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Singapore's first inter-disciplinary IDM research institute takes off

NUS has set up Singapore's first inter-disciplinary research institute in Interactive and Digital Media, with a seed funding of \$11 million over three years. The new Interactive and Digital Media Institute (IDMI) will undertake leading-edge, application-inspired basic research in emerging fields of IDM relevant to the critical and future needs of Singapore's industry.



PET GAME: Prof Barry Halliwell having a go at a mixed reality game, an IDMI project in which players can interact with a real hamster through digital technology. The game has been selected for 2007 Wired NextFest, a prestigious international IT show to be held in Los Angeles.



GREAT FUN: The hamster is induced to chase after "baits" by a moving pipe that has a tunnel it is attracted to. Its movements are transmitted to the screen in real time. The player scores points as the screen hamster gets "fatter" each time it finds a "bait".

Said Prof Hang Chang Chieh, Chairman of the Institute's Management Board: "The Institute will attract top research talent to join as academic staff and Fellows. We also want to attract talented graduate students from Singapore and Asia to NUS to pursue research in IDM and to develop them into a pool of highly competent researchers to help accelerate the pace of IDM industry development in Singapore."

Said Prof Barry Halliwell, NUS Deputy President (Research and Technology): "The convergence of researchers from varied disciplines such as science, computer science, engineering, arts and social sciences, performing arts, medicine and architecture is a novel concept — the IDMI has certainly redefined research conventions. The rich, creative and interdisciplinary research environment at IDMI is set to bring research excellence to the next level, capturing innovative opportunities in IDM."

The Institute will also transfer advanced knowledge and technology generated, as well as trained manpower, to the national research institutes as well as other agencies. IDMI expects to house about 160 researchers when in full operation — currently, 17 exemplar projects have been identified — many of them will be launched within a year.

The Institute will also oversee the NUS Hollywood Lab in Los Angeles established last July. A global search is now underway for a renowned expert in this field to head IDMI. Director of Mixed Reality Lab in NUS, Assoc Prof Adrian Cheok who was also instrumental to the formation of Hollywood Lab, is Deputy Director (Research) of IDMI.