

NYU hires away pioneer in U.S.-Chinese legal education

The founding dean and chancellor of China's first American-style law school has been named the vice chancellor of NYU Shanghai — a start-up campus where New York University officials expect to begin enrolling students in 2013.

Karen Sloan
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NOTE: This story has been corrected to make clear that the Shanghai campus will offer an undergraduate curriculum.

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Jeffrey Lehman founded the Peking University School of Transnational Law in 2007, with the goal of training lawyers in both U.S. and Chinese law.

"It would be difficult to imagine — much less find — a better vice chancellor for NYU Shanghai than Jeff Lehman," said NYU President John Sexton. "An esteemed legal scholar and a leader in higher education in both the U.S. and China, he is exceptionally qualified to take on this assignment."

Lehman told the Washington Square News, NYU's student newspaper, that he is "thrilled" to have "an opportunity to participate in the development of a compelling new vision of excellence in higher education."

There was nothing like the Peking University law school in China before Lehman helped found it five years ago. The law school's four-year program offers a unique mix of studies. Students take classes in both English and Chinese, and earn American juris doctor and Chinese juris master degrees. The latter is the basic graduate law degree in China.

Lehman, who previously served as president of Cornell University and was the longtime dean of the University of Michigan Law School, has become a fixture at academic events geared towards the globalization of the legal profession and legal education.

He had established a number of partnerships between Peking University and U.S. law schools, and was working on plans to seek American Bar Association accreditation. The ABA has never accredited a law school outside the United States, but the organization's Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar is surveying members about whether to do so.

NYU announced plans for a Shanghai campus in 2011, saying it would be the first American university in China with an independent legal status and approval from the Chinese Ministry of Education. The effort is billed as "a comprehensive liberal arts and sciences research university." NYU already has an international campus in Abu Dhabi.

Lehman will assume his new duties over the summer. He will function as the chief executive of NYU Shanghai, overseeing all academic and administrative operations, according to an announcement from the university.

Contact Karen Sloan at ksloan@alm.com.