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HARD AT WORK: Student putting together bamboo frame structures for the construction of an eco-friendly building.

Grand designs

If graduate employability is anything to go by, ALFA College's track record will take some beating.

Having maintained a 100% employment success rates since 1999, ALFA has become something of a household name for architectural and design houses.

ALFA graduates and interns are much sought after and S. N. Low and Associates Sdn Bhd Chartered Architects CEO Lee Chor Wah is one of the many satisfied employers.

"ALFA graduates are able to hit the ground running," says Lee, who is also the president of the Malaysian Institute of Architects.

"They are fast learners with a solid foundation and they contribute a lot. They have a great attitude and they're a joy to work with."

Likewise, Axis Interior Contracts Sdn Bhd has also placed the college graduates in their teams, citing the graduates' ability to identify client needs while coming out with practical and dynamic ideas.

Much of this is down to ALFA's curriculum emphasis on hands-on learning where students apply design solutions to live situations.

At the recent Innovation Week: Bamboo Forum which was organised by the Malaysian Association of Creativity and Innovation, the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) and the National Science Centre, ALFA students worked with architect Prof Dr Jimmy Lim to present an eco-friendly multiple-storey building using bamboo frames.

And there are those who choose to be self-employed like Edmund Tham, an outstanding graduate from the School of Visual

Communication.

One of only three Asians to receive the top 100 Photographer Award for the Wedding Photojournalist Association (WPJA), Tham now

runs a photo studio and employs interns from the college.

Addressing the fact that graduates need more than technical skills and knowledge to succeed, ALFA has also collaborated with Cambridge English for Life to create support programmes which help students master English language presentation and other essential life-skills.

These skills are taught alongside professional practice subjects ensuring that students learn the skills relevant to their profession of choice.

And with a student-lecturer ratio of 18:1, each student receives adequate individual attention at the college located in Paramount Garden, Petaling Jaya. Throw in the college's commitment to provide students with a healthy learning environment and you get a satisfied student cohort.

"One of the best things about ALFA is that it is small," said second-year architecture student Koh Sook Teng. "It's like a family, so supportive and the lecturers are always available to help us."

"My friends are surprised and rather envious that we are so close to our lecturers and course mates."

And the trend is set to continue as ALFA's meticulous hiring policy stipulates that only lecturers with five years of industrial experience and professional practice will make the

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cut. Also, lecturers must exhibit the right character and dedication to student welfare.

In the words of ALFA academic chairperson Syahrul Razali, "With great imagination and curiosity, both lecturer and students are able to tap into each others' life experiences to explore, extrapolate and create thoughtful, fresh and meaningful designs. This is simply because design is life."