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Lim Chong Eu is WOU's first chancellor

Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu, the intellectual and political giant who revolutionised Penang's economic fortunes in the 70s and 80s, has been made the founding chancellor of Wawasan Open University.

Hailing the former chief minister as a key architect of Penang's development, WOU council chairman Dato' Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik described Tun Lim as a man of vision and experience who could guide the university with his sound leadership and advice.

"In Tun Dr Lim we have a scholar, a colleague, a person of eminence and intellect with impeccable credentials," said Keng Yaik when making the announcement on the new chancellor.

WOU vice chancellor and chief executive officer Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan said Tun Lim's presence at the university would add to its standing as an institution of higher learning.

"Tun Lim's commitment to education and social change, coupled with the fact that he has gained immeasurable distinction as a statesman and business leader, make him an ideal choice for the role of chancellor," said Dhanarajan.

"He is an outstanding role model to the members of this university, and has the public stature to represent us with the highest level of integrity and passion."

The installation of Tun Lim as WOU's chancellor will take place next year upon completion of the university's new 12-storey campus at Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah.

Tun Lim was born in 1919 in Penang. He attended Penang Free School before he won the Queen's Scholarship at the age of 18 to study medicine at University of Edinburgh. He graduated with a degree in Medicine and Surgery (MBCh) in 1944.

He then began his active public service when he was appointed to the Penang Legislative Council in 1949. He worked his way up the political ranks, serving as president for two of Malaysia's major political parties, MCA and Gerakan.

When Gerakan won the general election in Penang in 1969, Tun Lim was appointed the state's second chief minister – a post he held till 1990. Concurrently holding the post of chairman of Penang Development Corporation, Tun Lim brought a new lease of life to the state by inviting international electronics firms to invest here. It precipitated in the development of industrial parks and free trade zones, and the infusion of foreign investments in local industries.

His legacy is today evidenced by the phenomenal success which is renowned locally and worldwide. His other landmark contributions to the state include the Komtar skyscraper and the Penang Bridge.

Tun Lim has since retired from active politics. He now concentrates on business, holding the post of chairman and advisor in several corporations. He has taken a keen interest in higher education since retiring, serving from 1994 to 1999 as pro chancellor of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

Among his many honours and awards, Tun Lim holds the Darjah Utama Pangkuan Negeri (DUPN) conferred by the Yang diPertua Negeri (governor) of Penang; the Seri Setia Mahkota Malaysia (SSM) by the Yang diPertuan Agong (king of Malaysia); the Datuk Amar Bintang Kenyalang (DA) by the governor of Sarawak; the Grand Cross 2nd Class Award by the president of Germany; and the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star by Emperor Akihito of Japan. He was also awarded Honorary Doctorate of Laws by USM and the title Doctorate in Honoris Causa by Edinburgh University.

Highlights

Countdown to a New University

1 Groundbreaking ceremony
8 Jan 2006

2 Launching ceremony
22 Sept 2006

3 Inaugural Student Orientation
21 Jan 2007

4 Topping Up ceremony
Oct 2007



Vice Chancellor's voice

As an open university with students spread around the country we felt the need to connect with our learners, tutors, regional staff, etc regularly to keep everyone informed of developments in the university. This news letter is a reflection of that desire. In it you will find snippets about the university, the individuals who study in

Tan Sri Emeritus Professor
Gajaraj Dhanarajan
Vice Chancellor and
Chief Executive Officer

it, the people who 'teach' and those who administer. It will contain news about academic developments and it will also describe physical and other infrastructural progress. This is your newsletter. It's about you and it is for you.

Welcome to the first issue of our quarterly newsletter

The University is less than a year old. This is a fraction of what perhaps could be its life span. But even during this short period we have crossed some very important milestones. For instance we have received provisional accreditation for 11 degree programmes, we designed and delivered the first eight courses to some 720 students who started learning at the university beginning 21 January 2007, we recruited and trained some 75 tutors to help our 720 students, four regional offices were designed and opened, some 101 staff were recruited and employed. I could go on, but our developments while important, are not as important as the students who are studying at the university. We want to do the best we can for you so that you will achieve your academic and educational ambitions.

Our students represent a cross section of our country in its fiftieth year of independence, the youngest student to study with us is merely 21 years old and the oldest is about 71. There are as many men as there are women studying with us. There are homemakers, clerks, technicians, teachers, office workers, and manual workers; there are those with a PhD and there are many who have years of work experience but who left school after their PMR exams. The University commits itself to supporting such a diverse group of learners sensitively and sensibly. We also hope to connect our students with each other, with their tutors and the university regularly through old and new technologies.

By the time you receive this first issue of the newsletter, those of you who are studying with us would have finished your examinations. In our University, exams are not something to be frightened of. If you have worked through your course materials diligently, completed the assignments dutifully, participated in the online discussions and the periodic tutorials without fail, these exams should not have come as a surprise. These exams are about finding out what you know rather than catching you on things you do not know. I wish you well in your efforts and look forward to welcoming you and our new students in our second semester, starting July 2007.

G. Dhanarajan



in the know

Forging alliances with MNCs

Some of the top multi-national corporations in Malaysia are keen to collaborate with Wawasan Open University to enhance their own research and human resource development.

This was expressed after several captains of the industry met WOU representatives headed by vice chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan.

Among other things, they discussed cooperation in conducting retraining for mid-level personnel, implementing market-driven courses for continuous professional development, and having joint research. They also discussed the possibility of performing community projects.

Industry heads who attended included Global EduTech Management Group executive director

Datin S. K. Ko, Dell Asia Pacific vice president and managing director Simon Wong and Motorola Technology Sdn Bhd managing director Yew Tian Tek.

Also present were Seagate engineering director K. C. Loo and corporate communications director Audrey Cheah, and AMD Export Sdn Bhd quality engineering director Jariyah Hashim.

WOU representatives included deputy vice chancellor (academic) Prof Wong Tat Meng, Centre for Graduate Studies dean Dato' Dr Dick Ho, School of Business Administration dean Prof Cheah Kooi Guan, School of Foundation Studies dean Dr Tan Toh Wah and School of Science and Technology associate professor Dr Khong Yoon Loong.



Datin SK Ko: Companies should enhance skills of their mid-level management staff.

Scholarship Fund 2007



Thousands of needy students in Malaysia will stand to benefit with the implementation of a new ambitious scholarship scheme by Wawasan Open University.

The WOU Scholarship Fund 2007 is intended to provide financial assistance through start-up bursaries to new students. The programme

will particularly help those who are financially strapped, but still aspire to pursue their education while managing their careers and family duties.

"This amount clearly reflects the university's commitment towards providing incentives to working adults to take the challenge and equip themselves with quality university education in order to improve themselves intellectually and vocationally," said WOU vice chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan.

Almost 400 students have already benefited from the fund in the first semester which began in Jan. WOU has also initiated another scholarship for continuing students.

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The Headstart

Applicants who do not possess required educational qualification or work experience to directly enter WOU's degree programmes can now undertake the new Headstart Programme. Available at all WOU regional centres, the programme serves as a bridge to furnish candidates with necessary abilities before their entry is re-assessed.

Of the 712 students enrolled in WOU in Jan 2007, 81 are now taking the programme which involves Mathematics, English, Malay and Study Skills. The students sit for their final tests at the end of the 20-week programme.

Penang-based Jeffery Koay, 30, a construction project manager, did not complete his Form 6 but has accumulated 10 years' worth of work experience. Returning to formal education after such a long time is not easy, but Koay is determined. He now attends Headstart classes from 9.30am to 5.30pm every Sunday.

"We have to make sacrifices like not going out with friends in the evenings and weekends,"

he said. "Whatever spare time we have after work is spent on exercises and assessment papers."

His colleague Chuah Choo Han said the guidance of tutors contributed tremendously to the students' improvement, while support from peers was encouraging. "We hardly knew each other when we started. We then formed study groups and this has helped us motivate one another."

Student Pauline Teo spends about two hours every night on assignments. "It can be very daunting in the beginning – a lot of homework and exercises."

"It's Friday night. You return from work tired and know you have to finish your exercises before your lesson on Sunday. You have to choose between going out with friends and finishing the homework."

"It is tough. But since you have chosen to pursue a degree, you just have to finish your homework. Just think of the graduation ceremony!"

It is not difficult ...once we manage our time. Don't give up.

Pauline



It builds up our foundation and lets us assess our own level of knowledge in the four subjects.



Jeffrey

We need advice on what courses to take after this.



Jane Yeap Kam Moey



Office Buildings Marketing Drive

As part of ongoing efforts to reach out to adult workers, WOU has embarked on a successful marketing drive at office buildings.

One of the office building drives was held at Wisma Penang Garden where many workers visited the WOU booth. Most were already aware of the university and its impending new building coming up a few doors away.

There were enquiries about the upcoming masters programmes – CEMBA and CEMPA, which will be available by 2008. Some prospective students even asked WOU to hurry, saying they have been waiting to register for a master's degree.

At the E-Gate building a small crowd had already gathered to meet the WOU marketing team even before the booth could be set up. They were also 'forced' to camp at Sunshine Square Bayan Baru for three days due to the heavy response.

More marketing drives would be initiated to reach out to potential students in locations other than office buildings.

Lim Keng Yaik

visits



The construction site of the Wawasan Open University's main campus became awash with an unusual sort of flurry when a swarm of journalists descended on the trail of a special visitor.

Eight years after he first proposed the vision to set up a virtual university at Gerakan's 28th National Delegates' Conference, Dato' Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik was stepping onto the site at Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah.

The tour was led by the deputy vice chancellor (academic) Prof

Wong Tat Meng accompanied by general services and administration head Andrew Joseph.

Lim bantered with the Press in his trademark humour as he made the whirlwind tour with photographers in his wake.

He later expressed satisfaction at the progress of the RM25 million project comprising the renovated Homestead heritage mansion and a new 12-storey extension.

The new building is expected to be completed in the second half of 2007.

Lim highlighted the university's Open Entry System by stressing on the quality of the degree programmes offered. "Easy

entry, difficult out," he quipped.

He meant that although the university had opened its doors for all Malaysians with minimum SRP qualification, each student would still need to work to earn 102 credit points with a minimum 2.0 CGPA to graduate. This was to ensure that Wawasan graduates would be credible and qualified, reflecting the quality of the university's education.

He noted that Wawasan was being led by academics who were highly experienced in open distance education. Both Wong and vice chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan were pioneers in distance education at Universiti Sains Malaysia, he stressed.



in the know



Students waving their student books.



Students taking the opportunity to activate their student accounts in WawasanLearn, Wawasan's Student Portal, during the hands-on lab session during the Orientation Programme in Penang.

Pioneerjoy

There were smiles and nervous faces all around as the pioneering students of Wawasan Open University received goodie bags and a warm welcome when meeting their fellow course mates and regional office staff for the first time at the inaugural Student Orientation Day on 21 January 2007.

The historic event was held simultaneously across all WOU centres. It helped new students familiarise themselves with the services and facilities at their respective regional offices and learning centres. They were also briefed on the university's regulations and procedures, and introduced to key issues and strategies to make

them better equipped to study via Open Distance Learning.

The orientation, to be held every semester for each new intake, was attended by more than 460 students and 54 tutors.

Registration began from 8.30am with students receiving bagfuls of booklets, pocket calendars and feedback forms with sponsored pens and notepads thrown in.

The programme included a welcoming session by the vice chancellor and HQ representatives who touched on WOU regulations and procedures as well as on study skills.

Students and officials then mingled over



The inaugural student orientation was supported with a strong turnout of about 153 students.

refreshments before going into the 'WOU Learning Support & Services' session which gave details on the IT system, the facilities, WawasanLearn and library services. The programme ended with a Q & A session.

Students were given then a taste of what was to come with a hands-on lab experience held immediately after.

Athabasca glacier melted by WOU charms



Athabasca Open University, Canada's largest institution specialising in online and distance learning is looking to develop research and academic collaborations with WOU.

A team from the Canadian university made a special visit to WOU in Malaysia as part of a tour to review its strategic relationships with notable open universities in the Asia Pacific.

The team comprised AU president Dr Frits Pannekoek, associate vice president in research Dr Rory McGreal and school of business professor Dr Fathi Elloumi.

The group was given a tour of WOU's main campus site under construction

at the Yeap Chor Ee Homestead along Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah by WOU deputy vice chancellor (academic) Prof Wong Tat Meng. Dr Pannekoek, who has keen interest in heritage buildings, was impressed with the restoration process of Homestead.

The AU team also held a meeting with WOU vice chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, deputy vice chancellor (operations) Dr Seah Soo Aun and deputy vice chancellor (academic) Prof Wong, followed by fruitful discussions with deans and senior academicians at WOU.

Both sides exchanged ideas on models of delivery in open distance learning and on technologies being used. There were also discussions on the possibility of purchasing AU's course materials as well as on collaborations in delivering post graduate programmes and research projects.

Since it was created by the Alberta government in 1970, AU has served more than 260,000 students. A publicly funded institution, its main centre is in Athabasca, 150 km north of Edmonton.

MOU with PSDC



One of Penang's best known skills development centre inked an agreement to partner with Wawasan Open University to enhance access to learning and training for the general community.

The Penang Skills Development Centre (PSDC) signed an MOU with Wawasan to expand and enhance collaboration in promoting lifelong learning to working adults.

The MOU aims to increase cooperation in the following areas: staff development and exchange programmes; advanced training and appropriate educational opportunities for the workforce; and optimising existing facilities at both institutions to support teaching and research.

Participating in the signing ceremony on behalf of WOU was vice chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan. Chairman of PSDC's Management Council, Mohd. Sofi Osman, signed on behalf of the centre.

"For us at the university, this is the beginning of a strong and lasting arrangement," Dhanarajan said. "With this partnership, we hope to create articulation pathways between the training PSDC provides and our degree programmes."

Contributing to Pan-Asian research



Dr Jon Baggaley in discussion with the WOU staff.

WOU staff members were given an insight into a unique series of distance education research projects currently conducted in 12 Asian countries.

Dubbed PANDora (PAN Asia Networking Distance and Open Resource Access), the research is sponsored by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and includes projects in Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Laos, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The research was introduced by PANdora academic advisor, Dr Jon Baggaley, during a seminar for WOU's academic and operations staff.

Dr Baggaley is responsible for the development of new media technologies

and policy for distance-based delivery of Athabasca University's programmes.

Baggaley, a professor of educational technology at Athabasca University, has been visiting each of the Asian project sites while supervising the publication of their reports in academic outlets over the past 15 months. He is currently spending the last few months of his extended leave in Malaysia.

During the seminar held at WOU's headquarters, Baggaley presented a summary of findings from nine projects, discussing the merits and problems of the transnational and collaborative approaches they have adopted.

In the ensuing discussion, a number of interesting suggestions were received from the WOU staff. Baggaley expressed his keenness to follow up on the suggestions to turn them into future collaborative projects involving WOU staff during the 2nd round of the PANdora project funding allocations.

Details of the PANdora projects may be viewed at www.pandora-asia.org



in the limelight



Executive Masters' with COL

Working adults in Malaysia can now obtain an internationally recognised MBA or MPA designed by a renowned inter-governmental organisation providing education and training through open learning.

The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) has signed an MOU with Wawasan Open University to make available its Commonwealth Executive MBA and MPA (CEMBA/CEMPA) by distance learning in Malaysia.

The ceremony was participated by COL president and chief executive officer Sir John Daniel and WOU chief executive officer and vice chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan. It was witnessed by Penang state executive councillor Dato' Dr Toh Kin Woon.

Formed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1987, the Vancouver-based COL devised the masters' programmes in collaboration with four open universities in south Asia.

The instructional materials were developed by experts from universities in Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, India and Canada. As a result of this network, the Commonwealth Executive masters' programme is internationally recognised while giving students mobility and credit transfer across participating institutions.

When made available in Malaysia, the degree programmes will mark a milestone in the collaborative approach adopted by the global open learning community. Students can choose either Business Administration (MBA) or Public Administration (MPA) as their major.

Specially designed for part-time study by busy working professionals, the programmes are flexible, modular and affordable. As currently run in other open universities, CEMBA/CEMPA gives students the option to leave at various stages in the programme, after earning a certificate, diploma, graduate diploma or degree.



Dr Willie Clarke-Okah making a point.

Members of the School of Business and Administration have been privileged to have face-to-face discussions with the Commonwealth of Learning's (COL) specialist in higher education and policy development, Dr Willie Clarke-Okah, during his 2-day trip to Penang.

The visit was part of Clarke-Okah's tour to institutions of higher learning that are participating in the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Master of Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes. Prior to the trip here, he visited three other countries to lend his advice and gain feedback on development of the programmes there.

Clarke-Okah, who also serves as the counsellor and head of development cooperation at the High Commission of Canada in Jamaica, has extensive background in international development and education, spanning 32 years in areas of policy and programming. He has also been associated with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for over 25 years.

While meeting WOU's business course coordinators, he gave helpful suggestions on improving and localising the mode of delivery of the programmes. He brought along sample courses from the other universities he had visited as reference for the coordinators. He also met staff of supporting operations departments, including those from the educational technology, IT support and services, and the publishing units.

Following the visit, WOU is now converting the course materials from print mode to online, in tandem with its plan to offer the CEMBA/CEMPA programmes by Jan 2008.

For details of CEMBA/CEMPA, visit www.col.org/colweb/site/pid/3953



in the limelight

HIGHLIGHTS

Countdown to a New University



Dato' Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik (right) and Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap (left) planting a tree to launch the development of WOU's main campus.

Ground breaking Ceremony

8 January 2006, Homestead at Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, Penang

WOU's main campus is located on a 4ha land at Homestead, a heritage building designed in 1919, and donated by the Yeap Chor Ee Charitable and Endowment Trusts.



Dato' Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik (centre) having a light moment with (from left) Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap, Tan Sri Emeritus Prof G. Dhanarajan, Dato' Dr Sharom Ahmat, Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu.



Higher education minister Dato' Mustapa Mohamed launches Wawasan Open University by hitting a traditional gong.

Launching Ceremony

22 September 2006, Menara PGRM, KL



Symbolic handover of the Letter of Establishment of WOU. From left to right: Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap, Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Dato' Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, Tan Sri Emeritus Prof G. Dhanarajan and Dato' Dr Sharom Ahmat.

WOU's Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Wong Tat Meng (third from right) and Johor Bahru Regional Centre Director, Ng Peng Long (fourth from right) with some of WOU's staff and students.



WOU Inaugural Orientation

21 January 2007

Distd College in Penang, Southern College in Johor, Menara PGRM in KL, and Excelsior Hotel in Ipoh

The inaugural orientation, held simultaneously at all the regional offices, had a strong turnout from pioneering students.



Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon signing the plaque to mark the launch of WOU's Penang Regional Office. Looking on are Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap (left) and Tan Sri Emeritus Prof G. Dhanarajan.

PGRO Official Opening

7 June 2007

Wisma Behn Meyer, China Street Ghaut

Joint Initiatives Across Borders

WOU has joined three of Asia's most established open universities for a string of initiatives in academic excellence by signing MOUs with Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) and SIM University (UniSIM) of Singapore, and a separate agreement with India's Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU).

The joint initiatives included efforts in research, training and conferences, curriculum and course development, course material design, credit transfer agreements and support for research-based postgraduate study.

UniSIM is Singapore's fourth university, and the only one in the island state catering to working professionals and adult learners. Established in 2005, it has a strong record, having evolved out of the highly successful SIM Open University Centre that produced more than 5,000 graduates over 12 years.

The OUHK, formed in 1989, offers more than 100 postgraduate, degree, associate degree and sub-degree programmes.

Signing on behalf of WOU, vice chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan hailed the occasion as an opportunity to benefit through partnerships with like-minded open universities with experience.

The other signatories at the event held at the Evergreen Laurel Hotel, Penang, were OUHK's Prof John CY Leong and UniSIM's Prof Cheong Hee Kiat.



In a separate MOU during the same function, Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (YCMOU) joined WOU to collaborate on course materials design in accordance with WOU's Blue Print and Quality Protocol. YCMOU was represented by its VC, Dr Rajan Welukar.

The ceremonies were witnessed by Penang state executive councillor Dato' Dr Toh Kin Woon. After a press conference, the gathering was given a quick tour of the university's headquarters at its construction site and of the Penang RO.



Prof Madhulika!

Welcome

A distinguished member of the academic board of the Commonwealth Executive MBA (CEMBA) and MPA (CEMPA) programmes has been proudly welcomed by the School of Business Administration into the ever expanding WOU family.

Prof Madhulika Kaushik joins the school on a two-year contract from Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). She comes with great expertise and experience, having been directly involved in the initial development of these programmes at the Commonwealth of Learning. At WOU, she spearheads the development of the CEMBA and CEMPA programmes, targeted to be offered in 2008.

Madhulika, who has conducted consultancy projects funded by international agencies such as UNDP, UNESCO, FAO, COL and ILO, has published extensively in the areas of consumer behaviour and marketing, as well as in open and distance learning. She has conducted

substantial research in different aspects of distance, as well as online, education. To date she has written a textbook, published 23 journal papers and delivered 22 conference proceedings.

She obtained her Ph.D. at Jodhpur University where she later rose from a research fellow in 1978 to become associate professor in 1987. She joined the School of Management Studies, IGNOU, in 1988, and was promoted as a full professor in 1996. During her 18 years there she held various positions, serving as a professor of management studies, director of the School of Management Studies, director of planning for the university, and director of National Centre for Innovations in Open Distance Learning.

School of science and technology

The School of Science and Technology offers five programmes in IT and electronics disciplines to meet the technological needs of modern industries and services in Malaysia.

The school kicked off its first semester programmes in Jan with an initial intake of 200 students, each taking three degree level courses and other non-degree subjects. Another three courses are in the pipeline for the second semester with ten more targeted to be introduced in the third. About five to eight new courses will then be added every subsequent semester. All courses for the five programmes are expected to be fully

developed in 2012.

In order to deliver education in a most relevant way, the school aims to not only stay abreast but ahead of the technology curve in our rapidly changing environment. It is therefore actively seeking appropriate linkages with industry and research-based institutions to gain feedback on its programmes and have collaborations in technology-based activities.

The school also seeks innovative ways to harness technology to deliver education, and is particularly keen to build a reputation for research activities.

In an environment where multi-skills are becoming increasingly important, the school's new programmes are likely to be "hybridised". For example, a programme can combine IT with Finance, or Electronics with Medicine.

To meet the industry's requirements for enhanced skills, it is also looking into developing post-graduate programmes at the Masters and PhD level.

SKILLS COURSES coming soon

Two new courses at WOU will soon address student concerns about writing and communicating for academic purposes. The courses, in the pipeline through the School of Foundation Studies, also offer workplace skills like preparing reports and making presentations.

'English for the Workplace' is a practical course to help learners develop English proficiency and communication skills. It covers topics like effective telephone skills, socialising in workplace situations, business letters, memos, faxes, emails, SMS writing and also the conducting of meetings and negotiations. Learners will also be taught sensitivities of cross-cultural issues.

'Writing Skills for University Studies' guides students to produce text that is appropriate for university academia. In addition to being taught how to paraphrase, quote and cite effectively, students will learn to classify, describe a process, narrate, persuade, compare, contrast, discuss, evaluate, define, give solutions to problems, and describe cause and effect.

In the near future, both courses will also be offered as short courses for the public. In fact, they are just two of many more short courses relevant to business situations, hobbies and life enrichment that will soon be on the platter for the public.



The Centre for Graduate Studies

WOU is entering into an exciting phase of development by initiating graduate studies by 2008, in a bid to develop a strong research arm that can attract project funding to the university.

The development of graduate study as well as of the research agenda is being spearheaded by the Centre for Graduate Studies under its dean Dato' Professor Ho Sinn Chye.

Working in partnership with all schools within the university as well as with participating research institutions and external organisations, the centre facilitates the development of various types of skills training programmes that are currently unavailable. These include new graduate certificate and diploma programmes for those wishing to acquire additional academic credentials in specific areas. These credentials may then be used as credits when pursuing future degrees.

The graduate certificate and diploma programmes are also valuable to those who have completed graduate degrees but require further credentials or knowledge and skills.

Scholarship research is highly valued by the university. Therefore, the promotion of an active research culture provides the necessary support to its researchers, whether they are academics or graduate students.

in the regional offices



Built in the late 1930s, the Wisma Behn Meyer building has had its interior upgraded to cater for modern working needs of WOU staff and students. Outside, the Penang Regional Office was festively decorated with its signature green.

Penang Regional Office Launched

It proved to be a nice sunny Thursday morning for the 130-odd people gathered by the breezy waterfront quay of George Town. The pleasant weather must have seemed as auspicious as the event they were gracing.

The Penang Regional Office, housed in the Wisma Behn Meyer heritage building at Weld Quay, was officially launched by Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

Also present were WOU vice chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, and WEF chairman and Yeap Chor Ee Charitable and Endowment trustee Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap Leong Huat.



Thumbs up to a new vision... (from left) WOU Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) Prof Wong Tat Meng, WOU Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, WEF Chairman and Yeap Chor Ee Charitable and Endowment Trustee Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap Leong Huat, and WOU Deputy Vice Chancellor (Operations) Dr Seah Soo Aun.



Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon declaring the premise open with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

TRUE GRIT

Hong Chuan Lee, one of the earliest students to register at the Ipoh Regional Office, is no ordinary individual. The 41-year old currently works in a private firm in Teluk Intan as an accounts clerk. He is physically disabled but is prepared to overcome all obstacles in his endeavour to gain a bachelor's degree in information and communication technology.

Hong, whose highest qualification is an SPM, is determined to improve himself and is grateful to be given



this opportunity by Wawasan Open University. Even though his home in Teluk Intan is rather far from the nearest learning centre in Ipoh, he makes it a point to travel every month to attend tutorials.

He is fortunate to have a very supportive wife who assists him in every possible way during this challenging period, including getting him to Ipoh on time for classes. At the university, everyone is ready to lend a helping hand to help Hong achieve his ambition. WOU plans to install special lifts to help students like Hong reach the upper floors in the learning centres.



A hive of activity at the WOU booth during the FACON exhibition at the KLCC on 18 March 2007.

From Tax Forms to Degree Scrolls

When throngs of people converged upon the Income Tax Department counters to beat the deadline to file their returns, little did they suspect they would be enticed into taking degrees!

Kuala Lumpur Regional Office staff recently brought out their marketing banners and brochures to a WOU booth strategically placed to greet incoming crowds surging towards the tax department counters in Menara PGRM.

KLRO has been on the high road in a variety of marketing campaigns in Damansara, Ampang and Klang. The team has also visited companies under the Valued Partnership Programme and put on exhibitions during the Gerakan National Delegates Conference.

The KLRO staff and students are also taking active part in the "Relay For Life" organised by the National Cancer Society of Malaysia in the MSN Training Stadium in Bukit Jalil.

Various events accompanied the overnight relay to keep the spirits (and eyelids) up. It was an opportunity to show care towards the less fortunate in society. It marked the first time KLRO students took part in activities under WOU's student development programmes.



April is the month for Secretaries Week. KLRO sponsored two of these events in leading KL hotels. Are these people "singing" for a course?



KLRO Director, Meilina Puteh explaining a point to PRGM delegates during the national delegates conference on 8 April 2007 at the Dewan Wawasan, KL.

Can't Beat The Real Thing

There were no free fizzy drinks when staff from the Johor Bahru Regional Office recently visited the F&N Coca-Cola (M) Sdn Bhd centre in Tampoi. But they certainly managed to generate plenty of bubbling enthusiasm.

The team was helping to conduct a WOU course preview during the company's monthly meeting for its southern region managers.

The half-hour preview session was attended by F&N Coca-Cola regional manager Goh Eng Hua and 12 of his managers. Quite a few queries were raised after the presentation conducted by JBRO director, Mr. Ng Peng Long.

The event on 9 May provided yet another platform for WOU course information to be disseminated to working professionals keen to upgrade themselves academically.



in the heart of society

a hill of Art

A brush and palette in hand, Wong Chee Meng kneels at a canvas, in his cottage on a hill while reflecting on the serene environment around him.

"It has given me a new life, being here," says the Taiping-born art lecturer. "I have stayed in KL for 13 years. It's a hectic place. But when I came down here, the solace just struck me in the first week itself."

Wong is the first of many artists to benefit from a new residential programme on one of the highest hills in idyllic Balik Pulau, the charming rustic side of Penang island.

Surrounded by secondary rainforests and native fruit trees with migratory birds, insects and little animals, the artist-in-residence project at Malihom is set to usher fresh waves of creativity in the region's art scene.

The programme, an inspiration of the philanthropist Yeap family, is officially named the 'ABN AMRO-Malihom Artist in Residence Programme of the Wawasan Open University'.



Wong Chee Meng, the first artist-in-residence at Malihom, at work.

While the location and its infrastructure are hosted by Malihom Sdn Bhd run by the Yeaps, the programme is administratively supported by the Wawasan Open University with ABN AMRO-Malihom as the main sponsor.

ABN AMRO-Malihom, incidentally, also supports some of the world's foremost art venues, including the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and the National Gallery of London.

"My family members are not art connoisseurs, but we are passionate about art," explains Stephanie Yeap. "We were informed that most artists are struggling, and they don't have the sources and means to support their careers as artists."

Covering some 40 acres, the retreat includes a gallery and four cottages to house resident artists with plans to further build workshops for non-resident local artists.

'Mali' in Thai means jasmine fragrance and 'hom' is the word for 'rice'. The 6-month residential sessions in January and July, are meant to accommodate up to 8 artists.

"At the end of the artist's stay, we'll hold an exhibition of the artworks that were done here," Stephanie says.

For further details, visit www.malihom-air.org



Serene air of creativity pervades Malihom.

Walking in Remembrance

Staff members of Wawasan Open University recently partook in a meaningful event to help to fight cancer and save lives. Reflecting the institution's focus on social and humanitarian contributions, ten WOU members attended the Relay for Life - Fighting Cancer Together 2007.

The event was a community-based project initiated by the National Cancer Society of Malaysia (Penang Branch) together with the Penang Hospice Society, and partially sponsored



by WOU. The project aimed to spread awareness about cancer and the preventive, diagnostic and supportive services that are available. It also aimed to raise monies for cancer-related programmes in the state.

Some 2,500 people gathered at Youth Park for the opening ceremony by Penang Yang diPertua Negeri (governor) Tun Dato' Seri Utama (Dr) Abdul Rahman Abbas, who was accompanied by chief minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and his wife Puan Sri Chui Kah Peng.

About 200 teams of at least ten persons each and more than a hundred individuals took part.

For sixteen hours, people walked the giant oval track, serenaded by music, announcements and spot prizes throughout the night. A ceremony to light hundreds of candles was held early the next morning to remember loved ones lost to cancer.

Live to learn, Learn to live

In order to survive successfully, human beings are constantly learning. When one ceases to learn, one ceases to lead a meaningful life.

There were pearls of wisdom to be heard when Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan gave a talk on life-long learning in a public event organised by PACE (Promoting Activities in Continuing Education).

Learning, stressed the vice chancellor, is necessary to bolster career changes and mobility, even as it empowers the citizen to protect his rights.

He related an incident of an under-educated Pakistani woman who foiled her husband's plan to divorce her without her knowledge with the minimal reading skill she gained by attending a community literacy class.

Peppering his talk with anecdotes, Dhanarajan drew from his experience, which includes the years as president and CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL).

Many people in society can benefit from accessible learning - from the illiterate to those with learning difficulties, and from out-of-school youths to those who are physically challenged.

Everybody, he said, could strive to access the best possible learning opportunities, regardless of personal circumstances like age or lack of funds or support.

Dato' Dr Sharom Ahmat, CEO of Wawasan Education Foundation, introduced Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan as the foremost expert on lifelong learning, and as the one who helped transform the Open University of Hong Kong into a leading open education provider.

As a boy, he deliberately failed his SRP as he wanted to be enrolled into the police force. To his dismay, he was turned down because of his youth.

But N. Velayutham was not one to bemoan his plight. He picked up English reading newspapers and chatting with passengers while driving a taxi for 12 years. He then worked towards retaking his SRP exams and passed.

Today, Vela, as he is known among family and friends, has become the first student to be enrolled in Wawasan Open University.

"Even though I have left school for 30 years, I can still do it. I can still improve myself," says the 43-year-old from Ipoh. "When you put your mind to it, you can do it."

Supported by his wife Susila Devi, he passed the Diagnostic Test "with flying colours" at WOU's Ipoh regional office, and invested in revision books to prepare himself for the

Headstart programme.

Vela was particularly moved when his eldest daughter Shamni offered to share her books.



N. Velayutham

I like to do what other people think they cannot.

Father and daughter now take turns to use a new PC as he prepares for his programme. Shamni, who has just completed her PMR, admits: "I'm impressed that my father wants to learn again. Even at his age, he's still enthusiastic."

Vela particularly wants his children, aged 7 to 15, to understand the importance of good education by watching him.

Vela had followed WOU's development ever since he heard Dato' Seri Dr. Lim Keng Yaik propose a virtual university at the 1999 Gerakan national delegates' conference. His wife and second daughter even attended the university's launching ceremony.

As someone who finds joy in learning, he believes one should give knowledge back to society. Besides being a Gerakan supporter, Vela organises charity fairs and seminars for the Malayali Association. Time management and planning are crucial as he juggles the many roles as father, husband, taxi driver and now student.

"As long as you are positive, sincere and good to your children and wife, you will do well in life."

When she was 8, Haszlinda Mohd Shahrudin fulfilled her mother's death wish to move in with her maternal grandmother as her father married another woman. She would go on to care for her grandmother while managing the household on a meagre income of RM 100 a month.

Today, the 31-year old administrative assistant, who passed her SPM without owning a reference book or attending tuition, longs to upgrade herself with a degree.

"I want to rise above my current status whether or not I have support," says Haszlinda. "I want my family and friends to know I can do something to change myself."

She heard about Wawasan Open University

through colleagues at the Islamic College where she has worked for 8 years. As the university is offering scholarships for a thousand candidates,



Haszlinda Mohd Shahrudin

I want to further my studies for myself, my career and my future.

she was determined to stand a chance. She made up her mind to enrol in the Business in Management degree programme at the Ipoh

Regional Office.

"I'm still young and can afford to study again. In another 5 years, I will have upgraded myself with this degree," she smiles, hoping to land a more secure position in a well-established government body.

"I was very frustrated before this as I was not able to study due to of family and financial problems." Her husband, a sales executive, encouraged her. She was also supported by her friends, many of whom are professionals and lecturers.

She now wants her sons to observe and be inspired by her when she studies. "Oh, my sons were excited when they knew I would be studying again. They kept asking whether they could tell their friends!"

He suspected something was amiss when he was 21 as the monthly allowance from his father was two months late. Surviving on 50 sen buns and donated milk powder for a whole fortnight, the Ipoh lad then received news his father was diagnosed with cancer.

The filial son with 9 siblings chose to give up his degree in computer studies to help treat his father. In doing so, he lost the opportunity to fulfil his father's wish to see at least one of his children achieve higher education.

Now, twenty years later, Oh Teik Dong, an Ipoh city municipal councillor, vows to make his father's dream come true.

"When I finally get my degree, I'll make a copy, address it to my father and burn it so that it reaches him," says the 41-year-old.

Oh is pursuing a Degree in Business Information System. A firm believer in lifelong learning ("It is important to prepare ourselves to embrace the increasingly globalised world"), Oh hopes

to set up an IT company with his degree.

His mother is glad that the "family tragedy" has finally come to a close with him being the first among her children to gain a degree.



Oh Teik Dong

This is a God-given opportunity to fulfil the dream of my late father.

"During the recession from 1982 to 1987, many SPM and STPM holders missed higher education," Oh reminisced. "There were no private institutions of higher learning then to cater for those less financially well-off."

Six months after Oh was told of the cancer, his salesman father passed away, leaving him to provide for himself. At one stage he resorted to collecting, repairing and reselling old shoes for a living. However, in 1991, he managed to complete his computer studies on a part-time basis while teaching at a high school.

Born in Ipoh, Oh has been the head of the Ipoh City Council's public service bureau the past two years. Ever willing to help, he tutors needy secondary students in English, Malay and Chinese during the evenings for a small fee of RM5 to RM10.

"The poor will always understand other persons who are poor," he says.

The father of two sons - 9 and 7 - and a 4-year-old daughter wants to show his family he can still study after 15 years. And he relishes the idea of sitting to study with his children on the same table.

Till then he looks forward to the day he burns a copy of his degree to put at rest the one wish of his late father.

Wawasan Open University Makes It Possible!



Future Developments

Roof is Up

Topping up ceremony scheduled to be in October.

Moving In

WOU shall be moving into the main campus at the Homestead at the end of 2007.

Branching out to Melaka and Kota Bharu

Looking forward to launching regional offices in Melaka and Kota Bharu in 2008.

Upcoming Events

Kuala Lumpur Regional Office Launch

Date : 4 August 2007 (Saturday)
Time : 10.30am
Venue : Main Lobby, Menara PGRM 1

Student Orientation Day

This familiarisation event will help to explain to students the services and facilities in their respective regional offices and learning centres, while acquainting them with the university's regulations and procedures.

Student Orientation Day for July 2007 intake

Date : 22 July 2007 (Sunday)
Venue : Learning Centres nationwide

Student Info

1 July 2007 - Headstart Programme begins
15 July 2007 - Last day to add courses
28 & 29 July 2007 - First tutorial starts for degree students
23 September 2007 - Last day to drop courses

Payment

31 July 2007 to 27 August 2007

IN THE E-TECH



Students of Wawasan Open University can now exchange views and information on the web through a unique e-forum that also provides online access to resources specific to their courses.

With its convenient and friendly navigation procedure, WawasanLearn allows a student to interact with other students by accessing the web pages of a relevant course. A chat facility enables them to participate in synchronous discussions.

Students can systematically work on their course contents through the web pages while a course calendar reminds them about events and activities.

The system's resources, ranging from web-links to directories, consists of common file formats with images, flash and Powerpoint.

It features quizzes, also known as CMA (Computer Marked Assignment), with formats like multiple-choice, true-or-false, short answers and matching answers. The quizzes are currently created for practice, and are not counted as part of the student's final grade.

There are three types of forums on WawasanLearn. The public forum allows everyone - from students to tutors and course coordinators - to have general discussions on a course. The group forum involves various tutorial groups where students can participate and view discussions of fellow students. The CC-tutor forum is meant exclusively for CCs and tutors to discuss course related matters while sharing resources.

A web of knowledge

In the minds of our readers

We would like to hear from you. Whether it's a view, a comment or even a question, don't hesitate to drop us a mail at mediainfo@wou.edu.my

For more details, visit wou.edu.my

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Regional Offices and Learning Centres

Open Tuesday to Sunday: 10.00am - 7.00pm
(extended to 10.00pm from Tuesday to Friday for KL only)

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