

**U**NITED KINGDOM'S Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron, is only 45 years young, while George Osborne, Chancellor of the Exchequer, has yet to turn 40 at the time of writing. Both leaders also share the distinction of having worked at the Conservative Research Department (CRD), the party's think tank arm that provides key policy inputs as part of its successful 2010 general election campaign. Both leaders are part of a larger, worldwide trend of younger emerging politicians to cut their teeth in a party policy making role prior to ascending to positions of power.

While the internet and social media have increased the accessibility of policy relevant information and materials to interested parties, specifically the younger generation, these channels have also facilitated young, fresh and creative voices to comment on public policy proposals to offer their own alternative solutions. In Malaysia, such young voices are heard through Tunku Abidin Muhriz's and Yap Mun Ching's columns in *theSun* and also in online newspapers and blogs. And working as special assistants to MPs and ADUNS, in think tanks and government-linked organisations such as Khazanah and Pemandu, the younger generation is also having greater access into the policy input process.

However, the ideals and aspirations of the younger generation are still not being structured, channelled and heard among the corridors of power. While they may have the energy, the idealism and the creativity in approaching difficult public policy issues with a fresh outlook, many of these ideas could be refined with the help of experienced policymakers and practitioners. Notably, many of these ideas are thought up in silos because these individuals do not have a platform or opportunity to discuss and debate the proposals. Ultimately, many of these ideas are not widely circulated because in spite of the internet and social media, they are not sufficiently "pushed" into the public arena.

To address these shortcomings, the Faculty of Economics and Policy Science (FEPS) at UCSI University is helping a group of

# UCSI's **Master** in Public Policy Competition

> Students pitch creative solutions to address public policy concerns

Malaysian students, currently studying in the UK, to organise a Malaysian Public Policy Competition (MPPC), to be held in early September at UCSI University's Kuala Lumpur Campus. The competition involves students pitching creative solutions to address a specific public policy concern before an esteemed panel of judges, all of whom are involved in the policy-making process in various capacities. These students will also be assigned mentors and given relevant policy briefings to help them structure their presentations. The winning proposals will then be "pushed out" into the public arena through various channels, including being written up as feature articles in newspapers like this one.

UCSI University's sponsorship of this inaugural Malaysian Public Policy Competition (MPPC) through the involvement of the Faculty of Economics and Policy Science (FEPS) is consistent with another "first": its Master in Public Policy (MPP) programme. It is the first of its kind offered by a private Malaysian university which is designed with practical implications and benefits from the onset. Its participants are provided the theoretical tools to structure their policy proposals, followed by the opportunity to "test" and refine these proposals among policymakers, and to finally, have these proposals developed and implemented as actual policies.

Competition participants, like the

A recent UCSI event... The university's Master in Public Policy (MPP) programme is the first of its kind offered by a private Malaysian university.



prospective students for the MPP programme, will also have the unique opportunity of engaging and interacting with individuals from various backgrounds in a team-building context for the eventual output, in the form of presentations and written proposals, as a product that has undergone the necessary critical internal examination before being shown to a wider audience, depending on the context. While this learning environment is par for the course in most established MBA programmes overseas, it is much harder to find it in the context of Malaysian universities, even among some of the more established Master programmes.

Malaysia, being at a critical juncture of its economic and political development, has received many inputs initiated as part of the

Prime Minister's agenda to transform the way the government operates through the Government Transformation Programme (GTP).

The Faculty of Economics and Policy Science (FEPS) at UCSI hopes to make meaningful contributions to this transformation agenda through nurturing the hearts and minds of policy-oriented individuals through its MPP programme to offer guidance and assistance to the younger generation participating in the Malaysian Public Policy Competition (MPPC).

**ONLINE** ➔

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