

PRESS RELEASE

19 September 2011

NUS SETS UP NEW SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH TO ENHANCE POPULATION HEALTH THROUGH RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

NUS Department of Epidemiology and Public Health expands to become the Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, named in recognition of distinguished alumnus' long-standing support of the University

The National University of Singapore (NUS) today announced the establishment of the new Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health to train future leaders in public health. The new School will also contribute to improving the health of the Singapore population and the region through its research and work on innovative models of public health and healthcare delivery that are cost-effective and relevant to Asia. The NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health will be officially established on 1 October 2011.

Expected to reach a steady state in 2016, the School aims to improve lives by providing the scientific evidence and ideas for timely intervention to prevent diseases through health and disease surveillance and the promotion of healthy behaviours. It will also work closely with the Singapore Ministry of Health to conduct research and gather population-based data for nation-wide and community-based health policy decisions.

The new School is the result of an expansion of the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, which was formed in 1948, at the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine. Over the next five years, it will increase the number of faculty members, strengthen the teaching of undergraduate medical students, expand its intake of students for its flagship Masters in Public Health programme, and intensify its research efforts in chronic non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer and heart disease, as well as health services research.

In addition, the School aims to develop strong infectious diseases (ID) capabilities, supported by sustained ID epidemiology programmes that would alleviate the impact of IDs that are common in Singapore. Through this, the School hopes to help the nation control these IDs and be better prepared for potential new epidemics in the future.

The School will occupy part of a new building that is expected to be ready by 2014.

The new School will be supported by funding from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and gifts from donors. An initial gift of \$30 million has been donated by NUS alumnus and Trustee Professor Saw Swee Hock. In recognition of his philanthropic contributions and long-standing service to the University, the School will be named after Professor Saw.

Said NUS President Professor Tan Chorh Chuan, “We are deeply appreciative of the strong support from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and Professor Saw Swee Hock in enabling the establishment of NUS’ new Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health. I hope Prof Saw’s magnificent contribution will inspire others to come forward and partner the University on worthwhile causes. Public health issues are among the most serious challenges for Singapore, Asia and the rest of the world. The new School of Public Health will develop a long-term comprehensive public health research capability that will provide the rigorous scientific base to inform policy and action. The School will draw on the extensive strengths within the University to address complex, multi-factorial public health issues, and make a significant contribution towards improving the health of Singaporeans and communities in Asia and beyond.”

Said Professor Saw, “I am delighted to provide this strategic gift to enable NUS to establish a School of Public Health to undertake cutting-edge research and education in all aspects of public health. It is my wish for the School to play a key role in helping to improve the standard of public health care in Singapore and the region in the years ahead.”

The School will also be an integral part of the National University Health System (NUHS), a common governance framework shared with the National University Hospital, Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, and Faculty of Dentistry. Said Associate Professor Benjamin Ong, Chief Executive, NUHS, “With shifts in demography, epidemiology and disease patterns, the study of diseases as they occur in populations, and the subsequent control of these diseases will impact healthcare delivery and health management. The Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health will play an important role in translating public health research findings into effective intervention measures to benefit patients and the community at large. The education of healthcare professionals and meaningful research done adds a critical dimension to the mission and capabilities of the NUHS in shaping medicine for the future.”

Many renowned schools of public health play active roles in promoting population health through research, education and making a valued impact on public health practice. Professor Chia Kee Seng, Dean-Designate, Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health said, “By expanding the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health into a full-fledged School, we can attract high quality faculty members and students, build upon our current strengths and take on a greater role in education and training of public health practitioners. In the long run, we hope that the School can develop leadership in areas such as disease prevention, health services and policy research and global health.”

Research

The School will be organised into four domain areas: Epidemiology, Biostatistics, Health Services and Policy Research, and Health Behaviour and Health Promotion. It will establish new multi-disciplinary research centers and programs that will focus on areas like public health genomics and modeling and simulation for healthcare policy.

Over the next five years, the School plans to increase the number of full-time academic staff from the current 20 staff to about 50 to 60 staff.

Education

The School will continue to teach medical undergraduates from the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine. The aim of the relevant undergraduate courses is to equip medical students with the skills to critically appraise evidence; prevent and manage disease; and promote health at the community level. Each year, the School trains over 1,000 medical students.

It will also expand its annual intake for the Masters in Public Health (MPH) programme. With a larger pool of academic staff, the School plans to offer more modules and more specialisations to enhance the value of the programme.

Leveraging on its expertise and strong connections in the region, the School aims to become a thought leader in public health policies and management in Southeast Asia and play an important role in training public health policy makers from the region. International students who graduate from the programme would return to their respective countries where they would contribute to public health policy and management, thereby expanding Singapore's public health network in the region.

Introduced in 1953, the MPH and its predecessor programme have trained close to 900 public health professionals to date. Amongst its illustrious alumni is Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organisation. "My time in NUS during the mid-80s doing my MPH degree proved a very enriching experience. The training received was of a very high quality and I developed many deep and lasting friendships with my classmates and lecturers. I have closely followed the exponential growth of the Department and am therefore very pleased that it will now become a School of Public Health. I am confident that its research and teaching will benefit, not only Singapore and the region, but also contribute to the improvement of global public health. I commend Professor Saw for his foresight and gesture regarding the founding of the School. Congratulations, and I wish the School much success in its future endeavours!" said Dr Chan.

Please refer to [Annex 1](#) for more information on the new NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health and [Annex 2](#) for a brief biography of Professor Saw Swee Hock.

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About National University of Singapore

A leading global university centred in Asia, the National University of Singapore (NUS) is Singapore's flagship university which offers a global approach to education and research, with a focus on Asian perspectives and expertise.

NUS has 16 faculties and schools across three campuses. Its transformative education includes a broad-based curriculum underscored by multi-disciplinary courses and cross-faculty enrichment. Over 36,000 students from 100 countries enrich the community with their diverse social and cultural perspectives.

NUS has three Research Centres of Excellence (RCE) and 21 university-level research institutes and centres. It is also a partner in Singapore's 5th RCE. NUS shares a close affiliation with 16 national-level research institutes and centres. Research activities are strategic and robust, and NUS is well-known for its research strengths in engineering, life sciences and biomedicine, social sciences and natural sciences. It also strives to create a supportive and innovative environment to promote creative enterprise within its community.

For more information, please visit www.nus.edu.sg

NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health

- The new NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health is an expansion of the Department of Epidemiology and Public Health at the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine. The department was established in 1948.
- The new School will be supported by funding from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and gifts from donors. An initial gift of \$30 million has been donated by NUS alumnus and Trustee Professor Saw Swee Hock. The School will be named after Professor Saw in recognition of his philanthropic contributions and long-standing service to the University,
- The School aims to:
 - Train future leaders in public health
 - Contribute to population health in Singapore and the region by developing innovative models of public health and health care delivery that are cost-effective and relevant to Asia
 - Serve as a long-term, comprehensive public health research capability that will provide the rigorous scientific base for influence policy and action.
- Research
The School will conduct research on three broad areas:
 - Causes and preventive measures relating to chronic non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer and heart disease.
 - Prevention and spread of communicable diseases
 - Development and evaluation of preventive healthcare services and policies
- Education
 - Undergraduate level: Each year, the School trains over 1000 medical undergraduates from the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, in relevant public health courses.
 - Graduate level: The School will expand its annual intake for the Masters in Public Health programme.

About Professor Saw Swee Hock



Professor Saw Swee Hock is Professorial Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) and President's Honorary Professor of Statistics in the National University of Singapore's (NUS) Department of Statistics and Applied Probability. He is an Honorary Professor in Xiamen University and the University of Hong Kong, and an Honorary Fellow of the London School of Economics. He was Senior Lecturer in the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Founding Professor of Statistics in the University of Hong Kong, and Professor of Statistics in NUS. He has published some 45 books and over 100 articles in learned journals. He continues to serve NUS as a member of its Board of Trustees.

Professor Saw has given generously to charitable causes, particularly in the area of education. Many universities have received his support for the establishment of medals, bursaries, scholarships, professorships, research projects, research centres and buildings. Recipients of his donations include the London School of Economics, Xiamen University, University of Hong Kong, ISEAS, NUS, Nanyang Technological University and Singapore Management University. In NUS, he has also set up an endowed bursary fund which has so far benefited some 102 final year needy students across all faculties/schools.

The Saw family is closely associated with NUS. His wife, Dr Cheng Siok Hwa, is an alumna and was a faculty member of the Department of History. They have two daughters and one son. Their eldest daughter, Seang Mei, is a Professor in the School of Public Health, and her husband, Dr Chan Tat Keong, is a Senior Consultant at the Singapore National Eye Centre. The second daughter, Seang Pin, is a missionary in the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, while her husband, Reginald Tan, is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Engineering. Their son, Matthew Seang Kuan, is a partner in Lee & Lee, and his wife, Sharon Lim, is a Senior State Counsel at the Attorney-General's Chambers.