Experts

How Will UMPSA Thrive Across Borders Yet Remain True to Its Roots?

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Last June, I shared my reflections on leadership, the kind of leadership rooted in values and purpose that we need as UMPSA moves through its transformation. Leadership, however, is not exercised in isolation. It must respond to the world around us.

Now, as we move beyond the recently celebrated Malaysia Day, my reflections turn to another question that defines our future: ***How will UMPSA thrive across borders yet remain true to its roots?***

This question is close to my heart. It is also deeply personal. Because at its core, it is about who we are, where we come from, and how we find the courage to step out into the world without losing ourselves.

Staying Grounded, Reaching Higher

UMPSA was founded with a simple, powerful purpose: to serve. To serve society, industries, and communities through education, research, and technology. Our beginnings were humble, but our mission has always been people-centred, ensuring that the knowledge we create brings real impact to those who need it most.

That is why our philosophy of SPIROS – **Skills, Perfection, Impact, Resilience, Optimisation, Sustainability** – matters so much. SPIROS is not a slogan; it is a promise. It reminds us that we can prepare our graduates for the world without compromising their identity. That we can pursue excellence without arrogance. That we can embrace sustainability as a duty, not an option. And above all, we must always balance global ambition with local relevance.
Our Alumni, Our Inspiration

Whenever I am asked how UMPSA thrives globally, I think of our alumni. They are the living proof of what this university can achieve.

I think of the young alumna recently selected for the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master (EMJM) programme, a recognition that has opened doors to Europe's universities. I also think of our graduates thriving around the globe, some breaking new ground in research, others contributing quietly yet powerfully in their workplaces.
What inspires me most is not just their success, but the way they carry themselves. They embody UMPSA's values: resilience, humility, and the confidence to adapt. Though they may live thousands of miles away, they remain deeply connected to their roots. In their stories, I see the answer to our question: UMPSA thrives globally because our people carry Malaysia with them, wherever they go, whether as local or international students.

Bold Partnerships, Shared Purpose

Our bold move forward is anchored on four strategic pillars: global visibility, research partnerships, student and staff mobility, and industry-driven projects. These are not abstract ambitions, but deliberate choices to ensure UMPSA's presence and relevance across borders.

Through collaborations with universities, industries, and organisations worldwide, UMPSA is shaping opportunities that open doors for our people. These partnerships bring mobility programmes that allow our students and staff to gain new perspectives, research alliances that push the boundaries of knowledge, and industry-driven projects that equip our graduates with future-ready skills.

Each partnership is not ceremonial but purposeful. They enrich our classrooms, strengthen our research ecosystem, and expand UMPSA's footprint on the global stage, all while ensuring our contributions remain deeply connected to local needs. And with every partnership, comes the responsibility to act boldly.

Taking Bold Steps Beyond Comfort

But partnerships alone are not enough. To truly thrive across borders, we must also have the courage to step beyond our comfort zone. That is why UMPSA has committed a significant investment in our people and future under the Transformation Agenda to support student mobility, staff upskilling, international partnerships, and alumni engagement.

This is not about numbers on a balance sheet. It is about people. It is about giving students the freedom to study abroad, to explore, to learn, and to dream. It is about giving our staff the chance to teach and collaborate globally, bringing knowledge back to strengthen our classrooms. It is about ensuring that internationalisation is not the privilege of a few, but an experience shared by many.

As an institution with big dreams, UMPSA cannot thrive by staying in its comfort zone. We must be willing to take bold steps, to challenge ourselves, and to embrace the uncertainty that comes with growth. This is how freedom expresses itself in education: the freedom to imagine differently, to take risks, and to create new possibilities.
Recognition, But with Responsibility

Yes, our efforts are reflected in rankings: 609th in QS, 601–800 in THE, 38th in THE Impact Rankings for SDG 1, and 62nd in UI GreenMetric. These achievements matter. They show that the world recognises UMPSA's quality and impact.

But to me, they are milestones, not endpoints. Our real measure of success lies in how these achievements translate into opportunities for our students, growth for our industries, and hope for our communities. True freedom is not found in numbers, but in the doors they open.

Freedom to Be Ourselves

So again, how will UMPSA thrive across borders yet remain true to its roots? By remembering that our roots are not limitations, they are our strength. We thrive by preparing graduates who are free to shape their own futures, by investing boldly in people and partnerships, and by carrying the Malaysian spirit proudly into every global conversation.

To our UMPSA community, I trust you had a meaningful Merdeka and Malaysia Day celebration. May

the spirit of independence continue to guide us as we carry UMPSA forward - rooted in Malaysia, thriving across the world, and free to create the future together.

As we reflect on both Hari Kebangsaan and Hari Malaysia, let us remember that our true strength lies in unity: in celebrating our diversity while working hand in hand to build a future without borders. Together, the spirit of Merdeka and Malaysia Day reminds us that freedom is not just a moment in time, but an enduring responsibility to rise, to thrive, and to serve with purpose.

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