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## Bridging the gap between law and business

### Osgoode student pitches entrepreneurial idea with international team

Written by [Zachary Pedersen](#)

Posted Date: April 21, 2014

Last week, Osgoode Hall Law School student Martin Hui presented a project he worked on with law students from the University of São Paulo in Brazil and Peking University School of Transnational Law in China.

Hui, a third-year in Osgoode's combined JD/MBA with the Schulich School of Business, collaborated virtually with his team to create a business proposal for a web site that would be a platform for law firms and personal injury victims to appeal to outside sources, including the general public, for litigation funding.

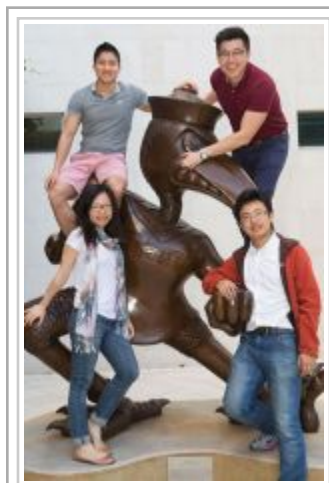
"It would be for instances when the law firm didn't have capital to do so, or it seems like a riskier bet than law firms might be willing to take on," he says. "It's only in instances where [the firms] would be taking them on a contingency basis where they would have to carry the costs."

The project came out of [LawWithoutWalls](#), a University of Miami School of Law initiative intended to bring together students, lawyers, and mentors to create new legal opportunities for emerging lawyers and entrepreneurs.

"My objective was to break down hierarchies between academia and real practice, between students and professors, between institutions of different ranks, between cultures and disciplines and to try to teach the skills that aren't focused on in law schools," says Miami law professor Michele DeStefano, LawWithoutWalls' founder. "But specifically, my interest was on project management, entrepreneurialism, and business — the types of skills that may be honed more in business school, but not necessarily in law school."

Hui applied for the program and was selected to be Osgoode's sole student representative. The law school sponsored Hui's travel costs, which included a trip to the LawWithoutWalls kickoff event at the University of St. Gallen in Switzerland three months ago. Each year, a participating school hosts the initial meeting where students are put into groups of three and assigned a topic to build their project around. Students from different countries are grouped together and they must collaborate online, using tools like Google Hangouts, Skype, and Adobe Connect to complete their business pitch.

"I've had international students in my undergrad . . . but this virtual thing was different. It brings things to a different level when you're not seeing people's faces, when you're not seeing body



The team in Miami (clockwise from top left): Martin Hui with teammates Ryan Mark, Dong Shaoling, and corporate mentor Mona Qiu.

language, when you're in different time zones," says Hui. "It's a good primer for what it might be like to work with international counsel once I start at a law firm."



Hui's team was given the following topic: "It's not our responsibility or is it? Balancing the commercial goal of making money with the moral obligation to protect human rights."

DeStefano says the program deliberately suggests broad topics to encourage students to explore what legal issues are present globally.

"The reason we do that is because research shows that the most creative people that actually develop business ideas and are successful at it are actually better at problem finding," she says.

Ed Waitzer, director of the Hennick Centre for Business and Law at Osgoode and Schulich, says the school's participation in the program was an easy decision.

"It fits with what we're doing at the law school and the business school because it's global in scope, it's a bridge between the academy and practice, and there's a high policy focus to it," he says. "It's all the things we're trying to do in terms of experiential education and making bridges between the theoretical element of law and business school and what students are going to do when they get out and beyond."

This year, the program had participants from 26 law and business schools originating from 14 different countries. All the students gathered at the University of Miami on April 12 and 13 to present their business proposals. One was selected as the winner.

Hui's team didn't win, but that doesn't matter to him because he gained so much from the experience.

"Legal entrepreneurialism is not a class that you take, at least not yet, and maybe it should be," he says. "It's a great networking opportunity, it's a great learning experience, and it's something to keep law school interesting because it's not another paper essay."

That's exactly what DeStefano is hoping for.

"It's a competition, but it's not really because . . . the judges are a very mixed group. We always have a venture capitalist, we always have a business professional, and then usually a lawyer and some type of academic," she says. "They provide an interchange for the purpose of helping the students and the teams improve their project and improve their presentations if they are going to try to take them forward."

LawWithoutWalls plans to offer support to students that wish to make their business plans a reality.

"I'll be mentoring them and I'll be hooking them up with other people that are experts in the field that can make it happen," says DeStefano. "It will be time consuming and sort of like an incubation — you don't have to win to do that."



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