first polytechnic graduates to gain direct admission to medical school at NUS confirms that we are producing quality graduates,” she said.

By Jessy Chua

At an NP Advantage

To help students graduating in this recession, Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) has launched the $2 million NP Advantage Package.

The package targets students who are not enlisting in National Service. It includes 15 new Specialist Diplomas to help about 300 graduates boost their portfolios, interest-free study loans to help up to 100 graduates pursue their degrees and 50 newly created jobs within campus.

The Specialist Diplomas are in areas where highly-skilled manpower is in demand, such as Tourism, and Marine and Offshore Technology. A unique feature of these Specialist Diplomas is their strong internship component.

Students who wish to pursue further studies with local educational providers that offer degrees from reputable overseas universities can apply for a $5,000 interest-free loan.

The 50 vacancies within NP for jobs such as project and research assistants will help them gain work experience and open up employment opportunities.

Nicole Cheong, who will graduate with a diploma in Banking and Financial Services this year said, “I’ve already applied to the local universities, but in case I don’t qualify, it’s reassuring to know that NP is giving me all these options.”
The School of Film & Media Studies is the first in Singapore to operate a media conglomerate staffed by students

Being the first student team to spearhead the Speak Good English Movement for Youth campaign was all in a day’s work for Jananitha Sri and Tammy Chua, two third-year Mass Communications students who served their internship at m:idea.

m:idea, which is run by Ngee Ann Polytechnic’s (NP) School of Film & Media Studies (FMS), underwent a trial for one semester in September last year. It will be launched at the end of May this year.

The first media conglomerate operated by an educational institution in Singapore, m:idea brings together the various media within NP such as Campus TV, Radio Heatwave and Trimedia Publishing, to offer companies a powerful integrated platform for youth-oriented advertising.

It also offers external clients a variety of media services such as writing and editorial management, video production, events management, and photography.

Jananitha and Tammy were among the 28 outstanding FMS students who were chosen to be part of the conglomerate’s pioneering team. They were attached to m:idea for the 20-week duration of their internship programme.

For the Speak Good English Movement for Youth Campaign, which was commissioned by the National Library Board, Jananitha and Tammy executed a creative publicity campaign that led up to the Really Super Verbal Party (R.S.V.P) at Zouk on February 28.

Making full use of their first-hand knowledge of youth trends, they carried out an aggressive online campaign on Facebook and Friendster to reach out to their target audience. They also organised flash mobs by hiring NP’s renowned percussion group Baracuda Batucada to play up a storm at places with high youth traffic, and handed out event flyers. There was also a three-day road show at the Esplanade.

At R.S.V.P, which saw a turn-out of more than 700 youths and enjoyed coverage from the local media, party-goers were challenged to think up the best pick-up line and come up with solutions to bad grammar – all in the name of speaking good English.

Jananitha said, “The two of us did everything – from research and copywriting, to account servicing and making connections with partners. I’m extremely proud that we were able to complete a task that my lecturer said would have taken 10 people to do.”

R.S.V.P, a national-level event, is just one example of the kind of work that m:idea can do for potential clients.
**CONGLOMERATE**

“Advertisers and clients can be assured of the quality of work and professionalism because our lecturers are there to supervise the process.”

– Deputy director of the School of Film & Media Studies Mr Robin Yee

m:idea also offers companies looking to reach out to the youth market affordable rates to advertise in the various media channels on campus. (see box)

Deputy director of FMS Mr Robin Yee, the driving force behind m:idea, said, “Advertisers and clients can be assured of the quality of work and professionalism because our lecturers are there to supervise the process.”

“And, moreover, the students working on the projects are at most one semester from graduation. They are familiar with what the industry expects of them.”

In fact, before the set-up of m:idea, some FMS students have already been offering their services on a freelance basis to external companies. For example, Yeo Kai Wen, the photo editor of campus newspaper npTribune also shoots for Chinese dailies Lianhe Zaobao and my paper as a freelancer. So what m:idea does is consolidate such talents under one company.

At m:idea’s new office at FMS, a full set of media infrastructure and equipment is ready for use. These include a dubbing booth and audio editing suite, as well as an indoor photography and video editing suite.

By Jessy Chua

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**At this rate, you can’t go wrong...**

Targeting the youth market for your product? m:idea gives your company a powerful and effective platform to reach out to those aged between 18 and 25 via advertising on the various media channels on campus. (Our affordable advertising rates, subject to change, are listed below)

m:idea also offers a full range of media services, such as editorial layout, graphic design, photography, writing and editing. The rates will be finalised in May.

For more information, contact Mr Ronald Wan at ronald@np.edu.sg.

**npTribune**
- Type: Newspaper
- Circulation: 3,000
- Frequency of publication: Quarterly
- www.theurbanwire.com/nptribune

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**hype**
- Type: Magazine
- Circulation: 4,000
- Frequency of publication: Biannual
- www.theurbanwire.com/hype

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**UrbanWire**
- Type: e-zine
- Number of hits: 2 million monthly
- Frequency of publication: Updated daily
- www.theurbanwire.com

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**Radio Heatwave**
- Type: Campus radio
- Listenership: 15,000 on campus daily
- Frequency of broadcast: Every day
- www.radioheatwave.com

Rates range from $70/mention/hour for a la carte selections during peak hour, to $4,500 for a package of 100 ads.
There’s something to be said about the potential of an invention when a hospital is keen to endorse it, and let it be tried out on patients.

The Mobile Lumbar Traction Unit, a final-year project by four Mechanical Engineering students, is one such innovation that has garnered the confidence vote from Ngee Ann Polytechnic’s industry partner, the Singapore General Hospital.

The device, which helps ease the suffering of patients with lower back pain, is the brainchild of Nurlina Fatima Shafrin, Nadiah Binte Mohamed Zi, Chan Loong Wei and Soh Chow Hun.

Conceptualised with the guidance of the hospital’s Physiotherapy Unit, the device is a portable battery-operated harness that can lift a patient’s upper body from the pelvic region. This sustained pull, called traction, relieves pressure on the spine.

Currently, similar devices available commercially are only able to perform the traction process when the patient is lying down. They are also not portable, so a physiotherapist has to be present during the therapy session.

“Initially, it was really difficult to visualise such a device, because it’s never been done before,” explained Nurlina. “We also had to develop a way for the motion of the harness to be controlled.

“For patients with stiffer backs, their nervous system could get a shock if the harness moved at a pace that’s too fast. We were a little intimidated by this.”

In fact, the project was complex enough that the team thought they might not be able to complete it by the time they graduated, and their juniors would have to take over.

But after seven months of research and development, including testing the device on numerous staff and students of various ages, it was finally ready. The process of building the device taught them first-hand about biomechanics, an area that Nurlina admitted they were unfamiliar with initially.

With significant media attention from The Straits Times and Today, the team can be proud of their project. “It’s a really pleasing feeling to also know that what we’ve accomplished will help a lot of people out there,” said Nurlina.
**Muscle-building ‘Chin Nods’**

When the Singapore General Hospital mooted the idea of developing a new device to help patients with swallowing problems strengthen their throat muscles, final-year Mechanical Engineering students Alvin Lee, Eddie Chen and Daphni Lim were quick to take it up.

This was even though there are no similar devices on the market, which made the project a particularly tough one. But it was an excellent opportunity for them to learn how engineering can be applied to a real world context, especially with the guidance of the hospital staff.

As Alvin explained, “We thought it would be challenging to do, and we wanted to help the hospital develop something that could really work for their patients.”

Their **Throat Muscle Strengthening Device** is strapped to the chest and provides resistance to the chin area. By doing chin “nods”, patients can strengthen their throat muscles.

It was certainly a challenge to create the device. After three failed prototypes and a looming deadline, the team still couldn’t develop a version that could work properly.

Initially, they struggled with trying to achieve the correct angle at which the chin should rest on the device. Thinking out of the box helped them to overcome this hurdle. Inspired by the bubble level on his camera tripod – a tool that helps to indicate whether a device is level – Alvin adapted it to his project, eliminating the problem.

The hospital allowed the trio to test the device on two of their patients, so that they could gain a first-hand understanding of how their device works in real life.

“It was through listening to the patient’s needs that we could fine-tune and perfect the device,” said Alvin.

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**Help with Breech Babies**

With a second collaboration with the National University Hospital’s Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology this year, the School of Infocomm Technology (ICT) has dealt with babies not once, but twice.

Back in 2006, ICT produced an animated training video to help the hospital’s medical interns and midwives better understand the birthing process.

This year, they have taken that idea a step further. As part of their final-year project, three Multimedia & Animation students, Le Hong Trieu, Jeny and Candy Tan developed a simulation application, **3D Birth**, to help train the hospital’s medical professionals how to deliver a breech baby. A breech birth occurs when the baby’s feet instead of head faces the birth canal. It is a rare occurrence, making training particularly challenging.

The **3D Birth** simulation application combines animation and interactivity in a powerful manner. It gives users an overview of the mother’s pelvis and uterus, and the position of the breech baby. Users can manipulate the baby’s position using mouse and keyboard, in order to reposition it for safe delivery. The application will give feedback if they make an erroneous move.

“It’s quite a big deal for us to be able to play a part to help doctors and midwives successfully handle breech babies. It’s very fulfilling,” said Candy.

There are already plans to add virtual gloves to the application in the near future, so that users can literally use their hands to manipulate the baby into position, taking the interactive experience to a new level.

*cont’d on page 8*
A Wind-Wind Situation

Challenging conventions in the field of technology is a big part of many of our student’s projects, making them serious contenders in national-level competitions.

The Greenwave Environmental Care Competition, which is organised by Sembawang Shipyard for tertiary institutions to showcase environmentally-friendly projects, is one of the platforms where our students have offered a fresh spin on green technology.

At last year’s event, our student projects bagged a total of five awards. One of these projects, the Wind Turbine Prototype Model, won the second prize of $6,000, thanks to the efforts of three Mechanical Engineering (ME) graduates who went against convention and developed a wind turbine to work in Singapore’s less than windy weather conditions.

Wind turbines are rare in Singapore because our wind speed averages a low 2m/s, but Ong Sook Ping, Luo A Yu and Guo Shanshan nonetheless attempted to explore ways to harness energy from the wind for their final year project.

“It’s really hard to get a wind turbine to kick off at our low wind speed, so we thought it would be interesting to see if we could pull it off,” said Sook Ping, who graduated last year and is now working at an engineering firm.

Through plenty of trial and error, the trio managed to get their prototype to work at a wind speed of 1.63 m/s.

The wind turbine has plenty of untapped potential. Sook Ping explained that solar cells and wind turbines could be used together, as they complement each other. For example, when solar cells are not of use at night, the wind turbine can be used to generate power instead since there are stronger winds at night than in the day.

As the first ME students to develop a wind turbine prototype, Sook Ping and her team have laid the foundations for subsequent students to delve deeper into this relatively new area of clean energy.

“Our juniors are already developing our idea further, and are now working on a hybrid prototype that combines both a wind turbine and solar cells,” she added.

Three other NP projects won merit prizes at the competition. These are the Stand-alone Desalination of Sea Water project by a team of Electrical Engineering students, the Environmentally Friendly Solar Fridge by students from the Building Environment Division, and Hybrid Solar Lighting by ME students.

Another ME team also bagged a commendation award for its Ozone Ice-making Machine project.

By Jeanine Tan

$650,000 R&D Grants for Staff

Our staff and lecturers also engage themselves in research and development projects, unearthing new discoveries and imparting fresh knowledge to our students. Such a practice has kept the spirit of innovation alive and kicking at NP.

This year, four projects by staff from NP’s Centres of Innovation received grants of up to $650,000 under the Ministry of Education’s Innovation Fund Grant.

One such project is the Electrospun Nanofiber Membrane Bioreactor for Wastewater Treatment by Mr Koh Lee Chew. Mr Koh is developing a more energy-efficient membrane bioreactor system using an electrospun nanofiber-based membrane. This will decrease the cost of wastewater treatment and water reclamation.

Another project is the TruImagE System for Morphology Analysis of PDT-mediated Apoptotic Cells by Ms Chee Oi Choo. With this project, 3D live cell imaging and measurement can be done in real-time, without the need for contrast agents.

Exploring the application of laser in the blasting of steel plates is Mr Kwee Tiaw Joo’s Steel Plate Laser Blasting Device. Lasers are cleaner and more environmentally-friendly than the traditional use of copper slag and steel grit blasting.

And in a research project that hits close to home, Mr Lim Yew Kin’s RFID-powered Exam Script Collection and Distribution System aims to help administrators handle the more than 100,000 exam scripts a day in an efficient and secure manner, by tracking and tracing every script.
A Taste of **INDIA**

**Nghee Ann Polytechnic students will experience India like never before, thanks to collaborations with two top schools there**

Ida Lyana Kamsani, a second-year Diploma in Information Technology student, is already thinking of working in India, even though she still has another year to go before she graduates.

Her plans were inspired by her visit to India’s National Institute of Technology Calicut (NITC) beginning March 8, where she will participate in a six-week immersion programme, along with 27 of her peers from the School of Infocomm Technology (ICT).

Not only will Ida and her peers attend classes at NITC, they will also learn more about India’s rich history, as well as visit infocomm companies in Calicut, Kerala.

“I’ll be able to hone my skills in adapting to a different culture and network with overseas friends. Who knows, I may look for work attachment opportunities in India when I graduate,” said Ida.

The trip was made possible by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between ICT and NITC on February 20. In addition to the trip, the two schools will also develop future opportunities to promote interaction and cultural exchanges.

Director of NITC Professor G R C Reddy said, “We have faith that this collaboration will prove very useful and beneficial for faculty and students in both countries, particularly in the areas of research and training in infocomm technology, photonics, nanotechnology and other areas of common interests.”

ICT is not the only school at Ngee Ann Polytechnic that is collaborating with a top Indian school.

Also leveraging on India’s untapped potential and giving staff and students a head start in Singapore-India relations is the School of Health Sciences (HS), which signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chettinad Hospital and Research Institute, also on February 20.

On March 30, 24 second-year students will participate in a three-week programme at the medical school in Tamil Naidu, where they will study Nursing Management and also undertake a cultural module that covers India’s history, society and medical industry.

As part of their study trip at Chettinad, the students will be attached to a forensic anatomy lab and play a part in a state-level health screening and vaccination programme.

*By Jeanine Tan*
The new Centre of Excellence in Business Tourism provides a platform for the exchange of ideas on the tourism industry

What kind of impact will the gloomy economy have on business tourism? If you were a student of Ngee Ann Polytechnic’s (NP) Tourism & Resort Management (TRM) course, you would want to know.

Helping students to allay their worries, and widen their knowledge about their chosen industry, is the newly-established Centre of Excellence in Business Tourism at the School of Business & Accountancy (BA).

The virtual Centre, which was set up in November last year, held its inaugural seminar “Business Tourism in Challenging Times” on November 19.

The speakers included prominent names in the tourism sector, such as Vice-President of Conventions and Exhibitions for Marina Bay Sands Mr Wolfram Diener, consultancy firm The Creative Edge’s Mr Joseph Tay and Group CEO for Corporate Travel Services Mr Cheong Tack Hoong.

And it wasn’t just students who benefitted from hearing the opinions of these industry experts, as members of the tourism industry were also in attendance.

Mr Diener spoke on the pertinent topic of how the highly-anticipated Marina Bay Sands Integrated Resort aims to thrive in the recession period. He said that Marina Bay Sands will work closely with tourism partners to help spur growth in the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions (MICE) industry.

The Centre also has plans to hold a major seminar once every semester. The topics range from revenue management to travel patterns among business travelers.

Dr Michael Chiam, the lecturer who oversees the Centre, said, “With this new set-up, we want to profile Ngee Ann’s competency and expertise in the area of BTMICE and other tourism sectors.

“This sharing of information will not only keep us relevant through constantly engaging with our industry partners; it will also provide more opportunities for future collaborations,” he added.

And call it killing two birds with one stone, but TRM students will also be roped in to coordinate large-scale events.

The next seminar, which will explore revenue management, will be held in the new school semester that kicks off in April.

By Jessy Chua
MEDIA PRESENCE

From offering applied subjects in media to selected secondary schools, to co-establishing a Media CET Centre, Ngee Ann Polytechnic is committed to nurturing a new generation of media professionals.

Media Studies in Secondary Schools

Secondary school students can now enjoy an early head-start in media studies.

Thanks to a partnership between Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) and three secondary schools – Paya Lebar Methodist Girls School, Singapore Chinese Girls School and Kuo Chuan Presbyterian School – Media Studies in English is now offered as an O level applied subject at these schools.

Sixty students began classes in January this year. The two-year course is helmed by NP’s School of Film & Media Studies lecturers Ms Tess Lim and Ms Huey Hong.

“We want to teach students to be media-savvy and show them what goes on behind the scenes, so they will understand that not everything they watch or read should be taken at face value,” said Ms Lim.

Students attend weekly three-hour classes where they are taught media theories and given a lay foundation in camerawork, scriptwriting and audio-video editing.

At the end of the course, they will be assessed based on an O level written exam and a video project.

Secondary Three Kuo Chuan Presbyterian School student Tan Jia Le said, “I’ve learnt how the media can impact the thoughts of people and how advertisements are able to attract the audience’s attention.”

The introduction of O level applied subjects is the result of a government recommendation to secondary schools to work closely with polytechnics, so that their students are equipped with the skills required in a knowledge and information-driven society.

Media Studies in English will also be available in the new School of Science and Technology when it opens in 2012.

Currently, NP also offers Fundamentals of Electronics as an O level applied subject. Plans are in the pipeline to develop more applied subjects in areas such as Media Studies in Chinese, Travel & Tourism, Design Studies, Biotechnology, and Environmental Sciences & Technology in the near future.

By Jessy Chua

Singapore’s First Media CET Centre

In 1989, Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) was the first Institute of Higher Learning to offer a diploma in film and media studies.

Today, NP continues its pioneering spirit in media initiatives as a key partner in the setting up of Singapore’s first Media CET Centre.

In November last year, NP signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Singapore Media Academy and the Workforce Development Agency (WDA) to start the Media CET Centre by 2011.

The Media CET Centre, which is part of a $40 million government initiative to boost the media industry, aims to help media professionals learn new skills, and assist those who wish to make a career switch to the media to develop the relevant skill-sets.

The Media CET Centre will also offer technical courses in audio and video technology, camera and lighting operations as well as soft skill training in scriptwriting. It will also be equipped with state-of-the-art technologies in creative production.

Courses will be subsidised up to 80 per cent by WDA. They will be in sync with the nationally-recognised Creative Industries Workforce Skills Qualifications framework for professionals in the Arts & Culture, Design, and Media and Communications sectors.

By Jessy Chua
The DIM SUM Connection

For one Business Information Technology student, winning the HP Total Care Challenge 2008 began from serving dim sum

What has waitressing at a dim sum restaurant got to do with coming up with an award-winning business proposal?

For final-year Business Information Technology (BIT) student Tan Hui Mian, her humble part-time job was what led her to bigger and better things.

The owner of the dim sum restaurant that she worked at happened to own budget hotel chain DRA Property Management, which was in desperate need of an information technology boost. So, Hui Mian and fellow BIT students Huang Zhi, Ngoh Him Lim and Jacqueline Zheng came up with a business proposal to launch an e-commerce website for the budget hotel.

Their idea beat out proposals from other polytechnics and even the University of Las Vegas, snagging them first prize in the youth category of the Hewlett Packard (HP) Total Care Challenge in October last year.

The HP Challenge is an island-wide campaign that highlights the need for small and medium-sized businesses to leverage on technology solutions to fully realise their business potential.

The H Team, as the four called themselves, took home $15,000 worth of HP products, including a HP laptop each.

“With the right IT fixtures, our projection showed that the hotel’s takings could be increased to the tune of 50 per cent,” said Hui Mian.

DRA Property Management has two branches in Chinatown and Little India, with a total of 68 rooms that cater to budget travelers and foreign workers.

Day to day duties such as the booking of rooms was carried out manually.

The hotel also lacked a presence on the web, receiving most of its reservations via walk-ins or phone bookings.

Jacqueline explained, “From the onset, we identified that DRA Property Management had a clear lack of IT support in its operation. We were very focused on what was needed to improve business.”

By Jessy Chua

SPECIAL MENTIONS

• Two Biomedical Engineering graduates won prestigious scholarships to pursue their degrees. Christine Pok (Class of 2007) was awarded the SingHealth Nursing Degree Scholarship, and she will pursue a Bachelor of Science (Nursing) degree at NUS. Ivan Gerald Lee (Class of 2005) won the Singapore General Hospital Overseas Scholarship to pursue a Bachelor of Health Science degree at the University of Missouri in Columbia, USA.

• Biotechnology graduate Her Zhisheng (Class of 2003), who graduated from NTU with first class honours in Biological Sciences last year, has been offered the NUS President Graduate Fellowship.

• The Electrical & Electronic division clinched third prize at the Micromouse Exert Class Event for staff and the Microclipper event for students at the All Japan Micromouse Contest held in Tokyo, Japan in November last year.
The Ngee Ann Preparatory Programme gives selected students a taste of poly learning ahead of their peers

By the end of March, Georgina Zeng, 17, had already completed five modules of her Diploma in Accountancy course – despite the fact that her very first semester at Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) only begins a month later.

The former Singapore Chinese Girls’ School student is among 129 students who enjoyed an early start to poly life, thanks to the Ngee Ann Preparatory Programme (NPP), which is specially customised for first-year students who enrol via the Direct Polytechnic Admissions (DPA) exercise.

Students who apply to poly via the DPA secure placements in the courses of their choice before even sitting for their O levels.

The mandatory eight-week NPP helps these students build a strong foundation in NP’s learning environment. These students take a minimum of four common modules, including a foundational module that is relevant to their course.

As they accumulate credits during the NPP, they will have up to 180 hours of free curriculum time over their next three years of study. As such, these students can pursue new interests via NP’s varied CCA choices, take up enrichment modules, or obtain extra certification under the Diploma Plus programme to boost their portfolios.

“This free time, I’ll take up fencing or learn a foreign language to make myself more well-rounded,” said Georgina.

This year’s NPP kicked off on January 14, and the students experienced lectures and tutorials just like full-time poly students.

Ms Anna Yeow, deputy director of the Special Projects Office, which helped to organise the programme, said, “In a short span of eight weeks, the students are given a preview of what their next three years of learning at NP is like.

“This includes an industry exposure visit to a company related to their area of study, which most full-time students only get to experience in their second or third year.”

This year, the students visited companies such as MediaCorp, ST Electronics and StarHub. To complete their unique NP experience, they also got to travel to Bintan for a three-day leadership training camp.

Despite the fact that these students have to sacrifice their vacation time to participate in the NPP, they thoroughly enjoyed the experience, according to feedback from lecturers.

“They tell me that the students are enthusiastic learners, which could be due to the synergy forged in a conducive learning environment,” said Ms Yeow.

By Jessy Chua
From **Scratch** **to the** **Finish Line**

Not only did they build their own go-kart, but these two girls also pit their skills against the guys in an all-out race

In the world of fast cars, it’s not often that you see a female racer.

But at the go-kart racing competition organised by Ngee Ann Polytechnic’s Mechanical Engineering division on January 22, there were two females behind the wheels.

Final-year students Tan Geok Ching and Jessica Tan not only raced with the guys, they also built their go-kart – christened “Herbie” after the Volkswagen Beetle in the Disney movies – from scratch for their final-year project.

The male students in their project group, Soh Jun Yang and Sherwin Seetoh, encouraged their female teammates to man the wheels on race day, as a lighter load would allow Herbie to hit its maximum speed of 25km/h.

The go-karts in the race were judged on two factors – the time taken to complete two rounds of the circuit and the amount of fuel consumed.

While there was good-natured teasing from their fellow racers, the girls remained unfazed.

As Jessica put it, “Engineering is not just for guys. Though I sometimes get strange looks and laughed at for telling people what I’m studying in school, it doesn’t really bother me because I find enjoyment and satisfaction in what I do.”

Thanks to 10 months of research, Herbie was the only go-kart in the race to boast of a simplified differential gear function, which allowed it to negotiate turns better and not skid when attempting to navigate around a bend.

For the record, Herbie came in second place.

By Jessy Chua

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**Top Names in Film at Ngee Ann Poly**

The pioneer batch of students from Chapman University’s Bachelor of Fine Arts in Creative Producing had the rare opportunity to interact with top names in the local and international film industry in their first semester, which ended in December 2008.

Terence Chang, who produced films such as John Woo’s Red Cliff, and Andre Morgan, who produced the Hong Kong musical Perhaps Love, were at the Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) campus to conduct master classes. In the coming semesters, more film industry names, such as MediaCorp Raintree Pictures CEO Daniel Yun, are slated to lecture.

Another highlight of the two-year accelerated degree programme, which is offered via a partnership between Chapman University in South California and NP, is its flexibility.

Student Lisa Teh said, “We’re a small class at Chapman, so even lectures feel like tutorials – informal. The syllabus is also more fluid.”

For example, students are encouraged to give suggestions on the films they would like to watch. They also take day trips to the cinema to watch the latest films, and analyse these films immediately after the screening.

The creative producing degree programme is tailored for graduates with Diplomas in Film Sound & Video or Mass Communication from NP’s School of Film and Media Studies. It also includes an optional immersion programme in Orange County, California.
Ngee Ann Polytechnic alumnus and young entrepreneur Dennis Ng has his own style of doing business

You may not hear this from many businessmen, but Dennis Ng will tell you that stubbornness is a trait that could help your business to succeed.

He should know what he’s talking about. At the relatively young age of 28, the Mechanical Engineering diploma holder already owns his own flourishing pet supplies business – and it all began from selling dog leashes and pet goggles.

He started Einsoon Pet Supplies when he was just 23, by pooling together $10,000 with a partner. Today, the company distributes pet supplies to about 100 pet retailers in Singapore, and it also has businesses in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Explaining his approach to doing business, Dennis said, “It’s not just about being hardworking – it’s a combination of attributes. Be logical, but be a risk-taker. You must have a vision and be determined, and sometimes even be stubborn.”

Dennis added that he consulted very few people when he decided to be his own boss, after resigning from his job at a shipping company because he was tired of the office politics. He named his company “Einsoon” since it gave the impression of an old and established company, as he felt people would be mistrusting if they knew that the boss was so young.

“I’m the independent type when it comes to making decisions,” he said. “Most people, including my family, only knew about my business after I registered it.”

And when his family found out, they weren’t supportive. When Dennis was growing up, the family of six lived in a cramped one-room flat. To help make ends meet, Dennis worked part-time as a cashier at Cold Storage, and toiled late into the night as a cook and helper at a coffee shop during his school holidays.

His family felt that their youngest child lacked the capital required to start a business. Since Dennis graduated among the top five per cent of his cohort, they also felt that he should make use of his excellent academic record to find a regular job.

“I don’t blame them for this. They were just being conservative, and they were concerned about me.

They didn’t want to see me fail, as I had no reserves to fall back on,” he said.

But armed with determination and some of that stubbornness, Dennis pushed on. Opportunity came knocking one day when Einsoon was approached to represent the pet grooming products brand Esde in Singapore, and everything fell into place when it scored that deal. Next up for the company is getting a foot into the Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan markets.

Dennis may only have six years of business experience, but his achievements seem like that of someone much older. In addition to Einsoon, the go-getter also has a supplementary business in spa products distribution. Meanwhile, his events company, Ein Media Productions, took off in October last year and has managed everything from weddings to funerals to getai shows.

“Though I’m young, I don’t really do things the way most youngsters do. Perhaps most youngsters will consider many factors, do a lot of research, do a lot of talking, a lot of surfing on the web, before they really start doing something,” he said.

“For me, I only think for a short while. Of course, we must still take calculated risks. But I’ve always felt the only way to attain the desired outcome is to do it!”

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