

A true measure of success

UCSI University's recent achievement of Tier 5 or "Excellent" status in the Rating System for Malaysian Higher Education Institutions 2013 exercise (SETARA 2013) speaks volumes.

Apart from affirming UCSI's status as one of Malaysia's foremost universities, the rating placed the university alongside some of the world's leading institutions that finished in the same tier.

While such developments are encouraging, UCSI's true measure of success has always revolved around the achievements of its students.

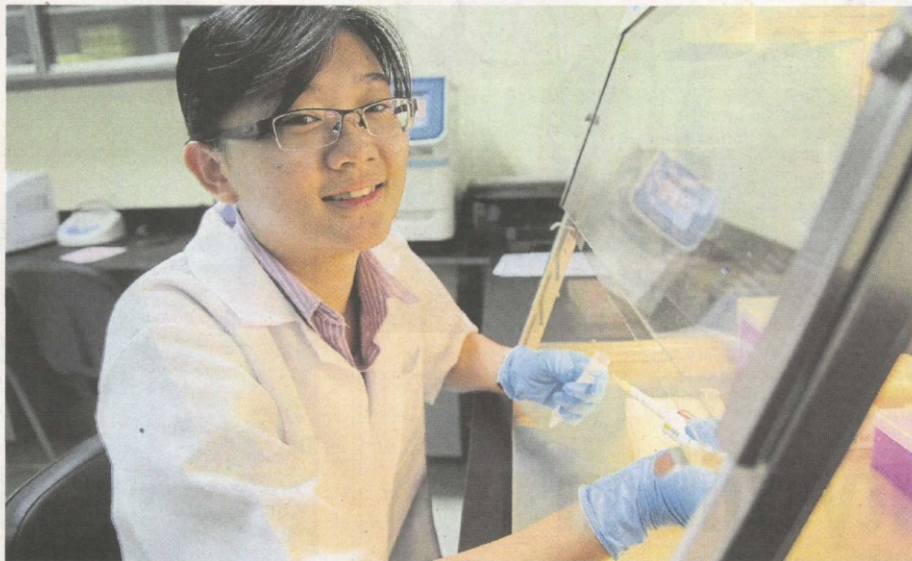
This has been the trend for almost three decades and the university recorded more milestones when Cherish Chong Chiu Wern and Nurul Aina Abdul Ghani recorded personal firsts at Harvard and Hollywood, respectively.

While the achievement is something both of them share, their stories could not be more different.

Chong is realising her potential in research while Nurul Aina bested the competition in a global music competition.

From Grey's to Harvard

From being fascinated with TV shows such as *ER* and *Grey's Anatomy* to being selected for



Chong (left) is currently undergoing a research year at Harvard.

Below: Nurul Aina became the first Malaysian to be crowned the 2014 Senior Grand Champion under the Vocalist of the World category at the World Championship of Performing Arts 2014 in California.

a research year in Harvard University, Chong has come a long way.

She recently completed the second year of her Doctor of Medicine programme at UCSI University (UCSI) and is now spending a year in Boston under the Harvard Medical School's Global Clinical Scholars Research Training Programme.

During her time at Harvard, Chong will be involved in cutting-edge research under the Hormonal Mechanisms of Cardiometabolic Injury Programme at Harvard's Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Chong said, "Harvard is at the forefront of research and I'm sure this exposure will help me in my aspirations to be a clinician-scientist."

"UCSI went out of the way to prepare me for this and I've received a tremendous amount of support."

The first contact with Harvard was initiated by UCSI's vice-chancellor and president, Senior Prof Datuk Dr Khalid Yusoff, one of the country's foremost cardiologists and researchers.

His collaborations with renowned researchers from Harvard, Duke, Sydney, Melbourne and McMaster universities, enabled UCSI to propose students for the intercalated research year.

The students were then interviewed by Prof Williams and Chong made the cut.

She revealed that during her interview, Prof Williams questioned her on her independence and critical-thinking skills.

Her research dreams were also made possible with the funding she received from UCSI University Trust.

The support from UCSI also came in terms of preparing her for her research work in Harvard as she was given extensive lab training by the experienced staff at the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences.

Currently in Harvard, Chong points out that the extra lab training was invaluable – she has no problems coping with the research work assigned to her thus far.

A rising star

Like Chong, Nurul Aina is living the dream.

A student of UCSI University's Institute of Music, she had won numerous singing competitions but her biggest break happened when she became the first Malaysian to win the World Championship of Performing Arts 2014 (WCOPA).

The only international competition for aspiring performing artistes, the WCOPA is dubbed the "Olympics of the Performing Arts" and is held in Hollywood, California, annually.

Nurul Aina beat 15 other hopefuls to be one of the two singers to represent Malaysia.

Describing it as "tough", she did not



expect to win – more than 200 vocalists took part in the competition in Hollywood and only six countries would make it into the grand finals.

Despite the odds, her powerful and effortless rendition of Whitney Houston's *I Have Nothing* helped her win the 2014 Senior Grand Champion title under the Vocalist of the World category.

Ecstatic about her big win, the Foundation in Music student credits her classical lessons for strengthening her stomach muscles and diaphragm, thus enabling her to belt out high notes.

She credits the various master classes organised by the institute for sharpening her stage presence and even business acumen to succeed in showbusiness.

Nurul Aina reveals that while she is happy with her win, she has a bigger goal.

"I want to inspire people to study my songs," she said with a smile.

■ Visit UCSI's Open Days on Dec 6 and 7 from 9am - 5pm at UCSI's KL Campus (South Wing), Taman Connaught. You can also visit www.ucsiuniversity.edu.my or contact 03-9101 8882, or e-mail www.ucsiuniversity.edu.my/onlineenquiry