

UCTS a university by definition — Wong



(From left) Dr Hakim, Wong, Toh, and Andrew at the press conference yesterday.

SIBU: University College of Technology Sarawak (UCTS) chairman Dato Sri Wong Soon Koh reiterated yesterday that UCTS is a university and not a college, despite its name of 'University College'.

"UCTS is actually a university, but all universities must start with the name of University College," he told reporters after the soft launching of UCTS by Chief Minister Pehin Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud.

He pointed out that UCTS had graduate courses and would soon offer postgraduates and Phd courses.

"There is no difference between UCTS and other universities. Degrees will be awarded and there will be no difference either between the degrees awarded by UCTS and degrees awarded by other universities."

He lamented the confusion cast among the people, particularly by the Opposition, regarding the status of UCTS.

"They said UCTS is no different from Kolej Laila Taib (KLT).

"But just like we have Sunway University College, Taylor University College, Tunku Abdul Rahman University College, this university (UCTS) must start with the name university college as required by the Ministry of Education."

Wong, who is also Minister of Local Government and Community Development and Second Finance Minister, said SibU presently had a college called KLT and a university called UCTS.

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak was impressed when he visited KLT during the SibU by-election in 2010, and proposed to elevate KLT to university status."

He said KLT's board of management, however, decided to get a separate licence for a university in SibU as they did not want to lose a college in SibU.

“The board of management felt that should we upgrade KLT to university status, we have to forgo the college status and that we would thus lose that college.

“After consultation with the Ministry of Education, and the current vice-chancellor of UCTS Professor Dato Dr Hakim Juri, we decided to get a separate licence for a university,”

Phase One of UCTS construction is near completion.

“We are just left with another three blocks, which will be for civil engineering, food technology, additional laboratory, and additional classrooms.”

He said when Phase One is completed UCTS would be able to accommodate about 2,500 students.

Wong said the management would decide on the construction of Phase Two once the three blocks under Phase One were completed.

According to him, UCTS was not ready to receive international students as they had high expectations on accommodation facilities.

UCTS, he pointed out, was established to cater to the need of the second wave of development in Sarawak.

He said it was the chief minister’s vision for human capital development.

“He (Taib) felt that if we were to maintain the traditional economics activities, we are going to experience deceleration of economy.”

Meanwhile, Dr Hakim said with new degree programmes to be offered in UCTS this year, UCTS was targeting to have about 800 students this year.

The courses are Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering, Bachelor of Electrical Engineering (Power), Bachelor of Science in Architecture, Bachelor of Food Technology, Bachelor of Accounting, Bachelor of Software Engineering, and Bachelor of Network Computing

He also planned to get more students from the peninsula.

“We do a lot of promotions in Sarawak but not so much for the West Malaysia side, but we get quite a lot of applications from West Malaysia as well.”

Meanwhile, he said UCTS was going for Platinum rating for Green Building Index (GBI).

He said UCTS was designed for the platinum rating, and had to go through assessment for about a year to be qualified.

“We need to prove that in terms of electricity consumption, harvesting of rain water, the technology that we are using to control the lightings are green in nature.

“Once we get it, UCTS will be the only university in the world to get that platinum grade.”

Also present at the press conference were Hock Peng Organisation managing director Datuk Toh Chiew Hock and Sibu Municipal Council (SMC) deputy chairman Dato Andrew Wong.