

NUS Law launches pro bono centre

✔ **YUEN SIN, THE STRAITS TIMES**

A new centre to encourage law undergraduates to offer free legal help to the needy has been set up at the National University of Singapore's law faculty.

The Centre for Pro Bono and Clinical Legal Education, launched yesterday, will consolidate the work of the NUS Pro Bono Office and the faculty's clinical legal education programmes.

It will also offer an expanded range of programmes for students in the faculty.

One new programme is the State Courts-NUS Clerkship Programme, which started in August. Students assist top State Court judges, getting a first-hand look at criminal procedure and community justice issues from a judicial perspective.

Three students have completed its pilot run, and the programme is looking to take in up to 10 students in its sec-

ond run, said associate professor Lim Lei Theng, the co-director of the centre.

The move comes amid a growing movement among law students here to offer more pro bono work.

All law students are required to complete at least 20 hours of pro bono work as part of their graduating requirements. On average, NUS law students clock 48 pro bono hours by their second year, more than twice the minimum requirement of 20.

Past statistics are not available, but Prof Lim said she has seen a surge in the number of hours contributed since the launch of a pro bono work portal in 2014.

At Singapore Management University, law students in this year's graduating batch performed an average of 37 hours of pro bono work, a 70 per cent hike from 2009.

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