NUS law school still more popular with students

By Maria Almenoar & Ho Ai Li

SINGAPORE Management University’s law school, with its special focus on corporate law, was pitched as the place where “high-flying legal eagles” would “soar”.

But when it came down to making a choice between SMU and the law school at the established National University of Singapore (NUS), many enrolling students went the tried and tested route.

After SMU sent out its offer letters, rejections came in, and university had to make fresh offers to those it had initially turned down.

SMU received 1,251 applications for its law course.

Eventually, it offered 197 students a chance to study at one of the 88 places.

But it received 109 rejections. Of these, 71 had chosen the rival NUS law school instead.

Meanwhile, NUS received about 1,500 applications for its law course.

It made about 300 offers for about 240 places.

Nine out of 10 students accepted NUS’ offer.

Only 10 students rejected the NUS law course to take up places at SMU’s law school.

The Straits Times spoke to eight students – initially rejected by SMU law school – who were offered places there about two weeks ago.

The university said that it had “reviewed their cases again” and they would now be given places.

Six of these eight students rejected the offer.

Former Raffles Junior College (RJC) student Brenda Goh was one such student who was informed that SMU had reversed its decision on her law school application.

She has, instead, decided to go to Warwick University in Britain, to read history and politics.

“I realised I didn’t want to do business law,” said Miss Goh, 19, who scored two As, a B and a C in her A levels.

Students who rejected SMU’s offer cited a number of reasons, including the fact that they would be the first batch of students, SMU’s higher hostel and tuition fees, and its corporate law focus.

Miss Eugenia Tan, 19, a former National Junior College student, had applied to both NUS and SMU’s law schools.

Both accepted her. She took up the place at NUS’ law school even though SMU dangled a one-year scholarship of $12,000 before her.

“NUS has a good reputation in law. The quality of education is credible and good,” she said.

“I was afraid that, halfway through, I would regret it or find I’m more suited to doing criminal law. Then I’d be stuck,” said Miss Tan, who scored three As in her A levels.

Other students, however, were attracted to the idea of a new law school.

Miss Christine Chan, 19, a former RJC student, had offers from NUS and SMU but chose SMU because she wanted to be part of a “smaller community” where lecturers can pay more attention to students.

According to an SMU spokesman, the school uses a different approach to recruitment compared to NUS and offered places in batches to get a “feel of the market”.

Associate Professor Low Kee Yang, interim dean at SMU’s law school, said: “SMU law school is new and we are mindful not to over-recruit a pioneer batch that is substantially higher than our planned intake…”

“Hence, we have adopted a careful and meticulous approach by making offers in multiple stages.”

The school said that it has also applied to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Law to expand its enrolment by another 20 places for the current year.

It will offer places to those on its waiting list.

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