

FACULTY ANNOUNCEMENT

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NUS Law: Champions Of International Negotiation Competition 2012

The National University of Singapore's Faculty of Law has emerged as champions of the International Negotiation Competition (INC) 2012, for the second consecutive year. This is the first time that a law school has won the shield twice, since the competition's inaugural installation in 1998. The competition was hosted at Queens University in Belfast, UK, from 3-7 July.

Representing Singapore in the competition were NUS Law students Benjamin Moh, who graduated with a Bachelor of Laws degree this year, and final year student Eddy Hirono from class of 2013. Coached under the expert guidance of Associate Professor Joel Lee, the team bested 15 other international teams in the final rounds of the competition. Professor Lee is also the Vice Dean of Student Affairs for NUS Law.

"The aim of the competition is to allow students to learn that getting a good agreement for one's client does not necessarily require an adversarial approach and can be a collaborative process. This has been the touchstone for myself and the INC Alum who make up the coaching team. This consecutive win validates that philosophy. We are very proud of the team," said Associate Prof Lee.

Open to law students, the competition had teams of two lawyers representing a client negotiating an international transaction or to resolve an international dispute with an opposing team. The teams' performances were judged by lawyers and leading law professors from the participating countries.

Winning the competition for NUS and defending the shield won by their predecessors last year, the battle to the top was not without its challenges. Eddy reflected, "There were so many more experienced teams, like the team from USA, who had to beat over 200 teams just to get to this competition. Add to that the fact that we had to face an Australian duo who had been competing together for five years, and I think we genuinely felt we had no chance at the title."

In order to overcome the various challenges presented at the competition, Benjamin said, "I think the numerous practices with the dedicated INC Alumni team helped us in focusing on the key strategies and techniques to adopt in our negotiation rounds. Most importantly, we relied heavily on our coach, who gave us guidance each morning before our rounds."

Sharing similar sentiments, both Benjamin and Eddy added, "The most valuable experience was forging friendships with the representatives of the other 15 countries and regions. I think we left the competition confident that these relationships would last through our professional lives - and more importantly, that it embodied the spirit of amity and cooperation which underlies interest-based negotiations."

The competition is governed by an executive committee consisting of representatives from various regions such as the Americas, Asia, Europe, Australia and New Zealand. Some of the countries who participate in the competition regularly also include Canada, Denmark, England and Wales, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Northern Ireland, Puerto Rico, Republic of Ireland, Scotland, South Korea, and the US.



Caption: (Left to right) Associate Professor Joel Lee, Benjamin Moh, Eddy Hirono, and INC EXCO member Professor Nancy Schultz)

About the competition

The aim of the INC is to promote greater interest among law students in legal negotiation, provide a means for law students to practice and improve their negotiating skills in cross-border transactions and disputes, and enable law students to meet other law students and lawyers from other countries.

It also allows law students to experience different aspects of international legal negotiations, including differences in negotiating styles, ethical and social norms, and business practices. The judges of the competition including lawyers and leading professors of law from participating countries evaluated the teams based on apparent preparedness, flexibility in deviating from plans or adapting a strategy, and the outcome of the negotiation as it relates to serving the client's interests.

The teams were also judged on the relationship between negotiating teams, ethics, self-analysis, as well as teamwork. The inaugural INC was held in California, USA in 1998 and NUS has participated every year since 2002. In 2009 and 2010, a joint team comprising students from NUS and SMU represented Singapore in the competition.