



First poly grad in NUS law blazes trail to NY

By Ho Ai Li

THE first polytechnic graduate to study law at the National University of Singapore (NUS), Mr Lavanesan Swaminathan, once worried if he could cope with the rigours of academia.

He needn't have.

Not only did he excel, he is blazing a new trail, this time to New York University (NYU) on a fast-track master's programme.

The 25-year-old third-year student is among a pioneering batch of seven NUS students who will head to NYU in the autumn for a year of classes. At the end of their studies, they will be armed with both bachelor's and master's degrees.

"It seems like a good deal," said Mr Lavanesan.

It has been a journey of discovery for the former Broadrick Secondary student, who was unsure of what to study after his O levels. Influenced by the glamour of lawyers in TV series like *The Practice*, he went in for legal studies at Temasek Polytechnic.

During an internship at law firm Palakrishnan & Partners, he discovered his passion for law.

There, he helped with the defence of a client on trial for kicking another man off a moving bus. The man was eventually acquitted and reunited with his family and Mr Lavanesan found his work had "paid off in a very human, tangible way".

Having topped his poly cohort, he was admitted to NUS to do law in 2005, beating out some of the country's best junior college students. Now the president of his law cohort, he is one of two former poly graduates at the NUS law faculty.

Fellow course-mate Zhuo Wenzhao, 24, is also in the accelerated master's scheme.

"Law is something we are exposed to every day," said Mr Zhuo, NUS' top law student. "It's also intellectually challenging," said the former Hwa Chong Institution Humanities student.

ST PHOTO: SHONA CHONG

PIONEER: The first poly graduate in NUS' law faculty, Mr Lavanesan Swaminathan is now among a pioneering batch of NUS students heading to New York University on a fast-track master's scheme.

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