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Schools honour Mrs Lee

THE law schools of the National University of Singapore and Singapore Management University will honour the late Madam Kwa Geok Choo with scholarships, bursaries and awards in her name.

SMU will also name its law library after her, and NUS will create a professorship of property law in her name.

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The list of tributes

SMU

THE KWA GEOK CHOO LAW LIBRARY

To be built on the site of the old National Library Building in Stamford Road, the library will be open to the public and not just to students. It is scheduled to be completed in 2014.

THE KWA GEOK CHOO SCHOLARS PROGRAMME

It will fund a number of law students through their studies. The scholars will be selected by criteria that include "moral force of character, a global mindset and a consciousness to serve the community and the nation".

THE KWA GEOK CHOO TOP LAW GRADUATE AWARD

The award will go to the top graduating law student of each cohort who has demonstrated "both academic excellence and strong community participation".

The \$5,000 cash award will be given out for the first time when SMU's first cohort of law students graduates this month.

NUS

THE KWA GEOK CHOO PROFESSORSHIP IN PROPERTY LAW

The professorship will be a three-year position, and will first be bestowed next month, at the start of the academic year.

THE KWA GEOK CHOO DISTINGUISHED VISITORS PROGRAMME

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

KWA GEOK CHOO BURSARIES

The bursaries, valued at \$8,000 each, will assist financially disadvantaged students to pursue their studies in law. Up to 40 will be given out each year.

KWA GEOK CHOO GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS

The scholarships, to be given to up to 10 students a year, will recognise and support "highly talented" students to pursue graduate studies in law. Each scholarship is valued at \$17,000.



Madam Kwa, seen here in a 2004 photo, was a successful conveyancing lawyer who co-founded the law firm Lee & Lee in 1955. ST FILE PHOTO

■ BY RACHEL CHANG

SINGAPORE'S two law schools have announced plans to pay tribute to the late Madam Kwa Geok Choo, wife of former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, in the form of scholarships, bursaries and awards in her name.

The Singapore Management University (SMU) will also name its law library, to be completed by 2014 in the space formerly occupied by the red-brick National Library, after Madam Kwa.

The National University of Singapore (NUS) will also create a professorship of property law in her name, a three-year position to be bestowed from this academic year, which starts next month.

Madam Kwa, who died last October after a series of strokes, was a successful conveyancing lawyer who co-founded the law firm Lee & Lee.

Started in 1955 with her husband and his brother Dennis, it grew into one of Singapore's leading law firms.

The Straits Times understands that both universities had hatched plans to pay tribute to Madam Kwa separately, but decided to announce them jointly when each got wind of the other's plans.

Both universities say that they are still in the midst of fund raising for the various tributes, which they plan to continue indefinitely.

The organisations which have already made pledges towards NUS' tributes include Ngee Ann Kongsi, law firms Drew & Napier and Rajah & Tann, as well as companies such as Keppel Corporation, Sembcorp and Singapore Press Holdings.

SMU declined to reveal its donors, noting that it would thank them collectively after the fund raising is completed.

The Straits Times understands that the Lee family is not involved with fund-

ing or fund raising for these tributes.

Plans for scholarships, bursaries, professorship, law library in her name

In a statement issued by both universities, Ms Kwa Kim Li, now managing partner of Lee & Lee and Madam Kwa's niece, said that the family was "deeply touched" by the tributes.

"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 said.

Madam Kwa, despite seeming a modest political spouse, was a noted legal mind. At Cambridge University, where both she and Mr Lee completed their undergraduate degrees, she was the first Asian woman to graduate with first-class honours in law.

The leadership at both universities yesterday noted their desire to recognise a woman who was publicity-shy despite being the matriarch of Singapore's most fa-

mous family.

SMU chairman Ho Kwon Ping said it was without doubt that Madam Kwa played a key role in the Singapore story. But she "was often not accorded the recognition" she deserved because of the low profile she chose to keep.

Describing her as "striving for excellence with humility and perseverance", he said that these were qualities worthy of emulation by SMU students.

SMU, whose undergraduate law programme began in 2007, will see its first batch of law students graduate this year.

NUS president Tan Chorh Chuan said that the bursaries to go to financially disadvantaged students in her name would be "a reflection of Madam Kwa's long-standing concern that no deserving student should be deprived of a good legal education because of financial need".

Through the tributes, NUS hoped to keep Madam Kwa's memory alive, he said. The university counts her as one of their alumni as she had attended Raffles College, a precursor to modern-day NUS.

Her memory would inspire young lawyers to "contribute to the legal fraternity and society at large", Prof Tan added.

✉ rchang@sph.com.sg

NUS, SMU to honour late Mrs Lee