

SMU second again in top moot court contest

By IAN POH

TWO attempts and two finals appearances – this is the track record of Singapore Management University (SMU) at the international rounds of the world’s largest moot court competition.

On Saturday, the university, which set up its law school only in 2007, finished runners-up for the second consecutive year at the 55th Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition.

Some 600 schools take part in the event – which simulates court proceedings – each year.

More than 100 teams from around the world took part in last week’s international rounds in Washington, DC. SMU’s team comprised final-year students Kenny Lau, 25, Chua Wei Yuan, 26, Yeo Gek Min, 24, Carren Thung, 23, and Nicholas Liu, 28.

On the way to the championship round of the 55-year-old event, SMU beat teams from top institutions such as Oxford University and King’s College London before losing on Saturday to Australia’s University of Queensland.

SMU’s team captain Mr Chua said he was proud to represent Singapore. “It was fulfilling to watch my teammates grow as oralists and keep supporting one another from start to finish,” he said.

Participants in a moot represent opposing sides in a hypothetical legal dispute. They make written and oral arguments to a panel of judges.

SMU Assistant Professor of Law Chen Siyuan, 31, who coached the team, said international moot competition standards have risen “exponentially” in the last decade.

He said preparing for such contests helps to produce top lawyers, but added that a “macro strategy” for both law schools here – the other being the National University of Singapore (NUS) – was needed to further improve an already “excellent” support structure for mooting.

Singapore has the third-best track record in Jessup behind the United States and Australia, with four first-place and nine second-place finishes.

The Republic’s last championship, won by the NUS, came in 2001. Last year, SMU made it to the final round on its first attempt.

It lost to the National Law School of India University.

Notable Jessup alumni include Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, Senior Counsel Davinder Singh and Senior Minister of State for Law and Education Indranee Rajah.

✉ pohian@sph.com.sg



The SMU team that finished runners-up at the 55th edition of the Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition: (from left) Ms Yeo Gek Min, 24, Ms Carren Thung, 23, Mr Nicholas Liu, 28, SMU Assistant Professor of Law Chen Siyuan, 31, Mr Chua Wei Yuan, 26, and Mr Kenny Lau, 25. In the background is the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, which honours the third US president. PHOTO: COURTESY OF CHEN SIYUAN