Experts

From the Vice-Chancellor’s Desk: Leading with Values, Inspiring Through Action

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After five months at Universiti Malaysia Pahang Al Sultan Abdullah (UMPSA), I would like to take this opportunity to share a few reflections with the UMPSA community.

These early months have been filled with meaningful encounters, thoughtful conversations, and quiet moments of reflection. As I walked through our campuses, visiting faculties, research laboratories, support offices, and student spaces, I was constantly reminded of what makes UMPSA truly special: a community grounded in resilience, innovation, and sincerity.

During this time, I introduced the SPIROS philosophy, a guiding framework that has shaped five strategic transformation agendas and seventeen institutional shifts. These shifts, which I elaborated on in my recent Vice- Chancellor’s Address, are not merely structural goals. They represent our collective aspiration to elevate UMPSA through good governance, academic excellence, research innovation, and global relevance. At the heart of this transformation lies a foundation built on shared values.

As this is my first reflection shared through this dedicated platform, I would like to focus on a value that I believe resonates with every one of us – **the value of leadership.**

Leadership is often associated with formal positions or seniority. However, true leadership begins not with a title, but with a choice – the choice to act with empathy, integrity, accountability, humility and compassion. Leadership is not confined to any single role or status. It belongs to all of us, whether we are lecturers, researchers, technical staff, administrators or students.

Leadership is present when a lecturer patiently guides a student through difficulty. It shows when a student supports a struggling peer. It is evident when a staff member proactively finds a better way to serve others without being asked. These small, consistent actions demonstrate leadership in its most authentic form.

I still remember my first day as a lecturer. I stood in front of my students trying to appear confident, while feeling uncertain inside. Some students seemed disengaged. My questions were met with silence. But at the end of the semester, a quiet student approached me and said, “Thank you, Doctor. Your class made me feel I did not need to be ashamed of learning slowly.”

That one sentence did not make headlines, but it gave me something far greater – a student’s trust. It reminded me that leadership is not about visibility or recognition. It is about sincerity and consistency in helping others grow.

We live in a world shaped by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity – what we call VUCA. In such an environment, roles and structures alone cannot provide direction. It is our values that guide

us, especially when clarity is hard to find.

Over the years, I have come to embrace a leadership principle that reflects this very idea:

Effective Leadership = (Transformational Leadership × Distributed Leadership) + Values Based Leadership
Transformational leadership provides vision and purpose. Distributed leadership empowers everyone to lead meaningfully, regardless of position. And when leadership is anchored in values, every decision is guided by principle and care.

At UMPSA, I see leadership in many forms – in our laboratories and classrooms, in our offices and workshops, and in the everyday interactions that strengthen our community. Whether you are leading a research project, facilitating a student programme, maintaining our facilities or helping a fellow classmate, you are already making a difference.

Let us not wait for a title to lead. Let us lead from where we are. Let us lead with purpose and inspire through action.

As you reflect on this message, I encourage you to consider two simple questions:
? What is one leadership value that matters most to you?
? What is one small action you can take this week to live out that value, wherever you are in UMPSA?

In the end, our legacy will not be measured by our titles or achievements, but by the hearts we have touched and the trust we have earned.

Let us continue to lead not because we are asked to, but because we believe in a better future – one shaped by clarity, courage and compassion.

Moving forward with purpose. Leading with heart.

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