



# POST GRADUATE

## VC'S COLUMN

**T**HE theme for NAFSA's (the Association of International Educators) 2013 Annual Conference and Expo - Ideals and Impact in International Education – not only lived up to the expectations of the participants throughout the four-day event but also created a compelling commitment to forge ahead with the internationalisation of higher education. Held in St Louis, US, a city known as the gateway to the west, there was a palpable atmosphere of collaboration for internationalisation among universities. Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP) was one of the participating universities that was able to showcase its internationalisation initiatives at that global stage. The mood was really to share with others the things we all do and learn what others are doing more creatively and innovatively.

NAFSA started as a national association of foreign student advisers in US universities. Over the years it evolved into an international body. Now it organises activities related to international education that are of interest to many universities all over the world. NAFSA's annual conferences and expos are held in the US and attended by universities across the globe. The conference and expo's prestige is reflected in its ability to attract internationally renowned keynote speakers such as Liberian peace activist Leymah Gbow-

# Platform for internationalisation

ee, former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, and former US Defence Secretary David Gates.

UMP's participation in the recent conference and expo has enabled us to engage in face-to-face discussions and negotiations with participating universities for potential collaboration. The UMP team was able to learn firsthand what others are doing with regards to internationalisation, discover best practices in managing international initiatives, and enhance understanding in regional and countries' higher education system.

Already having collaborative linkages of its own with universities from four different countries, the need to have an in-depth assessment of the strengths

and shortcomings of our current collaboration model as compared to others is essential. UMP's collaboration experience with the University of

Northern Illinois in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and dual degree programmes was shared during a one-hour session. Little did we realise the amount of effort and commitment that had gone into the making of the collaboration by both parties until we received positive feedback, admiration and, more importantly, encouragement, by the audience. Several delegates actually expressed their curiosity and amazement at the extent to which our two universities were willing to stretch our limits to make the collaboration happen.

Two officers from our Academic

and International Office participated in poster presentations. The information displayed and shared at the poster presentation on Student International Mobility and UMP's German collaboration model gained positive comments and questions that enable us to reflect on the added value we have created and opportunities for improvement.

Throughout the conference and expo, UMP's booth continuously received visitors. The interest shown by other universities from various parts of the world provided our team with the opportunity to develop potential linkages. A case in point is a potential collaboration at the post-graduate level by leveraging on each other's strengths and specialties, such as UMP's engineering and London School of Business and Finance's business programme. Other typical areas of collaboration include student exchanges and mobility, joint, double and dual degree programmes, indus-

try attachments, short-term visits and participation in consortium arrangements.

NAFSA 2013 has reinforced the fact that internationalisation is certainly an agenda pursued by many universities all over the world. Universities are on a constant lookout for opportunities and potential partners. Also, models for collaboration are plentiful and diverse. In fact they can and should be created innovatively to suit and benefit the collaborating parties and certainly no one model that fits all.

The UMP team came back with a bag full of ideas, networking potentials, concrete proposals and a few for-follow-up activities. Last year's NAFSA resulted in UMP developing an elective course in collaboration with the University of California, Davis. As a platform for international collaboration, NAFSA 2013 promises more outcomes, both tangible as well as intangibles.



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