Headline: NUS High gets $35m to nurture talent

Source: The Straits Times

Date: 23 November 2011

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Endowment fund will be used to launch four awards, scholarships

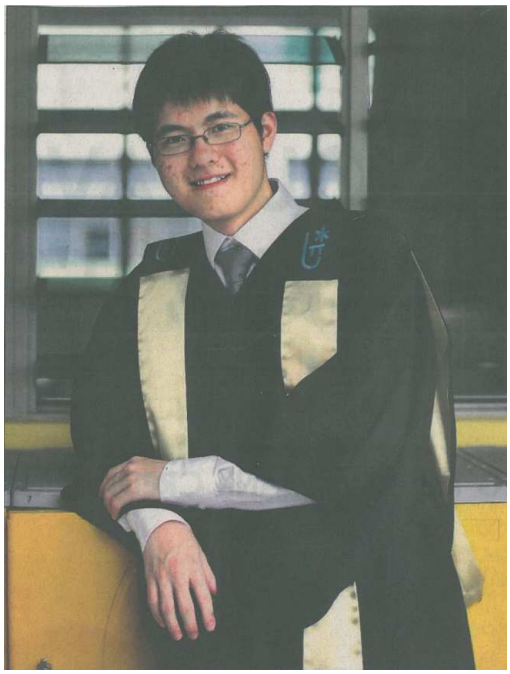
BY STACEY CHIA

THE NUS High School of Mathematics and Science has been given a $35 million endowment fund to nurture students who are gifted in these two areas.

The Tay Eng Soon Fund was donated by the Temasek Education Foundation.

At the school's graduation ceremony yesterday, principal Hang Kim Hoo said it would use the fund to launch four new awards and scholarships - the Tay Eng Soon Gold Medal, the NUS High School Study Award, the NUS High School Tay Eng Soon Award, and the NUS High School Scholarship.

"It is a form of acknowledgement that we are giving to our students, which we hope will inspire them to make a difference to society,"
Dr Hang said.



Herng Yi, one of 207 NUS High students who graduated yesterday, received the first Tay Eng Soon Gold Medal for fusing the art of origami with maths and computer science.
ST PHOTO: JOYCE FANG

The recipients of the study award will get $2,000 per year. Recipients of the NUS High School Tay Eng Soon Award and the NUS High School Scholarship will each get $2,200.

Education Minister Heng Swee Keat, who was guest of honour at the event, said in his speech that the endowment fund will further support the school's efforts in nurturing young mathematics and science talents.

The fund is named after the late former senior minister of state, Dr Tay Eng Soon, who died in 1993.

Dr Tay contributed greatly to the education sector during his term as senior minister of state. He set up Nanyang Polytechnic and established the Singapore Open University Degree Programme.

The Temasek Education Foundation was set up last year to support education opportunities in Singapore, in particular to develop the next generation of pioneers and leaders.

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It has launched two other endowment funds - the E.W. Barker Endowment to nurture young sporting talent, and the David Marshall Endowment to cultivate talent in the arts.

Mr Heng also gave out diplomas to the 207 graduands, the school's largest cohort to date.

Among them was Cheng Herng Yi, who also received the first Tay Eng Soon Gold Medal from Mr Heng.

It is given to a Year Six graduating student who has made outstanding achievements in mathematics and science.

The 18-year-old was awarded for his efforts in fusing the art of origami with mathematics and computer science.

Not only did he create mathematical formulas to fold complex origami models such as houses and vases, but he also created a software that teaches others how to fold these complex shapes.

He also won three awards at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in May this year for his research.

The NUS High School Scholarship, which is meant for first-year students, was awarded to Clarence Chew. The 12-year-old from Tao Nan School, who is currently awaiting his PSLE results, will be attending NUS High School next year.

The study award, which is for needy students, and the Tay Eng Soon award, which is for students in Years Two to Five, will be awarded next year.

Among this year's batch of graduates, 32 per cent received high distinctions and another 33 per cent received distinctions.

Dr Hang said that on average, about 30 per cent of the school's students take up scholarships every year.

Herng Yi, who has enjoyed origami since his childhood, plans to continue his research into mathematical origami design. He hopes to get a degree in mathematics or computer science at Princeton University or the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States, and said he would continue to fold more challenging shapes. "I think people should follow their passion, regardless of the field they are in. I think you'll be able to go further this way," he said.