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WOU offers dual mode learning led by veteran educators

Wawasan Open University presently operates as a dual mode learning university. It offers higher education opportunities to working professionals via Open Distance Learning (ODL), and also to the younger age group through On Campus Learning (OCL).

The University delivers ODL to adult learners, allowing them to study anywhere, anytime, on a part-time basis while they continue with their jobs. WOU also gives fresh school leavers and diploma holders the option to pursue full-time degree programmes at the main campus in Penang for better job prospects and career development.

To spearhead and ensure optimal delivery of its ODL and OCL programmes to its target audience, the University recently appointed two veteran educators as Deputy Vice Chancellors (Academic) to lead the 'charge'.

With broad vision and understanding of potential, Prof Mohandas Menon and Prof Madhulika Kaushik have been placed in charge of the OCL and

ODL programmes respectively.

Prof Menon shared his goal for the University: "Our OCL programmes will need both quantitative and qualitative expansion and further refinement. My short-term target is to make sure that all components of the OCL system are put in motion and stabilised in the next one to two years to achieve high quality standards and attract adequate number of students to sustain the full-time programmes."

"My long-term vision is for our OCL system to develop and grow into a Campus of Learning, taking advantage of the ICT infrastructure and learning resources available in a dual mode learning situation to make WOU a reputed dual mode institution in the region," declared Prof Menon.

Meanwhile Prof Madhulika stated: "The use of Massive Open Online Courses or MOOCs at WOU can enable the University to establish its credentials as a noteworthy provider of learning for areas of special expertise in ODL as well as in higher education."

"We have both internal expertise and the capacity to attract external experts to help us mount attractive MOOCs for the academic faculty on areas such as ICT applications in teaching and learning, research methods in ODL, leadership and governance in higher education institutions and mainstreaming Open Educational Resources (OER), besides discipline based specialised themes targeted at learners," she said.

"MOOCs demonstrate the value and potential of ODL as possibly the only mode capable of fulfilling the educational needs of the growing millions of aspirants for quality higher education in the developing world and the transition economies," she added.

WOU has a long history in ODL, expanding its cache from 11 degree programmes when it first opened its doors to students in January 2007 to more than 40 undergraduate and postgraduate programmes today.

The University offers nine ODL postgraduate programmes, which include Master of Education (MEd), Commonwealth Executive

cont. page 2

Wawasan Open University has transformed itself to become a dual mode teaching and learning institution, offering affordable part-time study opportunity for working adult students through Open Distance Learning (ODL) as well as On Campus Learning (OCL) full-time study for STPM school-leavers or Diploma holders, especially those living in the northern region of Peninsular Malaysia.

By extending its existing suite of MQA accredited programmes and excellent learning support services (both on campus and online) to students of the 17-24 year old age group, WOU hopes to assist Penang to enhance its position as the third education hub outside of the Klang Valley and Iskandar in Johor. We should realise that growth hubs require high quality accredited institutions of learning to sustain the growth momentum. WOU is confident that it can provide excellent learning experience to its full-time students. It has the necessary academic strength and infrastructural capacity to deal with the demands of its younger student population, both in curricula counselling and pastoral support.

I congratulate Prof Mohandas Menon and Prof Madhulika Kaushik on their recent appointment as Deputy Vice Chancellors (Academic Affairs) in charge of OCL and ODL respectively. On their shoulders rest the challenging task of steering the University towards attaining its OCL and ODL development goals. They bring with them many years of experience in dual mode education and I have every confidence that they would do their utmost best to fulfil their responsibilities.

WOU is introducing a new on-campus programme in the coming September intake. This is the Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Marketing. I commend the School of Business & Administration (SBA) for this initiative. I also thank the Course Coordinators from the relevant Schools for organising subject-related talks by invited speakers or practitioners in areas such as Islamic finance, social etiquette and advanced manufacturing systems for the benefit of students and staff.

I also commend the School of Education, Languages and Communications (SELC) for introducing a new specialisation, i.e. Education Management, to its Master of Education programme for the July 2014 ODL intake.

On another front, our Learning & Library Services Department is actively networking with researchers from the Centre for ICT and Distance Education (CODE) of Open University of Japan as well as the National Institute of Informatics to develop a WEKO-based content management system in WOU to hold and better organise our digital data. I believe the successful implementation of this project will help WOU manage and share its repository of Open Educational Resources (OER) more effectively online.

WOU will continue to forge linkages with institutions or organisations on projects of mutual interest and benefit. The recent visit and talk by a senior academic from Brunel University, UK and the hosting of a CEMCA-sponsored visit of senior academics from India to WOU are two such examples.

In its unending pursuit of academic excellence and inter-institutional linkages, the University however has not forgotten to meet its social obligations, doing its part for society at large, for the university's own learning community, as well as the young learners in secondary schools. I thank the WOU team of academic advisors who have stepped forward once again to guide students from yet another selected secondary school in Penang in their participation in the Young Enterprise Programme this year.

I wish to conclude by acknowledging the dedicated efforts shown by the staff of General Services and Administration (GSA) Unit in spearheading and continuously promoting 'green', eco-friendly, healthy-living campaigns and activities in the University over the years, the latest being the declaring of our main campus as a 'smoke-free' campus. Well done GSA.

“WOU will continue to forge linkages with institutions or organisations on projects of mutual interest and benefit.”



Professor Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye
Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer



MBA (CeMBA), Commonwealth Executive Master of Public Administration (CeMPA), MBA in Construction Management (MBA-CM), MBA in Manufacturing & Production Management (MBA-MPM), and PhD by research.

Among the ODL degree programmes are accounting, management, banking & finance, electronics, telecommunications, multimedia design, construction management, liberal studies, psychology, English Studies, and primary education.

WOU has two intakes every year for part-time study, in January and July. The University registers more than 4,000 active students in a given semester, and to date over 13,000 students have experienced the ODL opportunities provided by WOU.

In meeting the challenges and opportunities in higher education, WOU expanded its operations to offer OCL full-time studies last year. The pioneer batch of OCL students joined the University during the inaugural September 2013 intake to pursue Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Accounting and Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management.

For OCL, the University carries out three intakes a year, that is, in September, February and May. The upcoming September 2014 intake will see the introduction of Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Marketing to make it a total three full-time business degree programmes from WOU.

WOU has been recognised as a quality institution of higher learning by the Ministry of Education, and all its programmes are accredited by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA). In addition, 13 programmes have received recognition from the Public Service Department (JPA) following the graduation of the pioneer batch of students.

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Prof Madhulika sees transformational potential

Prof Madhulika Kaushik.

Prof Madhulika Kaushik is the new Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) in charge of Open Distance Learning (ODL) with effect from 24 February 2014.

She subscribes to the benefits of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in higher education and their transformational potential in how learning will be accessed and accredited in future, giving learners a key role in planning and managing their own education.

Prof Madhulika holds a PhD and MBA in Marketing, in addition to teaching and research experience of more than 36 years spread over different distinguished institutions. She started her career as a research fellow in 1978 at the University of Jodhpur, India and joined the ODL sector in 1988 as a Reader in Management Studies at the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), India. She was a Professor of Management in IGNOU from March 1996 until January 2011.

She has been involved in the design and development of the Commonwealth Executive MBA (CeMBA) and Commonwealth Executive Master of Public Administration (CeMPA) programmes at WOU, and has been a member of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) Academic Board since 1998. She coordinated the CeMBA/CeMPA programmes as Director of WOU's Centre for Graduate Studies from 2007 to 2009.

She was an Education Specialist for Higher Education at COL from February 2011 until January 2014 – prior to joining WOU in February this year – where her work included capacity building in higher education institutions for leadership, research, Open Educational Resources (OER) and ODL delivery, quality assurance and resource materials development.

Prof Madhulika, who has conducted consultancy projects funded by international agencies such as UNDP, UNESCO, FAO, COL, ILO and ADB as

well as the Government of India, has published extensively in the areas of consumer behaviour and marketing, women's leadership and entrepreneurship, and in ODL. She has published numerous journal papers and conference proceedings; written various course modules; developed video and audio tape based teaching materials; and overseen the development of online teaching materials.

Her current research interests include application of ICT in higher education, use of OER and issues of quality and governance in ODL, and leadership development in higher education and entrepreneurship education for developing and transition economies.

In recognition of her distinguished academic publications, teaching excellence and extensive professional contributions to the community and to the field of education, Prof Madhulika was honoured with the Indira Gandhi Priyadarshini award in 1998.



Prof Mohandas Menon.

Prof Menon's leadership for smooth delivery

Support). He will also facilitate academic staff development and delivery of face-to-face training programmes for WOU's Centre for Professional Development and Continuing Education (PACE).

Prof Menon from Kerala, India, joined WOU as Assistant Vice Chancellor on 1 March 2011, providing leadership in the areas of course development and advancement of e-Learning. He helped WOU to formulate its Open Educational Resources (OER) Policy and Open Licence Policy, and to develop an OER integration strategy. He facilitated the capacity building of academic and academic support staff in using OER in an e-Learning environment and helped in producing a cost-effective and quality assured course development model.

Before joining WOU, Prof Menon was the Deputy Director and Chief, Education Planning and Management Division, of UNESCO-United Nations Relief & Works Agency in Amman, Jordan, since April 2008. He was an Education Specialist at the Commonwealth of Learning from 2001 to 2008; and Director, School of Education at Indira Gandhi National Open

University, New Delhi from 1992 to 2001.

He holds a PhD in Educational Technology and Master of Education from the Centre of Advanced Study in Education, M.S. University of Baroda, India; a Master of Science in Botany from the University of Calicut, India; a Bachelor of Education from Regional College of Education Mysore, India; and a Bachelor of Science from the University of Kerala, India.

Prof Menon was conferred an Honorary Doctor of Letters degree by the Open University of Sri Lanka on 19 November 2008 for his work in education done during a 30-year career in the Commonwealth. He also received the *Honour for Life Contribution for Teacher Education* in 2007 from the Indian Association of Teacher Education for his contributions in Teacher Education globally.

Prof Menon has written numerous publications, book chapters and research articles in journals in his areas of specialisation, namely instructional design, ICT integration, Learner Assessment and monitoring and evaluation.

Prof Mohandas Balakrishna Menon has been appointed Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) to oversee the recently initiated On Campus Learning (OCL) with effect from 16 January 2014.

In his new capacity, Prof Menon will provide the necessary leadership and facilitate a smooth, cost-effective delivery of full-time programmes by the University.

Prof Menon will continue to oversee the running of the Educational Technology & Publishing (ETP) and the Learning & Library Services (LLS) Units, which he did in his former position as Assistant Vice Chancellor (Academic

Students welcomed to WOU's world of OCL



Prof Ho offers studying tips during the OCL Orientation.



Fan Yin Wen



Subashini



Melody Lim

Make full use of the powerful Internet-based learning generated by WOU. That was among the key advice given by Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye to the second batch of students for On Campus Learning (OCL) full-time studies at WOU.

The nine students attended orientation at the main campus in Penang on 5 February 2014. They comprised six from Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management and three from Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Accounting.

The students were introduced to their respective Academic Advisors from the Schools during the orientation. Prof Ho offered a few pointers to help them in their journey at WOU.

"First, form and maintain small study groups from among your course mates, about 3 to 4 in a group. Secondly, get to know your Academic Advisors and

seek their advice. Thirdly, make full use of the Internet-based learning we created for you. Get into the culture of getting information online and accessing WOU's learning management system, *Wawasan2u*."

The students were also briefed on WOU's regulations and procedures, IT services and facilities, WOU learning management system *Wawasan2u*, library services, OCL programme details, and on managing campus life.

Freshman Melody Lim Chii Wen, 20, from Balik Pulau, Penang who enrolled in Management, led in the oath-taking. She did her STPM at Methodist Boys School, Ayer Itam. "I found out about WOU from my counsellor in MBS, during her briefing on after-STPM programmes. I chose WOU because my relatives and my brother, Edwin Lim, who shall graduate this year in Liberal Studies, recommended this University. Also, I did Business Studies and

Economics in STPM, and I am interested in HR, and this programme covers it," she said.

Subashini Tavamany, 22, from Kulim, Kedah obtained her Diploma in Accounting last November. "After I finished my diploma, I didn't know what to do. My aunty suggested to me to come to WOU as a relative of ours previously did a part-time programme here. Moreover, having an Accounting diploma, I thought it best to pursue a specialised degree in the same field."

Fan Yin Wen, 21, received her STPM qualifications from Saint Anthony's School, Teluk Intan. "I like the environment here and the fees are affordable. I found out about WOU while searching through the Internet for my study options. I'm taking Accounting as I want to become a successful accountant, earn lots of money and help my mum," said the only child to a single parent who works as a nanny.

Regional centres abuzz during ODL orientation

The five Regional Centres of Wawasan Open University (WOU) were abuzz with excitement when many of the 1,000-odd new students of the Open Distance Learning (ODL) programme turned up for orientation. The sessions were organised by Kuala Lumpur (KLRC), Penang (PGRC), Ipoh (IPRC), Johor Bahru (JBRC) and Kuching (KCRC) on 12 January 2014.

Apart from acquainting the students with WOU, the orientation also witnessed the presentation of Dean's List awards for the January 2013 semester, with a total 67 students being named to the list.

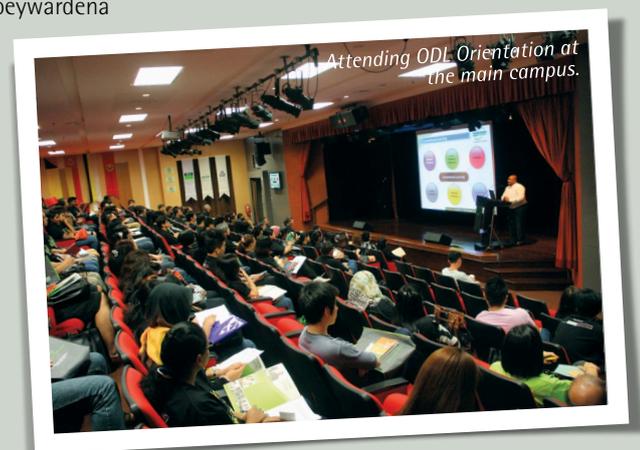
Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye represented WOU at the JBRC orientation. He gave out the Star Ambassador award to Gwee Yuen Hwa, a Bachelor of Technology (Hons) in Construction Management student, for introducing three or more friends under WOU's Friends and Family Programme. New student Hannah Khit Chin K'choo, who enrolled

for Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Psychology, led in the oath-taking and delivered the student address.

Academic representatives from the main campus – School of Business & Administration Dean Prof N V Narasimham (KLRC), School of Foundation & Liberal Studies Dean Dr S Nagarajan (KCRC), School of Education, Languages & Communications (SELC) Dean Prof Santhiram Raman (IPRC) and School of Science & Technology Acting Dean Ishan Abeywardena (PGRC) – were at the orientation organised by the regional centres to present briefings and awards.

At the main campus, among the new students registered with PGRC was Cheah Hui Ting, 25, from Padang Serai, Kedah, who enrolled for Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in English Studies. New student Oh Jia Ling, 24, from MBA in Manufacturing and Production Management, led in the oath-taking.

Meanwhile at IPRC, Pandian Saranganbaly, a recent Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management graduate of WOU who is currently enrolled in the Commonwealth Executive MBA (CeMBA) programme, led the new students in their pledge. Another graduate, Eric Chuang, shared his learning experience at WOU with the freshmen.



Attending ODL Orientation at the main campus.

Full-time students attend lecture at the main campus.



New full-time marketing degree to address talent demand

WOU is introducing a new full-time degree programme, Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Marketing, for the upcoming On Campus Learning (OCL) September 2014 intake.

The Marketing degree from the School of Business and Administration (SBA) will add to the existing two OCL programmes – Accounting and Management – currently offered at the main campus in Penang for STPM school-leavers and diploma holders.

This is a specialised programme that focuses on the different components of the marketing field, from Product Management to Internet Marketing and Retailing. This diversity reflects the wide range of roles and fields of expertise that are available within the marketing profession.

Marketing graduates can find employment as consultants, coordinators, executives, directors, managers, planners, and specialists in the fields of marketing, advertising and public relations, or land sales management positions and rise to become a Chief Marketing Officer (CMO).

Prof N V Narasimham, Dean of SBA, said that the marketing degree will equip students with skills to handle the wide scope of jobs out there. "The current economic situation and increased cost of living is influencing the type of jobs that are being created and sought by employers. Surveys and observations seem to show a demand for talents like business administration, marketing, media, IT and engineering."

The Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Marketing is a 121-credit programme comprising of

compulsory and University courses, as well as the basic major courses (total 27 credits) like Principles of Marketing, Business Law, and Microeconomics, and core major courses (65 credits) that equip students with all aspects of marketing.

Among the core major courses are:

- Product Management
- Internet Marketing
- Customer Service
- Marketing Plan
- Consumer Behaviour
- Social Media Marketing
- Personal Selling and Salesmanship
- Retail Management
- Brand Management
- Strategic Marketing

Equipping for administrative leadership in education

In an effort to develop education leadership and management skills, Wawasan Open University is expanding its Master of Education (MEd) programme to include the specialised field of Education Management, commencing from the July 2014 ODL semester.

WOU, through its School of Education, Languages and Communications (SEL), introduced the MEd in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) in July 2012. Now, working professionals have the added option to pursue MEd in Education Management via Open Distance Learning (ODL) for a broader perspective into the issues and challenges confronting education.

The MEd in Education Management is a 45-credit programme that can be completed in four semesters, or learners can stretch it according to their pace and schedule. It aims to provide students with knowledge and skills in educational administration and management. "International evidence shows that a strong and

knowledgeable school leadership is required to produce significant improvement in education, especially in student achievement," said Prof Santhiram Raman, Dean of SELC.

"This MEd should particularly benefit school principals, deputy heads, senior assistants, heads of units, education administrators in the various District Education Departments, researchers, teachers aspiring to administrative positions in the Ministry of Education, and educators in the private Education and Higher Education sectors," he added.

Students will need to complete five core Education courses, an Education project component, and three courses specific to the area of specialisation. The core Education courses are:

- Research in Education
- ICT in Education
- Ethics in Education
- Professional Development in Education
- Curriculum Development

The specific courses are:

- Education Administration: Theory and Practice
- Education Leadership
- Educational Policy and Planning

"The programme package as a whole will help students understand their role as professionals in educational organisations and enable them to play a proactive part and make informed decisions to meet the challenges of education administrators in the 21st century," Prof Santhiram clarified.

"The expected outcome is competent leaders capable of effectively managing education. The courses look at the key dimensions of instructional and administrative leadership and provide the students with the necessary knowledge base and best practices associated with leadership," he added.

ODL students attending tutorial classes.



WOU becomes a *smoke-free campus*



The breezy seaside air around Wawasan Open University's main campus at Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah in Penang is now assured of its freshness, for a truly invigorating and conducive setting for health and learning.

In an effort to promote good health and increase awareness among staff and students on the dangers of nicotine and tobacco, WOU was declared a 'smoke-free' environment starting from September 2013.

This move is also in line with the University's objective to create a safe and conducive environment for teaching and learning, and is in support of the government's aspirations to promote the adoption of a healthy lifestyle.

With the implementation of the 'smoke-free' campus, notices to inform students and visitors alike of this initiative and to prohibit smoking have been put up on the campus grounds, namely near the main gate entrance and at the cafeteria.

The University requests the cooperation of those working, studying or attending events at the main campus to refrain from smoking, and in this manner, help contribute towards a healthier environment.

NII of Japan keen to build *WEKO community* with WOU



Participants pose with the trainers.

The National Institute of Informatics (NII), Japan is looking forward to collaborating with Wawasan Open University in using the ground-breaking WEKO system in an Open Educational Resources (OER) world.

WEKO is an open source repository software developed by NII some six years ago and is being used by almost 200 universities in Japan.

Assoc Prof Dr Kazutsuna Yamaji of NII said the prestigious Japanese institution plans to supply the system to South-East Asian countries, starting with Malaysia. "So WOU can be the first partner to deploy our system to the different countries," he said, adding that NII is ready to offer support in migration to the WEKO repository system and to the end-user community.

Dr Yamaji said this when he was here as a co-trainer for a WEKO repository training workshop at the WOU main campus from 3 to 4 March 2014. The other trainers were Dr Hiroshi Kato, also from NII, and Prof Tsueneo Yamada from the Open University of Japan (OUJ).

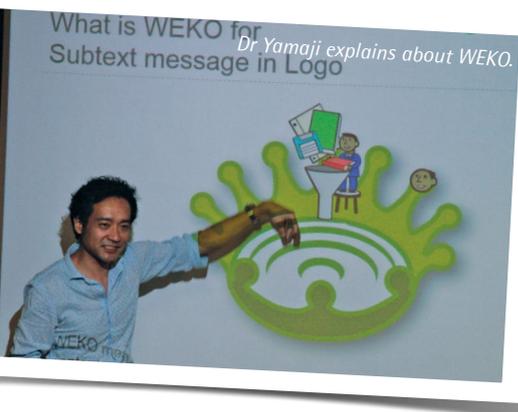
The workshop aimed to equip participants with hands-on knowledge on how to replicate a WEKO type arrangement in their respective universities. The programme was organised by WOU, through its Learning & Library Services Department. It was attended by 11 participants, with seven from WOU – including Learning & Library Services director Kamsiah Mohd Ali

and ITS personnel – and four librarians from Asia e-University, Universiti Malaysia Perlis and Universiti Putra Malaysia. WOU hopes to use the external librarians as catalysts to facilitate WEKO-based Institutional Repositories development in their universities.

"WOU will be able to share its Open Access contents for the use of its students, and the other institutions in Malaysia and around the world. The WEKO repository software is very easy to use by end-users and repository managers as it has a multiple deposit transfer functionality, allowing for the contents to be deposited into the repository with just one click of the mouse," stated Dr Yamaji. "If a few universities in this country decided to use WEKO, they can then easily share information within the end-user community, relying on each other for support and enquiries. The NII wants to build up the WEKO community here, and I would be happy if WOU can lead that community," he added.

The University library has received a RM50,000 grant from WOU's Institute of Research and Innovation last November to build and run a university digital repository using WEKO. This will allow the library to migrate its existing ePrints-based OER repository data to the new WEKO-based repository. This repository would facilitate the library to not only capture the metadata of WOU resources but also grow into providing a gateway to other OER resources from around the world.

The WOU team is also planning to work with OER Asia and GLOBE (Global Learning Object Brokered Exchange)-OUJ to participate in OER Asia-GLOBE Harvester network.



What is WEKO for?
Subtext message in Logo
Dr Yamaji explains about WEKO.

Appreciation

to excelling regional centres
and support centres



Wawasan Open University hosted an award ceremony at the main campus on 14 February 2014 to recognise the hard work put in by its regional centres and support centres in reaching out to prospective students.

The Penang Regional Centre (PGRC) was named the most efficient centre for the second semester running, registering the best student-to-staff throughput performance for the January 2014 intake. Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye presented the 'Most Efficient Regional Centre' award to PGRC marketing and admissions senior executive Rina Julian Nazrin Julian.

Meanwhile Subang Regional Support Centre (SBGRSC) grabbed two accolades, the 'Best New Enrolment Performance' and 'Best Revenue Performance' awards, and the Klang Regional Support Centre (KLGRSC) won the 'Best Re-enrolment Performance' category. The respective heads, Mohd Shuib Md Jadi of SBGRSC and Angie Ng Ai Chen of KLGRSC, were on hand to receive the awards.

Regional Operations & MARCOM Director KH Chong highlighted that there were winners in four out of five categories this semester despite tough challenges facing all RCs in new student enrolment. There was no winner for 'Highest in Total Enrolment Performance' – previously won by Ipoh Regional Centre for July 2013 intake. All awards were based on actual achievement against the targets set.

Deputy Vice Chancellor (Operations) Dr Seah Soo Aun spoke on WOU's achievements in 2013, remarking that total student enrolment and new student enrolment had increased compared to the previous year. He commended the regional centres and called on them to be a "working horse" and to further increase WOU's revenue in 2014 while reducing expenses.

WOU supports Young Enterprise Programme

in its **25th year**



Deehbanjli of WOU and Audrey Cheah of Seagate Penang shed light on the roles and responsibilities of the YE Board of Directors, while representatives from Intel and First Solar shared on the simulation of a production cycle and how to sell their handmade products. It was a learning experience for the new advisors as they have to guide their achievers (students) through the same process in the next 8 or 9 months.

The year 2014 marks the 25th anniversary of the Young Enterprise (YE) Programme in Penang, which is designed to guide students from participating schools in their objectives to become well-rounded enterprising individuals.

WOU once again lends its support as a corporate sponsor to the programme. This year, WOU is paired to mentor SMK Datuk Haji Mohd Nor Ahmad in Gelugor, Penang.

The school is among 16 secondary schools that are to be mentored by their respective corporate advisors, comprising mainly of multinational companies and two universities – WOU and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

The WOU team chief advisor Deehbanjli Lakshmayya said the 25th anniversary committee, consisting of the chief advisors from all 16 corporate sponsors, is gearing up for many activities and events to mark the auspicious occasion. An anniversary logo has been created with the help of Winnie Lee, the 'managing director' of Athena Enterprise Sdn Bhd, from Convent Green Lane's winning YE Company in 2010 which was sponsored by WOU.

An Advisors' workshop was held at the Dell plant in Bukit Minyak on 12 February 2014. It was participated by 80 new corporate and teacher advisors.

WOU later hosted a 'Train-The-Trainer' session at the main campus on 19 February 2014 to prepare the lead facilitators for the Achievers' workshop. Briefings were conducted by Deehbanjli and two others from the MNCs.

The Achievers' workshop was held in USM on 26 February 2014, attended by some 480 Form 3 and Form 4 students participating in the YE Programme this year. The participants learnt about teamwork, sales, coming up with creative products, and how to plan and execute their production properly and realistically.

Both the corporate and teacher advisors will work with the students from the assigned schools in the next few months to manage their company, including 'producing' hand-crafted items for sale.



New *WawasanLearn* in July 2014!

We are pleased to announce that we have upgraded a key feature in *WawasanLearn* which allows easier viewing of the entire site through mobile devices. Other improvements you can expect in *WawasanLearn* include:

1. 'Drag and drop' function (from desktop) for adding images or files in your forum posting. Please take note that this function is only available in all recent versions of Chrome, Firefox and Safari, as well as Internet Explorer version 10 and above.
2. Simple layout that is adaptive for all screen sizes.
3. Concise sections for viewing activities and resources in a course.

We welcome any feedback or suggestions you might have about our new *WawasanLearn* in the coming semester. We hope you will have an enjoyable e-learning experience at WOU!

Grooming 'professionals' for the workforce



Students 'introduce' one person to another.

Students of WOU received these and many other valuable pointers - ranging from preparation to dressing to handshake and on how to conduct oneself - in a job interview, during a talk on *Social Etiquette* at the main campus on 12 February 2014.

About 60 first and second-year full-time students pursuing Accounting and Management degrees at WOU benefited from the highly interactive and entertaining session by social etiquette coach Hor Phooi Sin.

Highlighting that 180,000 fresh graduates enter the workforce every year in Malaysia, she said only a small percentage of job applications lead to interview. "You have an average of 40 minutes to impress the interviewer or HR personnel," she stressed.

Speaking on 'image portrait', she offered basic tips like wearing a watch that's not too flashy or colourful, adorning simple or no accessories, simple spectacles or clear contact lens, little or no perfume, and clean shoes so as not to distract the interviewer from you as a person. "Wear a smile to show you're comfortable, confident, that you're in your comfort zone in the interview."

She advised being well-prepared by researching the company and the position applied for before going for the interview. "You must understand the company culture. Go online and check. Explore the dress code of current employees if you can," she remarked.

She showed a video on 'top 10 bad business handshakes' before demonstrating how to execute a proper handshake with the help of a volunteer. The students then spent a few minutes practising self-introduction and performing introductions with two others.

She described the usual format of job interviews and how to address them. "Hide all your personal data, photos, timeline, etc, on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram at least a few months before the interview. Don't hashtag your interview or the company. Never comment about a job interview on Facebook or any social media platform," she cautioned, adding that HR personnel have been known to track these channels.



Proper self-introduction when attending an interview.

When going for an interview, do you consider how important proper dressing is, or how helpful a confident demeanour would be? Do you know it is advisable to avoid tattoos or piercings other than a pair of earrings? Are you aware that you should be careful of excessive make-up to help project a proper professional image?



Choosing a more appropriate bag.

Showcasing Islamic finance as a viable option

Islamic finance is the fastest growing segment of the financial sector and highly resilient, able to withstand global financial and economic crises with very little impact, said Prof Datuk Dr Syed Othman Alhabshi, Chief Academic Officer of INCEIF, the Global University of Islamic Finance.

Speaking on *Islamic Finance – The Viable Alternative* at the main campus on 26 February 2014, he said Islamic finance achieved a 20% global growth rate over the last 5 years. "So every five years, it doubles. The Bank Negara plans for Islamic financing to account for 50% of the total by year 2020 from the current 24%. The Islamic sector is overtaking the conventional sector," he pointed out, noting that important financial centres around the world are embracing Islamic finance.

Noting that no Islamic banking institutions in Malaysia collapsed during the past three financial crises, he stated: "Islamic finance has inherent resilience as it is based on real sector

and has high liquidity." He said wealth in Islamic finance can only be created through productive activities that involve real sectors. "Real wealth is only 0.8% of total financial wealth, which is created every year through share swaps, derivatives and so forth without the backing of any real sectors."

He said household debt in Malaysia has increased to almost 82% of the GDP. He highlighted a recent research by his PhD student that found "25% of the people who go bankrupt are those who bought houses. Only 10% come from credit cards."

Prof Syed Othman said that people are therefore trying to make as much money as possible in any way they like. "We need to plough back morality and ethics," he said.

On the weaknesses of Islamic finance, he listed a lack of talents and inadequate avenues for Shariah-compliant investment to match the deposits. "So the government through Bank

Negara has established the International Liquidity Management Centre to create more investment instruments for the banks," he said.

The talk was part of the WOU Seminar Series and attended by about 70 people, including over 50 full-time WOU students.



The crowd at the talk.

- making sense and taking action

There is a need to use real-time data – rather than just relying on past data which does not work for a lot of current systems – to help retain the stability or optimal status of a system, whether manufacturing, banking or any embedded systems.

"The challenge is to make sense, as soon as possible, what the data is generating, and take corrective action," asserted Dr Alireza Mousavi, a systems engineering expert from Brunel University, UK, during a lecture at the main campus on 4 March 2014.

Historical data is only good for some parts of the system. "Now we can create and generate real-time data, which is needed to base your decision on. Real-time data is created, consumed, and collected by embedded systems, such as census, and devices in our phones, televisions, cars, airplanes," he said in his presentation titled *Advanced Manufacturing Systems*.

He said Brunel University is working on 'event modelling' which involves looking at the whole world for every source of information or input

data, with the assumption everything is related until proven otherwise.

He said we need to explain the system, whether it is a technology or a social or economic system, and how excitations are related with behaviour. "There are a lot of influences, so I want to know what happens when I take it from a stable to an unstable situation. If you don't know the source of the destabilisation or excitation, you cannot solve it.

"We must also be able to predict, for example if there is war in the Middle East, what happens to the price of oil. Obviously you want to stabilise it and have controls, but you should also improve and optimise the system."

Historical data helps find a pattern to predict or simulate the future in order to improve the system, such as bringing down costs in a factory. But there are drawbacks. "One of the most difficult parts of any simulation is reliance data. 70% of the time spent is to make sure I have the actual data."

Dr Alireza also met with WOU academics to

discuss possible collaboration in research projects; enhancing WOU's MBA programmes; jointly offering the Advanced Manufacturing Systems PhD programme; and Brunel conducting short-term courses for WOU's Centre for Professional Development and Continuing Education.



Making the concept of systems clearer to the audience.

More advanced, up-to-date and blended new ODL training



Prof Menon outlines the training.



Prof Dhanarajan shares on ODL.

Wawasan Open University has revised and upgraded its ODL Core Competency Certificate Programme (ODL-CCCP) for the training of its academic and academic support staff.

The revised version was launched by Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye at the main campus during the commencement of the workshop on *Module 1: An Overview of ODL* on 27 February 2014.

In inaugurating the programme, Prof Ho highlighted the importance of such ongoing professional development programmes for keeping abreast with new developments and emerging innovations. He said the academics will be able to develop professionally and enhance their competencies in ODL and, in the process, help WOU to improve its quality and institutional performance.

The revised ODL-CCCP is an updated version of two earlier cycles of the programme used in in-house training workshops organised in 2011 and 2012.

The Module 1 workshop was attended by 14 academics from the School of Business & Administration, School of Science & Technology, School of Foundation & Liberal Studies, and the School of Education, Languages & Communications (SELC). The trainers were Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Prof Mohandas Menon, and Prof Phalachandra Bhandigadi.

Prof Phalachandra from SELC, who coordinates the CCCP, said: "The new version will include all up-to-date developments in ODL and integrate the content of an introductory course on OER and e-learning. The revisions are expected to make the whole programme advanced

and comprehensive, thereby serving as an introductory certificate course incorporating the basic requirements for an academic in an open university."

Prof Menon, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic-OCL) and also coordinator of the CCCP, stated: "We have made the new package of ODL-CCCP more compact but intensive with six modules and a project with an estimated 120 hours of study. We will use a blended mode, including self-learning by individual participants, expert presentations, multi-media sessions, group discussions and activities."

For workshops on the subsequent modules of the CCCP, the University plans to invite international experts in different areas of ODL to provide resource support either through face-to-face or virtually.

WOU contributes to module development for Commonwealth course

A new online professional development course initiated by the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) is expected to help various institutions better deliver e-learning programmes through integration of Open Educational Resources (OER).

Five participants from WOU attended a three-day *Facilitators' Workshop* for OER-based eLearning organised by CEMCA in collaboration with Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU), Hyderabad, India from 7 to 9 January 2014.

The workshop at BRAOU Hyderabad was a follow-up to earlier workshops. It was facilitated by the CEMCA consultant, Dr. Som Naidu.

In January and June 2013, WOU had hosted two workshops where teachers from leading institutions in the Asian Commonwealth contributed to the development of five modules towards the online course over the last 12 months.

WOU academics Jasmine Emmanuel, Prakash Arumugam, Deehbanjli Lakshmayya and S. Vighnarajah who coordinated the development of four of the five modules of the course participated in the Hyderabad workshop.

Representatives from Indira Gandhi National Open University (India), National Institute of Open Schooling (India), Open University of Sri Lanka, Open University Malaysia, and BRAOU also participated, with another from the Higher Education Commission, Pakistan, in attendance.

WOU Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic-OCL) Prof Mohandas Menon who attended the workshop as a resource person said that the University's contribution in the development of the modules has been very significant. "The module development activities helped in orienting 15 WOU staff in the conceptual understanding and use of OER and e-learning, and four of them obtained exposure to how online facilitation in

a systematic and effective manner can be provided by tutors in online courses," he said. It is expected that this process of systematic online facilitation can be adopted in the ODL system at WOU. Such a provision can be helpful in offering one-to-one tutor support and feedback to individual students and also help facilitate non-synchronous discussion forums.



From left: Deehbanjli, Prakash, Vighnarajah, Jasmine and Prof Menon.

Delegation from India explores QA at WOU

A three-member delegation from India visited WOU's main campus from 20 to 21 March 2014 to learn about quality assurance standards and practices in the University's course development and delivery, including learner support and academic administration.

The visit was sponsored by the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), New Delhi.

The delegation was led by Prof Vinay Kumar Pathak, Vice Chancellor of Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University, Rajasthan. The other members were Mr Binod Kumar Bhadri, Assistant Educational Advisor from Ministry of Human Resources Development, India, and Prof Manjulika Srivastava from Distance Education Bureau, University Grant Commission.

The team met with WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye, the deans and other senior management.

Prof Pathak shared about his university's establishment 27 years ago and how delivery of education is changing with technology.

Mr Bhadri acknowledged that ODL is an

effective mode of education, but stressed the importance of quality. "Stakeholders should feel that they get quality education from ODL universities. I find some ODL programmes to be better than formal education, but then people's perception is important."

He said another problem is the lack of support for a fully online education system in India. "No online degree is recognised to date by the country. There is yet no infrastructure in place to implement a fully online education."

Prof Manjulika highlighted the function of the Distance Education Bureau in regulating institutions and ensuring that programmes meet required standards to remove negative perception among employers in India. "We want to study the QA practices and standards that universities follow in Malaysia," she said.

The delegation also expressed interest in WOU's learner support services, including the digital library and *WawasanLearn*, and the academic administration undertaken by Registry.

Prof Mohandas Menon, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic-OCL), said the visit was part of an ongoing cooperation between CEMCA and WOU. "CEMCA is keen to send study teams from other Commonwealth countries in Asia to

WOU as it is generally acknowledged that there is a lot to learn from the experience of WOU which has developed in a few years into an ODL institution of quality using latest technologies and innovations to reach out to large number of learners."



Prof Pathak (2nd from left) and his delegation with WOU top management.



The delegation met up with WOU management.

Virtues of the Horse light up Lunar New Year

WOU's family members embraced age-old Chinese traditions and cultural practices to usher in the Year of the Wooden Horse. The Chinese New Year celebration began with Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye and WOU Sdn Bhd Chairman Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap lighting loud fire crackers to chase away the negativities from 2013 and making room for good fortune and health in 2014.

"2014 is the year of the Wooden Horse, a horse that is vibrant and intelligent as it signifies an abundance of business opportunities this year as long as we are willing to work hard," said Prof Ho in his welcoming speech.

"The horse is often looked upon as an energetic character as most important battles in the olden days were won due to the power of horses. We must work hard and be committed as a team. Therefore, we will be able to sail through and excel together," he continued.

Chinese New Year luncheon is never complete without the 'yee sang tossing' ceremony. And so loud cheers and joyful exclamations were heard as the VIPs and staff tossed the 'yee sang' - ingredients made of thin slices of raw fish, vegetables and spaghetti (an add-on fusion item) - as high as they could. This age-old tradition of tossing is a symbolic wish for fortunes to rise and happiness for all.

Besides the traditional and cultural influences, gorgeous hanging lanterns and décor added to the festivity. Even the door gifts were made of paper that resembled a fish, symbolising abundance and prosperity. Thumbs-up to the skilful hands that created the beautiful decoratives from ang-pow packets. There was also an inscriptive decoration of the word "Horse" on the wall in Chinese characters.

Guests of Honour included Chairman of WOU's Board of Governors Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, WOU Sdn Bhd directors Loo Choo Teng, Ooi Teng Chew and Tan Sri Chin Fook Weng, Wawasan Education Foundation member Dato' Dr Sharom Ahmat, as well as Datin Seri Irene Yeap along with her daughters Janice and Stephanie.



Tossing the yee sang.

Chatting with colleagues over good food.



Receiving door gifts of oranges and fish-shaped ang pow packets containing sweets.



Dato' Seri Stephen lights the firecrackers.



Staff queuing up amidst colourful decorations.

Ma Mun Lai, 44, enrolled for the Commonwealth Executive MBA (CeMBA) in the July 2010 intake – and graduated at WOU's fourth convocation ceremony last December.

Ma has been working for over three years as a General Manager in an automotive parts company in Kuala Lumpur. Prior to that, she was the Deputy General Manager in another subsidiary within the same group.

Married with two teenage kids, she found out about WOU by searching the Internet and picked WOU because of the flexibility of the Open Distance Learning mode, which suited her schedule and "cost-wise, it was very good".

"After I was promoted to General Manager, I took

the MBA because I find that it is important to equip myself for my own knowledge and to increase my capacity to absorb new things.

"The research and assignments required for CeMBA inculcated a learning habit and helped me to develop strategic thinking. I can better approach problems and find solutions. I have also since acquired an interest in writing and regularly contribute articles to my company's automotive blog," Ma stated.

She feels that the MBA one chooses should be practical and not just give 'head' knowledge. "WOU's MBA definitely helps me in my work," she remarked, adding that the courses she took include Research Methods, Strategic Management, Management in Organisations,

and Operations Management.

She credits her husband for being a good support, and this helped her to juggle her studies with work and family. As to her future plans, career-wise, she quipped, "With the MBA, I can command a higher paying job in another company."



Ma Mun Lai

Sales engineer finds 'good foundation' at WOU

Chan Kok Ching, 31, is a sales engineer at TDS Technology in Bayan Lepas, Penang for the last three years.

He received his Bachelor of Technology (Hons) in Electronics degree from WOU last year. On hand to share the happy occasion with him was his wife, Esther Tham.

Chan enrolled at WOU in July 2008, after being introduced to the University by a school friend. "We were searching around for a university to do part-time study. My friend located WOU online and introduced it to me. We found it quite flexible and affordable. We went to the University to check and ask for advice, after which we immediately signed up together.

My friend graduated in 2012."

Chan was happy as he could focus on his work, and study during his free time. Besides his degree, he has a diploma in industrial robotics technology from a private institution.

"I work in automation, where we are engaged with controllers, integrated circuits and chips. Lots of programming and visual basics are involved. I chose Electronics in WOU as there are a lot of courses and learning related to my work. This has been very useful." Among the courses studied are Solid State Semiconductor Devices, Control Systems, Analog Circuits, and Microprocessor.

"I do sales. From my studies at WOU, I have developed a good foundation to further progress in my work. When I meet clients, I can explain what I am doing and the products I deal with."

Chan would now like to expand the operations of the Singapore-based company he works for, in Penang.



Chan Kok Ching

UPCOMING EVENTS

STUDENT INFO

2nd Regional Symposium on OER

WOU will host the 2nd Regional Symposium on Open Educational Resources (OER) themed 'Beyond Advocacy, Research and Policy'.

Date : 24 - 27 June 2014 (Sat & Sun)

Venue: WOU main campus

Student Orientation Day (July 2014 ODL Intake)

Date : 13 July 2014 (Sun)

Venue: WOU main campus and Regional/Learning Centres nationwide

Commencement of Enrolment for Sept 2014 OCL intake

Enrolment for On Campus Learning (OCL) full-time degree programmes at the main campus in Penang for September 2014 intake shall commence on 23 June 2014.

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In the minds of
our readers

The University 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

Call Toll-free Careline 1-300-888-968 (WOU)

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

Penang Regional Centre
54 Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, 10050 Penang, Malaysia.
Tel: 04-218 0133/4 | Fax: 04-228 4500
Email: ro_pg@wou.edu.my

Ipoh Regional Centre
Wisma Gerakan, 80 Persiaran Greenhill, 30450 Ipoh, Perak.
Tel: 05-242 6323 / 243 6323 | Fax: 05-254 9323
Email: ro_ip@wou.edu.my

Kuala Lumpur Regional Centre
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
(Library Services available Tuesday to Sunday, 10.00am-7.00pm)

Bandar Utama Regional Support Centre
L2-6 & 7, Wisma BUB, 11, Lebuhr Bandar Utama, Bandar Utama, 47800 Petaling Jaya, Selangor.
Tel: 03-7629 7223 / 7629 7123 | Fax: 03-7629 7023
Email: rso_bu@wou.edu.my

Klang Regional Support Centre
No. 41(Ground Floor), Jalan Kasuarina 2/KS7, Bandar Botanic Capital, 41200 Klang, Selangor.
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Subang Regional Support Centre
No. 34-1 Ground Floor, Jalan PJS 8/2, Mentari Plaza, Bandar Sunway, 46150 Petaling Jaya, Selangor.
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Johor Bahru Regional Centre
17 & 19 Jalan Jaya 2, Taman Jaya, 81300 Skudai, Johor.
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Kota Bharu Regional Centre
3956 Tingkat Bawah, Wisma Gerakan, Jalan Temenggong, 15000 Kota Bharu, Kelantan.
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Email: ro_kb@wou.edu.my
*Open Monday-Saturday from 10.00am-7.00pm

Kuching Regional Centre
14 Westin Avenue, Jalan Tun Jugah, 93350 Kuching, Sarawak.
Tel: 082-578 923 | Fax: 082-576 923
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