

In a move to make its graduates more marketable and well-rounded individuals, UCSI is venturing into areas of research, entrepreneurship and public policy.

Charting a new course

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JANET Ng first recognised the musical talent in her visually-impaired son Colin when she heard him playing a popular tune of German musician Klaus Wunderlich on the buttons of a calculator at the age of three.

Colin grew up to play the piano well and aspired to pursue higher education in music. Unfortunately, he was turned down by many institutions because of his disability.

It was University College Sedaya International (now UCSI University) which offered Colin a place, and he then went on to become the first blind person to graduate with a music degree in Malaysia.

Colin's story is one of many examples of UCSI University's (UCSI) commitment to give deserving students a chance at higher education.

The university now has a special body, the UCSI University Foundation, which was set up to benefit people and the society at large through the promotion of scholarly programmes to achieve cultural and scientific breakthroughs.

Since its establishment in 2008, the Foundation has functioned as the scholarship arm of the university, receiving and administering funds for education, research and



Harsoneljit Singh and Grace Foo with their study awards.

development. Foundation chairman Datuk Mohd Karim Abdullah Omar says students with exceptional grades and achievements will be rewarded with scholarships.

"Scholarships are a way of motivating students to study hard," says Mohd Karim. He reveals that the Foundation had given out a total of RM8.7mil in scholarships, of which RM6mil was awarded to students this year.

"We hope to increase the scholarship amount in the future as this will benefit more students," he shares.

During UCSI University's Awards Day held recently, students Grace Foo Wai San and Harsoneljit Singh received the Tan Sri Ahmad Razali Merit Scholarship 2010 from the Foundation.

Both students are well-rounded individuals who have excelled in their studies and co-curricular activities.

Research realm

Besides giving out scholarships, the Foundation also funds research initiatives by the university.

UCSI vice-chancellor Dr Robert Bong says a university is "a living organism which must never cease to develop itself".

"The question is whether the university wants to follow the herd or to move ahead of the rest," he says.

It looks like UCSI is moving ahead of the rest with the setting up of the Centre of Research, Value Innovation and Entrepreneurship (Cervie).

According to Dr Bong, Cervie is steering the university towards a more active involvement in research and development projects.

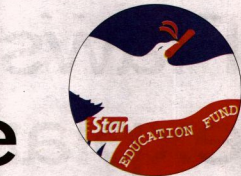
"The students and academic staff are given the support to carry out a broad base of research activities, from fundamental to applied research projects. The academic staff in UCSI receive incentives to participate in international conferences to present their research findings," he adds.

To be successful in their research endeavours, Dr Bong advises the parties involved to be enterprising and have a keen sense of entrepreneurship.

"Entrepreneurship is more than just having a sharp business acumen. It is also a way of thinking. An enterprising researcher will look at a problem from different angles and find a solution to it.

"In the field of fundamental science, for instance, researchers need to think beyond the existing knowledge in order to create new knowledge," says Dr Bong.

Meanwhile, UCSI is also placing strong



Mohd Karim: Scholarships motivate students to work hard.



Dr Bong says that there is more to entrepreneurship than just having business acumen.

emphasis on applied research to turn ideas into profitable and sustainable business models.

"Innovation is definitely an important element during the 'ideas' process of the research," he says.

Ideas taking flight

The Faculty of Economics and Policy Sciences (Feps) which is located at the UCSI Blue Ocean Strategy Regional Centre within the university's north wing campus has of late become a hub for discussions on current affairs.

Recent public talks held at the faculty include a discussion on the by-elections in the country conducted by its lecturer Dr Ong Kian Ming.

"Feps is an interesting faculty in UCSI. Instead of being driven by the academic curriculum, the activities at the faculty are led by happenings in the local and international scene," says Dr Bong.

According to Dr Bong, the other Feps members include past and current policy makers who are active in studying and predicting the developments of current events.

"The subject matter studied by Feps is very relevant to the development of the country," he says.

Set up primarily for postgraduate studies, the faculty has plans to offer a masters programme in public policy.

■ UCSI University is a contributor to The Star Education Fund.