

# Universities need strong alumni network — Mary

**KOTA KINABALU:** A world class university is characterized by three factors - excellent students and alumni, excellent academic staff and abundant resources.

All the world's great universities have strong alumni network - drawing on the energy and resources of their graduates to strengthen their position and build their futures.

Deputy Higher Education Datuk Dr Mary Yap Kain Ching stated this at the Asia e University (AeU) alumni reunion at Le Meridien Hotel here on Sunday.

Present were Professor Dato Dr Ansary Ahmed, president and chief executive officer of AeU, and the official ambassador of AeU, Dato Fazley Yaakob who is a postgraduate student of the university.

"The reputation of AeU depends on the reputation of those it educates in the wider community. So each and everyone of you has a part to play. You can all 'give back' in your own way - a service, a learning hour, mentoring, or a sponsorship or bursary scheme. I hope you will continue to stay engaged by lending your expertise to help strengthen AeU's network. Please get behind your university as it seeks to make a bigger mark on the world. They need your ideas,



Fazley (fourth from right) receiving his appointment as AeU Ambassador from Professor Dr Ansary, witnessed by Mary and AeU top management staff.

your input and your resources to take the University forward," she said in her speech.

Commenting on the paradigm shift in higher education, Mary said it may seem obvious on one level how education in general, and higher education in particular, benefits people: it equips individuals with competencies and skills that are needed in the labour market.

She pointed out that in all countries, labour market needs are rapidly evolving. Automation and digitization of industry, agriculture and the knowledge economy are

changing what is taught, how it is taught and when and where learners are likely to want to be taught. These means that as many jobs change and others become obsolete, it will be essential for higher education to also change to meet new knowledge and skill demands. At the same time, of course, graduates consistently need to upgrade their skills and companies need to top up their human capital.

"Our challenge is to pursue three goals simultaneously. We want to widen access so that education and training

can be available to all citizens that aspire to it. Second, that education must be of good quality. There is no point in widening access unless education makes a difference to people's capabilities. Third, the cost must be as low as possible. It is morally wrong to make education more expensive than necessary, because low cost enables more people to take advantage of it.

"The challenge of achieving these outcomes simultaneously becomes clear when you create a triangle of vectors. With traditional

methods of face-to-face teaching this is an iron triangle. This iron triangle symbolises the closed system of classroom teaching. You want to stretch the triangle to give greater access, higher quality and lower costs.

"Today there is a revolution in higher education as countries use the technology of distance education to achieve something completely new: education of higher quality at lower cost. Thanks to globalization successive waves of technology that sweeping the world - technology can now transform the iron triangle into a flexible triangle. By using the technology of distance education we can achieve wider access, higher quality and lower cost all at the same time," she said.

Mary added she was pleased that AeU had achieved the technological revolution of wider access, high quality and lower cost, and successfully stretched the iron triangle.

"Going forward, I hope AeU will continue to play an important role in preparing Malaysians for our future economy. AeU must also bring new energy to its longstanding effort to educate millions of able learners across Asia and around the world," she said.