

UMT NEWSLETTER

Volume 2, Issue 3, March 2022

Ocean of Discoveries for Global Sustainability



In this issue :

- » Higher Education Minister Officiates UMT's New State-of-the-art Building
- » Vice Chancellor Unveils New Initiatives for Greater Achievements in 2022
- » UMT Gets New Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation
- » UMT Researcher Creates Product for Joint Pain Treatment
- » UMT Students Cast Their Votes on Candidates

eISSN 2805-5578



9772805557003

UMT NEWSLETTER

Vol 2 Issue 3, March 2022

Executive Editor

Professor Dr. Fauziah Abu Hasan

Editor

Wan Zulkipli Wan Kassim

Content Advisors

Prof. Dr. Yusliza Mohd Yusoff
Dr. Azza Jauhar Ahmad Tajuddin
Shafie Umardi @ Kamarol Bahrin
Suhaili Safei
Wan Ab Hafiz Wan Ibrahim

Coordinators

Mohd Izham Mohd A. Wahid
Shamsul Hafizi Saleh
Nadia Farhana Abd Rahim

Designer

Azlin Abdullah

Photographers

Tengku Iskandar Zulfahmi Tengku Mohamad
Mohd Sharwan Abd Ghani
Mohd Shukry Tahar
Nur Hafiza Ellias

Contributors

Amirul Salam Hasan
Che Amar Che Mokhtar
Dr. Mohamad Nor Azra Md. Adib
Norul Aina Amirah Ab Rahman
Suhaili Safei

Corporate Communications Office
Universiti Malaysia Terengganu
email : pro@umt.edu.my

The Vice Chancellor has recently outlined his vision and strategies for 2022 covering all the thrusts in UMT's Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022. These include key initiatives on research and innovation to ensure UMT obtain a six-star rating in the Malaysia Research Assessment (MyRA). Among them are establishing inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary Special Interest Groups (SIGs), setting up Terengganu Innovation Centre (TIC), and increasing research collaborations with international partners. Initiatives for academic excellence include providing interactive learning spaces and equipping lecture rooms with digital learning and smart classroom features. Industry and international academic collaborations will be enhanced through the offering of micro-credential courses and dual degree programmes. Also planned are international internship programmes, Ambassador@UMT special programmes, and Global University Presidents engagement programme. As part of 2022 strategies, Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Noraini Ahmad was invited to officiate the Institute of Marine Biotechnology building, which houses the new state-of-the-art Climate Change and Adaptation (CCA) Lab. This lab will be used for research on aquatic organisms' adaptability to climate change and will provide databases and findings to enhance our understanding of climate change effects on the marine ecosystem. With all these strategies outlined, UMT will surely continue to excel and achieve its 2022 targets, as set in its Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022.



Professor Dr. Fauziah Hj. Abu Hasan
Executive Editor

CONTENTS

- 1 Higher Education Minister Officiates UMT's New State-of-the-art Building**
- 2 Vice Chancellor Unveils New Initiatives for Greater Achievements in 2022**
- 3 UMT Gets New Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation**
- 4 UMT Researcher Creates Product for Joint Pain Treatment**
- 5 UMT Students Cast Their Votes on Candidates**

Higher Education Minister Officiates UMT's New State-of-the-art Building



Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Noraini Ahmad recently paid UMT another visit, her second within the last four months.

She was on campus this time to fulfil several items on her agenda, which included the officiating of UMT's new Institute of Marine Biotechnology (IMB) building that houses several state-of-the-art laboratories.

The building that was constructed using the budget from the 11th Malaysia Plan was completed in 2020 and began to be occupied in stages in 2021. The RM20.8 million construction is mainly taken up by 11 laboratories that are being used for biotechnology research. Two of the laboratories are being used for international collaborative research, one with Ghent University in Belgium and another with Ocean University of China.



The highlight of the building is the newly set up Climate Change Adaption (CCA) laboratory that is equipped with the latest technology. The laboratory is the only one of its kind in Malaysia to date.

"With the establishment of the CCA laboratory, UMT is ready to become a pioneer of research on Malaysia's aquatic species and climate change adaption and will use the findings to develop a set of databases to benefit the country," said Dr. Mohamad Nor Azra Md Adib, the laboratory head.

CCA laboratory was initiated by Vice Chancellor Professor Dato' Dr. Mazlan Abd Ghaffar, who was awarded RM3.56 grant money by the Ministry of Higher Education through the Long-Term Research Grant Scheme to focus on a research project on aquatic organisms' adaptation towards climate change.



The laboratory also makes possible collaborative projects between research groups in various fields, including those relating to carbon dioxide gas emission into aquatic systems, climate change, and water acidity, that may utilize the Internet of Things technology.

As per Professor Mazlan, with the addition of the CCA laboratory, IMB is poised to become the next institute at UMT to be recognized by MOHE as Higher Institution Centre of Excellence (HICoE). When this happens, UMT will be the youngest university in Malaysia to have three institutes with HICoE status, the other two being the Institute of Oceanography and Environment and the Institute of Tropical Aquaculture and Fisheries.

After the officiating ceremony, Datuk Noraini was taken on a tour of the laboratories in the building.

As part of her visit, Datuk Noraini also completed another round of MOHE's humanitarian programme Program KPT Prihatin, an initiative taken by the ministry to help students from the B40 group and those affected by disasters.

This year, the programme also provided aids to the communities that were affected by the flood. UMT and Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UnisZa) have worked together under this programme to distribute more than 1500 hampers to flood victims in Terengganu.

During her visit, Datuk Noraini was accompanied by Professor Mazlan and other UMT principal officers.

Vice Chancellor Unveils New Initiatives for Greater Achievements in 2022



Achieving the six-star rating in the Malaysia Research Assessment (MyRA) is one of UMT’s primary targets for 2022, said Vice Chancellor Professor Dato’ Dr. Mazlan Abd Ghaffar recently to an audience of UMT staff.

For the target to be achieved, UMT will take several initiatives to improve its research performance, and these include motivating its researchers to increase the number of grants and high-impact publications, setting up Special Interest Groups that are inter-disciplinary, multi-faculty, and multi-cohort, and introducing Inter-Disciplinary, Impact-Driven Research Grant (ID2-RG), he said.

UMT is also intent on enhancing its commercialisation, Professor Mazlan said, and among the initiatives the university will be taking are setting up the Innovation and Commercialisation Centre and fostering a strategic partnership with the state government of Terengganu to boost commercialisation activities. The two will set up Terengganu Innovation Centre and share their resources.

Professor Mazlan shared about these initiatives when he was delivering his 2022 new-year speech on 30 January at UMT’s Sultan Mizan Hall.

On the initiatives to enhance teaching and learning, Professor Mazlan said most lecture rooms will be equipped with Digital Learning and Smart Classroom features, and micro-credential courses will be offered. Also, UMT will partner with Ghent University in Belgium to offer a joint PhD degree programme in Biotechnology and with Solent University to offer a dual-degree programme.

2022 will also be the year for UMT to take its knowledge transfer programmes and industry networking to greater heights, Professor Mazlan said. UMT will establish

UMT Community Hub, organize more activities for the communities, and bolster its smart partnerships with industries and communities.

To increase its international visibility, UMT will improve its internationalisation efforts, Professor Mazlan said. It will introduce among others International Alumni Engagement, an initiative to foster closer relationship with UMT’s international students all over the world.

Professor Mazlan became the sixth UMT Vice Chancellor when he was appointed to the post in August 2021 by Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Noraini Ahmad. Professor Mazlan was previously UMT Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation for six years.



One of UMT’s goals is to be the leader among universities under the Malaysia Focus University (MFUN) category, Professor Mazlan said. UMT not only strives to be excellent in its niche areas of marine science and aquatic resources, but it also aims to be a university that benefits the community, excels in terms of digital education, and becomes a point of reference at the national and international levels.



The audience inside the hall comprised only those who received an invitation, and the number was kept small in compliance with the standard operating procedure to prevent the Covid-19 spread. The rest of UMT community were able to watch the event on their computers as it was also broadcast online.

UMT Gets New Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation

UMT has a new leader to oversee its research and innovation division.

She is Professor Dr. Marinah Mohd Ariffin, who has recently been appointed as the university's Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation by Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Noraini Ahmad.



The post became vacant earlier when Professor Dato' Dr. Mazlan Abd Ghaffar ended his tenure after holding the post for six years. He was later appointed as UMT's sixth Vice Chancellor.

UMT's very own Professor Marinah will hold the post for three years, until 2025.

Datuk Noraini cited Professor Marinah's extensive experience in academic and research leadership as the basis for her selection.

Professor Marinah said that her main focus now is to improve UMT's visibility, in terms of research, at the international level.

"One way to achieve this is to engage in multi- and transdisciplinary research in UMTs' niche area," she said.

She intends to help UMT move up in the Malaysia Research Assessment (MyRA) rating and in the QS and Times Higher Education (THE) rankings. For MyRA, the goal is to achieve a six-star rating after UMT has previously managed to attain a five-star rating.

"It is a big mission, but not impossible to achieve," she said.

As for the THE rankings, the goal is to be listed in the top 500 of the world university rankings by subject, Professor Marinah said. UMT will create initiatives to encourage its academics to produce more high-impact publications on UMT's niche area, which is marine science and aquatic resources, in Q1/Q2 WoS-indexed journals.

"The subjects such as earth and marine science as well as agriculture and forestry will be given more focus," she said. "UMT will also examine ways to increase the number of citations per journal article written by UMT academics."

Professor Marinah has been with UMT as an academic staff since 1999, when the university was still known as KUSTEM. The old name was changed to UMT in 2007.

Previously, she was Dean of the Faculty of Science and Marine Environment (2019 – 2022) and Deputy Dean of the same faculty, in charge of academic and student affairs (2013 – 2015), Deputy Dean of the former Faculty of Science and Technology, in charge of research (2012), and Head of the Department of Chemistry, which was under the Faculty of Science and Technology (2010).



At the national scene, Professor Marinah has sat on the evaluation panel for FRGS proposals under the domain Pure and Applied Science. Her expertise was also sought by the Ministry of Science, Innovation, and Technology in the preparation of the 7th edition of Malaysia Research and Development Classification System.

Her research expertise is environmental chemistry, analytical chemistry, and forensic toxicology. She has secured several national grants, presented at international symposiums and conferences, and published articles in high-impact journals.

UMT Researcher Creates Product for Joint Pain Treatment

A UMT researcher has created a product called R-38 that has been scientifically proven to help reduce joint pain commonly occurring at the hand, foot, and knee.

The researcher, Professor Dr. Fadzillah Abdul Majid, is an expert on medicinal products. She has more than 20 years' experience studying traditional medicines made from herbal mixture.

Professor Fadzillah said that R-38 is one hundred percent made from herbal mixture.

Among the herbs used in R-38 are galangal (*Alpinia galangal*), misai kucing (*Orthosiphon stamineus*), and temulawak (*Curcuma xanthorrhiza*).

Only the best herbs are selected and then carefully processed to ensure the product is always of high quality, said the researcher who is currently the Deputy Director of the Institute of Marine Biotechnology. Professor Fadzillah practices strict quality control in the production of herbal medicine, especially when she uses traditional methods.



Professor Fadzillah said these herbs have been scientifically studied for their effectiveness in treating joint pain and arthritis, and the studies have found these herbs possess antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and analgesic properties.

According to Professor Fadzillah, joint pain is felt at the hand, foot, and knee in the forms of burning sensation or throbbing pain, and it is due to swelling, inflammation, and muscle tightening. She said these conditions are caused by several factors, including uric acid gathering at the joints, reduced joint liquid, and bone erosion.

A preliminary study on R-38 has found the product to be antioxidant and anti-inflammatory, which makes it effective in slowing down the production of Xanthine Oxidase (XO) enzyme and subsequently lowering the uric acid content, and of Cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2) and eventually reducing inflammation and pain.



In addition, R-38 can help reduce Interleukin-6 (IL-6) and Tumour Necrosis Factor Alpha (TNF-a), biochemical substances that stimulate body inflammation. The reduction of these substances will reduce inflammation.

The product has received positive feedback from consumers, based on a market study that has been conducted for five years.

The effectiveness of her R-38 product has attracted the attention of a company, Essentiq Pharma Sdn Bhd., which intends to introduce the product into the market. Wider distribution of R-38 in Malaysia and internationally can be expected after UMT and the company have recently agreed on a licensing right and strategic partnership.



UMT Students Cast Their Votes on Candidates

UMT students got to exercise their voting rights once again when a campus election was held in February to choose the new members of UMT Student Representative Council. The new council line-up is for 2021-2022 academic session.

Like last year, the voting process was held online due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The voting began as early as 8 am and lasted until 4 pm. Students cast their vote at MyUndi, a voting portal that was developed inhouse.

The event was broadcast live on UMT TV, and it was hosted by two student commentators who provided constant updates on the event's progress. It was one of the ways to add an interesting element to the all-day event.



Results were announced by Deputy Vice Chancellor (Student Affairs and Alumni) Associate Professor D. Hafiz Zakariya, who also assumes the role of chairman of the Student Representative Council Election Main Committee. He congratulated the winners who managed to win the hearts of many of the students.

"I hope the new line-up will be able to carry out the responsibility and bring changes that will benefit UMT students," he said.

Earlier in January, the council line-up for 2020-2021 academic session was dissolved after its term had ended. A caretaker council was immediately formed, which was approved by the Vice Chancellor, to take over temporarily while the new campus election was being organized.

A Campus Election Committee comprising 15 students was set up to oversee the election event from start to finish. Each was given a specific portfolio, including promotion and announcement, multimedia, technical, and so forth.

This has been a tradition at UMT dating back to 2018, Dr. Hafiz said.



"It goes to show that our students are able to carry out big responsibilities," Dr. Hafiz said. "What they had to do to ensure the election process went smoothly was no easy task."

Dr. Hafiz hopes that more students will volunteer to be involved as committee members in the future.

"This is a good platform for improving students' problem-solving skills and gaining valuable experience," he said. "It will help students build their confidence and improve their leadership skills as well."

The newly elected members of the Student Representative Council will be presented with their appointment letters in the coming weeks. Members will also elect the president and deputy president from among themselves.

