



TAR UMT MARKS BIGGEST MILESTONE YET

After 53 years of nurturing talent, the full-fledged varsity is setting its sights on producing highly skilled nation builders



KUALA LUMPUR: After more than five decades of serving the nation – first as a community college in 1969, then as a university college in 2013 – Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TAR UC) is now officially a full fledged university. Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah and Raja Permaisuri Agong Tunku Hajah Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah will commemorate the momentous upgrade of TAR UC to Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology (TAR UMT) at its main campus here in Setapak today, the varsity's board of governors chairman Tan Sri Liow Tiong Lai said. On Nov 7 last year, TAR UMT was officially formed upon receiving the certificate of registration by the Higher Education Department. Describing the upgrade as a "historic moment", Liow said the university – with five branch campuses in Penang, Perak, Pahang, Johor and Sabah – will focus on establishing itself as a future-proof talent development hub not only in Malaysia, but also in the Asean region.

"This is our vision and mission in the next 10 years to transform the future," he said, adding that the institution's transformation plans have been outlined in the "TAR UMT 10-year Roadmap (2021 to 2030)".

Highlighting that one of the university's specific roles will be centred on skills training, Liow said TAR UMT will focus on intensifying university industry collaboration. "We have had collaboration with over 1,000 companies. We aim to increase the number of our industry partners to 10,000 by 2030. "We want to train talent that the country needs and we want to ensure that our talent contributes to nation-building," he stressed. This is also in line with the institution's Beyond Education philosophy, which underscores that talent is developed not only through professional training or academics, but also through learning beyond the classroom and formal curriculum. Speaking at a media briefing held on Oct 25, Liow pointed out that while Malaysia needs at least 45% of its workforce in the highly skilled category, it only has 29.6% represented in the pool.

"We need more, and TAR UMT is here to offer our support to train talent for the nation," he said. He noted that to date, the institution has produced graduates across various disciplines who have gone on to contribute significantly to nation building

Over the years, it has produced close to 300,000 graduates: 45% in accounting, finance and business; 41% in science, engineering, technology and computing; and 14% in communication, design and social sciences. In continuing to produce talent to meet the needs of the nation, Liow drew attention to the university's "One Student One Industry" slogan. "It means the scope and magnitude of industry engagement is so enormous that every student will have the opportunity to actively engage with at least one industry during their studies at TAR UMT," he explained.

Liow also pointed to the newly established small and medium enterprises (SME) centre at the university, which will serve as an avenue for TAR UMT staff and students to connect and engage with SMEs, micro businesses and the wider industry. "We believe the SME centre will play an important role for the growth of SMEs (see infographic)."

As part of the ongoing infrastructure development at the university, the SME centre was set up in March last year and will be housed within the student centre, which will be fully ready in 2024 at the KL campus. TAR UMT president Prof Dr Lee Sze Wei, who was also present at the media briefing, added that to expand academia-industry collaboration, the university has targeted every programme of study, regardless of discipline and level of study, to have active engagement with industry. All final year projects, dissertations and theses – as well as research topics for the postgraduate level – will be industry-focused, he said.

"Every programme will have at least one industry partner to review and design curriculum and delivery, and will involve exchange of knowledge with industry.

“Every student must complete at least one industry assignment, while student clubs and societies will have elements of industry engagement in their activities,” he shared, adding that the university will also engage closely with business and industry associations. By taking these initiatives, he said, the university hopes it can give industry exposure to students so that they will be able to acquire all 21st-century skillsets, including soft skills, for their careers. Prof Lee added that the institution has a good track record of graduate employability. “Our students have an overall 90% employability rate within six months after graduation.

“Some students have a higher employability rate such as our information technology graduates at above 95%. In general, our graduates are well received,” he shared. As a talent development hub, TAR UMT will also do its part on continuous learning. According to Liow, the institution’s Centre for Continuing and Professional Education offered over 40 short courses which were open to the public last year. “We hope we can do more. The short courses are for reskilling, upskilling, certification, general well-being, and lifelong learning, among others,” he said.

He also shared the university’s plans to expand its network in the Asean region, adding that it has already partnered with universities in Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, China and other parts of the world.

Alumni to grow student loan funds

To fulfil its lifelong mission to provide affordable quality education to all Malaysians, Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology (TAR UMT) is seeking to grow its interest-free student loan funds from 53 to 100. And to achieve this target, the university will be tapping into its alumni numbering close to 300,000 members.

TAR UMT alumni council chairman and board of governors member Tan Sri Chan Kong Choy said the alumni council, which was established in 2021 and oversees six active alumni associations,

“plans to hold a “big gathering” this year with the aim of reaching out to its alumni to grow the funds, which have disbursed a total of RM55.4mil to needy students since 1979.

“Many of the funds were donated by our alumni members,” said Chan, who is an alumnus himself, adding that the alumni serve as a pool of resources and talent ready for the university to call back and serve their alma mater.

TARC Education Foundation board of trustees member Tan Sri Lau Yin Pin, who is also an alumnus, added that in order to change with the times, the university needs continued community and alumni support. “The whole idea is to train our students to be more relevant to the changing development of the nation. “This is our task and we know we need to be dynamic to change, and we are changing. “In the course of changing, we need continued support. This is extremely important. “By effectively harnessing the resources of our alumni, we are poised to grow very fast in the next decade,” he said.

Student mobility

“With this university status upgrade, we are looking to have more international students. With the increasing number of these students, we will be able to generate more revenue for the university to continue providing affordable quality education. At the same time, we want to expose our students internationally. We collaborate with international universities to send our students overseas through student and lecturer exchange programmes, workshops and seminars.” – Tan Sri Liow Tiong Lai

Alumni network

“The alumni council is set to establish an orderly network to connect its alumni. We will work closely with the university management so that these alumni members can come back and assist or play advisory roles in various departments. We have leaders in industry who can accept students for internship and academic staff for sabbatical. We can also introduce a system of adjunct professors where we invite them to fund research projects, or invite prominent professors and experts to teach and carry out research.” – Tan Sri Chan Kong Choy

Asean focus

“TAR UMT will intensify student mobility, particularly in the South-East Asia region. We have established quite a number of collaborative programmes with foreign institutions to give students cost-effective exposure to other countries. We are also franchising our programmes to foreign partners in Nepal, Myanmar and Dubai. Moving forward, that’s the way for us.” – Prof Dr Lee Sze Wei

