

Strengthening Employability Skills Programme and IEM's AFETD Membership Drive



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TO become a successful engineer, adequate employability skills are necessary in order to enter and progress in a real working environment. "Employers not only look at a student's academic qualifications and technical skills, but also assess his or her ability to participate effectively in the workforce," said Dr Hapidah Mohamad during a programme focusing on strengthening employability skills of engineering graduates at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM).



From left: Engr. Ir. Vasan Mariappan, Y.Bhg. Professor Datin Dr Napsiah Ismail, Engr. Associate Professor Dr Yus Aniza Yusof, Engr. Wan Mahmud Najmi Wan Ismail, Engr. Associate Professor Dr Khalina Abdan and Engr. Associate Professor Dr Hasfalina Che Man

The programme was successfully conducted by the Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering (DBAE) together with the Department of Process and Food Engineering (DPFE), UPM, on 28 September 2012 at the Faculty of Engineering, UPM. The programme, jointly organised by The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia (IEM), was a continuation of the effort from last year's "Engineering a Career in Agriculture and Food" programme which aims to promote the agricultural and food engineering profession among students and the local community.

This year, the programme was enhanced with the promotion of the IEM's Agricultural and Food Engineering Technical Division's Membership Drive and through the exposure of students on improving their employability skills. Approximately 400 undergraduates of Bachelor of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering and Bachelor of Process and Food Engineering participated in the programme.

The opening remarks on the programme were delivered by the Head of DPFE, Engr. Associate Professor Dr Yus Aniza Yusof, who emphasised the aim of the programme, which was to expose undergraduates to career and industrial training opportunities available, both nationally and internationally. The event also aimed to motivate the students and raise their awareness on the importance of employability skills in paving their future careers. The programme was officiated by Y.Bhg. Professor Datin Dr Napsiah Ismail, Deputy Dean (Academic, Student Affairs, Alumni and Industry & Community Relations), Faculty of Engineering, UPM. Other VIPs who were present included the Head of DBAE, Engr. Associate Professor Dr Khalina Abdan; Vice Chairman II of IEM's Young Engineers Section, Engr. Navinderan Mageswaran; and Dr Hapidah Mohamad, the Assistant General Manager (Head of HRD & Six Sigma), Ranhill Berhad.

The highlight of the programme was the public lectures delivered by two distinguished DBAE and DPFE alumni, Engr. Ir. Vasan Mariappan from Perunding Bakti Sdn. Bhd. and Engr. Wan Mahmud Najmi Wan Ismail from Barry Callebaut Services Asia Pacific Sdn. Bhd. They shared valuable experiences and knowledge from the industrial perspective to help the students prepare themselves to become successful engineers.

The students were also inspired by the motivational talk given by Dr Hapidah Mohamad who has had more than 20 years of experience in human resource development and seven years specifically in engineering management of a large engineering organisation. The morning session of the programme ended with a brief introduction by Engr. Navinderan Mageswaran on IEM membership benefits to encourage the students to get involved in professional development to enhance their professional skills and strengthen their career paths.



Dr Hapidah Mohamad, Assistant General Manager (Head of HRD & Six Sigma) of Ranhill Berhad giving a motivational talk to students on the importance of acquiring employability skills

The final event of the day was the presentation of the industrial training and student's mobility programme by the final year students of DBAE and DPFE undergraduates. They shared their valuable experience of knowledge learning



The Vice Chairman II of IEM's Young Engineers Section, Engr. Navinderan Mageswaran, introducing IEM membership benefits to the students



A Bachelor of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering undergraduate, Miss Norini Liana Hai Shah Hairi sharing her experiences during her 10-week internship in Kyoto, Japan

after 10 weeks' involvement in the industrial and mobility programme when they were attached to local industries and international universities during their semester break. This year, both departments had sent 43 students to local firms and 23 students overseas including to the United States, Japan and Turkey, to undergo industrial training as one of the components to fulfil their graduation requirement.

The director of the programme, Engr. Associate Professor Dr Hasfalina Che Man hoped that the programme would enhance the awareness of current agricultural and food engineering students about the importance of professionalism, not merely in the cognitive domain of technical and engineering sciences, but also in the affective and social domain of ethics and employability skills. She also expressed her gratitude to Malaysian Society of Agricultural Engineers Student Chapter (MSAE-SC) and Process and Food Engineering Club (PROFEC) for making the event a success. ■

Engr. Dr Samsuzana Abd. Aziz received her Bachelor of Engineering degree in electrical and telecommunication in 2002 from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and later completed her Master's and PhD degrees in agricultural engineering in 2005 and 2008 from Iowa State University, USA. She is currently a faculty member at the Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering, Universiti Putra Malaysia.