

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR**  
**SIMPOSIUM UM GIVING 2026 – MEMACU PELABURAN IMPAK**  
**SOSIAL MELALUI NILAI SOSIAL**

**5 MAY 2026**

**M Resort and Hotel, Kuala Lumpur**

---

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh and Salam Sejahtera

Yang Berbahagia members of the Board of Directors of Universiti Malaya,

Distinguished leaders from across the public and private sectors,

Esteemed partners from civil society and religious institutions,

Members of the university leadership and campus community

Respected alumni of Universiti Malaya,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Let us be clear. Giving is now central to the survival, competitiveness and moral purpose of a great university. It is not an accessory to excellence. It is part of the architecture of excellence itself.

2. A university that depends only on conventional funding will always be limited by conventional possibilities. But a university trusted by society, strengthened by alumni, supported by partners and sustained by long-term capital will have the confidence to lead, the courage to innovate and the independence to serve with purpose.
3. Before I proceed, let me say this clearly: Universiti Malaya is deeply grateful to every donor, benefactor, alumnus, partner, foundation, corporation, religious institution and friend of the university who has stood with us and contributed to our mission. On behalf of UM, and from me personally, I thank you. Your contributions are not merely acts of generosity; they are acts of belief — belief in our students, in our research, in our public mission, and in the future of Malaysia. You have helped strengthen access, protect talent, support knowledge and expand the university's capacity to serve. UM does not take this trust lightly. We recognise it, we honour it, and we will carry the responsibility of turning your generosity into real impact with discipline, integrity and purpose.
4. Every generation is judged by what it chooses to invest in. Some generations invest only in comfort, some in short-term gains, and some in institutions that will outlive them. The most visionary societies are those that understand that the future is not secured by wealth alone, but by knowledge, values, talent, courage and trust.
5. This is why our discussion today is not merely about giving to Universiti Malaya. It is about the kind of Malaysia we want to build, the kind of world we want to shape, and the kind of legacy we are prepared to leave behind.

6. This symposium is therefore not merely about fundraising. **Symposium UM Giving 2026: Memacu Pelaburan Impak Sosial Melalui Nilai Sosial** is about how Universiti Malaya builds a new culture of giving, trust, stewardship and measurable social impact for Malaysia.
7. For UM, giving must now be understood as a strategic force. It shapes access. It protects talent. It accelerates research. It uplifts communities. It allows the university to stand not only as an institution of learning, but as an institution of national consequence.
8. UM Giving 2026 must mark a decisive shift in thinking. A contribution to UM must not be seen as money leaving the donor's hand. It must be seen as value entering the future of society, as capital transformed into capability, and as generosity converted into national strength.
9. The future of higher education will belong to universities that can command trust. Trust becomes capital. Reputation becomes capital. Alumni loyalty becomes capital. Public confidence becomes capital. The university that earns trust will earn the right to lead.
10. When UM speaks about giving, we are not speaking only about institutional needs. We are speaking about Malaysia's capacity to produce talent, ideas, solutions, leadership and moral imagination for a difficult century. We are speaking about the future infrastructure of the nation's mind.

11. The theme of this symposium reminds us that it is not enough to give, receive or celebrate generosity. We must ask the harder questions: what does every contribution change, who does it uplift, what capability does it build, what national problem does it address, and what legacy does it leave behind?
12. I also wish to highlight that contributions to Universiti Malaya may be eligible for tax deduction or tax exemption, subject to the applicable provisions and requirements under the Income Tax Act 1967 and the relevant approval framework of the Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia. UM Giving will continue to facilitate the proper documentation and processes for eligible donations, so that every act of generosity is not only meaningful in impact, but also recognised through the appropriate national tax incentive mechanisms. This reflects the country's acknowledgement that giving to education, research and social advancement is not merely private generosity, but a contribution to national development.
13. This direction is fully aligned with the spirit of my Perutusan 2026 given earlier this year. The message was clear: 2026 must be a year of execution, discipline and institutional delivery, moving from aspiration to implementation and from intention to measurable impact.
14. Two major tenets must guide our thinking today: **financial sustainability** and **social value**. Financial sustainability gives the university strength. Social value gives that strength meaning. One enables UM to stand with confidence; the other ensures that UM stands for something larger than itself.

15. Financial sustainability is not a technical matter for the finance office. It is a strategic condition for university independence. A financially weak university will always be structurally limited, no matter how ambitious its plans or how talented its people may be.
16. We must be honest: the era where public universities can rely comfortably on traditional funding models alone is over. Government support remains important, but if UM wants world-class impact, UM must build world-class financial resilience.
17. Financial sustainability gives UM the confidence to move faster. It allows us to attract the best talent, invest in new disciplines, support scholarships, establish chairs, build laboratories and form global partnerships at the speed demanded by the future.
18. UM must therefore reduce excessive dependency on conventional funding streams. This is not a rejection of public support. It is a recognition that a great public university must be strong enough to serve the public with resilience, autonomy and continuity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

19. The challenge is not simply to raise more money. The real challenge is to build a mature system of stewardship — one that combines governance, transparency, donor confidence, investment discipline, beneficiary mapping and measurable outcomes.
20. The strongest universities in the world understand this clearly. Harvard, Oxford, Cambridge, Stanford and other leading institutions are strong not only because of history or rankings, but because they have built deep cultures of giving, endowment, alumni loyalty and long-term trust.

21. Harvard offers one of the clearest examples of endowment as strategic capacity. Harvard states that its endowment supports student aid, faculty positions, research, the arts, community programmes and other university purposes.
22. In fiscal year 2025, Harvard said endowment support enabled US\$784 million in financial aid and scholarships. The lesson from Harvard is not simply that Harvard is wealthy. The deeper lesson is that generations of alumni, families, foundations and partners see giving to Harvard as an investment in civilisation, knowledge and future leadership. Wealth alone did not build that culture. Trust did.
23. Harvard also teaches us that endowment must be governed with clarity. Endowment is not a vague pool of money. It is made up of donor intentions, restricted purposes, long-term investment rules and disciplined stewardship. UM must build the same confidence that every contribution is protected, governed and converted into real outcomes.
24. Oxford offers another powerful model. Oxford reports university endowment assets of around £4.2 billion, while its colleges hold their own endowments. The Oxford lesson is continuity. Oxford's strength was not built in one campaign, one year or one administration. It was built across generations of trust, giving, stewardship and institutional memory. This is what UM must build: not a campaign, but a culture.
25. Oxford also shows the power of transformational philanthropy. The Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities was made possible by a £185 million gift, described by Oxford as the largest single gift in modern times made to the university. It shows how philanthropy can reshape not only buildings, but entire intellectual ecosystems.

26. UM must learn from these examples, but not copy them blindly. Our model must be Malaysian in soul, global in standard and moral in purpose. We must build from our own values, our own national needs, our own social realities and our own responsibility to the rakyat.
27. UM must build a Malaysian model of world-class giving: one that combines endowment discipline, wakaf permanence, zakat justice, philanthropic generosity and measurable social impact. This is not imitation. This is adaptation with confidence.
28. The second major tenet is social value. If financial sustainability gives UM strength, social value ensures that this strength serves people, communities and the nation. A university that is financially strong but socially indifferent has failed its highest purpose.
29. Every Ringgit mobilised through UM Giving must be connected to human dignity, opportunity, capability and transformation. We must not ask only how much was given. We must ask what changed because it was given.
30. Social value forces us to ask better questions. Which student remained in university? Which family was lifted from vulnerability? Which research was advanced? Which patient benefited? Which community gained capacity? Which national problem was addressed?
31. This is where Social Return on Investment becomes important. SROI gives structure to moral intention, allowing UM to move beyond activities and into outcomes, and to show donors what changed because of their contribution.

32. UM Giving must therefore become the university's strategic engine of trust, where every Ringgit is governed with discipline, every contribution is tied to purpose, and every act of generosity is converted into measurable public value.
33. UM Giving must not merely receive funds. It must structure giving, match donors to causes, conduct due diligence, design measurable outcomes, monitor implementation and report impact. This is how UM Giving moves from administration to strategy.
34. Zakat must be elevated from relief to capability-building. At a university, zakat can protect students from dropping out, support food security, provide learning materials, and ensure academic continuity. Properly structured, zakat protects talent and dignity at the same time.
35. Wakaf must be treated as a sacred long-term trust. A wakaf contribution made today can continue generating benefit across generations through scholarships, chairs, libraries, laboratories, medical facilities, research funds and community service. Its power lies in continuity.
36. Endowment must become UM's long-term financial backbone. It allows the university to plan beyond the annual budget, invest in future disciplines, protect excellence and sustain access. If UM wants world-class standing, endowment culture must become part of our institutional identity.
37. We must also recognise that this conversation is taking place at a time when the world itself is becoming more uncertain, more competitive and more unequal. Nations are now competing not only through military strength, trade power or natural resources, but through talent, knowledge, research capacity, technological command and institutional resilience.

38. The future will not wait for countries that hesitate. It will be shaped by nations that invest early and boldly in human capital, science, innovation, health, energy transition, artificial intelligence, food security and social cohesion. Malaysia cannot afford to stand at the receiving end of global knowledge, consuming technologies designed elsewhere, importing solutions created elsewhere, and depending on ideas produced elsewhere. A nation that only consumes the future will never command it.
39. Malaysia must build its own capacity to think, discover, invent, decide and lead. This is where Universiti Malaya carries a national duty. Investing in UM is not a ceremonial act of supporting a university; it is a strategic act of strengthening Malaysia's intellectual sovereignty, technological readiness and global confidence. In a more demanding world, Malaysia's place will not be secured by caution alone. It will be secured by institutions strong enough to produce knowledge, shape talent and generate solutions for the nation and for humanity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

40. Let us be clear: current mechanism must not become another polite platform for occasional generosity. It must become one of the university's strongest instruments for national transformation. If zakat only relieves but does not empower, if wakaf only preserves but does not multiply, if endowment only accumulates but does not liberate, and if philanthropy only donates but does not transform, then we have not gone far enough.

41. Our task is to build a system where every form of giving strengthens capability, protects dignity, expands opportunity, and gives Universiti Malaya the financial and moral force to serve Malaysia at the highest level. This is not about asking society to support UM's future. This is about asking society to build Malaysia's future through UM.
42. As I close, I want to place on record once again our highest appreciation to all donors and partners who have invested their trust in Universiti Malaya. Your support is not symbolic. It is consequential. Because of your generosity, students can continue their journey, research can move further, communities can be uplifted, and UM can serve Malaysia with greater strength and confidence. We will honour your trust not through words alone, but through governance, transparency, measurable impact and a relentless commitment to ensure that every contribution becomes part of a legacy worthy of Universiti Malaya and worthy of Malaysia's future.
43. It is a contribution to the next generation, to the young minds who will carry Malaysia forward, to the researchers who will search for answers to the hardest problems, to the communities that deserve dignity and opportunity, and to the wider human family that depends on knowledge, compassion and courage. Every gift entrusted to UM carries a larger meaning. It says that you believe education can change lives, that knowledge can serve humanity, and that a university can be a force for good far beyond its own campus. For that trust, and for that belief, Universiti Malaya is deeply grateful.

44. We invite society to invest because Malaysia needs strong institutions — institutions that are financially resilient, intellectually fearless, socially purposeful and morally anchored. When we invest in UM, we invest in Malaysia's mind, Malaysia's soul and Malaysia's future. We turn generosity into opportunity, capital into capability, and social value into a legacy that will outlive us all.

With that, I thank you

Wabillahi taufiq wal hidayah.

Wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.

---