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#EnterprisingCampus: A Proposed Business Model Towards Sustainability

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Abstract

#EnterprisingCampus is more than a hashtag; it represents the strategic business model adopted by Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Sabah Branch, Malaysia. Introduced in July 2023, this initiative has driven remarkable institutional transformation, culminating in UiTM Sabah receiving a prestigious 6-star rating for the 2024–2025 assessment period. Although UiTM Sabah is a public university, its traditional focus has largely remained within the boundaries of academic activities. This conventional approach has become increasingly unsustainable in the face of significant financial constraints, including government budget reductions of approximately 30 to 40% from previous allocations, as well as other emerging institutional challenges. The concept of an enterprising university extends beyond commercial transactions. Enterprise is understood as purposeful and proactive behaviour that can be demonstrated across diverse contexts, with business representing only one dimension. An enterprising institution is one that transforms ideas into action, capitalises on opportunities, drives innovation, and creates meaningful organisational and societal change - value creation. This paper examines the key gaps and challenges faced by UiTM Sabah and proposes the Quintuple Helix 5Rs (QH5Rs) Model under the theme *#EnterprisingCampus*: Cultural, Natural and Societal Resources as a strategic framework to address these gaps. There were 13 Rector's Initiatives and among the key initiatives presented is the establishment of a MY Social Enterprise Town (MYSET) under The Islamic Social Enterprise (SE) Partnership centred on the Blue Economy sector, which integrates economic, environmental, and social sustainability. The paper concludes by identifying eight Critical Success Factors (CSFs) for sustainability, derived from UiTM Sabah's leadership-driven strategic integration framework for 2024–2028, demonstrating how an enterprising university model can strengthen institutional resilience and create long-term value for stakeholders.

Keywords: Enterprising Campus, The Quintuple Helix 5Rs Model, Islamic Social Enterprise Partnership, Critical Success Factors

1. Introduction

The global higher education landscape is undergoing a dramatic transformation, driven by a shift in societal expectations and fiscal realities. Universities and state campuses are no longer assessed solely on pedagogical or research output; they are increasingly required to function as value-generating ecosystems that catalyze regional innovation toward sustainability. For public institutions, this transition from a cost-center model to a value-creation framework is not merely an academic exercise but a strategic necessity for survival. The contemporary higher education landscape is undergoing a paradigm shift, transitioning from traditional knowledge conservation to the "enterprising university" model. This evolution is necessitated by a global funding crisis, exemplified by government allocation reductions of 30 to 40 percent, which have rendered historical operational models unsustainable. This paper evaluates the *#EnterprisingCampus* initiative implemented at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Sabah Branch as a strategic response to these constraints since 2023. The focal point of this initiative is the Quintuple Helix 5Rs (QH5Rs) framework—integrating Relation, Reduction, Return, and Resilience, which aligns university capabilities with industry, government, civil society, and the natural environment. The success of this model is evidenced by UiTM Sabah's 6-star rating for the 2024–2025 assessment period. By operationalizing regional resources through the Blue Economy sector and the Islamic Social Enterprise Partnership (ISEP), the model demonstrates how public institutions can transform latent assets into sustainable economic, social, and environmental value.

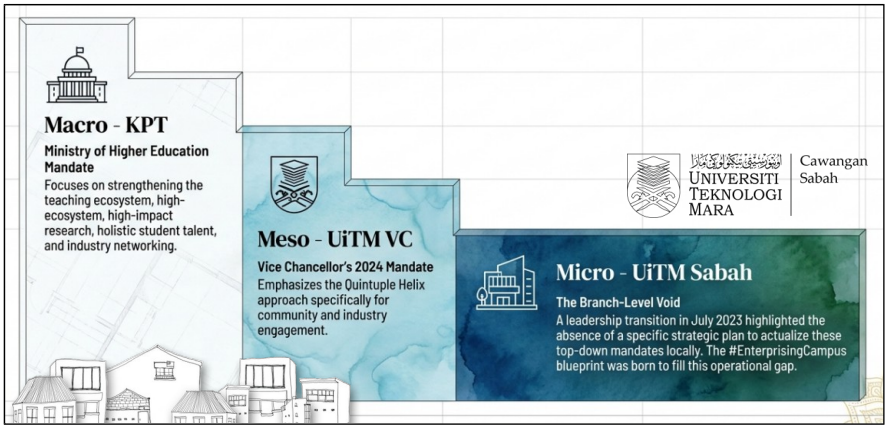
2. Current State and Strategic Gap

a. Global Landscape and the Funding Crisis

Public universities face a profound financial crossroads. According to the source context, government budget allocations have been reduced by approximately 30–40% from previous levels. When coupled with rising operational costs and the demand for digital transformation, traditional reliance on external state allocations becomes unsustainable. Institutional sustainability now depends on the capacity to leverage underutilized assets and establish cross-sector partnerships that insulate the university from fiscal shocks. A 2016 report based on the Federal Expenditure Estimates states that University of Malaya (UM) had reduction of 28.5%; Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) by 32%; Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), 32%; UPM and UTM also experienced substantial reductions. A 2017 Budget showed several major public universities experienced cuts around 28–32%. The report also notes that funding for universities and teaching hospitals fell from RM8.8 billion in Budget 2016 to RM7.1 billion in Budget 2017. As for a Parliamentary record discussing university funding reported that UM experienced a 41.73% reduction in allocation, accompanied by a 72% reduction in research and development allocation. This provides particularly strong evidence for the upper end of the "30–40%" claim, although it concerns a specific university and period rather than the whole sector. However, a report citing the Budget figures states that allocations to public universities were reduced by 23.80%, from RM7.573 billion to RM6.117 billion. It also reports larger reductions for individual universities, including UKM (45%), UPM (42%), UTM (43%) and UiTM (33.69%) (CLJ Law, 2016).

b. The UiTM Sabah Case Study

As the oldest branch campus outside of the main Shah Alam campus (established in 1973), UiTM Sabah serves as a critical legacy institution within a centralized university system. In July 2023, following a leadership transition, the branch launched the #EnterprisingCampus initiative. This framework was designed to align the branch's unique regional strengths with the Vice Chancellor's 2024 mandate regarding the Quintuple Helix Model. The immediate impact of this strategic alignment was the attainment of a 6-star rating for the 2024–2025 assessment period, signaling the viability of the enterprising model. The gaps were found during the rector's tenure such as (1) The "Mini VC" Role Ambiguity: While branch Rectors are colloquially referred to as "Mini VCs," this role is not explicitly or comprehensively translated into the governance structure. This creates a disconnect between the expectation of campus autonomy and the reality of centralized constraints; (2) One University, Multi-System Challenge: In a system of 34 campuses, identifying a Unique Selling Point (USP) or Value Proposition (VP) is difficult. Without a distinct "niche," campuses risk internal competition and strategic drift; and (3) The Macro-Meso-Micro Gap: A critical difficulty exists in translating macro-level goals (e.g., Ministry of Higher Education directives) into micro-actions feasible at the branch level (refer to Figure 1).



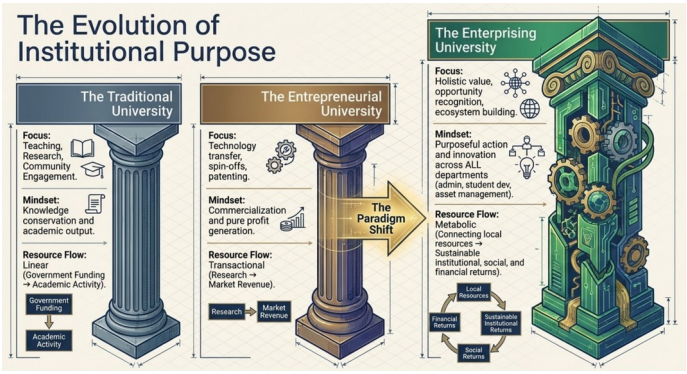
Source: UiTM (2025) - *Amanat Naib Canselor (2024) & Amanat Rektor (2024)*

Figure 1: Translating the National Mandate into Local Action

c. Defining the Enterprising University/Campus

A rigorous definition is required to distinguish the "enterprising university/campus" from narrow commercialization. Unlike profit-seeking commercial entities, an enterprising university demonstrates a proactive institutional capacity to identify opportunities and co-create value. It represents a "way of thinking and acting" where ideas are transformed into purposeful action across all functions—academic, administrative, and communal. This paper proposes the Quintuple Helix 5Rs (Relation, Reduction, Reform, Return, and Resilience) Model or QH5Rs business model as the formalized mechanism to institutionalize this behavior. Few nomenclatures such as *#EnterprisingCampus,* hashtag has been used by

UiTM Sabah since 2024, reflecting its way forward as an enterprising campus, generally encourages initiative, innovation, entrepreneurship, and proactive problem-solving among its students and staff; Entrepreneurial Leader describes someone resourceful, energetic, and willing to take on new projects or opportunities; and Enterprising Institution promotes entrepreneurial thinking and business creation; encourages students to be creative and innovative; supports leadership, teamwork, and independent learning; provides opportunities such as startup incubators, innovation hubs; competitions, or industry collaborations, and fosters a culture where students take initiative rather than follow instructions. Figure 2 illustrates the evolution of institutional purposes of public universities and applied to branch campuses under the main campus. It started with the traditional university, followed by the entrepreneurial university, and the enterprising university. The details on focus, mindset, and resource flow are further displayed on the diagram.



Source: UiTM (2025) - *Amanat Rektor (2024)*; Ruiz, Sofia & Martens, Cristina & Costa, Priscila (2020)

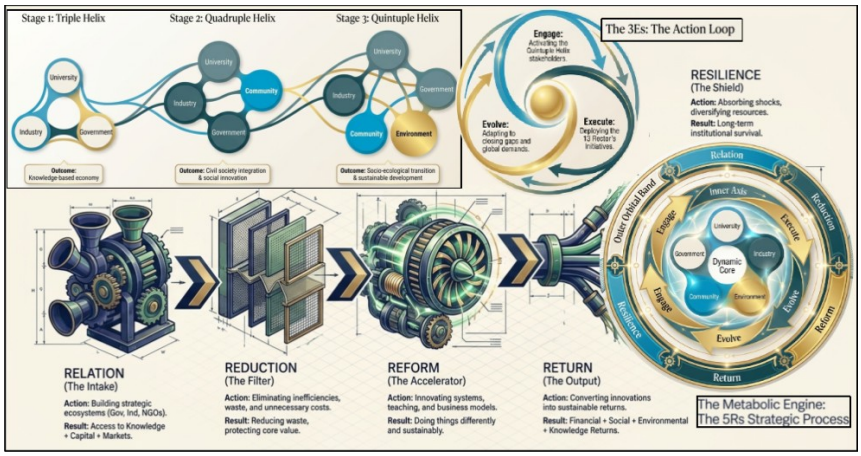
Figure 2: The Evolution of Institutional Purposes

Traditional universities can be split into teaching university and research universities. The above diagram with the additional historical grounding is essential to legitimize new institutional business models. The role of the university has evolved through a clear trajectory: Teaching University → Research University → Entrepreneurial University → Enterprising University. While the entrepreneurial model focuses on patents and technology transfer, the enterprising model embeds an opportunity-oriented mindset throughout the entire organizational culture.

3. Literature Review

a. New Proposed Business Model - Quintuple Helix 5Rs (QH5Rs) Model

As the oldest branch campus outside the main Shah Alam campus (established in 1973), UiTM Sabah serves as a critical legacy institution within a centralized university system (one university, multi-system). Prior to 2023, there was no Sabah branch campus' blueprint strategic plan available. Therefore, in July 2023, following a leadership transition, the branch officially launched the *#EnterprisingCampus* initiative in 2024. The new proposed business model framework was designed to align the branch's unique regional strengths with the UiTM Vice Chancellor's 2024 mandate regarding the Quintuple Helix model. After 3 years of implementation, the immediate impact of this strategic alignment was the attainment of a 6-star rating for the 2024–2025 assessment period, signaling the viability of the enterprising model which was aligned with the branch strengths and opportunities (SO). The QH5Rs model is proposed as the direct solution to these omissions. The QH5Rs model synthesizes ecosystem architecture (Quintuple Helix) with strategic action mechanisms (the 5Rs), driven by a specific operational methodology known as the 3Es. The 3Es Operational Methodology includes Engage (*Libat Urus*): Build active, multi-stakeholder relationships; Execute (*Laksana*): Implement projects with measurable milestones and Evolve (*Lebar Luas*): Scale successful initiatives to achieve wider impact. Diagram 3.0 shows three main components of the new business model, i.e., (1) The evolution of helix model from Triple Helix (university, industry, and government) - knowledge-based economy to Quadruple Helix (university, industry, government, and community) - civil society integration and social innovation, and lastly Quintuple Helix (university, industry, government, community, and environment) - socio-ecological transition and sustainable development [Carayannis, E. & Campbell, D. (2010); Carayannis, E.G. & Campbell, D.F.J. (2010)], (2) The 5Rs action Framework comprises of (i) Relation: Building ecosystems for access to Knowledge + Capital + Markets. It shifts the university from isolated acts to networked value-creation; (ii) Reduction: Optimizing efficiency under the principle: Reduce waste, not value." This includes digitalization and process simplification to counter budget cuts; (iii) Reform: Systemic innovation in business models and teaching. It asks, "How can we do things differently and better?"; (iv) Return: Generating multidimensional returns (Financial, Social, Knowledge, and Institutional); and (v) Resilience: The capacity for shock absorption, ensuring long-term sustainability through resource diversification (refer Figure 3).



Source: UiTM (2024); UiTM (2025); UiTM (2026) - *Amanat Rektor*; Carayannis, E. & Campbell, D. (2010); Carayannis, E.G. & Campbell, D.F.J. (2010)

Figure 3: The Metabolic Engine of QH5Rs Model - Combining elements of Quintuple Helix + 5Rs + 3Es

b. Theoretical Foundations of Study

The transition toward an enterprising framework is supported by a synthesis of global literature that can be explained below. It was supported by the following thoughts:

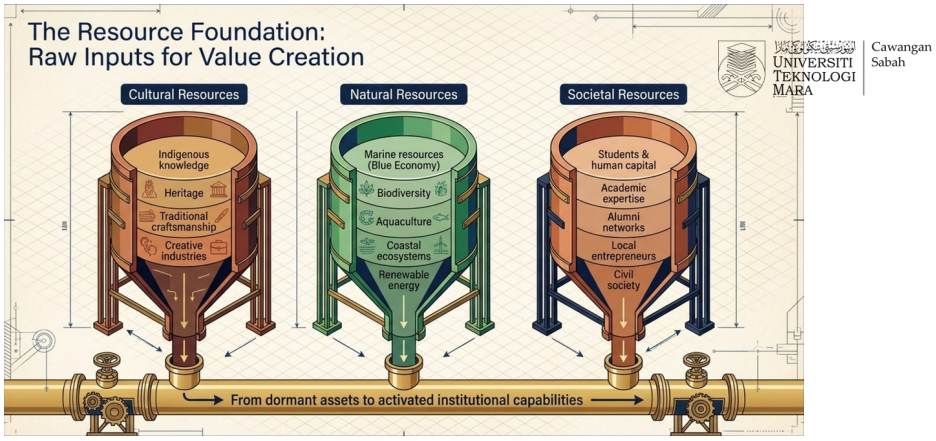
i. Dynamic Capabilities: Ruiz et al. (2020) and Heaton et al. (2020) highlight the need for universities to adapt internal structures to volatile environments.
ii. Innovation Engines: Etzkowitz (2016) and Thorp & Goldstein (2013) frame the university as a problem-solving hub for society.
iii. Policy & Culture: Gibb & Hannon (2006) and James et al. (2002) explore the necessity of embedding entrepreneurial mindsets within academic governance.

c. Regional Resources and 13 Rector's Strategic Initiatives

Strategic innovation must be place-based. For UiTM Sabah, the tagline *#EnterprisingCampus* initiative leverages the unique geographic and cultural assets of the Sabah region to generate value - value creation and unique selling point (niche). The chosen theme focuses on Sabah campus' niche i.e., *#EnterprisingCampus*: Cultural, Natural, and Societal Resources. Figure 4 further explains the categorization of regional resources, which comprises:

i. Cultural Resources: Indigenous knowledge, heritage traditional products, and local craftsmanship.
ii. Natural Resources: Marine biodiversity, coastal ecosystems, fisheries, and renewable energy potential.
iii. Societal Resources: Student talent, academic expertise, alumni networks, and community social capital.

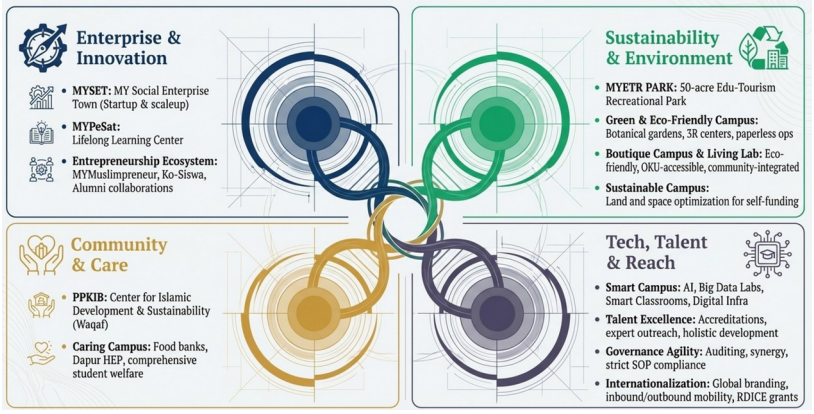
Traditional academic models often view these resources as mere subjects of study. The QH5Rs model evaluates them as latent capital. By viewing indigenous knowledge as a platform for creative social enterprise or marine biodiversity as a foundation for biotechnology, the university converts local " context" into " institutional value," bridging the gap between ivory-tower research and regional economic development.



Source: UiTM (2024); UiTM (2025); UiTM (2026) - *Amanat Rektor*

Figure 4: Regional Resources Categorization

The macro-vision of the *#EnterprisingCampus* is realized through 13 specific micro-actions under four clusters including (1) Enterprise and Innovation; (2) Community Care; (3) Sustainability and Environment; and (4) Technology, Talent, and Reach (Figure 5). These initiatives are designed to bridge the gap between resource mobilization and value creation.

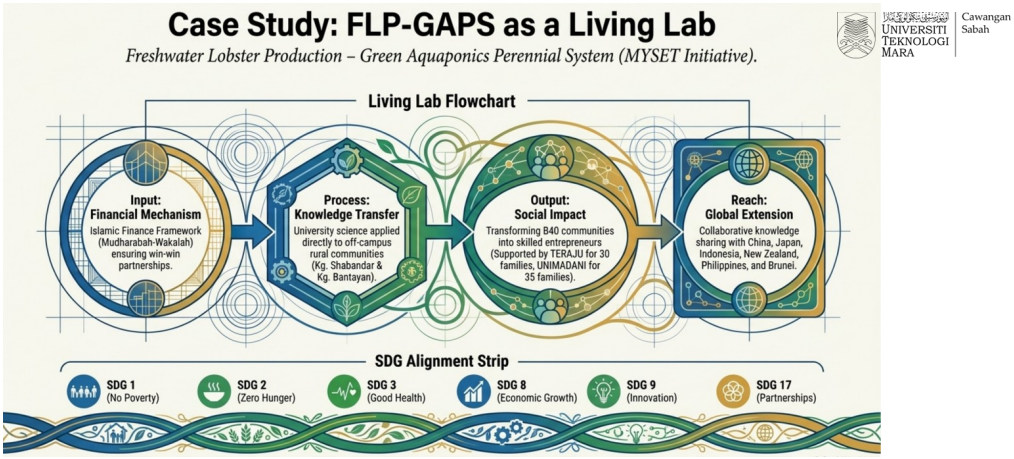


Source: UiTM (2024); UiTM (2025); UiTM (2026) - *Amanat Rektor*

Figure 5: 13 Rector's Strategic Initiatives and Clusters

d. Proof of Concept - Strategic Application of QH5R: MYSET - ISEP and Blue Economy

Place-based innovation allows a university to leverage regional comparative advantages for global relevance. UiTM Sabah utilizes its cultural, natural, and societal resources as a primary innovation platform. The Islamic Social Enterprise Partnership (ISEP) called Freshwater Lobster Production - Green Aquaponics Perennial System (FLP-GAPS) integrates university expertise with Islamic values - Amanah (Trust), *Keadilan* (Justice), and *Ihsan* (*Benevolence*) and the other four elements of QH5Rs. This framework adopts a White Ocean Strategy (WOS), which prioritizes environmental and human values over mere profit to create long-term competitive advantage. In the context of UiTM Sabah, the Blue Economy represents the sustainable use of freshwater resources. The university role as an Ecosystem Enabler serving six SDG pillars (refer to Figure 6.0).



Source: UiTM (2024); UiTM (2025); UiTM (2026) - *Amanat Rektor*

Figure 6: QH5Rs Model + The Islamic Social Enterprise Partnership (Blue Economy)

4. Eight Critical Success Factors (CSFs) of UiTM Sabah

Critical success factors (CSFs) are high-level goals that an organization must meet to achieve its strategic objectives. CSFs can be implemented at the project, program, or organizational level, though they are most frequently used by entire departments or organizations because of their close connection to an organization's business strategy. Achieving

institutional CSFs typically yields meaningful value and positive financial outcomes for your organization (Martins, 2026). Hence, to prevent strategic drift, the institutional alignment of UiTM Sabah branch must be maintained through eight CSFs as the followings: (a) Strategic leader; (b) Winning Business Model; (c) Strategic Partners/Synergy; (d) Green-Based Project; (e) Opportunities Creation; (f) Reputation; (g) Knowledge/Skill Transfer & Wealth Contribution; and (h) Entrepreneurship Ecosystem, Supply Chain & Special Purpose Vehicle Creation (refer to Diagram 8.0).

5. Discussion and Managerial Implications

In conclusion, The QH5Rs Model demonstrates that institutional sustainability is not achieved through austerity alone, but through the synergy of cost reduction and value creation. For university administrators, the implications are clear:

a. Integrated Strategy: The QH5Rs Model - *#EnterprisingCampus*: Natural, Cultural and Societal Resources must be the core strategic "kitab" (guide), not a secondary project.
b. Unique Selling Point (USP) Identification: Every branch campus must identify its regional "niche" to avoid redundancy within a centralized system.
c. Mindset Transition: Staff and students' development must prioritize financial literacy, partnership management, and entrepreneurial thinking.

For future research agenda, the following research questions are proposed to validate this model further:

a. How does an enterprising culture influence long-term institutional sustainability in public universities?
b. How does strategic partnership capability influence the success of revenue diversification?
c. Does innovation mediate the relationship between resource mobilization and institutional resilience?
d. How does the QH5Rs model influence specific social and environmental outcomes in regional ecosystems?
e. What role does Islamic Social Enterprise play in strengthening community-based economic development?

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