



Tan: Student intake will continue to grow

Inti in Indonesia

Already a premier educational institution in East Malaysia, Inti College Sarawak will next set up a branch campus in Jakarta.
By S C Chan

PRIVATE education has never been an easy business, but some people insist that it is even tougher these days. But one thing is for sure — owners and managers must think long and hard when planning for growth. Just ask William Tan, managing director and chief executive officer of Inti College Sarawak.

Like heads of the country's many other private colleges, he faces new challenges and imponderables due to the rising competition and occasional government policy shifts.

Although Inti College Sarawak is widely regarded as the state's most established private college — it has over 2,000 students, of whom a quarter are foreigners — Tan readily admits it operates within an increasingly competitive environment.

He points out that the Education Ministry has issued some 600 private college licences since the mid-1980s. He reckons that there are about 100 active institutions throughout the country, with a combined student population of around 50,000.

This already suggests a crowded market, but in fact, the private institutions of higher learning are not just competing among themselves. Public universities and other government-sponsored educational institutions are raising their annual student intakes, and the authorities are establishing more of such universities and colleges. Besides, they charge much lower fees.

Fortunately, Inti College Sarawak has managed to stand its ground. Tan says its

enrolment figures have stayed consistent. 'Because of our reputation, the quality education we offer and the popularity of our courses, we remain attractive not only to locals but also to foreigners. He points to the college's strong links to Indonesia, where most of its 500 foreign students come from. It also has students from India, China, Africa, Myanmar, Vietnam, Bangladesh and the Philippines.

But economics have prompted the college to embark on a new venture. The depreciating rupiah means that it is increasingly expensive for Indonesian students to study abroad. As such, Inti College Sarawak plans to set up a branch campus in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta. This will be its first overseas branch campus.

The branch campus is expected to commence in the first half of the year with 250 students and will offer English, information technology (IT) and business courses. Most of the teaching staff will be drawn from Indonesia. A few lecturers from the Kuching college will work in Jakarta on short attachments.

'This (the establishment of the branch campus) will help the Indonesian students save money. They can opt to do subsequent semesters at Inti College Sarawak,' Tan says. For Inti, it means being able to continue to get students from its main traditional market across the border. The move also ensures stronger growth than if it had instead relied heavily on a rather narrow domestic market.

He adds, 'We foresee our student intake continuing to grow due to the robust demand for higher education among local and foreign students. As a forward-

looking institution, we are assisting the state government to promote Sarawak as a centre of education excellence in the region. In the years to come, we also hope to increase our intake of foreign students to 50 per cent of the student population.'

In conjunction with its 10th anniversary, the college is awarding bursaries or special grants to students with good results who sign up before Sept 31 this year. It also intends to soon offer master's degree programmes in business administration and IT.

Located in Jalan Stampin Timur to the south of Kuching, Inti College Sarawak boasts a purpose-built modern campus and a full-time academic staff of more than 100. Over the years, it has invested more than RM30 million in its physical infrastructure, multimedia equipment, course and curriculum acquisition, and human resource development.

It is the only MSC-status college in Sabah and Sarawak. It is also the first private college in East Malaysia to receive approval to conduct 3+0 programmes in business administration and computer science.

It has five faculties (business, engineering, computing and IT, science and mathematics, and language and liberal arts) offering an array of pre-university, bachelor's degree, professional, trade, certificate and diploma courses.

Its degree programmes include the 3+0 Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Business Administration course (in collaboration with the University of Hertfordshire, UK) and the 3+0 Bachelor of Computer Science (in collaboration with Australia's University of Wollongong). **mb**