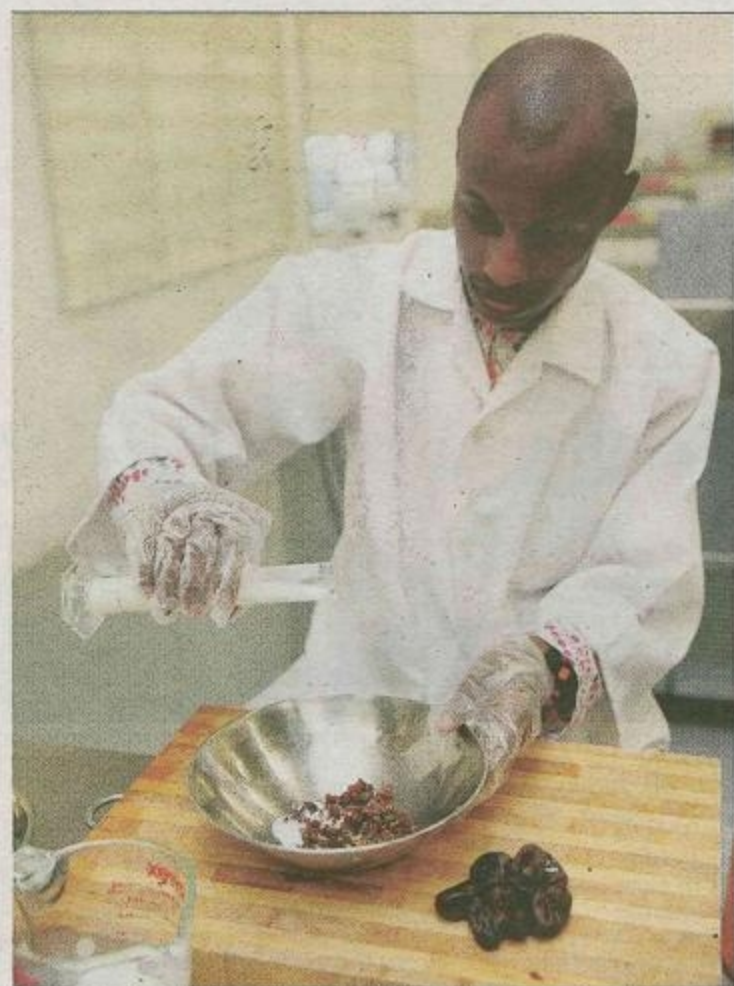


LEARNING CURVE **UNIVERSITIES**



Researching into dates and goat's milk in a laboratory.

of Naqli and Aqli. Many are sceptical. It is the institute's responsibility to share what Islamic Science is all about, to channel the people to the sources and get them to gain more knowledge.

"We may have academicians who are specialists in Aqli but not Naqli, so it is important to put people from different disciplines in one place to work together.

"The challenge for the university is to integrate Islamic studies, the Quran and Sunnah, Islamic arts, social science, the humanities, and Islamic Science, technology and engineering."

USIM's approach to this challenge is through its six Centres of Excellence responsible for enhancing the research environment. They are The World Fatwa Management and Research Institute, Islamic Finance and Wealth Management Institute, Institute of Halal Research and Management, Asian Centre Research in Drug Abuse, Islamic Science Institute and PERMATA Insan Centre.

How far can research go? Nor Aripin said that the research into bee honey, for example, has resulted in the publication of approximately 45,000 articles. With this volume of work and evidence, he believes that the prophetic foods open the door to many research areas in Islamic Science.

He added: "Many have the impression that Naqli is all about reciting the Quran. The university needs to educate the public on the concept and encourage more lecturers to conduct research into Islamic science integrating Naqli and Aqli."

RELEVANT TO PRESENT NEEDS

Ensuring that students graduate with marketable skills remains a crucial goal for universities to support the

workforce with new talent and deliver increased productivity. At the same time, there is a need to offer varied options for students to stay relevant.

In addition to Islamic Science, USIM offers students fresh alternatives — courses integrated with Naqli and Aqli.

One of the pioneers of Islamic business (Muamalat) in the local university scene, USIM introduced the Bachelor's of Muamalat Administration with Honours programme in 2002.

Faculty of Economics and Muamalat dean Associate Professor Dr Amir Shaharuddin said: "The niche of the faculty is Islamic finance which includes zakat (tithes), wakaf (property) and charity in solving current global challenges in the business world. Monetary gain is not the only focus, business ethics matter too.

"For instance, while maximising shareholder profits is vital to businesses, in the field of Muamalat, Muslimpreneurs must also focus on social obligation as a mindset to serve the public.

"We use case studies to teach and learn similar to Harvard Business School but adapt them to the Muamalat concept."

At the Faculty of Science and Technology, courses include bachelor's degree programmes in computer science focusing on information security and assurance and architecture.

Dr Madihah Mohd Saudi, deputy dean of the faculty, said linking verses from the Quran with contemporary subjects is an area that needs development.

"It is not only about reading the Quran but also integration of content. We can relate some of the verses to the importance of cyber security defence or information security (in computer



Muzzammer Mansor (fourth from left) and his team members have won several awards for their product, **Crushy Energy Bar**. With them are group adviser Alina Abdul Rahim (third from left) and Musa Ahmad (centre).



Madihah Mohd Saudi



Vickneshwari Kanagaveloo



Nader Yahya Alkeiny

science). We align Naqli with information ethics and human values."

In architecture, syariah compliance is also a relatively unexplored field. "The entrance to a home should not face the door of the opposite house. For security, the hall should not be the first place one enters in a home.

"Building a high gate surrounding your house without the consent of your neighbour is not encouraged in Islam in relation to neighbourhood relationships. But at the same time, a functional gate system is a necessity for security," she said.

To integrate Naqli and Aqli into the design of the building, one can look into combining security (Aqli) and neighbourhood relationships

Facebook specially for Muslims who are particular about security and privacy policies. IslamTag has 100,000 members monitored by a team of 10 people.

In 2013, Nader expanded IslamTag into Zcholar, focusing on scholars who want to interact worldwide in a social network for academicians.

"Zcholar is a combination of Facebook and Google Plus. Its users have their own online library as they can upload and download articles, books and any educational material shared among the members," said Nader.

Already in the process of finalising his thesis, Nader hopes that Zcholar will one day be a virtual source of knowledge on Islam.

Recently, a team of students from the Faculty of Science and Technology won a silver medal for a snack named Crushy Energy Bar at the British Invention Show 2014. Muzzammer Mansor, a third-year student who is a team member, said: "The Crushy Energy Bar contains all-natural ingredients mentioned in the Sunnah and Quran such as dates, raisins and nuts, using milk as a binder to form a snack."

The Crushy Energy Bar also won a gold medal at the Novel Research Innovation and Competition at Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang.

Being a non-Muslim did not stop Vickneshwari Kanagaveloo from pursuing her master's degree at USIM. A counsellor teacher, she is taking a break from work to pursue the Master's in Counselling (Substance Abuse) through the Speciality Programme for Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

"It is important that secondary school students are exposed early to the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse. In my 10 years of teaching, I have encountered many youths with problems arising from this abuse."

USIM's focus on religion, she said, is applicable to dealing with young people's problems. "A religious point of view (regardless of the religion) encourages a positive view. At the same time, as the majority of my students are Muslims, I can apply my knowledge of Sunnah as a counsellor."

(Naqli).

In keeping with its philosophy, the university aims to give students the professional skills they need to compete in the global employment market, coupled with a strong social conscience — a value seldom emphasised among graduates — making USIM graduates a different breed in the workplace.

Amir added: "We hope to produce creative and trustworthy graduates who can integrate Islamic foundations with contemporary knowledge and practices to contribute towards a more humane, just and inclusive society."

TOWARDS GLOBAL MOBILITY

USIM's unique branding not only targets students balancing both Naqli and Aqli as one quality of its graduates but it also helps them compete globally. Students, academics and university brands will encounter global mobility. This will not only intensify competition, but also create opportunities for much deeper global partnerships and broader access to student and academic talent.

For Nader Yahya Alkeiny from Yemen, who is in the third year of postgraduate studies at USIM, the decision to study in Malaysia was easy for he had not only wanted to be exposed to the country's ethnicities but also tap into the strength of the Islamic foundation of the university.

Nader is also founder of IslamTag, a social networking website similar to