Interest in SIM University’s much-awaited law school – due to open next year – is so high that it had to hold an extra briefing session on its courses yesterday.

More than 450 showed up for two two-hour briefings detailing the school’s law programmes at UniSIM’s annual open house – double the expected number.

The UniSIM School of Law, Singapore’s third law school, will aim to address a predicted shortage of lawyers in the fields of criminal and family law.

There are a total of 60 places available on its two courses, 48 of which will go to those with degree applications. The school is looking for applicants with relevant working experience. The other 12 will go to A-level school leavers and polytechnic diploma-holders joining the Bachelor of Laws (LL.B) course.

Paralegal Latifah Hassan, 32, who has been working in family law for 12 years and has a diploma in law and management, said that it would be a “tough fight” for those like her applying for the LL.B course.

“Not everyone makes a good family or criminal lawyer. We hope to attract a special breed of students who have relevant work experience, strong hearts and helping dispositions,” she said.

UniSIM president Cheong Hee Ki-at said earlier this month that the school was hoping to draw mature individuals with experience in related fields, such as social work and law enforcement, who want to make a career change.

Students will be selected not just based on academic ability but also profile of applicants. Professor Leslie Chew, the law school’s dean, said, “Not everyone makes a good family or criminal lawyer. We hope to attract a special breed of students who have relevant work experience, strong hearts and helping dispositions,” he said.

“From the turnout today, I am particularly encouraged that many people who have a passion for the law came here,” he said.

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Applications for the law school will open on Tuesday and close on July 31. yuensin@sph.com.sg