

Varsity among key players in project NOW

Fits well into the UMS' status as EcoCampus

Mary Chin

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is one of the key players in the implementation of the No More Plastics in Our Waters (NOW) project.

Director of EcoCampus Management Centre, Dr Awangku Hassanah Bahar Pengiran Bagul said UMS' transformation into an EcoCampus fits well into NOW.

"Last year, UMS decided to transform itself into a sustainable university so we came out with a Blueprint for EcoCampus charting the course for transformation.

"This is our policy now - we are now committed to being an EcoCampus to promote environmental education and care, and moving towards environmental sustainability through good planning and activities.

"Hence the Blueprint will drive such a change by empowering stakeholders with environmental awareness, knowledge, skills and values.

"At the same time, the EcoCampus Management Centre was set up to oversee implementation of the EcoCampus Blueprint," he said.

According to Dr Awangku Hassanah, UMS is the first university in Malaysia to have a five-year-plan for transformation into an ecocampus (2013-2017) with the theme 'Our Environment First'.

The concept of EcoCampus was mooted by UMS Vice-Chancellor, Professor Datuk Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah upon the latter's appointment.

As an institution of higher learning, UMS undertakes the responsibility of educating all its stakeholders on responsible environmental stewardship.

Dr Awangku Hassanah said environmental stewardship, which



relates to responsible planning and management of resources and empowering stakeholders as catalysts for change, is one of the five core values of UMS EcoCampus.

The other values are Sustainable development (Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; Ecological protection (Maintaining the viability and vitality of the natural environment); Environmental compatibility (Impact of activities which do not exceed the environmental threshold); and Resource conservation (Efficient and responsible use of resources).

"By environmental stewardship is meant people leading the way to safeguard the environment. In this context, EcoCampus acts as a steward of the environment.

"In our environmental stewardship towards sustainable development, we introduce environmental excellence in teaching and learning; research, infrastructure, development, and management and operational practices, as well as campus experience," Dr Awangku Hassanah explained.

The aim, he said, is also to create a pool of people who aspire to conserve the environment. "My point is that people who pass through UMS EcoCampus, be they students, staff, visitors, guests or contractors, will see for themselves and thus learn something about environmental protection. "We hope they will lead the drive for change by bringing back the values to their home, workplace or organisation.

"Against this backdrop, we are very excited to work with the NOW Action Committee, especially when we look at their manifesto. This (public cleanliness) has been a perennial issue in KK.

"NOW is like our EcoCampus where we have a lot of good ideas which we want to transform into reality. That's what we are trying to do now," he elaborated.

Following a discussion with Co-Chairperson of the NOW Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Initiative, Marinah Harris Embiricos, Dr Awangku Hassanah said UMS EcoCampus agreed to allow the partners to use the university's facilities. The initiative is to clean up Sabah's coastlines and beaches, including those on offshore islands.

Wastes collected by the debris skimmer boat will be transported by DBKK truck from the trash mother boat at the UMS jetty to the upcoming university's recycling centre.

Calling the collaboration with other partners (in NOW project) a 'gentleman's handshake', Dr Awangku Hassanah said:

"We are happy to support this kind of project as long as our help is needed. When it becomes more permanent, we might even consider a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) platform. It's fine with us.

"It is good, in a sense, to spread the NOW project to UMS EcoCampus because we have our own beach front. The recycling centre located near the School of Medicine building will be completed by the end of June.

"Once it is ready and equipped with a compactor, we will invite the NOW Action Committee to visit the place."

ECO Management Centre is in the process of securing the compactor from China costing about RM10,000 for compacting recyclable wastes like paper, cardboard, plastic and aluminum items.

Dr Awangku Hassanah said EcoCampus Management Centre will hire trained manpower to operate the recycling centre where solid wastes will be compacted into energy blocks which can be used as fuel.

"These will in turn be sold to factories around the university area. So basically, it is recycled material for fuel. Separation of wastes is done to maximise energy efficiency," he pointed out.



**Dr Awangku
Hassanal
displaying a
travel-friendly
ecobag
designed
by UMS
EcoCampus
for conference
participants.**