

Leveraging on intellectual assets

■ By Michael Sun

UNIVERSITI Putra Malaysia (UPM) fosters an Alumni culture that gets graduates to contribute to their alma mater.

"Wherever you are, even after your graduation, you are not cut off from UPM. Our alumni constitute the intellectual asset of the university and represent the university," said Associate Professor Dr Rohani Ibrahim, director of the Centre for Career and Alumni Services. "As of August last year, we have been taking an active interest in the career path of our graduates, organising career placement services and workshops by leveraging on UPM's alumni," she added.

Rohani works closely with the alumni association, at building C13, the Alumni and Career Office at UPM in Serdang, to implement programmes at state level where state chapters of the association have their annual gathering.

"We send students for mentoring in their practical training to acquire entrepreneurship skills, and we have active chapters in Ke-

MUCH INTEREST: Students at a seminar organised by UPM's Centre for Career and Alumni Services.

dah, and in Johor where the Serdang Sunshine UPM Alumni Chapter is," she said.

On Oct 9, the UPM Alumni Sarawak Chapter will be launched in Kuching. "We expect 500 or more participants to turn up at the Hilton so that we can raise funds for the university endowment of a Chair in Agriculture, scholarships and awards," she added.

"We hope our alumni will

support UPM's research activities." Alumni UPM organises two career lecture series and motivational talks every month when UPM alumni in the private sector, entrepreneurs and the government sector are invited to give talks to help open career pathways for students.

The alumni office also disseminates newsletters and the quarterly campus newspaper, *Tribune Putra Wadah Gagasan Keprihatinan*, to

members.

It is at the chapter level that UPM leverages on prominent alumni association members who are in the government or private sector. "In Sarawak, we leverage on our alumni in the Farmers Organisation Authority Malaysia (Lembaga Pertubuhan Peladang) and the Department of Agriculture," she added.

"After Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin was appointed the



Agriculture and Agro-based Industries Minister, he addressed UPM students and lecturers," she said.

UPM has a strong alumni network in the agricultural vocation with many graduate managers working in plantations, at the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) and at the Jabatan Haiwan.

"Some of the funds raised can be used to bring farmers back to the university. Our Outreach programme on campus reaches out to colleges to help students," she added. There are alumni programmes to benefit the community and which the university would like to pursue, but the organisation is focused on students' careers and this has been captured and updated on UPM's computer system, much like a "Jobstreet" menu.

By next year, UPM should be able to conduct an alumni survey through the Internet. The need for an alumni association started a long time ago and Rohani is optimistic about its growth. "We have close to 100,000 alumni," she said.

Although the university was established in 1935, it



wasn't until 1969 that the Pertanian Alumni Association was formed. It was registered as Persatuan Alumni UPM in 1972.

"We started registering the records of our alumni in 1999," she added.

Some 200 companies have been invited to participate in UPM's six-week career fair and on-campus interviews starting mid-January to end-February. A three-day UPM Entrepreneurship and Career Exposition commencing from Jan 21 has also been planned.

"We hope to expand UPM's One Alumni One Graduate Employment Programme, where advertisements of job vacancies would be directed to the alumni office at UPM and job placement services would be facilitated for the current list of UPM graduates," she said.

For details, log on to: www.upm.edu.my