SMU awarded $15 million grant for computational law research

School of Law will establish new research centre to devote focused, multi-disciplinary efforts towards flagship research programme

Singapore, 11 March 2020 (Wednesday) – The Singapore Management University (SMU) has been awarded a major grant of S$15 million from the National Research Foundation Singapore (NRF) to helm a five-year *Research Programme in Computational Law*. The University will invest multi-disciplinary efforts towards the research - SMU School of Law will take the lead to undertake focused efforts on the Programme later this year, in collaboration with the SMU School of Information Systems.

The *Research Programme in Computational Law* will study and develop open source technologies for 'smart' contracts and 'smart' statutes, starting with the design and implementation of a domain-specific programming language (DSL) that allows for laws, rules and agreements to be expressed in code. This paves the way for 'smart' contracts and statutes that can be reliably executed by computers to enable precise and accurate performance and compliance. The eventual industry-adoption of the DSL will facilitate the delivery of more efficient legal and regulatory services through digital systems, and will broaden access to justice.

The *Research Programme in Computational Law* will be housed within a new Centre to be set up at the SMU School of Law. Named the Centre for Computational Law (CCLAW), it will be helmed by SMU Assistant Professor of Law and Information Systems (Practice) Lim How Khang as its Centre Director.

The *Research Programme in Computational Law* will be the Centre's flagship project. It will leverage SMU's faculty expertise and also carry out industry engagements. In particular, Wong Meng Weng and Alexis Chun, the co-founders of the Singapore-based legal technology startup Legalese, have joined the University as Principal Research Fellow and Industry Director respectively, and will contribute their knowledge and connections to the Research Programme. Wong Meng Weng has also been appointed Principal Investigator of the Research Programme, with co-investigators from the SMU School of Law (comprising Professor Goh Yihan, Assistant Professor Lim How Khang, Assistant Professor Lau Kwan Ho and Lecturer Jerrold Soh), and research collaborators from the School of Information Systems.

[Professor Goh Yihan](#), Dean of the SMU School of Law, said, "This new *Research Programme in Computational Law* is an exciting area that will result in new innovations in delivering legal services. We are grateful to the National Research Foundation for their immense support through this grant; SMU is committed to producing research and technological innovations that will contribute to the development of Singapore's legal sector and digital economy. This new *Research Programme in Computational Law*, together with our existing Centre for AI and Data Governance, and our new SMU Bachelor of Science (Computing and Law), will make us a regional and global force for research and educational innovation at the intersection of Law and Technology."

Mr George Loh, Director (Services and Digital Economy), National Research Foundation Singapore, said, "Digitalisation is disrupting and transforming business models and functions across all industries. We are confident that the successful applications of digital technology such as Artificial Intelligence in other business sectors can be replicated in the legal profession to transform the work of paralegals, lawyers, litigators and legal researchers. This new research programme on computational law allows Singapore to build thought leadership and digital expertise in this nascent field, and bring law firms along in the digitalisation journey to incorporate legal technology into their operations."

[Assistant Professor Lim How Khang](#) said, "This is definitely an exciting time to be researching legal and regulatory-compliance technology. The true potential for such technologies, and for understanding how they integrate practically with ongoing developments in AI and blockchain, is enormous. The legal sector is beginning to accelerate its push into digital transformation, and is now in a position to benefit from the development of technologies adapted for legal services. The forthcoming launch of CCLAW and SMU's existing efforts in developing interdisciplinary expertise in law and computing technology will provide us with a very strong platform to work with our academic and industry partners to harness disruptive changes towards improving legal services delivery and increasing access to justice."

Wong Meng Weng, Principal Investigator of the Research Programme, said, "The recent wave of innovation in LegalTech indicates pent-up market demand for software-driven legal solutions which will give consumers, companies, and citizens better access to justice and to law. At SMU, a depth of expertise in both law and computing offers a unique opportunity to build a solid R&D foundation for the legal industry of the future. Alexis and I are grateful to have been brought in to support this important initiative. We look forward to enabling the digital transformation of both the legal profession and the legal industry through open-source software and tools built thereon."

CCLAW will be operational from April 2020. Besides focusing on computational law research, it will also conduct research on the application of cutting-edge computational technology to legal, regulatory, compliance and governance problems. In doing so, the Centre will collaborate with research centres and institutional partners, as well as the technology industry and legal professions around the world.

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About the National Research Foundation, Prime Minister's Office, Singapore

The National Research Foundation (NRF) is a department within the Prime Minister's Office. The NRF sets the national direction for research, innovation and enterprise (RIE) in Singapore. It seeks to invest in science, technology and engineering, build up the technological capacity of our companies, encourage innovation by industry to exploit new opportunities that drive economic growth, and facilitate public-private partnerships to address national challenges.

Under RIE2020, NRF is committed to create greater value in Singapore from our investment in research, innovation and enterprise through 1) closer integration of research thrusts, 2) stronger dynamic towards the best teams and ideas, 3) sharper focus on value creation, and 4) better optimised RIE manpower. Visit www.nrf.gov.sg/RIE2020 for more details.

About Singapore Management University

A premier university in Asia, the Singapore Management University (SMU) is internationally recognised for its world-class research and distinguished teaching. Established in 2000, SMU's mission is to generate leading-edge research with global impact and to produce broad-based, creative and entrepreneurial leaders for the

knowledge-based economy. SMU's education is known for its highly interactive, collaborative and project-based approach to learning

Home to over 10,000 students across undergraduate, postgraduate professional and postgraduate research programmes, SMU is comprised of six schools: School of Accountancy, Lee Kong Chian School of Business, School of Economics, School of Information Systems, School of Law, and School of Social Sciences. SMU offers a wide range of bachelors', masters' and PhD degree programmes in the disciplinary areas associated with the six schools, as well as in multi-disciplinary combinations of these areas.

SMU emphasises rigorous, high-impact, multi- and inter-disciplinary research that addresses Asian issues of global relevance. SMU faculty members collaborate with leading international researchers and universities around the world, as well as with partners in the business community and public sector. SMU's city campus is a modern facility located in the heart of downtown Singapore, fostering strategic linkages with business, government and the wider community. www.smu.edu.sg

About SMU School of Law

SMU School of Law proudly welcomed its first cohort of 116 students in August 2007. Taught by a dynamic faculty with postgraduate degrees from renowned universities, the School aims to nurture its students to become excellent lawyers who will contribute significantly to society. Trained with the ability to contextualise legal expertise and to think across disciplines and geographical borders coupled with SMU's interactive pedagogy, SMU's law graduates are confident articulate and analytically agile.

The SMU School of Law offers a four-year full-time Bachelor of Laws programme, a five-year double-degree programme which combines law with Accountancy, Business, Economics, Information Systems or Social Sciences, a three-year Juris Doctor programme, a Master of Laws programme, as well as continuing legal education. The School has also set up four legal research centres focusing on A.I. and data governance, cross-border commercial law, international dispute resolution and intellectual property. www.law.smu.edu.sg

About SMU School of Information Systems

Real-world industry sectors provide our School of Information Systems (SIS) with a testbed and laboratory for experimentation, as well as a fertile breeding ground for new ideas. Our faculty and students apply their research results to solve real problems in a variety of industry settings and to create IT applications and systems. At the same time, our faculty actively publish in top-quality Computer Science and Management Science conferences and journals. Our research areas include Cybersecurity; Data Management & Analytics; Human-Machine Interaction; Information Systems Management; Intelligent Systems & Optimisation; Machine Learning & Intelligence; Multimedia; Sensing, Sense-Making & Activation; Software Engineering & Systems.

SIS offers a suite of degree programmes. Our B.Sc. (Information Systems), B.Sc. (Computer Science) and B.Sc. (Computing & Law) have been remarkably successful in demonstrating educational innovations and creating a culture of learning, establishing external linkages and partnerships with industry, government and the social sector, and with job placement. We run a highly ranked Master of IT in Business degree, with specialisations in Analytics; Artificial Intelligence; and Financial Technology & Analytics. Our doctoral degrees, including Ph.D. (Computer Science), Ph.D. (Information Systems) and Doctor of Engineering, have produced graduates who joined highly sought organisations in academia and industry. www.sis.smu.edu.sg

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