The talk entitled, “It’s Not What Happens to You! It’s What You Do About It!” by Mr W Mitchell was organised by Centre for Extension Education (CEE), Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) in collaboration with Plaseed Training and Consulting on 19 May 2012.

Mitchell was involved in a blazing accident that left 65% of his body burned, and four years later he was in a plane crash which paralysed and confined him to a wheelchair for life. He greeted the audience with these words: “I want all of you to observe a man with scarred face, fingerless paws sitting on a wheelchair, with real genuine happiness in his heart. Therefore, I want to be a symbol for you. I want to be your mental image of the power of the human mind to go beyond circumstances. When you feel you have met an undefeatable obstacle, I want you to think of me. Then, say to yourself, “If he can be successful, so can I”, said Mitchell.

Mitchell mesmerised and astonished the audience with his story and then calmly empowered them to accept challenges, welcome change and action – not only at work but in everyday life. He explained that unexpected changes could become exciting new starting points. “Before I was paralysed there were 10,000 things I could do. Now there are 9,000. I can either dwell on the 1,000 I’ve lost or focus on the 9,000 I have left,” said Mitchell. He went on to explain that he learned to take ‘responsibility’ for the countless changes in his life. The way he introduced the word ‘responsibility’ to the audience was unique and smart – RESPONSIBILITY = ABILITY to RESPOND. He also explained how he focused on the positive changes by taking responsibility for all that had happened to him.

The Q & A session was a lively interaction. The audience who were mainly youngsters asked numerous questions. One of the young boys asked Mitchell what was his inspiration and Mitchell answered that his inspiration was none other than himself! Another youngster asked him, “Can I hug you?” and promptly went on stage to hug Mitchell.

Mitchell’s message addressed the human spirit and its yearning for survival. His parting advice to the audience was, “Do not wait to grab happiness” and this was followed by some inspirational quotes with explanations. He ended the talk by saying, “My life is fine just the way it is because it’s not what happened to you but it’s what you do about it!”