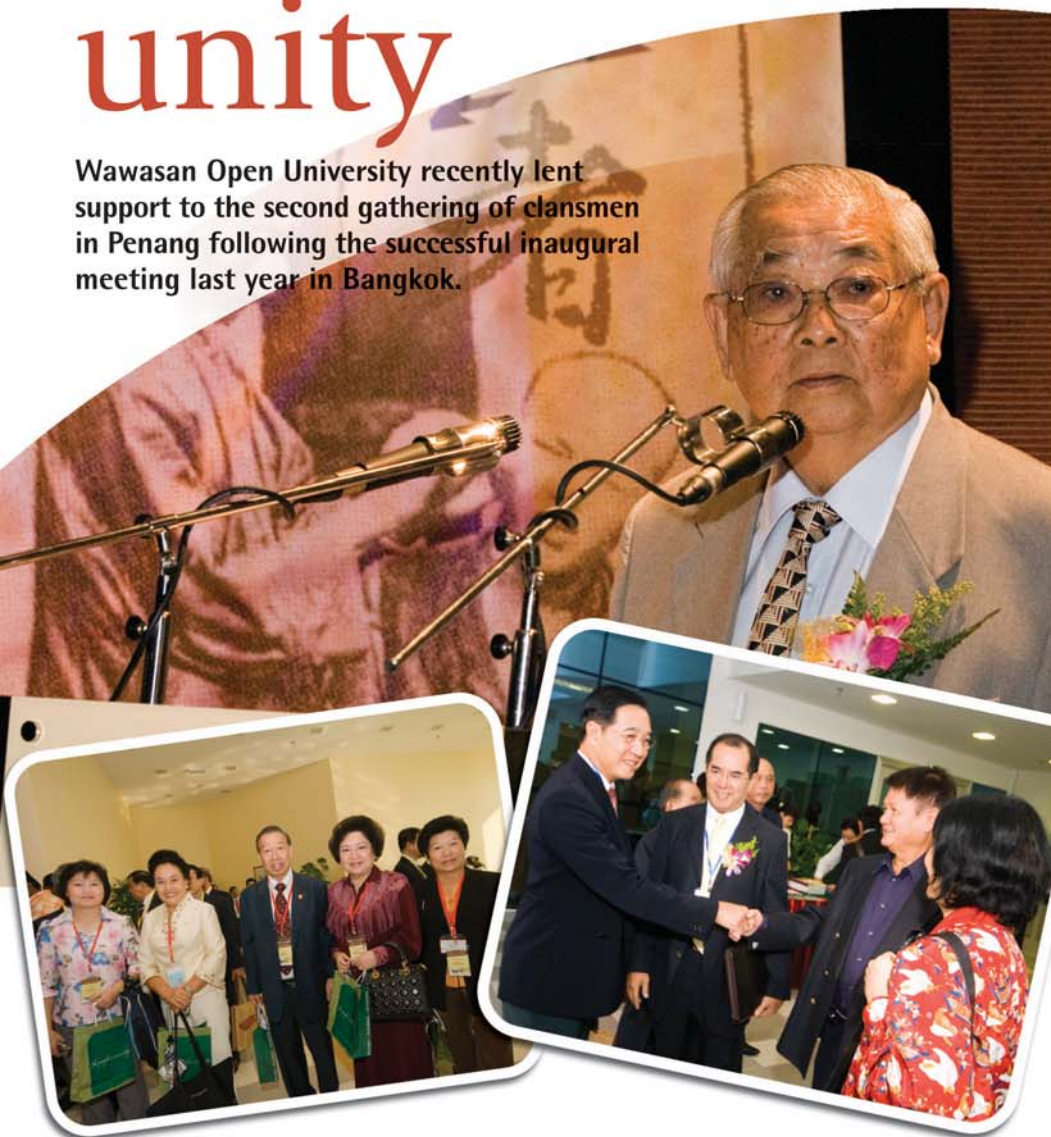


Clansmen exemplify solidarity and unity

Wawasan Open University recently lent support to the second gathering of clansmen in Penang following the successful inaugural meeting last year in Bangkok.



WOU hosted the opening of the symposium on *The Evolution of Sino-Southeast Asian Communities* organised by the Penang Chinese Clan Council and the Clan Associations Youth Committee, Penang from 18 - 20 July 2008.

The annual event aims to foster understanding and cooperation amongst participating Chinese Clan members, and offer a platform for members from different countries to exchange views on cultural environments, tourism products, social and economic policies, and to develop networks through friendship.

Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu, Chancellor of WOU, in launching the symposium, said such a gathering would help towards sustaining world-wide peace and harmony.

"We must endeavour to work closer together as brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, in a world that has become borderless because of the Internet but which is still vexed and troubled by the social economic imbalances that exist between the advanced and developing nations," he commented.

He also suggested the clansmen sponsor some of their students to study with WOU, adding, "I am confident that the growth of Wawasan Open University can contribute much towards further developing the objectives that your clansmen seek to implement."

Tun Dr Lim noted that clan organisations allowed the Chinese immigrant communities to remain spiritually true to the heritage of their ancestral origins while contributing to the socio-economic progress and national development of their new homelands.

"The clan interactions which your symposium has established will become useful examples of how people hailing from different origins and living in different nations can understand the importance of unity and loyalty as universal truths."

Among the dignitaries at the opening were State Executive Councillor Danny Law Heng Kiang, Penang Tourism Action Council chairman Dato' Kee Phaik Cheen, organising chairman and advisor of Penang Chinese Clan Council Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap, and WOU Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan and Deputy Vice Chancellors Prof Wong Tat Meng and Dr Seah Soo Aun.

The delegates came from Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Philippines, and Indonesia.

During their three days here, the delegates visited several ancestral clan houses and heritage zones, notably the Clan Jetties, Little India, Goddess of Mercy Temple, Yap Kongs, Dr Sun Yat Sen's Museum, Acheen Street Mosque, Hock Teik Cheng Sin Temple, Khoo Kongs and the Cheah Kongs.

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This edition of WawasanLink happily coincides with WOU's second anniversary as it was on 22 September 2006 that WOU was officially launched. This milestone is a time for our ever-growing WOU family to reflect on the immense challenges we have faced and the progress we have made together.

While it is satisfying to reflect and to seek quiet satisfaction from our achievements to date, this must be tempered by WOU's unending commitment to making higher education available to everyone. This is a responsibility we must all continue to share.

I'd especially like to celebrate the spirit, courage and exceptional determination of our students as they continue on their journey of higher education. Juggling the responsibilities of work and family with study is never an easy task. Rest assured that we are with you every step of the way. Your challenges are also our challenges, and our success as an institution can only be measured by your achievements.

It is extremely heartening for me to share with you that over 30% of WOU students have only an SPM qualification or its equivalent; which is an incredible indication of the ability of Malaysians to take on the challenges of tertiary education, despite limited formal education.

Overall, we should be proud that WOU has in place tried and tested teaching approaches that will deliver quality education. I am especially enthusiastic about the effectiveness of WOU's Headstart Programme, and its ability to prepare WOU students for the rigours of studying for a degree. WOU's high retention rate gives me good reason to be very positive about our future.

As we look ahead to another year, our second birthday gives us the confidence to reaffirm our basic aim, which is to assist individuals who want the opportunity to challenge themselves intellectually, regardless of their academic, economic or social background. I congratulate you all!

Welcome to the fifth issue of our quarterly newsletter



"Lights! Camera! Action!" at WOU Main Campus.



On 22 May 2008, Wawasan Open University Main Campus was turned into a film set, proof of its iconic magnificence as a heritage building. A sight to behold, the normally peaceful campus grounds felt the tremors of showbiz as the trailers rolled in, stars rolled out and the cameras rolled on!



“I've made over 100 movies in over 15 years. This location is by far the best combination of old and new I've seen put together. It's strange. It's beautiful.”

Film Director Dietmar Klein while filming German miniseries Dream Hotel at Wawasan Open University's Main Campus in Penang.

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ACADEMIC MILESTONE

Changes in Degree Structure that Benefit WOU Students

The newly formed Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) has recently introduced the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF) to cover qualifications awarded by all Malaysian education institutions. In response to proposed changes covered by the MQF, the Wawasan Open University has started to review all graduation requirements for its Bachelor's degree programmes. This review will take into account MQA's requirement that all undergraduate degree programmes call for students to successfully complete and accumulate a minimum of 120 credits in order to gain a degree. The university's review will include making the curriculum "learning outcome" based and taking into account student workload to reflect the total work put in by learners, including time spent on self study, attending tutorials, doing assignments, laboratories and workshops, making contributions to WawasanLearn (online learning) and sitting for exams.

The proposed move to convert the degree programmes from the existing 102 credit-unit system to a 120 credit-unit system will assign credit values to many of the currently 'unseen' learning activities that a student at WOU has put into every course during a semester.

This system will not only be a measure of the students' 'seat time in' the classroom but would also gauge other activities including participation in the prescribed assignments, additional homework and time spent learning online.

Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan said that the credit migration reflects a change in the emphasis from the traditional way of measuring "teaching via hours of 'contact' with the teacher to measuring "learning"; it is very student centred. He said the university decided to make this move to migrate from the 102 credit to the 120 credit based degree in order to enhance and strengthen its ongoing programmes and curricula. The current 102 credit structure strictly adhered to a previous prescription by the National Accreditation Board [LAN] which required all courses in a diploma or degree programme to adhere to a standard 3 credit weightage, with each credit requiring a notional 40 hours of work. Compliance with this prescription meant courses had to be designed to stick to a 3 credit block regardless of the demand of the discipline. For example, an introductory course in Accounting had to be broken up into Accounting 1 and Accounting 2 each to be taught over 120 hours and weighted as 3 credits. This meant an artificial separation of what should have been one unified and cohesive course into two separate bits with overlap of curriculum and two exam papers among other things. The new system frees the university from

such constraints. Since the intention is to drive the curriculum on the basis of "LEARNING OUTCOMES", the university is given the freedom to design the curriculum and vary the credit weightage to unite the content and discipline. Our migration plans following this advice will have the following features:

1. The LAN and some University compulsory courses will maintain their 3 credit value.
2. All others will be weighed at 5 or 10 credits.
3. The 3 and 5 credit courses will be one semester long.
4. The 10 credit courses will be run over two semesters.
5. The total number of courses (and exams) will be reduced from the current 34 to between 23 and 26 depending on the choice of courses as well as the specific programme of study.
6. The fee per credit will be reduced to between 110/lower level credit and 150/higher level credit. This means the total graduation costs will remain the same for the present. Future increases will simply reflect adjustments to inflation.
7. If you had already sat and passed courses at the present 3 credit rating, the university will do the necessary conversion. There will be no additional cost to you.
8. The total time required for graduation still remains the same. It depends on the speed at which you progress under some restrictions imposed by the government.

Dhanarajan said all these measures being introduced will certainly have an advantageous affect on the student's study time and with careful planning, the student can actually shave off some time in order to graduate. He assured WOU students currently in the system that a conversion mechanism is being worked out to change their current three credit-units into five credit-units without affecting their grades.

"Our students have nothing to worry about. The redesigning of the system will take all this into account and ensure that there is minimal impact to their academic progression."

"We have, as part of our realignment, looked at the entire curriculum of programmes, rationalised and ironed out the wrinkles, making it possible to be seamless from the start to the end of the course," he said. He also said that the MQA should be complimented in allowing greater autonomy to universities to design curriculum that best suit their programmes of study.





WOU shares e-learning expertise



Faculty members of the School of Human Ecology from Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Bangkok (STOU), visited Wawasan Open University on 29 May to study the university's developments in the delivery of open distance education.

The head of the 14-member delegation, Dean Assoc Prof Parichat Changsingha, credited STOU president Prof Dr Pratya Vesarach for encouraging the visit. Prof Dr Pratya was very impressed with WOU's e-learning system during his earlier courtesy call on Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan in March 2008.

According to Prof Parichat, the School of Human Ecology started to employ e-learning about three years ago for two courses on nutrition and science.

At the one-day e-learning workshop and tour of facilities arranged for the visitors, Prof Dhanarajan described WOU as a toddler compared to STOU, which was established in 1978. He said that WOU was happy to share with the delegates its experiences of providing learning support to students through electronic media.

Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) Prof Wong Tat Meng gave a talk on the shift of higher education from "D" Learning to "E" Learning due to advances in ICT. "Our content is mostly in print form but we use a lot of electronic forms to support our students' learning." He explained that distance education or "D" learning, employs microphone, radio broadcast, audio/video conferencing, television, and satellite television, while "E" tools comprise the computer, Internet, broadband, and wireless technology to create a 'networked community'.

The delegates were later briefed on WOU's e-learning model by Director of Educational Technology, Prof Ng Wai Kong, and had a hands-on look at the learning management system, e-library facilities and the video-conferencing link-up capabilities.

Student Orientation

JULY 2008



The July 2008 Student Orientation was held simultaneously at WOU's main campus in Penang, Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bahru on Sunday, 20 July 2008. The Kota Bharu RO held their orientation session earlier on Friday, 18 July 2008.

In Penang, students started streaming in as early as 8am to register and collect goodie bags of WOU pens, T-shirts, bookmarks, and Orientation CDs.

Students paid rapt attention as Director of Penang RO, K. Manoharan, delivered his welcoming speech. "No man is an island," he remarked, assuring the students that they could always count on the RO for support.

A pre-recorded speech by the Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan was shown on the screen. Students were then invited to recite the *Ikrar Mahasiswa* (Student Oath), led by Bachelor of Technology in Electronics student Mohd Johari Ishak.

Dean of the Centre for Graduate Studies, Prof Madhulika Kaushik briefed the students on the ODL model, stressing that WOU students are "masters of their own destinies, taking the responsibility of learning into their own hands".

Over at the main campus, a pleasant surprise was in store as the Happy Cruisers from Chinese radio station, 988FM, turned up during lunch time to give out goodies to enthusiastic participants who joined in the fun trivia session. In KL, cruisers from English radio station, Red.fm, entertained the city folks during their stop at the capital's RO.



AHEAD OF THE PACK

Dato' Boonler Somchit, CEO of the internationally acclaimed Penang Skills Development Centre (PSDC), and member of the WOU Council and Advisory Peer Group, shares his frank views with WawasanLink about the state of the local education system and challenges facing the local workforce.

“Our educational environment has to evolve to produce confident, competent graduates that are able to find opportunities for themselves.”



WawasanLink >> **WL** Dato' Boonler Somchit >> **DBS**

WL : There's a general feeling of 'doom and gloom' about the effects of a US economic slowdown and its impact on Penang's hi-tech sector. What's your take on this?

DBS : The US is still in denial about the state of the economy. Let's face it, they are facing a recession! Having said that, I'm still very optimistic about Penang's ability to weather the storm due to the competitiveness of our knowledge-workers or K-workers.

Penang faces so much competition from ASEAN nations in the production of low-value, high-volume electronic components that our manufacturing focus has shifted. It is simply not viable for us to compete with nations that have much lower raw material and labour costs than us. Our relatively small population also limits the size of our workforce.

So while we lack muscle-power, we have to focus on continuously developing brain-power, to educate and to train competent K-workers that are in demand. Globally, Malaysian workers are perceived to have excellent hard skills and good cross-cultural understanding; you only have to look at the number of Malaysians managing international plants across SE Asia and China. It's a very impressive statistic.

For these reasons I'm very upbeat about Penang's future, which has received a boost from investment by Honeywell and Ibiden – two organisations that really value R&D. This is solid proof that the economy is moving higher up the value-chain and that we are no longer regarded as just a source of cheap labour, but a provider of technological innovation.

WL : How do educational/vocational institutes groom good K-workers that are competent and competitive? What is PSDC's approach?

DBS : "Garbage in equals garbage out." This is true of any education system in the world.

There are problems with the local system that begin at grassroots level and have continued all the way up to tertiary level. There is currently a very low-level of collaboration between tertiary institutions and industry in Malaysia, which is a big oversight. Universities and industry need to create strong working partnerships to continuously share ideas and skills in order to remain relevant. I am pleased to observe that this situation is gradually changing and more universities are reaching out to industry.

To groom effective K-workers, our educational environment has to evolve to produce confident, competent graduates that are able to find opportunities for themselves, rather than providing fresh graduates that expect to be spoon-fed in the real world as they have been throughout their university days.

PSDC's approach has always been focused on providing industry-driven training to equip workers with relevant skills and knowledge that are in demand. The focus is on producing 'employable' workers.

Our culture of 'success breeding success' speaks for itself. We are not a '*lebih senang*' institution and have a proven track record. PSDC is a model for many vocational training centres around the world and has acted as a consultant to international governments.



WL : You've spoken about the need for K-workers to keep Penang and Malaysia globally-competitive, how does WOU fit into this?

DBS : Knowledge and the continued thirst for knowledge are definitely the keys to success. But I also want to make it clear that the Malaysian education system shouldn't just be about creating 'ready-made' workers. This is too simplistic, not to mention impossible!

That said, it is possible to nurture and train students to become attractive to prospective employers. The most employable workers have a certain mindset. They possess good communications and presentation skills, maturity of thought and independence, problem solving skills, ability to draw on resources and competencies, and networking skills. In short, these are all the traits that WOU encourages and hones through open-distance learning (ODL).

WOU also promotes independent problem-solving and decision-making, and these are attributes that are very much in demand. It isn't enough to blindly learn and repeat by rote – all learning needs to have an application.

WOU gives working adults a valuable second chance to obtain a degree, which shouldn't imply that the student or the degree is second rate. Employers value how mature students are able to apply their knowledge and working experience in ways that many fresh grads simply cannot.

I don't mind sharing with you that the industry perception of WOU's educational standards are very high, thanks to the reputation and experience of your academics, especially the VC. It is very impressive that the public thinks so highly of WOU and believes that you guys really know what you're doing!

I think this positive public perception is shaped by the Homestead campus as well as your effective marketing and PR campaigns. These factors have given WOU a very high media profile and created a real buzz about the place, making WOU a very attractive destination for working adults considering taking degree courses. After all, everyone wants to study at a prestigious university – it's only human nature!

WL : WOU and PSDC recently signed an MoU in January 2007. What are the benefits of PSDC's and WOU's cooperation?

DBS : PSDC is currently at the crossroads where it simply doesn't have the resources to offer high-end R&D or academic programmes that can only be offered by tertiary institutions. PSDC needs to focus on providing peripheral skills training. To meet this challenge, PSDC has teamed up with local and international universities to prepare students for degrees by providing a strong and relevant foundation.

Cooperation between WOU and PSDC will result in several concrete benefits:

Credit transfers. This will allow PSDC diploma students to 'upgrade' to a degree. The more rigorous academic environment offered by WOU will train PSDC students to develop their analytical skills. PSDC's own staff will also benefit from WOU programmes; there are currently 6 PSDC staff enrolled at WOU.

Advisory Peer Group. Dato' Boonler's participation on WOU's Advisory Peer Group allows the University to tap into his vast industry experience and PSDC's networks to offer WOU students a more industry-relevant education.

Direct industry links. PSDC's contacts with MNCs and SMEs provides WOU with direct access to industry. MBA students in particular will benefit from roundtable discussions with captains of industry, which will commence in the later part of 2008.



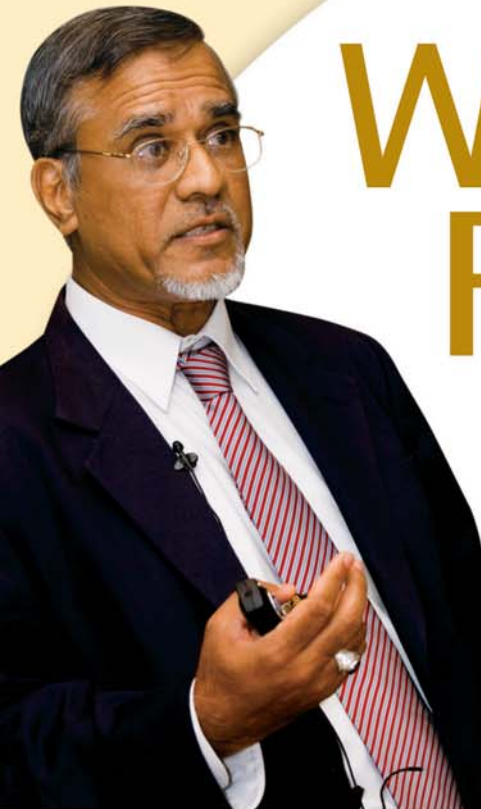
a world-leader



PSDC, established in 1989, is one of the world's leading technical training centres. The Centre is a joint effort of government, academia and industry and is Malaysia's first industry-led training centre.

PSDC has a membership of 142 member companies who rank among some of the world's most admired corporations, employing over 170,000 workers. PSDC's mission is to pool resources among Penang's four FIZs and four Industrial Estates by providing cutting-edge training and educational programmes.

For further information, please visit www.psd.org.my



WOU & FMM

Partners for International Conference

WOU scored another first in tying up with the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) as a strategic partner for their international conference on *Excellence in Manufacturing*, held recently at Sunway Resort Hotel and Spa, Selangor.

The conference gathered a host of industry experts to shed some light on how local manufacturers could improve their businesses and achieve more with less.

Speakers included Australian Chris Geraghty, the managing partner of Kepner-Tregoe Asia Pacific, on the topic of *High Performance Manufacturing*, and Hong Li, vice president of Lean Enterprise China, who touched on *Lean Manufacturing on the Shopfloor in China*.

The keynote address entitled *Best Practices and Benchmarking in Malaysian Companies* was presented by Abdul Wahid Mohamad, managing director of BPM Consulting. He has over 12 years experience of consulting and training, and more than eight years experience of corporate planning, benchmarking and business process management.

Wahid discussed four benchmarking types including competitive benchmarking, which makes comparisons between direct competitors. This method may not identify best business

practices. Internal benchmarking compares similar operations or functions across a company, which means it targets an internal standard only.

Functional benchmarking compares specific functions with the best in industry and best in class, but it may not help the other operations in a particular business organisation. The ultimate in benchmarking applications is generic benchmarking, which compares all areas of a business operation or process with that of other industries, regardless of the product or service being produced.

He cited several critical success factors for benchmarking, including focusing on the right issues and on the right partners, and most importantly 'the willingness to change'.

Although the seminar was manufacturing-oriented, many principles were also relevant to other sectors, proving that different organisations can learn from each others experiences.

About 70 senior management personnel from various manufacturing industries in Malaysia as well as a few academics attended the one-day conference.



Benchmarking for dummies

The process of benchmarking was pioneered by Rank Xerox in the late 1970s as a response to shrinking market share and profits. From 1974 to 1984, the copier giant experienced a dramatic fall in market share from 86% to 17%. During this same period, profits tumbled from USD1.15 billion to USD290 million!

This reversal of fortunes was widely attributed to complacency and the rise of new, highly competitive Japanese companies including Ricoh and Canon. Through benchmarking, Xerox's CEO, David T. Kearns, discovered that their Japanese competitors were running manufacturing costs around 40-50% that of Xerox! Competitive benchmarking helped Xerox to reduce their own costs, returning the company to robust financial health.

The moral of the story? 'You can't improve what you don't measure'.





Mainstream media under pressure!



The mainstream media must embrace the digital world if they want to stay relevant and competitive before it "squeezes them out of business." This was the bold statement made by Ann Olson, in her public lecture on "U.S. Media and the Digital Challenge: How technology is changing media and US journalism". The talk took place on 4 August 2008 and was hosted by WOU in collaboration with the US Embassy in Malaysia.

Olson is a creative media trainer and journalism specialist from the US, with 34 years of international journalism experience.

During the talk, she observed that, "The Internet is the driving innovation that has pushed the mainstream media to adapt. As a result, major dailies are now trying to attract niche audiences, moving faster than ever before, using every platform for delivery, relying on new voices, and re-thinking the nature of information."

Timeliness is a real challenge for journalists, as the immediacy of the Internet has changed how

quickly people seek information and how they judge its value. Olson noted that journalists are now forced to post news online in real time to keep up with the changing angle of their stories.

In the lively question and answer session that followed the talk, Olson reassured the audience that the digital revolution need not marginalise poorer communities, as up-to-date news can be delivered cheaply through wireless technology on mobile phones. She explained that in developing countries in Africa, Korea and China, people get the latest news briefs delivered instantly to their mobile phones.

To another query, Olson observed that many US advertisers are reluctant to invest in print ads, preferring online ads. She believes that traditional newspapers need to work on a "subscription media" model - where people pay for specific, detailed information, including politics and business - in order to stay in the black.

WOU Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) Prof Wong Tat Meng acted as the moderator for the talk.



Keeping the spirit of Entrepreneurship Alive

All of the world's major organisations began with the kernel of inspiration termed 'entrepreneurship', the spark of an idea that delivered new, innovative products and services. Today, the term 'entrepreneurship' is widely regarded as something of a 'holy grail' in corporate circles, as established organisations look to sustain growth and keep levels of innovation high.

In the new years of a recently formed organisation, levels of entrepreneurship tend to remain fairly high, especially if the founder is still heavily involved in the business. As the organisation attains a certain level of success and stability, entrepreneurial levels can taper off. Entrepreneurship becomes stifled by an increasingly rigid operational structure, bureaucracy and the establishment of 'comfort zones', where management (and employees) become more interested in protecting their own

territories, than encouraging growth and innovation.

According to Prof Madhulika Kaushik, Dean of the Centre for Graduate Studies, WOU, "It is an important challenge for organisations, to harness the collective ideas of its members to maintain the spirit of entrepreneurship." There are many ways this can be done, through the establishment of committees and special task forces or even through something as basic as an 'ideas box' for employees to contribute to. "It is important that a conscious decision be taken, with the specific purpose of keeping entrepreneurial spirit high. Organisations need to cultivate an environment where ideas can be shared freely. Excessive formality and bureaucracy should not hamper innovation as anyone can have a brainwave!" she stressed.

Prof Madhulika believes that when looking at corporate entrepreneurship in the context of higher education, it is necessary to regard universities and colleges as, "...providers of solutions for the educational needs of the people.

There are two ways that we can encourage corporate entrepreneurship at WOU, by creating new education products (courses) and exploring previously untapped markets." Both these approaches require a systematic and innovative approach to determine whether or not a sizeable market exists, and who the beneficiaries of any new course will be - the intermediaries (students), or the end-users (industry)?

"Part of WOU's challenge, is to meet society's unfulfilled educational needs, and if necessary, to create various intermediate certifications which can later be assigned credits. In this respect, WOU is an innovative institution as we are constantly looking at ways to develop and deliver a quality education to Malaysians. It is vital that WOU delivers an education that equips students with the necessary competencies and is relevant to society's needs," Prof Madhulika explained. "Committing ourselves to corporate entrepreneurship will ensure that WOU will remain the proverbial rolling stone that gathers no moss."



Crice-is!

Can Malaysia cope with a possible rice shortage?

The Government, responding to the impending rice crisis, urgently ordered 500,000 metric tonnes of rice in May 2008 from Thailand. This exercise amounted to RM725 million in subsidies (from taxes) and was the first time imported rice has been subsidised.

This action was triggered off by rising rice prices, up from US\$360 per metric tonne in October 2007 to US\$512 in January 2008, US\$760 in April 2008, and US\$1,000 in May 2008! These hikes are closely related to the rise of crude oil prices.

Are you aware that Malaysia has a stockpile of rice to last three months in place? This stockpile amounts to 92,000 metric tonnes kept by Bernas (Padiberas Nasional) – the nation's sole rice importer – and 464,933 metric tonnes in trading stock, kept with suppliers, wholesalers and retailers.

Local rice production currently meets 70% of consumption, with the balance imported

mainly from Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and India. The Government aims to increase this rice self-sufficiency ratio to exceed 80% (this will surpass the original target of 75% set by the Ninth Malaysia Plan).

Rice consumption per capita among Malaysians shrank from 123kg in 1970-72 to 88kg in 1999-2001, and to 82kg in 2006-07. This is still considerably more than other advanced Asian nations including Japan, Korea and Taiwan that consume on average, 50-60kg rice per capita.

Recently, rice prices have risen drastically when compared to other food staples including corn, wheat and soybean, which unfortunately means that Asians will be among those most affected. Malaysians must be extra mindful to not waste food, water and electricity, and should opt for cheaper generic brands of rice.

It is worth noting, that rice is a poor energy source when compared to other starches like potato, yam, pasta and bread. Perhaps it's time to re-examine our eating habits rather than to fret at the recent increases.

Rice grades

Rice prices are currently controlled by the Government according to different grades:

| | |
|---------|---|
| ST 15% | rice with 15% broken grains retails at RM1.65 per kg. |
| SST 10% | rice with 10% broken grains retails at RM2.70 per kg. |
| SST 5% | rice with 5% broken grains retails at RM2.80 per kg. |

ST- Special Tempatan | SST - Super Special Tempatan



Welcome

Prof D.D. Kaushik!

Prof Dhurendra Dutt Kaushik recently joined WOU's School of Business and Administration, bringing with him 25 years of law experience.

Prof Kaushik is the course coordinator for Business Law, a subject the university offers to students pursuing any of the six undergraduate programmes at the SBA.

Prof Kaushik, a distinguished Indian academic, started teaching law at Meerut University – renamed Chaudhary Charan Singh University. He taught both undergraduate and postgraduate students, and five students under his supervision were awarded Doctorate in Law (LL.D.).

He subsequently took up position as Director of the Institute of Company Secretaries in New Delhi, remaining there for over seven years. His next tour of duty was as Pro Vice Chancellor of BBD (Babu Banarasi Das) University in Delhi.

Highly experienced in the field of law, both under the conventional as well as distance learning mode, Prof Kaushik was Professor at the HR Institute of Professional Management, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, prior to joining WOU.

He is the author of the book, *Corporate Governance-Model Formats, 2003* which was published by the Institute of Company Secretaries. His articles have appeared in several prestigious journals and he was a contributor to the *Commonwealth Legal Education seminar* in Hong Kong.

Prof Kaushik was the Convener of Research Degree Committee and Chairman of the Board of Studies in Law at Meerut University, and a member of the Board of Studies and Research Degree Committees of various universities in India.

SBA gets the ball rolling!

WOU's inaugural Staff Seminar series kicked off on 27 May with a talk on *Rice Shortage, Subsidies and the Effects*, by Au Yong Hui Nee, course coordinator for *Logistics and Supply Chain Management/Economics* from the School of Business and Administration.

The turnout for the talk was certainly encouraging, with over 30 staff members in attendance. After delivering her presentation, Au Yong took plenty of questions from the floor, which contributed to the lively and informal atmosphere.

The Staff Seminar series was initiated to share information and provide a platform to discuss current topics among WOU staff. Here's to the next seminar!





WOU Student Ambassadors go all out!

Motivated by a common drive and passion for helping others to help themselves, WOU student ambassadors Chong Wan Siang and Ravichandran Jeyacelan decided to reach out and persuade their family and friends to study at the people's university.

For their sterling efforts, the duo had double the satisfaction of seeing their loved ones take up the challenge of tertiary education and emerging as winners of the ODL excursion to Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) in Bangkok in July.

"I try to encourage friends and family to take up a degree at WOU because the programmes offered are flexible and affordable so there's no excuse for anyone to say they have no time or money to study!" said Chong, a 38-year-old mother of four.

Chong is now into her third semester of a *Bachelor of Business in Accounting*. To date, she has introduced 16 new students to WOU, including her husband – studying together certainly sounds like the secret to a happy marriage!

What's the secret to this lady's impressive marketing efforts? Simply sending as many text messages as possible to her friends telling them, "Your future is in your hands, why not give WOU a try!" Short, simple and hugely effective!

In addition, Chong keeps stacks of WOU brochures in her office in Seremban, "They come in handy when customers walk in as it has become a sort of habit to pass the brochures to all who drop by."

For *Bachelor of Technology in Electronics* student Ravichandran, studying at WOU has taken on a 'family affair' flavour, as three of his younger brothers are currently taking degree programmes at WOU.

"I like to share my experiences and it is more fun studying together with people close to my heart," he said.

He has so far introduced 12 students who have enrolled, with the majority being his Infineon Technologies colleagues; a semiconductor manufacturing firm in Melaka.



WOU welcomes the New SBA Dean

Dr Chee Kim Loy, 64, joined the School of Business and Administration as the new dean on 28 July 2008.

Prior to joining WOU he was Professor in the Department of Public Policy and Administration, Faculty of Business Economics and Policy Studies, University of Brunei Darussalam. He was also Head of Strategic Management Office, Chancellery, University of Brunei Darussalam, in addition to Programme Manager/Principal Trainer of the Executive Development Programme for senior government officers and of the Development Programme for government middle management officers.

Dr Chee's own academic background includes a BSc (Hons) in Mathematics, Universiti Malaya, an MSc in Statistics from the University of Iowa, US, and an MA and PhD in Sociology, both from the University of Michigan, US.

For over 12 years, Dr Chee has taught courses in *E-Government Policies and Practices, Management Information Systems, Business Research Methods, Advanced Research Methodology, Strategic Management, and Development Policy and Management* to undergraduates and Masters students at the University of Brunei Darussalam .

He has done extensive consultancy work on a national and regional level, including stints with the ASEAN Secretariat in Jakarta on information system plans for regional data systems in the ASEAN region. Dr Chee was also principal researcher and consultant to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Bangkok, in a regional study on informational systems for social development in Pacific Region from 1998-99.

He was an honorary consultant to the Penang State Government and undertook a study of the Rent Control Act for Penang in 1998. The following year he reviewed the 10-year strategic planning for Penang (2001-2010).

His consultancy work in strategic planning and management has seen him advise various government ministries and departments in Brunei, notably the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, Royal Brunei Police Force, and Sultan's Foundation. During his time in Brunei, he produced the first National Labour Force survey in 1995. He was also advisor and consultant to Brunei's 2001 Population Census Report.

He designed, managed and conducted executive development training for senior government officers from Brunei and ASEAN (CLMV-Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) for 12 years, from 1996 to 2007.



WOU's First 'Get-to-know-you' Night

The night definitely created some memorable moments for the 80 students, tutors and staff who recently attended WOU's 'Get-to-know-you' night! The gathering was the brainchild of the Penang Student Association Chairman, Calvin Yeoh.

"We like studying here as there is a mix of students from different backgrounds. As we share and discuss topics together, studying is more enjoyable and not as stressful as we initially thought it would be," Yeoh said in his opening speech.

The emcee for the occasion, Khor Boh Ling, dished out some heartfelt advice addressing issues faced by ODL students. "We understand you. You come home, exhausted from work. You want to study, but you're still struggling to get used to the learning mode and the technology involved. That is why it is important to have study groups – interacting with fellow students whom you can rely on for help."

PGRO director, Manoharan, in his speech, noted, "Despite the fact that we operate on an Open Distance Learning platform, your presence here tonight proves that WOU students are not studying alone."

After the speeches, the participants challenged each other in a series of fun games that encouraged teamwork and unity. The participants later helped themselves to a sumptuous buffet spread in the cafeteria.

A lucky draw added to the festivity of the event, and participants cheered as 32 prizes sponsored by Vice Chancellor, Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) Prof Wong, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Operations) Dr Seah, Penang Student Council advisor and PGRO director Manoharan, PGRO representative Teh Kim Kow, and the organiser, were given out.

The 'Get-to-know-you' night was the third 'get-together' organised by the WOU Penang Student Association, following a fun hike up

Penang Hill and an interesting line dancing session at WOU headquarters.



UPCOMING EVENTS

KOMAS Freedom Film Festival 2008

Date : 26 - 28 September 2008

Venue : Wawasan Open University main campus, Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, Penang

The KOMAS Freedom Film Festival (FFF) screenings will offer members of the public a rare opportunity to view outstanding films and documentaries focusing on social issues including HIV/AIDS, human rights, poverty and the environment. The FFF will also showcase alternative films which are not publicised by the mainstream media and are out of the reach of most Malaysians due to a lack of commercial backing.

Check out the website for further details.

Exhibitions/Fairs

The regional offices will be holding a series of roadshows to prepare for WOU's fifth semester that is set to commence in January 2009.

Napei Education Fair

Date : 6 - 7 December 2008

Venue : Persada Johor International Convention Centre, Johor Bahru

Facon Education Fair

Date : 6 - 7 December 2008

Venue : Putra World Trade Centre, Kuala Lumpur

Date : 12 December 2008

Venue : Legacy Hotel, Melaka

Date : 14 December 2008

Venue : Hyatt Regency Johor Bahru

The 25th Malaysian Education Fair

Date : 13 - 14 December 2008

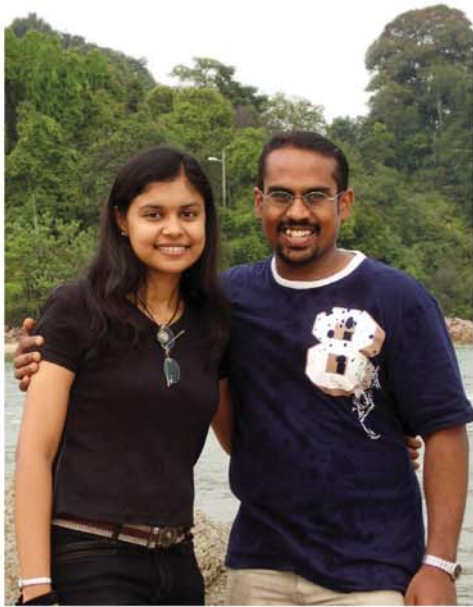
Venue : Mid Valley Exhibition Centre, Kuala Lumpur

Final Examinations

The final examinations for the July semester will be held over two weeks from 1 December (Monday) to 14 December (Sunday) 2008, after which is the semester break till 18 January 2009.



Banking on WOU



The year was 1995. Having completed his SPM examinations, a young and fresh Augustine Selvam Anthonysamy applied and to his joy, received an offer to work in a bank. Grateful for the job, Augustine worked hard and remained in the banking industry for 13 years, not anticipating that he would one day become a student all over again.

For Augustine, now aged 31, the road has been difficult, especially after his father passed away while he was still schooling. "I saw how tough it was for my mother to single-handedly raise my sister and me. It was then that I decided to start working after my SPM," he mused, "I just felt it was my duty to support the family because I didn't want to burden them."

"I remember being playful back in school. I preferred hanging out with my friends to studying. School was just a passing phase for

me, and I took my studies for granted," he reflected. Although Augustine passed his SPM, he was disappointed with his average grades. It was his determination to do better the 'second time around' and to bury the ghosts of his past that spurred him on to sign up at WOU.

Now in his second year of a Bachelor of Business in Banking and Finance degree, Augustine is a changed man and a two-time recipient of WOU merit scholarships, thanks to his excellent grades.

He credits his wife for his success and pays tribute to her gentle prodding and guidance along the way. "My wife never fails to check on whether I have done my revision or not. I must say she is the main reason I am doing well in this programme. When you work and study at the same time, good time management and discipline is important but what counts most, is support and encouragement from your loved ones," he said.

Married for two years to Melissa Magdalene, they recently welcomed the arrival of their first baby, Abigail Agnes. "I always felt incomplete without a degree. Now that I'm on my way to one, I am also thankful that my new baby completes my family!"

Constructing a path to success

Jeffery Koay is a busy man these days. As if working in the construction industry was not challenging enough, the project manager is also pursuing his Bachelor of Business in Logistics and Supply Chain Management (Hons) at WOU.

With a full time job and other commitments, Jeffery often finds himself drawing on his strength and determination to achieve that delicate balance between work, studies and his personal life.

"It can be overwhelming at times," said Jeffery, 29, but he is taking it all in his stride. "Commitments? Of course everyone has obligations and responsibilities to fulfil, but we should not see them as obstacles to education," he added.

In the midst of all the frenzy at work, the industrious man with business interests in four companies is not complaining. Instead, he is glad that what he has learned thus far is relevant to his profession.

"I took University Mathematics last semester and found that I could apply the theories to my job. It was a good surprise!" he quipped.

For Jeffery, the three semesters since January 2007 at WOU have been a holistic and enriching educational experience.

"The best part of studying at WOU is getting to know these different people coming from diverse industries and backgrounds, and sharing our knowledge and expertise together. It's really helpful because you not only benefit academically from the programme, but at the same time broaden your perspective on so many things as well," said Jeffery.

Although his two brothers and sister have all graduated, Jeffery explained that sibling rivalry had nothing to do with his pursuit of a degree. Rather, being "the only one left" as he put it, Jeffery seized the opportunity when a friend told him about the unique concept of open and distance learning (ODL) at WOU.

"I just wanted to give myself a chance to accelerate my learning curve, and the ODL model

attracted me. With ODL, I can still concentrate on my career and graduate with a degree in the future."

"I like it. The whole concept suits my lifestyle; it gives me flexibility and most of all, freedom!"



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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