



FORWARD SCHOOL RAISES US\$500K PRE-SEED FUNDING LED BY FOUNDERS OF EXABYTES AND VITROX

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Forward School, founded last year to bridge the widening tech skills gap using non-traditional learning methods, has raised US\$500,000 (RM2.07 million) from five angel investors to boost that effort.

Prominent among the angel investors are leading tech leaders, Chan Kee Siak (CEO, Exabytes Group), Chu Jenn Weng (CEO, ViTrox Corp) and Chiew Kok Hin (CEO, AIMS Group). Lawyers Ang Siak Keng (Partner, Zaid Ibrahim & Co) and Brian A. Wong (Managing Director, Seacliff Partners) are the other two investors.

With the mission to build a pool of experienced software engineers and programmers, Forward School offers select students a hands-on, project-based education that is reportedly more effective than traditional rote learning. The school's unique tech programs were developed in partnership with industry practitioners and hiring partners from the region.

One such program is the 2-year NitroDegree in Applied Software Engineering where qualified students will study and work under the sponsorship of key local tech players with a job placement guaranteed and a minimum starting salary of US\$724 (RM3,000).

"The 2-years NitroDegree in Applied Software Engineering is groundbreaking. It has the potential to lessen the severity mismatch of the talents that the industry needs. It places emphasis on competency-based learning which will help the students be better prepared for the workplace," says Chu Jenn Weng, CEO of ViTrox Corp

The goal at Forward School is not about getting good grades but more on putting together a portfolio of practical work capable of impressing both local and global technology companies - and prompting them to make lucrative job offers.

With the new investment, Forward School plans to move into their new campus this quarter, an integrated co-learning, and co-living space. The concept is a first-of-its-kind in Malaysia with the intention of immersing highly motivated students and professionals in a tech-driven

community space besides creating more tech-focused programs in computing-influenced STEAM (Science Technology Engineering Arts and Math) fields that are increasing in demand from high-growth employers such as software engineering and mobile app development.

"National and international demand for students with innovative digital and creative skills will only continue to expand as Industry 4.0 (i4.0) sweeps the globe," says Howie Chang, Founder and CEO of Forward School.

"The challenge is not just for individuals to keep pace with technological developments but for learning institutions to lead the way. My team and I set out to design a new, revolutionary technology school that I wished had existed when I was a student. I am glad it now exists in Penang and soon it will also be found throughout Southeast Asia's major cities," Chang adds.

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