Transcript

Singapore's second law school at the Singapore Management University will be headed by Professor David Smith - a former Vice-Dean of the renowned Harvard Law School in the US.

His vision - to mould the institution into one of the leading law schools in the world within the next five to ten years.

Wu Shang Yuan with this report.

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Professor Smith wants the SMU law school to produce some of the finest lawyers in the world

In fact, the former Vice-Dean of the Harvard Law School already sees some traces of his Harvard students in the school's pioneer batch.

SMU, he says, has laid a strong foundation for its students through a general interdisciplinary education.

Lessons are also highly interactive and the students are dynamic.

This is unlike other Asian universities he's taught at, including the City University of Hong Kong and the Macau University of Science and Technology.

At SMU, the law school faces a different challenge.

In Hong Kong, I inherited a three-year law programme with very little general education I also spent a lot of time assisting our students and faculty to be more interactive. Here I think the biggest challenge is to integrate into the classroom not only the teaching of substantive law but the teaching of thinking skills, presentation skills, a strong sense of social responsibility and a strong sense of ethics.

When asked if he was afraid the school might face competition from the National University of Singapore Law School, Professor Smith says he's not worried.

He feels there're enough good students here to fill "many law schools".

In fact, the relationship between the two law schools in Singapore should not be that of competition but cooperation.

SMU and NUS have slightly different approaches to legal education. Our approach is more interdisciplinary, particularly with regards to the relationship between law and business management, I hope we'll be able to invite scholars from NUS, not only from the law faculty but otherwise to come to speak to our faculty and students. I expect there'll be very substantial intellectual exchange.

On whether they may be receiving an education skewed towards business, students like Jo Tay say no.

When I come out, I believe I'll have a very sound understanding of the business world as well as the legal side of it so that'll put me in good stead.

The school will take in its first batch of students this August.