

SMU breaks ground for new law school building

By PEARL LEE

FUTURE law students at the Singapore Management University (SMU) will be able to prepare for law competitions in a moot court simulating a real court.

The moot court, named after the late criminal lawyer David Marshall, also Singapore's first chief minister, will be housed in a new School of Law building.

Yesterday, a ground-breaking ceremony was held for the facility between Armenian Street and Canning Rise, due to be ready by 2017 just as SMU ramps up its law student intake. The law school will take in 180 students from this year, up from the 150 admitted to the course last year.

The size of roughly 52 basketball courts, the new 22,000 sq m premises will include other key features such as the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library, named in memory of the late Mrs Lee Kuan Yew, and a Pro Bono Centre.

Currently, the law school shares the same building as SMU's accountancy school.

Attorney-General Steven Chong, who attended the ceremony, said the law profession would get a renewal with SMU increasing its law student intake and the setting up of the third law school.

"For many years, the profession was suffering from a shortage of supply... People were leaving the profession, going overseas, going to other disciplines. I think the new supply of lawyers will address that."

He said that while each law school has its own strengths, he has observed SMU graduates to be "more engaging, more prepared to speak up". It is not necessarily the case that they are always right, "but they probe, they ask, they question", he said.

SMU president Arnoud De Meyer said the building, when completed, will "foster closer ties among SMU's law students, alumni and the legal fraternity".

SMU is about 1km from the Supreme Court and various law firms, and is "an ideal environment in a convenient location for students, alumni and fraternity



Mr Jonathan Marshall (from left), SMU's board of trustees chairman Ho Kwon Ping, SMU Chancellor Yong Pung How and Ms Ho Ching looking at a model of the new SMU School of Law building. ST PHOTO: DESMOND LIM

to meet and interact", said Professor De Meyer.

The Pro Bono Centre, to be housed in the basement of the seven-storey building, will be acces-

sible from the carpark to make it more convenient for members of the public seeking legal advice.

SMU students already participate in a legal clinic housed with-

in its administration building, where they assist volunteer lawyers. This exposes the students to real-life cases and nurtures a sense of empathy and social mission in them, said SMU's law dean, Professor Yeo Tiong Min.

Among the guests at yesterday's event were Ms Ho Ching, executive director and chief executive of Temasek Holdings, one of SMU's donors, and Mr Jonathan Marshall, the son of Mr David Marshall.

The younger Marshall said his father would have been "delighted" to know that a moot court has been named after him. "He had a love for the law that was almost like the love for a person. It was a very devout loyalty."

Mr Chong added that the moot court facility will "further hone and develop" the students' oral advocacy skills. "It is... entirely apt that this moot court will be named after the late Mr David Marshall, the finest criminal defence lawyer Singapore has ever produced," he said.

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