



SUSS gets \$1m gift to help nurture leaders

Donation from philanthropist will support new leadership academy, other initiatives

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Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) students taking courses to develop leadership and peer support skills will get a boost from a \$1 million donation by Mrs Wong-Mah Jia Lan, an active philanthropist who has been contributing to SUSS since 2019.

The donation will support nine existing courses and expand leadership programmes in SUSS under the new Wong-Mah Jia Lan Lead (Leadership Excellence and Affective Development) Academy launched yesterday.

The academy and its students will be supported in perpetuity with the endowed donation.

Said Mrs Wong-Mah: "I hope this gift to SUSS will provide opportunities to mould our students to be future leaders for social good, contribute to the community, and realise their personal growth through positive impact on others."

Mrs Wong-Mah, whose business empire with her late husband Wong Kwok Leong included ventures in tin mining, shipping supplies and the hotel industry, was named one of Asia-Pacific's top philanthropists by Forbes in 2013. Students can tap the academy's

programmes to equip themselves with various skills, including training to be peer supporters and leading community engagement and service.

Professional counselling services, mentoring and coaching support for students with special needs, and workshops on mental health and emotional intelligence are also in the line-up.

More programmes, which will range from a one-day workshop to a 12-month programme, will be rolled out in the coming years.

About 1,200 students are expected to benefit annually from the academy's initiatives. SUSS students also collaborate with community and industry partners to develop some of the programmes.

Mr Jason Tan, 26, a third-year marketing student, is the founder of the Our Wellbeing Listeners (OWLs) programme.

The course aims to train students to help their peers who require a listening ear as they struggle with issues, such as mental wellness.

Mr Tan hopes the school will continue to involve more industry experts to train students in the course.

"With this funding, the school will be able to match us OWLs with local partners who have the expertise, where we can learn more, and connect us with people and even overseas organisations to train us."

Overseas training is one of the ways that SUSS also plans to use the funding.

SUSS president Cheong Hee Kiat said: "We want more opportunities available. For instance, taking our students out to see other places comes at a cost. Some of these students cannot fund themselves to go on this kind of discovery."

"Some of the funding will go towards helping them defray the costs. And the more opportunities they have, the more they will be able to develop their sensitivities," he added.

The academy targets to raise another \$4 million over the next few years through fund-raising to sustain these efforts and initiatives.

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Philanthropist Wong-Mah Jia Lan (centre), with SUSS president Cheong Hee Kiat (left) and SUSS academic adviser Eddie Kuo, and a finger painting she donated to the university.
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