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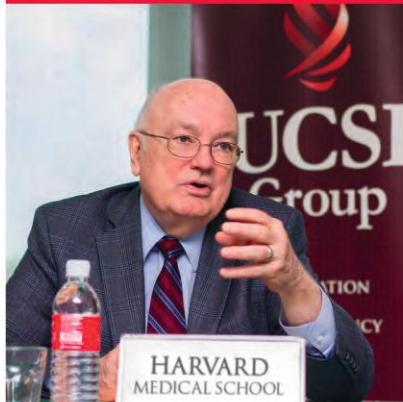
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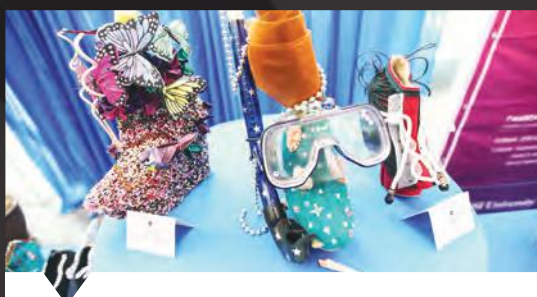
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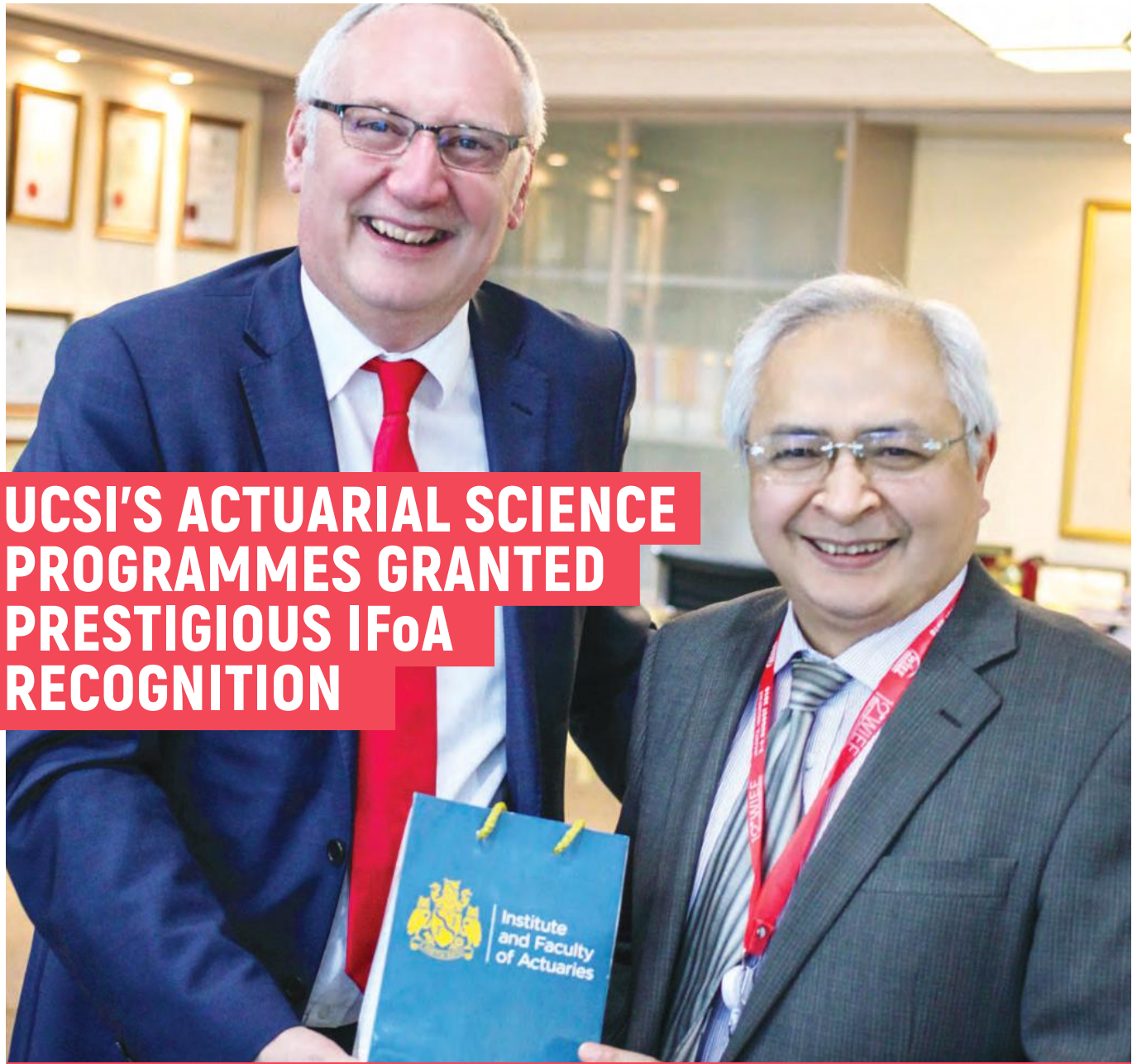
Write Right: Insights from some
of Malaysia's most experienced
authors and journalists

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UCSI'S ACTUARIAL SCIENCE PROGRAMMES GRANTED PRESTIGIOUS IFoA RECOGNITION

UCSI University (UCSI) has become the first and only private university in Malaysia to be recognised by the Institute and Faculty of Actuaries (IFoA), joining the ranks of an elite group of universities like Oxford, Imperial College London, LSE and Warwick.

Students who are pursuing UCSI's Actuarial Science programmes will now be granted module exemption for IFoA's Fellowship and Certified Actuarial Analyst exams.

"This is indeed a notable achievement and I wish to thank our actuarial science department for facilitating this achievement," said Professor Dr Ooi Keng Boon, Dean of the Faculty of Business and Information Science. "This would not have been possible without their efforts."

IFoA is UK's only chartered professional body dedicated to educating, developing and

regulating actuaries based both in the UK and internationally. They represent over 28,000 members worldwide in driving innovation and research in the field.

With this recognition, students who have completed their Mathematics in Interest Rates course — taken in year one of their BSc (Hons) Actuarial Science or BSc (Hons) Actuarial Science and Finance programme at UCSI — with a B minimum will be exempted from IFoA's first Core Technical module on Financial Mathematics, also known as CT1.

In total, there are nine Core Technical modules. Aspiring students seeking the Associate status from IFoA will need to complete them all with an additional three Core Application modules to qualify.

"Moving forward, we are looking to obtain more exemptions, especially for the CT3 and

CT8 modules," shared Associate Professor Dr Ngerng Miang Hong, senior academic at the faculty's Actuarial Science and Applied Statistics department, who worked closely with his fellow lecturer Mr Lai Wan Fei on this endeavour. "We hope to eventually gain a block exemption, covering CT1 to CT8."

IFoA's CT1 also leads to an exemption for the Society of Actuaries (SoA)'s Exam FM in Financial Mathematics due to an agreement between the two professional bodies.

UCSI was also the first private university in Malaysia to be approved by SoA, a leading global professional organisation for actuaries. Students have been known to pass all five professional papers even before their third year of undergraduate study — remarkable achievements that have cemented a sterling track record for the faculty.



UCSI RECEIVES MODULE EXEMPTION FOR THE RENOWNED CFP CERTIFICATION



UCSI University (UCSI) has gained module exemption for the Certified Financial Planner (CFP) certification programme, a qualification recognised as the gold standard in personal financial planning around the world.

Students reading UCSI's Bachelor of Financial Economic (Hons) and Bachelor of Science (Hons) Finance and Investment will be exempted from Module 2 of the Certified Financial Planner (CFP) certification programme when they pass their Risk Management course — usually taken in year three of their study — with a minimum grade B.

Additionally, Finance and Investment students who pass Personal Wealth Management — a year-two course — will only be required to attend a 20-hour workshop on Tax Planning instead of the original 60 hours they must undergo before being eligible to register for the Module 1 exam.

Administered by the Financial Planning Association of Malaysia (FPAM), aspiring students at UCSI will only need to complete the remaining three modules before attaining the certification.

In Malaysia, the CFP qualification is recognised by the Securities Commission and Bank Negara Malaysia, enabling certified practitioners to stand out in the industry and to communicate their expertise and credibility to their clients.

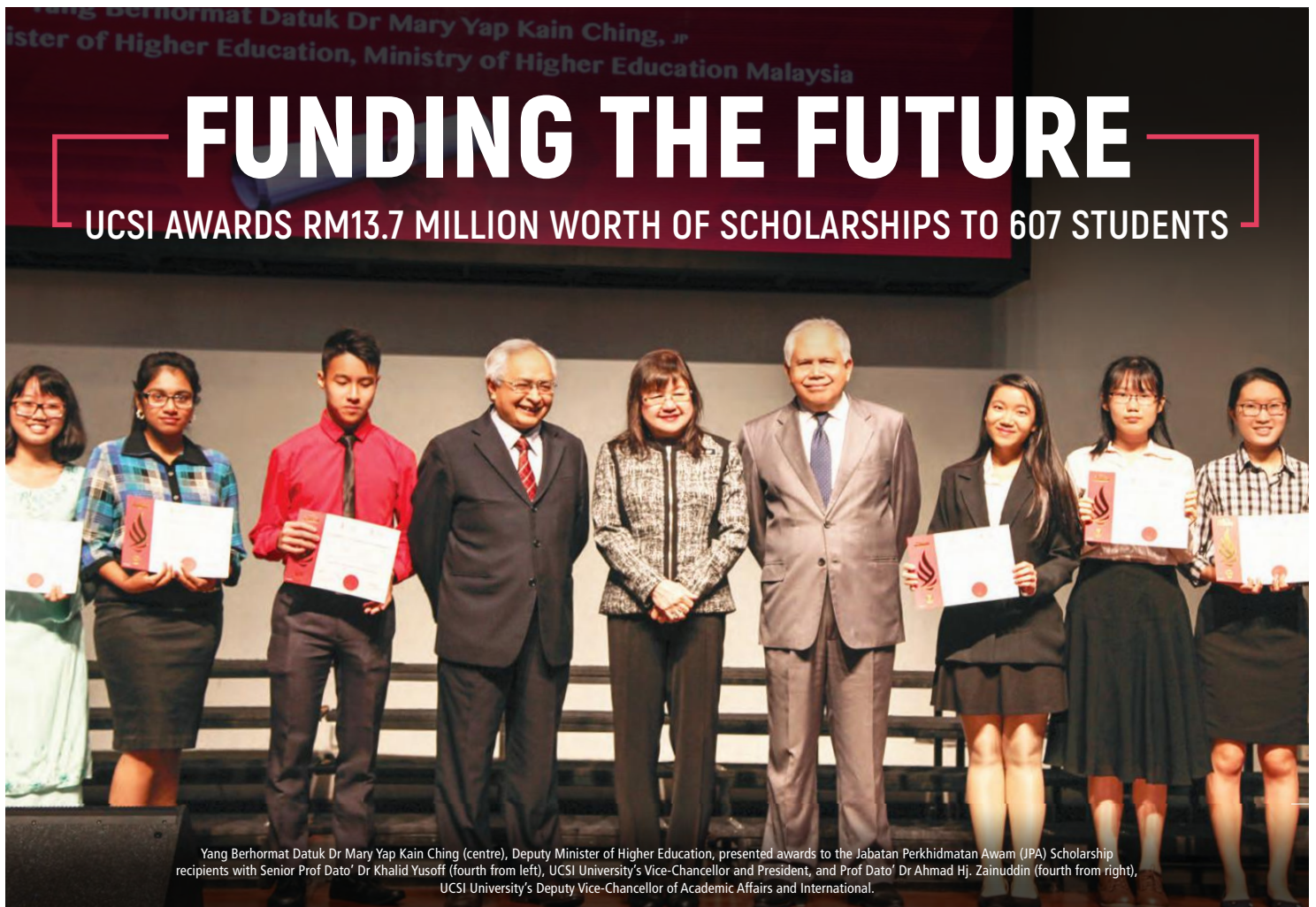
"Engaging a CFP is beneficial to ensure that one stays focused and on track in our financial plans," said Professor Dr Ooi Keng Boon, Dean of UCSI's Faculty of Business and Information Science. "An objective perspective is very important when making difficult decisions and finance is definitely one of them."

"Having this credential will tell clients that you adhere to the highest standard and give

them confidence in your ability to meet their expectations. I am glad that with this partnership with FPAM, we can provide our students with a competitive edge in this specialised career."

FPAM is an affiliate member of the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards based in the United States. It is the foremost professional body for financial planning in Malaysia with more than 8,000 members as well as 40 Charter and Corporate members, many of whom are among the most established financial institutions in their sector.

CFP is administered in 26 countries and territories with the number of CFP professionals standing at over 160,000 globally.



Yang Berhormat Datuk Dr Mary Yap Kain Ching (centre), Deputy Minister of Higher Education, presented awards to the Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (JPA) Scholarship recipients with Senior Prof Dato' Dr Khalid Yusoff (fourth from left), UCSI University's Vice-Chancellor and President, and Prof Dato' Dr Ahmad Hj. Zainuddin (fourth from right), UCSI University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs and International.

Tan Soh Lin's dream had always been to pursue her studies in the medical field but a recent family tragedy served to give her a personal purpose. Her mother's passing last year, having lost her battle with ovarian cancer, inspired Tan's decision to read the Bachelor of Pharmacy (Hons) at UCSI University (UCSI).

"I want to be a pharmacist so that I can learn how to dispense the right drugs to each patient," said the Batu Pahat native. "I also want to conduct research on new drugs so that untreatable diseases can be a thing of the past."

Tan was one of the 607 recipients at the UCSI University Trust Award and Scholarship Ceremony 2017 where over RM13.7 million worth of scholarships and bursaries were disbursed at the University's first award ceremony of the year.

UCSI has pledged RM30 million for the second consecutive year to UCSI University Trust, matching the original contribution made in honour of the University's 30th anniversary celebration last year. The remaining funds will be disbursed over the next three quarters of the year.

The joyous ceremony was graced by Guest of Honour Yang Berhormat Datuk Dr Mary Yap Kain Ching, Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia.

Commending UCSI for improving access to education, Datuk Yap said that not everyone has the same opportunities in life and financial support is crucial to help level the playing field for disadvantaged groups and to ensure that education is availed to every student regardless of their family's income level or background.

"It is heartening to find that UCSI has invested RM30 million this year to award all these students from various disciplines," she said. "This is really something that I hope other private universities will emulate."

Datuk Yap also spoke of the importance of educating well-rounded graduates who, apart from excelling academically, must also master outstanding values, mannerisms, ethics and entrepreneurship.

"UCSI is definitely actualising a lot of what is in the Blueprint in terms of producing balanced graduates," she said. "This is a

positive indication that the quality of education is getting better and better. Today's scholarship recipients must be grateful and take full advantage of this opportunity to develop themselves."

This year, the Ministry of Higher Education will ramp up its efforts to redesign the higher education landscape by pushing more initiatives to improve graduate employability such as work-based learning. "We cannot go this journey alone, we must involve the industry so that students can equip themselves with the competencies required by today's industries," said Datuk Yap.

UCSI was the first university in Asia to facilitate industry placements for students each year. It runs what is virtually Malaysia's largest university-industry network with over 4,000 industry partners including world's best companies like Accenture, Deloitte, DHL, KPMG, Leo Burnett, Nestlé, Petronas, PWC and Sony Malaysia, among others.

Dato' Dr Hj Mohd Karim bin Hj. Abdullah Omar, Chairman of UCSI University Trust, revised a quote from Nelson Mandela in his speech. "Educated youth is the most powerful weapon that can change the



world," he said, "and this is what drives the Trust — the belief that we have a role to play in equipping youths with the knowledge they need to fulfil their potential and make a difference in the world."

The ceremony saw the presentation of the UCSI University Trust's Prestige Scholarship Award which recognises the crème de la crème of the scholarship recipients, and the UCSI University Trust Scholarship Principal's Award which is purposed to be an avenue for schools to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of its students as they move on to tertiary education.

Students were also awarded scholarships for each level — pre-university (including A-Level), diploma, degree and postgraduate study — and a sports bursary for state and national athletes.

These scholarships bursaries were awarded to deserving students irrespective of race, nationality, religion and creed to pursue their higher education at UCSI University. The recipients were selected based on outstanding academic achievements, athletic talent, strong leadership or financial need.

To date, UCSI has awarded more than RM120 million in financial aid and scholarships to over 4,000 students.

Also in attendance at the ceremony were Dato' Peter Ng, UCSI Group Founder and CEO; Senator Dato' Sri Khairudin Samad, Advisor to UCSI Group; Tan Sri Dato' Seri Dr Musa Mohamad, Chairman of UCSI Group; Senior Professor Dato' Dr Khalid Yusoff, Vice-Chancellor and President of UCSI University; members of the UCSI University Senate and Management Board; faculty deans; as well as parents and family members of the recipients.

UCSI University awarded 607 students with scholarships and bursaries amounting to RM13.7 million in the year's first award ceremony. Having pledged RM30 million in funds to be disbursed in 2017, UCSI will continue to provide financial aid to deserving students over the next three quarters.

Tan 'Soh Lin (left) receiving her scholarship from Dato' Dr Hj Mohd Karim bin Hj. Abdullah Omar, Chairman of UCSI University Trust at the UCSI University Trust Award and Scholarship Ceremony 2017.



Chairperson of Sri UCSI School Datin Lily Ng (left) accompanied by CEO of Yayasan Budi Penyayang Malaysia YABhg Dato' Leela Mohd Ali and event organiser Lucas Lim posing for a photo with an award recipient.

UCSI CELEBRATES 106TH INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY WITH 106 DECORATED HEELS

UCSI Group celebrated the 106th International Women's Day with 'Shoe for Art', an art showcase and fundraising campaign where 106 women were invited to create their most artistic and inventive designs using ankle boots sponsored by Rhea Benson as their canvas.

The participants all come from UCSI and they include students, professors, staff, and even members of the senior management team. Asked to share their stories, express their ambitions or give voice to their opinions, the participants were given creative freedom in the design of their individual heels.

"The primary aim of this event is to honour and recognise women for their strength and resilience," said organiser Lucas Lim and lecturer from UCSI University's (UCSI) De Institute of Creative Arts and Design (ICAD). "At the same time, it is to embrace

creativity and support arts education."

The top 16 designs received the Designer Choice Appreciation Award from sponsors Rhea Benson and Ellgen. Winners were presented with prizes and mock cheques from Datin Lily Ng, Chairperson of Sri UCSI School.

All 106 heels were displayed at the University until the end of March, before being transferred to KL City Gallery in April to be showcased.

Ng spoke on gender equality at the launching ceremony. "Just 100 years ago, women lacked the rights to vote, the rights to work and at times, the rights to pursue an education," she said. "Great progress has been made but let us be cognisant that much more needs to be done."

"For every Marissa Mayer or Sheryl Sandberg success story, we find hundreds of negative accounts from talented women who have been overlooked. Only 14% of all top execs around the world are women. And in certain countries, women are still being treated like second-class citizens or worse."

"At UCSI, we are doing our part to raise awareness by making International Women's Day a campus-wide event. We champion issues. And more importantly, we do our best to chip in."

The heels will be available for silent auction with all proceeds going to the Sin Chew Hope Reading Fund in support of education and reading, and Yayasan Budi Penyayang Malaysia — a foundation that is active in education, volunteerism, health, cultural preservation and skills training.

"I am delighted that UCSI has come up with such a creative way to celebrate women and girls," said Yang Amat Bahagia Dato' Leela Mohd Ali, CEO of Yayasan Budi Penyayang Malaysia, who officiated the event. "The craftsmanship and imagination on display were truly wonderful."

"Women typically have mixed emotions about heels — they are uncomfortable to wear for long periods of time but they are widely considered to convey a polish of professionalism at work or beauty on a day out," she observed. "Nonetheless many, many women have gone forth in these heels to overcome, achieve and inspire."



106 women in UCSI submitted their most artistic and inventive designs using boots sponsored by Rhea Benson as their canvas in conjunction with International Women's Day.



This campaign stands as a fitting symbol of their journey."

Also in attendance were Rhea Tan, founder and designer of Rhea Benson Shoes; David Ng Chin Poh, CEO of Ellgen (M) Sdn Bhd; Adeline Lee, CEO (Operation) of Ellgen (M) Sdn Bhd; and Ng Bee Ting, CMO of Ellgen (M) Sdn Bhd.

The event concluded with a Women's Health Forum conducted by Dr Anantharaj Abraham.

#BEBOLDFORCHANGE



Participants includes students, academics and even members of the senior management team.



PREMIER CO-OP STUDENTS WALK AWAY FROM INTERNSHIP WITH FULL SCHOLARSHIPS

Four students from UCSI University's (UCSI) Faculty of Business and Information Science were recently sponsored full scholarships by Averis Sdn Bhd after impressing the company during their two-month internship.

Ann Marie Pang, Nicole Ng Swee Yin, Phuah Yin Mei and Tang Sing Sing were amongst the first few who were selected for UCSI's Premier Co-Operative programme — an initiative that seeks to provide students with a well-rounded blend of higher learning and real-world practice while allowing industry partners to identify their future human resource from among the best of UCSI's students.

The Premier Co-Op experience includes the Multidisciplinary Case-based Study which sees students and lecturers working together to provide solutions to current issues that their host company is facing.

At Averis, the four ladies — who are all pursuing their BA (Hons) in Accounting and Finance — were challenged to improve operation processes in the organisation. Under the guidance of academic advisors Radha K. Krishnan Nair, who heads UCSI's

accounting and finance programme, and Assistant Professor Dr Ho Wai Kee, they successfully pitched their solutions to the company's top management.

At the same time, they were also exposed to the daily accounting and finance tasks required and were heavily involved in event management.

"The Premier Co-Op was a very different experience from the other internships that I have completed," said Phuah. "I had to present a proposal to the management on how to improve the company's operations, so I had to work on my presentation skills.

"I also learned how to process invoices using the SAP system and to organise events. Most of the time, the ability to multi-task was very important so it was a lesson in managing my time effectively."

"I got to work with different levels of management and was able to learn the different perspectives on handling a situation and working with environmental constraints," added Pang. "My time at Averis enabled me to enhance my accounting

knowledge as well as to improve my communication and critical thinking skills."

Assistant Professor Ho spoke of how the Premier Co-Op programme is helping students gain valuable applied experience and build their network in professional fields that they are considering as career paths.

"Averis was a great resource in that regard as they were diligent in facilitating an experiential learning experience for our interns," she said. "They created opportunities for them to not only gain operational skills but also the professional connections that are relevant to this industry."

Founded in 2006 to provide a set of common services to the Royal Golden Eagle (RGE) Group of Companies, Averis supports a growing business that is worth USD 15b in assets with a 50,000-strong combined workforce. It has always been a strong proponent of championing young talents.

"We strongly believe in cultivating future leaders," said Lim Ser Yong, Service Delivery Lead for Averis. "With our vast areas of

coverage, there is no better nurturing ground for growing professionals to hone their skills and knowledge, and to springboard themselves to a successful and rewarding career."

UCSI's Premier Co-Op is an enhanced version of UCSI's flagship Co-Operative Placement Programme which has the honour of being Malaysia's most extensive university-

industry network with more than 4,000 companies in partnership.

Each study year, UCSI students embark on a two-month internship to gain practical industrial experience and networking opportunities. This has translated into a track record of high graduate employability for UCSI — in fact among the highest in the country.

The Premier Co-Op was a very different experience from the other internships that I have completed

- PHUAH YIN MEI,
BA (HONS) IN ACCOUNTING AND FINANCE



Tang Sing Sing (left), Phuah Yin Mei (second from left), Nicole Ng Swee Yin (second from right), and Ann Marie Pang (left) pictured with their mentors at Averis, Vanitha Devi and Angie Ng (centre).



The students assisted the organising team to prepare games and brain teasers for the staff. Pictured here is Nicole Ng Swee Yin (centre) at the booth she helped to conceive.

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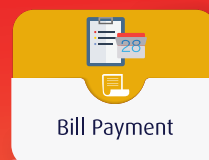
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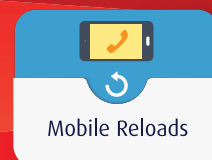
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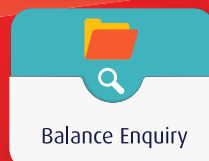
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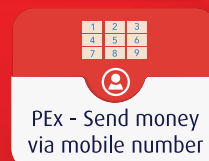
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COVER STORY

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No building is stronger than its foundation; that holds true for any kind of study and especially for music. Many believe that music is a gift that one is either born with or without, but musicianship requires more than just talent: it takes methodical training and practice. All musicians have studied under the instruction of their leading contemporaries — a rite of passage to hone one's skills and techniques.

As Malaysia's leading private music school, UCSI University's (UCSI) Institute of Music (IMus) has been consistently raising the bar when it comes to teaching standards. Its distinguished faculty includes internationally renowned and award-winning soloists, chamber, and orchestral musicians who work closely with their students. Compounded with a challenging curriculum and numerous opportunities to perform, students at UCSI enjoy a learning experience like no other.

Whether full-time, adjunct or artist-in-residence, the Faculty represent the highest standards in scholarship, performance and teaching. This promotes a culture of excellence that is continuously empowering students to launch careers in the music industry. Here are some of the musicians cum academicians that engage students in a learning environment that is equalled by very few in Malaysia.



Associate Professor Dr Goh Chia-Chien

Dr Goh has the distinction of being the youngest founding member of the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra (MPO), having passed the audition at a mere 21 years old. An award-winning violinist, he has studied under the instruction of Vartan Manoogian, Efim Boico and Dr Shinichi Suzuki — founder of the famed Suzuki method. He has performed on international stages, including Carnegie Hall, as a soloist as well as a concert master for several orchestras.

To Dr Goh, music like any stage craft is anchored in entertainment but it also serves as a platform for social commentary. “When horrible things happen in the world, that’s when people need us.”

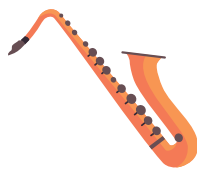
Recalling a piece composed for him by Jerry Hui that carried a dark social commentary on the clash between Western and Eastern cultures, he elaborated, “Music allows us to comment on issues that people cannot or do not wish to deal with in their daily lives. To be in a place where as a musician our role is to serve, made me see everything in life a lot differently. It changes your perspective.”

Dr Goh’s first major teaching venture came just a year after he joined MPO when he founded Kampung Strings, a critically successful string orchestra for young local musicians. Under his tutelage, most of the members went on to occupy principle positions in the MPO and to win international music competitions.

Dr Goh went on to accept several teaching stints at universities and music schools in the

US as well as in Malaysia, and many of his students charted successful careers in music. Notable mentions include first violin in the internationally acclaimed Sirius String Quartet, concert master for the Illinois Valley Symphony Orchestra, and finalist of the Grammy-nominated Turtle Island String Quartet’s auditions.

“No one learns the same way so I tailor my teaching approach to each student,” he said. “The environment here at UCSI is such that we are free to teach how we want to teach, and because of that freedom we are able to offer our students the very best.”



Julian Chan

Julian was around 13 years old when he was inspired by contemporary jazz artist Dave Koz to pick up the saxophone. He never looked back since. Having studied under a roster of jazz greats like Antonio Hart, Michael Mossman, and David Berkman in New York, he went on to enjoy a blossoming career as a performer and sessionist upon his return.

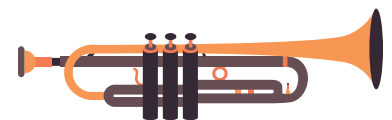
“The saxophone is special to me because I feel it is the extension of my own voice,” said Julian. “I also think it’s only as special as the person who plays the instrument so I try my best to be better at what I do.”

He has certainly achieved that. He has played in many countries including China, Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan; performed with James Morrison, Laura Fygi, the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra; toured with his band and with Taiwanese artistes like

Jonathan Lee, Jeff Chang and musical director Mac Chew; and recorded several instrumental albums, with the latest released just last year.

“The process of learning and living the music life has taught me that there is more to life than just the ambition to chase after material gains and nothing else,” said Julian. “Seeing how sharing music can have such a positive impact on the lives of others, and making people smile and go home happy from a good musical performance, are what drives us to be better as music practitioners.”

He advises his students to keep improving themselves and to be responsible musicians. “There is a quote by a great musician: If you take care of the music, the music will take care of you.”



Assistant Professor Justin Lim Fang Yee

This year marks the 10th since **Justin** joined the Faculty back in 2008. Currently the head of the contemporary music programme, he ensures that his students acquire the definitive hands-on experience in a myriad of aspects from pop to rock, blues to jazz.

One of the ways he does so is by promoting the importance of performance and community in the broadening of horizons. Affiliated with the Malaysian Jazz Piano Festival — the brainchild of legendary Malaysian pianist Michael Veerapen — since its inaugural launch in 2014, Justin has strongly encouraged students and staff alike to participate in the Festival’s clinics, live

performances and especially the jazz piano competition.

The Festival has grown to become one of the most important music festivals in Malaysia in terms of its impact on young musicians. It is known for its strong emphasis on imparting professional know-how to younger musicians as well as inspiring the seasoned professionals themselves as they come together to learn from each other in what has become a strong and thriving community.

"UCSI is always well represented in almost every way," said Justin. "This year, we saw a significant number of staff, students and alumni who were featured as performers at the Festival."

A seasoned pianist, Justin has worked with Malaysian Idol Jaclyn Victor, Indonesian pop artiste Kris Dayanti and Korean folk legend Kang SanEh in addition to performing in jazz festivals in Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia. He has also recorded with A.P.I, a fusion band led by Malaysian bassist Andy Peterson.

Teaching brings him a special kind of satisfaction. "One of the joys of teaching is to see my students transform from young, impressionable individuals to full-fledged professionals contributing to the society in their own way," he said. "For instance, some of our teaching staff were once my students and today, they in turn are educating and growing the next generation of music practitioners."



Tan Chee Shen

Chee Shen has been singing for as long as he can remember. What else he fondly remembers is being greatly inspired by Roger and Hammerstein's *The Sound of Music* as a kid, and his high school music teacher who did not charge him a single cent for vocal lessons because he believed in what Chee Shen could achieve.

Familiar with the influence of a good teacher, Chee Shen strives to be the best role model and mentor to his students. "I encourage

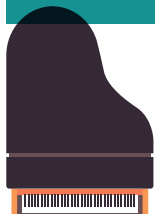
taking risks and making mistakes in my lessons for it is definitely more effective than not allowing yourself to make any," he said. "Each mistake made is potentially a great experience gained. Progress, not perfection, is my motto as an educator."

He recalled a student who had a beautiful voice but had difficulty coming out of her shell. He had to try many different approaches to help her find her voice before he finally succeeded. "Malaysian students tend to be more reserved and demure when it comes to emoting," said Chee Shen. "It is not always easy to put yourself out there and that is why I strive to create a safe environment where students can feel free to express themselves."

"There are few greater satisfactions than witnessing students make breakthroughs and watching them start to find a sense of belonging from doing what they do."

Chee Shen specialises in classical vocal which includes operas and art songs of various languages including Italian, German, French, English and a bit of Russian. He has sung many times under the baton of Maestro Joshua Greene, the assistant conductor of the world renowned Metropolitan Opera, with his very first on the stage of Carnegie Hall.

Recently, he is venturing into crossover genres. "As a musician, we have to have a strong set of principles but at the same time, we have to be open-minded and have the necessary elasticity to cope with various demands. Above all, be persistent and just keep doing what you love."



Carolyn Lo May Yeeng

The Institute has opened doors for some of the most prominent figures in the Malaysian music industry, and some have even returned to the faculty to assume teaching positions. This includes **Carolyn** who read her Bachelor's degree in music at UCSI before leaving to pursue her postgraduate studies in the US.

In 2015, she became the first and only Malaysian to be awarded the Fellowship diploma in Piano Performance (FRSM) from the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music (ABRSM) in London, achieving distinction on her first attempt — a very rare feat.

"UCSI is unique because it caters for each student's needs and provides every opportunity for an all-rounded learning experience," said Lo. "It is an honour for me to be a part of that very culture that had helped me realise my potential as a musician."

Like her peers, Lo believes that an educator needs to have a flexible teaching style so that each student is given the best guidance to develop their musical talents. She also practices the facilitated learning approach,

where her students are encouraged to take more control of their learning process.

"My goal as a teacher is to enhance my students' learning experience so that they will reach a greater understanding and appreciation for music," said Lo. "This includes addressing their strengths and weaknesses individually so that they may reach their personal musical goals."

Many of her students have gone on to achieve greatly. Some have auditioned and received scholarships into conservatories and universities like Birmingham Conservatoire, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, and Miami University. Some have competed and won prizes at the Malaysian Youth Music Festival and The Asia Piano Competition. And each year, she prepares a good number of students for their Trinity College of Music and ABRSM exams with some excelling with distinction.

She advised, "Music can only be shared and experienced in its entirety if we have passion. Being passionate is one of the many steps to be successful in whatever we do. When we play with passion, we will play it well."



The Music of Being Human

The Institute of Music's visiting professor makes a case for the democratisation of music, and speaks of his time at UCSI during his one-week visit at the end of March.

Professor Dr André de Quadros has spent a substantial amount of time in prison. Not as an inmate, but as a music educator for prison ministry programmes in Bangkok, Sweden, and the United States.

"There is a forgotten world out there," he said during his lecture at UCSI University's (UCSI) Institute of Music, referencing the disabled, dying, sick, homeless, elderly, poor, racial minorities, refugees and asylum seekers, and the incarcerated. "These are the people who are being excluded, who are undervalued, and whose music is not represented."

Citing Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that states that everyone has the right to freely participate in cultural life and to enjoy the benefit of the arts, he asked, "Are your rights extinguished if you are one of the forgotten?"

Professor de Quadros started his prison ministry back in 2006 and has since then developed with his colleagues an approach they call 'Empowering Song' — a teaching method rooted in improvised song, poetry, body work, and imagery.

"We are not allowed to bring any musical instruments into the prisons with us so we are working with the body," he said. "The focus becomes, how do we make music with access to nothing? But human beings are hardwired to create, it is in our DNA, so we just have to tap into that."

Sensitive to vanishing culture and traditions, the professor of music and chair at Boston University often seeks out music and songs

of the old that are on the verge of being forgotten. In them, he guides his students to breathe new life and to use them as inspiration to create new art.

Most of the inmates he had spent time with were musically illiterate but from resistant teenagers to the reserved elderly, Professor de Quadros had managed to coax them all into actively participating in the creative process.

"It may take a while for the brain and body to switch to music but it is all in the course of helping people experience music and love," he said. "What I want to leave them with is to think of themselves as musical beings and that they can make music."

One of his students was Greg, a 50-year-old man who was sentenced to life when he was a teenager. In 2012, Greg's case came up for resentencing and during his hearing he credited music for changing his life. Greg was released last year and since then, has accompanied Professor de Quadros to speak at presentations and to share his personal journey with music.

"Music has immense power," said Professor de Quadros. "It is reconnecting inmates to their self-worth, recovering in them a sense of humanity, and transforming their lives in ways that they have never imagined."

An ardent human rights and social change activist, Professor de Quadros believes that consensus music-making can bring people and cultures together. To that end, he has been at the forefront of efforts for music and social change. In 2008, during the Iraq

war, he co-created a choral festival in Jordan that brought together choirs from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria.

"I was terrified that we would not make it there and back alive but it turned out to be a great success," he said. "This experience made me realise how important it was for Arabs to be together and to make music together, especially in this time of conflict." The festival was such a success that it was repeated in 2012.

Last year, he helped to bring together equal groups of Arabs, Israelis, and Swedes — flying the Middle Easterners to Stockholm — to form an international project choir. Common Ground Voices gave its first performance in the presence of the King and Queen of Sweden and an invited audience.

Professor de Quadros does not think of himself as a man with a personal mission but rather, as a path. "I am always listening to what the locals want to do," he said. "I have ideas but I do not go with a plan because it is not about me, it is about what the people need and want. They are my partner and I am theirs."

Asked by a member of the audience if he had encountered any opposition in his work, he recalled how a prison administrator did not believe that learning music would be of any use to the inmates even as the programme was at that moment helping to broker peace between rival gang members.

"We live in a complex environment where not everyone believes in the value of the arts and that music makes sense only when there

is an economic rationalism behind it," he said. "The administrator did not think music was a life skill, she would rather have had us teach welding or plumbing."

He told a story of a team who built a dam high in the Bolivian mountains. After the construction was completed, the team leader realised that they had unspent funds and he offered it to the villagers. The team leader was taken aback when the village leader requested for musical instruments. He asked if they would rather have improvements like electricity, a sewer system, or telephone lines.

Continued Professor de Quadros, "The elder explained that everyone in their village plays an instrument: We would gather to make music before we talk about the problems that we face in our community and how to solve them. Our instruments are old and falling apart; without music, so will we."

During his week at UCSI, Professor de Quadros participated in a lively dialogue and conducted over 10 hours of coaching sessions for all four of UCSI's choirs — chamber, concert, mixed and junior. He came away speaking highly of the students he taught.

"UCSI has very fine students here," he said. "They are intelligent, responsive, and above all I find particularly terrific is that they are eager. I asked them to create or think about something in a particular way, and they gave me many ideas and thoughts while demonstrating particularly good skill levels. I was really impressed."

As someone who has been in this discipline for a better part of his life, Professor de Quadros is well aware that in this ever-changing society, music education is constantly shifting and evolving.

"The world of music, technology, the brain and the body, the relationship between music and society, the role of culture, how music is developed in schools and in communities — they are all changing so dramatically," he said. "Institutions must be responsive and UCSI is very much so."

"The teaching staff I have met here are very engaging and very committed to their mission, and Professor P'ng is a fine leader who really understands what needs to be done for a music institution. Everything that I've seen here has all the ingredients for long-term success."

With a concert scheduled for Professor de Quadros's last day at UCSI, Adjunct Professor Ian Lim Kean Seng had been preparing the chamber and concert choirs for the performance over the last semester. Before he took the stage with the students, Professor de Quadros spent some time with the choirs working on a couple of songs and guiding them to approach their musical

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Music has immense power. It is reconnecting inmates to their self-worth, recovering in them a sense of humanity, and transforming their lives in ways that they have never imagined.

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– PROFESSOR DR ANDRÉ DE QUADROS



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– PROFESSOR DR ANDRÉ DE QUADROS



ideas from alternative perspectives.

“I only came in at the end and brought some different takes,” he said. “We ended up altering some ideas, but I would say the way which I am leading is very much in sympathy in the way that they have been preparing so the process was really smooth.”

“Performing with Professor de Quadros was refreshing,” said Low Lik How, assistant leader of the chamber choir's bass section. “He suggested that we do not stand in the traditional choir setting but instead in a circle which allowed us to produce a different sound.”

“It was a fantastic experience,” added Shaun Chow, section leader of the chamber choir. “I learned plenty of culture, language, and how an experienced maestro perceives music and shapes it for the public accordingly.”

The interaction and fresh insights are certainly one of the many advantages to having visiting musicians, according to Professor Dr P'ng Tean Hwa, Director of the Institute of Music.

“Students will get to work with someone of a world-class calibre and under a different atmosphere, but they will also be hearing a lot of the same things that we have been telling them,” he said. “This reinforces that learning even as they explore different angles with the guest.”

Jessica Teh, president of UCSI's concert choir fully agrees. “Professor de Quadros dealt not just with music education, but the purpose behind why we do what we do as educators,” said the contemporary music student. “It is not just about us and what we gain from it, but ultimately what we can give back to the society through our art.”

Teh said that it was always encouraging to hear from music veterans who are reminders that it is possible to be successful in the industry. “You get the opportunity to hear all about their experiences and in that moment when they share their life with you, you get to stand on the shoulders of giants and see beyond what you usually see, and that expands your view as a musician and a person.”

Professor de Quadros will continue globetrotting after his visit to UCSI, with an upcoming Islamic music concert in Boston and an International Youth Choir Festival in London. He left UCSI with a thought-provoking call to action.

“Ask yourselves what you can do as a musician and as global citizen,” he encouraged the students. “Education prepares you to create a better place so what kind of world do you want to live in? What is music in that world and where does everyone fit in? How can you harness your strengths to realise it?”



STRIKING THE RIGHT CHORD

Working with leading artistes is an essential part of music education at UCSI. The Institute hosts an average of 40 events a year that encompass masterclasses and recitals given by acclaimed musicians and seasoned academics who perform and adjudicate on the global stage. These visits serve to enhance learning outcomes with the Institute's own renowned faculty. Here are more of them who have crossed UCSI's doorstep.



THE ORFEO TRIO

Grammy-nominated chamber music trio.



MICHAEL VEERAPEN

Veteran Jazz pianist



ANDY PETERSON

Renowned slap bassist

RISING STARS

Learning from — and working alongside — the best in the business sets the stage for an infectious culture of excellence. This leads to many memorable moments where our students achieve on the grandest stages, some even before they have graduated.



HOR CHEE SENG

Bachelor Contemporary Music (Hons)

- Shared the stage professionally with high-profile musicians such as John Ashley Thomas, Michael Veerapen, Daniel Foong and Julian Chan.
- Performed at the Malaysian Jazz Piano Festival, World Youth Jazz Festival, Publika Jazz Festival, and more.
- Recorded for John Dip Silas's latest album 'Eager Expectation'.



NG SHIN KAY

Bachelor Contemporary Music (Hons)

- Second runner-up in 8TV's 'I Wanna Sing', a national music composition and singing competition.
- Winner of the Astro Hua Hee Karaoke Singing Competition.
- Debuted a mini concert in March this year.



ANG TING

Bachelor Contemporary Music (Hons)

- Brand ambassador for Lindsay Marcus Guitars.
- Winner of the Most Popular Award and a Top 10 finalist in the Sungha Jung Guitar Competition.
- Performed in Singapore and Indonesia, and worked with international guitarists like Lee Guo Liang, Anthea Tan and Erica Cho.



WONG HUI YUN

Master of Music (Performance Studies)

- Adjudicated the Seoul International Harmonica Festival and the Asia Pacific Harmonica Competition in 2016.
- A double champion at two consecutive Asia Pacific Harmonica Competitions and in the World Harmonica Festival in Germany.
- Member of Fresco Harmonica.

UCSI'S MEDIA FEST RETURNS FOR ITS THIRD YEAR RUNNING



UCSI University's (UCSI) annual Media Fest rounded off an exciting day packed with interactive sessions with an illustrious line-up of media luminaries including the Hitz.FM Morning Crew, OneFM veejay Jason Phang, and photographer Jimin Lai.

An annual event that aims to inspire and engage students within the field of subjects allied to the media discipline, this year's Media Fest featured practitioners and personalities from the silver screen to the radio industry.

"The media is an ever-growing industry and no matter what disciplines you are in, it is a form of art — one of disseminating information and conveying messages — that we cannot neglect," said Gloria Chan Choi Sim, who leads the Department of Mass Communication in UCSI's Faculty of Social Sciences and Liberal Arts, in her opening speech.

"I hope that the audience today will gain

new perspectives on the media industry from these professionals and are able to use this knowledge as a guideline for their future careers."

Jimin Lai, a photojournalist who has had a solid decade of experience telling stories with a single snapshot, had much to share. Formerly with Agence France-Presse (AFP), Reuters, and The Star, Lai has photographed the aftermath of natural disasters, war conflicts, sporting events, and more. His work has been featured in publications like *Time Magazine*, *The International Herald Tribune*, *The New York Times*, and *The London Times*.

"It is important to take risks with unique angles," he said, after telling a story of how he broke away from the crowd of photographers swarming Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad as he departed on his last day in office to find a wider angle. He did so without knowing whether Malaysia's fourth prime minister would turn in

his direction but his gamble paid off and Lai nailed a shot that framed the chaos beautifully.

"Think out of the box and do something different, do not follow the crowd. The way you stand out is to have what people do not see or do."

Lai also recalled tougher assignments that had him spending three months in Pakistan and Afghanistan to document the struggles of the Afghan people during the war on terrorism.

"Fear is not something you can afford to focus on," he said. "You are under a lot of pressure to deliver and the goal is to perform. Hundreds of papers are waiting for you when you work for a wire agency so if you do not deliver the picture today, the world is not going to see it tomorrow."

For that perfect shot, he has argued with an armed guard and taken harrowing rides up



update my social media channels, record Chinese New Year songs for my station, and even act in movies."

As a social media influencer and travel blogger, Phang has worked with both the Macao and Taiwan tourism boards as well as Universal Studios in Japan. He advised, "Study hard, work hard, and get out of your comfort zone. There's so much in the world to experience."

Other speakers included Julio Ng, founder of dOb Entertainment and a specialist in advertising, TV production and event management, who took the students through the ups and downs of freelancing. Isazly Mohamed Isa, a film editor and post-producer who has worked on nationally acclaimed films like *Susuk*, *Saloma*, and *Lips to Lips*, wrapped up the day.

"There are no shortcuts to success, it will take you a lot of passion, hard work and focus," he said. "The industry is full of daydreamers and we do not need more, so get out there and start shooting. Push yourself physically and mentally, and persist."

The event was also attended by Professor Dato' Dr Ahmad Hj Zainuddin, UCSI's Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs and International, who opened the festival.

Jimin Lai, who has had a solid decade of experience in photojournalism, shared photos from his work documenting events around the world while encouraging the students at UCSI University to think out of the box and embrace creativity.

◀ (LEFT PAGE)

The Hitz.FM Morning Crew — Arnold Loh (left), Jay Smith (second from right) and Ryan De Alwis (right) — pictured with UCSI University lecturer and event supervisor Ghazila Binti Ghazi (second from left).

the mountains in open vehicles where he had swung close to the cliff's edge and stared down into the icy abyss. Despite it all, Lai cannot remember any moment when he had wished he was somewhere else.

"To achieve success, you need to be passionate about what you are doing, have a purpose, and have a message you want to communicate," he said. "For me, I wanted to touch lives and show the world that you can still find hope, joy and beauty in terrible times."

Speakers also discussed the rise of new media and the necessity to integrate technology into traditional practices. The Hitz.FM Morning crew trio Arnold Loh, Jay Smith and Ryan De Alwis shared how social media has expanded both the reach and role of the media and its personalities.

"Twitter was only in its infancy when I started working in radio but today, social media has become part and parcel of the

job," said Smith. "Some shows have even started to incorporate Facebook Live so that they can connect with their fans while on air. It is move with the times or be left behind."

"There is a lot more to do now," said Loh. "You got to keep posting content on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. It is a challenge for sure."

"I used to process traffic reports for the station before I became a radio host, but now that role is near obsolete with traffic and navigation apps," said De Alwis. "So what we got to do is to approach it differently, like partnering up with Waze to deliver those traffic reports."

Jason Phang, an OneFM veejay and well-known personality in the Chinese entertainment industry, added, "The world today is different from the yesteryears. The industry is very competitive and you have to work hard and branch out. I could not just stay behind the mic; I had to write blogs,

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”

— JIMIN LAI,
 PHOTOJOURNALIST

UCSI'S FLAGSHIP CO-OP PLACEMENT LEADS TO A STUDENT'S DREAM JOB

SHEHABUR RAHMAN

Diploma in Graphic Design
Graduated in 2015
Digital Visualiser, Bitopi Leo Burnett Ltd.



UCSI University (UCSI) stands out with its flagship Co-Operative Education Placement Programme (Co-Op), a unique internship arrangement between the university and a network of more than 4,000 companies – locally and abroad. It is the first university in Asia that facilitates industry placement for students each year. This has translated into high graduate employability for UCSI. In fact, among the highest in Malaysia. And through its Co-Op Premier initiative, the University's Co-Op partners are now able to identify their future human resource from among the best of UCSI students.

Students benefit from Co-Op in ways large and small. They gain skills, cultivate adaptability and creativity in a dynamic world, build professional connections, and gain exposure to real-world problems and issues that perhaps are not found in textbooks.

Undoubtedly, the experience complements their studies and gives them an advantage in an increasingly competitive job market after graduation. Thus, every once in a while, as the Co-Op eases the transition from being a student to entering the workforce, students benefit from it in a really big way, with a job offer even before, or immediately after graduation.

Alumni Shehabur Rahman, who graduated with a Diploma in Graphic Design offered by

UCSI's De Institute of Creative Arts and Design (ICAD), is part of that fortunate group. After interning for Bitopi Leo Burnett, a creative advertising agency in Dhaka, Bangladesh, he received an offer to work in the company as a Digital Visualiser, just three months before he completed his study in 2015.

Commenting on his Co-Op experience, Shehabur said it was fascinating to see things he learned in the classroom come to life in the real world. He also noted that some of the skills he gained were more intangible. But that is the key to being creative and innovative.

"What made you successful in the internship had to do with how personable you are in presenting yourself and how dedicated you are to your work," he said. "And these are things that you should be picking up throughout college. However, since there is no class for that, an internship certainly plays that very important role. You are given the opportunity to explore and discover more about the field you are passionate in."

The job offer certainly changed the course of Shehabur's life — from being lost and clueless to being certain of what he wants to do as a profession.

"It is only normal to wonder after you have completed your study, whether you are

going to get a job offer or not. There is a lot of pressure going on around that time and there are other interests that I have that I would like to pursue," he said. "But interning in Bitopi really hit me that this is really where I want to be for now."

As a Digital Visualiser; a part of the Digital Team at Bitopi Leo Burnett, Shehabur and his team called Mighty Byte is responsible for creating and handling the digital campaigns for brands in social media and other digital platforms.

The environment at Bitopi as described by Shehabur, is simply magical.

"It is very friendly here and we have an open office policy. One can simply walk into the office of the CEO, COO or anyone in that position and simply have a chat or discuss ideas," he said. "There are no restrictions as there is a lot of emphasis on freedom of sharing ideas and speaking one's mind. It is more than I could have imagined what working for a big company would be like. I very much enjoy working here; although it does get very stressful at times, but I think that is something every creative person must deal with."

Shehabur is Bitopi's first hire from UCSI. According to Nausher Rahman, the Digital Communications Director at Bitopi,



This undoubtedly, is achieved through the industry exposure UCSI emphasises on in which major exhibitions, shows, workshops and industrial visits are frequently organised where the students gain constructive feedback from key industry players and the public in order to polish their craft.

The young lad also spoke well about his lecturers who have helped him in his academic pursuit.

"Our lecturers definitely put an effort in trying to make us understand how demanding and hard it is to be in the creative industry but also that it is equally fulfilling and satisfying. Particularly Assistant Professor Shahfida Abdul Manap; from the first semester until my graduation, she has been a consistent supporter and motivator for me and my mates. She is one of the reasons I am where I am today."

Shehabur also said that he is a goal-oriented person and that trait of his had given him many opportunities that he had grabbed.

"I have many goals that I hope to achieve - working for Bitopi Leo Burnett was one of them. I also want to be a product designer and a Ui/Ux designer in the coming years. If there is a chance, I want to live in all the design capitals of the world and learn more about graphic design. I cannot stress enough how much I enjoy and truly love graphic design," said the young lad.

He then added, "No matter what my goals are and what is reserved for me in the future, I don't know what other doors will open. But for now, it is amazing to know that this could be one of my dream jobs that would lead me to better jobs or opportunities in the near future."

When asked about what the word 'design' means to him, this is what he said:

"To me, design is a powerful tool. Design is everywhere. The software I wrote these words on, even the laptop I used is a product of design. To me, design is simply another word for innovation and a tool to potentially change how we live our lives. Case and point, the iPhone."

Shehabur's biggest asset is that he is a conscientious and diligent worker.

"Shehabur is a hard working young man with a good work ethic. For a young man in his first job, I am impressed with his level of dedication and seriousness."

Nausher also spoke about the young lad's initiatives, ideas, and creative inputs to the projects that he is involved in.

"I think his visual creative sense is good, and we are happy with the execution of his creative ideas. I think from a conceptual creative point of view, he will improve with experience and time. The deeper he thinks about his craft, the better his ideas will be," he said.

Shehabur credits his time at UCSI for his employability and for teaching him how to be a creative person with industrial outlook. The study of graphic design offered by ICAD is not merely to meet one's creative thirst and needs. The study also focuses on creating products that optimise a given functionality, which gave him the added edge valuable to the creative industry.

On top of that, as the University strives to make its students achieve full potential and to work with passion and creativity, the social environment and teaching style also helped

him to develop attributes which are in high demand from employers worldwide. These attributes are none other than creativity, innovation, teamwork, and leadership.

Shehabur grew up in a creative household in Dhaka, Bangladesh with his brothers, a mother who paints, and a father who is an architect enthusiast. He came to UCSI because according to him, it is an ideal combination of affordability and quality education.

As it is far from his country, Shehabur said he is interested to see where the next chapters of his life take him — though he noted that if he wanted it easy, he could just pursue his higher education in Dhaka itself instead of coming to Malaysia.

"Studying in a foreign country forced me to accept my individuality and accept the fact that I am different from the people around me and it is fine for me to be as such. My time in UCSI has really helped me shape my way of thinking for myself and form my own points of views and opinions. The same experience also helps me in the working culture where I get to embrace my individuality and look at the problems presented with unique perspectives," he said.

He then added, "Studying in UCSI has also given me the opportunity to speak to people who have achieved these things respectively and gain some valuable insight from them."



ANDREAS VOGIATZAKIS SPEAKS ON INFLUENCER MARKETING

UCSI University (UCSI) recently welcomed Andreas Vogiatzakis, CEO of Havas Media Malaysia, on campus for the CEO Talk Series where he challenged the youths of today to be an influencer of tomorrow.

Vogiatzakis leads the Malaysian arm of Havas Media, the lead agency in one of the world's fastest growing media group that operates in 144 countries. Havas Media Malaysia launched in 2016 with Vogiatzakis at the helm. He brings more than three decades of experience in the media industry spanning across media agencies like Omnicom Media Group, Mindshare and Starcom MediaVest Group.

With social media gaining in popularity every day, the average time spent on social networks per day continues to increase. Social media has become a prominent part of life for especially many young people today, specifically Gen-Y and Gen-Z. This has led to the emergence of the social media influencer concept.

Vogiatzakis began his talk with a video that demonstrated how youngsters who have technology in their hands can be a strong influence.

"In advertising, influencer marketing is becoming a norm where companies are

seeking out individuals who have followers in the range of thousands," said Vogiatzakis. "They are sought out as brand ambassadors with a responsibility to create a story on Snapchat or to post a picture on Instagram so their followers are aware of the product."

When companies require their brands to reach the masses, modern technology through the Internet of Things has provided them with the wide-reaching access and tracking solutions.

"A basic Facebook page will provide you with an engagement report for each post you make and this provides feedback to the marketers on how meaningful the content was based on the number of comments and reposts," he said. "This will drive marketing strategies to stick with what's good and to revamp what isn't."

Vogiatzakis goes on to say that each reaction, retweet and repost connects people around the world. Connectivity provides the leverage for the influencers out there to bring people together because of the emotional engagement that they manage to create.

"However, technology-dependency has disconnected people from actual human interaction," he said. "It is to an extent

where people would only believe online reviews instead of actual human marketers, just because 'other people are talking about it.'"

In this fourth Industrial Revolution, companies are depending on large data analysis to make decisions because it is based on actual figures and trends.

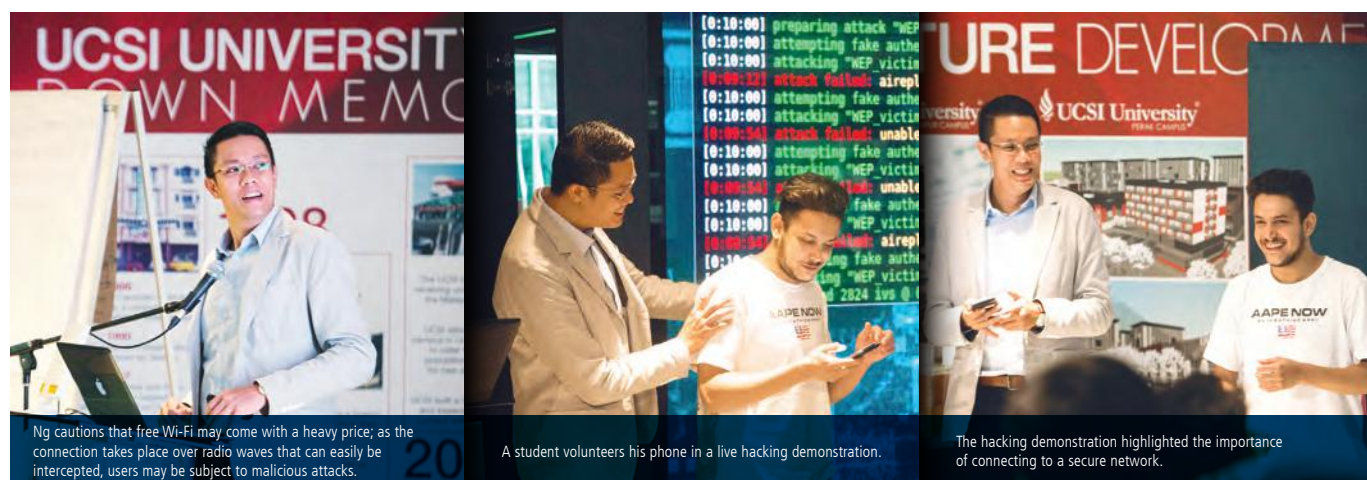
"But the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart," said Vogiatzakis. "What we think is from the brain, but how we respond is from the heart. When social media and modern advertising can reach the people's hearts, then truly the influencers have achieved their goals."

He said that a full circle is reached when influencers generate valuable data through human emotions to guide marketing strategist in their next campaign. "As modern as the world is, the old saying from William Schwenck Gilbert, a British poet still holds true," he said. "It's love that makes the world go round."

The talk was organised by the Student Council and the Student Affairs and Alumni division with the support from Malaysia Youth Community's CEO, Jason Ko and Head of Public Relations, Saifulzaman Mahadi.



BEWARE FREE WI-FI: AN INDUSTRIAL TALK ON WIRELESS NETWORK SECURITY



Everybody loves free Wi-Fi but not many are aware of the security risks such networks may pose. UCSI University's (UCSI) School of Information Technology (IT) recently organised an industrial talk by Captain Samuel Ng, an information systems security expert and Certified Ethical Hacker by the EC-Council, to demonstrate how a hacker would look for weaknesses and vulnerabilities in target systems.

"Nine million people fall victim to identity theft each year according to recent studies," said Ng. "Now, with thousands of Wi-Fi hotspots available across the country, hackers are constantly looking for new and easy ways to steal information."

Speaking to an audience of students from various programmes on how to protect

themselves, Ng highlighted the differences between encryption standards like WEP, WPA, and WPA2 — using the latter is your best bet — as well as emphasised the importance of choosing strong passwords.

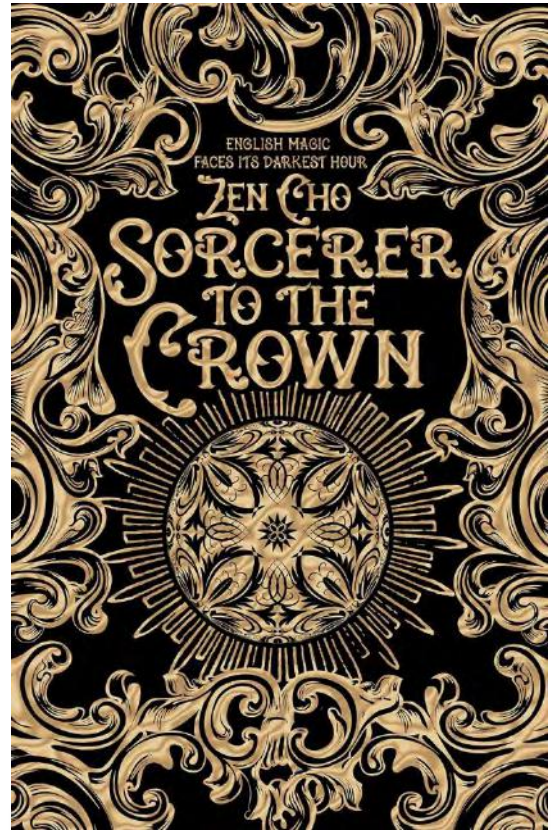
"Around 70 to 80% of women incorporate the names of their husband or children into their passwords," he said. "Men typically go for names of football stars, favourite name brands and cars. It is best to avoid these."

He advised users not to use dictionary words in their passwords. This is because a standard method for cracking passwords is by brute force attack, in which the attacker tries possible passwords over and over again using dictionaries of common words and names.

Ng also encouraged users to perform regular updates on network equipment drivers, be mindful of placing access points in secure locations, and to adjust network strength configuration, just to name a few.

He ended the session by performing a live demonstration of how a hacker would target a vulnerable network by hacking a volunteer's mobile phone.

Currently commissioned as second in command in Malaysia's 74th Royal Signal Squadron, Ng has also served in the Ministry of Defense's Cyber Warfare Department and obtained his first degree in computer security from the National Defence University of Malaysia.



WRITE RIGHT

Insights from some of Malaysia's most experienced authors and journalists.

An advocate for feminism and social justice in genre, editor of the anthology *Cyberpunk: Malaysia* — a Popular-The Star Readers' Choice Awards 2016 finalist and a juror for the Speculative Literature Foundation 2014 Diverse Writers and Diverse Worlds grants, **Zen Cho** was a 2013 nominee for the Campbell Award for Best New Writer, joint winner of the Crawford Award for her short story collection *Spirits Abroad* and winner of the British Fantasy Award for Best Newcomer for her debut historical fantasy novel *Sorcerer to the Crown* in 2015.

Selected for the 2017 Amelia Bloomer List of notable feminist literature for young people, *Sorcerer to the Crown* was also a Locus Awards finalist for Best First Novel, RT Reviewers' Choice Awards nominee for Best Fantasy Novel and official nominee for the ALA/YALSA Alex Awards, as well as being longlisted for the British Science Fiction Association Awards and the Tiptree Award. Her short fiction was also nominated for the Selangor Young Talent Awards and the Pushcart Prize, honour-listed for the Carl Brandon Society Awards, and translated into French, Spanish, Italian and Finnish.



Can you please share with us how did you begin your career as a writer? And what was the journey towards publication like?

I started writing stories when I was a kid but probably only started taking it seriously in my teens. I started publishing short stories when I was 24. I eventually managed to complete a novel I was satisfied with in 2013, at age 27, and it came out two years later in 2015. So I guess I would say the journey was long!

What was the inspiration for *Sorcerer to the Crown*? For those who don't know anything about your book, how would you briefly describe it?

Sorcerer to the Crown is a historical fantasy novel set in 1800s London about Zacharias Wythe, England's first African Sorcerer Royal, who is struggling to solve the problem of England's declining magical resources when he meets ambitious orphan and female magical prodigy Prunella Gentleman. Together, they change the future of English magic.

Like most novels, *Sorcerer to the Crown* drew on many sources of inspiration, chief of which were the frothy Regency romances of Georgette Heyer and the Edwardian comedies of P. G. Wodehouse. I wanted to investigate Imperialism, but with jokes.

Your books received good critical acclaims and have been awarded and nominated multiple times. How does it feel to see your works receiving such amazing buzz?

It is very valuable. It is the nature of the beast that people tend to see the successes, but do not see the years of hard slog and failure that accompany the wins. Working in a creative field can be very challenging and it can be hard to keep up your confidence, so it helps to have awards, recognition and positive feedback from readers.

What are the main challenges you have met as a writer?

The challenges I have faced are the usual ones — rejection, self-doubt, producing bad writing for years on end.

As you are based in London, is it important for you to be identified as a Malaysian author, or would you prefer to just be known as someone who writes fantasy and science fiction?

I identify myself as a Malaysian because I did not know of any Malaysian fantasy authors when I was growing up. To be known as 'someone who writes fantasy and science fiction' is a bit too generic for me. The ideal would be to be known as Zen Cho, the way Zadie Smith is known as Zadie Smith.

Your writing leans towards speculative fiction. What first sparked your interest in the science fiction and fantasy genre?

The books I read as a kid — I am especially influenced by the work of great British fantasists I read when I was young, like Diana Wynne Jones, Edith Nesbit and Terry Pratchett — but also the culture I grew up in. In Malaysia, we have the benefit of being exposed to lots of different stories, from Chinese wuxia to Malay hantu tales to Japanese mecha anime. That is the fodder I use when I write.

Have you ever encountered a writer's block while writing your novels and how do you overcome it?

Yes. There is no easy answer to this. Sometimes it works to push through it and force yourself to write even if you are not feeling it. Sometimes it works better to rest and let the words come back to you.

How do you hone your writing skills?

By reading a lot, thinking very hard, staying open and interested in the world, and writing as much as you can. As with any skill, you improve with practice.

Do you have any writers that you look up to? Who are the Malaysian and non-Malaysian writers that have left a deep impression on you and why?

Lots. In addition to the authors I have named already, Karen Lord, Geoff Ryman and Amitav Ghosh have written the kinds of books I aspire to write one day. Among Malaysian writers, I admire the non-fiction of Farish Noor and Rehman Rashid. I like the comics of Mimi Mashud, Fishball and Azwanjijai. And I think Preeta Samarasan is a really fascinating writer — I would like to see what she does with her next book.

Your current career is one of the future career options for UCSI students reading Mass Communication and English Language and Communication programme.

Do you have any recommendation or advice for the students pursuing a career in the mentioned field?

This will be a disappointing answer, but I would recommend getting a day job which you find interesting and enjoyable — ideally something that involves social interaction and physical exercise, because creative writing does not involve a lot of those two things. You may be able to quit your job and write fiction full-time someday, but it often takes a long time to start generating a liveable income from fiction writing. It is also good for your art, for you to have different experiences, and non-writing careers are a good way of delivering that.



It is also good for your art, for you to have different experiences

PRACTITIONER TALK AND DIALOGUE SESSION –

“GROWTH OF NON-LIFE INSURANCE IN MALAYSIA: AN OVERVIEW”

Malaysian non-life or general insurance industry is largely driven by automobile and homeowner policies which have seen to a collective RM17 billion in premium income and RM7 billion in net claims paid. While still far behind the established life insurance market, general insurance has been recording impressive growth rates over the past few years. In fact, market analysts have indicated that it is among the fastest emerging markets in the global insurance industry.

To provide an overview of this burgeoning industry and to discuss actuarial careers that may be charted within this field, UCSI University's (UCSI) Department of Actuarial Science and Applied Statistics hosted a practitioner talk and dialogue session with Ong Shze Yeong, Head of Actuarial at AXA Affin General Insurance Berhad — one of the fastest growing general insurance companies in Malaysia and the leader in medical and health insurance.

Ong has eight years of experience in general insurance liability valuation, product pricing, capital, and reinsurance optimisation. He is also a Fellow of Casualty Actuarial Society (CAS), a CAS Ambassador for Malaysia, and a GI sub-committee member for Actuarial Society Malaysia (ASM).

“Growth in non-life insurance is mainly driven by product and distribution innovation opportunities in Malaysia,” said Ong, whose role in AXA is to manage the valuation of reserves while providing analyses, trend reports, and insights to support various business units within the company.

“Today's technological advancements and infrastructure development are just a few of the factors that must be leveraged upon to create products that address risks not effectively covered by the traditional insurance policies.”

Ong was joined on stage by Associate Professor Dr Ngerng Miang Hong, CEO of UCSI Poll Research Centre and associate professor of quantitative finance and risk



management, who provided an academic perspective to the discussion.

Ong emphasised the importance of research in developing non-life insurance products but acknowledged the difficulties, as highlighted by Associate Professor Ngerng, researchers and students face in obtaining local data especially of medical and auto insurances.

Currently, ISM Insurance Services Malaysia Berhad (ISM) manages local databases which are shared only to contributing members. For a third party to gain access, all members of ISM have to consent to release the information.

“Data is limited and scarce,” said Ong. “Even as an ISM member, the data that we are able to download is selective and censored. However, we can definitely reach out to ASM to support this open access.”

Moving forward, both Ong and Associate Professor Ngerng agreed that more dialogue between practitioners and academicians is needed to reach a mutually beneficial decision on how to better utilise the data resource — a key component for academic study to improve industry efficiency and standards of practice.





As product innovation and development is highly needed in the Malaysian insurance industry, Ong assured students that careers in non-life will be rewarding and shared the essential skills one would need.

"The most relevant are the CAS exams five to nine," he said. "Those are really applied in your work in non-life. In terms of what you don't, I have to say that my peers and I don't use loss models much but it still helps that you understand the concept and know how to perform the technical calculations."

UCSI will soon be introducing courses on basic ratemaking process and computation to enhance the students' competitiveness for those who are interested in pursuing careers in the non-life insurance industry. Ong encouraged them to perform well in their studies, to pass at least two to four preliminary exams, and to participate in campus activities to hone their leadership skills. For an even stronger start, he said that students should also focus on internships.

"It is valuable practical experience and I am more likely to hire someone who has interned for say, six months at an insurance company than someone with a higher

CGPA," said Ong.

"It's not difficult to understand ratemaking and reserving so if you had interned for three months, you would at least have gotten some sense of the concepts. Stay longer and you would have gotten to interact with senior managers and start adding value to the work. All these are very important to your future employer."

UCSI currently runs the country's widest industry-academic network with over 4,000 partners providing two-month internships to students each academic year. Associate Professor Ngerng said that the University's Faculty of Business and Information Science will definitely look into exploring longer internship durations so that students may better prepare themselves for the workforce.



Sean Ooi Weng Seen

Bachelor of Contemporary Music (Hons), graduated 2012
Founder, The Academy Music Centre

As UCSI University marks three decades as an exceptional education provider, we have inadvertently created a tradition of incredible achievers. To honour these individuals, The UCSI Gazette catches up with the University's alumni to shine a spotlight on their career and achievements after graduation, and glean some words of wisdom from the alumni themselves. This issue, we liaised with **Sean Ooi Weng Seen**, a Bachelor of Contemporary Music (Hons) student who upon graduation has accumulated a notable amount of working experience in the field.



Please describe your career journey.

As I was working part-time to fund my final-year education, I discovered a love for teaching — watching my students grow from barely being able to hold an instrument to being an amazing maestros in their own right, was a satisfaction that money cannot buy.

Upon graduation, I did freelance music recording projects, corporate performances and part-time music teaching. After a period of four years, I was able to save enough money, and together with my investors, we started what is now known as The Academy Music Centre.

What started out as a simple music school, has grown to be one of the largest contemporary music company in Kota Damansara. There are 4 separate divisions in my company: At the forefront, we have a music school that provides music education; a retail department where we house over 23 different brands ranging from Roland, Ibanez, Korg, and many more; we provide soundproofing works and pro audio equipment to concert halls, restaurants and auditoriums; and the main division of my business is where we help run various international schools' music programmes. We offer music consultation and we help create a successful music programme for our clientele.

Please tell us what does your current job scope involves.

As the founder of the company, I am tasked in a multitude of things. I served as a key member of the company and I am tasked in formulating strategic directions and business development for the company. I also execute marketing strategies and form strong business partnerships with our various corporate clienteles. I work very closely with

academic directors of various international schools to conduct and execute music programs for their students.

Is your current working experience similar to what you imagined when you were still a student?

Oh, definitely not! I am still learning something new every day. I believe that the key to success is to have ample humility and to never stop improving oneself. The moment an individual believes that there is nothing more to learn is when that person will begin to fall behind in the race.

What inspired you to found The Academy music centre?

When I was younger, I received a lot of stigma when I chose music as my career choice. I received a lot of backlash from family, friends and relatives. Determined to prove the naysayers wrong, I learned to be inventive and build my company from the ground up.

Can you describe to us your experience studying in UCSI? What was your most unforgettable memory?

There is a particular subject called the 'Modern Band Ensemble' where the lecturer will group up randomly five or more students from the entire faculty to form a band, and by the end of the semester you are required to perform 10 songs with each song being a different genre. You might end up with a group of seniors, a group of juniors, or a group of musicians who plays the same instruments! For those who are not as well-versed with the context of music, that is a crazy hard thing to achieve!

I remembered myself approaching the said lecturer and asked "Why such an arrangement?" and he said, "The beauty of this subject is that you will learn to work with

people of different levels, skills, age and characters. When you go out and work in the real world, you will come to realise that not everything comes the way you always wanted, you will meet people from different walks of life and if you cannot survive here, you cannot survive outside." Needless to say, I was star-struck.

How did UCSI affect you in terms of personal and professional growth?

I have learned so much from my time here in UCSI. I have learned to pick myself up when I fall countless times. I was not a 'grade A' student, you see; there were times where I wanted to give up. But through sheer determination and support from the many great lecturers, I picked myself up and finished my studies.

What two or three accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? Why?

I started my company with nothing. But through sheer hard work, my investors and my team of dedicated staffs were able to cultivate a successful pipeline and achieve a six-figure revenue from sales opportunities.

Personally, I have grown from being a shy introverted individual to a person with confidence, a sense of responsibility and dedication. I would never have gotten to where I am if I did not take that leap of faith to start my own company. I am content and happy with where I am right now, and I will always have my beloved lecturers in UCSI to thank for.

Do you have any words of advice for students who wish or are currently pursuing an education in music?

Life is not easy; you will meet people who will let you down, take advantage of you, or even hurt you. In time, you will come across obstacles in your path. Don't give up!



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