

Singapore Management University

Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University

SMU Press Releases

University Heritage

4-2009

SMU Establishes New Centre for Dispute Resolution

Singapore Management University

Follow this and additional works at: https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/oh_pressrelease



Part of the [Communication Commons](#)

Citation

Singapore Management University. SMU Establishes New Centre for Dispute Resolution. (2009).

Available at: https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/oh_pressrelease/67

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Heritage at Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. It has been accepted for inclusion in SMU Press Releases by an authorized administrator of Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. For more information, please email cherylids@smu.edu.sg.



PRESS RELEASE

SMU establishes new Centre for Dispute Resolution

New centre at the School of Law – through research, teaching, outreach – will help anchor Singapore as the centre for dispute resolution in Asia, particularly in arbitration and mediation.

Singapore, 16 April 2009 (Thursday) – The Singapore Management University (SMU) announced today the establishment of a new Centre for Dispute Resolution at its School of Law. The Centre will bring together top research calibre and teaching capabilities within SMU from mainstream fields of dispute resolution in commercial transactions such as arbitration, mediation and negotiation to new, emerging areas such as WTO dispute settlement, international peace negotiations, Islamic arbitration, cross-border disputes between nations and civilian conflict management.

Aligned with the national movement towards a less litigious society where alternative forms of dispute resolution become viable channels in achieving win-win outcomes outside of the courtroom, the new Centre will play key roles in teaching, research and outreach, complementing existing institutions in championing dispute resolution. It will be a focal point for the convergence of cross-disciplinary research in areas common to dispute resolution. Faculty from across the six schools of SMU will be able to take advantage of a common platform to present, discuss and collaborate on research areas as diverse as commercial arbitration and mediation; WTO negotiations and free trade agreements; diversity, ethnicity and conflict management; Islamic arbitration; business negotiation; ethics in negotiation; and the psychology behind dispute resolution. The Centre aims to host major conferences in Asia, organise roundtable discussions and contribute to top research publications and journals. The Centre will also become a platform for long term collaborative research on dispute resolution in Asia, through its website and using wiki-technology.

To be an effective vehicle for outreach, the Centre will build close working relations with agencies and industry bodies such as the Maxwell Chambers, the Singapore Mediation Centre, the Singapore International Arbitration Centre, and the Singapore Institute of Arbitrators. Outreach plans in the pipeline include guest lectures, seminars, workshops and practitioner training developed as part of continuing legal education in partnership with relevant professional bodies and overseas universities known for their repertoire in dispute resolution. Online dispute resolution is another important area the Centre will explore with industry partners.

SMU offers a range of well-established undergraduate and MBA courses and electives in the field of dispute resolution such as 'Negotiation', 'Conflict Resolution', 'Negotiation & Mediation for Lawyers', 'Arbitration and Dispute Resolution', 'International Commercial Arbitration', 'WTO Law', 'Trade and Business Dispute Resolution', 'Negotiation Skills for Business' and 'Business Negotiation and Conflict Management'. The Centre is looking into promoting greater cross-disciplinary teaching such as developing a university-wide track in dispute resolution. It is also planning to pilot a series of practical clinics where students can be attached to agencies such as the Singapore Mediation Centre, United Nations and World Trade Organization for internships and work alongside professional mediators and arbitrators. The objective is to expose university students at an early age to the skills of dispute resolution, generate interest and prepare them for a future career in this profession.

The Centre will be headed by Practice Associate Professor Ian Macduff from the School of Law at SMU. Professor Macduff is a professional mediator and negotiator, with over 25 years of experience in this field. He has practised, researched and written extensively in negotiation and cross-cultural conflict resolution, being actively involved in training and capacity building in a number of countries.

Said Professor Michael Furmston, Dean, School of Law at SMU: "With its sound legal infrastructure and well-developed institutions in mediation and arbitration, Singapore has gained a strong reputation as the preferred forum for dispute resolution in the region. Skills of negotiation and dispute resolution in commercial transactions are therefore in demand. The new Centre will help equip graduates of SMU with this essential skills-set for the business world."

Said Practice Associate Professor Ian Macduff, Director of the Centre for Dispute Resolution at SMU: "For many years now, as businesses become more sophisticated and the region sees an increase in commercial activity, demand for dispute resolution talent and mechanisms will see a corresponding rise. The role of this new Centre is to grow thought leadership in dispute resolution through teaching, research and outreach. SMU students will gain exposure to valuable skills in this profession through mentorship with professional arbitrators and mediators."

Please refer to [Annex](#) for a background on dispute resolution in Singapore.

For media queries, please contact:

Mr Chua Loo Lin
Assistant Director
Office of Corporate Communications
Singapore Management University
DID: 68280235 / 98514175
Email: llchua@smu.edu.sg

About the School of Law at SMU

The School of Law was established at SMU in 2007 as Singapore's second law school, welcoming its pioneer batch of students in August 2007. 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 (LLB) and a five-year double degree programme. It currently has a total enrolment of 245 undergraduates. The first batch of SMU law students will graduate in 2011.

About the Singapore Management University

Incorporated on 12 January 2000, Singapore Management University (SMU) aims to groom outstanding business leaders and creative entrepreneurs capable of excelling in a rapidly changing and dynamic world. The University is known to be a pioneer for its interactive pedagogy of seminar-style teaching in small class sizes which remains its unique hallmark. Today, SMU is home to more than 6,000 students and comprises six schools: Lee Kong Chian School of Business, School of Accountancy, School of Economics, School of Social Sciences, School of Information Systems and School of Law. SMU offers bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. degree programmes in business and management-related areas, ranging from Accountancy, Economics, Finance, Wealth Management, Law, Information Systems and Social Science. It also has a dedicated Office of Research, a number of institutes and centres of excellence, and provides public and customised programmes for working professionals through Executive Education. Collaborations with leading institutions, including The Wharton School, Carnegie Mellon, the University of Pennsylvania and the University of Chicago, allow SMU to draw on academic and research strengths across all major disciplines. The SMU campus is a state-of-the art facility located right in the heart of Singapore's civic and business district. www.smu.edu.sg

About Dispute Resolution in Singapore

Singapore – with its reputation for upholding the rule of law, integrity, transparency, political and social stability, pro-business environment, modern infrastructure, legal talent and strategic geographical location – is fast becoming the location of choice as a neutral, reliable country in Asia for alternative dispute resolution. As businesses become more global in nature, alternative dispute resolution channels are increasingly becoming the preferred medium of resolving commercial disputes instead of litigation which is more costly, adversarial, time consuming, lacking in privacy and confidentiality. The advantages of private channels such as arbitration and mediation are that they readily overcome the immediate challenges and avoid the complications of jurisdiction and enforcement which are part of the traditional, formal judicial process.

Singapore bears huge potential to becoming a centre for dispute resolution given its position as a country with stable political and legal institutions, and a framework of the rule of law. The development of dispute resolution expertise and facilities in Singapore, especially arbitration and mediation, paves the way in attracting both international and domestic disputes here for settlement and resolution. Singapore could become for Asia as important as London or Paris is for Europe as a centre for dispute resolution.

Dispute resolution is a broad field of practice and inquiry covering principally non-judicial forms of dispute settlement particularly mediation, negotiation and arbitration. In the last few decades, it has expanded considerably to encompass conflict management in schools; organisational and workplace conflict; resolution of banking, investment and insurance disputes; the design and development of more culturally-specific and appropriate procedures to resolve disputes in diverse societies; environmental and planning disputes; court-linked mediation (including judge-led mediation); criminal and youth offender programmes (e.g. family group conferences and victim-offender mediation).

The development of dispute resolution begins with a concern with access to justice and as such was concerned with low-cost and user-friendly processes. It has evolved from there since the 1970s and gained popularity initially as an “alternative” to formal justice. By deploying a set of flexible and transparent procedures, it has been accepted in more recent years into the mainstream in commercial contracts, policy-making, and in international relations through peace negotiations, humanitarian and ‘multi-track’ intervention in ethnic conflicts, NGO activities, and civilian conflict management.

Key agencies in Singapore involved in the work of alternative dispute resolution include the Maxwell Chambers, Singapore Mediation Centre, Singapore International Arbitration Centre, Singapore Institute of Arbitrators, Small Claims Tribunal, e@dr Centre (Subordinate Courts), Community Mediation Centre, Consumer Association of Singapore (CASE) Mediation Centre and Financial Industry Disputes Resolution Centre.