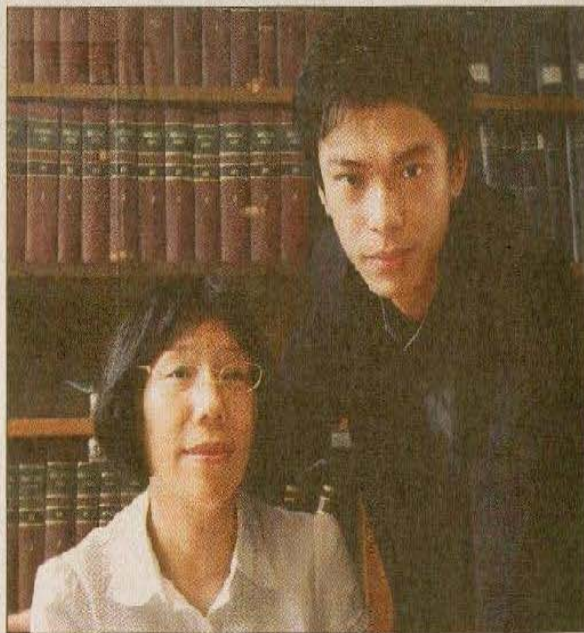


## STARTINGOUT *continuing education*

# Passport to world of legal issues



Law students Sheng Jin and Ernest Ng. Photo: Edward Wong

A law programme aims for an international perspective, writes *Susie Gyöpos*

**I**N A FAST-CHANGING world, it is almost impossible for a university to equip students with job-specific skills, but it can give them the mindset to help them seize every challenge and try to reach their full potential.

One leading American university is preparing undergraduates for a life of continuous learning and careers that have a truly international perspective.

*US News & World Report*, in an August issue last year, ranked Duke University as one of the top five schools in the United States.

The school has 37 Hong Kong students currently on campus, not to mention hundreds of alumni originally from or at present working in the territory.

Duke University president Richard Brodhead believes that higher education should inspire curiosity and empower lifelong learning. One important step in his approach to education has been to create an international environment by engaging in real-world issues and setting up interdisciplinary programmes.

The law programme jointly run

with the University of Hong Kong (HKU) is one of many such partnerships that reflect this approach to education.

Duke University's Asia-America Institute oversees the intensive, full-time course which gives students of international and comparative law full access to HKU's considerable resources.

The programme was established in 1995, and its goal is to offer a truly comparative experience, said Jennifer Maher, assistant dean for International Studies at Duke Law School. Participants learn about contrasting styles of legal education and tackle courses of very different structure and content.

"We enrol students not only from Duke and Hong Kong University but also from other law schools in the US and around the world," Ms Maher said. Seven Hong Kong students attended last year.

Aside from encouraging awareness of the significant changes taking place in Asia, the course helps prepare students for an international career.

The course is also a stepping stone for Hong Kong students wishing to

study at a US law school and seeking to network with leading law firms.

Competition for places is keen, and only those who excelled in English are likely to be accepted.

"The ideal candidate wants both to learn from and share information with students and faculty from different legal backgrounds," Ms Maher said.

One successful applicant was Sheng Jin, an HKU student from the mainland, who is in the second year of her PhD studies in company and securities law.

Ms Sheng said the programme offered her a unique opportunity to study an extensive, well-organised curriculum and take part in productive, interactive sessions.

"For example, the course on banking regulations and payment systems really broadened my viewpoint, and the afternoon seminars provided information on legal issues unique in Hong Kong," Ms Sheng said.

She said the style of teaching, erudite and often entertaining, was one of the programme's attractions.

The month-long course includes visits to Hong Kong's Supreme Court, the Legislative Council and the local

offices of American law firms. The workload is heavy, involving 70 to 80 pages of reading a night to supplement classroom sessions, seminars and excursions.

Only those with a strong commitment should consider applying. One student who has demonstrated such commitment is Ernest Ng, a third-year HKU undergraduate, who is following a double degree in government and law. He said he was inspired to take the programme because of its focus on international legal issues.

"The learning experience is much more valuable, as we do not usually have such opportunities during term time," Mr Ng said.

While cherishing the opportunity to make friends from around the world and meet distinguished professors and lecturers from different faculties and countries, he believed the programme's biggest plus was the quality of the teaching.

"There are two professors for each subject, so you can compare different perspectives," he said. "Taking the programme helped me to determine the career path I want to follow."