

Thumbs up for Project

By Fatiha Junaidi

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Journalism on Campus (JOC) project has received the ministerial stamp of approval and appreciation.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Khaled Nordin was full of praise for the project and its first product, the NST-UiTM Varsity Voice, during JOC's official launch at NSTP's Balai Berita here on Oct 26.

The Minister was particularly impressed by the ability of UiTM students to produce two issues of the monthly campus newspaper, which he felt reflected their talent, enthusiasm and determination.

"This project offers the right kind of exposure that is needed by students to gain work experience before they take the next critical step in their lives to build their careers," Khaled told the gathering.

"It is a wonderful opportunity for students to explore their potential and prepare themselves for employment, whether in journalism or other fields."

Also present at the launch were NSTP Group Managing Editor Datuk Zainul Arifin Mohammed Isa, UiTM Vice Chancellor Datuk Professor Ir Dr Sahol Hamid Abu Bakar, NST Group Editor Datuk Syed Nadzri Syed Harun, JOC advisors and supervisors, as well as 30 UiTM students involved in the project.

Following the launch, UiTM students presented the Minister with a framed copy of Varsity Voice's second issue.

The JOC project is undertaken by NSTP with the support of the Higher Education Ministry to provide industrial training, improve the level of English and enhance soft skills among university students.

Varsity Voice is a collaborative effort between NSTP and UiTM and represents the first newspaper published by a public university.

The initial year-long project will see the publication of eight issues with a monthly print order of 25,000 copies to be distributed to all UiTM campuses nationwide, including Sabah and Sarawak.

Zainul commented that the newspaper project provided an opportunity for NSTP "...to learn as much as the students".

Through the project, he said NSTP would gain a better insight into the kind of news and content that would appeal to the younger generation.

Echoing Zainul's sentiments, Sahol expressed his pride and pleasure at the steady progress made by the students in producing a newspaper that was informative and interesting.

“There are many benefits to this project such as its ability to enhance the soft skills and motivation of our students, and at the same time, broaden and open their minds to the real world,” said the Vice Chancellor.

Later at the Press Conference, the Minister pledged to assist fresh graduates get a job after they graduate.

In giving this assurance, Khaled said MoHE would assist graduates to find employment within six months of graduation.

“We have set the bar very high compared with many other countries like Australia, where the expected time frame for graduates to find employment is two years after graduating,” he said.

Statistics compiled by MoHE indicate that 70 per cent of public university graduates succeed in finding a job within the six-month period, although the Minister believes the proportion is higher since the data is collected from the third month upon graduation.

Khaled said the Ministry was optimistic about achieving the target as graduates from public universities were equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the needs and demands of industry.

On this score, he emphasised the importance of internships between institutions of higher learning and the corporate sector.

“If students are able to gain work experience in the working world, they will have the x-factor to gain employment when they graduate.”

(Ed: This article first appeared in Varsity Voice, a monthly publication jointly produced by the New Straits Times and Universiti Teknoogi MARA (UiTM) under the newspaper's Journalism on Campus project.)

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