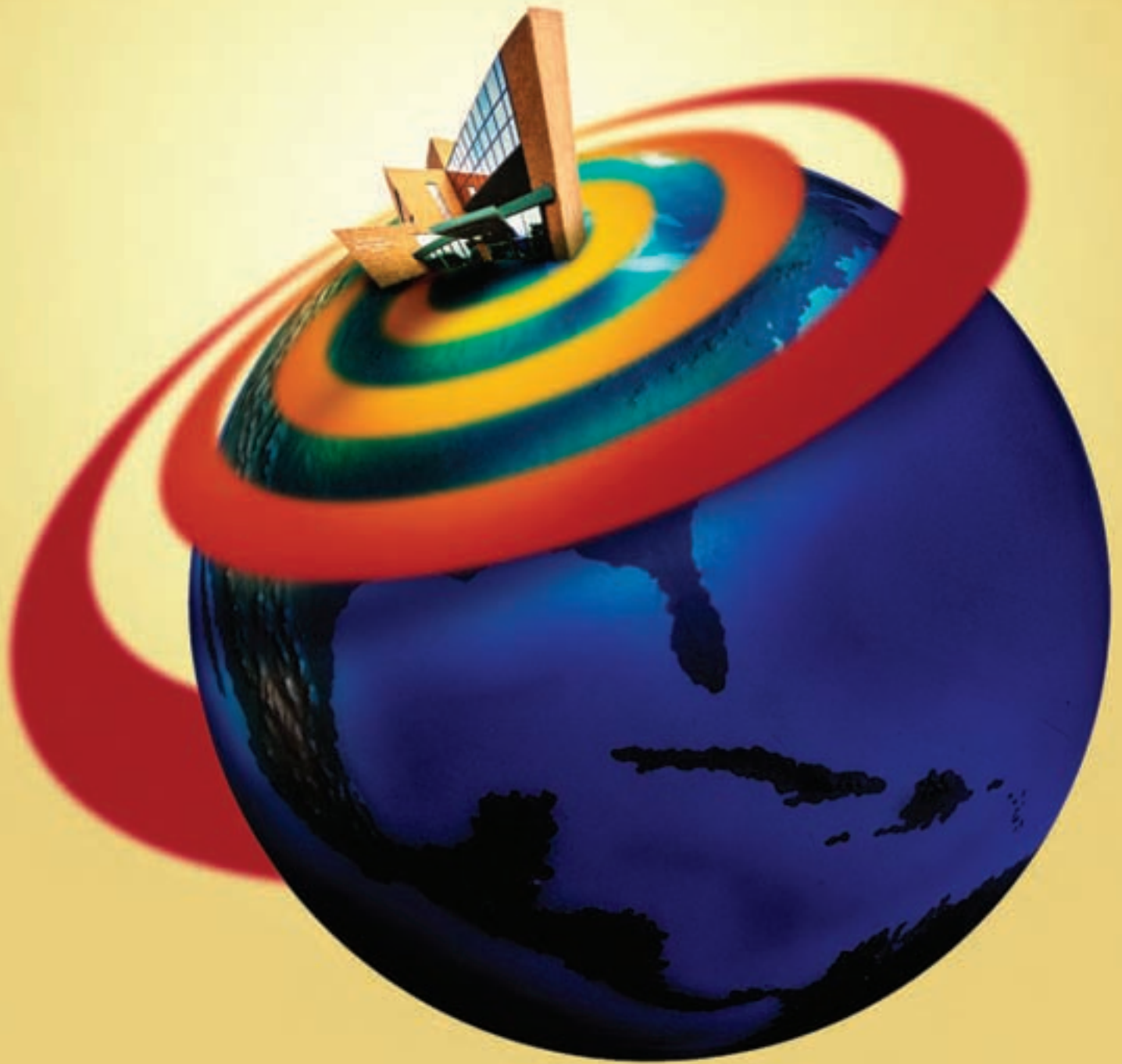


# Training A Global Workforce



## An expanding education for a shrinking world

BY FRANK JOSSI



After receiving his J.D. from the University of Minnesota Law School in 2007, **Peihuan Kao** began looking for a full-time job. With his Law School credentials, a distinguished work history, LL.M. degrees from Columbia Law School and Soochow Law School in Taipei, and an M.S. in medical technology from National Taiwan University, he was unlikely to struggle very long to land a partner-track position at a high-dollar law firm.

But ever since childhood, Kao had wanted to somehow contribute to ameliorating Taiwan's isolation in the international community, to assist in removing its status as an outlier that would eventually become part of mainland China. As luck would have it, he heard about an opening as a legal adviser to the Permanent Mission of Taiwan at the World Trade Organization in Geneva. He got the job.

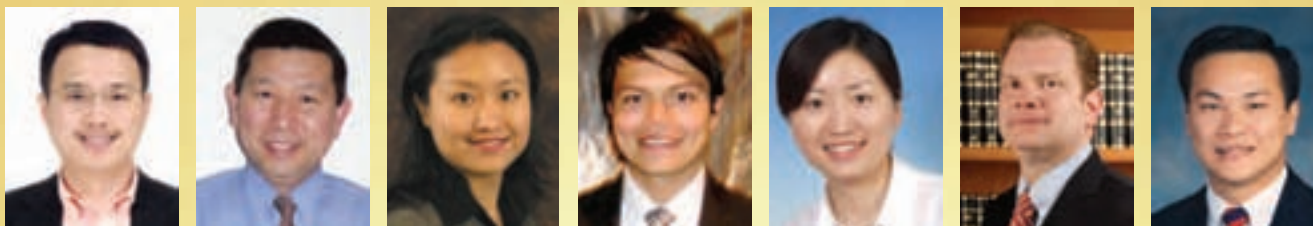
"The Law School provided a fascinating spectrum of courses and opportunities in nearly all areas of international law," says Kao. "It laid a solid basis of the legal knowledge and skills that are required to serve as a legal adviser to Taiwan's Permanent Mission to the WTO."

### The big world of law

The Law school has been preparing American and foreign-born students to work in international law and business for decades. Several full-time faculty members, including the Law School's dean, David Wippman, teach international law. In addition, between 5 and 10 foreign educators typically teach J.D. classes each year as visiting scholars and affiliated and adjunct faculty.

As law and business progressively intermingle in today's global marketplace, educating students to practice multi-nationally has become a focus of Dean Wippman, who has begun changing the curriculum to feature more international courses, even for first-year students. "We have a panoply of courses and programs in place to train U.S. students in international law and to welcome and teach international attorneys," says Wippman. "Being able to function in a global legal community is an increasingly important facet of a legal education."

Of course, it's a two-way street. Foreign students offer the Law School a level of diversity and connection to a larger world that benefit all students, faculty, and staff. In an effort to attract more students from abroad, the school established a one-year LL.M. (master of law) program in 1994 that has conferred degrees on 365 graduates from 62 countries over the last 14 years, says Muria J. Kruger, director of international and graduate programs. A handful of those students will stay on at the Law School and, after improving their English and taking the LSATs, earn a J.D. degree, which allows them greater flexibility and the ability



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Dennis L.T. Nguyen

to take U.S. state bar exams, she says. LL.M. students bring not only an international perspective but a professional one, too, since to even gain admittance to the program, applicants must have graduated from law school in their home countries.

South Korea native and Twin Cities attorney **Woodrow Byun** ('93) initially advocated creating an LL.M. program when he was a J.D. student and has hosted dinners and events for Asian students over the years. "Having foreign students really diversifies the Law School," Byun says. "It's fine to have American-born students with a Chinese or Korean origin who bring diversity, but that's not the same as having someone in the LL.M. program who works as an attorney for Samsung and who has years of working experience. Those students give the school a truly global perspective."

### A diversity of people and careers

What happens to students once they graduate with a J.D. or an LL.M.? Some return to their home countries and practice law in firms with global practices. Others find positions in legal departments of multinational corporations. A handful find their calling in business, too, since a law degree prepares graduates for positions in finance and in other sectors.

**Yanhang Helen Hu**, for example, who completed her J.D. in 2005, is an associate at Fulbright & Jaworski in Minneapolis. Before coming to Minnesota, she was an attorney for four years in the largest private practice in Shanghai. "I came because I heard it was a good law school" and "affordable," she says. "I didn't care about the weather. I knew it was cold."

Guatemala native **Frank DeLeon**, a transfer and pricing consultant with Ernst & Young in Minneapolis, who completed his J.D. in 2007, came to the Law School after working for an international program in Washington, D.C. The Law School gave him a framework for "the application of analytical skills," he says. "People tend to forget that law school prepares you for different jobs that require you to use the application of skills you learned in law school rather than the knowledge you gained from that experience."

An American legal education has various advantages, alumni say. **Christoph Narten**, an attorney in the Wiesbaden, Germany, office of a global automotive supplier, came to the Law School intending to improve his English legal vernacular and "get an insight on the legal

system in the U.S." At the Law School, he gained an understanding of the "common law" American system and now is better able to explain to clients how Germany's "codified" law differs. German attorneys can largely rely on statutes, Narten says, while American attorneys have to "check and check and check" case law to see how the courts view a legal situation.

"I learned the language, the terminology, the way of legal thinking in America," says Narten, who attended high school in the United States for one year. "Other programs I looked at were more about getting foreigners in and having them pay huge fees and not really offering them something. Here we were allowed to participate in nearly all classes." In addition, he says, an LL.M., which he completed in 2001, was practically a prerequisite for working internationally for a large law firm or corporation.

**Yu (Rose) Li**, another LL.M. graduate ('06), received a \$10,000 scholarship to attend the Law School. When she reflects on her year at Minnesota she recognizes the importance of acquiring practical tools, such as how to research legal opinions and how to solve problems within the judiciary system. Now working for Best Buy in China, she says she feels much more knowledgeable when her American colleagues ask, "Rose, this is a new law. How does it impact our work in China?"

The practice of devoting extensive time to legal research left an indelible and long-lasting impression on many foreign-born graduates, who say that learning those skills has made them better attorneys. **Fernando Orrantia Dworak** ('95), a partner in a Mexico City law firm, says learning the habits of American law was "a very important part of my legal education. I was exposed to much more detailed legal research, which is not customary in Mexico. My legal research has that detail and insight that would not be found in Mexican colleagues who have not been exposed to the American legal education system."

### Clear writing welcome worldwide

One of the Law School's particular strengths has been its devotion to strong legal writing, a point many foreign-born graduates who work internationally applaud and say they found lacking in their legal educations back home. "In Mexican law schools, there's not much on writing," says Dworak. "I think basically a Mexican lawyer has to learn to write after finishing law school. That was something I really liked. There was a very strong focus on legal writing in my first two years of the J.D. program."

An education in law and legal writing expertise come in useful even for graduates who did not stay in law. Californian **Dennis L.T. Nguyen** received his J.D. in 1998 and now co-chairs New Asia Partners in Shanghai. He has invested in many Chinese start-up companies that have had successful public offerings, among them one firm that returned 1,000%. “In private equity and banking, every single day we encounter legal issues,” he says, commenting that he spends about one-third of his time working on contracts—investment agreements, agreements with law firms, agreements with accounting firms, and the like. “We write tremendously in our jobs,” Nguyen says, “to investors, to outside professionals, or to companies we’ve invested in. Even within our company, New Asia Partners, we’re interacting through writing.”

The Law School offers experience with writing from the other side of the desk, too: as a staff member on a student-edited scholarly journal. Kao and DeLeon served as outside articles editor of *Law and Inequality: A Journal of Theory and Practice*. The editing opportunity “drastically improved my writing skills,” says Kao, while for DeLeon the position offered a chance to hear and participate in passionate debates among colleagues to determine which articles would be published.

### Intangible benefits

The Law School gives attorneys who work globally multiple opportunities while at the University to broaden their skills, as well as their personal and professional networks. DeLeon, for example, served as head of the Latino student organization, where he honed his leadership skills. Kao served as vice-president of the International Law Student Association and volunteered with Amnesty International on a case involving religious freedom in China.

Graduates say the Law School also offers skills, knowledge, and relationships outside the classroom that have proved important in their education and careers. Hu recalls helpful seminars on finding jobs and interviewing with firms. “The Law School showed me how to market myself and to increase my confidence and show me the way,” she says. Additionally, friendships she developed have collectively formed a great personal network of colleagues in Taiwan, Europe, and Japan. “Before, when I lived in Shanghai, I didn’t know anyone who wasn’t Chinese,” Hu says. “Since I went to the United States, I’ve gotten friends who live in all corners of the world. The exchange of information with them is a real benefit.”

Then there’s a basic sense of belonging, and care, that the faculty, staff, and students provide one another, especially in challenging times. In his second year of Law School, Kao experienced a life-shifting event: His wife had a child. “I managed the whole year, I think, smoothly,” he says. “The faculty was so supportive. My friends and other students there were so supportive, too. I didn’t feel the competitiveness. I only got help, understanding, and assistance. This is an important factor of why I love my alma mater so much.”

By Frank Jossi, a freelance writer based in St. Paul

## INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS

The Law School sponsors a number of programs with a global scope for both native and foreign-born students.

Those interested in promoting and protecting human rights, for example, can take advantage of the Law School’s concentration in human rights program and immerse themselves in courses University-wide to prepare for work in the field. The Human Rights Center, located in the Law School, just celebrated its 30th anniversary and has an international reputation for offering training, educational materials, and opportunities in the human rights community.

The Law School also offers opportunities to learn at campuses outside U.S. borders. Semester-abroad programs are available in France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain, and Uruguay. Six-week summer programs in Beijing, China, and student-initiated study abroad programs also are available.

Why go abroad? “If a student plans to practice in international or comparative law of some type, a study-abroad experience is almost an imperative,” says Director of International and Graduate Programs Muria Kruger. “Also, students wishing to practice in areas such as business law and intellectual property law particularly benefit from studying abroad, as these areas of law are increasingly becoming international in scope.” And some students, she suggests, study abroad to reflect and learn about themselves in a setting, language, and classroom experience that are all new.

Time abroad gives students a chance to learn how American law differs from law in the country they are visiting, notes Kruger. Students can begin to see where the American system of justice delivers well and where it could be improved. “These are insights that turn an average lawyer into a superb one,” she says.

—F.J.