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Two Malaysian students gain entry into Harvard College (New Straits Times – 3 April 2025)



Two Malaysian students, Athena Siow (left) and Namira Lee (right) Tzu, have been admitted to Harvard College's Class of 2029, securing places at the world-renowned university.- COURTESY PIC

KUALA LUMPUR: Two Malaysian students, Athena Siow and Namira Lee Tzu, have been admitted to Harvard College's Class of 2029, securing places at the world-renowned university.

Siow, a Yayasan UEM scholar from Kuala Lumpur, completed her SPM at Kolej Yayasan Saad and intends to major in government (data science track).

Meanwhile, Lee, a PNB global scholar from Kuala Terengganu, completed her SPM at SMK Chung Hwa Wei Sin and plans to major in environmental science and engineering.

Both students received highly competitive scholarships, enabling them to pursue their academic ambitions at Harvard.

Harvard Club of Malaysia president, Wan Nadiah Wan Abdullah Yaakob, expressed her pride in seeing Malaysian students - particularly those from government schools and middle-income backgrounds outside the Klang Valley - admitted to one of the world's top universities.

"This reflects the increasing opportunities available to students from diverse backgrounds. As a nation, we will undoubtedly benefit from their contributions in the future," she said in a statement today.

She emphasised the critical role of scholarships in helping students realise their academic potential.

Wan Nadiah highlighted Siow's impactful work in climate justice and her involvement in various social initiatives.

"As one of only two Malaysian representatives at the Conference of Youth at COP 2023 in Dubai, she voiced youth perspectives on global climate issues. Siow's advocacy efforts extended locally when she trained 100 youth leaders through Girl Guide programmes, who in turn trained 13,000 students nationwide."

Beyond her advocacy, Siow is also a competitive chess player and a teacher for lower secondary refugee students in her community, demonstrating her strong belief in the power of education. Additionally, she supports marginalised households through organisations such as Women of Will.

Meanwhile, Wan Nadiah said Lee's commitment to environmental conservation has been the driving force behind many of her extracurricular activities.

"Her passion for the cause was ignited during her participation in the United States-sponsored Southeast Asia Youth Leadership Programme. Building on this experience, Lee launched a turtle conservation project in collaboration with WWF and later expanded it to involve more students, including those from a Chinese primary school with limited access to environmental programmes."

She also champions access to higher education, particularly for students in Terengganu, through her work with the Base Initiative, which provides resources to help students pursue further studies.

Wan Nadiah said that Harvard College operates a need-blind admission policy and offers generous financial aid for low- and middle-income families.

"Beginning in the 2025–26 academic year, Harvard will provide free tuition, housing, food, health insurance, and travel costs for students from families earning US$100,000 (RM475,000) or less annually. Students from families earning US$200,000 (RM950,000) or less will receive free tuition and additional financial aid based on their needs," she said.

She added that Harvard's financial aid budget has expanded significantly, with the university providing more than US$3 billion in financial support since the launch of the Harvard Financial Aid Initiative in 2005.

Khazanah Nasional's head of research and co-head of private markets, Nick Khaw, also congratulated the duo on their admission.

"Their remarkable achievements reflect their dedication to making a positive impact on their communities, and we hope they will continue to inspire future generations to pursue excellence," he said.

Founded in 1636, Harvard is the oldest institution of higher learning in the United States. Harvard College's mission is to educate citizens and future leaders who will contribute to society.