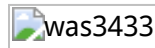


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USM WELCOMES SECOND BATCH OF GAC USA STUDENTS FOR A UNIQUE GUSTAVUS SEMESTER IN MALAYSIA ACADEMIC PROGRAMME - MALAYSIA: LIVING DIVERSITY



PENANG, 15 February 2016 - Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) today received and welcomed 10 students from Gustavus Adolphus College (GAC) from Minnesota, United States of America for a semester here under a unique academic programme specially designed together by USM and GAC.

They were greeted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International Affairs) USM, Professor Dato' Dr. Ahmad Shukri Mustapa Kamal here at the School of Social Sciences Conference Room, along with a few of the Deans and Directors from the Schools involved in the programme.

The Schools which are involved in this programme are the School of Social Sciences, School of Humanities, School of Languages, Literacies and Translation and the School of Biological Sciences.

According to Shukri, GAC and USM had already established collaborations since 1990, in focusing on international cultural education and other related areas.



"Similarly to the first programme held in 2014, the programme for this year will focus on four modules that consist of Tropical Ecology, Malay Language and Culture, Religious Experiences in Malaysia and Living Diversity," he said.

Shukri added, this academic programme is into its second round of implementation and it is hoped that all the students from GAC, though they come from different disciplines of study, would be able to adapt to the various challenges and assist each other in facing the new experiences.

Shukri also gave a brief introduction about USM and a general mention of all the USM campuses to the students and hope that they can experience the diversity in Malaysia throughout the duration of their stay here under this programme.



Meanwhile, the GAC Programme Coordinator, Dr. Joel Carlin said that, since this programme was first initiated with the collaboration between both parties, the feedback has been positive and it was smoothly-run throughout the length of the programme.

"The first programme was a huge success judging from the feedback that we received from the 12 first batch students who were here and we are all delighted at the progress made.

"This has been a great investment of cost and time and we hope USM would give our students the opportunity for wider interaction with USM students, the campus community and also the public in experiencing life here," he said.

Joel, who is an Associate Professor in Biology and Environmental Studies at GAC, also thanked the USM Vice-Chancellor, Deans, Lecturers and all those involved in providing such fruitful experiences to the GAC students and hope that this programme will continue in the future for the benefit of both institutions.



He added that the primary reason Malaysia was chosen as the destination to conduct such a programme was because Malaysia is a politically, economically and socially stable nation that is culturally, ethnically and religiously diverse which provides an excellent context to study diversity.

"Our students will definitely be exposed to all the different cultures, religions, languages, dialects, way of life, tropical environment, and even food which are markedly different from that of the USA," said Joel Carlin.

The Programme Coordinator for USM Ajindar Kaur Banta Singh introduced the 4 Module Coordinators i.e. Dr. Rahmad Zakaria (Tropical Ecology), Professor Dr. Tengku Sepora (Malay Language), Dr. Peter Gan (Religious Experiences in Malaysia) and Associate Professor Dr. Azrina (Living Diversity).

She coordinated the inaugural 2014 programme and thanked all those who are directly and indirectly involved in the planning and implementation of this year's 2016 programme and hoped that the outcome will be equally if not better than the previous one.

"This programme provides an interesting insight to our rich Malaysian diversity and we believe that it will be a very good learning experience for the GAC students as well as the USM student buddies as they interact and build friendships with one another and other local students as well," said Ajindar, who is the Deputy Registrar, Division of Academic and International Affairs, USM during her programme overview presentation.

Also present at the welcoming ceremony were the Director, Centre for International Collaboration Prof. Dr. Lee Keat Teong; Dean, School of Social Sciences Prof. Dr. Azlinda Azman; Dean, School of Languages, Literacies, and Translation Prof. Dr. Tengku Sepora Tengku Mahadi; Dean, School of Biological Sciences Prof. Dr. Amirul Al-Ashraf Balakrishnan Abdullah, along with the modules coordinators and academic staff involved in teaching.

Text: Hafiz Meah Ghouse Meah & Tan Ewe Hoe / Photos: Mohd Fairus Md. Isa



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