SMU law school to welcome inaugural intake in August

By WEE LI-EN
The new law school at Singapore Management University (SMU) will accept 90 students and offer a curriculum with a non-law component of 30 per cent when it opens in August.

SMU president Howard Hunter said yesterday at the launch of the school that the annual intake will be increased to 120 students from August 2008.

Law Minister S Jayakumar announced last year that a second law school would open at SMU and that the National University of Singapore (NUS) would increase its intake of law students to boost the number of lawyers here.

The NUS law faculty will raise its annual intake from 230 to about 240 students next year.

This means, that by 2012, the two law schools will produce about 360 graduates a year, compared with the current 230 from NUS alone.

SMU’s law programme will have a commercial and corporate bent, with 17 compulsory core courses, five law electives and 11 compulsory non-law courses.

The compulsory non-law courses include “Leadership & Team Building”, “Technology & World Change”, “Finance”, “Work & Family” and “Finishing Touch” which teaches life skills.

Students will also undergo a mandatory 10-week internship with a law firm, public sector legal unit or regulatory body and commit 80 hours to community service.

SMU law school interim dean Low Kee Yang said: “The significantly higher proportion of non-law subjects if they wish to, and that some spend the equivalent of a whole semester doing so.

“At NUS, we want our students to be the principal authors of their own learning and it is their choice what areas they want to specialise in, what non-law subjects to take,” he said.

He also said the NUS approach is to infuse interdisciplinary perspectives into many law subjects such as “Economics in Competition Law” and “Philosophy in jurisprudence and legal theory” so “inter-disciplinary learning takes place in an integrative and holistic manner”.

Mr Hunter said the fees students will pay to attend SMU’s law school are under review by the Ministry of Education and will be divulged this month. He indicated that fees at the law school will be higher than SMU charges for their other programmes.

“There will be some distinction between law and other disciplines in part because we’ve put together a top quality faculty with a very small student-faculty ratio,” he said.

By 2012, NUS and SMU will produce about 360 graduates a year, compared with the current 230 from NUS alone.