



UMS  
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

SOARING  
UPWARDS  
MALAYSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

SPEECH

# VICE-CHANCELLOR'S *Message* 2017



UMS  
OPTIMISING  
RESOURCES

**7 March 2017 | 8.30 am**  
**Kompleks Dewan Kuliah Pusat Ke-2**

## Salutations

1. Members of the UMS Board of Directors
2. Key and Senior Officials
3. Senate Members
4. Faculty Deans
5. Directors of Institutes and Centres
6. Heads of Departments, Sections and Units
7. Lecturers
8. Management and Administrative Officers and Staff
9. Student Representative Council
10. Beloved Students
11. UMS Media Friends
12. Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh...

Salam Sejahtera, Salam 1Malaysia and Salam EcoCampus to my beloved UMS family.

## **FOREWORD**

Alhamdulillah, all praises and glory to Allah SWT for bestowing upon us good health and the opportunity to come together for the 2017 Amanat Naib Canselor ceremony today. It is my deepest hope that this ceremony will serve as impetus for us to be more engaged and focused towards the attainment of greater heights of excellence this year.

The thrust of the 2017 Amanat is on "UMS Optimising Resources" anchored on the steadfast belief that it is when we utilise our available resources and strengths that the University management and services could be sustained and strengthened regardless of current and future challenges. I am sure that we all are fully aware of drastic reduction in the operational expenditure allocation for UMS this year which indeed greatly constrains and challenges us in our planning for the physical development of our institution. Nevertheless I have faith that we could and we would rise to this financial challenge through creative cutback strategies and income- generation ideas based on the resources available to us. It is on this conviction that we collectively persevere in our quest to upgrade and enhance our strengths in research, innovation, and teaching and learning.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen, and my beloved colleagues and students**

Any success, unless shared or made known, becomes a quiet unwritten annotation in our lives. However, success that is celebrated together

where everyone partakes in the joy and glory of accomplishment can serve as inspiration and motivation for everyone else in the UMS community to strive further towards excellence. We can dream and we can hope, but all these will come to nought when there is no effort. The best outcomes come to being when thoughts are matched with actions and perseverance. When our dreams and our actions are in sync, we are effectively on course in our quest to put the UMS name in the public consciousness. Success is an accrument that comes to those who think and view things differently. What is important here is that we realise our aims in such a manner that our actions and achievements are visible and tangible.

2016 was a year of dignified pursuits and engagements eventhough we were confronted with various adversities. There is a need for us to occasionally look behind us, if only so as to measure our steps and guide the onward direction of our paths. We have to move forward and address collectively whatever adversity is in our way for it is only through such tenacity that we can experience the fullness and colour of life. Together we recorded many achievements in 2016, and through all these success our purpose and direction remain unchanged. I value and take pride in our achievements but we must never be complacent and instead should always reflect on what we have attained and how we can further improve or rectify our weaknesses or weak links. When we address these lacks, improve and practise management excellence and optimise available resources, we are well on track towards attaining the pinnacle of glory.

I would like to extend my appreciation and congratulations to several members of the UMS community for achieving excellence and outstanding success in 2016:

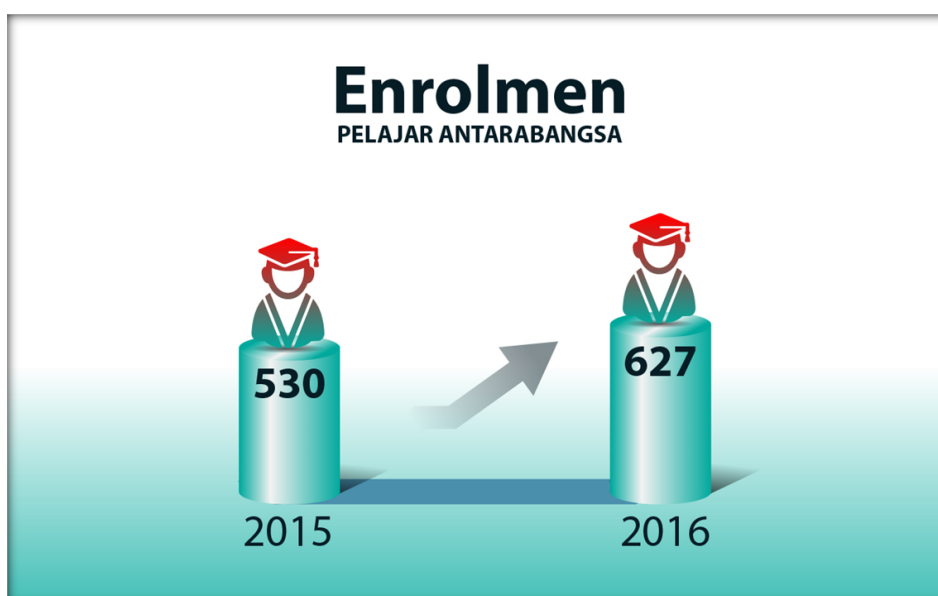
1. Dr. Liew Kang Chiang, Shirley M. Bakansing dan Azli Sulid from the Faculty of Science and Natural Resources for their selection as recipients of Best Forestry Book Award at the National Book Award 2016 ceremony for their book *"Wood Species of Sabah: An Illustrated Guide"*;
2. The UMS Ladies Futsal Team for consolidating their reign as champion for three consecutive years at the 41<sup>st</sup> *Kejohanan Sukan Staf Universiti Malaysia*;
3. The UMS Contingent with their medal haul of six gold, five silver and 12 bronze at the *Sukan Institusi Pendidikan Tinggi (SUKIPT)*;
4. UMS reseachers with their achievement of 24 medals at various national and international research exhibitions;
5. Ms. Siti Nurzulaiha Lailee, the winner of the *"Young Humanitarian Writers Competition"* organised by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and National Press Club Malaysia;
6. Dr. Awangku Hassanal Bahar Pengiran Bagul from the Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy for his award of The Golden Globe Tigers 2016: Leadership Award for Excellence in Social Innovation at the Asia Business Network, and his appointment to

the *Sustainable Campus Network* (ISCN) for two years beginning June 2016;

7. Researchers from the Biotechnology Research Institute for their world-first success in determining the genetic coding of the MD-2 and Babagon pineapples;
8. Dr. Annita Yong Seok Kian and her research team from the Borneo Marine Research Institute for their success in the production of eggs of the mangrove crab species;
9. Ms. Chaw Vi Vian, our student from the Faculty of Science and Natural Resources for winning the 2016 Freezailah Forest Sustainability Award.

I am indeed very proud of the names here who are among the many success stories that have consolidated the UMS name and lead in many diverse fields of specialisation.

The increase in international student enrolment and enhanced cooperation with foreign agencies activated by the International Students' Affairs Centre are acknowledged by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education. This acknowledgement is demonstrated in UMS winning the Special Award: International Students Office Achievement Award. In 2016, the number of foreign students enrolled in our University stood at 627 compared to 530 in 2015. I am certain the international student presence in UMS will continue to expand every year. This increase is in part the direct result of continuous promotional initiatives and internationalisation efforts by the University by way of strategic partnerships with foreign institutions such as Heilongjiang Academy of Science in China, Kindai University in Japan, the agreement between the Ministry of Education with the Republic of Timor-Leste Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources, Zunyi Medical University in China and several other foreign agencies.



Yet another UMS achievement at the international level was our institution's involvement in the Presidents' Forum of Southeast, South Asia and Taiwan Universities (SATU Presidents' Forum). UMS was appointed into the 2017-2018 Steering Committee with Taiwan's National Cheng Kung University as Secretariat. This direct participation in SATU creates immense benefits for our University in terms of greater regional visibility and institutional reputation.



Our success in securing a 5-Star rating for Best Record Management among Public Institutions of Higher Learning is clear validation of the quality of our University management.



## **Ladies and Gentlemen, my beloved colleagues and students**

### **(Reflections on the EcoCampus Excellence)**

Based on the EcoCampus Action Plan 2013-2017, UMS is committed towards becoming an institution where teaching and learning excellence is the norm and innovation, relevance and sustainability key elements in the development of an EcoCampus that integrates environmental factors in its planning and activities. The UMS EcoCampus Transformation Plan is anchored on five (5) core values: sustainable development, ecology protection, environmental monitoring, environmental harmony and conservation of resources. These are to be realised through the six key elements of mindset shift, development of infrastructure, teaching and learning, research themes, management, and operational practices. The accrued benefits from these core values and key elements are manifested in terms of greater awareness of the environment, social change empowerment reflected through actions, preservation of natural resources and healthy lifestyle, inculcation of leadership towards environmental matters, preservation of income generation through reserves and downstream effects, enhanced ability to adapt to change, and the attainment of international acknowledgement.

All the abovementioned were implemented according to the agreed planning and cooperation of the relevant parties in UMS. Our institution has recorded many notable and praiseworthy achievements and I am confident that we shall soon attain full-fledged EcoCampus University status. Insyah-Allah.

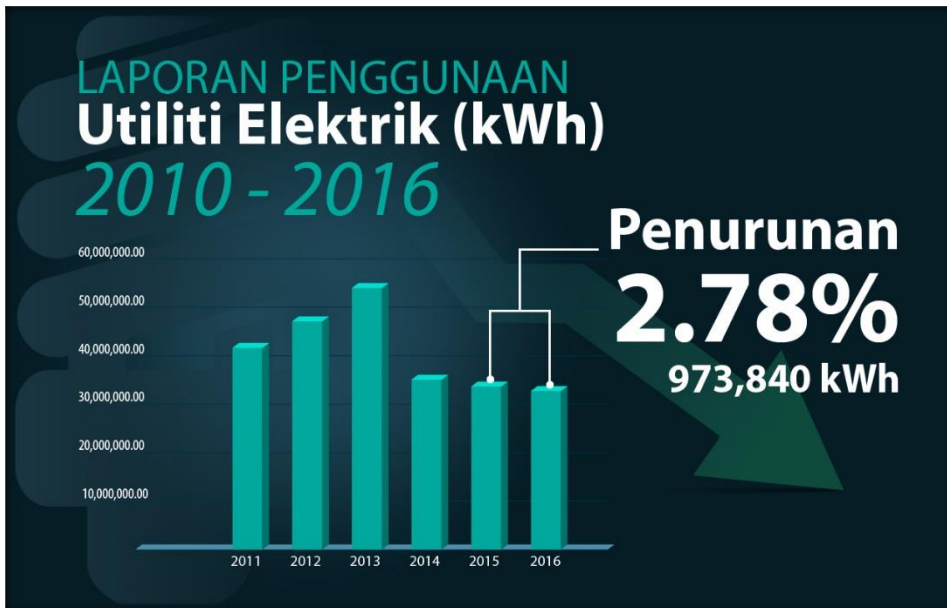
The UMS-EcoCampus Visitor Information Centre (UMS-EVIC) was launched and officiated on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016 by the Honourable Datuk Seri Panglima Masidi Manjun, the Sabah Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment. This Centre functions as a one-stop centre for all tourism related activities in UMS and provides services such as a tourism information counter, a tourist information centre and gallery, an integrated ticketing system, a souvenir shop and a light refreshment café. These facilities without doubt would extend maximum benefits and convenience to visitors in UMS.



In the 2016 UI GreenMetric World University Ranking, a ranking initiative for environment-friendly campuses, UMS recorded a major leap forward with its 44<sup>th</sup> world placement. This translated into a 129-position surge from the 173<sup>rd</sup> placement in 2015. In the Asia region, UMS was ranked 6<sup>th</sup> compared to 66<sup>th</sup> in 2015. At the Malaysian Institutions of Higher Learning level, 2016 witnessed UMS at 2<sup>nd</sup> position, a definite improvement from its 7<sup>th</sup> rank in 2015.



As part of the on-going effort to ensure environmental sustainability within the campus and decrease the effects of climate change, the EcoCampus Management Centre together with the UMS Development and Maintenance Department have established measures to implement more efficient usage of power and water supply within the campus.



The total power supply consumption up to December 2015 was recorded at 34,978,990 kWh. The final figure for 2016 was 34,005,150 kWh, a decrease of 2.78% compared to the 2015 decrease of 0.26%. Among the measures implemented by the UMS Development and Maintenance Department to reduce energy consumption are:

- i. Installation of LED lighting in the Faculty of Psychology and Education (Education Block);



- ii. Installation of spotlight induction lighting at the Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy and the Borneo Marine Research Institute; and



- iii. Installation of solar panels on bus-stop roofings at the Faculty of Engineering, Library, Tun Fuad College Residence, Dewan Kuliah Pusat 1 and Dewan Kuliah Pusat 2 Complex.



In line with the UMS aspiration to achieve full- fledged EcoCampus status, the EcoCampus Management is currently in the process of obtaining the MS ISO 14001:2015 (Environment Management System) certification. We hope to secure this in June 2017. The Faculty of Engineering, the Chancellery and the EcoCampus Management Centre have been selected for the purpose of this certification.

This year, the Recycling Centre housed at the Faculty of Engineering will be improved and modified into a management centre for waste and recycling materials such as paper, plastic bottles and cans. This Centre is important towards the realisation of the sustainable campus concept and also as per requirement for the MS ISO14001:2015 certification. The Centre will become a point of reference and learning for students in waste management systems.

To extend our commitment on the issue of climate change and its link to carbon discharge through fossil-based energy usage, the EcoCampus

Management Centre in response to the suggestion by the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water has implemented energy use auditing in UMS. The EcoCampus Management Centre has recently applied for a conditional energy audit grant for commercial buildings under the RMK-11 to identify aspects or elements of energy wastage or inefficient use of power in UMS and thereafter provide suggestions for more efficient and cost-effective energy consumption measures in the campus. The initial energy audit will be conducted at the Library and the Faculty of Engineering.



To intensify tourism activities and position UMS on the Sabah and Malaysia tourism map, the University will collaborate with the Sabah Tourism Board, the Sabah Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment, the Malaysian Ministry of Tourism and Culture and tourism agencies to promote the institution as a key tourist destination in Sabah. Campus tourism is anticipated to become an important income generator for UMS.





To inculcate a continuous EcoCampus culture in UMS, the EcoCampus Management Centre together with the Committees under its jurisdiction will hold roadshows in the various Departments, Faculties, Centres, Institutes and Units to brief and explain to the University community aspects and concepts of EcoCampus in the office and outside of the workplace. Interactions of this nature will provide feedback to the EcoCampus Management Centre on the extent the EcoCampus culture is understood and practised, and at the same time highlight any need for future improvements.

**Ladies and Gentlemen, my beloved colleagues and students.**

### **(Strengthening Research in UMS)**

In 2016, UMS researchers received a total of RM4,461,555.33 to fund 46 research projects at national and international levels. From this figure, RM2,696,234.00 was allocated for 37 national research projects under the Ministry of Higher Education, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Sultan Mizan Antartica Research Foundation, the Prime

Minister's Department, and other agencies. At the international level, research funding valued at RM1,206,488.33 from countries such as Japan, South Korea and Switzerland was obtained for nine research projects.

To further encourage basic and applied research for the purpose of generating knowledge that could enhance intellectual understanding, create new technology and inculcate a dynamic culture in line with national aspirations, UMS allocated a total of RM2,364,400.00 towards 94 research projects in the University. These grants were channelled through the *Skim Penyelidikan Bidang Keutamaan (SPBK)*, *Skim Pensyarah Lantikan Baru (SPLB)*, *Skim Geran Inovasi (SGI)*, *Skim Geran Penyelidikan UMS-Top Down (STD)* and *Skim Geran Insentif PhD (SGPhD)*.

To increase the number of publications among postgraduate students and at the same time inculcate a research culture among the UMS community, the University allocated a total of RM2 million for the *Skim Geran Bantuan Penyelidikan Pascasiswazah (UMSGreat)* out of which RM1 million was reserved for 93 research projects in 2016 and the remaining funds to be channelled in 2017.

The need to position UMS as source of reference for Borneo-related research has witnessed the University establishing research collaborations with Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). A total of RM500,000.00 has been allocated for Borneo-related research projects under this UMS-UNIMAS research collaboration agreement.



Improved attainments by UMS in the Malaysia Research Assessment (MyRA) have resulted in the Ministry of Higher Education channelling funding towards the inculcation and enhancement of the culture of research in the University. UMS has allocated RM1 million from this amount for research initiatives under the Research Collaboration with Other Institutions Grant whereby 10 types of collaboration are identified

with four of these at national level and six with international partners from Japan, the United Kingdom and Indonesia.



This Collaboration Grant is aimed at increasing quantity and quality of research, and at the same time providing opportunity to produce high-impact research and subsequently enhancing the visibility of UMS at the international arena of higher education.



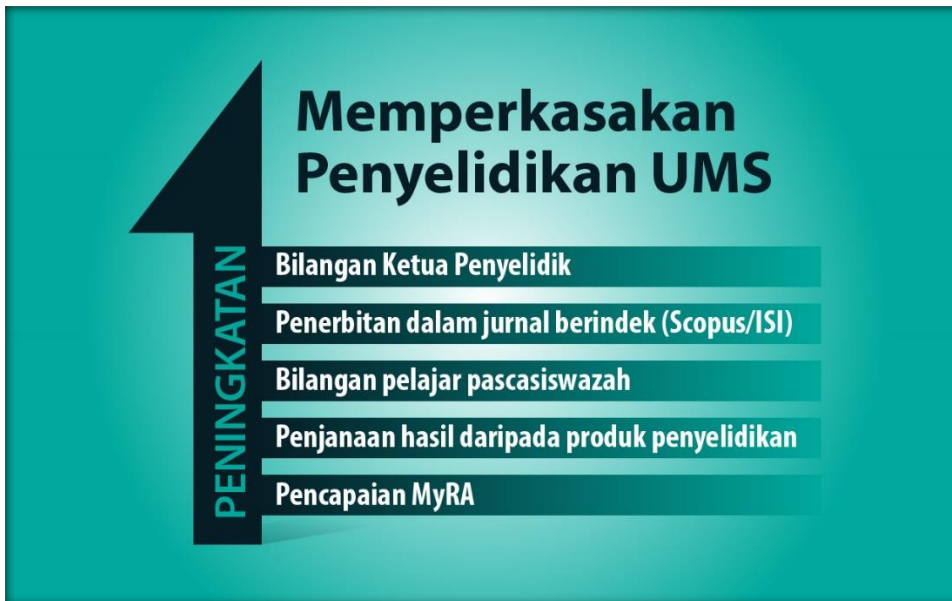
To encourage researchers to publish articles in indexed journals, UMS through MyRA has allocated a sum of RM100,000.00 to assist in the publication fees imposed by indexed journals such as Scopus and ISI. It is my hope that this assistance would benefit the work of many researchers.

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With these work and initiatives, UMS increased the number of Lead Researchers in the University, improved on the number of publications in indexed journals (Scopus/ ISI), raised the intake of postgraduate student, and ensured income generation from the sale of research products. All these translated into the very positive upward surge in the MyRA rankings.

Pre-commercialisation and commercialisation activities will be intensified with the active involvement of external agencies in the UMS product evaluation process. Among these agencies are Platcom Ventures, Biotech Corp and the Intellectual Property Corporation Malaysia (MyIPO).



### **Strategies to Improve the Quality of Research and MyRA Score**

To strengthen our MyRA ratings score, several targets are to be emphasised and prioritised by the UMS management and academic staff. These are:

1. To ensure at least 50% (500) of Academic staff become Lead Researchers. In 2016, there were only 389 Lead Researchers among Academic staff.
2. To encourage publication in indexed journals (Scopus/ ISI), lecturers who publish will be given priority to attend overseas conferences paid for by the University.
3. To enhance the commercialisation potential of UMS research products, the scope for the award of the UMS Innovation Grant Scheme will be widened to include loans or business start-up funding. The Grant currently includes funding for improvement/ modification and marketability study of products.
4. To ensure the Water Research Unit Laboratory at the Faculty of Science and Natural Resources obtain accreditation so as to enable it to become a source of reference and training in aspects related to water research both at local and international levels. This will augur well for the income generation initiatives currently in place in UMS.



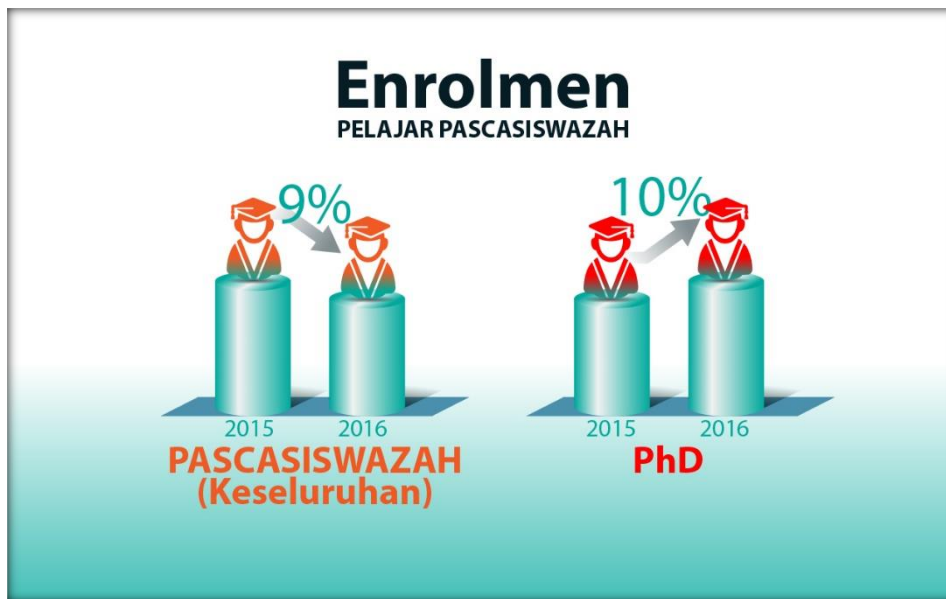
5. To establish and enhance research management services by strengthening current processes, policies and guidelines in order to make these more relevant to current developments and ensuring online research management.
6. To intensify Translational Research activities whereby research output is translated into "business and value".

**Ladies and Gentlemen, my beloved colleagues and students.**

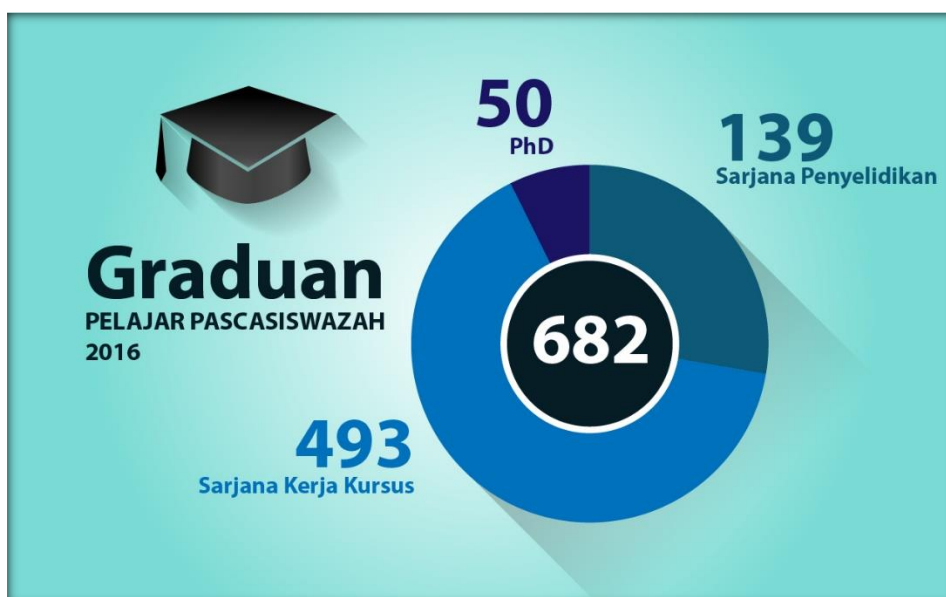
**(Developing Knowledgeable Minds)**

Further education at postgraduate level forms the nerve centre of formal knowledge development and expansion in terms of human civilisation in the modern era. In many countries, it is the backbone of national development and progress specifically in the context of technology, innovation and new ideas in society. As the basis for knowledge advancement in each field of specialisation offered in UMS, critical areas/ fields will be given focus in line with the University's mission and the national development agenda. In fact, scrutiny will not only be on the areas of learning with high marketability value, but also on fields of knowledge deemed critical to the national strategic requirements and those perceived as having a competitive edge. For example, opportunities in the agriculture sector, the potential of the tourism industry, abundant natural resources, oil and gas, and wealth in biodiversity will continue to be the core thrust and theme for postgraduate studies in UMS.

2016 witnessed a decrease in the enrolment of postgraduate students in UMS with 2,474 students compared to the 2015 figure of 2,703. This translated into a 9% downturn with 229 fewer students enrolled in postgraduate studies. This however was a universal situation in other Institutions of Higher Learning in Malaysia perhaps due to economic pressure and limited access to funding sources and lack of financial assistance. Nonetheless the enrolment into PhD programmes increased by 10% with 682 students compared to 620 in 2015; this is definitely a positive outlook on the challenges and potentials that UMS could explore.



Quality, delivery, professionalism, infrastructure and infostructure will continue to be aspects of aggressive focus in 2017 to further attract a larger postgraduate study enrolment. International postgraduates accounted for 98 of the overall number in 2016. 682 students graduated with postgraduate degrees in 2016 with 50 obtaining PhD qualifications, 139 research masters, and 493 masters by coursework.

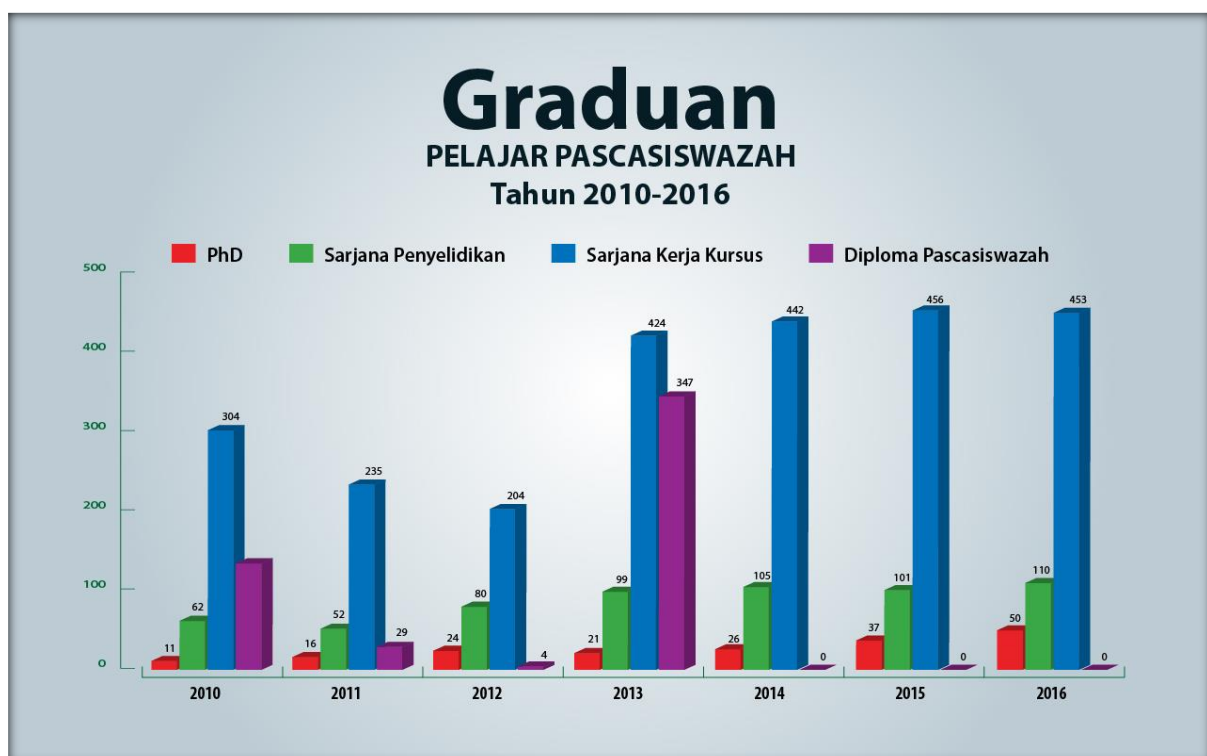


The number of PhD graduates in 2016 exceeded the initial projection of 48. The rate of Graduate-on-time (GOT) for PhD was 29% and 50% for masters.

For 2017, UMS has set a target of 730 students enrolled on PhD programmes, 899 on masters by research and 877 for masters by coursework. The graduating rate is aimed at 55 PhD, 145 masters by research and 450 masters by coursework. The target for international student enrolment in 2017 is set at 118, a realistic projection when

accompanied by aggressive promotional drives, exploration of potential markets in neighbouring countries, the introduction of new programmes and the improvement and strengthening of current delivery systems. The UMS success in restructuring existing programmes into generic degrees and conditional offers to future graduates will help expedite this process.

The proactive step of offering MBA and Master in Counselling Psychology programmes in Peninsular Malaysia is expected to contribute to the attainment of this projected enrolment size. Postgraduate programme delivery in UMS will be undergo continuous improvement and adjustments so as to make it dynamic and competitive in line with the overall objectives of the University specifically in the realisation of both UMS and MOHE projections.



**Ladies and Gentlemen, my beloved colleagues and students.**

**(Alumni as UMS ambassadors)**

UMS has to date produced a total of 57,092 graduates since its inception. This translates into a body of 56,266 local and 826 international alumni. The achievements and contributions of the alumni towards their alma mater and society position UMS as a prestigious and highly-esteemed institution.

I believe that this sense of belonging should be nurtured from the moment the young person assumes the UMS mantle and become our student, and not attempted only during their final year of study. To all of us in the UMS community, treat our students well for they will become

UMS ambassadors once they graduate. It is my hope that the UMS alumni stay connected with their alma mater regardless of wherever they might be. The Alumni card issued for two consecutive years during the University Convocation ceremony provides perks such as discounted book rates and utility from the UMS Publishers and UMS Cooperative.

In terms of the UMS Alumni Fund, the Alumni Centre successfully generated a total of RM220,0918.80 from various activities in 2016 bringing the overall accumulated funds to RM3,646,744.10. Thank you to all staff (Alumni) who had made contributions through salary deductions. It is my hope that many more will follow suit. Let us not complicate good deeds even if it is merely a smile.



Activities organised by the Alumni Centre are not limited to members of the alumni; various activities have in fact been conducted to boost graduate and career marketability. This has become the impetus to re-brand the Alumni Centre into the Alumni and Career Development Centre. I believe this rebranding will further expand the functions and objectives of the Alumni Centre and strengthen the value-added element of students and alumni.

**Ladies and Gentlemen, my beloved colleagues and students.**

**(Improving Industry and Community Networking)**

Since 2013, UMS has secured 18 Knowledge Transfer Programme (KTP) grants with an accumulated value of RM2,768,748.50 for a five-year duration (2012-2016). In 2016, UMS secured 2 additional KTP grants worth RM144, 238.00 under the Life-long Learning Scheme First Rolling plan which is almost 10% of the overall KTP grant total for 2016.

UMS researchers stamped their mark of excellence when they were awarded eight National Blue Ocean Strategy (NBOS 4.0) grants totalling RM689,000.00 made available under the Industry Relations Section of the MOHE. This is compared to the one lone grant secured in 2015 with a value of RM274,000.00. The overall total for NBOS grants therefore stands at RM963,000.00.

UMS for the first time was successful in securing 3 grants from the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry valued at RM70,000.00 under the "My Kampung My Future" scheme in Banggi Island, Kudat.



*Credit: SabahKini*

In 2016, UMS obtained monetary contributions or a commitment to contribute funding from several agencies. Currently, the University manages two endowment trust funds: the *Tabung Sumbangan Dana Warga UMS* with funds at RM12,315.85 and the Tun Said Keruak Scholarship valued at RM25,373.00. Boustead Holdings Berhad has pledged a total of RM500,000.00 from this year onwards specifically for improvements or upgrading of the UMS Aquarium and Muzium. Asan Foundation has committed to provide in-kind contributions in the form of books and journals related to business and finance – this will be housed in the UMS Library.

Felda Global Ventures (FGV) has made available a RM2 million endowment for a Professorial Chair under the Sustainable Palm Oil Research Unit (SPOR). The signing ceremony for this MoA was held on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2016 in conjunction with the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Faculty of Sustainable Agriculture at the Sandakan Campus. Cash totalling RM320,000.00 from Binapuri Sdn. Bhd. was also received in 2016.



MoU documents signed with YTL Corporation in February 2016 paved the way for the provision of special scholarships to UMS Civil Engineering and Accountancy students from semester 2015/ 2016 onwards.

UMS also received acknowledgement at the national level when the University was chosen to spearhead the formation of the Industry Centre of Excellence (ICoE) for the Agriculture Cluster. The ICoE is a 'signature programme' of the MOHE and complements the implementation of the National Economic Transformation Programme. The ICoE Agriculture Cluster focuses on the development of human capital and technology-sharing between Institutions of Higher Learning with industry in the agriculture sub- sector to ensure the sustainable development of the agriculture industry in the country. ICoE also aims to produce professional, innovative and competitive agriculture entrepreneurs.

Seven ICoE Agriculture Cluster training programmes involving students from throughout the country were conducted in 2016 in collaboration with supporting institutions and industry. As of December 2016, a total of RM508,361.90 was utilised for programme purposes whereby 500 students were successfully trained to enhance their marketability value once they graduate. This was a 1.5% realisation of the KPI set by the Ministry. In addition, the ICoE Agriculture Cluster online system was established for the use and convenience of all supporting institutions.

With the re-assignment of the endowment and contribution function to the new Generation and Investment Unit, the Centre for Industry and Community Network (CICN) will focus on the establishment of network links between industry and community. Apart from consolidating current functions specifically those related to community, other planned programmes are:

1. **"1 Faculty- 1 Industry- 1 Community"** - this programme is implemented based on existing initiatives such as CEO@ Faculty, CEO@University, ICON@UMS and various other MOHE/ NBOS grants and collaborations with the corporate sector under their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes.
2. **Overseas Industrial Training** – this is to encourage more students from the various Faculties to plan and experience their Industry Training in other countries whether through their own initiatives or with the assistance of existing programmes. The best module for this is the Student Aquaculture Industrial Training in Overseas (SAITO) in the Aquaculture Programme whereby the shared farm is used to generate income to fund students' Industrial Training in Japan in collaboration with Kindai University, Japan.
3. **Regional Digital Maker Hub** – this is to realise the necessary infrastructure and facilities for the implementation of various programmes and courses for UMS students, students and teachers in schools, and the general public by utilising a 'self- financing model'.
4. **Increase in grant/ funding** - for community programmes so as to encourage applications for the various funding sources to support community programmes.
5. **ICoE Agriculture Programmes** – as of 13<sup>th</sup> January 2017, 14 Working Papers were submitted to the ICoE Agriculture Cluster Secretariat from various supporting institutions in Malaysia with a combined total of approximately RM1.1 million. These Working Papers will be conveyed to MOHE for new funding application for 2017 together with other ICoE Clusters.

UMS through CICON is committed to becoming an innovative and acclaimed institution at the global level, relevant, referred to and respected through strategic and smart partnerships with government agencies, industry and community in its quest towards achieving holistic and balanced human capital development, efficient management and high-impact outcome or output.

**Ladies and Gentlemen, my beloved colleagues and students.**

**(Empowering Entrepreneurship)**

In 2016, the Entrepreneurship Research and Development Centre (ERDEC) trained a total of 1,832 Entrepreneurship students through

various seminars, courses, and business activity programmes. 45 students who were involved in business while studying are registered with ERDEC, and a projected 150 are expected to become entrepreneurs in 2017 after their graduation. Among programmes which has had impact on UMS students is the NBOS 'My Best Buy' Farmers' Market in collaboration with the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA).



Held every Thursday, 20 students are currently involved in this programme with sales reaching the RM25,000.00 mark or RM100,000.00 a month. This collaboration led UMS, through the MyAgrosis Club, to set up two K-Shoppe (one at the Labuan International Campus with average daily sales of RM1,500.00 and another in the Sandakan Faculty of Sustainable Agriculture with RM3,000.00 daily).



17 teaching staff were given exposure on aspects of entrepreneurship skills teaching while 3 lecturers attended an Entrepreneurial Educator Enhancement Program (3EP). In terms of research, a total of

RM854,540.00 in funding was secured with 1 being a research grant and the other 5 community grants.

There is nevertheless still room for improvement for the achievements in 2016 in terms of more thorough planning and systematic implementation. It is with this aim that ERDEC will launch an online student entrepreneurship training system. This system will enable student entrepreneurship training and skills to be recorded and for training transcripts to be generated at the end of every semester whereby potential entrepreneurs may be identified. ERDEC in collaboration with the Technobiz Club in the Faculty will also launch an online business portal accessible at [www.tamu.ums.edu.my](http://www.tamu.ums.edu.my) through web and mobile apps applications. This virtual market provides an avenue to both staff and students to engage in appropriate online businesses as reflected in the era of digital economy.

For 2017, ERDEC has structured a Comprehensive Entrepreneurship Strategy Plan anchored on five core strategies. Three of these are focused on student entrepreneurship development while the other two refer to academic and community development elements:

- 1) Sustainable Entrepreneurship Culture;
- 2) Empowering Entrepreneurship Learning;
- 3) Inculcating Effectuate Entrepreneurship;
- 4) Competency in Teaching and Learning; and
- 5) Community-based Research.

The implementation of the first strategy involves making available courses and entrepreneurship skills seminars with and without credits. The implementation can take effect through the organising of Sabah SME Week at state level, Young Entrepreneurship Mentor (YEM), Faculty-Incubator programmes, Professional Entrepreneurship Programme (PEP), National Entrepreneurship Month, and Basic Entrepreneurship Development.

The second strategy focuses on teaching methods and entrepreneurship course content across curriculum. This strategy encompasses the implementation of learning methods such as problem-based learning, experiential learning, student-centred learning, and phenomenon learning. This effort augurs well with the UMS aim of producing responsive, innovative and competitive graduates.

The third strategy revolves around the nurturing of entrepreneurship amongst students and graduates. To ensure more students become involved in business while studying, business space has to be made available. To this end, several solutions have been identified such as creating more Student Business Centres (SBC), expanding the Student Business Farm at the Sandakan and Labuan International Campus, and providing Student Malls and Student Kiosk Areas.

2017 will also witness the launching of an additional K-Shoppe in the Main Campus. UMS is currently in the planning stage on launching a shop, SBC-OneB, in One Borneo as an avenue for our students to conduct business outside of the University. This shop will at the same time provide opportunities to promote UMS products that have commercial value. Apart from this provision of business space, the Entrepreneur Club, Enactus Club and MyAgrosis Club will also expand their membership. A new club that emphasises on the concept of 'Green Business' will be launched this year. This Club is a direct outcome of the collaboration between UMS and Yes Green with the Ministry of Energy, Green Technology and Water.

To ensure that these three strategies could be implemented, the implementation of the fourth strategy, teaching staff competency, is very significant. Among the programmes envisaged for this purpose are Entrepreneurship Leadership Programme (ELP), Entrepreneurial Educator Enhancement Programme (3EP) and Entrepreneurship Training of Trainers (ToT). The teaching staff joining the training will be drawn from both academic and administrative sections. These measures will help ensure entrepreneurship education benefits the UMS community and the local population. Teaching staff competency will ensure the smooth and effective implementation of entrepreneurship programmes in UMS.

The final strategy, community-based research programmes, positions UMS to contribute to the development of small and medium industries in Malaysia specifically in Sabah. Community-based research initiatives need to be intensified; to this end, the Public Private Research Network (PPRN) provides entrepreneurship research grants based on innovative technology for small and medium industries. ERDEC through its Fellows will strive to secure such grants for the sake of SMI development in Sabah. Other community-based grants such as NBOS and KTP will be increased in 2017.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen, my beloved colleagues and students.**

### **(Facilities and Environment)**

In 2016, UMS successfully decreased the amount of power consumption in the campus by 9.7% which translated into a savings of RM1,326,782.94. Similarly, the utility bill for telephone usage witnessed savings of RM19,347.51 (-5.28%). However we were not as successful with our water use whereby our bill for this utility actually increased by 8.38% or RM195,203.00 which is attributed mainly to a rise in current water tariffs. Water bill notwithstanding, these savings in power and telephone utility charges are indicative of our commitment towards more effective and economical use of resources.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Rolling Plan in the 10<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan with five projects are catalysts to the success of the Development and Maintenance Department

in ensuring the completion of said projects. Three out of these five projects are the acquisition of equipment for the Biotechnology Research Institute, Faculty of Sustainable Development and Faculty of Medicine and Health Science. In addition, projects to rehabilitate farming land, planting plots, ponds and the drainage system at the Faculty of Sustainable Agriculture, rectify defects at the Labuan International Campus building, and install infrastructure convenience at the Main Campus are some of the continuing projects that have been completed.

Two new projects currently at the final stage of completion are the construction of the Science and Technology Preparatory Centre and the Integrated Laboratory at the cost of RM20 million. Constructed under the full supervision of UMS through the Development and Maintenance Department, these projects are validation of our ability and professionalism to undertake, supervise and successfully complete work regardless of size. We can also take pride that our ability here is regarded as a benchmark for other Public Universities to emulate or replicate. All these projects fall under the 11<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan and are expected to be completed by November 2017.

To assist the University in aspects of prudent spending, cost-cutting measures and more efficient use of utility have been implemented such as the use of induction lamp and spot light induction lighting, and the installation of solar panels on the rooftops of bus stops around the campus. All these work, completed according to a staggered timeline, are expected to demonstrate very significant impact on the UMS utility billing in 2017. The move to utilise water from water catchment lakes for landscape purposes and the closure of garden taps are measures to ensure that usage is proper and with due care.



**Ladies and Gentlemen, my beloved colleagues and students.**

**(Upgrading Digital Delivery)**

The world where information is at one's fingertips is the fastest access for education and integral for the UMS community. It is with this consideration that the Management of the University has taken the proactive step to upgrade the WIFI UMS system to enhance its coverage and accessibility from all corners of the campus. Several projects have been implemented to ensure this coverage encompasses all University ground.

85% of the access point installation works have been completed as of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016 with the rest completed fully in February 2017. Coverage at the Tun Mustapha and Tun Fuad College Residences is fully complete while the work completion at E College Residence is 85%.

The completion rate up to the present time for the rest is as follows: 10% at Kingfisher College Residence primarily at the Student Affairs Administration Block; 80% at USIA College Residence; and 90% at ALFA and BETA College Residences in UMSKAL. The work is anticipated to be 100% completed by December 2017 in locations where the access signals are still weak or sporadic.

The UMS Journal Management System has been in operation since June 2016. The system is established with the main objectives of providing a central information repository for all publications especially those published by the University, and ease of online access to facilitate the sharing of knowledge with the public at large. This activity indirectly supports our quest to improve our Webometrik ranking in aspects of impact, transparency and presence. To date, four science category journals and 14 from the field of social science and humanities have been created.

**Ladies and Gentlemen, my beloved colleagues and students.**

**(Optimising Management Expenditure)**

It is true what they say about money: "When there's money, everything is possible; when there is none, death seems a better option." 2016 had been a year of constant challenges throughout the world with the unstable global economy affecting many of us in various ways. The appreciation of the American Dollar, the sharp downward slump in the price of crude oil and other commodities for instance impacted our country greatly. I am afraid 2017 does not look any better, and we will continue to be confronted with all manners of economic shock.

MOHE has been proactive in this aspect and earlier on initiated measures to lessen the dependence of public Institutions of Higher Learning on government funding. The Prime Minister through the MOHE approved a total of RM344,271,000.00 to UMS for 2017, inclusive of allocation for

internal sources at RM101,821,000.00. In black and white, this means that the total allocation that will be channelled to UMS in 2017 is only RM242,450,000.00.

However the drastic cut to our operating expenditure does not mean a drastic cut in our activities or programmes. With the 23% reduction in funding (compared to the amount received for 2016), UMS will have to self- source the additional amount necessary for the daily management and running of our University which is projected at RM399,000,000.00, a figure that will maintain and support institution growth and ensure the smooth running of teaching and learning activities. Taking into consideration all factors and costs, UMS has projected a deficit of RM156,550,000.00 which would have to be sourced or procured from within the University itself. This indeed will be our collective yoke in 2017.



For the information of those present this morning, the UMS operating expenditure for 2016 was recorded at RM393,179,460.00 with internal sources utilisation at only RM58,607,447.00. 2016 also witnessed UMS initiating several high- impact projects with projections of high returns or income generation which we hope would help the University weather the unstable and uncertain economic scenario in the coming years:

- 1) Aquaculture Incubator Development Project (New hatchery) at IPMB



- 2) UMS Livestock Feed Research Centre sited on University land in Apin-Apin, Keningau



- 3) IPB Research Project



**Ladies and Gentlemen, my beloved colleagues and students.**

**(Save and Generate)**

2017 is going to be a year of challenges; I therefore ask that all Deans, Directors, Heads of Departments, Management and members of the UMS family to face together whatever obstacles might come our way. When we are together in one thought and one mind, we are strong; but when we are in disarray, we will fall and we will fail.

To address the drastic RM156 million shortfall in government funding, I am hopeful that everyone of us will rise and protect our beloved institution from falling and failing. Let us practise prudence in our action, spending or planning. Towards this end, for 2017 the University will implement the concept of one-line budgeting whereby the respective *Pusat Tanggungjawab* (PTJ) is empowered to determine the breakdown of each vot on condition that no additional allocation is allowed.

The University expenditure will be restructured according to priorities and needs from time to time without affecting the teaching and learning process. Initiatives for prudent and streamlined spending are as below:

- 1) Decreasing fixed commitments that are within control;
- 2) Re-consolidating allocations under Travelling Expenses and Living Allowance (OS B21000) and Maintenance and Repair (VOT B28000);
- 3) Practising prudent spending by postponing non-necessary activities such as *Dasar Baru* dan One-off;
- 4) Conducting fewer entertainment activities that do not impact or has minimal impact on University excellence; and
- 5) Spending according to ability or available resources.

We as members of the UMS community can play our part in applying prudent spending in our work. For example, when we are outstation or conducting work outside the University, we could utilise Grab or Uber car services which are undoubtably cheaper than a regular taxi.

Nonetheless eventhough there is a shortfall in allocation, the University will not compromise on efficient financial management. I sincerely hope everyone of us here today share the same commitment, are united and will continue to strive so as to ensure our higher education programmes are implemented.

**Income Generation Strategies**

All quarters must therefore work together to identify possible solutions to address the shortfall in allocation. Income generation can be in the form of implementing activities that generate revenue, or through strategic investment. For 2017, the amount needed by the University to maintain or sustain operations at optimum level is approximately RM156 million, an

increase of nearly RM100 million compared to the RM58 million that was generated through various activities in 2016.

Student tuition fees are the main source of income for the University; in 2016, fees contributed 60% to the total income for UMS. Alhamdulillah, the student debt amount decreased by 36.6% in 2016 which is equivalent to RM1.675 million. The percentage of debt repayment collection for the same year rose to 95% or RM48 million. I am hopeful that this momentum can be sustained or made even better in 2017. I therefore call upon the Deans, Directors and relevant parties to intensify the tuition fee collection drive of their respective Faculties and Centres.

However, the income generation performance of PTJs recorded a significant decrease in 2016 with a percentage of -33.63% compared to 2015. As of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016, internal income generation in the various PTJs recorded a mere RM755,885.30. It is indeed a huge loss if we do not optimise the usage of our available space, facilities and services. Let us all be creative in promoting what we readily have here in our University; let us be proactive in making what we have work to our advantage.

I would like to once again remind everyone here that even as we become engrossed in devising strategies to generate income, we must remember that the processes and procedures of that particular project management or income generation programme need to be in accordance with laws and requirements in practice. All revenue and related expenditure are to be channelled through the University Bursar.

I would like to announce here that permission was obtained from *Majlis Ugama Islam Sabah* (MUIS) in December 2016 for the University to act in the capacity of *Nazir Khas* for *Tabung Wakaf Tunai Pendidikan UMS*. *Tunai Wakaf* contributions can be made at the Bursary or through monthly salary deductions. Up to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016, a total of RM21,453.89 was collected from staff through the Endowment Section. It is hoped that this amount would rise significantly in 2017.

The securing of additional funding through *wakaf* and endowment has vast potential for expansion. The Endowment Section for instance successfully collected a total of RM18,600,000.00 in cash and in-kind throughout 2016. This year I urge all parties to collaborate with the Endowment Section and the Bursary to secure funds in the form of cash, asset development or others for the University especially those that involve the UMS Alumni or external industry. As the saying goes, the joy in life is not in what we acquire but in what we can offer to others.

**(New Initiatives)**

We are committed towards turning UMS into an institution that gives back to society, and independent and sustainable in its financial management. UMS aspires to achieve continuous academic excellence, disseminate knowledge and produce individuals who are not only knowledgeable and possess noble values but also norms that could drive the economy and financial sustainability. To propel UMS forward as a public Institution of Higher Learning capable of generating leaders and an intellectual society endowed with noble values, the University must have capable human resources with high integrity. We are all integral assets of UMS with our own roles and responsibilities. I would like to reflect for a moment on what I had highlighted in my maiden speech as Vice Chancellor in 2012:

(Harun, 2012:10)

“Working as a team is an important pillar in the Institution. We are strong when we are united, and we fail when we are in disarray; we stand together in good times and in bad times; Insyah’ Allah all work become easy and more effective.”

(Harun, 2012:16)

“The involvement of all staff whether academic or non- academic at all levels in the Department, School, Centre, Institute and Unit is very welcome. Each individual should have a role and is expected to uphold and support activities at Department and University level. A monitoring system will be effected to ensure the core mechanism of each JSPIU is functioning and able to contribute to the progress of UMS.”

(Harun, 2012:16)

The current human resource strength in UMS stands at 2,866 with 1,084 academicians and 1,782 administrative staff. Therefore we as integral assets of the University confronted with challenges at work and in life are in a position to determine the quality and productivity of the organisation. Every year, there would be a small number of civil servants identified as low performers. To ensure that the delivery of public service in UMS is not compromised, the circular *Pekeliling Perkhidmatan Bil. 7 tahun 2015* provides specific guidelines on the implementation of the Exit Policy for low-performing civil servants.



The University authorities endorsed the use of this circular at the *Mesyuarat PBPU Bil.7/2016 kali ke-201* held on 30 June 2016. This will be implemented in 2017 for the LNPT 2016 staff performance appraisal.

The Exit Policy empowers the government to terminate the employment or retire low-performing civil service staff. Personnel who are retired under this policy are still able to access facilities similar to normal retirement such as a monthly pension, gratuity, cash in lieu of leave, healthcare benefits, and a pensioner's card. Those under the Employee Provident Fund (EPF) will receive their contribution plus dividends and other benefits but minus the gratuity.

Low- performing staff are classified as those with *LNPT* appraisal scores of below 60% and who fail to achieve their set KPIs. The Exit Policy is applicable across the various groups and grades including the top management in the University.

To ensure the proper and transparent implementation of the Exit Policy, a Psychological Intervention Panel is formed to recommend appropriate or suitable intervention programmes for the affected parties. The role and responsibility of the Panel here is to consider and endorse intervention suggestions and overall evaluation of the staff under observation.

*Rakan Pembimbing Perkhidmatan Awam* (AKRAB) was established to provide assistance in the monitoring period of the low-performing staff as well as to act as peer counselor to help steer the personel towards his full potential and possible excellence.

The implementation of the Exit Policy will help retain committed and high-performing staff, a positive step towards UMS attuning its competitive edge in line with its aim of creating a high-performing public service sector with integrity. This is also in sync with the autonomy secured by UMS in July 2016. It is therefore pertinent that we continue to strive together and improve and upgrade through human resource optimisation from both the academic and management sectors.

From 2017, the employment and renewal of contract staff will be tightened and take into consideration strategic needs of the University as well as the performance of the individual in question. What this means is that the number of new contract staff will be fewer, and some among the current ones would no longer have their contracts renewed. This move is to optimise expenditure in anticipation of even more challenging economic quagmires ahead.

It is therefore critical for the University to exercise smart spending of the reduced government allocation. The key phrases here would be 'optimising available resources' and 'generating own income' to fund current expenditure and in the days ahead. Our institution must exercise prudence and care in the usage of the very limited allocation. However, although we might cut back on non-essential spending, we must not compromise on the quality of our services or graduates.

In our bid to produce graduates of quality and nurture their potentials, we must always ensure that our efforts are anchored on the precepts of the National Education Philosophy:

“Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically balanced and harmonious, based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high level of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society and the nation at large.”

UMS similarly has a vision and mission reflective of the National Education Philosophy: to become a university that is innovative and world-class, with intellectual excellence in a diverse range of subject matter, and acknowledged internationally through excellence and quality in teaching, learning, research, publication, and community service while at the same time producing graduates who are equally balanced in content knowledge and positive personal attributes.

Kiai Hj. Maemun Zubair once said,

“So the teacher does not need to aspire to make someone smart. Otherwise you would become angry when your students are not smart. The sincerity disappears. What is important is your desire to impart knowledge and to teach well. Whether your student becomes smart or not, leave that to Allah. Just continue praying that he might eventually be enlightened.”



I am confident the Student Affairs Department will continue its volunteer and local community programmes in order to provide a more encompassing experience to our students. Apart from ensuring the acquisition of soft skills, matters pertaining to the welfare of students are also addressed such as accommodation and conducive facilities as well as the structuring of dynamic training and leadership programmes as preparation before graduation.

To improve the marketability of local graduates, MOHE through *Lonjakan 1 PPPM (PT)* established the Integrated Cumulative Grade Point Average (iCGPA) system as a holistic measurement of the level and development of students from Semester 1 until the end of their study. I am happy to announce that UMS will begin implementing the iCGPA in the 2017/ 2018 session where it would be piloted in the Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Business, Economics and Accountancy. For others, preparation needs to be in place to commence such system in the 2018/ 2019 session.

UMS will also introduce *Sarjana Muda Pendarasan Islam* a new undergraduate programme in the 2017/2018 session with an initial intake of 20 students. Two other programmes recently approved by the MOHE are the Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education and Bachelor of Oil and Gas Engineering.

To provide opportunities for STPM school leavers from low-income families to enrol in UMS, the B40 programme which began in the 2013/ 2014 session will be continued this year whereby 100 places will be made available. 67 of the B40 students in the first intake graduated during the last UMS Convocation ceremony. The move by UMS to create this opportunity has recently received praise from YB Dato' Seri Idris Jusoh, the Minister of Higher Education.



I would also like to emphasise here that UMS will continue with the implementation of *Ekosistem Kondusif Sektor Awam* (EKSA) with improvements made in the implementation practice of the 5S. EKSA supports the creation of a conducive workplace and a corporate image. UMS has initiated measures since the beginning of this year to secure EKSA certification by October 2017. To the Deans, Directors and Heads of Departments, be more proactive and extend your cooperation to ensure every member of the UMS community has the opportunity to become involved in EKSA.

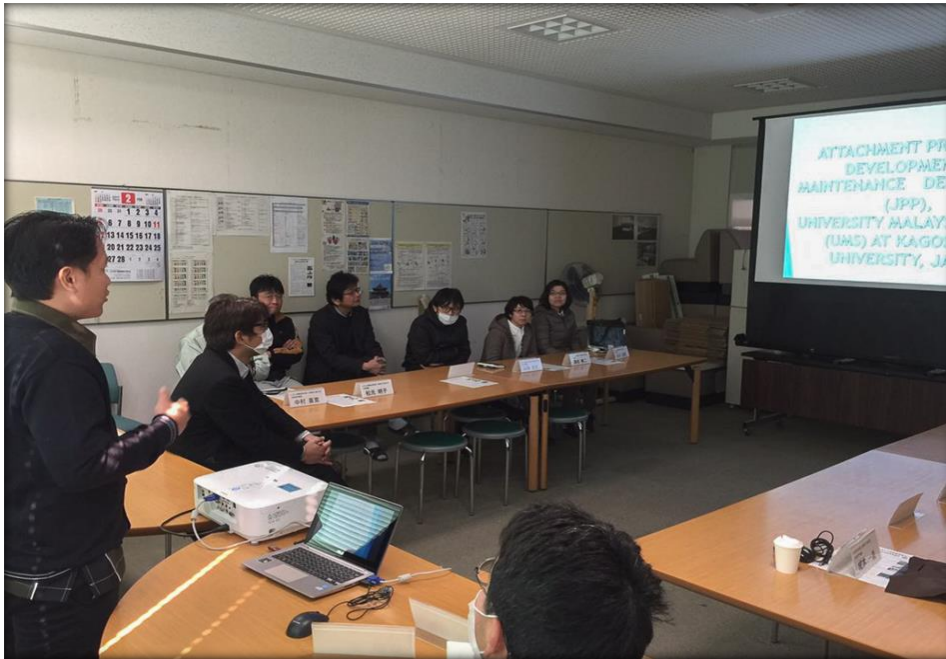
**Ladies and Gentlemen, my beloved colleagues and students.**

**(UMS-NorthSouthbound Friendship Policy)**

The UMS-NorthSouthbound Friendship policy is a programme that paves the way for cooperation with strategic partners from countries to the north of Borneo such as Taiwan, China, Japan, and Korea, and Australia and Kalimantan to the south.



Although the funding for this partnership is relatively small, the policy of internationalisation is very commendable in that it allows our students to experience life and school in a different (foreign) setting thus avoid being the perennial big toad in a small pond. The exposure to a different environment for both staff and student can bring enlightenment and a fresh outlook. This type of cooperation or agreement with foreign institutions brings immense benefits to our side. For example, we recently sent two of our engineers for a 15-day stint at Kagoshima University in Japan for them to observe, learn and understand the work ethics and culture of the Japanese people.



In 2016 several of our staff were sent to GIST. We will continue with the practice of sending students and staff overseas as a form of training. With the current cutbacks in available funding we have to be proactive and creative in sourcing for funds. Perhaps we can take the SAITO and Shared Farmland model as examples. In SAITO, students from the Aquaculture programme at the Faculty of Science and Natural Resources with the collaboration of Borneo Marine Research Institute (IPMB) have been successful in generating funds totalling RM120,000.00 every year, a sufficient amount to finance their 10- week industrial training stint in Kindai University, Japan. Students from Year 1 onwards would be trained to become independent and care and manage fish stock to be sold with occasional monitoring by their supervisors. 214 students have taken the opportunity for industrial training in Kindai since 2000. This is a good example of fund-sourcing that can be replicated in other study programmes in UMS.



Every Faculty should seriously consider these types of initiatives to address the monetary challenges that our University is confronted with. It is no doubt a universal issue among public universities in Malaysia with continuous cuts in annual institutional allocation whereby by 2020, 70% of the operating budget has to be self-sourced. The 2017 Budget announcement in October 2016 saw a reduction of RM74 million for the overall funds allocated to UMS.

Tight discipline, wisdom, collective spirit, thinking outside the box and honesty are pre-requisites of the UMS community in facing the trials and tribulations of these coming days. We should take note of the journey and survival of the banking industry in Malaysia. We must heed the lessons learnt from the death of several banking giants. Closure, mergers and a host of unthinkable outcomes could happen when we lose sight of our aims. To ensure the survival of our beloved University, we have to practise a serious, wise and optimum style of management without monetary and human resource wastage, or leakages anywhere in the system. Every academician has to be performing, researching and publishing, and teaching. This is after all what differentiates a university academician and a teacher in school.

In this climate of challenges, it is time to optimise the use of available or ready resources within our gates. This includes the aspect of teaching and learning. Let me remind everyone here that this year, lecturers are encouraged to teach across faculties and institutes, that is, teaching similar courses but in different Faculties or institutes. I do not want to hear of lecturers teaching only one subject to a few students throughout the semester while his counterparts are teaching full loads. I would like to

remind the Deans and Heads of Programme here to monitor and ensure that this does not happen in their respective places.

**Ladies and Gentlemen, my beloved colleagues and students.**

**(CONCLUSION)**

Generosity in a man is a commendable trait and required by all religions and culture. A man's willingness to share his wealth with society reflects a noble heart. Allah SWT in Surah al- Imran verse 92 reminds us:

"You shall never attain good unless you spend your favourite things; and Allah knows whatever you spend."

The hadith conveyed by Amr bin Auf tells of a saying by Rasulullah SAW:

"Verily the alms of a Muslim will lengthen his life; and protect him from a bad death; and Allah will make him the redeemer of sin, pride and boastfulness."

(Hadis Riwayat Thabrani)

Albert Pike, an American Statesman, once said: "Whatever we do for ourselves will die with us; but whatever we do for others and for this world will remain."

Based on these sayings, I call upon every member of the UMS community to instil the habit of giving for the good of ourselves and society. To encourage this spirit of giving, UMS has created several endowment funds for education, welfare, development, and conservation purposes. Through these endowments, the UMS community can choose to donate a fixed sum from as low as RM3.00 a month through salary deductions which would then be channelled to the endowment fund of your choice.

I would like to stress here that these endowment funds were created not for the purpose of replacing the 'lost' amount in the government allocation. I can assure everyone here that the University is still able to continue with its planned education development agenda and capable yet of ensuring the welfare of each and everyone of us. Your contribution which is tax- exempted will help in some small measure the survival of our beloved institution.

Remember that satisfaction in life lies not in what we acquire but in what we can afford to give away. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt gratitude to 25 UMS personnel who have been contributing to the UMS Community Fund through salary deductions since 2015. I hope more of you will donate to the various endowment funds, some of which will soon be established.



Before I end my speech, allow me to share some thoughts to help us weather through these challenges and uncertain times. For this, I would like to quote Hamka: "Our task is not the result. Our job is to try, for it is in the trying that we find and we learn to build opportunities to bear fruit." We do not need to sigh in the face of difficulty; instead we should treat it as a challenge and not a problem for whatever happens can only make us smarter. Use whatever we have to the best of our ability because what we have today is actually the best.



Every work requires patience and determination because it is our responsibility. Nurture a cooperative spirit, help each other, and commit towards reaching your goals for then there would be happiness and we would be able to appreciate what we feel. Cleanse and purify your heart and do the job entrusted to you. Sincerity in doing any work is the spirit to our habits and our calm.

To close, let us together reflect on the wisdom of Imam al-Ghazali:

- What is momentary – ‘Time’
- What is deceptive – ‘the World’
- What is forthcoming – ‘Death’
- What is all-consuming – ‘Worldly desires’
- What is heavy - ‘Trust’
- What is not easy – ‘Sincerity’
- What is easy – ‘Going towards Sin’
- What is difficult – ‘Being patient’
- What is often forgotten – ‘Being grateful’
- What destroys good deeds – ‘Gossiping’
- What leads to Hell – ‘Our tongue’
- What is priceless - ‘Faith’
- What soothes the heart – ‘True friends’
- What Allah SWT asks of us – ‘Penance’

Reflect. Think. Reflect yet again. May our hearts be filled with blessings and grace. Insya-Allah.

Wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

Thank you.



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