SINGAPORE: A former Vice-Dean of Harvard Law School has been appointed as the head of the school of law at the Singapore Management University (SMU).

Professor David Smith takes over from interim Dean, Associate Professor Low Kee Yang.

The new dean already has plans for the new law school.

For a start, Professor Smith said that the law schools at SMU and the National University of Singapore (NUS) should be cooperative and not competitive.

He added that SMU's law school would take on a slightly different approach from the NUS law faculty.

He said: "Our approach is, perhaps, more interdisciplinary, particularly with regard to the emphasis on the relationship between law and business management. We put more emphasis on general education as a foundation for the study of law.

"I'm going to emphasize, and hope that our teachers will emphasize, more interactive teaching, more training of students in skills such as advocacy and negotiation and problem solving.

"I hope that we will be able to invite scholars from the National University (of Singapore), not only from the law faculty, but otherwise, to come and speak to our faculty and students. I expect there'll be very substantial, intellectual exchange."

The first batch of law students at SMU will begin classes next month.

Jo Tay, an incoming law/business undergraduate, said: "I think SMU has a different edge. NUS is known for its very solid, very mature law school. SMU is young, but it has a lot of spunk, a lot of energy.

"And from what the Dean said just now, (it has) a lot of potential, a lot of drive. People want to bring it somewhere. People want to bring us somewhere, and we really want to go in that direction as well."

SMU has increased its intake for the pioneer batch of law students - from 90 to 118.

Out of this group, 34 are on a double-degree programme. - CNA/ir