

Creating a global college

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■ By KOH SOO LING

CONCENTRATING on national needs alone is a thing of the past if universities are to compete internationally. Amongst other criteria, the recent *Times Higher Education Supplement World University Rankings 2006* placed emphasis on the number of international students in universities.

It is therefore not surprising that Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), a new player in this highly lucrative education sector, is organising a conference aptly themed *Internationalisation of Universities: Current Understanding and Future Directions* on Wednesday at Concorde Hotel, Shah Alam.

This event is held in conjunction with the 50th anniversary celebrations of the establishment of UiTM. The conference draws eminent vice-chancellors and presidents from New Zealand, Australia, United Kingdom, Russia, Japan and Malaysia to debate crucial and timely issues on higher education such as internationalisation, governance of world-class university, university ranking and competition in higher education.

Organising chairperson Associate Professor Habibah Ashari says: "The Ministry of Higher Education has urged universities to 'internationalise' their campuses by hiking their intake of international students, encouraging cross-border research collaborations, increasing staff and students' mobility through exchange programmes and accreditation of university curriculum.

"Presently, we have international students in our postgraduate programmes but we need to get together to learn more about marketing strategies and off-shore education."

Internationalisation spells changes.

Professor Denise Bradley, vice-chancellor and president of the University of South Australia, says that with internationalisation,

micro and macro changes are required. According to her, internationalisation strategies, when put into effect, require change at every level as well as a shift in how people think and behave. In short, the culture of the university must be transformed.

The need for a less restricted emphasis and the fluidity of a transborder education are necessary for changes to take place.

Manchester Metropolitan University pro vice-chancellor international Professor Richard Murray believes that the future of a restricted emphasis on catering for local, regional or national needs will need to be reviewed.

In his talk, Murray will address aspects of the discussions now taking place around selectivity, curriculum development, partnerships with overseas institutions and the strengthening of support services.

The fluidity of a transborder education is necessary so that students can transfer their studies easily and be assured of continuity in their education. University of Hertfordshire vice-chancellor Professor Tim Wilson will discuss the formation of a successful network over a decade of international development in his talk entitled *Creating a Global College for the Next Generation of Graduates*. Wilson will examine both successful and unsuccessful partnerships as well as problems of cross-cultural operation and international barriers to increased student mobility.

The highlight of the conference will be a forum for vice-chancellors to share experiences and lessons learnt on internationalisation at their respective universities. The one-day conference provides extensive opportunities for networking with international education providers.

For more information, call Habibah at 03-5522-7001 or visit uitm.edu.my/wcvc2006