

## PAN conference a success!



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## WOU & IDRC host 3rd PAN All Partners Conference

**Over 180 research partners from more than 30 countries descended on WOU's main campus from 11-14 June for a conference themed *Networking to Build Equitable Information Societies in Asia*.**

This international conference was organised and sponsored by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), in partnership with WOU. Participants comprised project leaders, representatives from Pan Asia Networking (PAN) research networks, global researchers in ICT, key regional practitioners and researchers, evaluators, donors, and staff from IDRC.

A welcome reception and launch of the fourth edition of the book, *Digital Review of Asia Pacific*

2009-2010, took place at Evergreen Laurel Hotel Penang on the first day, with the former head of MIMOS Bhd, Tengku Datuk Dr Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen, and Dr Michael Clarke, Director, ICT4D and Research on Health Equity, IDRC jointly officiating.

WOU's Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan and Prof Ng Wai Kong were among the contributors to this comprehensive guide on the state-of-practice and trends in information and communications technologies for development (ICTD) in the Asia Pacific region.

Other dignitaries at the launch included Canadian High Commissioner to Malaysia, His Excellency, David Collins; IDRC's Southeast and East Asia Regional Director, Richard Fuchs; and PAN Asia Networking Programme Leader, Laurent Elder.



# Welcome to the Ninth issue of our quarterly newsletter

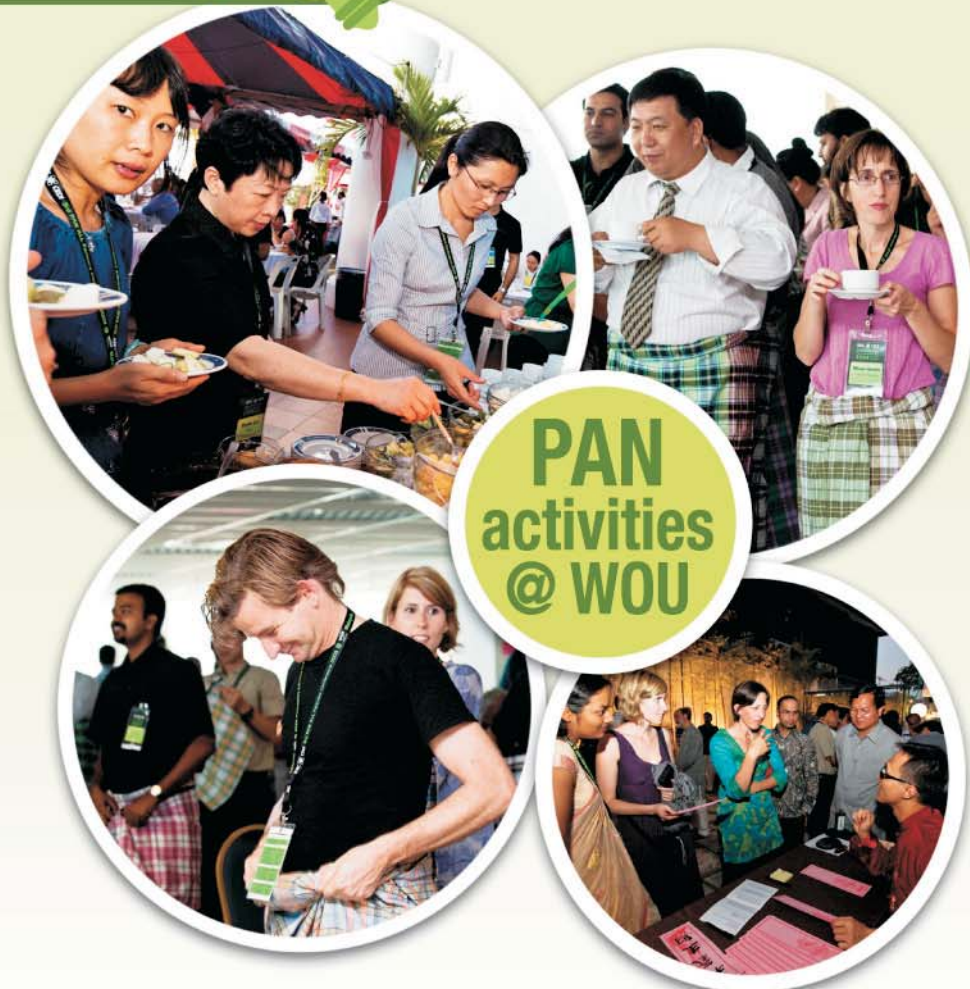
Those of you who visited the WOU main campus in mid June would not have failed to notice a whole lot of activity and hustle and bustle going on! In addition to the usual end of semester examinations taking place, WOU also played host to a major international conference (see the main story).

The conference sponsored by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), in partnership with WOU, comprised mainly researchers and resource persons linked to IDRC's Pan Asia Networking (PAN) Programme, who gathered to discuss how Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have helped solve some of Asia's development problems.

Many issues were especially relevant to WOU and how we continue to deliver quality education through appropriate technologies. As we strive to build equitable societies in Asia and keep pace with the global advancement of information and communication technologies, we need to always consider our students' ability to accept and embrace ICTs into their lives.

If these new technologies are to be relevant, we must acknowledge the complexities involved when introducing them to those not yet culturally or economically prepared. Having said that I am very optimistic that WOU students will find our new online *MyEnrolment* facility a real time-saver (see page 10), especially as so many of you have heavy work and personal commitments.

Finally, I would like to record my appreciation to all WOU staff for a job well done. Pulling off a large scale conference is no easy matter, and the efficiency and patience with which you got the job done was evident to all the participants. Thank you for being the perfect ambassadors for WOU!



## PAN activities @ WOU

**The three-day conference turned WOU into a hive of activity with capacity building exercises, skills training workshops and networking interactions taking place throughout the main campus.**

A hilarious *Change Talk Show* hosted by Dr Michael Clarke came complete with an 'applause' cue card for the audience and 'commercial breaks' for the organisers to hard sell upcoming conference activities. In this informal setting, guests – Angelo Ramos and Alvin Marcelo of the Philippines, and Helani Galpaya of Sri Lanka – chatted about projects implemented with IDRC funding and the benefits to the target community.

The second day saw the delegates cram in close to 16 learning clinics moderated by several IDRC personnel on various social/ICT related topics. The final day of the conference involved two major talks on *Catalysing the impact of ICTs for development* and *The Great Mobile Debate* – about how mobile phones can transform ICT in developing countries.

In true WOU spirit, the University arranged for some 'educational entertainment' with participants taught how to joget, tie a sarong and make teh tarik! They were also hosted to dinner at the Dr Sun Yat-Sen Memorial Centre and taken on a GPS scavenger hunt around George Town's heritage area. A seafood barbecue on WOU's main campus grounds provided a fitting finale to the intensive conference.

## Correction

Dr Barry Tan was previously Managing Director of International Research Support Services, and Chief Executive Officer of IOI Oleochemical Industries Bhd (formerly Palmco Holdings Bhd) and not Chief Executive Officer of IOI as previously stated in WawasanLink 8.

## Editorial Board

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in the limelight

# Post@Postcard Contest winners!

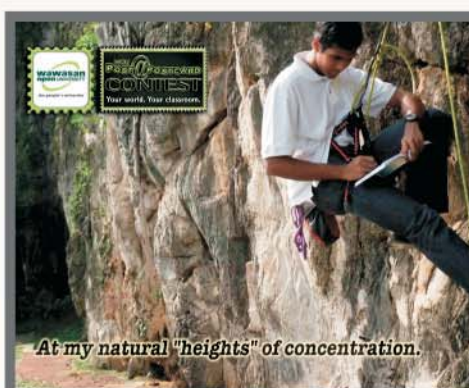
After an overwhelming response from the public and months of voting, here are the winners of WOU's Post@Postcard Contest! When it comes to explaining the concept of open distance learning – these pictures really speak a thousand words. Congratulations to all those who took part!



First Prize **Kim Hui Yu**



Second Prize **Lee Kam Mooi**



Third Prize **Kevin Lee**



Special Prize **Beh Phaik In**

Consolation Prizes:

Wong Kae Lynn  
Yong Kuan Yew  
Patmanathan Arumugam  
Sharifah Nawwar Ilyiana bt Syed Unan Mashri  
Muhamad Anuar Ridzuan Azman

Ho Suet Lee  
Apple Ko Wai Sze  
Mohd Fathuddin Hakim b Johari  
Pang Hooi Fung  
Tjoa Hooi Leng





# WOU congratulates its **NEW PROFESSORS!**

**Some 40 colleagues celebrated the professorial conferment of two senior academics of Wawasan Open University at a simple tea ceremony held in their honour at Homestead on 22 May.**

The deans, **Dr Mogana Dhamotharan** (*School of Foundation and Liberal Studies*) and **Dr Chee Kim Loy** (*School of Business and Administration*), were conferred *Professor of the University* for their long years of distinguished contribution and services to academia.

The WOU Council—the executive body responsible for overall management—had approved the bestowing of the highest academic rank of the university on the two associate professors during its meeting on 16 May.

During a brief but historic ceremony, Dr Mogana and Dr Chee were presented by Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) Prof Wong Tat Meng to Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan for their professorship conferment. Both Dr Mogana and Dr Chee then received a scroll from the Vice Chancellor to mark the occasion. The event was attended by the deputy vice chancellors, deans, academics and heads of departments.

Dr Chee, 65, was a Professor at Universiti Brunei Darussalam where for over 12 years he taught on e-government policies and practices, management information systems, business research method, and other subjects related to strategic management and policy.

He has a PhD and MA in Sociology from University of Michigan, an MSc in Statistics from University of Iowa, and a BSc (Hons) in Mathematics from Universiti Malaya.

Dr Chee joined WOU as dean of SBA on 28 July 2008 while Dr Mogana joined a few months later as dean of SFLS on 8 September 2008.

Dr Mogana, 59, comes with over 30 years experience in open distance learning after having started in ODL back in the 1970s while undertaking her Master's.

She holds a PhD in Distance Education from the University of Glasgow; two Master of Education degrees from Universiti Malaya and University of Wales, UK; and a Bachelor of Journalism and Bachelor of Arts in English (Hons) from University of Panjab, India.

Dr Mogana has previously served as Associate Professor at Universiti Brunei Darussalam and Universiti Malaya.



# Artists in residence

Penangites were recently treated to the fifth instalment of the *RBS-Malihom Artist in Residence ("AiR") Programme* in June, with works from Canadian artist Drew Harris and Cecilia Ramirez Corzo Robledo from Mexico.



in the know

The AiR Programme is administratively supported by WOU. For further details, visit [www.malihom-air.org](http://www.malihom-air.org)



## Be an Artist through Give+

**Give+** is an innovative project that uniquely combines the use of Web 2.0, Internet, tangible art objects and delivery to discover the unexpected among the topics, responses, destinations, occupations, human interaction and motivation behind each participant's experience through the project.

Participation is via Facebook, a free online social networking platform, and is open to anyone who wants to be an artist.

Here are six easy steps to participate:

1. Sign up for a Facebook account. Using the site's search function, find Give+ Project and join the group.
2. Get an idea or subject to paint from someone (receiver).
3. Using any type of media or material, complete the artwork in one day or a week.
4. Give your work to the receiver, who will give it

to a third person.

5. Exhibit your work on Facebook.

6. Anyone is welcome to leave comments.

While the tangible creation is given away as a gift, a picture of the work will be exhibited on Facebook and remains intangible, allowing anyone to leave comments about the painting.

This project is initiated by Sue-ching You, an artist from Taiwan currently attached with the *RBS-Malihom Artist in Residence Programme* of Wawasan Open University. Visit her blog at <http://suechingyou.blogspot.com/>



**PENANG** – The Penang Regional Office chalked up a new record, registering the highest ever number of new students on a single day, during the Open Day organised at the main campus. In total, 40 new students signed up – 32 for Bachelor's programmes and eight for the CemBA programme – for the July semester. This record enrolment was accomplished despite the heavy rain that poured down!

**IPOH** – The Open Day in the silver state resulted in the registration of 16 new students. Among the team in Ipoh were Director of Regional Operations, Chong Kong Hoong, and new Kuching RO Director, Jimmy Chai.



**Kuala Lumpur** – Not to be outdone, the KLRO registered a total of 24 students, a vast improvement on the first Open Day held last year. Perhaps **Deputy Vice Chancellor (Strategy, Planning and Continuing Education)** Unni Kumaran Menon's generous contribution of nasi briyani was the extra 'motivating' factor!

## Open Day successes across Malaysia

**Bandar Utama** – With the IPRO and BURSO (Bandar Utama Regional Support Office) having their Open Day on the same day, both ROs went all out in a friendly 'competition'! Text updates were continuously provided, courtesy of Chong Kong Hoong, who had blisters to show for it! At the end of the day BURSO registered 17 new students.





## NEW LOOK for Penang Regional Office

**The Penang Regional Office is sporting an improved look when renovation works inside the Behn Meyer building were completed on 28 May.**

WOU Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan was at the regional office on 13 May for a first-hand look at the progress of the renovations. Work started early May to construct a staircase, set up workstations, and install partitions for a meeting room and discussion areas.

He was accompanied on his site visit by PGRO director K. Manoharan who briefed him on the various aspects of the renovations and future arrangements of the regional office setup.

The new look will see staff occupying the current vacant first floor of the building after contractors put the finishing touches on the refurbishments. A spacious area has also been designated to serve as a one-stop centre for distribution of course materials to students beginning from the July semester.

Meanwhile the ground floor will house the director's office, reception and counselling areas, and a fee collection centre. Manoharan believes the refurbished regional centre will enable his team to provide better services to students in a more conducive and friendly environment.

Echoing the same sentiment, Tan Sri Raj said: "The Penang regional centre is a premier learning centre for WOU. As a model centre, we would like to see it being developed in a manner that reflects the University's priority in providing good services for our students."

# WOU spreads its wings to East Malaysia



**Wawasan Open University is a step closer to its vision of making its presence felt in every corner of the nation with the opening of a regional office – its seventh – in Kuching, Sarawak in September this year.**

The office located along busy Jalan Tun Jugah will be in the prime business area of Kuching City, offering close proximity to both medium and high-class housing estates and to business centres.

The Kuching Regional Office is expected to be fully operational by September with five full-time staff, including director Jimmy Chai, and supported by a panel of independent tutors.

The building occupying more than 2,000 sq ft promises to be the nerve centre for the promotion and delivery of WOU programmes through the open distance learning (ODL) package in Sarawak. It will be equipped with student support facilities such as open access computers, resource centre, counselling area and video conferencing facility.

WOU aims to provide education opportunities to many of the 500,000 working adults in Kuching who wish to pursue higher education and lifelong learning, either for self improvement or career enhancement without having to give up their full-time jobs.

"It will be a challenge for us as there are already about 10 private and public universities or colleges in the area which cater to adult learners or offer distance learning programmes," quipped Chai.

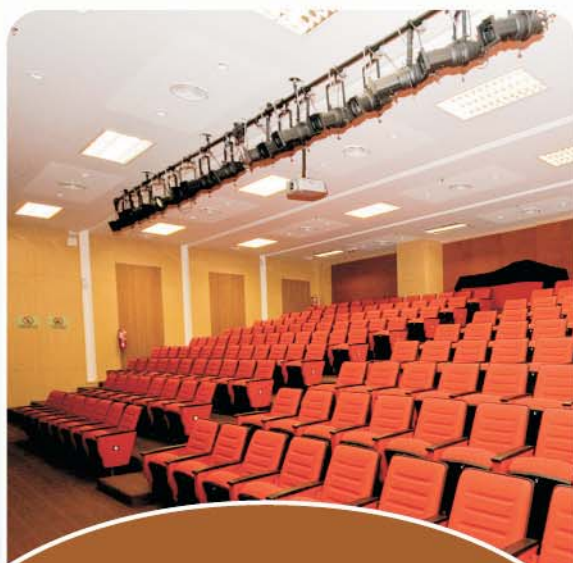
He however added that the flexible, affordable and accessible model of the University which allows "working adults to study at their own pace without quitting current employment will differentiate WOU from others in the adult-learners market."

The regional office hopes to promote the University's programmes from August onwards through billboards, banners, roadshows, advertisements and an Open Day.





# WOU event venue with a DIFFERENCE



Please visit

<http://wou.edu.my/Document/WOUFacilities.pdf>  
for details on the facilities and rates. For booking enquiries, contact the university's General Services and Administration department at 04 228 9323 ext 300/323/318/316 or email [eventbooking@wou.edu.my](mailto:eventbooking@wou.edu.my).

Wawasan Open University is offering organisers the privilege of holding functions at any of the nine venues in the **Homestead** Heritage Mansion and the 12-storey **Albukhary Building**, also referred to as the Tower, at competitive rental rates. The blend of old-world charm epitomised by the 20th century Mansion and contemporary architecture reflected in the glass facade Tower is sure to turn any event into a truly memorable experience for guests.

WOU's fully equipped state-of-the-art **Theatres** on the fifth floor of the Tower can hold up to 400 people and are suitable for arts performances, concerts, movie screenings, seminars and symposiums. The spacious **Exhibition Foyer** just outside the theatres is perfect as a gallery to showcase anything from arts to artefacts and offers a picturesque panorama of the sea.

The **Open Garden Terrace** on Level 5, with a spectacular view of the Straits, provides an idyllic backdrop for cocktail parties and open-air socials. Guests can enjoy outdoor and indoor dining at the seafront **Café Alfresco** on the ground floor, while the adjacent **Function Room** is suitable for tea parties, gatherings or as a holding room for special guests.

There are a total of 17 **Seminar Rooms** on Level 2 of the Albukhary Building, equipped with audio-visual facilities, to hold trainings, presentations and workshops. Varying in size, these rooms can accommodate up to 80 participants.

Meanwhile in the Homestead Heritage Mansion, the tastefully furnished **Loft** located upstairs is just right for a stylish party. On the ground floor, the **Galleria** lends a touch of elegance to exhibitions and product launches, while the Italian-inspired **Hall** is an ideal rendezvous for fine-dining.

Interested parties should not miss out on the opportunity to hold their events at the University. At reasonably priced rental charges, the venues are available for daytime and evening use throughout the year.



Seminar Room



Café Alfresco



The Loft



The Hall

## WOU conducts fire drill at Main Campus

Some 150 staff, workers and students at Wawasan Open University's main campus had to 'scamper' to safety during a full-scale evacuation for a fire drill exercise carried out on 21 May.

To add a touch of realism to the exercise, a total of 15 Fire and Rescue personnel and three fire engines from the Perak Road, Beach Street and the Bagan Jermal Fire and Rescue Departments took part in the exercise. The Police and the Malaysian Red Crescent Society were also at hand to help control traffic and render 'assistance'.

Most of the occupants of the Homestead Mansion and the 12-storey Albukhary Building managed to 'escape' on their own. However the firemen had to assist four 'victims' trapped by smoke on Level 5, relying on their skills training and employing the sky-lift to bring the 'victims' to safety.

The elaborate fire drill was the culmination of a week-long inaugural WOU Safety Week, launched by Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan on 14 May.







# Commonwealth Education Ministers gather in KL

The 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (17CCEM) took place from 15-19 June in Kuala Lumpur with the theme for this year's 50th anniversary conference—*Education in the Commonwealth: Towards and Beyond Global Goals and Targets*.

The Commonwealth Education Ministers and a diverse range of educational stakeholders including senior officials, and representatives from national and international agencies, academics, teachers, NGOs, youth and the private sector meet at this key event every three years to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest, share ideas, and challenges and identify future goals and directions.

The 17CCEM held at the KLCC was jointly organised by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia and the Commonwealth Secretariat.



## Education in the Commonwealth: towards and beyond global goals and targets

By Tan Sri Emeritus Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Vice Chancellor, Wawasan Open University, Penang, Malaysia, on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretariat for the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers.

### Executive Summary

#### Introduction

1. Commonwealth Co-operation in Education, after 50 years, has much to celebrate.
2. With impressive past achievements, the 17th conference – *'Towards and beyond global goals and targets'* must make a realistic appraisal of where Commonwealth nations are in terms of the Education for All (EFA) goals and what needs to be accomplished before and beyond 2015. The challenges these nations confront will include both unfinished business and new ones. The unfinished business will include:
  - Reaching some 27 million of Commonwealth children who are still not in school.
  - Eliminating [gender] disparities where progress is still slow.
  - Improving the quality of education on qualitative aspects where good data is not sufficiently available and needs to be gathered.
  - Mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS on education where some 60% of HIV sufferers are still from the Commonwealth.
3. Adding to the above list of unfinished business, is the additional demand on Ministries of Education to make:
  - Educational provisions from early childhood to postgraduate studies inclusive, both as a necessary good thing as well as responding to the broader goals of the EFA.
  - Continuing and lifelong education including addressing the needs of the marginalised communities as a social and economic necessity.
  - Addressing concerns relating to underachievement that is gender centric and underperformance relating to completion rates, urgently.

- Improving the quality and professionalism of the teacher workforce.
- Expanding access to skills training and higher education.

4. This conference therefore will consider as part of its agenda the following:

- Educational provisions and services in a fast changing environment.
- Education as an interdependent continuum from early childhood through primary, secondary, post-secondary and lifelong learning.
- The creation and preservation of quality in education.
- Sharing the lessons that Commonwealth nations have learnt.
- The application of ICTs to further improve access and quality.
- The financing of education especially at the basic level. Educational provisions and services in a fast changing environment.

#### Global Changes and Challenges

5. In considering the above six issues, the Conference may wish to take note of the global changes of significance which in one way or another will continue to impact on education as they have done over the past decade. They are:
  - The recognition that education is a fundamental tool for self-improvement and national development and a basic right for citizens to claim.
  - The amazing transformation of social and economic lives of individuals with the arrival of new technologies and the solutions they provide to support expansion of access and removal of barriers to learning, and opportunities to improve the quality of curriculum exponentially.





- The global nature of economic competitiveness where businesses and governments are asking themselves what they must do to achieve and maintain competitive advantage over their rivals.
- Economic liberalism which is making many nation states liberalise a whole range of services including education. The deregulation of educational systems at all levels is making educational institutions competitors for market share.
- Rising expectations of learners to have a say in what, how and where learning can and should take place or happen, especially if they have to pay for it.
- The effects of globalisation on the economies of the world and the well-being of the world's peoples; about the complexities and influences of cultures and religions, and the differing if not conflicting perspectives of our neighbours and friends, the unknown dangers of climate change as well as insecurities of food supply and economic volatility.

Education as an interdependent continuum from early childhood through primary, secondary, post-secondary and lifelong learning

6. The interconnectedness of the various sectors of learning is organic and requires careful management. Sound basic education leads to desirable entrants into post-basic education including secondary, tech-voc and higher education, all of which requires a rethinking of educational provisions such as:
  - Provisions for both early childhood education and adult literacy programmes as precursors for the early intellectual/cognitive development of the child and the continuing productive capacity of the adult respectively require serious attention.
  - Expanding the definition of Basic Education that normally stops at 6 years of schooling which is no longer seen as adequate. An increasingly complex and globalised world requires basic education to support citizens to meet the challenges of that complexity.
  - Universal secondary education is fast being recognised as a necessary condition for the enhancement of economies for personal and national well-being.
  - Increasing access to and provision for Technical and Vocational Education in the context of improving the supply of a technically-trained workforce to support economic and social development.
  - The continuing and necessary role of higher education, for sound national development, even as the sector gets challenged by:
    - Information explosion.
    - Technology explosion.
    - University system deregulation.
    - Market-driven globalisation.
    - Global distance learning.
    - The increasing presence of bogus universities.

The creation and preservation of quality in education requires a broader vision of quality

7. While proxies such as pupil/teacher ratio, teacher training, absenteeism and financial expenditure have been helpful indicators, quality considerations must go beyond these proxies. Data on the assessment of quality must take into account:

- Evaluations of learning achievements.
- Improved proficiency in cognitive skills.
- Higher scores in assessments.
- Improved completion rates.
- System accountabilities.
- Incentives to motivate learners, teachers and schools.

At the heart of any improvement of quality consideration is the quality of teachers, their recruitment, deployment, retention and professionalism. These must be addressed with increased seriousness. Quality in post-secondary education is also coming under close scrutiny – a reassessment of the measurement of quality in this sector needs addressing for the development of a vibrant and responsive post-secondary sector. Current popular practices have a limited value but are seen to be an inadequate measurement of actual outcomes and impact.

Sharing the lessons that Commonwealth nations have learnt

8. Commonwealth countries will continue to progress towards achieving the targets of EFA by 2015 or at least at some future date. To get there especially with inclusiveness as an important agenda, requires strategies to be adopted to fill the gaps in the present provision. Of the many strategies available, eight fits well as a basis for Commonwealth cooperation. They are:
  - Expanding the scope of EFA beyond Universal Primary Education (UPE) through sharing of strategies and experience.
  - Problems relating to gender parity.
  - Further studies relating to underachievement as well as underperformance.
  - Access to underserved groups.
  - Completion rates.
  - Secondary, Technical – Vocational and Higher education.
  - Training and retraining teachers.

Financing

9. There is fear that educational budgets will diminish in the global economic climate where many other needs are also chasing after shrinking resources. Ministers and international development partners must be urged to make every effort to maintain and increase budgets for education. This would mean:
  - Moving towards a 15-20% availability of national wealth to be invested in education.
  - Keeping the momentum and achieving better delivery of the Fast Track Initiative (FTI) and related provisions.
  - Mobilising increased international support for other [especially secondary and post-secondary] sectors.
  - Reducing household costs to learning beyond primary education, in order to get more children into secondary schools and beyond.

*This paper is available in its entirety at*  
[http://www.17ccem.com/02\\_minisemeeting\\_execsummary.html](http://www.17ccem.com/02_minisemeeting_execsummary.html)



## No boundaries

### The Commonwealth 60 years on

Of all the world's geopolitical and socioeconomic alliances – think G7, European Union, APEC, NAFTA – the Commonwealth stands out as a unique gathering of nations, one that bridges political, economic and geographical boundaries to work towards shared goals in democracy and development.

This voluntary association of 53 countries (the majority were formerly part of the British Empire) brings together the world's largest and smallest,

richest and poorest countries – overcoming the North-South divide. Despite its relative low-key media approach, the Commonwealth is an effective association and is home to two billion citizens of a multitude of faiths and ethnicities – over half of whom are 25 or under.

There are three intergovernmental organisations in the association: the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth of Learning.

Beyond the ties of history, language and institutions, it is the association's values that unite its members – democracy, freedom, peace, the rule of law and opportunity for all. Commonwealth countries work together in a spirit of co-operation, partnership and understanding to reach consensus.

For more information, visit  
[www.thecommonwealth.org](http://www.thecommonwealth.org)





## WOU laureate

Teaching comes from the heart;  
Education comes from the mind;  
Analysis comes from the brains;  
Caring is from the soul.  
Heart and soul maketh the teacher;  
End product is always the student;  
Remember the lives you touch.



The talented Prakash (School of Business and Administration) aka *Candle in the Wind* used the letters of the word Teacher in his poem to win first prize!

## Academics on the loose!

The *School of Foundation and Liberal Studies* paid tribute to deans and lecturers at WOU during the Teacher's Day celebrations held at the main campus recently.

The celebration organised by the school comprised of a two-hour interactive session that was kick-started by SFLS course coordinator Jasmine Emmanuel who shared the need for teachers to 'reflect' on their work from a new perspective, lest they repeat the same things semester after semester out of boredom and burnout.

For the Reflection exercise, the academics who attended the event were divided into small groups to discuss the metaphor that best described them as an ODL course coordinator/writer. The various reflections proved to be eye-openers!

Leading the pack was Dr Mogana who described herself as an exquisite fragrance as she wanted to leave something sweet behind. Dr Chee Kim Loy called himself a pathfinder as there are many ways to deliver ODL courses; while Dr Edwin an RPG (role-playing gamer) as the system allows many entrances and exits; and finally Dr Ho Sinn Chye described himself as a flashing beacon, giving directions for people to follow.

Other metaphors chosen by the academics included *Candle in the Wind* (Prakash), octopus (Lilian), problem-solver (Teoh Ai Ping), gardener (Deehba) and painter (Fakir). Read what you will into these descriptions!

Dr Edwin took charge of the quiz session and had the academics make as many words as possible from the word Education, create a greeting for Teacher's Day not exceeding 20 words, write a poem, and answer questions related to teaching.

Later WOU Vice Chancellor Tan Sri Emeritus Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan presented a one-page inspiring handout on *The Creation of the Course Coordinator*, adapted from a piece on Mothers, to everyone present.

## MyEnrolment for easy enrolment!

WOU's new online enrolment system kicks off.

Wawasan Open University kicked off its new online re-enrolment system *MyEnrolment*, which allows students the convenience of re-enrolling for courses with a credit card from any location with Internet connection.

The test launch was carried out in May with selected students registered through the Johor Bahru regional office. The success of the pilot scheme saw WOU extending *MyEnrolment* to all JBRO students and subsequently to students from Kuala Lumpur and Ipoh. From 20 June ALL WOU students will be able to access *MyEnrolment*.

"The pilot project was undertaken after much planning to test the efficiency of the system and rectify any issues before we implement it in full force across the country. Selected user-testers were selected from the WOU student population, the respective regional offices, as well as from the academic and operations departments here at the Main Campus," said project leader and Head of Finance, Chua Saw Nee.

Deputy Vice Chancellor (Operations) Dr Seah Soo Aun, advisor to the *MyEnrolment* project, encouraged students to try out the new system as "the process is simple and easy, and students no longer have to travel all the way to the ROs just to settle their payment."



## Multiple financing options for WOU students

To ease students' financial burdens, WOU has a range of financing options including the WEF Study Grant (see p11), the Chancellor's Merit Scholarship for outstanding students and now the introduction of interest-free payment for tuition fees.

Credit card holders of Hong Leong Bank and CIMB Bank will be able to enjoy interest-free settlement of their tuition fees via instalments spread over a few months under WOU's new

easy payment scheme introduced in June. Hong Leong Bank credit card holders can pay fees back in interest-free instalments over six months. This scheme is being offered to students for an unlimited period of time and students just need to register with their nearest RO.

Students with Visa, Master and Direct Access credit cards from CIMB Bank can enjoy interest-free repayments over 10 months. This scheme is valid

until 31 December 2009. The cardholder must go to the nearest RO to register and opt for the scheme, and also contact CIMB Bank customer service at 04-2407788/03 - 6204 7788.

Head of Finance Chua Saw Nee said this easy-payment scheme is "to provide a sort of financial aid to WOU students so that they do not have to worry of paying fees up front."





# Brothers united in their passion for CeMBA

Sibling rivalry takes on a whole new meaning in the Phoon household. Brothers Chee Wai and Chee Nouk are battling it out in their quest to obtain their Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration (CeMBA) degrees from WOU.



Older brother Chee Wai, 35, was the first to take up the MBA challenge in January 2008. Soon after, younger brother Chee Nouk, 25, followed suit and enrolled in the same programme.

A chemical engineer by training, Chee Wai believes that an MBA will equip him with the necessary tools to "survive in the ever-changing business environment." "An MBA opens up avenues towards acquiring a positive and strategic approach to every challenge in the world," he said.

Younger brother, Chee Nouk, 25, couldn't agree more. The technical sales engineer appreciates the value and prestige of a Master's degree, declaring, "An MBA will develop my analytical skills and help me gain the confidence of my colleagues." The key to his success is 'setting realistic milestones' for his work and studies, and completing these with enthusiasm.

Both brothers are now in their fourth semester of studies, and already they are bringing home good results as a testament of their keen pursuit of academic goals. There may be a 10-year age gap separating the brothers, but their shared vision to attain postgraduate qualifications at WOU has brought them even closer – a perfect example of distance learning bridging the age gap!

## WOU's financial aid spurs adult learners to take the plunge

Recently, a 24-year-old corporate buyer got the perfect educational boost with the award of a study grant from Wawasan Open University to ease her path towards tertiary qualifications. "I am really thankful for the Wawasan Education Foundation (WEF) Study Grant; without it I doubt whether I could have got started on my degree," said Thangahlethumi Dhatchanamurdhy.

Now approaching the end of the first semester of her Bachelor of Business in Logistics and Supply Chain Management (Honours) programme at WOU, she was quick to apply for the grant when she enrolled for three courses through the Penang RO. "The courses are practical and help me in my daily work routine, especially as I have to deal with many vendors to source for the best pricing in the market," she explained.

Despite the convenience of WOU's online study mode, Thangahlethumi still makes it a point to travel to the main campus library twice a week to meet up with her peers for their discussion group, which she believes helps them to motivate each other.



### WOU'S COMMITMENT TO LIFELONG EDUCATION

Despite the difficult economic climate, WOU remains as committed as ever to providing WEF Study Grants as an incentive for students to try-out the exciting Open Distance Learning (ODL) environment that allows them to work and study at the same time.

Applications for the grants are open to new students enrolling in the University's Headstart and 12 degree programmes.

Malaysian citizens with a gross personal monthly income of RM2,500 and below (if single), or a combined income of not more than RM3,500 per month (if married), are eligible to apply. Students with degree qualifications however do not qualify for the grant.





# WOU partners with Eden to help the disabled



## Eden Handicap Service Centre

Established in 1991, the non-profit organisation provides the disabled with free services, including care and training to allow them to lead self-sufficient lives. It currently has about 30 disabled adult trainees and 15 disabled children under its care.

Eden encourages their residents to work at the training hostel to prepare them for the job market, but sadly not many employers are enthusiastic about hiring the physically and mentally challenged.

Wawasan Open University has initiated a caring partnership with Eden Handicap Service Centre starting from May by engaging the services of the mentally challenged to paste labels and stuff WawasanLink newsletters into envelopes.

The enterprise is mutually beneficial as it frees up WOU staff from the task (especially since the mailing list has expanded tremendously!) while giving the disabled an opportunity to contribute and be productive members of society.

Eden administrator Terence Low thanked WOU for providing the disabled with the opportunity to carry out the work at the University from 26 - 29 May. Five trainees - David Yong, Lim Beng Huat, Yeoh Ling Kiang, Loo Sian Yi and Tan Jin Ching - from the Jalan Sir Hussain centre spent four days preparing 5,000 copies of WawasanLink for postage.

Tan, one of the trainees, found the job at WOU to be easy and comfortable compared to his previous work at a petrol station where he felt isolated and had to stand the whole day, while Yeoh enjoyed the air-conditioned environment unlike his past odd jobs sweating under the sun.

Terence added, "WOU has done well to help them as they attempt to lead independent and self-sufficient lives, and to become balanced individuals. In this way they feel dignified and this makes a difference in their lives."

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Making Dreams Come True Charity Concert

11 October 2009 (Sunday)

WOU Main Campus, Penang

Soroptimist International Penang, in collaboration with Dolci Voci and WOU, presents a musical evening in aid of the Pertubuhan Rumah Kebajikan Seri Cahaya Pulau Pinang building fund.

### Conference of the Birds

20 - 22 November 2009 (Friday - Sunday)

Lecture Theatre 1, WOU Main Campus, Penang

The opera by Five Arts Centre is a modern interpretation of a poem by a 12th century Persian poet which describes the search of a group of birds for a leader; an allegory of a Sufi sheikh or master leading his pupils to enlightenment.

The original score is written by Johan Othman, a lecturer from the School of Fine Arts, USM while

the young and talented Chee Sek Thim directs. The libretto is by esteemed scholar William Radice from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

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Call WOU CARELINE 1-300-888-WOU(968)

**Main Campus**  
**Wawasan Open University** (700364-W)  
54 Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, 10050 Penang, Malaysia.  
Tel: 04-227 3323 | Fax: 04-226 9323  
Email: [enquiry@wou.edu.my](mailto:enquiry@wou.edu.my)

**Regional Offices and Learning Centres**  
Open Tuesday to Sunday: 10.00am - 7.00pm

**Penang Regional Office**  
No. 7 China Street Ghaut, 10300 Penang.  
Tel: 04-263 3323 / 262 5359 | Fax: 04-262 3669  
Email: [ro\\_pg@wou.edu.my](mailto:ro_pg@wou.edu.my)

**Ipoh Regional Office**  
Wisma Gerakan, 80 Persiaran Greenhill, 30450 Ipoh, Perak.  
Tel: 05-242 6323 / 243 6323 | Fax: 05-254 9323  
Email: [ro\\_ip@wou.edu.my](mailto:ro_ip@wou.edu.my)

**Bandar Utama Regional Support Office**  
L2-6 & 7, Wisma BUB, 11, Lebun Bandar Utama,  
Bandar Utama, 47800 Petaling Jaya, Selangor.  
Tel: 03-7629 7223 / 03-7629 7123  
Fax: 03-7629 7023  
Email: [rso\\_bu@wou.edu.my](mailto:rso_bu@wou.edu.my)

**Kuala Lumpur Regional Office**  
Level 3 Menara PGRM, 8 Jalan Pudu Ulu,  
56100 Cheras, Kuala Lumpur.  
Tel: 03-9281 7323 / 9283 8323 | Fax: 03-9284 9323  
Email: [ro\\_kl@wou.edu.my](mailto:ro_kl@wou.edu.my)  
(Library Services available Tuesday to Sunday,  
10.00am-7.00pm)

**Johor Bahru Regional Office**  
17 & 19 Jalan Jaya 2, Taman Jaya, 81300 Skudai, Johor.  
Tel: 07-556 4323 / 556 6323 | Fax: 07-554 9323  
Email: [ro\\_jb@wou.edu.my](mailto:ro_jb@wou.edu.my)

**Kota Bharu Regional Office**  
3956 Tingkat Bawah, Wisma Gerakan,  
Jalan Temenggong, 15000 Kota Bharu, Kelantan.  
Tel: 09-748 7323 | Fax: 09-748 9323  
Email: [ro\\_kb@wou.edu.my](mailto:ro_kb@wou.edu.my)  
\*Open Monday-Saturday from 10.00am-7.00pm

**Kuching Regional Office**  
SL No.14, Ground & First Floor, Westin Avenue,  
Jalan Tun Jugah, 93350 Kuching, Sarawak.  
Email: [ro\\_kc@wou.edu.my](mailto:ro_kc@wou.edu.my)