Nilai UC shares its Enrichment for Life philosophy with secondary school students

The future of nursing

Secrets to a perfect BBQ revealed
The year of the ‘water’ dragon is supposed to bring much prosperity and abundance. Here at Nilai University College (Nilai UC), the aims and hopes remain the same every year since we opened our doors in 1997. That is to offer quality higher education which will produce well-rounded graduates who will be a boon to society.

In pursuit of that goal, I continually instruct all academic and administrative staff to offer the very best that they can to our students. Ask any of our current students and very likely they will tell you stories of lecturers who give them personal tutoring or spend many after-class hours to prepare them for competitions or exams. A good example would be the nursing faculty. You may have read some negative reports surrounding nursing studies in this country with plenty of jobless nurses saddled with huge loans.

I can assure you that the nursing faculty at Nilai UC takes great effort to ensure it produces nurses who are highly skilled and qualified. This is reflected in the consistently high pass rate Nilai UC nurses achieve in the Nursing Board exams. The latest batch scored a 97% pass rate. The nurses gain plenty of hands on knowledge via practicals at various industry partners as well as in house with our high fidelity simulator. This is key in ensuring they are highly sought after in the job market.

Nilai UC does not restrict its services to just its own students. The Enrichment for Life school programme trains secondary school students in a number of areas. These include exercises in teamwork, time management and leadership, which are all vital when these students make the transition into tertiary education. The training programme is held both at Nilai UC campus as well as in secondary schools. Turn to our centrespread to find out how Nilai UC shares its Enrichment for Life philosophy.

A picture paints a thousand words. But in the case of Tommy Lee, it says much more. His award-winning photo in the Petronas Chinese New Year competition not only showcased his keen eye for detail but also Nilai UC’s philosophy of nurturing such talent. This young lad is a keen amateur photographer who has found plenty of use for his talents on campus. He is the President of Nilai UC Photography Club and he actively helps out as a lensman during Nilai UC events. His pictures are also regularly featured in these very pages as well as the student newsletter.

By taking his talent and utilising it in a working environment such as an editorial context, Tommy Lee understands how to make the most out of his shutterbug talents. This is how Nilai UC encourages and nurtures students’ passions, imaginations and soft skills. If there are more of you out there, come join us at Nilai UC and we can help bring out the best in you.

R Bala
Editor

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An Eye for the Spectacular
Nilai UC’s Photography Club President grabs top prize in competition.

The photo above is not the work of a seasoned professional photographer. It was also not taken after weeks of planning to get just the right burst of sunlight for maximum effect. It was, in fact, snapped by 19-year-old Tommy Lee Yan Shan (Nilai University College Foundation in Science) on a spur of the moment during a trip to the Thean Hou temple in Kuala Lumpur.

Seeing the silhouette of the dragon perched on the edge of the roof in the brilliant sunshine, Tommy decided to experiment with differing shutter speeds and apertures. To his great satisfaction, the result is the picture above which he submitted to the recent Petronas Chinese New Year Photography contest. And he was absolutely gobsmacked when his entry grabbed the top prize.

“One of the things I like best about Nilai UC is that it’s not about books and continuous studying 24/7. The lecturers are constantly stressing the importance of extra-curricular activities and the need to build up our soft skills,” says the soft-spoken KL-ite. “I was very pleased there are a large number of clubs and societies for us to join, in particular a Photography Club which is my main interest.”

Although Tommy has always been active in extra-curricular activities in secondary school where he was a president of the computer club and a Boy Scout troop leader, he says being head of Nilai UC’s Photography Club has a lot more responsibilities. “It’s quite a challenge to find ways to boost membership and to encourage passion in photography. Along with my committee members, we are constantly scouting for interesting locations for photo shoots. It’s been really good fun,” says Tommy.

His extra-curricular activities coupled with an impressive showing in SPM led to Tommy being offered a Nilai UC Merit Scholarship. He plans to pursue a Nilai UC Degree in Computer Science once he has completed his Foundation programme. “I am happy here at Nilai UC. There’s the right balance between work and play. I am totally enjoying my time here and my next project is a competition for students to capture their best Nilai UC moment,” declares Tommy.

Nilai UC administrators recognise the importance of extra-curricular activities in developing well-rounded graduates. Hence, school leavers with impressive extra-curricular credentials can apply for scholarships and financial aid from Nilai UC. Its 105-acre campus in Putra Nilai is also a hive of activity with over 50 clubs and societies offering students a myriad of sporting and social pursuits.
“Nurses are in a great demand. Make no mistake about that. Healthcare industry still needs skilled and qualified nurses,” states Prof Emeritus Tengku Dato’ Shamsul Bahrin, Nilai University College (Nilai UC) President. His emphatic statement is in response to recent media reports regarding high number of unemployed nursing graduates struggling with hefty education loan repayments. He points to the World Health Organisation data that to reach developed nation status, there should be a ratio of 1:200 (nurse/resident). It currently stands at 1:348 in Malaysia. “We are still some way off Vision 2020 as far as nurses are concerned,” says Tengku Shamsul.

Tengku Shamsul is keen to emphasise the positives of Nilai UC School of Allied Health and Sciences which was founded in 2004. School leavers can opt for either the diploma or degree in nursing programmes. It has one of the largest student populations and is reflective of the continued popularity of Nilai UC’s nursing programmes among applicants.

Well Equipped

“Nilai UC is a well established institution which began operations in 1997. The administrators have spared no expense in making Nilai UC one of the premier higher education institutions in the country and the nursing faculty and its training facilities are a great reflection of their efforts,” says Tengku Shamsul.

He is keen to emphasise that Nilai UC has equipped its nursing faculty with some of the most expensive and latest teaching facilities. The nursing faculty has a number of laboratories and simulation wards which ensure students get proper training. Nilai UC students also benefit from having access to high fidelity patient simulators which offer training for a number of real life scenarios.

“This equipment was installed at great cost but we are convinced that it will benefit our students greatly. It is no substitute for real-life practical experience but a valuable training aid. For instance, this high fidelity patient simulator can replicate hundreds of human responses from breathing patterns to reaction to drugs,” explains Tengku Shamsul. “Students may not get a chance to learn vital skills during practicals. For instance, they may not have had a chance to witness how a cardiac arrest patient is treated. The high fidelity patient simulator allows them this opportunity in a safe and controlled environment.”

In addition to having such equipment, Nilai UC organises seminars and workshops for the benefit of its staff and students. It recently hosted the first Asia Pacific Simulation in Nursing Education Conference with industry professionals and academics combining to give Nilai UC nursing students invaluable instruction. Students at the conference voiced their approval for such events as it clearly helped with their nursing education. The general consensus among the conference participants is that they learned a great deal. School leavers looking to enter a nursing programme should ensure the institution has the necessary amenities and hold value-added events for the benefit of students. “Some people are dismissive of such training equipment simply because they do not want to incur the extra expenses and merely pass the responsibility of training nurses to the hospitals. That is not the Nilai UC way,” stresses Tengku Shamsul.

High Pass Rate

Recent reports in the media stated that the passing rate among private institution nurses for the Nursing Board examination had dropped significantly. That is not the case with Nilai UC’s nursing students who have consistently posted a pass rate of above 90%. The latest batch of students to sit for the Nursing Board examinations posted a 97% pass rate. This is in no small part due to the quality of the teaching staff at Nilai UC, many of whom hold a Masters Degree.

“Nilai UC academics in the nursing department are vastly experienced. I know for a fact that many of them spend much time beyond school hours to help students with their studies. They are very approachable and dedicated lecturers who go the extra mile for the students,” says Tengku Shamsul proudly. “It is this dedication which has helped Nilai UC maintain a high passing rate for the Nursing Board exams. Their caring attitude is typical of healthcare professionals and it is hoped students will absorb such a mind-set from their lecturers when they enter the working world.”

Nilai UC President Prof Emeritus Tengku Dato’ Shamsul Bahrin states that the demand for skilled and qualified nurses is still high.

Still in Demand

Quality and skilled nursing graduates are still in demand despite reports suggesting otherwise.
Nilai UC’s nursing faculty is one of the largest on campus. Nilai UC nursing students benefit from seminars and workshops held to improve their skills.
Preparing School Goers for Varsity Life

Nilai UC spreads its ‘Enrichment for Life’ philosophy with a series of team building events at secondary schools and on its own campus.

Quality education need not be confined to the lecture halls of higher education institutions. Nilai University College (Nilai UC) administrators readily acknowledge that the process of nurturing young minds for the challenges of higher education must begin at an early age. Hence, last year, the Enrichment for Life school programme was launched allowing Nilai UC trainers, academics and counsellors to share their knowledge and skills with school-going teens.

Visiting schools as far as SMK Katolik Melaka as well as hosting visiting schools at its 105-acre campus in Putra Nilai, students and teachers were invited to participate in a number of projects and events. These include teambuilding events, motivational talks and time management training. Highlights from last year’s calendar included the Youth Empowerment Symposium and the International Cultural Fair. The former was a collaborative effort between Nilai UC, Universiti Putra Malaysia and the World Youth Foundation. The theme was ‘Youth Roles and Responsibilities in Today’s World’ and 41 secondary school students got to listen to various speakers as well as participate in roundtable discussions and make presentations on the theme.

The latter event was on a much larger scale with almost 500 secondary school students visiting Nilai UC’s campus to learn from the international student populace. Language, handicraft, and cultural dance classes were held for students who will soon be mingling in a melting pot campus. These events are designed to ensure secondary school students learn how to interact with people of different cultural backgrounds. Secondary school teachers were not to be left out as LADAP (“latihan dalam pengajaran”) training was held at Nilai UC’s auditorium.

Nilai UC is continuing this Enrichment for Life school programme into 2012. Among the highlights include personal development series, competitions, and specialist talks.

The visiting students’ reactions speak volumes of their Nilai UC experience.
Exercises emphasising teamwork are very much part of the programme.

Secondary school students were amazed at the high-fidelity simulator which could mimic hundreds of human responses.

A display of youthful enthusiasm from visiting students.

A healthy body equals a healthy mind.

Nilai UC academics explaining the finer points of the programmes on offer to visiting students.

Secondary schools students visit Nilai UC's hangar.
Light Your Fire

Perfect your barbequing technique with these user-friendly tips from Nilai UC’s Chef Anwarul Hadi.

“First thing is to pray hard that it doesn’t rain,” laughs Chef Anwarul Hadi when asked about sharing some barbequing tips. The rotund and cheery Chef Hadi is a senior lecturer at Nilai University College’s School of Hospitality and Tourism, and teaching his students how to plan and execute a perfect barbeque is part of the syllabus.

Basic Essentials

“Barbequing is an ancient form of cooking using wood or coal to give meat and vegetables a unique smoky flavour which cannot be replicated with other methods,” says Chef Hadi. The first thing to do is to get a fire going and he says using charcoal alone would suffice.

“Adding various exotic woods to the fire is something for the advanced barbeque chef. Furthermore, getting the heat right with charcoal will give the food plenty of flavour,” he says.

Chef Hadi says that we should use about a third of the charcoal from a 1kg bag and build little pyramids with some air pockets in them. Place firestarters in the middle of each pyramid and light with a long match.

“Wait for the coals to catch fire before fanning the flames to get the fire going. You can also use a table fan to assist with this job. You want to fan it till the coals are amber in colour. Once it has achieved this colour, you can place another third of the charcoal on top of these smouldering pieces and close the pit with a cover to start a really hot barbeque. Remember you want all the coals to be glowing red rather than in flames as you want heat and not fire which will burn your food,” says Chef Hadi.

The Secret

“I believe the secret to a great tasting barbeque is in the marinade. They are plenty of variations and much depends on the items you are preparing. You can opt to use ready made barbeque sauces or you can combine stuff like mustard, Worcester sauce and even honey for your own special marinade;” says Chef Hadi. However, he cautions against using hot and spicy ingredients if cooking for international visitors and children.

He says that its best that the items are marinated for at least half a day but for best results, let the items sit in the fridge overnight (except for seafood where a shorter marinating time will suffice). “Barbequing is all about cooking slowly over low to mid-temperature heat, so the more moist the meat becomes during the marinating period, the better,” he says.

Chef Hadi, however, recommends to his students to experiment with a variety of ingredients to come up with their own marinades. This is essential in a commercial setting as it keeps costs down as well as generally tasting better than the bottled variety (see sidebar for Chef Hadi’s special marinade recipe).

BBQ Essentials

“Always remember that at a barbeque, the star of the show is the food and not the chef. Too many people are too busy looking cool at the pit and forget that it’s the food that deserves the attention,” jokes Chef Hadi. His first tip is to buy the food according to the guests’ appetite.

“For instance, when cooking for adults, you can have larger chunks of meat such as lamb and various cuts of beef, both of which can be cooked rare or medium. For the former, I always recommend you use the shoulder as it is relatively inexpensive and taste great barbequed. Simple seasoning of salt and pepper will avoid detracting from the meat’s naturally tasty flavour,” he says. Beef lovers can choose between the inexpensive brisket and more costly cuts such as tenderloin. Same principles apply - use seasoning sparingly to allow the natural flavor of the meats to come to the fore.

“If you are going to barbeque seafood, I recommend using squid and prawns as they have no bones and a simple marinade of salt and fresh turmeric will make for great seafood kebabs. Just add some onions and bell peppers in between and you have a definite crowd pleaser,” he points out. But he is quick to warn of the dangers of overcooking seafood. A couple of minutes each side on a really hot pit would be enough. If in doubt, always try a piece before serving guests to ensure food is properly cooked.

If your party includes children, Chef Hadi says try to include items such as sausages, burgers and chicken drumlets to appease the young tykes. We teach our students how to prepare these items themselves so as not to litter the barbeque pit with junk food which have zero nutrients and even less flavour,” he says.
Shopping for greens

“Buy vegetables in the same way you would seafood. Look for the freshest items. Vegetables and spuds are a perfect accompaniment to the meat and seafood,” says Chef Hadi.

He says that cob of corn is a firm favourite and all they need is a generous slather of butter. He says that for more flavor, use salted butter instead of margarine or oil. “Corn on a barbeque pit looks and smells great. So do bell peppers which add colour and variety. You can also buy Japanese eggplants as well as carrots which can be sliced and seasoned with salt and pepper,” he explains.

Jacket potatoes wrapped in aluminum foil also serve as a great partner to steaks and lamb chops. Chef Hadi says it would be easier if the potatoes are pre-boiled before wrapping them in the foil as they will then only need 10 minutes on the grill. Adding some butter and chopped parsley onto the cut-open barbequed jacket potato will make it a simple yet delightful side dish.

Patience is a virtue

“Everyone likes to say patience is a virtue but that doesn’t mean you can keep your guests waiting forever!” laughs Chef Hadi. He advises to prepare early if expecting a big crowd and it may make sense to have more than one barbeque pit if serving groups larger than 10.

“You don’t want to overcrowd the grill and serve up half cooked items. To see if the items are cooked, gently press the meat with your fingers. Rare meat will be soft and wobbly while medium will have a springy feel while well-done is unyielding and firm,” he says.

“Remember to take the foodstuff out of the fridge for it to come to room temperature; otherwise you risk having food looking cooked on the outside and raw in the centre,” cautions Chef Hadi. One other essential tip is to ensure you have plenty of oil or leftover marinade for basting the food items. Basting will ensure the food does not become too dry from the barbeque heat.

If time permits, try making a sauce for dipping. “Having a homemade sauce instead of just bottles of chili and tomato ketchup certainly add zest to the barbeque. It gives guests the impression you have gone the extra mile to make their meal extra special,” says Chef Hadi (see sidebar for sauce recipe).

Chef Hadi is also quick to point out that barbeques are a social event, so a relaxed and informal ambiance should be created. Having a theme such as “Hawaiian Night” or “Football Jerseys” will help make the barbeque gathering more fun. “Remember outside of a commercial kitchen preparing for an event, your own barbeque parties should be fun for both host and guests. “One of the easiest tips is to marinate the meats the night before and to get the fire going early. That way you can put a few items on the grill and guests can munch on a few starters while enjoying each others’ company,” says Chef Hadi.

Chef Hadi’s Sauce and Marinade Recipe

Marinade for meat items

Ingredients
1. 6 – 7 cloves of garlic
2. Small bottle of Worcester Sauce
3. 200 g of tomato sauce
4. 3 tablespoon of chili flakes
5. 1 tablespoon of turmeric powder
6. 2 tablespoon of ground pepper
7. 100 g of mustard
8. 100ml of oil (vegetable)

Preparations of marinade
i. Finely chop garlic
ii. Add all ingredients in an airtight bag
iii. Add meat items (the recipe and quantity above is sufficient for approx 1kg of beef/lamb/chicken) and mix evenly.
iv. Rest in fridge for minimum 4 to 6 hours, preferably 24hours.

Sauce
1. Chili sauce 200g
2. Mustard 50 g
3. Onions 100g (fine chopped and lightly cooked)
4. Garlic 50 g (fine chopped and lightly cooked)
5. Juice of one lemon
6. Mix all items above in blender and serve in sauce/dipping dish.
Mastering the Nursing Profession

Two high scorers in Nilai UC’s nursing degree programme plan to complete their Masters in order to be the best nurses they can be.

“My classmates always look to me when there’s a difficult question in tutorials or practical sessions. They always seem to expect me to know the answer,” laughs Ismahyanti Ismail, a final year student in Nilai University College’s BSc (Hons) in Nursing programme. Her course mate, Ong Siow Ying (or Cynthia to her friends) nods her head in agreement. Both students are among the cream of the crop of their programme and are recognised as being extra diligent and whose hard work have resulted in them getting scholarships from different organisations.

Ismahyanti managed to secure a scholarship from Yayasan Sabah whilst Cynthia is being sponsored by a local vernacular newspaper’s education fund. The former says her classmates look to her for the answers because she comes from a family of nurses. Her mum is a nurse as well as three aunts. Add in an uncle who is a medical assistant, her classmates assume that she is receiving plenty of home tuition from her family members.

“That isn’t quite true. Though my mum and aunts are always helpful, they do expect me to work hard and find out the answers for myself. In fact, their heightened expectations have driven me to ensure I succeed in my studies,” smiles Ismahyanti. Cynthia is being motivated by different factors. Surprisingly, she says she had actually enrolled in a mechanical engineering programme but later found that it did not suit her. Initially she had considered transferring to a medical degree programme but decided that seven years of private tuition fees would be too much of a burden on her parents.

“I was still very attracted to the idea of a career in healthcare and I had visited Nilai UC before whilst in secondary school. A quick check at the website (www.nilai.edu.my) revealed the School of Allied Health and Sciences offered Diploma in Medical Laboratory Technology. Diploma in Nursing and Degree in Nursing,” says Cynthia. “Since I wanted to have a hands-on role, I chose nursing and the degree because I had already done my A-Levels.” She was determined to do well in this programme given the earlier error in choice. With a CGPA of 3.8, Cynthia is on track to finish near or even at the summit of her class and she is visibly proud of her achievements thus far. But she is not yet resting on her laurels and is already planning to do her Masters.

“Funds permitting, I would like to do my Masters overseas. As a nurse, you never stop learning and its paramount you keep abreast with the latest developments. Doing a Masters programme is part of that learning process which I believe will make me a better nurse,” explains Cynthia.

Ismahyanti agrees and is also planning to do her Master’s after getting some work experience. This is because she intends to enter the world of academia and to help improve nursing education in her home state of Sabah. “My mum and my aunts have been a tremendous help in guiding me and my sister (who is pursuing a diploma in nursing at Nilai UC). I want to contribute similarly and a Master’s qualification would help me achieve that goal,” she says.

When asked of the main attractions of studying the nursing degree at Nilai UC, both girls provided a list of convincing answers. Cynthia notes that she really likes the quite and peaceful atmosphere of Nilai UC’s campus. “I know many students who complain this place isn’t happening enough but I am here to gain an education and the environment is perfect for that,” says Cynthia. She also points to the consistently high pass rate for both diploma and degree programmes as proof that the environment is ideal for studies. Ismahyanti further states that she does not understand why students complain when there are a host of clubs and societies on campus offering plenty of activities. She should know as she is on the Student Representative Council and is in charge of clubs and societies. Both girls say they are impressed with the facilities and are also appreciative of Nilai UC’s efforts in organising seminars and workshops. “The recent seminar focusing on the importance of simulation in nursing was a huge boost for us. We are fortunate to be able to work with such high tech mannequins under the supervision of industry experts. My sister and I really learned a lot during those sessions,” says Ismahyanti.

However, both girls save the best praise for last when they single out Nilai UC’s nursing lecturers as being the most important aspect of their ascendency to the top of their respective classes. “They are vastly experienced and are ever willing to share that knowledge with us. They are very approachable and very easy to talk to. The lecturers really make a difference,” concludes Cynthia.
Overcoming Obstacles
Nilai UC engineering student tells how overcoming obstacles inspired his final year project.

“I come from a working class background. My mother is a housewife and my dad drove a cab. He was the sole breadwinner of the family and when he unexpectedly passed away last year, things were looking bleak for me as I was just halfway through my studies,” says Ravikumar Krishnasamy, a final year student in Nilai University College (Nilai UC) Diploma in Mechanical Engineering programme.

Luckily his eldest sister, a teacher, was able to help with the finances and Ravi was able to continue with his studies. He has also used that experience as an inspiration for his final year project. Given the amount of difficulties he has had to face to reach this point, Ravi decided to build something that could overcome obstacles in its path.

Six Footed Arachnid
What he and his project mates came up with was the Hexapod Spider Robot. Designed as a remote- and sensor-controlled mechanism, the robot is supposed to go places where both human and conventional tyre-driven vehicles will have a hard time.

“I had the idea of designing a robot that can crawl and climb through rough and hazardous terrain. Its uses would range from spying and reconnaissance missions to bomb-detection. Military field would be its primary area of usage,” says Ravi as he assembles the Hexapod for a quick demonstration.

Some minor adjustments and after plugging in the battery, the Hexapod was alive, scurrying about the surface and using its sensor to detect and avoid any obstacles. Ravi and his team took inspiration from nature and chose the spider for its dexterity and ability to manoeuvre through any surface. Hence each leg was designed to bend and have a suspension system that allowed the Hexapod to keep its centre of gravity no matter what the terrain.

“This Hexapod is very stable. With a little additional programming, we can even get it to climb walls,” smiles a visibly proud Ravi. He says his team spent close to RM2500 to complete this compulsory final year subject. Although there were other teams that had bigger budgets, Ravi is unperturbed as he says that grading is not based on the size of the budget but on the ingenuity of the project and the ability to incorporate the knowledge taught in the classrooms into an actual working mechanism.

Number Crunching
Ravi says he chose engineering because he has always been fascinated by all things mechanical. “I was always curious about anything with moving parts and what made it tick. In school, I was also quite good at maths and physics and my teachers advised me to pursue engineering,” says Ravi.

“In engineering, a student must be able to think analytically. Mugging alone is not going to help a student score good grades. Memorising formulas will be of little help if a student cannot understand when and where to apply them,” he says.

“School leavers who are looking to pursue engineering must be good at maths and physics. These are the core subjects and there will plenty of calculations in almost every module. So students looking to join an engineering programme must be confident of their mathematical abilities,” cautions Ravi.

His favourite subject unsurprisingly is numerical robotics control. Ravi plans to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering next so that he can enter the working world with the right qualifications.

Dedication and Perseverance
As he carefully stores away the Hexapod in its container, Ravi says he is thankful for having the opportunity at higher education. “My family has been very supportive and made many sacrifices so I can fulfil my ambitions. My advice to students is to take nothing for granted and to grab the opportunity to enter higher education. The hard work students undergo in university is nothing compared to the difficulties encountered by our families who have given us this opportunity. Don’t waste it,” says Ravi.
EXCELLENCE AWARDS

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