

A lifeline for deferred dreams

TAR UMT support schemes turn academic and career aspirations into reality

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KUALA LUMPUR: Leong Hue En dreamed of pursuing higher education but financial constraints stood in her way.

She secured a place in university in 2023 but had to delay enrolment after finding out about the fees.

"My family could not afford it. So I went to work at a friend's law firm instead," said Leong, 21.

But she kept searching for a university that offered quality education at a cost she could manage.

"TAR UMT became the lifeline I needed. I immediately applied when I learned the university offered student loans," she said during the institution's Foundation Day celebration yesterday.

Leong, who is pursuing a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education, now balances her studies with part-time work during semester breaks.

She has a student loan from the National Higher Education Fund Corporation as well.

"The lecturers are helpful and attentive. They are supportive of me whenever I feel bogged down by assignments," said Leong, who is now in her second year.

For Loh Hiew Yin, 22, the decision to join TAR UMT was a life-changing experience, too.

The final-year international business student enrolled for a



Shining bright: (From left) Loh, Leong, Anis Syakirah and Vong.

diploma course when the institution was known as Tunku Abdul Rahman University College.

Within the same year, it was upgraded to full university status, a transition she feels mirrors her own journey of growth.

Raised by a single mother and inspired by her elder sister who is also a TARCian, Loh chose a two-year diploma course followed by a degree in international business after completing her SPM in the science stream.

"I was wondering whether I should study something science-related.

"But I knew I was more interested in the international environment and business," she said.

Her campus life extended beyond academics.

From volunteering in events to working behind the scenes in logistics and crew teams, Loh said the experience helped her build confidence, discipline and people skills.

"It's like a mini society here. You meet all kinds of people. I

learned how to manage my time, my emotions, and how to work with others," she said.

She credits her sister for helping her find her footing in her first year.

Financially, Loh received a scholarship at diploma level and now relies on the university's interest-free student loan scheme.

"The fees are affordable, the campus is close to home, and the learning environment is good. TAR UMT changed my life," she said.

Founded in 1969 as Tunku Abdul Rahman College, the institution was upgraded to Tunku Abdul Rahman University College in 2013 before attaining full university status as TAR UMT in 2022.

Diploma in multimedia design student Anis Syakirah Abdul Jalal, 19, said she initially worried about being a "minority" on campus but her mother wanted her to be exposed to different cultures.

"I quickly felt at home here. There are many opportunities to

learn outside of my course," she said.

With a 25% bursary awarded based on her SPM results and the help of a university loan, Anis Syakirah said she could continue with her studies even when her parents' business faced difficulties.

"I think the education at TAR UMT is affordable compared to others," she said.

Anis Syakirah got involved in many events that helped build her skills, too.

"Even if money was no object, I would still come here," she said, adding that the environment and education quality are what she was looking for.

A music producer, known as Vong, enrolled in 1996 when the institution was still Tunku Abdul Rahman College, said that campus life became the turning point that defined his future.

He pursued a twinning programme in chemistry and biology, graduating in 1999.

Today, Vong is also a recording engineer, guitarist and songwriter who has worked with local and international artistes, contributed to TV shows and composed music for films.

Though his job path is way different from the course he took, he said the seed of that career was planted on campus.

"I found my calling here," he said.

While studying science, Vong immersed himself in co-curricu-

lar activities, joining creative workshops where students wrote songs and explored music production.

"That was where I discovered what I really wanted to do. Education is not just about what you majored in college. It's about what you discover along the way," he said.

Vong rejected the notion that studying science was a waste of time.

"What you learn never leaves you," he added.

In fact, Vong believes his grounding in chemistry and biology sharpened his analytical thinking and continues to influence how he approaches music production.

"You may not end up with a job directly related to what you studied, but the knowledge stays with you. It shapes the way you think," he said.

Three decades on, his connection to his alma mater remains strong.

Vong returns frequently, sometimes twice or thrice a month, to support campus events. Recently, he volunteered his expertise to fine-tune the acoustics and sound system in the university hall.

"Anytime they need me, if I'm free, I will come back," he said.

For him, TAR UMT was more than a place of lectures and exams.

"It opened doors. Every door you walk through leads you closer to where you're meant to be," Vong said.