

Malaysia University of Science and Technology (MUST)  
– Its Role in Malaysia's Research Initiatives

# OVERVIEW

- Malaysian Govt recognized that R&D is the way forward
  - Created some initiatives but got caught in the buzzword syndrome: it was ICT initially (hence establishment of Multimedia Super Corridor) and now Biotechnology (creation of Biovalley, National Biotechnology Center). But all seem to be stuttering along.
  - Although Materials Science is recognized as a priority area but no concerted effort made to have a long term strategy. There are only about 300 materials scientists in the country.

- Only materials science research center is at Advanced Materials Center (AMREC) under the auspices of Malaysian Standards and Research Institute of Malaysia (SIRIM).
- Local public universities do not really have full fledge materials science programs. Research tend to be focused on utilization of indigenous materials.

# MUST

- MIT was invited to assist in establishing MUST as a postgraduate research university following visit by former PM to MIT in 1996.
- MUST became the first private, non-profit, graduate university to be established in 2001. Only masters and doctoral programs will be offered and research excellence is the main focus. Initial funding of RM100 million spread over 5 years comes from the Malaysian Govt.
- Under an Assistance Agreement, MIT's faculty will provide course materials to MUST's faculty as well as opening avenues for joint research.

- MSc in Materials Science and Engineering at MUST follows the same curriculum at MIT's DMSE. 1<sup>st</sup> batch of 11 students came in 2002 followed by another 14 students. All were provided full scholarships from the Govt grant.

# Issues & Challenges

## Inadequate Funding

- RM20 million per year is not enough to sustain a top class research university. Govt was under the impression that industry support will be readily available. This is not the case.

## Misconception of MIT's assistance

- MUST is not a collaborative program with MIT (unlike Singapore-MIT Alliance or Cambridge –MIT Alliance).

## Lack of good research students

- Students from local public universities do not have strong materials science background.

## No track record

- Being new MUST is still a mystery to most people. Therefore attracting good students difficult.

## MUST vs Public Universities

- Public universities are now claiming to become research universities and so questioning the Govt providing the RM100 million to MUST which was established as a private university.

# The Future for Materials Research

## Government's Role

- Need to recognize the right for faculty to publish. MUST was having difficulty in this area when entering into a collaborative research with SIRIM. The Govt had imposed the restriction that all publications relating to any research must be approved by the Govt. This is against the freedom for faculty members to publish.

## Materials Science Curriculum at Public Universities

- Need to overhaul the present undergraduate materials science programs at public universities.



## Create Awareness

- There seem to inadequate understanding on the diverse opportunities in materials science. This is one of the main reasons for students' lack of interest.

Thank You

