If you work in cybersecurity, then it's very likely you're acutely aware of the talent shortage the industry faces globally. According to (ISC)², the industry needs about 3 million professionals that it doesn't currently have. (ISC)² estimates that the Asia-Pacific region faces the largest shortage, with a deficit of more than 2 million cybersecurity professionals.¹

The skills gap is particularly palpable in Malaysia, where smart cities are booming and cybersecurity professionals are needed to protect smart infrastructure from digital risk, according to Associate Prof. Dr. Wan Haslina Hassan, the Head of Cybersecurity Lab at the Malaysia-Japan International Institute of Technology (MJIT), Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM).

The proliferation of smart cities combined with the paucity of regional cybersecurity talent played a large role in propelling MJIT to join RSA's academic alliance program in January 2019. RSA began the program in 2014 with leading polytechnic institutes in Singapore. The goal of the program, according to Edward Lim, a senior director at RSA in the Asia-Pacific region, is to build a healthy talent pipeline—producing thousands of cybersecurity professionals each year—by working with universities to develop leading-edge, hands-on cybersecurity curricula that prepare students for real-world jobs and the challenges of managing digital risk. Currently, five universities (including MJIT UTM) are members of RSA's academic alliance program, and more are joining across Asia-Pacific, the U.S. and EMEA. The program has been honored by both the Singapore Cybersecurity Awards (2018 and 2019) and the Malaysia International Business Awards (2019).

As part of the program, RSA works with partner institutions to build a state-of-the-art security operations center (SOC) on campus where students can learn and practice threat hunting and incident response procedures. In addition to providing the security technology, RSA also lends its technical experts and security analysts to mentor students.
At MJIIT, RSA worked with faculty and staff to build an academic SOC. MJIT's Dr. Wan says the faculty is hoping to distinguish its cybersecurity curriculum by giving students the opportunity to focus on securing smart cities and infrastructure. "This [infrastructure] has a larger, more significant impact if something goes wrong," she notes. "This is not just about ransomware, losing money or losing data. This impacts the security of the nation and the security of our economy."

RSA's partnership with MJIIT and another Malaysian university is expected to produce more than 100 cybersecurity professionals by early 2022 and to grow rapidly each year.

"Through the RSA academic alliance, students are placed in internships in the domain they have studied, so they get actual experience, which gives them confidence," says Dr. Wan. "When they graduate, they have skills they can apply immediately, and they face much better odds of getting hired straightaway by the companies they interned for."

Indeed, feedback from participating institutions indicates that more than 95% of students have found jobs within six months of completing their education. Says RSA's Lim, "We're thrilled to play a leading role in academic partnerships that advance cybersecurity education and help to create a surging talent pipeline in APJ and around the world."

RSA’s partnership with MJIIT and another Malaysian university is expected to produce more than 100 cybersecurity professionals by early 2022 and to grow rapidly each year.

ABOUT RSA

RSA® Business-Driven Security™ solutions link business context with security incidents to help organizations manage digital risk and protect what matters most. With award-winning cybersecurity solutions from RSA, a Dell Technologies business, organizations can detect and respond to advanced attacks; manage user identities and access; and reduce business risk, fraud and cybercrime. RSA solutions protect millions of users around the world and help more than 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies thrive in an uncertain, high-risk world. For more information, visit rsa.com.

1 (ISC)², "Cybersecurity Professionals Focus on Developing New Skills as Workforce Gap Widens; (ISC)² Cybersecurity Workforce Study, 2018"