

Raising students' technopreneurial skills at UTP



BRANDED

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"My stint in those programmes gave me the advantage of training students to further develop their entrepreneurial mindset," said Zamri (left).

GROWING up in a family of entrepreneurs, Zamri Abdullah learnt to hone his skills in spotting a solid business opportunity and making the most of it.

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"I've developed my own training modules for this programme and also created seven more, called Kickstart, in my startup module," said Universiti Teknologi Petronas (UTP)'s Technopreneurship Office manager Zamri.

Having trained some 2,300 students, he describes technopreneurship as a branch of entrepreneurship combining technology and entrepreneurship, using the former in its solutions.

Clocking in 42 weeks of coaching and mentoring under the technopreneurship umbrella this year alone, Zamri aspires to produce technopreneurs who are socially innovative, put people first and always lead with empathy and demand.

Some important skills students would develop, he shared, include problem-solving, creative and innovative thinking, communication, persuasion and negotiation, leadership and lastly, grit.

"(We) produce graduates with a high entrepreneurial mindset, achieved by three objectives through strengthening a holistic and integrated ecosystem on campus, increasing the number of graduates with high competencies and by making entrepreneurship a viable career option.

"These goals are in alignment with the five objectives in the National Entrepreneurship Policy 2030," he added.

Conducting 58 programmes - mostly virtual since the start of the movement control order (MCO) - the programme is structured under the student development 4E framework, which is to explore, equip, engage and excel.

A job search platform, SolviePro is among the memorable success stories born from UTP's Technopreneurship Office.

The Perak team first approached Zamri with the hopes of starting a business to solve the lack of work opportunities amongst the youth in their village, Manjung, Perak by connecting work seekers and employers.

"We are proud of their achievements, especially being able to turn the RM2,000 funding -- the first cohort under the programme's Microbiz fund -- into RM2 million," he said.

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Mentored by Zamri, Tang runs his own business, JL Photography.

Initially providing only 20 jobs through the platform, Zamri pointed out, the SolviePro application - allows employers to rate job seekers - now has 4,700 registered users.

Zamri also mentored Tang John Loong, who runs his own business, JL Photography.

Describing the technopreneurship programme as fun and challenging, 24-year-old Tang remembers Zamri giving a talk on this hands-on department during one of his classes, which prompted him to reach out for mentorship.

Tang's big break began when the Technopreneurship Office, recognised his skills in photography and set up his debut gallery show titled The Couplet Dress: Reimagining Chinese Calligraphy at the 2018 Startup Expo.

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“We launched a series of portraits – The Couplet Dress – in conjunction with Chinese New Year, shared it on social media and approached a local newspaper. Following this, more people became aware of my work and since then, this has become one of my annual photography projects.”

Sharing the same sentiments as Zamri on coaching students to hone their entrepreneurial skills, UTP Deputy Vice Chancellor Student Affairs Prof Dr Nor Hisham Hamid said: “An entrepreneurial mindset does not mean a person would necessarily become an entrepreneur but rather enables them to understand and contribute to the sustainability of an organisation.”

“In UTP, Student Development programmes are structured where every student will undergo three developmental phases: Personal Development, Interpersonal Development and Societal Development.



“An entrepreneurial mindset does not mean a person would necessarily become an entrepreneur but rather enables them to understand and contribute to the sustainability of an organisation,” said Prof Dr Nor Hisham Hamid.

“In the Personal Development phase, we provide opportunities for students to explore, identify, develop and expand their strengths, skills and talents, and assist them to close gaps, all in their own space and pace,” he added.

UTP, he said, is on a mission to produce well-rounded global graduates (WRGG) who not only achieve

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synthesis ability while UTP core values are collegiality, accountability, adaptability, integrity and respect.

“To achieve high business acumen attributes, we provide every student with the opportunities to be involved in a structured entrepreneurship programme and activities,” he said, adding that focus is placed on technology and science.

To date, UTP’s Technopreneurship Office has produced 165 student entrepreneurs and developed 95 startups with total revenue generated amounting to RM12.6mil since its establishment in 2016.

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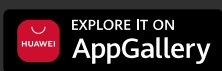
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