

Making the *Best* of Yourself

After taking a leap of faith and choosing to study Law, one third-year undergraduate is now absolutely certain that she has chosen the right degree.

By Cheryl Tay

faced with the common dilemma of choosing a university and degree programme after the 'A' levels, Magdalene Lie found herself at a fork in the road, uncertain of which path to take. Eventually, after seeking advice from her family, teachers and seniors, Magdalene decided that pursuing a Law degree would best fit her strengths in argumentative writing, critical thinking and debating.

"No one else in my family had studied law and I was initially considering Business or Arts. But after two and a half years of studying Law, I have no regrets about choosing it," says the former Anglo-Chinese Junior College student.

Established in 1956, the National University of Singapore's (NUS) Faculty of Law offers a full-time four-year Bachelor of Laws (LLB) with honours degree programme and a three-year LLB programme for those who already have a first degree in a non-law discipline.

With its broad and diverse range of subjects available, the Faculty of Law enables undergraduates to take their pick from topics such as Asian legal studies, biomedical law, commercial law, comparative law, corporate law, criminal law, intellectual property, international law, law and social justice, public law, and transportation law.

"Once I decided to major in law, the choice to read law at NUS was very clear. The Faculty of Law at NUS is well-regarded

MAGDALENE LIE
NUS GLOBAL MERIT SCHOLAR

STUDYING:
Bachelor of Laws, NUS

internationally with a reputation for having a challenging course. I believe it provides the quality of education I desire, and at the same time, is recognised by employers worldwide,” says Magdalene.

OVERSEAS OPPORTUNITIES

While others tend to associate an overseas education with glamour and appeal, this NUS Global Merit Scholarship recipient preferred to remain in Singapore to pursue her degree.

“I did think of applying to Boston University and New York University (NYU) in the United States. But I realised that as glamorous as studying overseas might sound, I was not yet prepared to leave my family and close friends – and local food – for an extended period of time.”

But soon enough, Magdalene was given a chance to study overseas. In their third year of study, law undergraduates have the opportunity to go on the NUS Student Exchange Programme for either a half- or one-year period at over 40 leading law schools around the world. She is currently on a one-year student exchange programme with Bristol University in England.

“Singapore’s legal system is based on the English common law system. Hence, I chose to apply to the United Kingdom (UK) for my overseas student exchange. I believe it is important to understand the legal culture of the UK and the changes which Singapore needs to take into consideration when adapting UK laws,” says Magdalene.

“The exchange programme is a tremendous opportunity for both academic and personal growth. Being in a completely different learning environment challenges me to break out of my routine thought processes and analyse problems in new ways,” she adds.

Apart from the Student Exchange Programme, NUS also offers unique academic programmes such as the NYU-NUS Masters in Law (LLM) programme, where students are given the opportunity to study at NYU in their fourth year of

undergraduate studies and graduate with an LLB from NUS and an LLM from NYU.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Alongside the high academic standards in an intellectually stimulating environment, the Faculty of Law also enables students to develop a healthy work-life balance. Magdalene is a fine example, having served as the Vice President of the faculty’s Freshmen Orientation Committee in her first year and assisted in leading a 150-strong committee to plan all the freshmen orientation activities.

In her second year, she took on the role of Publications Secretary in the 29th NUS Law Club Committee and was responsible for all publicity and communications work. She was also the Chairperson of the Open House Committee, where she organised a two-day event that showcased the Law School’s programmes and its historic campus as well as addressed potential undergraduates’ queries about studying law at NUS.

When she is not hitting the books or planning the next event for the faculty, Magdalene would be catching a movie with fellow schoolmates or pursuing her hobbies – photography and dance. “At NUS Faculty of Law, we are taught to be independent with an emphasis on self-

study. Class time is minimal, thus leaving me with the rest of the time to integrate social activities into schoolwork.”

FLEXIBLE APPLICATIONS

Hoping to see Singapore develop as a centre for international alternative dispute resolution, such as through mediation and arbitration, Magdalene intends to sit for her bar exam upon graduating in 2011 and join the local legal practice, specialising in Intellectual Property.

For those who have an interest in critical thinking, questioning decisions, writing, and public-speaking, Magdalene recommends pursuing a law degree as it will make use of and develop these abilities to their maximum potential.

“Having a law degree is extremely flexible as it can be deployed in a huge range of industries, from business to finance and even theatre (see the number of lawyers who become actors). It’s an excellent first degree to graduate with, and the quality of education at NUS is top-notch. The course is no doubt rigorous and the standards are high, but you’ll be secure in the knowledge that the rewards are well worth the efforts,” she concludes. *

“Having a law degree is extremely flexible as it can be deployed in a huge range of industries, from business to finance and even theatre (see the number of lawyers who become actors).”

MAGDALENE LIE, NUS