

Campus

Hard work pays off

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THERE was much merriment and fanfare around Universiti Putra Malaysia's (UPM) campus as 7,200 graduates received their scrolls over four days.

For some, obtaining a degree was just another feather to add to their cap.

Bachelor of Science (Food Studies) graduate Nor Eizzah Yusoff, 23, had already made a name for herself as a successful female student entrepreneur while she was still studying.

She runs three different food businesses under the name Tangan Berduit Enterprise.

She opened her first stall in UPM when she was just 20-years-old selling pre-packed warm food at three kiosks in College 13 on campus.

"UPM Holdings offered me a direct tender to open my kiosks and told me they wanted me to inspire other students to also go into entrepreneurship," she adds.

"Right now, I have nine permanent staff running my business for me while I oversee the manage-

ment aspect," she says, adding that she also has part-timers who are UPM students.

She also says she gets her food on consignment from suppliers and can hit a monthly profit of about RM4,000 from each kiosk.

"As a student, that's a lot of money and I used it to invest in other businesses."

Nor Eizzah also owns another two food joints on campus - a shop selling different packed foods at the Foundation Centre and another selling shawarma (Middle Eastern grilled meat wraps) at the Economics Faculty building.

Her sales from the shawarma reach about RM1,800 per day while the shop at the Foundation Centre touch RM1,700 a day.

Nor Eizzah says she chose to study food science to gain knowledge on food itself including food safety and product development.

However, her real passion lies in business. "I want to be a pioneer and provide high quality food which is cheap and fits into a student's very tight budget."

She says the cheapest item at her kiosk is nasi bujang (white rice and



Noor Azira (second right) received a congratulatory kiss from Basirah (right), witnessed by her husband Ahmad Muhaimin Roslan (second left), Ahmad Furqan (left) and Ahmad Irsyad, after the convocation ceremony.

omelette) which is RM2.

During her semester and end of year breaks, she would also work up to 18 hours a day to ensure the growth of her business.

For all her hard work, Nor Eizzah was chosen as the UPM Entrepreneur Icon in 2016.

Not only does she want to earn money for herself, she also wants to empower other students to take on entrepreneurship.

How? Through what she calls her corporate social responsibility programme - Abang Burn.

In the programme, university students are trained to operate food stalls on campus using a common model she came up with.

"It's a kind of licensing and I find it so fulfilling when they say they've made a lot of money through this opportunity," she says.

For Noor Azira Abdul Mutalib,

31, there was even more to celebrate as she had just given birth to her third child just 20 days before her convocation.

She is also the first to receive a dual PhD in microbiology from UPM and Kyushu Institute of Technology Japan (Kyutech).

The dual PhD programme is part of UPM's efforts to build closer ties and increase collaboration with its foreign counterparts.

She also works at UPM's Faculty of Food Science and Technology and specialises in food safety.

She says she could only cope with the constant travelling between Malaysia and Japan, and taking care of two young children thanks to the support from her husband, family and supervisors.

"Whenever I had any difficulties, I would just consult my supervisors and we would come up with ideas

on how to solve the problems and carry out my research efficiently," she adds.

UPM pro-chancellor Tan Sri Lim Ah Lek says that UPM makes it a point to create skilled, patriotic, disciplined graduates who possess high standards of morality.

"Like it or not, graduates about to start their job hunt will face difficulties if they do not possess the right skills that need to be fostered during their university days," he adds.

He also says that possessing a university degree is not a guarantee to finding a job anymore and that competition is very stiff in the real world.

"So, graduates do not have much of a choice but to equip themselves as early as possible in order to face the tough competition in the job market."