

\$457 million to boost social science and humanities research over next five years

✓ **CHERYL TAN**

A total of \$457 million has been set aside to strengthen social science and humanities research in Singapore over the next five years.

This is around a 30 per cent increase from the \$350 million previously set aside for the financial years 2015 to 2020 to support key initiatives launched by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC).

Education Minister Chan Chun Sing, in announcing the increase in spending yesterday, said the funds will help boost support for young Singaporean researchers with promising careers, as well as efforts to build a vibrant social science and humanities research ecosystem in Singapore.

He was speaking on the second day of the Singaporean Researchers Global Summit at Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

From 2016 to last year, the SSRC awarded funding to 37 projects under the Social Science Research Thematic Grant, spanning a variety of topics that are salient to Singapore's socio-economic challenges.

These include projects that studied raising productivity levels in the service sector; how low-income families adapt to their environments; and fostering harmonious inter-group relations



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TNP PHOTO:
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in early childhood.

Mr Chan said: "The objective is to cultivate interdisciplinary research... The Covid-19 pandemic has underscored the importance (of this).

"While a biomedical scientist can sequence the virus and develop vaccines, we need the behavioural scientists to help us better understand the science behind the impact of Covid-19 on our well-being."

He cited how Dr Anne Rifkin-Graboi, senior lecturer (research scientist) at the National Institute of Education in NTU, drawing on her training in behavioural neuroscience, tapped existing data to examine the impact of Covid-19-related stress on early childhood development and family functioning in a project that she led.

Her project was awarded the Social Science Research Thematic Grant last year. It

began on Aug 31 and will span three years.

Mr Chan also announced a new SSRC graduate research fellowship targeted at Singaporeans pursuing their PhDs or post-doctorate stints overseas.

"This initiative offers a boost to those Singaporeans who have made the move to embark on a research career on their own and are interested in working with

established researchers in Singapore," he said.

The fellowship will provide a grant of up to \$10,000 for PhD students, and \$20,000 for post-doctorate fellows. Applications for the scheme will open next year.

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