

# Adding practical value to studies

In its quest to give students a total education, UCSI University is equipping them with entrepreneurial skills to boost their career

prospects.

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**S**TARTING out as a humble computer training centre, UCSI University, formerly known as University College Sedaya International, is making a name for itself in the higher education industry.

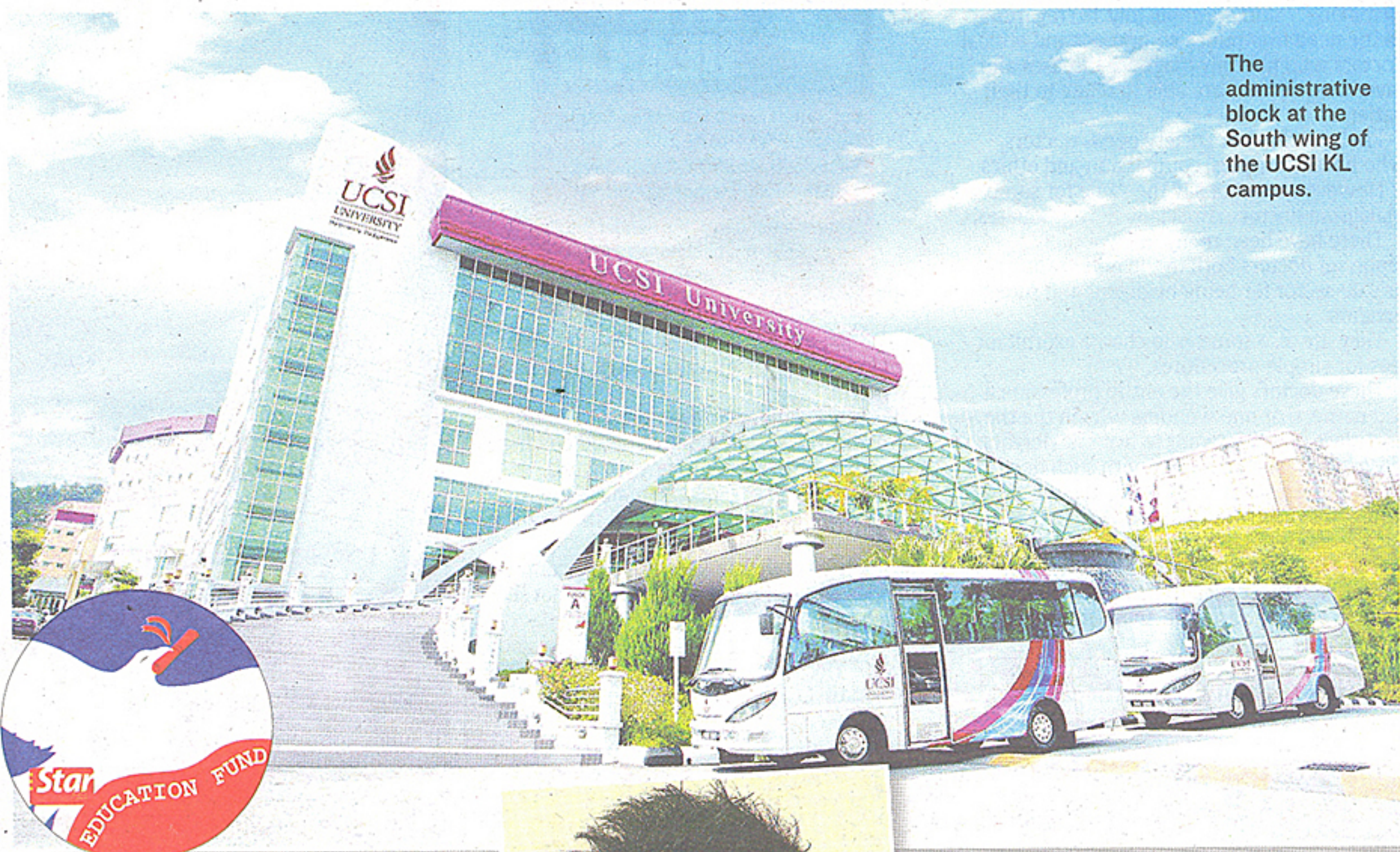
With campuses in three states (Kuala Lumpur, Terengganu and Sarawak), and offering a spectrum of academic programmes ranging from medicine to the arts, UCSI University now has a three year plan to take it to further heights.

Aside from expanding its infrastructure, it seems like the university's pet project is to transform the process of teaching and learning through technology.

UCSI University group president and chief executive officer Peter Ng is one person behind this vision for change, and is determined that higher education institutions should embrace the future.

The extent of Ng's commitment to innovation is especially clear when he starts musing about the university's latest gadget acquisition for its students - a pen that doubles up as a voice recorder.

"There are many similar products on the market, but the beauty about this pen is that it's capable of playing back precise moments of recording as it glazes over key words previ-



The administrative block at the South wing of the UCSI KL campus.



Ng: We're looking at a different approach to learning.

ously written down.

"You can store an entire semester's worth of lectures at your fingertips - imagine the possibilities!" exclaims Ng.

He explains that UCSI University will soon see a fully integrated information system at its campus where learning is not confined to merely the classroom.

"We're looking at a different approach to learning. It's not enough to simply put up lecture notes onto the Internet because that's now a rudimentary approach to technology.

"Here at UCSI University, we're looking at mobile connectivity where students can learn wherever they are, as well as bringing the whole world into a classroom."

Taking the first step in this direction is the UCSI University library, which will be full automated by the end of August.

"This means that there will be no need for a counter; you can just swipe your book to check it out or return it," elaborates Ng.

In its quest to enhance its students' learning experience, UCSI University is also keen on equipping them with entrepreneurial skills to increase their employability as well as add practical value to their education.

The institution's Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Zone (2EZ) is one way where students can actively delve in the world of entrepreneurship by running co-operative initiatives and planning marketing campaigns.

Two companies, namely Himalaya and DiGi,

have already set up booths in the university's Kuala Lumpur campus under the 2EZ banner, and more companies will be coming onboard in the future.

Ng reckons that it is important for students to think like entrepreneurs as the knowledge would apply to any field they wish to pursue.

"When you think like an entrepreneur, you can innovate a lot more and take into account different perspectives of a single idea," he says.

"By refining ideas with this frame of thought, you can produce quality ideas that are readily applicable in the real world."

He adds that the university plans to distribute to students manuals detailing the steps required to set up their own enterprises.

As UCSI University is due to be listed as a comprehensive university under the Rating System for Malaysian Higher Education Institutions (Setara), plans are also underway to up its research capabilities.

"The principle of our research undertakings is value innovation," stresses Ng.

"This means that whatever research that is carried out needs to be meaningful and not simply done for the sake of doing it."

Putting their money where their mouth is, the university contributed RM4mil to its Centre for Research Excellence this year.

Another new development for UCSI University in the near future is the setting up of an independent foundation to distribute research funds and scholarships.

"The UCSI University Foundation will be chaired by former Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad and the university will continue to channel a percentage of its revenue to the foundation," explains Ng.

With over 40% of its 7,000 students coming from over 70 countries, UCSI University also boasts of a vibrant campus culture, which Ng calls a "dream environment".

"With the constant influx of foreign students, we're actually working harder on recruiting locals!" jokes Ng.

"But the mix of cultures does make for an exciting campus - it's great that students can be exposed to such an international atmosphere."

UCSI University is a contributor to the Star Education Fund.