

## TAR UC Unveils 10-year Roadmap



KUALA LUMPUR: A 10-year roadmap will be unveiled today by Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TAR UC) detailing its strategies to scale greater heights from 2021 to 2030. This comes on the heels of its recent status upgrade to a full-fledged university known as Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology (TAR UMT), which was announced on April 12.

Officiating the ceremony at its main campus in Setapak will be TARC Education Foundation board of trustees chairman Datuk Seri Dr Wee Ka Siong, who is the current Transport Minister. The institution, said TAR UC alumni council chairman and board of governors member Tan Sri Chan Kong Choy, has come a long way from its beginnings as a community college in 1969 and its upgrade to university college status in 2013. Over the course of 53 years, he added, the institution has produced over 270,000 graduates, who play an important role in nation-building today.

“Without the support of the community and our alumni, there is no way we could have come this far. We hope we can get the continuous support of the community from all walks of life,” he stressed. Speaking at a media briefing held on July 4, he thanked the TAR UC alumni for providing input on the roadmap.

“They are resources we can potentially tap into, from providing financial aid to various industry knowledge, in the next 10 years and beyond,” he said. Also present at the media briefing was TAR UC president Prof Dr Lee Sze Wei, who said the way forward for the varsity, as outlined in the roadmap, is to establish itself as a future-proof talent development hub with an Asean focus.

To achieve this, the varsity will be focusing on three strategic priorities: excellence in education, mission-driven research and knowledge creation; operations optimisation; and sustainability-driven.

### Beyond Education

Cognisant of the rapidly changing global trends, especially in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0), the varsity, said Prof Lee, is stepping up its efforts to develop talent with 21st century skillsets.

“Students do not only study their subjects of specialisation, but are also equipped with digital skills development. “We are also getting industry to be more involved in our campuses. Having their presence will give students the kind of exposure they will never get just by attending classes. “This is what we call the Beyond Education philosophy. For us, talent is developed not just through professional training or academics, but also through learning beyond the classroom and formal curriculum.

“We are talking about creating an ecosystem in our campuses in such a way that our students will be able to develop their skillsets and character,” he stressed. Student and SME centres to synergise entrepreneurship and innovation In order to create a future-proof ecosystem for students, Prof Lee said the varsity – with five branch campuses in Penang, Perak, Pahang, Johor and Sabah – will optimise its operations, which includes developing its infrastructure. “In the next few years, we are going to develop our campuses, especially the KL campus. We have started the construction of our student centre, which is going to be the iconic building of TAR UMT. It will be ready in 2024,” he shared. Dedicated towards enriching students’ multi-dimensional learning, the seven-storey student centre will house facilities such as multi-purpose function rooms, a rooftop football field, computer labs, industrial partners rooms and an exhibition hall, among others.

The building, which spans more than a million square feet, will also house a small and medium enterprise (SME) centre to encourage students to be more involved in industry. The SME centre, Prof Lee said, will be the first of its kind in a university campus in Malaysia, and will serve as a one-stop centre for academia-industry collaboration, especially with local and overseas SMEs, to help them not just in talent recruitment, but also in addressing industry problems.



TARC Education Foundation board of trustees member Tan Sri Lau Yin Pin, who was also present at the media briefing, added, “We are actually running at operational loss, which means after deducting the direct costs from the fees we collect, we are running at a loss. “But due to prudent management over the years, we have accumulated some money which is sufficient to fund the construction of the RM200mil student centre. However, that does not mean we do not need to raise funds. In the next 10 or maybe 30 to 50 years, we would need around RM1.5bil for building physical development and infrastructure. So we still need the continued support of the community.”

#### Asean-focused internationalisation

The varsity, said Prof Lee, is expanding its reach abroad, especially in Asean. “We see there is big potential for South-East Asia, with its over 600 million population. Malaysia has a relatively small population at just over 30 million so there is a lot of room for us to reach out to a bigger community in the region,” he said. The varsity’s internationalisation efforts, he added, are aimed at giving local students more exposure to diversity in their student community, which will enable them to enrich their learning experience through interaction with students from different nationalities and ethnic groups. The varsity, Prof Lee added, has set up a number of partnerships with local and overseas institutions of higher learning through its dual award and other collaborative programmes. It is also looking into franchising its programmes to foreign institutions.

“We are currently discussing it with some partners overseas, and offering programmes we are well-known for such as our technical, business and accounting programmes,” he said.

These efforts, in addition to the facilities provided in the SME centre, will encourage international mobility through student and staff exchanges, co-teaching, joint research and close collaboration with local and regional SMEs, he added.

#### Financial aid and community support

With the varsity's lifelong mission to provide affordable quality education to all Malaysians, Prof Lee said the TAR UC Student Loan Fund has been helping students finance their cost of living and studies for over 40 years.

"We started this student loan in 1979 and since then, we have distributed about RM53mil which benefited 15,000 students," he said, adding that the loan is interest-free. The varsity, he said, foresees that the demand for financial assistance will still be high in the next two years.

"We are monitoring the situation. During the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a surge in applications by about 200%. "In 2020, our board of trustees, knowing we were short of funds, pumped in RM20mil due to the urgency of the situation, enabling us to loan out over RM6mil to 700 students," he shared. For the successful implementation of the 10-year roadmap, Prof Lee urged the community and alumni to extend support in three key areas – financially, and in talent, as well as infrastructure development.

#### Strong alumni backing

Lauding the institution's forward-thinking plans, TAR UC alumnus Datuk Spencer Tan pledged his support to see the roadmap come to fruition. "We fully support the 10-year plan by our alma mater to ensure younger generations can enjoy quality affordable education at TAR UMT." Federation of TAR College Alumni Associations Malaysia deputy president Adrian Yeo said the alumni are ready to provide their full support. "As the alumni body, we are ready to help our alma mater and play an active role in this ambitious plan," said Yeo. TARCian Alumni Association president Bobby Tan said its members are fully behind the roadmap and would "ensure its success so that all young Malaysians will benefit from TAR UMT's education".

