



Hatyai University, the first private university in southern Thailand, announces its latest venture in education — the opening of Didyasarin International College.

Hat Yai is a main business center in Songkhla province. Although the region has experienced recent violence and political disturbances, the university offers hope that the province will be strengthened by establishing healthy international ties.

The new private university is expected to meet the demands of a global economy. Chinese, Indian, Malaysian and Indonesian consulates welcomed the official announcement.

Family commitment

The Didyasarin family has progressively expanded their education business for generations. They have provided education services in Hat Yai for 70 years.

Starting with the Hatyai Annuaywit School group, the family eventually established Hatyai City College in 1997, which later became Hatyai University in 2003.

Praneet Didyasarin, founder of Hatyai University, looks forward to a new phase of higher education with Didyasarin International College.

In the past, local people often left Thailand to study in Penang, Malaysia, says Praneet. We think it is time to invite our neighbors to study in Thailand.

She hopes that the new college will attract students from neighboring countries and also those who wish to participate in cultural exchange programs.

Associate Prof Dr Chaivitya Silawatshananai, dean of Didyasarin International College, says their college would provide more freedom and flexibility in certain academic areas, including an international exchange.

Three programs offered

The international college will offer a bachelor's degree in three undergraduate programs: Business English, Business Chinese and multimedia and graphic design.

As an international program, the Business English major will be conducted entirely in English, while the other two majors will be bilingual programs.

The Business English program offers basic courses in accounting, finance, banking and business ethics. There will also be an emphasis on English for business writing and conversation.

Worachart Amonpinoykiat, business English department head of Didyasarin International College, said the school only had to make minor changes for it to become an international program.

The Business Chinese program is offered to fulfill the community's demand, says Dr Chaivitya. Students can make business contacts with Chinese in Hat Yai. Students will learn Chinese reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Chinese courses will be available in hotel management, tourism, international trade and public speaking.

Each program will accept a maximum



Filipino and Indonesian students, who are accepted to Didyasarin International College, pose in front of the temporary admission office.

Boosting education in Hat Yai

A private university in southern Thailand will open an international college to attract both local and foreign students

Story and photos by WEENA NOPPAKUNTHONG

of 50 students. Applications are available until May for the academic year that begins in June. Candidates must graduate from Mattayom 6 (Grade 12) to qualify for admission or receive an equivalent diploma certified by the Ministry of Education. They must also pass an English placement test, such as Toefl or Ielts.

Tuition is approximately 250,000 baht for four academic years, which is cheaper than many international programs offered in Bangkok.

Eyeing neighboring countries

Initially, the new college hopes to attract students from Southeast Asia, says Dr Chaivitya, because it will take time to build its reputation. We hope to eventually attract more students from China and India, he says.

He thinks the collaboration between universities, such as the memorandum of understanding that the college signed with universities in Malaysia and China will attract many foreign exchange students.

Starting with the 2008 academic year,

Didyasarin International College will grant about two scholarships each for 10 countries, namely Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Laos, Vietnam, China, Myanmar, Cambodia and India. The scholarship will cover full tuition for four years of study at the Business English program.

Until now, graduates have learned about the university only by word of mouth.

Siema Ann Cruz, a 17-year-old student from the Philippines, has been accepted to study in the Business English program. She heard about the new college while visiting her mother who works as a teacher in Hat Yai.

Likewise, Dwi Handhny Pratiwi from Indonesia says her mother, who works in the Indonesian consulate, told her about the new college.

Experienced academic support

Administrators from Assumption Business Administration College (Abac) will

help provide academic support, says Dr Bancha Saengbhiran, Abac president. "We want to build strength within the country to make our international education institutions stronger, so that Thailand can be a center of learning for the Asia Pacific region," he says.

Abac will help by providing administration, personnel and curriculum planning. Didyasarin International College instructors can visit Abac to observe classes. There could also be future exchange programs between teachers and students.

Most people look at quantity — the number of students in an institution — as the most important, says Dr Bancha, but the truth is you need to gradually build on quality. The school therefore seeks to invest in improving teachers, curriculum and students.

More foreigners would be attracted to study, he says once the school has become strong and ready, he says.

For more information on program offerings, visit www.hu.ac.th.