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A Day to Remember

Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu installed as WOU's Chancellor

Wawasan Open University installed Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu as its first Chancellor in a simple yet poignant ceremony at its main campus on 29 November 2008.

The formal ceremony saw Wawasan Education Foundation chairman, Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap Leong Huat hand over WOU's specially commissioned mace to Tun Dr Lim in a symbolic gesture of the latter's installation as the first Chancellor of WOU. On hand to observe the proceedings was Chairman of WOU Council, Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik.

Over 300 people attended the installation and special convocation, including national and Penang Gerakan committee members, representatives from several institutions of higher learning, members of the consular corps, and leaders of the corporate sector and the business community.

This historic ceremony also brought together three politicians who have held or currently hold the post of the Chief Minister of Penang - Tun Dr Lim, Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and Lim Guan Eng. It was an honour for WOU to become the surprise setting for the meeting-up of these eminent leaders particularly as the Chief Minister was not earlier scheduled to attend the event.

Honorary degrees

In a special convocation that followed, Tun Dr Lim conferred the Honorary Doctor of Letters on Professor Dr Wichit Srisa-an and the Honorary Doctor of Laws on Dato' Dr Sharom Ahmat.

Professor Wichit, 74, currently serves as Chairman of the Council of Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU). He also chairs the Council of four other Thai universities and is the executive vice president of the renowned Chulabhorn Research Institute.

Meanwhile Dr Sharom sits on the Board of the Penang Education Consultative Committee (PECC), the Socio-Economic and Environmental Research Institute (SERI), and the Wawasan Education Foundation.

more pictures on page 2...



Welcome to the Sixth issue of our quarterly newsletter

As many of you are no doubt aware, we recently held our inaugural Chancellor's Installation Ceremony. We are deeply honoured to have Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu as our very first Chancellor and I can think of no other individual who so exemplifies the spirit and commitment of WOU to lifelong education. In Tun Dr Lim, we also have an individual who has made significant contributions to the nation; his efforts give all of us the encouragement we need, to make a change for the better!

I'm sure that the pomp of the Installation Ceremony will be vividly remembered by those present for many years to come. Even though WOU as an entity is only two years young, this Installation Ceremony 'reconnected' us to university traditions that stretch back to the medieval ages. The Chancellor's dress, the University Mace and WOU's new crest are perfect examples of these ancient influences. WOU is proud to continue these traditions and to take our place in the world as an exemplary tertiary institution.

This Installation Ceremony and WOU's future Graduation Ceremonies mark important milestones in WOU's history as well as in our own personal history. The ceremonies celebrate the University's reverence for academic traditions that include upholding the spirit of intellectual betterment and making a positive contribution to society. WOU is not an 'ivory tower' and we want to play our part to create a more just and cohesive society. I have every confidence that future WOU graduates will also make a positive impact in the outside world.

This brings me to the topic of 'degree mills' covered in more detail on page 4. Please take note of these shady organisations that only have one objective in mind - to make a quick buck! Sadly these days, education is often treated as a commodity and degree mills are quick to exploit such sentiments. We are lucky that in Malaysia, the Ministry of Higher Education(MOHE) is vigilant of these scams and to the best of my knowledge there are no degree mills based in the country; however I do know that many Malaysians have fallen prey to international degree mills. As always, knowledge is the best weapon to combat such unscrupulousness.



The VC signing the honorary degrees.

Honorary graduate Dato' Dr Sharom Ahmat.



A historical mark was made within the walls of WOU when for the first time ever, three politicians who have held or currently hold the post of the Chief Minister of Penang gathered for a noble cause - education. Lim Guan Eng, the Chief Minister of Penang and his predecessor Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon came to witness and support the installation of Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu, the latter's predecessor, as WOU Chancellor.

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Saving Lives!

This blood donation campaign at the main campus on 23 October was organised by the WOU Staff Recreation Club (SRC) with the cooperation of the Penang Hospital Blood Bank with over 20 WOU staff who stepped up courageously and donated blood to save lives.

Others who heeded the call to donate were sadly turned down due to low haemoglobin counts and the flu (which was making its seasonal rounds).

Many who successfully contributed blood were regular donors but there were also a few 'first-timers'. "Come join us!" encouraged GSA's Balachandran and Zulkifly Pawancheek after the nurses had stuck needles into their veins.

"This is my sixth time, donating blood is simple and quite painless," said Choy Paik Lin from the Library with her usual spirit of bravado. "Who's next?" quipped Dr. Andy Liew, SRC chairman, as he encouraged more colleagues to come forward; this was his 33rd time donating blood!

Credit should be given to all who made the campaign a success and we definitely expect a larger turnout the next time!

Unveiling the WOU crest

After months of hard work, WOU's new university crest can now be revealed! The crest was the brainchild of WOU's Vice Chancellor, Tan Sri Emeritus Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan and was designed by Johnathan Tan and Lim Yao Han from Corporate Communications. What does it all mean? Read on...

Taking pride of place on the WOU crest is a titanium torch, an inspirational symbol of modernity and sincere guidance, twin ideals that drive WOU. The palm fronds etched onto the torch handle represent the state of Penang, where WOU was established.

The dynamic flames create abstract shapes of two people holding hands and reaching high,

emphasising the University's role as "The People's University" as well as communal betterment through education. Look hard and you'll make out the letter "W" within the stylised flames.

Behind the torch is an open book, representing WOU's commitment to learning and accessibility. All these elements are held in unity by an elegant silver shield.

At the foot of the shield are two golden rice stalks, symbolising WOU's vision of bringing prosperity to the people through education. The rice stalks also pay tribute to Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia for its instrumental role in establishing WOU.

The lobe at the top of the shield together with WOU's corporate logo completes the crest.





Run Through The Mill



How to spot a degree mill

– a warning from the Commonwealth of Learning

What is a degree mill?

A quick search on Google reveals over 37,000 entries and definitions for the term "degree mill". Very simply, degree mills are bogus educational institutions offering bogus degrees or credentials; little formal course work is required and many of these institutions tend to exist online.

Genuine universities are able to offer their students a unique tutor-mentor experience regardless of whether the institutions are traditional 'brick and mortar' units or open universities. This systematic, regular interaction ensures that students are able to benefit from a structured curriculum and rigorous assessment process. With degree mills, this interaction rarely, if ever, takes place and many degrees are awarded on the basis of 'life experience' only!

The Diploma Integrity Protection Act of 2006, introduced in the US by Congresswoman Betty McCollum, defines a degree mill as, "Any entity that lacks valid accreditation by an agency recognised by a Federal agency, a State government, or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation...and offers degrees, diplomas, or certifications, for a fee, that may be used to represent to the general public that the individual possessing such a degree, diploma, or certification has completed a programme of education or training beyond secondary education, but little or no education or course work is required to obtain such a degree, diploma or certification."

Although the above definition defines degree mills in the context of the US education system, it is still a useful guide for Malaysian students and potential students. Ultimately, the university experience is all about honing and improving an individual's intellect and not merely about just accepting a paper certificate.

Why do degree mills pose a threat?

- 1) Degrees or diplomas issued by degree mills are worthless in the real world, jeopardising 'graduates' ability to find suitable employment or to embark on postgraduate programmes at credible universities.
- 2) As the courses offered by degree mills are not accredited by any educational body, there is a genuine danger that degree mill 'graduates' will lack the necessary skills and knowledge demanded of a typical university graduate.
- 3) Degree mills perpetuate the myth that paper qualifications are the 'be all and end all' of education. Education isn't just about a piece of paper, but the journey of self-discovery, learning and the application of knowledge to practical situations.
- 4) The existence of fraudulent online degree mills can tarnish the reputation of legitimate ODL universities – a case of one bad apple rotting the barrel. As part of the growing WOU community, we all need to be clued up on the definition of degree mills and should be able to explain the difference between phoney degree mills and the genuine educational institutions to others.

Fraudulent and low quality providers, popularly known as 'degree mills', threaten the credibility of the online provision of courses internationally by offering credentials and degrees that are costly but of dubious educational value. Electronically-delivered degrees are largely unregulated and pose serious challenges in many countries in the world.

Although comprehensive and reliable data on degree mills is not available, thousands of degree mills are estimated to operate worldwide. The growing demand for higher education has created a significant market for such providers but few governments or organisations are positioned to take needed steps to educate and protect the public.

Degree mills are a special threat to e-Learning because some jurisdictions, in an attempt to choke off the bogus web-based operations, have put an outright ban on the recognition of qualifications gained online.

How can you tell the difference between a diploma mill and a legitimate college?

Spotting degree mills can be difficult. Below are 10 warning signs. If you see two or more of these warning signs, you may be dealing with a degree mill.

- 1) You can earn degrees in significantly less time than at a traditional college or university.
- 2) The college places a heavy emphasis on offering college credits for life experience.
- 3) The college sends you a diploma if you pay a fee.
- 4) The college lets you "buy" a grade point average and academic honours.
- 5) The college charges tuition by the degree, or offers discounts if you enrol in multiple degree programmes. (Traditional colleges generally charge by the credit hour, course, or semester, although some vocational schools charge tuition per programme.)
- 6) The college's address is a post office box.
- 7) The college's Web site does not include information that a traditional college Web site might include, such as a mission statement, course requirements for specific programmes, library resources, and faculty information.
- 8) The college provides only vague information about its faculty or has no faculty, only "evaluators," "mentors" or "counsellors."
- 9) The college claims to be accredited by an association that either does not exist or is not recognised by accreditation bodies. (Malaysian degree programmes need to be accredited by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA).)
- 10) A name has been chosen that is uncomfortably similar to a well-known and well-respected college.

Liberal Studies to Make Their Wawasan Debut!

From January 2009, Wawasan Open University (WOU) will be offering a unique Liberal Studies degree programme. The Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies (Hons) programme is the first offering from the School of Foundation and Liberal Studies (SFLS).

According to WOU Vice Chancellor, Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, "WOU's Liberal Studies syllabus has been carefully designed to meet the growing market demand for graduates with excellent creative, analytical and critical thinking skills. Our programme will create thinking graduates who can communicate and

express themselves effectively, and are able to anticipate and solve unexpected problems."

Dhanarajan asserted that the programme will develop students' academic and intellectual ability as well as their 'soft skills', supporting government efforts to cultivate a new generation of independent, highly motivated graduates. "I am confident that our Liberal Studies graduates will be in great demand, as they will not need any spoon-feeding."

WOU received approval for the Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies (Hons) programme from the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in July 2008.



Soft Skills & the Job Market

There are currently over 80,000 unemployed graduates in Malaysia, with thousands more threatening to join their ranks each year. What stands in the way of local graduates and the job market? According to industry insiders and government officials it is a lack of 'soft skills'.

In a report in The Star (3 July 2008), Higher Education Minister Datuk Khaled Nordin asked all public universities to set up 'finishing schools' to teach graduates soft skills in order to enhance their employability. He explained that, "the finishing schools will provide courses such as the mastery of the English language, entrepreneurship and other personal skills."

“ Being reliant on services means employers require people who not only have knowledge but who possess the 'soft skills' as well: people who can communicate effectively, and analyse and solve problems efficiently. ”

Shamsuddin Bardan
Executive Director of
the Malaysian
Employers
Federation

“ A large number of the graduates of public universities fail to make good employee material according to our clients. ”

Marie Lam
Country Manager of employment
agency Adecco Group Malaysia.

Quotes extracted from 'The unemployable Malaysian graduate' which ran in The New Sunday Times (20 March 2005).

“ Graduate unemployment is a worrying trend because the numbers have been increasing in the past several years. ”

Professor Datuk
Dr Mohd Salleh
Mohd Yasin
Former Universiti
Kebangsaan Malaysia
Vice Chancellor





WOU - Factor @ Anniversary Celebrations!

The spirit of camaraderie was truly alive and well as WOU's 2nd Anniversary celebrations went full swing at the university's main campus on 23 September 2008. In his simple yet profound address, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) Prof Wong Tat Meng opened the event, declaring "Let the party begin!"

A multimedia presentation highlighting photos of the university's early days and milestones certainly brought many down memory lane. The night also doubled up as a *buka puasa* get-together, with a sumptuous buffet featuring a variety of local dishes and desserts laid out.

There was definitely no shortage of talents that night as the staff danced, acted, and sang their hearts out in highly entertaining, rib-tickling and amusing performances.

Many were fascinated, even surprised, at the hidden talents unearthed. The clear winner was the group representing the General Services and Administration department, whose enthusiastic performance in the musical "Aci-aci buka pintu" had the floor in stitches.

A best-dressed costume competition saw representatives from various departments parading their outfits based on the "Traditional & Contemporary" theme. Special mention must go to the sporting Samuel Low of Marketing, who stole the limelight in his saree!

Peals of laughter rang throughout the night, especially when guests sportingly competed against one another in the hilarious vegetable race and icebreaking session.

The celebrations culminated with a lucky draw featuring an array of attractive prizes including a DVD player, MP3 player, various electrical appliances, and the grand prize of a 32-inch LCD television.



The stars of Aci-aci buka pintu from GSA



Stars in the making - entertaining performance from GSA



Top three winners of the best dressed costume competition



GIVING FROM THE HEART

A group of 12 students from Wawasan Open University's Penang Student Association (PSA) brought joy and shared the importance of lifelong learning with the children of St Joseph's Home during a recent visit.

Members of the PSA distributed stationery, food, slippers, cooking oil and a personal RM500 cash contribution as a gesture towards helping the home face the increasing price of food items and other essentials.

PSA president Calvin Yeoh said that this was PSA's first charity project, adding, "We also presented a motivational talk to the secondary-school children on our studies at WOU and how a good education is important to reach one's life goals. We hope that our personal experiences will also encourage them to never give up!"

The PSA team hosted a colouring contest for the younger kids and quizzes for the older ones, with prizes for the winners; they also gave out gifts to all the 42 children at the home.

Yeoh said that the PSA volunteers were happy to spend the few hours with the children despite being busy with assignments, work and personal activities. "Lifelong learning is only complete when we share our time and resources with the less fortunate. When we share knowledge we can help to improve the lives of others," explained Esther Tham, PSA assistant treasurer.

FreedomFilmFest2008@WOU

Watching the People Speak

The FreedomFilmFest 2008 in Penang saw members of the public thronging WOU's main campus from 26-28 September 2008. It was the first time WOU hosted the film festival, which was brought by Pusat KOMAS (Community Communication Centre) to Penang for the third consecutive time.

This year's theme, "Democratic Space - Making Room for Human Rights", was aimed at drawing attention to the deteriorating state of democracy in the country.

The opening ceremony of the festival was graced by the presence of two special guests, Jelutong MP Jeff Ooi, and Aliran President P. Ramakrishnan, who implored the audience to stand up for democracy.

A number of NGOs like Aliran, PT Foundation, Pusat Khidmat Pekerja Tanjung and Non-Timber Forest Products also set up information booths to help raise visitors' awareness on various

issues like gender, human rights, democracy and the environment.

KOMAS also held an exhibit of still photographs, where guests were invited to cast a vote for the photograph that best captured the essence of democratic space.

Over 20 thought-provoking films and documentaries exploring issues such as human rights, environment, race, identity, religion and terrorism were screened at WOU's Theatre 1, drawing a sizeable crowd over the three-day festival. Other highlights included talks by social activists and filmmakers.

The festival also premiered three winning films from KOMAS's "Dare2Document" filmmaking competition - Abror Rivai's "Pilihanraya Umum Malaysia ke-12: Demokerasi atau rebutan kerusi", "Pecah Lobang" by Poh Si Teng, and Justin Johari Azman's "Who Speaks for Me?", which won the award for Most Outstanding Human Rights film.



KAIZEN WORK APPROACH – the key to Japan's competitive success

Over 200 people attended a half-day public seminar on *Towards Betterment: 5S & Kaizen* organised by WOU and Persatuan Alumni AOTS Malaysia (PAAM) and supported by the Embassy of Japan.

The seminar held at the WOU main campus highlighted the many tangible and intangible benefits from implementing the '5S' management principles. Among them are shortened working time, reduced machine breakdown, reduced operation costs, higher labour productivity, enhanced team spirit, better self-confidence among employees, and an overall enhanced company image.

The first speaker, Lim Eng Swee, director of a consultant company, spoke on *Start Implementing 5S: The Basic of Kaizen*. Lim graduated in Electrical Engineering from Kyoto University, Japan, and had served in a Japanese multinational corporation for 30 years.

The second speaker, Theodore Wong Kit Choy, in his paper on *Continual Improvement*, attributed Kaizen to be a key factor behind Japan's competitive success. He said Kaizen brings gradual improvement in performance and productivity, and involves all employees without incurring a large capital. This results

in worker satisfaction and creates a sense of accomplishment.

Wong is general manager of administration/sales and marketing of Sumitomo Electric Sintered Components (M) Sdn Bhd, a Japanese multinational corporation in Shah Alam.

The participants included students and representatives from the corporate sector and non-governmental organisations. His Excellency, Mr Hideaki Hoshi, the Consul-General of Japan in Penang, officiated at the event. The seminar was part of a series of free admission public talks arranged by WOU this year to promote lifelong learning.

What are the 5S?

The fabled 5S is a way of organising and managing the workspace and workflow to improve efficiency by eliminating waste, improving flow and reducing process unreasonableness. They can be loosely translated from Japanese to English as:

- Seiri – Sorting
- Seiton – Straighten or Set in Order
- Seisō – Sweeping or Shining
- Seiketsu – Standardising
- Shitsuke – Sustaining



Ivory towers

The People's University

Is there room for social justice in universities?

“As institutions charged with education, research and training, our purpose is not to be construed as that of handmaidens of industry, implementers of the skills agenda, or indeed engines for promoting social justice.”

Professor Alison Richard, vice-chancellor of Cambridge University in her speech at the 2008 annual conference of Universities UK, 10 September 2008



The British press had a field day covering Professor Richard's frustration over what she construed as government 'meddling' – some UK ministers called on elite universities to do more to attract students from poor backgrounds.

According to Professor Richard, "We try to reach out to the best students, whatever their background. One outcome of that is that we can help to promote social mobility. But promoting social mobility is not our core mission. Our core mission is to provide an outstanding education within a research setting." While few would dispute Cambridge's position as one of the world's leading research universities; on the basis of the VC's message, the university seems to lack an understanding of its own place within society and the power it has to provoke change for the greater good.

Universities cannot exist as ivory towers, detached from industry, government or society; what would be their purpose otherwise? If we have to accept that universities have little or no connection to the outside world then the role of graduates within society will be negligible too. Universities are the pillars of a civilised society and need to play an active role in providing equal opportunities to all (admittedly not at the expense of lowering educational standards). By making education accessible to as many as possible, universities empower graduates to make a useful contribution to society. WOU's VC, Tan Sri Emeritus Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan underlined that "...universities need to produce graduates that are both economically productive and socially responsible citizens."

WOU's mission, vision and value statements are a complete contrast with Professor Richard's comments, and WOU was established with a commitment to social justice as its driving force. As a private, not-for-profit tertiary institution, WOU is against setting racial quotas for intakes and has successfully implemented its Headstart programme to help working adults with little formal education to meet the necessary standards required by the university. WOU is taking an active effort to bring about social change in Malaysia by ensuring that tertiary education is within the reach of everyone.

Professor Richard's outspoken views should be tempered with the fact that under her tenure, Cambridge developed a bursary fund to help undergraduates affected by the national increase in university tuition fees. It was reported in *The Times* (23 September 2008) that Cambridge is also considering a one-year foundation course for pupils who fail to win a place because of poor A-level grades. The foundation course offers promising applicants a second chance, by helping them with their retakes and providing financial support.

Jon Beard, Cambridge's new director of undergraduate recruitment pointed out that "As a state school student who very nearly didn't go to university at all, I understand some of the reasons why others never apply. The widening participation agenda is important to me because of that."

Perhaps there's a little bit of the WOU spirit of social justice in Cambridge after all.

Team WOU Triumphs at CIMA Business Game 2008

Two teams from WOU were among the participants at CIMA Penang Branch's inaugural Business Game 2008 held at WOU recently.

The day-long competition provided an opportunity for teams to execute analytical and leadership skills in a virtual highly competitive corporate world.

Team members were required to take on different management roles in a simulated business environment. Among the key areas covered were competitor analysis, business decision-making, business data analysis, demand forecasting and creativity in advertising.

WOU's Talented Fervent Charismatic Team, comprising Bachelor of Business students,

Esther Tham, Chuah Ee Lean, Henry Tye and Jolene Fernandez, emerged as champions when they successfully earned the highest profit from their mock pizzeria business.

The simulation game also drew participating teams from Universiti Sains Malaysia, INTI International College and Kolej Disted-Stamford.



Intel-ligence begins at WOU

Wawasan Open University has drawn up a detailed leadership training module for Intel's senior managers to get them to think creatively and display critical thinking. This is the first such collaboration between the university and Intel Corporation.

The training will stretch over six sessions with four to be held in the later part of 2008 and the remaining sessions taking place in early 2009. The customised training programme for Intel managers was developed by WOU's Centre for Graduate Studies.

According to Intel's managing director Atul Bhargava, the training programme offered by WOU matched Intel's needs for developing senior management leadership skills.

"WOU offers invaluable content like critical thinking, out-of-box thinking, strategic analysis, and the building of learning organisations." Through the programme, Intel aims to build leaders with "technical, business and organisational skills."

Over 20 senior-level managers from manufacturing, finance, human resources, services, and design from Intel's Penang

and Kedah plants attended the sessions. Each session was facilitated by a resource expert:

- Prof Dr M.B. Athreya, Harvard University PhD holder in Business Administration, and a much sought-after consultant / advisor, who covered Business Strategy and Strategic Orientation .
- Prof J. Ramachandran, the BOC Chair Professor of Business Policy at the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, discussed Strategic Leadership. The senior managers learned about leadership of organisations (i.e. shaping the firm's destiny) as opposed to the traditional focus on leadership in organisations (i.e. motivating people to work well).
- Datuk Dr Michael Yeoh, founder, executive director and chief executive officer of the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute (ASLI) focused on Building Strong and Vital Organisations. He explained how to develop and lead teams, and how to create the vision of Intel as the preferred employer.

The remaining sessions will discuss the following topics: Implementing Strategy; Managing Stakeholder Relationships; and Leading with Integrity. The senior managers will be exposed to a total of 12 case studies built around the themes in order to develop and hone the skills of problem-solving, analysis and critical-thinking.





WOU Welcomes New SFLS Dean



Dr Mogana Dhamotharan joined the WOU family on 8 September as the new dean of the School of Foundation and Liberal Studies.

Dr Mogana brings with her over 30 years of experience in Open Distance Learning (ODL). Prior to joining WOU, she was an Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Foundations, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, since 2005.

Her other credentials include Associate Professor at Universiti Malaya from 1982 to 2005, *Commonwealth of Learning* consultant to the Open University of Sri Lanka in 2004, and consultant for the English programme for Selangor State civil servants in 2002.

"Teamwork and a passion driven by what you want to achieve and what the students need

to achieve is important. The programmes we offer have to be sustainable and so we must keep our courses viable, never compromising on quality," she explained.

Dr Mogana, who started in ODL back in the 1970s when undertaking her Masters, considers this learning approach very much a part of her and so feels at home at WOU. "During that time, technology and computers were limited but already there was a need for self-access and self-instructional learning," she added.

She obtained her PhD from the University of Glasgow in 1988; Masters of Education from Universiti Malaya in 1981; Masters of Education from University of Wales, UK, in 1977; Bachelor of Journalism in 1975, and Bachelor of Arts in English (Hons) in 1974, both from University of Punjab, Chandigarh, India.

WOU's First Student in Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies

At 20, Henry Ooi Kean Seng is probably the youngest student ever to enrol in Wawasan Open University. Having passed his A-Levels early this year, Henry was given permission to register, making him the first student for the Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies (Hons) programme.

The former student of Sekolah Menengah Heng Ee in Penang currently tutors primary and secondary students in subjects like Bahasa Malaysia, English, Science and Mathematics. There was little hesitation as the team at the Penang Regional Office led by Director K. Manoharan introduced him to the Liberal Studies programme.

"I had originally wanted to sign up for an Accounting degree. After much thought and counselling by Mr Mano, we both decided that

a degree in liberal studies would be more suitable for me," Henry said, explaining that he had been tutoring for more than three years now.

"I am still going to take up Accounting, as I do not want to leave this subject behind!" he added.

With aspirations to build a solid career in education, Henry hoped to benefit from the soft skills learnt from the programme. "It would definitely be helpful in my communication with my students in and out of the classroom," he remarked.

The Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies (Hons), set to roll out in January 2009, offers courses from two clusters – Social Sciences and Humanities. Liberal Studies students can also take up courses in Science and Business studies to enhance their soft skills as they move up the career ladder.

“Me and Tamilkumaran, a Form 3 student who just finished his PMR.”



“Me and my student's family enjoying a funny moment.”





Finance Your WOU Degree Without Tears



Paying for higher education requires much financial planning; it is important to plan ahead in order to maximise the net returns on your educational investment!

Here is a simple guide to financing your WOU degree:

1) PTPTN Study Loans (<http://epinjaman.ptptn.gov.my>)

These are available for Malaysian citizens not exceeding 45 years of age. Loan repayments only begin after graduation and are offered at a low interest rate of only 2%.

To apply online you need one of these:

- a) SSPN account
- b) CIMB Bank personal savings account
- c) Bank Simpanan Nasional pin-number

2) EPF Education Withdrawal Scheme (<http://www.kwsp.gov.my>)

Malaysian citizens below the age of 55 can withdraw part of their EPF to pay for their education, provided they have a remaining balance in Account II.

- a) Collect or download the application form, Borang KWSP 9H (AHL) from the EPF Office.
- b) Request for supporting documents from your Regional Office. These include payment receipts from the university.
- c) Submit the documents and your personal savings account passbook to the EPF Office.

3) Other loans available

State government loans and bank loans are also widely available. Please do check online or with your bank for more information. For further information on points 1 and 2, please contact your nearest Regional Office.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Student Info

Registration Deadline for New Students

The last day for new students to register for courses for the forthcoming January intake will be 11 Jan 2009 (Sunday), which is a week before the semester starts.

Re-enrolment and Deadline for Adding Courses

For students continuing their studies at WOU, the last day to add courses is one week after the commencement of semester, that is, 25 January 2009.

Early Bird Fees

Students qualify for discounted tuition fees if they enrol for courses not later than 14 December 2008.

BA Liberal Studies

The Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies programme will be offered from January 2009 to impart creative, analytical and critical thinking skills for effective communication.

Student Orientation Day

This activity aims to prepare students by highlighting the facilities and services available at the regional offices and learning centres. They are also informed about the university's regulations and procedures.

For the Jan 2009 intake, student orientation for both the Bachelor's and Master's programmes will be as follows:

Date : 18 Jan 2009 (Sunday)

Venue : Learning Centres nationwide

**For KBRO, orientation day will be on 17 Jan 2008 (Sat).*

WOU Opens Support Office at Bandar Utama



This latest regional centre, referred to as BU8, aims to strengthen the support services rendered by WOU via its existing regional offices in Penang, Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru and Kota Bharu.

The BU8 is headed by Meilina Puteh, who formerly held the position of Director of the Kuala Lumpur Regional Office for over a year. BU8 comes under the purview of the KLRO.

The contact numbers of BU8 are as follows:

- * Main Telephone Line: 03-7629 7223
- * Telephone Line: 03-7629 7123
- * Fax Line: 03-7629 7023

WOU plans to open up regional offices in Kuching and Kota Kinabalu next year as it continues on its mission to make lifelong learning flexible, affordable and accessible to the people.

Wawasan Open University moves one step closer to bringing tertiary education within the reach of Malaysians spread across the land with the opening of the Bandar Utama Regional Support Office on October 28th.



Aiming For CeMBA Credentials Despite His "Busyness"

The hours in a day seem inadequate for Brian Lariche to juggle the demands of his job, community work and his many charity ventures. He has now added to his plate the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration (CeMBA) programme.



Lariche, 41, is executive director of a Kuala Lumpur-based company that focuses on corporate community projects. He also undertakes charity work that eats into his already crowded schedule. Yet the drive to build up his professional credibility led him to register for CeMBA through the Kuala Lumpur regional office, as he finds the course content practical in value for enhancing his career.

Apart from the personal satisfaction and sense of accomplishment, an added bonus will be the academic credentials he can tag to his extensive corporate and community work experience. He feels the MBA will give him 'extra' weight when negotiating with clients and thus lend strength to his current curriculum vitae.

As to how he balances time between work and studies, he says it is "a matter of scheduling" and "making the time."

Lariche plans to finish his CeMBA in two-and-a-half years and he will then enrol for the Commonwealth Executive Master of Public Administration (CeMPA) programme.

"I work with many non-profit organisations and have also worked with the UNDP. What I learn from CeMPA will enable me to see situations from a larger perspective, and thereby allow me to improve on my services to non-profit organisations not only locally but regionally," he quipped.

<<In Senegal with his African queens, Thebisa, Margaret and Maria

Rising To A New Challenge

In the midst of hundreds of students present, there sat an unassuming, bespectacled gentleman in his forties. Cutting a familiar figure, Teng Chang Yeow listened intently as WOU officials welcomed and briefed the new students during the July 2008 Orientation Day.

Many will remember Teng as the former Penang State Executive Councillor in charge of Tourism Development and Environment. With years of extensive experience in local government administration, the Commonwealth Executive Master of Public Administration was the choice programme for him.

With the assistance rendered by Penang Regional Office director K. Manoharan, Teng signed up for two public administration papers.

"I believe in improving oneself and constantly acquiring new knowledge. Taking a bold step to study again is itself a challenge to me, but more importantly, the rewards of self development are certainly worth the effort," he declared.

Teng hoped that he would be able to share his experiences with his fellow students and learn something new in return.

For now, he is diligently absorbing his reading materials and finishing his assignments, all the traits of a disciplined student!



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

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