GEMAS: The Malaysian Centre for Tourism and Hospitality Education (MyCenTHE) recently led a corporate social responsibility initiative to raise greater awareness on education and career opportunities in the local hospitality and tourism industry among secondary school students. Held in Dewan Tan Sri Dr Mohd Yusof Noor (Negeri Sembilan) on Aug 21, 2013, the campaign was a joint effort between MyCenTHE’s member institutions to help deserving secondary school students who are keen to pursue a tertiary education relevant to the industry by offering scholarships.

Notably, Bishrel’s stunning collection is proof that she is no longer a fresh faced novice in fashion design. Her two course mates, Sepideh Zandieh and Hannah Wanjuhi Wahmamu, have designed unique collections as well, inspired by Wabi-sabi - a comprehensive Japanese view on the acceptance of imperfections - and Maasai ethnic wear, respectively.

KUALA LUMPUR: The recent UCSI University (UCSI) Graduation Fashion Show 2013 - themed, ‘Ec-lectic’ - was an evening filled with exciting fashion shows and lively musical performances. Models paraded the collections of UCSI’s graduating and junior fashion students - in addition to a casual denim collection by an event sponsor, Nusantara Denims - in the 117-year-old National Textiles Museum.

But among the many highlights, the -Dark Victorian- collection - designed by Mongolian student Bishrel Byambajav - stole the limelight. Swathed in hues of gold and polished mahogany, the collection took a modern take on the Victorian era and swept all three awards - namely, the Most Liked Facebook Entry, Best Fashion Design Student Award and Best Fashion Design Collection Award - at the show.

Ecstatic about her multiple wins, Bishrel explains her design aesthetic: “It leans towards rock and gothic styles but I also wanted to incorporate Victorian elements like layered ruffles as well. This unique twist suits my personality as I am not keen on girlish designs.”

She further credits the lecturers at UCSI’s De Institute of Creative Arts and Design (ICAD) for their support throughout the programme, grateful that she has gained much technical knowledge and life skills at the University. “During my first year at UCSI, I did not know how to go about garment construction at all but we were encouraged to participate in a fashion competition in the same year and from there, I learned a lot,” she adds.

As such, he adds, it is important to establish a strong relationship between the industry and academia to ensure students are kept abreast of the latest trends and happenings.

The event was attended by more than 120 guests, including prominent industry leaders and academics - such as deputy director-general of the National Textile Museum Mr Wan Jamaluddin bin Wan Yusof, UCSI Group founder and chairman Dato’ Peter Ng and UCSI deputy vice-chancellor (Academic Affairs and Research) Prof Dr Teoh Kok Soo.

MYCENTHE PLEDGES SCHOLARSHIPS TO HELP DESERVING STUDENTS

Notably, this campaign is part of MyCenTHE’s efforts to reshape the tourism and hospitality industry through education in Entry Point Project 10 (EPP10). It is anticipated that this campaign will see approximately 500,000 trained tourism and hospitality specialists in the long run.

Among those who were present at the event include prominent industry leaders – such as FELDA chairman Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad and MyCenTHE owner Yg Bhg Dato’ Peter Ng, among others. Approximately 300 secondary school students from five schools and their teachers were in attendance. There was also an exclusive cupcake demonstration by Chef Loke Hoi Weng of UCSI University.

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There is great demand for skilled personnel in this multi-billion dollar industry, and Dato’ Peter Ng commented that MyCenTHE shows great promise to generate a quality workforce for this industry. “MyCenTHE members are actively pioneering the work-based learning pedagogy for hospitality and tourism-related programmes,” he said. “We are very privileged to have such prominent industry leaders and academics work together to lead this national initiative.”

MyCenTHE’s unique work-based learning curriculum has attracted key industry players like Pullman Hotel and Shangri-La Tanjung Aru Resort, among others. This university-industry partnership has created a solid cornerstone for MyCenTHE clusters that are keen to see students excel within multiple fields and industries, domestically and on the global front.
UCSI Professional Academy (UPA) offers the prestigious ACCA qualification programme for both school leavers and working individuals.

For school leavers embarking on the ACCA programme of study, a solid foundation programme – tailor-made and designed by ACCA United Kingdom – is the Certified Accounting Technician (CAT) programme. This is a course that sets aspiring ACCA graduates on the right path towards earning a prestigious accounting qualification. As the first stepping stone, learners in the CAT programme will be introduced to the basics of accounting principles, taxation, audit, management accounting and finance.

With a CAT qualification in hand, the learner can choose to enrol into the ACCA programme or gain employment as a junior accountant. CAT is equivalent in standard to a first-year degree programme. It is also a fast-track route to qualify for the ACCA programme and is more focused on the discipline as compared to Foundation Studies or A – Levels.

SPM (or ‘O’ Level) leavers should consider this programme to gain insight into the world of accounting and finance, as it equips learners with the fundamental basics before they embark on the ACCA programme. The UCSI Professional Academy encourages learners to thrive in an environment that is conducive for learning. Here, learners are taught by experienced and qualified lecturers; lecturers who are committed to provide learners with the right mindset and knowledge to excel in the exams. The dedication of lecturers here is evidenced by the track record of the students.

It is also worthy to note that helpful administrative staff and student counsellors are also available to assist learners with their choice of classes, facilities and schedule management. UPA was recognised as a Gold Status Approved Learning Partner by ACCA and is a registered computer-based learning centre with ACCA. CAT is focused on professional learning that exposes learners to real-life challenges and equips them with the ability to take on the challenges of the ACCA programme as well. This is a key factor in keeping the lessons taught in classrooms relevant to the accounting and auditing industries in Malaysia. Most foundation programmes, otherwise, are textbook-focused, thereby denying learners exposure to the real world.

The CAT course takes approximately one year to complete. Students who complete the course would be awarded a certificate, which then qualifies them for employment in the accounting and finance industry. Students who complete one year of relevant training in the accounting and finance industry and achieve the Practical Experience requirement will be recognised as a Certified Accounting Technician.

With a CAT qualification, learners can be eligible for exemption from the Knowledge module (that consists of three papers at the Fundamental level) of the ACCA qualification and thereby shortens the study time for the ACCA qualification.

There are nine papers in total that a learner needs to complete. Exams are paper-based and computer-based. A student of the CAT programme at UCSI Professional Academy, How Wee Lee, says, “I enjoy the class, especially exchanging ideas with my friends. I appreciate the professional help provided by my lecturers and administrative staff who are always there to support my academic needs.”

The Academy’s pillar of strength – to deliver quality programmes – is a strong teaching faculty. Marie Xavier, one of the Academy’s CAT programme lecturers, says: “As an ACCA graduate myself, we are required to constantly keep abreast of the latest developments in the accounting profession so that we can impart that to our students.”

“The Academy incorporates guest speakers from ACCA and accounting firms. This way, students get a feel of the ‘real’ world.”

KUALA LUMPUR: UCSI University (UCSI) recently presented three students from Methodist Boys’ Secondary School Kuala Lumpur (MBSSKL) with a cheque worth RM1,000 - the result of winning the recent Science and Mathematics Quiz organised by UCSI University’s (UCSI) Centre for Pre-U Studies.

Held on July 20 this year, the quiz aimed to foster greater interest in Science and Technology (ST) among secondary school students, in line with govern-
UCSI BREAKS NEW GROUND IN REAL ESTATE EDUCATION

The real estate landscape in Malaysia is set for a boost with the recent Memorandum of Understanding to jointly develop the UCSI-Hartamas Executive Development Programmes.

These programmes – the Executive Master and an Executive Diploma in Real Estate – will be developed by UCSI Extension and Hartamas Academy – the training arms of UCSI Group and Hartamas Real Estate Group. In addition to a paper qualification, these programmes prepare candidates for the Board of Valuers, Appraisers and Estate Agents Malaysia (BOVAEA)’s licensing exam.

In line with this development, below is a first-hand insight into the industry by Christopher Chan BA, CDipAF (ACCA, UK), MBA, CRS (christopherchan@hartamas.com).

Christopher was engaged as an adjunct lecturer from 2008-2009. He is currently a registered real estate agent and an Associate Director with Hartamas Real Estate (M) Sdn Bhd, one of the most respected property groups in Malaysia.

Why a career in real estate?

The simple answer is, the real estate business has one of the cheapest start-up costs and there's no limit to how much income you can earn. Experienced sales personnel often say – 'the sky is the limit'.

Based on my experience, a sizeable number of the real estate sales personnel in my organisation earn between RM 160,000 to over a million ringgit per year. The best of all is that there's no retirement age!

For those who prefer the flexibility of managing your own working hours, this is also the ideal industry. You are free from the traditional stranglehold of office hours and your success depends on your personal ability and your dedication.

Finally, there's a high demand for registered real estate agents in Malaysia. We have one of the lowest numbers compared to other professionals. To date there are approximately only 2,300 registered real estate agents in the country as compared to 15,193 lawyers, 28,500 accountants and 32,979 doctors. Against a backdrop of a population of about 30 million, we have a chronic short supply of registered real estate agents.

In fact, many non-real estate professionals are now joining the real estate profession.

What kind of personality do I need to succeed in real estate?

Well, I have found that the real estate profession is suitable for those who possess the following characteristics:

• Hard -working: if you are hard-working then you will have a head start.

• Focused: you will be successful if you focus on certain properties in a particular area. You would not want to be a 'jack of all trades but a master of none'.

• An extrovert and a 'people person': you must naturally want to meet people as properties are owned and bought by human beings and the only way to do business is to get to know them.

If you want to start your career in real estate, you can begin right away by being a negotiator in a licensed real estate firm. Currently, being a negotiator does not require any qualifying examinations. A ‘negotiator’ is defined as a person or salesperson who assists the estate agent in the practice of estate agency and who works under his direction and supervision. If you intend to be a licensed real estate agent, then you would need to undertake some examinations and to also meet the other criteria as set by BOVAEA.

It is crucial that you join a reputable licensed real estate firm. A tip would be to look out for firms which are award winners such as a firm with an award from the Malaysian Institute of Property Agents Malaysia (MIEA).

UCSI BREAKS NEW GROUND IN REAL ESTATE EDUCATION

KUALA LUMPUR: More than 60 Architecture students from UCSI University’s School of Architecture and Built Environment (SABE) banded together to participate in various categories in the recent 25th PAM Architectural Students Workshop, bagging seven prizes as the reward for their efforts.

Designing LED-illuminated dance suits and constructing a unique wood-based structure, among other works, the students made a formidable team, edging out tough competitors from local universities - as well as foreign universities from Korea, Indonesia and Brunei.

Notably, the young talents won in three categories, namely, Performance Art, Installation and Ideas. For the first two categories, UCSI was given the theme 'Visible and Invisible'.

The 'Performance Art' category saw the students choreographing a unique 'Michael Jackson meets PSY' dance that drew an overwhelming response from the crowd and won them the 1st place, Best Performance and Best Costume awards. This success was further complemented by more wins, as the students made a clean sweep of the top three awards in the 'Ideas' category with their impressive artwork.

Chalking off another win to their achievements, the team also won 2nd place in the 'Installation' category with their structure. In this category, they were required to design a living capsule and a 1:10 scale model - built within a week - as well as architectural drawings that were creatively communicated on boards. These were accompanied by floor plans, perspectives and detailed design explanations.

"We spent 20 hours a day - five days a week - in the workshop. Some of us were permanent (fixtures) there," grins Architecture and Interior Student Association president Ashkan Shirazzideh Moghaddam, while explaining that it took them approximately two weeks to come up with the idea and design. "It was challenging to build the structure on such a large scale, the biggest among all other university entries. It is easier to work with a model because you only need glue to stick the pieces together."

Highlighting that the entire structure symbolised society as a whole, Ashkan adds: "The hollow wood panels - covered by wire mesh - symbolises the poor and the needy - while the other panels are solid wood that represent how our lives are 'full'," he explains.

Such innovative pieces successfully illustrate that the School has nurtured its students to become problem solvers who strive for the best - a sentiment shared by UCSI Group founder and chairman Dato’ Peter Ng. "I can see that this project draws all of you together as a unit and (the win) must have been a highlight - a definitive moment - for the School," says Dato’ Peter. "It is an amazing feat. This is our biggest win (since 2006) and it is a fantastic show of winning spirit.”
Imagine the expressions on the faces of teenagers when they were told of a life without mobile phones, internet, cars, food and, practically, everything fun, utility & luxury. This was what the UCSI University team, comprising Ir. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jimmy Mok Vee Hoong, Dean Engineering Department, and Mr. Umar Razzaq, Assistant Manager International Team, witnessed during their 10 days visit to Mauritius this month. During the seminars, the rooms were filled with expressions of awe, concern, horror, excitement and assurance at the same time when they were informed that a world without engineers is not a world anyone would want to live in.

The tour to Mauritius was a part of UCSI University’s Engineering Faculty’s efforts to educate students and professionals of the objectives, challenges and promises the world poses to engineers of today. Themed “A World Without Engineers”, during the tour, the team visited 3 schools and 2 universities during the educational tour, meeting O Levels, A Levels and Engineering students from up to 4th year, sharing the concept at different levels according to students’ comprehension. Dr. Jimmy’s lively and involving method of delivery, combined with Mr. Umar’s comprehensive support, made the workshops an enjoyable and memorable experience for the participants. At the end of every workshop, one could see the excitement on the faces of aspiring-to-be-engineers, knowing they will be the ones making it all happen for their peers and others around the world.

Dr. Jimmy, in his talks, explained the important and crucial role Engineering industry and Engineers play in developments these days. He emphasized the need to understand that, like all aspects, Engineering has been and will be used for both development and destruction but as a generation that vows to bring peace and progress to the world, we must choose to utilize our engineering skills and expertise to make the world a safer, healthier and luxurious place for all. He delivered his talks with the aid of movies and slides that showed a concept of a world without any development and another that was marvel of Engineering. The difference made it an easy decision for many to be engineers and be part of that world.

The team visited the following schools and universities during the education tour.
1. Emmanuel Anquetil State Secondary School
2. Northfields International School
3. Le Bocage International School
4. JSS Academy
5. JR School

As another effort under the same title, the Engineering Faculty at UCSI University visited Myanmar to share the imagination of a world without Engineers with the high school students. This time Ir. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jimmy Mok Vee Hoong, Dean Engineering Department, accompanied by Mr. Sean Calvin, Assistant Manager South East Asia, ventured into the beautiful cities of Yangon & Mandalay in Myanmar. The events, themed “A World Without Engineers”, drew huge number of attendants who were eager to know what the world would look like if there were no engineers to maintain it the way it appears to them today.

The workshops in both cities were designed to educate the high school students what opportunities and challenges lie ahead for them as engineers and what must be done to ensure a smooth career progression. Dr. Jimmy’s friendly personality, aided by Mr. Sean’s professional assistance, created an environment where the students soon made friends with two seniors and were sharing ideas, discussing queries and promising projects the day they became engineers. Dr. Jimmy encouraged them to participate in few tasks that were designed to enhance the importance of simple physics in daily lives and its implication in engineering industry for mega-projects. The fun-filled and practical methods of delivery by Dr. Jimmy made students participate actively. It was amazing to see how students were able to grasp these concepts and develop few of their own through these activities.

The students had a lot of queries and the UCSI University team did a great job at answering those. It was ensured that the students realize what important role engineers play in daily lives of everyone these days. They were informed that an engineer in one part of the world can influence the quality of lives of millions in another part of the world. Dr. Jimmy took the opportunity to emphasize that engineers must know they owe a duty to develop lives of the individuals, in a positive and constructive method.