



NEWS RELEASE

SMU AND NUS TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE LATE MDM KWA GEOK CHOO

Initiatives by the law schools of the two universities honour an extraordinary woman, who while choosing to remain in the background, can be credited for playing a crucial part in the building of modern Singapore

Singapore, 5 July 2011 – The Singapore Management University (SMU) and the National University of Singapore (NUS) today jointly announced that they will pay tribute to the late Madam Kwa Geok Choo, wife of former Prime Minister and Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew, in separate initiatives. SMU will name its new Law Library, a new Scholars Programme and a top Law Graduate Award after her. NUS will establish a professorship in property law, a distinguished visitors programme, and bursaries and scholarships in honour of the late Madam Kwa, an alumna of the University.

This tribute is befitting of her achievements and the values she held dear. While the former Prime Minister and Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew has been credited for taking Singapore “from third world to first”, Mrs Lee can share in that acclaim for standing by her spouse and assisting him through the development of the nation.

Mrs Lee was an esteemed lawyer and a brilliant student. In 1936, she topped the Senior Cambridge Exam for the whole of Malaya and Singapore. She enrolled in Raffles College, a predecessor institution of NUS, in 1940 and resumed her studies there in 1946 after the end of World War II. In 1947, she graduated from Raffles College with a First Class Diploma in Arts, winning the Queen’s Scholarship to study law at Cambridge University where she became the first Asian woman to graduate with first-class honours in Law from Cambridge University.

Mrs Lee’s intellect and fortitude shone through as she applied herself in the legal arena. She was a pioneer who started a law firm with Mr Lee and his younger brother, and then went on to excel as a conveyancing lawyer, mentoring many others in the process.

“On behalf of the family, I would like to share that we are deeply touched by the initiatives of the Singapore Management University and the National University of Singapore as a tribute to her,” says Ms Kwa Kim Li, Managing Partner of Lee & Lee and niece of the late Mdm Kwa. “She was a brilliant lawyer, an amazing lady, a visionary ahead of her time. A lady made of steel and silk in equal parts. Much as my aunt shied away from being in the spotlight, she would have been very honoured by this,” she adds.

“Without doubt Madam Kwa had played a key role in the Singapore story even though her role, and the low profile she chose to keep, was often not accorded the recognition it deserves. SMU has been in consultation with the family on this tribute. And we are privileged to acknowledge her contribution by naming our new Law Library, a new Scholars Programme and a Top Law Graduate Award in her honour,” says SMU Chairman Ho Kwon Ping. “We want our students to follow in her footsteps, striving for excellence with humility

and perseverance. Mdm Kwa - her life, her values, her achievements and her contributions, will be an inspiration to generations of SMU students. We at SMU are grateful for being able to play our part as upholders of her legacy,” he adds.

“It is our honour to be able to pay tribute to a most remarkable Singapore pioneer who will serve as a model for our students now and those to come. For a young School of Law which will graduate its first batch of students this year, this tribute is of tremendous significance for us. The values that Madam Kwa espoused and represented are very much the same values we want our students to emulate – her pursuit of excellence, her integrity, her humility, her dedication and her graciousness. We hope to continue her legacy of nurturing talented aspirants seeking to contribute to the legal scene in Singapore and beyond,” says SMU President, Professor Arnoud De Meyer.

Says NUS Chairman Mr Wong Ngit Liong, “Madam Kwa was an extraordinary lady well-known for her selfless dedication and wisdom. Her quiet but important contributions to Singapore are immeasurable and we are privileged to be able to contribute towards upholding the legacy of an outstanding alumna. The NUS community is proud to have the opportunity to honour Madam Kwa through programmes and people that will perpetuate the values that she believed were important.”

“The scholarships named after Madam Kwa Geok Choo at the Faculty of Law are a reflection of Madam Kwa’s longstanding concern that no deserving student should be deprived of a good legal education because of financial need,” says NUS President, Professor Tan Chorh Chuan. “Through our initiatives in legal education and research, bursaries and scholarships, we hope to keep Madam Kwa’s memory alive to inspire generations of promising young lawyers to contribute to the legal fraternity and society at large,” adds Prof Tan.

Initiatives at SMU in honour of the late Madam Kwa Geok Choo

SMU will name its new Law Library in honour of the late Madam Kwa. An integral part of the Law School, the new **Kwa Geok Choo Law Library** (柯玉芝法律图书馆) will be the heart of legal education and scholarship for Singapore. This is akin to her role, played with quiet grace behind the scenes, as the pillar of strength and trusted confidante of the former Prime Minister and Minister Mentor. This state-of-the-art library in the city centre will serve not just the SMU community, but also the legal community in Singapore and beyond. It represents not only a bastion of knowledge, but will also offer a dynamic exchange between the school and the legal community, continuing a tradition of mentorship and learning.

The **Kwa Geok Choo Scholars Programme** (柯玉芝奖学金) and the **Kwa Geok Choo Top Law Graduate Award** (柯玉芝最佳法学毕业生奖) will keep the memory of the late Madam Kwa alive to every recipient. She embodied the values which SMU hopes generations of law students to come would emulate – her pursuit of excellence, her integrity, her humility, her dedication and her graciousness. The Programme will fund scholars in the School of Law.

Please refer to [Annex 1](#) for more details on SMU’s initiatives to honour the late Madam Kwa.

Initiatives at NUS in honour of the late Madam Kwa Geok Choo

The NUS Faculty of Law will honour the memory of the late Madam Kwa through initiatives that will significantly benefit the legal fraternity and less privileged Singaporeans.

The **Kwa Geok Choo Professorship in Property Law** (柯玉芝产权法教授席) will be established as Madam Kwa was a leading property lawyer. The NUS Faculty of Law will also establish the **Kwa Geok Choo Distinguished Visitors Programme** (柯玉芝访问学者计划). Under this programme, leading law academics will be invited to Singapore each year to teach a course at NUS and/or give public lectures on highly topical legal issues.

Through the professorship and the distinguished visitors programme, legal education and research in Singapore will be further enhanced.

In addition, **Kwa Geok Choo Bursaries** (柯玉芝助学金) and **Kwa Geok Choo Graduate Scholarships** (柯玉芝研究生奖学金) will be established to assist financially disadvantaged law students at NUS. The establishment of the Kwa Geok Choo Bursaries and the Kwa Geok Choo Graduate Scholarships is a reflection of Madam Kwa's concern that no deserving student should be deprived of a good legal education because of financial need.

Please refer to [Annex 2](#) for more details on NUS' initiatives to honour the late Madam Kwa.

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About the SMU School of Law

The School of Law was established at SMU in 2007 as Singapore's second law school, welcoming its pioneer batch of students in August of that year. For the first time in Singapore legal education, a new contextualised teaching of law has been introduced to produce lawyers ready for corporate and commercial practice. SMU leverages its existing strengths in business and finance, and extends the unique SMU brand of education which serves a select, smaller cohort of students to the School of Law. The objective of the different law curriculum is to develop law graduates who have a broad-based understanding of the real world, practice-relevant legal knowledge and expertise and the ability to think across disciplines and geographical borders. The School of Law offers a four-year single law degree (LL.B), a five-year double degree programme and the Juris Doctor (a graduate legal programme). There are currently 490 undergraduates and 55 students on the J.D. programme. The first batch of SMU law undergraduates will complete their LL.B in 2011.

About the Singapore Management University

A premier university in Asia, the Singapore Management University (SMU) is internationally recognised for its world class research and distinguished teaching. Established in 2000, SMU's mission is to generate leading edge research with global impact and produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the knowledge-based economy. It is known to be a pioneer for its interactive and technologically-enabled pedagogy of seminar-style teaching in small class sizes which remains its unique hallmark. Home to 7,000 students, SMU comprises six schools: School of Accountancy, Lee Kong Chian School of Business, School of Economics, School of Information Systems, School of Law and School of Social Sciences, offering a wide range of bachelor's, master's and PhD degree programmes in business and other disciplines. With an emphasis on generating rigorous, high impact cross-disciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance, SMU faculty collaborates with leading foreign researchers as well as partners in the business community and public sector through its research institutes and centres. Through executive education, the University provides public and customised training for working professionals in meeting the needs of the economy. Close relationships with leading universities, including The Wharton School, Carnegie Mellon, the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Chicago's Booth School of Business, allow SMU to draw on their academic and research strengths in various collaborations. The SMU city campus is a state-of-the art facility located in the heart of downtown Singapore, fostering strategic linkages with the business and wider community. www.smu.edu.sg

About the NUS Faculty of Law

Located in Singapore, which for almost 200 years has been a major international commercial hub and a cosmopolitan city, NUS Faculty of Law is the premier law school in Singapore and also widely regarded as Asia's foremost centre for legal research. NUS Faculty of Law has an international research active faculty of approximately 60 people and 1200 undergraduate and postgraduate students. Its faculty is a scholarly community dedicated to the constant search for better legal solutions to the issues that confront all societies. The faculty is committed to research and regularly publishes books and monographs and articles in leading journals in Singapore and abroad.

Apart from the LLB degree, NUS offers a number of degrees which include the following degrees: law and business, law and economics, law and life sciences and law and public policy, the LLM and the PhD. Since 2006, NUS Faculty of Law has been situated in the historic Bukit Timah campus.

About the National University of Singapore

A leading global university centred in Asia, the National University of Singapore (NUS) is Singapore's flagship university which offers a global approach to education and research, with a focus on Asian perspectives and expertise.

NUS has 15 faculties and schools across three campuses. Its transformative education includes a broad-based curriculum underscored by multi-disciplinary courses and cross-faculty enrichment. Over 36,000 students from 100 countries enrich the community with their diverse social and cultural perspectives.

NUS has three Research Centres of Excellence (RCE) and 22 university-level research institutes and centres. It is also a partner in Singapore's 5th RCE. NUS shares a close affiliation with 16 national-level research institutes and centres. Research activities are strategic and robust, and NUS is well-known for its research strengths in engineering, life sciences and biomedicine, social sciences and natural sciences. It also strives to create a supportive and innovative environment to promote creative enterprise within its community.

For more information, please visit www.nus.edu.sg

ANNEX 1: TRIBUTE TO THE LATE MDM KWA GEOK CHOO – SMU INITIATIVES

SMU will pay tribute to the late Madam Kwa Geok Choo, wife of former Prime Minister and Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew, through the following initiatives:

1. Kwa Geok Choo Law Library

An integral part of the Law School, the new Kwa Geok Choo Law Library will be the heart of legal education and scholarship for Singapore.

The Library will be built on the site of the well-loved old National Library building on Stamford Road. It will be a premier legal resource for Singapore and the region. The Library will hold an extensive online and print collection of 100,000 items. It will develop special collections aligned to SMU's inherent strengths, including dispute resolution and Islamic law. Blending the best of the old and the new, there will be a traditional reading room for research and study, coupled with innovative learning spaces and outstanding information services. In addition, premier facilities such as moot practice rooms, a presentation rehearsal studio and multimedia training rooms will allow students to refine their professional skills. With a planned floor space of up to 5,000 sq m and the capacity to accommodate more than 1,000 users, it will be a green library in its design and construction, from the eco-friendly furniture to the environmentally-conscious building design. Efforts will also be made to bring nature into the Library to complement the green design of the existing SMU buildings and the greenery of Fort Canning Park against which the building will be built.

2. Kwa Geok Choo Scholars Programme

Kwa Geok Choo Scholars Programme will fund scholars in the School of Law. Under SMU's holistic admissions system which evaluates students beyond just grades and seeks out the potential in each student, the university will select well-rounded students who exhibit a moral force of character, a global mindset and a consciousness to serve the community and the nation. These students will benefit from the broad-based, multi-disciplinary and globally-oriented SMU education with a focus on ethics and social responsibility.

3. Kwa Geok Choo Top Law Graduate Award

This is an award for the top graduating student of each cohort who has demonstrated both academic excellence and strong community participation.

ANNEX 2: TRIBUTE TO THE LATE MDM KWA GEOK CHOO – NUS INITIATIVES

NUS will pay tribute to the late Madam Kwa Geok Choo, wife of former Prime Minister and Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew, through initiatives that will significantly benefit the legal fraternity and less privileged Singaporeans.

1. Kwa Geok Choo Professorship in Property Law

As Madam Kwa was a leading property lawyer, the NUS Faculty of Law will establish a professorship in her honour.

2. Kwa Geok Choo Distinguished Visitors Programme

Under this programme, leading law academics will be invited to Singapore each year to teach a course at NUS and/or give public lectures on highly topical legal issues.

3. Kwa Geok Choo Bursaries

The NUS Faculty of Law will set up the “Kwa Geok Choo Bursaries” to assist financially disadvantaged students to pursue their studies in the NUS Faculty of Law.

4. Kwa Geok Choo Graduate Scholarships

“Kwa Geok Choo Graduate Scholarships” will recognise and support highly talented students to pursue graduate studies at the NUS Faculty of Law.