SMU and ICPAS in tie-up to boost accountancy standards here

By LINETTE LIM
THE Singapore Management University (SMU) inked a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Singapore (ICPAS) yesterday.

SMU president Arnoud De Meyer also announced a new research centre set up by the School of Accountancy, called the School of Accountancy Research (SOAR).

Under the MOU, SOAR and ICPAS Research will collaborate to produce research and organise forums and talks.

Initiatives in the pipeline include a survey of CEOs to take the pulse of the economy. Slated to take place early next year, it will culminate in a CEO forum around the second quarter of 2011.

In a speech prior to the signing ceremony, ICPAS president Ernest Kan said the tie-up was a response to the recommendations made by the Committee to Develop the Accountancy Sector.

"In light of Singapore's plan to be a global accountancy hub by 2020, the partnership comes at the right time, as developing strong research capabilities will be a key focus area for the sector," said Dr Kan.

Other initiatives for the coming year include joint research on the implications of the European Commission's green paper on audit policy, a study of the audit market in Singapore, and an eminent speaker series.

The research will reach more than 22,000 ICPAS members and will also be made available for downloads from the SMU website.

The dean of the SMU School of Accountancy, Pang Yang Hoong, said the partnership between the two organisations is an "extension of their close working relationship".

According to Dr Kan, the tie-up is significant as "most of the accounting research is US-based, or Europe-based".

"Asia is a fractured region when it comes to developing a consistent voice on accounting standards," he said.

However, the lack of uniform accounting standards in Asia and the diverse businesses here presents both a challenge and an opportunity.

"In America, it is mostly rule-based, with the Sarbanes-Oxley Act. In Europe, it is principle-based, with the Combined Code," he said.

"But in Asia, we have large state-owned enterprises in China and big family businesses in Indonesia. We cannot have a one-size-fits-all approach."

He said Singapore - with its high level of internationalisation - is well placed to combine accounting best practices and become "Asia's voice" on accounting standards and research.