

Building Strategic Linkages



Contents

- Vice Chancellor's voice 2
- in the limelight**
Keeping PACE with training at WOU 3
- Perodua staff to benefit from customised WOU programme
Employers partner with WOU to benefit workforce 4
- WOU participation in new science centre
CEMCA sponsorship to run OER-based online course in January 5
- in the know**
DVC appointed to international education body
WOU academic bags 'Best Professor in HRM' award 6
- New dean of School of Science & Technology "returns" to WOU
New HR head believes in being people-friendly 7
- in the schools**
WOU explores joint initiatives with TUT of Japan
Implications from the rise of MOOCs 8
- "University ranking system must keep improving to address shortcomings"
WOU to offer COL-sponsored open online course in January 9
- Competency in designing learning materials and assessment
WOU host career talk by ICAEW for students 10
- School students become "entrepreneurs" at fair
Memorable charity clothing donation during Hari Raya 11
- It's a family effort for MBA trio
As he learnt, MBA student applied to his work 12

WOU on threshold of delivering higher education overseas

Wawasan Open University (WOU) has set its sights on opening a new chapter in its operations next year with a plan to deliver its programmes and courses to overseas learners and institutions through open distance learning (ODL).

"WOU is now poised to go offshore with its quality learning materials," Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye announced. "Forging strategic partnerships has always been part of the university outreach strategy and work plan of WOU."

He said WOU is prepared to work closely with any prospective partner institutions, especially newly established open universities in and around Asia, to package and deliver ODL programmes that meet their needs. "We are now in talks with several such institutions in,

for example, Maldives, Nepal and Nigeria, discussing course contents, preferred delivery mode as well as business arrangement that best meet the needs and financial means of the parties."

"We are also planning to offer our popular Commonwealth Executive MBA (CeMBA) programme offshore together with a strategic partner," he added.

This effort will augment the University's existing collaborative initiatives with associations, organisations and the corporate sector in the country, which help offer people from all levels of employment the opportunity to acquire job-related skills and qualifications.

The decision on this matter was taken following the many official

visits and requests made by representatives of universities and organisations from within and outside Malaysia. All the parties sought to forge strategic collaboration with WOU, with most wanting to utilise the University's learning materials in one form or another, while benefiting from the dedicated online learning support services provided by WOU.

As it is, WOU's repute as a trusted provider of quality tertiary education in Malaysia was borne out by the two major awards from the Commonwealth of Learning (Vancouver) at the 7th Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning held in Abuja, Nigeria, in December 2013. One was the *Award for Excellence for Institutional Achievement* and the other was the *Award for Excellence for Distance Education Materials*.

cont. page 2

With increasing confidence, exciting new initiatives are being planned in WOU as we approach the end of the year. The University no longer needs to be confined within the borders of Malaysia as its reputation as a trusted provider of quality tertiary education becomes better known.

WOU's academic programmes and expertise in the delivery of open and distance learning (ODL) are increasingly sought out especially by newly established higher learning institutions abroad. Thus venturing offshore and bringing to fruition our plans for international collaboration with suitable strategic partners will feature prominently in our planning calendar for next year and beyond. Besides responding to specific requests for assistance from overseas institutions, WOU will also selectively seek out and establish strategic linkages with academic partners overseas.

On the home front, with lessons learned from its past interactions and arrangements with professional bodies and multinational corporations within the country, WOU will continue to customise courses to meet client needs, as we have done for selected employees of Perodua.

Along the same vein, I would like to extend an open invitation to corporate employers, managers and leaders who are planning on upgrading the knowledge and skills of their workforce, to approach WOU to explore appropriate human capacity development and skills training support.

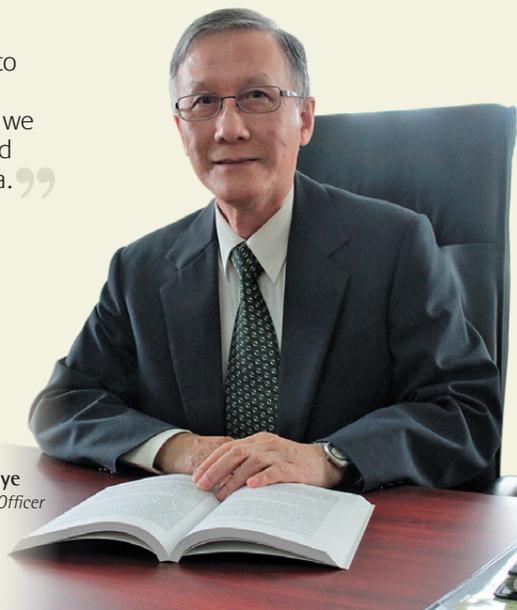
We are both delighted and grateful that 120 companies had already come forward to become our educational partners under the University's *Valued Partnership Programme (VPP)* initiative. The employees of our VPP member companies will get to enjoy course fee rebates when they enrol to study part-time in WOU. The employers themselves will benefit from the arrangement since their employees can continue to work full-time at their work site. Furthermore, the ODL mode of delivery as practised by WOU allows its learners to apply their newly acquired knowledge almost immediately to their workplace.

The Centre for Professional Development and Continuing Education (PACE) of WOU is planning on conducting more short duration courses and training workshops with appropriate certification. Successful participants of these WOU-certified professional development courses can in accordance with terms and conditions use the certification to enjoy credit exemptions if they wish to further pursue any academic qualifications at the University.

WOU is presently ready to offer two short-term courses entirely online, targeting school teachers and educators, in January 2015. While WOU embarks on various fronts to extend its academic outreach, it has not shed its social responsibility to the community at large. Its contributions in the Young Enterprise (YE) Programme and efforts in a charity clothing donation drive are two examples in point.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank every member of the WOU community, both past and present, for shaping the University into what it is today. The University recently marked the 8th anniversary of its establishment, and in spite of various challenges, I am happy that WOU continues to fulfil its academic and social obligations.

“...WOU will continue to customise courses to meet client needs, as we have done for selected employees of Perodua.”



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



Signing of MoU with CIMA in April 2008.

Over the years, the University has generated strategic alliances, both on the national and international fronts, with institutions such as the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers, National Union of Bank Employees, Junior Chamber of Commerce International Malaysia, Penang Skills Development Centre, Symbiosis Open Education Society in Pune, India, and the Commonwealth of Learning.

The University is always open for discussion on various forms of collaboration. WOU can also customise and deliver shorter skills-enhancement courses through its Centre for Professional Development & Continuing Education (PACE).

“We have in the past formally customised and delivered specially-packaged MQA-approved (Malaysian Qualifications Agency) courses for employees in the private sector, to improve their job performance and increase company sales (see *PERODUA story inside*),” Prof Ho noted.

Certainly, there is more than one way of forging and benefiting from mutually beneficial linkages with WOU. As Prof Ho stressed: “We are here to help build up the talent pool of the nation.” And, he may soon add, of the world.

Editorial Board

- Editor** Rasidah Mion
Corporate Communications Manager
- Members** Professor Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye
Vice Chancellor of Wawasan Open University
- Dr S Nagarajan
Dean, School of Foundation and Liberal Studies
- Professor Phalachandra Bhandigadi
School of Education, Languages and Communications
- Associate Professor Dr Wendy Bong Chin Wei
Dean, School of Science and Technology
- Deebanjli Lakshmayya
Senior Lecturer, School of Business and Administration
- Editorial Team** Selva Suppiah
- Photographers** David Lee, Boey Hein Lee

KDN Permit: PP 14958/11/2012 (031535)
Published by **Wawasan Open University**
Wholly owned by Wawasan Open University Sdn Bhd (700364-W)
Printed by **Thunder Print Sdn Bhd**
No 6463, Lorong Ayam Didak 3, Taman Ria Jaya Light Industrial Park,
08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah.

Keeping PACE with training at WOU

With the recent reactivation of WOU's Centre for Professional Development & Continuing Education (PACE), members of the workforce have the opportunity to attend short-term courses and get relevant certified qualifications.

Operating from the main campus in Penang, PACE helps to provide professionalism and recognition for people in their particular lines of work.

The centre, initially formed in 2010, is now slated to kick off a host of new activities latest by early next year. Headed by Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic-OCL) Prof Mohandas Menon, PACE aims to identify market needs and provide job-specific skills or updated knowledge to equip the workforce.

"We will have partnership with outside agencies, and use the expertise within our Schools and our course materials," Prof Menon said. "Funds are coming in as well from the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to develop and offer online courses." COL and its Asian regional agency, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre (CEMCA), are committed to financing WOU to run two online courses using open educational resources (OER) over a three-month duration, starting next January.

Stressing that all short-term training would come from PACE, Prof Menon said: "We have even requests for attachment from foreign universities wanting to send academics for 2 weeks training on eLearning."

He added that all courses would need to be validated by the PACE-Validation and Certification Committee (PACE-VCC), comprising the deans of the four Schools, the Director of the Regional Centre Operations, and any course coordinator or expert invited as required.

He said that the WOU certification would open up opportunities for workers, the self-employed, members of professional organisations and so on, as the qualifications are recognised and would offer credibility in the eyes of employers and clients.

WOU plans to have partnership with an experienced training agency to conduct the majority of its training courses. The agency will undertake the organising and recruiting of participants, venue logistics, and running of programme. PACE welcomes similar MoUs with other external training agencies having expertise in other specialised areas.



Training of staff is important.



Learning about leadership.



Prof Menon explains about PACE.

What is PACE training all about?

- **Duration:** Very short (1-5 days); medium (2-4 weeks); or longer (up to 4 months).
- **Mode:** Face-to-face; entirely online; or blended.
- **Types:** Partnership with external agencies; Corporate sponsored in-house courses (as part of WOU's ODL programme for groups of students sponsored by the corporate sector); Online courses; Training attachments.
- **Resource Persons:** External experts or WOU's own academics.
- **Certification:** Certification of Completion for attendance; and Certification of Achievement for course/training with assessment component.
- **Learner support:** WOU will create a dedicated online Learning Management System (LMS) site, *Wawasan4PACE*, for participants of PACE training courses.
- **HRDF claimable:** Companies can claim from the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) for sending their staff for training to PACE.

Courses to be initiated/offered in 2015

The four training activities being taken up by PACE in 2015 are as follows:

- A Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) on 'Action Research for teachers' in different educational/training contexts
- A Series of MOOCs on OER based eLearning for educators
- IELTS Preparatory Course
- Training attachment of academic staff from the Open University of Sri Lanka in WOU



Hands-on training in progress.

Perodua staff to benefit from customised WOU programme

WOU has formalised a collaboration with Perodua towards a customised programme on management to benefit the national automaker's sales and service workforce.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the two has paved the way for a specialised Graduate Diploma in Sales and Services Management (GDSSM) programme for Perodua employees.

The GDSSM, which can be completed in two years, comprises 12 courses specially selected from WOU's fully accredited degree programmes after consultation with Perodua.

The MoA between WOU and Perodua Sales Sdn Bhd (PSSB) was signed by Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye and the President and CEO of Perodua, Datuk Aminar Rashid Salleh.

The ceremony on 9 Oct 2014 was witnessed by WOU Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic-ODL) Prof Madhulika Kaushik and PSSB's Chief Operating Officer, Zahari Husin. Also present were WOU Pro-Chancellor Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and WOU Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan.

In his speech, Prof Ho stated: "This collaboration will see our two institutions working hand in hand to professionally equip the sales and service staff of the Perodua workforce with a broad range of specific management skills, so that they can deliver quality service to their customers and increase their sales volume."

The MoA also formally endorses Perodua Sales as one of the 119 education partners to date under WOU's Valued Partnership Programme (VPP),

allowing employees of Perodua to enjoy tuition fee rebates.

The first batch of 17 sales and service managers of Perodua Sales Sdn Bhd, from its different branches across the country, have already signed up for courses at WOU. Their study is fully sponsored by Perodua.

Meanwhile, Datuk Aminar said the GDSSM programme aims to refine the skills of Perodua's human capital to the fullest potential, in order to best serve its customers and stay competitive in the global market.

"We believe that the GDSSM programme will benefit our staff as we aim to arm our people with the right knowledge and skills," he stated, adding that it will enhance the entrepreneurial skills and maximise efficiency of the sales and service managers.

"For Perodua, the process of finding the right institution to offer this programme was a long one as we needed an institution that has presence throughout the country; an institution that has a proven track record and an institution that is recognised," he said. "WOU has met these requirements and more."

Datuk Aminar later showed guests Perodua's new Axia model on display in front of the Homestead mansion, before he and his staff were taken on a tour of the campus.



Datuk Aminar (2nd from left) and Prof Ho exchange documents.

Employers partner with WOU to benefit workforce

The private and public sectors can partner with WOU under the Valued Partnership Programme (VPP), to gain tuition fee rebates for their employees to take up higher education qualifications at the University.

Since the VPP was established in October 2011, the University has to date linked up with some 120 multinational corporations, local companies, educational institutions and public sector agencies. Employees of WOU's education partners enjoy rebates for a period of two years – up to RM550 in the first semester, and a 10% reduction on tuition fees for at least the next consecutive three semesters.

The VPP facilitates the upgrading of knowledge and skills of the Malaysian workforce, leading to higher productivity and better job performance.

Employers incur no cost in signing up under WOU's VPP but reap great benefits for their employees. Moreover, companies registered under the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) can pay for their employees to take up courses as part of their educational assistance plan, and claim from HRDF.

A few of WOU's education partners spread nationwide are noted below:

- Manufacturing sector: Penang Seagate Industries; Southern Steel; Globetronics; SAM Engineering & Equipment; Agilent; Plexus; Dell; Intel; Flextronics; Osram; Jabil Circuit; Texchem; Knowles; AMD; Mattel; Zuellig
- Banking: Maybank; CIMB; Public Bank; Bank Muamalat Malaysia; Sarawak Bank Employees Union
- Education: Penang State Education Department; Seameo Rescam; Southern University College; Tunku Abdul Rahman University College; Penang Skills Development Centre
- Government agencies: Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission; Public Works Department northeast district; Bank Simpanan Nasional; Pos Malaysia Berhad; Perodua
- Others: Maxis; Canon Marketing; Suiwah Corporation; Royal Selangor Marketing; Boon Siew Honda; AIA; Zurich Insurance



WOU participation in new science centre

A science centre is expected to emerge soon in the magnificent Wisma Yeap Chor Ee building in George Town to inspire interest in the learning of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) among young and old alike. The Penang State Government through the Penang Development Corporation (PDC) recently signed an agreement with WOU Sdn Bhd for a 30-year leasing of the pre-colonial heritage building at China Street Ghaut.

It will house the centre, the Penang Science Café, operated by Penang Science Cluster (PSC), and serve as a hub for Creative Animation Triggers (CAT) to promote creative multimedia development.

The agreement for the 42,402 sq feet building was signed during a ceremony on 29 June 2014 by WOU Sdn Bhd Chairman Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap Leong Huat and PDC General Manager Dato' Rosli Jaafar. Among those present was WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye.

The science centre is expected to commence operations early next year. "The Science Cluster and associated industries spearheading innovation will add further value to all of the other infrastructure facilities within the heritage enclave," said Dato' Seri Stephen.

This signing was preceded a month earlier by a brainstorming session at the WOU main campus to discuss collaboration with PSC on how the building could be used and on the content of various proposed activities. It was attended by, among others, WOU Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Dato' Seri Stephen, Prof Ho, as well as PSC's Director Yoon Chon Leong and CEO Ooi Peng Ee.



The PSC, an industry-led initiative set up in 2009 with the support of the State Government, aims to address the demand for science, engineering and technology graduates to fulfil needs of industries in Penang. Yoon said the PSC particularly hopes to create interest in young children in science and engineering through activities conducted at the science centre, leading to pursuits of these fields at university-level later. He said WOU students may also run their projects in PSC facilities.

The Penang State Government is working with the PSC to set up science centres at different localities in the state to promote science and technology. The first centre at Krystal Point led by Agilent Technologies became operational late last year. It holds science and technology-related activities and provides space for school children or undergraduate students to undertake projects.

CEMCA sponsorship to run OER-based online course in January

Educators in Malaysia will soon get to benefit from an Open Educational Resources (OER) course set up by WOU and the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) entirely through virtual means.

WOU has signed an agreement with CEMCA to run the OER-based eLearning course online in January 2015. It would benefit educators in schools, teacher training institutions and universities.

The agreement was signed by WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye and Mr R Thyagarajan, Head of Administration and Finance of CEMCA, New Delhi, on 22 Aug 2014. WOU and CEMCA had jointly developed the course last year and offered it on a trial basis.

CEMCA has contributed RM38,000 for WOU to run the course's five modules under the CC BY SA (Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike) licence.

Under the agreement, CEMCA supports WOU in the reuse of the modules for developing and offering the three-month course. WOU will provide technical and tutoring support. The agreement is effective until June 10 next year.

A training workshop for the necessary online facilitation was held from 16 to 18 October 2014 for capacity-building of a selected group of WOU academics. CEMCA provided the assistance of an expert, Dr Som Naidu from Monash University, Australia to conduct the training in Penang.

"We currently have four resource persons, Jasmine, Vighnarajah, Deehbanjli and Prakash, and we need at least another ten by January," said Prof Mohandas Menon, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic-OCL) and Acting



Prakash Arumugam of WOU.



Director of WOU's Centre for Professional Development and Continuing Education (PACE).

"We will train them on how to give learner support and tutorial online. For each unit within a module, the facilitator must set questions and tasks for students to respond to. All these must be managed online."

He added that the running of the course would provide experience for WOU to evolve a sustainable business model to offer more courses online.



DVC appointed to international education body

WOU's Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic-OCL) Prof Mohandas Menon has been appointed to the Board of Directors of the International Council on Education for Teaching (ICET).

He was officially welcomed to the Board by Prof James O'Meara, the ICET President, in a letter dated 17 July 2014. The ICET Board represents professionals in education from all regions of the globe. Prof Menon is expected to serve a three-year term till mid-2017.

As Director, Prof Menon will contribute to the ICET's initiatives in the Australia/Asia/Pacific region, namely in resource development, policy development and governance, so as to advance the organisation's mission.

The ICET is an international non-governmental organisation of policy and decision-makers in education, government and business dedicated to global development through education.

Based in US, the ICET has consultative status with the UNESCO Economic and Social Council. It stresses on international cooperation in educational development to improve the quality of teacher education and to expand global educational opportunities.

The ICET's stated mission is "to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of learners in all parts of the world by providing opportunities for those involved in their education to share knowledge, practice, resources, and expertise and establish active partnerships that are designed to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and improve life opportunities for young people."

Prof Menon viewed his appointment to the Board as a great recognition for the University. He stated: "I hope to be able to help, through the ICET, in further developing and improving the quality of resources as well as the level of teaching at universities in this region, since it will directly impact the calibre of professionals that are created for the teaching profession. The new technology applications and innovations developed and practised successfully by educators in WOU should support my efforts in this regard."

WOU academic bags 'Best Professor in HRM' award

WOU's School of Business & Administration Senior Lecturer Dr Balakrishnan Muniapan was named 'Best Professor in Human Resources Management (HRM)' at the fifth annual *Asia's Education Excellence Awards* held in Singapore on 1 August 2014. He was the sole award recipient in the HRM category.

Dr Balakrishnan, who joined WOU in July 2013, received a trophy and a citation award at the ceremony organised by CMO Asia, Chief Marketing Officers Council and World Education Congress. The event was attended by some 200 people from about 25 countries in the Asian region.

"This honour is not just for me, but for the whole University and country," said Dr Bala, stressing that the award for his contribution to HRM teaching and research adds to the numerous accolades won by WOU recently.

"The award enhances the image and brand name of the University. It will also serve to spur other WOU academics to develop competencies and to excel in their respective fields, and be noted internationally," he said. "It gives the University recognition and moreover when people know that you have award winners, especially since

Bachelor of Business (Hons) in HR Management has just been offered through ODL, this is a plus point for WOU in promoting the programme to prospective students."

Dr Bala has 20 years' experience in training, research, advisory, consulting and teaching in HRM. He had previously worked as a senior lecturer/lecturer in HRM for 10 years at the Sarawak branch campuses of Swinburne University of Technology and Curtin University of Technology. He had served as a Visiting Professor in HRM for many universities and institutes within Asia, namely Malaysia, Vietnam, Philippines, Thailand, India and China. He had also presented HRM papers at conferences in several countries within Asia, Africa, Australia and Europe.

He holds a Doctor of Business Administration in HR Development from Ifugao State University, Philippines; an MSc in HR Management from University of Portsmouth, UK; and a Bachelor of Economics from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

Offering his thoughts on the field of HR, Dr Bala said: "Every manager needs to be concerned about HR since they all manage people. If a manager is well-versed in HR management,



Dr Balakrishnan with his trophy and citation.

it could help avoid HR errors like hiring wrong people for the job, poor human resource planning, hiring without proper investigation or background checks, finding employees not giving their best, and unfair compensation and rewards system."

New dean of School of Science & Technology “returns” to WOU

WOU welcomes Dr Wendy Bong Chin Wei as Dean and Associate Professor of the School of Science and Technology (SST), which she assumed on 18 July 2014.

Dr Bong is “returning” to WOU, the university where she had once served as Senior Lecturer at the SST from 2006 to 2008. She has accumulated some 15 years’ work experience in the area of information and communications technology (ICT), particularly in research and teaching. Her research activities were mainly supported by research grants from the Ministry of Health (MOH), the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) and Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

Prior to re-joining WOU, she had worked as a Senior Staff Researcher from 2011 to 2013 at MIMOS Berhad, a fully government-funded company that undertakes research in ICT. While at MIMOS in Technology Park Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, she actively carried out research activities for the artificial intelligence centre, knowledge management cluster, and the information security laboratory.

She was also a post-doctoral Research Fellow at the School of Computer Science, USM, from 2009 to 2011. She had previously served as Lecturer in KDU College, Penang, from 2004 to 2006, and as Research Fellow in Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) from 1999 to 2004.

On her appointment, Dr Bong said: “My objective for the School is to ensure that it will be able to provide a high quality and up-to-date educational programmes with the cornerstones of value learning and confidence among students and staff, quality performance among students and staff, and transition for students to reach their divine potential.”

Dr Bong obtained her PhD in Information Technology from UNIMAS, where her doctoral thesis focused on algorithm design, optimisation, decision-making and artificial intelligence. She holds an MSc in Information Technology and a BSc in Information Technology from UNIMAS, where she was a recipient of Postgraduate and Postdoctoral Fellowship awards for MSc and PhD programmes from MOSTI.

She had in the past provided her expertise and IT consultancy services to the Penang General Hospital, GeneNews (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, a cancer research centre, and MYSTECH Solutions Sdn Bhd, a solution firm for Computer-aided Design for surveyors and civil engineers. She has also conducted guest lectures in USM for postgraduate students and tutorial sessions in the second and third Malaysian Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence.



New HR head believes in being people-friendly

Puan Surrayya Shuib has been appointed as the new head of the Human Resources Department at WOU effective 25 June 2014. She oversees the departmental functions that include meeting WOU’s manpower requirements, generating a positive and productive work and learning environment, and developing an excellent workforce for optimum productivity.

She brings with her more than 15 years experience in the field of human resources management, particularly in the industrial sector.

Surrayya describes herself as a “people friendly” person. She hopes “to deliver the best I can to the management and staff of WOU, and bring the HR Department to greater heights with respect from all”.

Prior to joining WOU as Senior HR Manager, she was the HR Manager at Inari Technology, a leading electronics manufacturing services company at the Bayan Lepas Free Industrial Zone. She had also served as HR Manager

at Flextronics Technology (2010-2013), Rapid Penang (2009-2010), Marvell Semiconductor (2007-2009), and Globetronics (1997-2006).

She did her secondary school studies at Tunku Kurshiah College, Seremban, before enrolling at the then Institut Teknologi MARA in Kelantan where she obtained her Diploma in Accountancy. She graduated from the South Bank University, London, with a degree in Accounting and Finance.

“I am very new to Education and would really appreciate guidance from everyone,” she says. “I thank WOU for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the educational sector whatever best practices that I have learned from my many years of working in the manufacturing industry.”

WOU explores joint initiatives with TUT of Japan



Posing after the meeting.



Prof Inoue gestures as he makes a point.

The delegation comprised Prof Mitsuteru Inoue, Executive Trustee/Vice President of TUT, Associate Prof Dr Lim Pang Boey of TUT's Centre for International Education and Mr Kiyohiko Kuroda, Administrative Head of Global Education, TUT-Penang. They were accompanied by Dato' Seri Kelvin Kiew, chairman and president of Mini Circuits Technologies (M) Sdn Bhd.

The visitors met with WOU's senior board members and top management, including Wawasan Education Foundation chairman Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, WOU Sdn Bhd Chairman Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap and Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye. Also present were relevant faculty members from the School of Science and Technology (SST).

In his briefing, Prof Inoue said TUT hopes to realise its plans for a full-fledged independent Japanese university in Penang, anticipating students from Malaysia and ASEAN countries. He highlighted TUT's first-rate research facilities, including the recently opened Electronics-Inspired Interdisciplinary Research Institute (EIRIS) and a robotics research centre.

The science and engineering-oriented university was founded in 1976 and is fully financed by the Japanese government. It has some 2,200 students, including 200 international students

of whom 60 are from Malaysia.

The university opened its first overseas education base, the TUT-USM Penang centre, last December through collaboration with Universiti Sains Malaysia. The centre provides engineering degree programmes to Southeast Asian students, with lectures in English conducted by TUT's engineering faculty.

Prof Inoue also said TUT has 21 undergraduate engineering students doing a six-month internship at a few multinational corporations in Penang and attending seminars at TUT-USM.



Prof Inoue.

A delegation from Toyohashi University of Technology (TUT) in Japan paid a visit to the WOU main campus on 8 August 2014 to promote and reinforce their university's aspirations in Penang.

The representatives expressed a commitment to Penang, especially in seeking partners like WOU which they said "is strong in delivery of higher education."

Implications from the rise of MOOCs

To MOOC or not to MOOC. That is the question higher education institutions must confront today as an increasing number of sectors take up Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs).

In a recent talk at the WOU main campus, Commonwealth of Learning (COL) President and CEO Prof Asha Kanwar said the rise of MOOCs has made higher education readily available, bringing implications for universities. This is especially so in the areas of pedagogy, services management (such as advanced records management, access to online library and discussion forums) and credentialling (such as certificates of completion, badges and credits).

Speaking at WOU's main campus on 17 Sept 2014, she emphasised the growing popularity of MOOCs. Two universities in Malaysia have already started offering a course on MOOC, she said.

And of the three big MOOC platforms - Coursera, Udacity and edX - some 270,000 people signed up for a single computer science MOOC course under Udacity, she said. The number is higher than the 200,000 learners who aspire to do computer science courses in nearly 3,000 institutions in the US, Prof Kanwar stressed.

When COL offered a MOOC for Development (M4D) course, a total of 2,286 signed up from 116 countries, she added.

The lesson learnt from this is that it is important to provide high quality materials combined with good teaching, she asserted. Learners need to be kept engaged and IT platforms must be reliable. MOOC can also be achieved

without branded platforms like edX, while quality can be delivered at low cost, she said.

Prof Kanwar also stated that countries must have a national policy on MOOCs, including credentialling, to provide an enabling environment for higher education institutions to offer the courses.

The talk was attended by over 70 people, including academics from WOU and other institutions in Penang.



Prof Asha Kanwar.

“University ranking system must keep improving to address shortcomings”



A former head of India's national accreditation body has cautioned that while university ranking is gaining popularity and prominence, there is a need to keep improving the methodologies involved to make the ranking system more valid and reliable.

Prof V S Prasad, the former Director of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) of India, said during a recent talk at WOU's main campus that ranking has become an important tool to market higher education and spells benefits for the education community. "But we must be aware of the methodological limitations, and continuously aspire to improve the methodologies and bring more validity, reliability into the whole process of the ranking system."

The three criteria of research, teaching and learning, and community engagement are not given equal weightage in the measurement of quality, he said. Ranking also tends to favour institutions focusing on certain disciplines which are more market-oriented and critical to society, he added. Another concern is a distortion of reality by institutions participating in rankings for commercial purposes.

Prof Prasad said this when speaking on *World University Rankings: Different Perspectives* at WOU on 30 June 2014. The in-house talk was held under the auspices of the WOU Seminar Forum.

He explained some downsides of ranking, such as that it could lead to 'neo-imperialism' in higher education since western institutions dominate in world rankings and other institutions would strive to follow the western model, neglecting their own mission and vision. He expressed concern that brand images and appearances may become more important than content, even though in education "it is the experience and not the branding that matters".

He noted that ranking can benefit the education community as it stimulates quality and increases performance, while providing information to prospective students, parents and the public about the quality of the institution.

"Ranking promotes self-esteem of institutions, enhances the employability of graduates, attracts best students and best faculty, and enables better funding from government or international agencies, while learners would not mind paying more to be in that institution," said Prof Prasad.

"Ranking can contribute to more international collaboration and international students, and to national pride and prestige."



WOU to offer COL-sponsored open online course in January

WOU plans to offer an open, online Action Research course targeted for school teachers, teacher educators, teacher trainees and industry trainers next year.

It would be implemented as a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) through the University's Centre for Professional Development and Continuing Education (PACE).

The course, coordinated by the School of Education, Languages and Communications (SELC), is being created with a grant awarded by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), Canada. It is one of the two MOOCs being developed by WOU this year.

Speaking at an in-house talk under the auspices of the WOU Seminar Forum on 19 September 2014, SELC Assoc Prof Dr Goh Lay Huah said the course will facilitate and guide learners through their action research process.

Participants who are WOU-registered online learners shall receive full online tutor support and certification for a fee, while MOOC learners who take the course free-of-charge on a self-learning mode without any online facilitation or guidance will have access to quizzes and self-tests.

WOU is now producing the Action Research course, containing four modules that focus on the practices and applications in carrying out action research in the education/training context, as follows:

- Module 1 - Introduction to Action Research
- Module 2 - Plan and Write an Action Research Proposal
- Module 3 - Plan and Implement the Action Research
- Module 4 - Analyse Data and Write Report

The project team members from SELC are Dean Prof Santhiram Raman, Prof Phalachandra Bhandigadi and Dr Goh. The course shall commence in January 2015 for completion by the end of March.

There are also plans to translate the Action Research MOOC into Malay in the future.

Meanwhile, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic-OCL) Prof Mohandas Menon said a new learning management system, *Wawasan4PACE*, is being created to support the Action Research course as well as WOU's OER-based online and IELTS preparatory courses.

Competency in designing learning materials and assessment

WOU participants undertaking the ODL Core Competency Certificate Programme (ODL-CCCP) recently completed two important modules on learning materials and assessment.

Module 3: Designing Learning Materials and Use of Resources was conducted in June while *Module 6: Formative and Summative Assessment in ODL* was completed in August.

Twelve staff from the four schools and the Educational Technology & Publishing Unit attended the training facilitated by Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic-OCL) Prof Mohandas Menon and Prof Phalachandra Bhandigadi, School of Education, Languages and Communications.

In Module 3, Prof Phalachandra discussed potential problems in course modules prepared by course writers. He said student workload must be correctly reflected in the hours allotted in the course guide, and "the section objective, unit objective and course objective should match with the learning outcome".

Prof Menon spoke on effective instructional design for courses and for self-learning materials in the ODL mode. "We must design materials based on learning principles underlying different theoretical frameworks," he said.

Participants were given a hands-on task to identify suitable learning devices that could be integrated to learning materials to increase learner-learner and learner-material interactivities.

Later in Module 6, Prof Menon spoke about the role of assessment in offering feedback to all stakeholders – students, educators, parents, MQA and the public – while allowing for certification.



Prof Phalachandra shares about TMAs.



Prof Menon (left) and Prof Phalachandra.

He stressed on tutor-marked assignments (TMAs) as being the main type of formative assessment at WOU. Others include self-tests, quizzes, unit tests and short projects, with summative assessments being final exams and final projects.

Prof Phalachandra said TMAs must have a "fair and objective grading, clear comments/notes on grading, constructive criticism with indications of how to improve, students strengths and weakness pointed out" and be a learning experience.

He also conducted a critical analysis of sample TMAs to discuss issues like appropriateness, number of questions, clarity, level of difficulty, marking scheme and time required, to help the participants prepare better quality TMAs.

WOU host career talk by ICAEW for students

Two representatives from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales (ICAEW) conducted a career seminar on professional accounting for open distance learning (ODL) students of WOU at the main campus on 20 September 2014.

ICAEW's Senior Executive for Student Recruitment & Marketing, Ethan Neo, and Business Development Manager Abdul Rahman Ali, from the Malaysia regional office in Kuala Lumpur shared about the organisation's leadership role in accountancy, finance and business. They also spoke about how to become a member of the professional body and earn the right to be called a Chartered Accountant to enjoy the benefits.

Joining the speakers was ICAEW member Mohd Junaidy Abdul Mutalib, a senior general manager for group finance at Felda Global Ventures Holdings Berhad.

The University organised this career talk for its ODL Accounting degree students who shall qualify to become chartered accountants after graduation. Anyone seeking to practise in Malaysia must obtain the Chartered Accountant qualification, as required under the Accountants Act 1967. They must pass either the Qualifying Examination of the Malaysian Institute of Accountants or the exams of scheduled bodies, including ICAEW, and undergo chambering.

WOU graduates enjoy credit exemptions to sit for the qualifying exams as its Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Accounting programme – offered both

via part-time and full-time study – is recognised by ICAEW. The ICAEW examinations are open book exams which integrate understanding and application of theory to the workplace throughout training

Currently 20,000 students globally are studying for the ICAEW qualification. ICAEW is a professional membership organisation, supporting over 143,000 chartered accountants around the world.



Mohd Junaidy (left) and Ethan Neo share on ICAEW.

School students become “entrepreneurs” at fair

Some 25 secondary students from SMK Datuk Haji Mohd Nor Ahmad – the school sponsored by WOU under a programme to nurture business leadership and entrepreneurial talents in the young – had a fruitful and exciting time participating in the recent 12th Annual Young Enterprise Northern Region Sales Fair.

Held at the 1st Avenue Mall, Penang, the activity was part of the Young Enterprise (YE) Programme, a community education initiative under the auspices of the Malaysian American Chamber of Commerce (AMCHAM).

A total of 16 “companies”, or corporate-sponsored schools, with some 450 students took part in the annual fair on 19-20 July 2014. It also featured an exhibition to celebrate 25 years of YE in Penang.

The event was graced by Northern Region YE Programme administrator Datuk Tang Hon Yin, top managers of the corporate sponsor companies – including WOU Chief Administrative Officer Yeong Sik Kheong – and heads of the sponsored schools.

SMK Datuk Haji Mohd Nor Ahmad's own “company”, Dark Horse Enterprise, stood out because of its uniquely hand-designed logo and four ‘manufactured’ products. The team sold rubber-band or rubber loom bracelets, crystal and cartoon brooches, bag tags, and the YE commemorative 25th anniversary recycled paper mache limited edition photo frames.

Prior to the fair, WOU's Chief Advisor Deehbanji Lakshmayya conducted several briefing and training sessions for the ‘Young Achievers’, who comprised fourth formers of the school. As they were tasked to form and manage a company, including developing products for sale, they received training on approaching customers, closing a sale, inventory control, pricing and promotion.

In addition to the overall YE Achievement Award, there were special prizes given for best overall stall, best customer service, best teamwork, best sales and marketing techniques, best decorated stall and most profitable stall. The Penang Green Council also awarded a prize for the best recycled product and the YE committee gave one for best 25th anniversary commemorative product.



Holding out door gifts of ‘ketupat’.



Staff having a fun time at the gathering.

Memorable charity clothing donation during Hari Raya

In the spirit of ‘giving and caring’, WOU organised a memorable clothing donation drive in conjunction with the Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebration this year.

The in-house charity initiative was intended to improve the lives of the homeless by distributing to them used or recycled clothes collected from the WOU family. It was a way for the University to help the less fortunate in society.

“For this year’s Hari Raya celebration, we decided to do something different. We organised a clothing recycle programme from May 26 till June 26, participated by WOU staff and students,” said Pn Kamsiah Mohd Ali, Director of Learning & Library Services, who acted as WOU Hari Raya celebration organising chairperson.

The clothes were collected, sorted and distributed to the poor and homeless at Jalan Kapitan Keling and Jalan Jelutong, Penang. “We also donated clothes to people in need, the WOU cleaners and to an Orang Asli settlement in Perak,” she said in her address to staff at the annual Hari Raya gathering arranged by the WOU Muslim community at the main campus on 28 August 2014.

Many of the guests came to the festively decorated hall of the Homestead mansion on campus dressed in attractive traditional Malay outfits and were greeted with gifts of multi-coloured crafted ketupat.

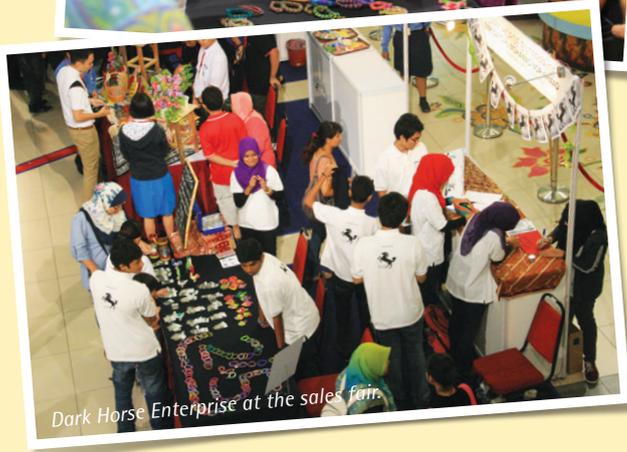
In his speech, Vice Chancellor Prof Dato’ Dr Ho Sinn Chye noted that the less fortunate are never forgotten and applauded the charity clothing drive. He added that the gathering served to enhance the camaraderie among employees.

The staff enjoyed a traditional Hari Raya lunch of nasi briyani, dalca, chicken rendang, ketupat, *kuih cara* and other tasty delicacies.

WOU top management who graced the event included Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Chief Administrative Officer Yeong Sik Kheong and Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic-ODL) Prof Madhulika Kaushik.



Admiring the rubber loom bracelets.



Dark Horse Enterprise at the sales fair.

It's a family effort for MBA trio

Studying at WOU is very much a family affair for three students from Johor Bahru pursuing the MBA in Manufacturing and Production Management (MBA-MPM).

Tee Hui Ping and her husband Calvin Cheok Ching Kiat, both 32-year-old professionals, had long wanted to pursue further studies to enrich themselves. Having the impression that studying for a Master's would involve full-time commitment and regular classes, they delayed the dream.

When her brother Tee Jay Sun, 34, registered for the January 2013 intake of the programme, he decided to encourage the couple to join him so that they can pore over and discuss the subjects together.

They like WOU because of the flexibility of the courses and classes, allowing them to manage work, family and study in a convenient manner. "When we found out about WOU's open distance learning where we can arrange our own schedule of self-learning, it suited us the best," said Hui Ping, who has been working as a delivery planner

at FMC Technologies in Nusajaya for seven years. Jay Sun is a product planner at FMC.

"We work in the manufacturing line. The MBA-MPM offers specialist courses like Supply Chain Management, Project Management and Operations Management to equip us with knowledge for better planning and implementation," she added. The MBA will be a welcome addition to the degree in Information Systems that she obtained from a local private university.

For Calvin, a staff engineer at Flextronics Technology for two years, the MBA augments his current scope of work. "The courses give me a better understanding of accounting, finance, and health and safety issues," said the holder of an engineering degree (Electrical-Electronics) from a public university. "I find the MBA equips me with relevant management knowledge for a business environment while my job gives me the hands-on experience," he added.

"Embarking on the journey was tough at first as I had left studies 7 years ago. However in studying together as a family, we are able to offer academic and moral support to one another. We share opinions and thoughts on the courses that we take, making the journey at WOU enjoyable and much easier. We also have our own study group and regularly chat via WhatsApp," said Calvin.

Since Flextronics and FMC are VPP (Valued Partnership Programme) partners of the University, they also enjoy tuition fee rebates under the scheme.



Calvin (left) with wife Hui Ping and brother-in-law.

As he learnt, MBA student applied to his work

A 31-year-old construction manager from Ipoh recently completed his MBA in Construction Management (MBA-CM) at WOU. During the process, he was able to actively relate what he was studying with his work, and even got promoted twice.

Chu Wai Lune has been working with Gamuda Engineering for nearly six years, having first joined as a site engineer. He was encouraged by his immediate superior to pursue the MBA to better equip himself.

Aspiring to be in top management and wanting to drive his company forward, he took up the programme. "When I signed up back in July 2011, I was a senior engineer then," he said. "The two-and-a-half years at WOU matured my thinking and I was promoted from senior engineer to section head and am currently a construction manager."

He was able to use his work environment as a case study for assignments and put into practice

what he learnt. "The courses relating to safety, risk management, negotiation and dispute resolution, and construction management helped me to make clear, appropriate decisions without jeopardising the operations, safety and finances of the company," he added.

Chu holds a Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Civil and Structural Engineering from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. He chose WOU for its affordable cost and flexible study, and because his course mates are mostly working professionals. "We can share our knowledge and experience, and learn from one another," he said.

"Having technical knowledge alone is not enough. We need to communicate and negotiate with people, and so I wanted to learn more about management, economics, and finance," Chu added. "The MBA-CM offered me a full package of management skills and it's related to my work."



In action at a construction site.

Get the latest WOU updates from Facebook and Twitter!



Follow us:

<http://www.facebook.com/WawasanOpenUniversity>



Follow us:

<http://twitter.com/WawasanOU>

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)

Main Campus
Wawasan Open University
54 Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, 10050 Penang, Malaysia.
Tel: 04-218 0333 | Fax: 04-226 9323
Email: enquiry@wou.edu.my

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.
Tel: 03-3325 2353 / 3325 2373 | Fax: 03-3325 2313
Email: rso_klg@wou.edu.my

Subang Regional Support Centre
No. 34-1 Ground Floor, Jalan PJS 8/2, Mentari Plaza, Bandar Sunway, 46150 Petaling Jaya, Selangor.
Tel: 03-5635 5323/ 5632 5323 | Fax: 03-5635 1323
Email: rso_sbg@wou.edu.my

Johor Bahru Regional Centre
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

Kota Bharu Regional Centre
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
*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
Email: ro_kc@wou.edu.my