

Campus Spotlight: NUS UTown revolutionises campus life

NUS' University Town provides an innovative model of living and learning with its residential colleges

University Town (UTown) at the National University of Singapore (NUS) provides more than your traditional educational facilities.

For those living in UTown's residential colleges, academic discourse is not limited within the four walls of a tutorial room or lecture theatre.

Jonathan Ong Chong Han, a first-year Business student and Tembusu College resident, believes that UTown's educational concept has revolutionised campus life by marrying academia with social life.

'If I were to describe the spirit or character of UTown, it would be 'Breaking the Work-Life Dichotomy', an assimilation of passions, interests, academics and relationships,' said Jonathan.

Two residential colleges opened at UTown last August; a third will also admit students for the coming academic year. Cinnamon College houses the University Scholars Programme (USP), while the UTown Residential Programme is offered in Tembusu College and the new Angsana College.

For both programmes, students are expected to live in UTown for two years and take seminar-style modules offered by their residential colleges. The residential college model is structured to promote a vibrant and holistic educational experience.

'When we want to have serious academic discourse, we can approach the professors living among us. When we want to be engaged in student-centric activities, the facilities are always available for us to realise our plans,' said Law Zhe Wen, a first-year Chemical Engineering/USP student from Cinnamon (USP) College.

UTown boasts a state-of-the-art Education Resource Centre, which has many facilities that are open 24/7. Its facilities include a multimedia hub, computer commons and a learning cafe with Starbucks.

An EduSports is also in the works. The complex will host a range of sporting, educational and cultural activities, enriching student life at NUS.



NUS' University Town provides an innovative model of living and learning with its residential colleges. -- PHOTO: NUS

UTown is connected to the main part of Kent Ridge Campus by a link bridge, but it has its own separate vibe. Integrating green concepts for long-term sustainability, UTown also has an open and modern design.

Yash Vardhan Kanoi, a first-year Industrial and Systems Engineering/USP student and Cinnamon (USP) College resident, said, 'So proud am I of our landscape in UTown that I have spent many an evening guiding an old friend or mentor of my own zeal.'

The residential colleges are housed in sleek high-rises, which offer both single rooms and six-bedroom suites. Each College includes student lounges, a dining hall and other common spaces, where the learning often continues after classes.

Tania Harsono, a third-year Business/USP student and Cinnamon (USP) College resident, noted, 'Staying with friends whom you take classes with is a unique feature of UTown ... It builds a culture of academic discussions outside classrooms.'

Edna Chai Pei Zhi, a first-year Life Sciences/USP student and a Cinnamon (USP) College resident, also appreciates the sense of community that UTown fosters.

She said, 'With classmates, friends and lecturers residing and being within close proximity ... it is definitely easy to approach them when faced with any challenges, be it academic or extra-curricular.'

Students often gather on the Town Green for sports and social activities; Marcus Tan Zi Liang, a first-year Science student from Tembusu College, cites it as a favourite spot for a game of Ultimate Frisbee.

At other times, he might be found attending a forum organised by his College. 'UTown is a place where the lines that separate living and learning become increasingly blurred,' remarked Marcus.

Student-faculty interaction is deliberately integrated into the residential experience. In each residential college, a Master and faculty fellows with their families live alongside students.

Visiting scholars also often take up residence in the colleges. Informal learning takes place through 'Master's Teas' and talks by distinguished visitors.

Further rounding out the UTown community are students from the Graduate Residence, foreign students on exchange programmes, and researchers from the National Research Foundation's Campus for Research Excellence And Technological Enterprise (CREATE).

Together with undergraduates and faculty from the residential colleges, they form a shared learning environment where creativity, innovation and enterprise flourish.

More information on UTown can be found at utown.nus.edu.sg.