THE Lien Foundation has pledged $6 million to set up the Lien Foundation Centre for Social Innovation at the Singapore Management University (SMU), it was announced yesterday.

The centre aims to understand the root causes of social problems and to find ways to address those problems, said Mr Laurence Lien, governor of the Lien Foundation, which was founded by the late banker Lien Ying Chow in 1981.

It will research social issues and problems faced by the non-profit sector, teach undergraduates and working executives about these issues and collaborate with other agencies.

For a start, it will research areas like social entrepreneurship in Singapore and management of non-profit organisations. Social entrepreneurship involves non-profit groups starting for-profit enterprises, to raise funds to run their non-profit projects.

The centre’s director, Associate Professor Tan Wee Liang, said: “Another issue we are interested in looking at is the aftermath of the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) saga, to see what lessons can be learnt there.”

NKF chairman Gerard Ee has been appointed chairman of the centre’s board. He is also a governor of the Lien Foundation.

Mr Ee said equipping students and others here with such expertise and knowledge is timely, given the intense scrutiny surrounding charities and other non-profit groups in the wake of the NKF saga.

“The need for strong leadership in this field has never been stronger,” he said.