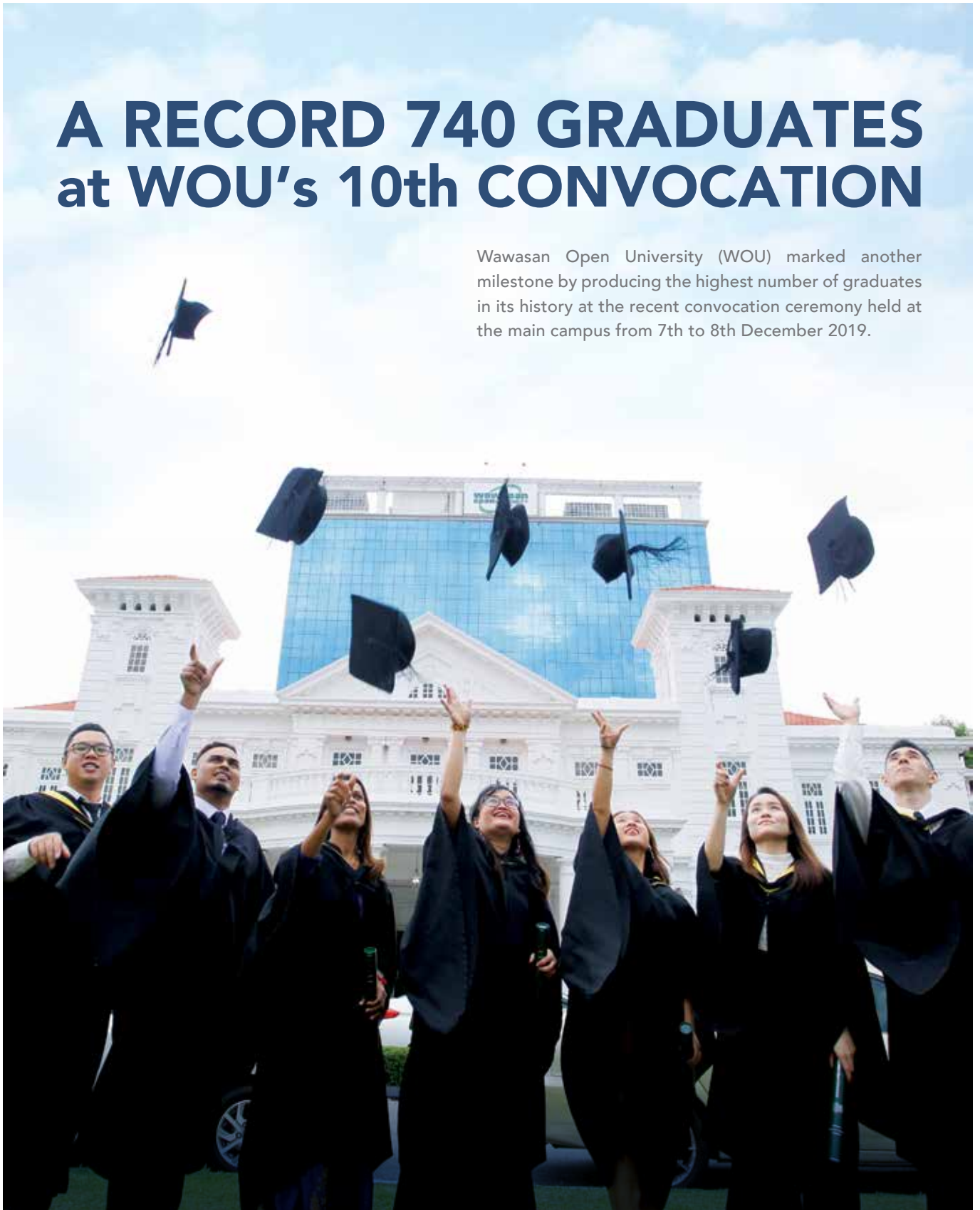


A RECORD 740 GRADUATES at WOU's 10th CONVOCATION

Wawasan Open University (WOU) marked another milestone by producing the highest number of graduates in its history at the recent convocation ceremony held at the main campus from 7th to 8th December 2019.



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EDITOR'S NOTE

In this issue, we are proud to feature highlights of the University's 10th Convocation Ceremony that was held over seven sessions at our very own seaside campus in Penang from 7 to 8 December 2019.

The convocation featured the Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor and Vice Chancellor each participating for the very first time since assuming their respective roles in 2019. We are also thankful to two of our alumni who shared their learning experiences and pearls of wisdom with the graduates during two of the sessions.

This year WOU produced a record 740 graduates - its highest thus far - to make a total of 4,495 graduates produced since its first convocation event in 2010. Of the 740, 163 were from postgraduate programmes and 577 from undergraduate programmes. They ranged in age from 22 to 76 years. The majority, comprising 63.1% of the graduates, were 35 years old and below. Once again, the School of Business & Administration had the largest share of graduates.

WOU fervently subscribes to the philosophy of lifelong learning. Fittingly, we saw many graduates returning to the University to do their Bachelor's and Master's degrees, and even their doctorates. Age is just a number when it comes to determination, grit and passion to keep on learning and contribute to the community. There were four graduates born in the 1940s, and therefore in their 70s no less, graduating at the recent convocation. Two of them have re-enrolled yet again for additional degrees at WOU.

I therefore wish to take this opportunity to encourage readers to scale greater heights by upskilling and reskilling yourselves in the face of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, both for your own personal growth, and to broaden your employability and marketability.

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THAI COLLEGE DELEGATION MAKES STUDY VISIT TO WOU



▲ Prof Zoraini (right) receives a souvenir from the delegation.

Prof Zoraini Wati Abas who spoke about the establishment of the University.

School of Education, Languages and Communications (SELC) Senior Lecturer Sean Ooi Li Hsien gave a brief overview of higher education in the country. He elaborated on the study options available to secondary students upon completion of their Form Five or Form Six examinations.

He highlighted WOU's four academic Schools and the University's goal of enabling working adults to pursue their educational aspirations through open distance learning (ODL).

The visitors from HATC, which is located in the province of Songkhla in southern Thailand, were suitably impressed to learn that WOU currently offers 9 on-campus learning programmes for school leavers and diploma holders.

SELC lecturer Arathai Din Eak mentioned WOU's short courses and workshops, such as the English Language Workshop for working professionals and for international participants.



▲ The Thai delegation posing with WOU staff.

A group of 99 teachers and students from Hatyai Amnuaywit Technological College (HATC) in Thailand paid a visit to WOU on 8 November 2019 in a bid to better understand the Malaysian post-secondary education system. In particular, they were keen to gain insights on WOU's academic offerings and operations.

The delegation was welcomed to the main campus by Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and Educational Technology)

▼ The Sikhism booth.



▼ Highlighting the Peranakan culture.



◀ Entertaining Malay dance thrills the crowd.

RELISHING UNITY AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGH A CULTURAL FEST

Students from the Comparative Religions class for the September 2019 intake recently participated in a savoury experience of sorts to celebrate harmony and understanding among the country's major religions. The project was given a delightful flavour thanks to an appetising spread of tasty dishes from the diverse cultures.

The Penang Food and Cultural Fest, as it was called, was organised by the 80-odd students, all undertaking full-time on-campus study at WOU, at the main campus on 13 November 2019,

While the undertaking was part of their course assessment, it also helped raise funds for a worthy cause. All proceeds from the food sales were directed to the children's cancer ward of the Penang Hospital.

The event allowed the students to become acquainted with the main religious cultures in a unique manner. Ten stalls were set up to sell the food items and also to share insights on the various faiths and communities. They covered Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism and Taoism. They also highlighted various cultural attributes of the Cantonese, Eurasian, Hokkien, Indian Muslim, Peranakan, Punjabi, Tamil and Thai communities.

The students invested a great deal of effort in making the project a success. For instance, the Punjabi group, which featured the Sikh faith, brought in a chef to fry *pakor*as and dish out *chapatis* on the spot. The Thai 'sawadika' stall prepared *tom yam*, mango rice and *taufu bergedil*, while the Tamil group served freshly made *thosai*.

CHANCELLOR MAKES CALL FOR TRANSPARENCY AND HIGH ETHICAL STANDARDS

There is a pressing need for everyone in society, especially those in power, to practise openness and transparency at all levels of organisational life, be it in corporate administration, political governance, or management of any social or cultural body.

In asserting this, WOU Chancellor Tunku Tan Sri Imran Tuanku Ja'afar quoted a widely held axiom: "Corruption is authority plus monopoly minus transparency."

"It is vital for those in positions of leadership in business, government and civil society to demonstrate openness and transparency," he said. "The integrity and moral compass of those in leadership will tend to disintegrate without transparency and accountability."

Tunku Imran said this in his address to graduates at WOU's 10th convocation ceremony at the main campus on 7 December 2019. He had earlier presented postgraduate degrees to 81 graduates from the Master of Education (MEd), Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), MBA in Construction Management (MBA-CM), MBA in Manufacturing and Production Management (MBA-MPM), and the Commonwealth Executive Master of Public Administration (CeMPA) programmes.

He called on the graduates to help to build a society with high ethical standards. Besides being themselves transparent professionally, they should promote and demand transparency from the government, local authorities, service providers, and other public and private institutions, he said.

There should be transparency across all sectors of business and government, he stressed, particularly in key institutions like Bank Negara, the Judiciary, Police, Election Commission and Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission. He said it would bring about greater performance and also help to tackle problems like nepotism, cronyism, favouritism and inefficiency.

Tunku Imran asked the graduates to ponder if they hold the attainment of a university degree as something paramount in their lives. "What about character and integrity, which are important fundamentals to promoting a culture of transparency and accountability in government and the corporate sector?" he asked.

"Transparency makes good business sense, since it enhances customer trust and confidence, builds customer loyalty and promotes customer satisfaction," he said. It also compels businesses to be more committed to improving their products and services, he added. "Without transparency, we invite abuses and misappropriation of funds."

He called for transparency to infuse every part of an organisation, cascading from top management to the bottom level, "to ensure that both employees and the public get access to the important information they require."

"Transparency demonstrates a company's accountability to its shareholders, employees, customers and the general public; it keeps the management honest, promotes ethical behaviour and delivers best performance," he said. "Transparency is key to good corporate governance, investor confidence, reduced corruption in the public and private sectors, and improved national economic growth."

In addition, a transparent, open workplace culture serves to improve employee morale and productivity, he said. Employees become more engaged in their work, developing trust in their employer, and deriving work satisfaction. In line with this, Tunku Imran called on top management members to share clearly their vision, financial performance, processes of hiring, appointment and promotion, and other decisions with the staff. "This makes employees feel invested in the company's growth and success, keeps anxiety levels low, builds trust in the employer, and convinces them of the company's ethical standards," he said.

He noted that transparency is in increasing demand in the current age of connectivity. Businesses should disclose what goes into a product, where its raw materials come from, how it is priced, and the social and environmental impacts of the business. "The bottom line is that without openness and transparency, wrongful acts sprout, affecting society and the nation," he said.

Tunku Imran also emphasised the importance of instilling this ideal among the younger generation. "Educating our citizens from young to embrace intrinsic values is key to promoting a culture of transparency. The young must be taught to embrace noble values," he said.

"In Malaysia, we really need a strong political will to legislate good governance; we need strong consumer pressure to demand greater accountability in service providers and other public institutions; and we need a strong deterrent in the form of hefty punishments for various abuses of public trust."



► Tunku Imran conferred postgraduate degrees on 81 graduates.

WIDEN YOUR FOCUS AND CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIETY, GRADUATES URGED

WOU Pro-Chancellor Dato' Dr Lim Thuang Seng urged graduates to broaden their perspective and seek to make a positive impact in society. Although universities bear the responsibility to revise their curricula and courses to match with talents required by employers, it is equally important for graduates to acquire cross-disciplinary knowledge and skills for better career prospects.

"In today's world, employees with skills in digital marketing, software and application development, e-commerce, big data analytics, and database management are highly sought-after by employers," he pointed out as examples.

Dato' Lim was speaking at WOU's 10th convocation ceremony on 7 December 2019. He gave the address after presenting degrees to 105 open distance learning (ODL) graduates.

He lauded WOU for its efforts to offer curricula in line with what is relevant in the job market. He also referred the graduates to the nation's 2018/2019 Critical Occupation List (COL) - which lists 59 critical jobs across 18 sectors in Malaysia - for a guide on job opportunities.

Dato' Lim offered three pieces of advice from his wealth of experience to help the graduates progress in life and in the job market. "First and foremost, **widen your focus**. Next, **seek friendship connections**; and thirdly, **seek to contribute in your own way**."

In his call to **widen their focus**, he said that there are always opportunities to explore and gain knowledge in areas other than what one has specialised in. This is to benefit one's life and career. "For instance, you may study English to become a journalist but the ability to interpret scientific data will definitely give you an added advantage," he said.



▲ Dato' Dr Lim (2nd from left) presides over the second session of the convocation.



▼ A section of the happy graduates at the convocation ceremony.

Technological advancements and digital disruptions are changing the nature of work, and the types of skills and jobs that are now in demand. Employers want graduates with a breadth of knowledge across disciplines, with critical thinking skills and the ability to understand changing outlooks.

He therefore urged the graduates to seek cross-disciplinary experiences, and called on higher learning institutions to keep pace with changes so as to produce industry-ready graduates with the right combination of hard and soft skills.

In suggesting the graduates **seek friendship connections**, Dato' Lim said they would have met fellow students from different backgrounds, interests and viewpoints while at WOU. He told them to expend their time and energy to continue building on friendships made as well to maintain connections with the faculty and tutors.

As for **seeking to contribute in their own way**, he asked the graduates to use the acquired skills and knowledge "to make a real impact" on society, the nation and the world. "Although you have graduated, learning and acquiring new knowledge must not stop. I am certain you will find many opportunities out there, and whichever career you are in or going into, seek out and find your own way to contribute," he said.

MAKE LEARNING AND CHANGE A WAY OF LIFE, SAYS TAN DR SRI KOH TSU KOON

WOU Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon has urged the University fraternity to always be prepared to upgrade and transform in accordance to prevailing circumstances while being aware of major challenges existing in the present day.

In particular, he highlighted three key challenges that now confront the University. First, the advent of Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) with disruptive technologies that impact on jobs and livelihood. Second, the volatile and uncertain socio-economic environment globally and domestically, and third, increasing competition from more institutions offering many online learning opportunities.

He said WOU must change and revamp by upgrading its technology and pedagogy; it must develop and deliver programmes and courses that are relevant to the changing demands of both industry and community. He stressed this in his welcoming remarks at the beginning of WOU's 10th convocation ceremony on 7 December 2019.

As Penang Chief Minister from 1990 to 2008, Tan Sri Dr Koh helped the state surmount various economic challenges, globally and domestically, in its rise as one of Asia's top manufacturing bases, especially in the electronics sector. He later served as a Minister in the Prime Minister's Department from 2009 to 2013.

Tan Sri Dr Koh also delivered a convocation address the next day which saw the graduation of 103 open distance learning (ODL) students from the business degree programmes of Accounting, Corporate Administration, and Entrepreneurship & Small Business Management. He used the occasion to pay homage to the late philanthropist Towkay Yeap Chor Ee and benefactor Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar Albukhary for their generosity and altruism in the building of the main campus.

"Towkay Yeap and Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar are indeed role models in entrepreneurship and corporate management for all of us," he said. "They started with no education or just basic education, without a bachelor degree in business administration or any other field, and yet they could overcome so many obstacles, excel so well and achieve top business leadership."

A leader, he added, "must always be committed to lifelong learning so as to keep up with information explosion and rapid changes brought about by technological disruptions of IR 4.0". He particularly commended the four septuagenarian graduates at the convocation and the top ODL student from the postgraduate programmes, Chay Foo Soon, as exemplary lifelong learners.



▲ Tan Sri Dr Koh and Vice Chancellor Prof Lily Chan (front row) pose with a few graduates and family members.

To underscore his point, he quoted the ancient Greek statesman and philosopher Solon who had said: "I grow old learning something new every day." He also remarked how the great Italian Renaissance artist Michelangelo was reported to have commented at the ripe age of 87: "I am still learning."

Delving on his Asian roots, he further shared two popular Chinese sayings: "To live and learn till old age" and "There is no limit to learning".

Tan Dr Sri Koh also touched on how people work hard and give their best but feel frustrated and stuck with what they are doing, leaving them unappreciated and suffocated. "Life becomes miserable for themselves and for others who work or live with them," he said.

"However, if we have a positive mindset towards our job and our responsibilities, things usually will click better and work to our advantage," he said. "Hence, being responsible at the workplace does not merely entail achieving the KPIs (key performance indicators) of each and every piece of work assigned to us, in a procedural and mechanical way.

"It should be more than that. It is bringing a good heart, mind and soul to our workplace. It is having the welfare of our workplace and our colleagues at heart. It is working closely and happily with everyone towards the success of our organisation, for all to benefit. Our workplace will then be a pleasant place for us to look forward to."

"Happy and positive-thinking people working together are usually more productive, more effective and even more innovative," he added, making the clarion call: "Let us make learning not only a life-long process, but also our way of life."

'THINK TOMORROW'

TO READY GRADUATES FOR A GLOBAL SHIFT



▲ Vice Chancellor Prof Lily Chan presided over 4 of the 7 sessions of the convocation to present scrolls to the graduating students.

WOU's latest tagline 'Think Tomorrow' is a reflection of its foresight in equipping students to meet the imminent new demands of the world in the near future.

Addressing the graduates at WOU's 10th convocation ceremony, Vice Chancellor Prof Lily Chan explained how the University is going through a period of transformation to tackle changes that are coming. "We are at the precipice of another global shift within the next five to ten years," she said.

Up to 375 million people worldwide will need to find entirely new kinds of jobs by 2030 because of automation, she stressed. "We at WOU have to be geared for this change by continuing to evolve new course contents, continuing to adopt new learning platforms, and staying relevant to attract students," she said.

"Our tagline right now is 'Think Tomorrow'; this is because we are striving to build the nation's talent pool that automation cannot replace," she added. The delivery of education will need to be transformed to arm future generations with the right set of skills and knowledge in the face of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0),

"We at WOU are gearing for this shift and will roll out a new set of exciting initiatives in 2020 to cater to this fundamental need of the nation," she announced. "As the world readies for IR 4.0, universities have to gear up and prepare a creative workforce that supports new fields such as artificial intelligence, innovation and automation. We must not just be aware but know how best to manage all these upcoming technological advancements that are expected to impact all aspects of our lives and industries."

Prof Chan also highlighted how the Internet of Things (IoT) will impact on lives. "Universities are also trying to understand the many opportunities and challenges we are all going to face as more and more devices start to join the IoT," she said.

"Institutions of higher education can no longer conduct their businesses as they have in the past; the challenges associated with IoT have to be managed in order to ensure effective and immediate transformation," she pointed out.

She reiterated the need to transform our human capital by equipping people with new skills, innovative thinking and multi-disciplinary knowledge. "We want to play a role in shaping innovation and educating future generations in Malaysia. WOU's mission is to transform higher education through open distance learning (ODL)."

Prof Chan asserted that WOU has found its right footing by being one of the pioneering institutions offering ODL in Malaysia at a time when the cost of traditional tertiary education is escalating around the world. The ODL mode of study employs technologies to enable students to access course contents online and communicate with faculty and tutors. "The future of education will increasingly rely on such distance learning platforms," she said.

She also spoke on the role of higher education in driving the nation's growth and competitiveness through teaching and research, cultivation of the mind, and through civic activities and public discourse, and in building good human beings.

She said the educational system must produce an educated community that values democracy, diversity, and need to be at the forefront of innovation and research. "Establishing an inclusive culture must be a priority of senior leadership at all institutions. This is critical, for only with strong, successful and innovative universities can a nation's economy be bolstered and we are able to shore up Malaysia's position in the global hierarchy of power."

Prof Chan also called for universities to prepare for Generation Z students, referring to those born in the late 1990s and after, who have grown up in a digital environment and are Internet savvy.



▲ Septuagenarians Wong, Kamilia (1st & 2nd from right) and Mangayarkarasy (2nd from left) with fellow graduates Chay Foo Soon (centre) and Belinda Chee.

GOLDEN GIRLS IN THEIR 70'S EPITOMISE ARDOUR FOR LEARNING

Ageing like fine wine in the most profound sense of the adage, three septuagenarians have exemplified the grand spirit of lifelong learning at WOU. At their advanced ages they graduated with a master's degree each, presenting an exhilarating picture of inspiration and delight at WOU's 10th convocation ceremony on 7 December last year.

Intriguingly enough, as though gaining such a high degree was not enough, all three have now embarked on plans to take on doctoral programmes. Their enthusiasm and determination to learn is matched only by their dedication to serve society and their own families.

Madam Kamilia Tan Abdullah, 76, of Johor Bahru, worked as a stenographer in decades past till she took a rest from the profession to become a full-time homemaker. She received the Commonwealth Executive MBA (CeMBA) degree at the convocation ceremony. She already holds a Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management (BBMG) from WOU which she had also pursued after retirement.

Explaining her motivation to take up formal studies at this time of her life, Kamilia said: "For a long time, I have been wanting to study to improve myself and to have something to do. The assignments and revision kept me busy." Remarkably, she hopes to study even further. "The learning experience has given me more confidence and to be more open. What I learnt at WOU I can apply to manage my daily life."

Meanwhile, **Madam Mangayarkarasy Velayutham**, 71, of Skudai, Johor, and **Madam Wong Seow Chee**, 72, of Kuala Lumpur, both received the Master of Education (MEd) degree specialising in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL).

Mangayarkarasy, a part-time tuition teacher, also holds a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) degree in Psychology from WOU. She looks forward to using the knowledge gained from the

programmes to help bring improvement to weak students and those with learning disabilities. What is interesting is that, like Kamilia, she has now turned her focus towards pursuing a doctoral degree. In line with her vocation she wants to undertake postgraduate study that covers both education and psychology.

Mangayarkarasy has been teaching for over 30 years now. Her love for teaching remains as bubbly as her passion for studying. She currently teaches part-time at a private educational centre and also gives tuition in her house.

Despite facing difficulties in the past, especially concerning her health and in caring for her husband, she steadfastly emphasises how important it is to have a positive mindset. This means to embrace learning and live life to the fullest. In this regard, she finds that achieving the university degrees offers her a sense of purpose as she can use the knowledge acquired to help her family and society.

Meanwhile Madam Wong, is already in the midst of pursuing her Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) at WOU. She also has a Graduate Diploma in Sales and Marketing from the University.

She was not intimidated at all by the much younger students during her MEd studies, and in fact found it interesting to hear views from the different age groups. Wong, who was a teacher for some 30 years, took the MEd programme because "I just wanted to go on learning, and to keep myself occupied in a useful manner. Since I was once a teacher of English, somebody encouraged me to take up MEd." She now works part-time, doing administrative work as well as sales and marketing.

She fittingly offers some gems of advice: "You should go on learning, be it formal or informal. Pick up any course, something you like. I believe knowledge is really useful, regardless of age."

MBA BOOST FOR A TRULY 'CONSTRUCTIVE' CAREER

When **Eng Seow Leong**, 46, finally graduated with an MBA degree in Construction Management (MBA-CM) it proved to be a significant accomplishment in more ways than one. The Johor Bahru man had achieved his goal of attaining the coveted degree before he hit the age of 45. In addition to that, he had acquired precious knowledge and skills to enrich his role as the chief operations officer (COO) of Laubros Holdings (M) Sdn Bhd which handles building construction projects all over Malaysia.

"My company has 120 over staff and they all report to me," he said. "I picked up skills in human resources management, how to undertake project management, scheduling and accounting. With the knowledge acquired on accounting, I can better monitor my accountant."

Eng, who was promoted two years ago and has been with the company for over 12 years, had enrolled for the degree programme at WOU through Open Entry in July 2015. He already holds a Diploma in Technology (Building) from a private college.

"The degree is related to my profession and so it is more relevant. As COO, I oversee all projects at my company," he explained. "What I learnt from construction management

helps me a lot to supervise my staff, and to deal with the vendors and clients."

Eng's enthusiasm even prompted him to recommend WOU and the MBA-CM programme to his subordinates. A few of them have already enrolled.

He found the online mode of learning at WOU, with tutorials on weekends, to be very convenient for working adults. "I recommended my staff to further their studies to expand their knowledge, and I suggested WOU because I know a few of their programmes are quite relevant to us - like construction management, logistics, sales and marketing, and management."

In fact, he even convinced his wife, Tang Pei Ee, to further her studies in her related field as well. A manager at a property development company, she enrolled in the Commonwealth Executive MBA programme in January 2019, and will surely find it to be beneficial on her own right when she too eventually graduates.



PROJECT MANAGER GETS 'POWERED' TO APPLY MBA SKILLS AT WORK

Serving as a project manager at an energy construction company for more than ten years, **Anne Chang Hui Mei's** work is certainly as formidable as it is unenviable. After all, the Sarawakian has experience in managing construction works of complex utility projects like electrical substations and transmission lines from beginning to completion.

The 34-year-old was naturally delighted to receive her MBA in Construction Management after having enrolled in July 2016. The graduate from Kuching already holds a Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) in Electrical Power Engineering from a private university in Miri.

Chang says she chose to pursue the MBA-CM programme at WOU as she was interested to improve herself in the area of construction management. "I feel I have improved in terms of my knowledge of construction, my management skills," she said. "At the same time, I have made friends and connections with coursemates from the same background, the same field. We were able to share our experiences and knowledge."

She stressed that all the subjects under the programme have turned out to be extremely useful. "For example, the negotiation and dispute resolution course was especially helpful as I deal a lot with third parties like clients, customers and vendors," she said. "I also have a team working under me, comprising an engineer, a supervisor, a technician and all the sub-contractors, and I have to liaise with them."

Chang aims to continue working with the same company, but is looking to further improve herself professionally as she has a strong passion for construction management. For good self-management, she advised, people should smartly manage their own time, work, personal interests, families and also studies. Above all, she concluded, "You must have a passion for it all."



WHEN A GENEROUS BOSS EYED HIS POTENTIAL AND PROMISE

Chai Chee Siong, 40, has been working in a cable manufacturing company in Johor Bahru for some seven years, and was promoted to assume the task of Operations Manager in July 2018.

When he graduated with an MBA in Manufacturing and Production Management (MBA-MPM) recently, he was quick to thank one particular figure who has pushed him to scale greater heights.

"I was actually introduced to this programme by my boss," revealed the native of Kuching who had enrolled through Open Entry in the January 2016 intake. He also has a Diploma in Industrial Engineering from an institute in Singapore.

Chai's boss felt that he seriously needed to upgrade himself. Not only did the boss enrol him in the programme, but also paid for his studies. "He chose this programme for me since I am in the production line," Chai shared. "He said that he saw my potential, and advised me to give it a try. So I agreed."

As a grand incentive the boss even promised him a promotion upon attaining the MBA degree. "Previously, I was the Deputy Manager of Operations. He promoted me in July 2018 because I was undertaking this programme and was nearly completing my studies. All that was left to finish then was my final year project," Chai said.

Overall, the programme has given Chai a better understanding of the production process. "The degree



helps me to manage things better. I see more clearly how the production line is going, how to make the production line grow, and about the new manufacturing technologies," he said.

And there seem to be many more prospects to come. "My boss also sent me to Germany to view how cable manufacturing is going to be in the future, and in 2020, I will be going to Shanghai, all because of my MBA degree."

"I am applying what I learnt to my work since I oversee the overall production, logistics, internal issues and the QA. I have five sections under me, with a total of over 100 employees," he added.

On the challenge of managing work, study and family, Chai said: "My wife is very supportive. And my four children also. When they see me studying they also study with me."

He now highly recommends learning to upgrade oneself. "I feel that when you have an interest in something, like I do for production management, you will do it wholeheartedly." Keen to outdo himself, Chai is intent on enrolling in the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) programme at WOU in another two to three years.

RAISING HIS PORTFOLIO AND MARKETABILITY WITH MBA



See Choong Weng, 36, from Ulu Tiram, Johor, took on the MBA degree in Manufacturing and Production Management (MBA-MPM) to increase his market competitiveness and gain more knowledge in the field. When he completed the programme he readily attested that it has indeed helped him with a new job, especially on how to

initiate planning strategy by setting up the basic concepts prior to implementation.

"The tutorials at WOU were very useful as they try to use scenarios that relate to our jobs," he said. See enrolled in July 2016. He holds a Bachelor of Communication (Hons) in Public Relations from a private university.

He has been a Supply Chain Manager at Dyson Manufacturing in Senai, Johor, since 2017, having worked with the company for over ten years. He undertakes planning, including inventory planning, and manages the supply of the various home appliances.

"This Master's degree is an extra mark on my portfolio. With this degree, I am in a good position to seek a better opportunity, if any, elsewhere." He plans to take a break before pursuing another new programme to increase his knowledge.

On how he managed to juggle his time during his MBA, he shared that he mostly tried to complete his assignments during weekdays after work, while weekends were normally allotted for family. He said his company also gave him study leave to revise for exams.

His advice to potential students, "You need to find out what it is that you want to do and what is needed to execute it. Once you find this, then you need to be very, very determined for it to work out successfully."

RETIREE FULFILS DUAL DREAM OF THRIVING BUSINESS AND DEGREE



At the age of 69, **Ching Lam Ing** of Petaling Jaya has graduated with a Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management (BBMG) from WOU.

Anyone in her position would most likely be content to regard this as the pinnacle of life's success, and opt to relax with well-deserved rest and recreation. But Ching has set her eyes on doing even more as she inches towards her septuagenarian years.

"I plan to do my Commonwealth Executive MBA next," she said. "When you go for further learning, it increases your confidence and improves the quality of your life... You are never too old and it is never too late to study. Nothing is impossible if you put your head and mind to it."

Ching had retired at the age of 55 after nearly 30 years of working in a merchant bank as an accounts administrative executive. For the next two years she performed part-time work at a friend's conveyancing law firm where she helped with the accounting as well as with legal and loan agreements.

She then started her own business when she turned 57. The business is running well till today. Her company manufactures food coating ingredients which are supplied

to factories of frozen foods in Malaysia.

Determined to realise her long-cherished goals, she enrolled for her bachelor's degree in July 2012 through Open Entry. It was her niece who introduced her to WOU's offerings.

Her achievements after retirement must surely compensate for being unable to fulfil her earlier aspirations of running a business by the age of 35 and of gaining a degree when young.

Ching confided that she had gone into depression for a year after her husband passed away when she was 60. "Then I decided I needed to do something for myself, to further my education," she said. "At first I was worried as everybody else was so young."

"But I like to learn new things," she added. "I am happy today because I have achieved my dream of a degree. I can now handle the accounting, purchasing and administration of my own company without the need for clerical staff."

Incidentally, her son, Ryan Yong Seat Pao, is the head of WOU's Bandar Utama Regional Support Centre. She stressed that she owed her success to the encouragement and backing of her two sons and niece. "In education and whatever we do, we need family support," she stressed.

SEEKING 'THE NEXT LEVEL' WITH A CORPORATE ADMINISTRATION DEGREE

Bong Ngiat Ngo, a native of Kuching, graduated with a Bachelor of Business (Hons) (Corporate Administration) (BBCA) degree with distinction.

The 52-year-old has been working at Sarawak Energy Berhad as a personal assistant to a vice president there for about 20 years. She assists her boss in administratively running the department.

However, she yearned for some higher exposure and knowledge from the personal kind of administration she had been doing with the firm. This led her to pursue the BBKA programme after she earned a Graduate Diploma in Corporate Administration from WOU in 2018.

Explaining her motivation, she said: "This is something like extra knowledge for me because I just want to improve myself. Moreover, our corporation also encourages us to keep learning."

"It will definitely help with my job because my boss may ask me something about the company law, as I work in a department where we need to refer to certain rules and regulations," she added.

"So I took corporate administration. That is the next level. I wanted to advance in my career," she said, reasoning that there is now room for her to scale higher in her company with the degree.

Besides learning about company law, she also acquired critical thinking, decision-making and other beneficial skills at WOU, she added.



'CHORES BECOME HOBBIES' WITH HEART SET ON THE RIGHT FIELD

When **Michelle Tan Cheng Hooi** began her stint as an on-campus learning (OCL) student at WOU, she was filled with trepidation on whether she would be able to cope with her tertiary studies. However, she soon found the subjects interesting and agreeable enough to make studying them reasonably easy.

"I had found my passion. When you do something you love and enjoy, chores become hobbies. I was excited to learn and studying became second nature to me," she said in her valedictory speech at the University's convocation ceremony recently.

Tan, 22, who lives in Tanjung Bungah, Penang, graduated with a Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management (BBMG) degree. She was awarded the Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik Memorial Gold Prize for emerging as the top student from the OCL undergraduate programmes.

She had chosen the BBMG as she wanted to further her studies in the same field as the Diploma in Business Administration that she had earned from a private institution. She was also seeking an education that would equip her to help her parents who have been operating their own business of selling factory machinery components for some ten years.

That brought her to WOU. "I can apply the theories and skills learnt, like human relations and time management skills to my work and life," she said. "We also did planning and scheduling which I can use for our family business."



▲ Tan receives her award from Vice Chancellor Prof Lily Chan.

There were also other positive factors that spurred her performance at WOU. For one, she found the relaxing atmosphere of the seaside campus in Penang rather conducive for studies. Her involvement in the student council also helped as it gave her skills to handle people and work under pressure.

Tan said her parents never put any pressure on her but gave her space to just to do her best. She has been working as an administrative executive in a factory in Bayan Lepas since October 2019.

Summing up her ambition as "to do well in life", Tan now plans to pursue a master's degree after a few years. She shared an inspirational quote: "When you are faced with challenges, do not run away. You have nothing to lose but always something to gain." She advised the graduates to say to themselves "all is well!" so as to derive courage when facing problems.

SMART STUDY AND DISCIPLINE PAVES THE WAY FOR ODL SUCCESS

When **Tan Jin Yong** undertook the Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Banking and Finance (BBBF) programme he set a strict study plan involving good time management where he set deadlines for every work task and assignment.

The discipline that he inculcated as an open distance learning (ODL) student improved not only his time management skills but also his sense of responsibility and conduct. It also taught him how to learn independently. "You should study smart and not study hard aimlessly," said the 23-year-old graduate from Bukit Mertajam, Penang, in his valedictory speech.

Tan, who already held a Diploma in Business from a private university, received the Chancellor's Gold Medal for being the top student from the ODL undergraduate programmes. "While the scroll alone may not guarantee us success, thanks to everything I have learned so far I am confident and ready to move on to take on whatever challenges come next."

Tan has been working as Team Leader at an Urban Republic retail outlet since 2016. He manages the entire sales process,

including sales performance, crew training and stock maintenance. He feels that his new knowledge of statistics has helped him in performing functions like sales reporting and stock taking.

Tan also believes that his degree will open up opportunities in the sales or banking sector as he desires to work as a sales executive in factories, or as a share investment executive or share trader in banking. "I am interested in asset management and investment because I have loved statistics since secondary school," he said.

He emphasised that it is alright to make mistakes or fail when confronting challenges "because that's where we learn to get up again and again, and become stronger". Quoting famous scientist Stephen Hawking, he said: "And however difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. It matters that you don't just give up."



▶ Tan with his Chancellor's Gold Medal award.

INTERNSHIP LEADS TO FULL-TIME POSITION WITH LEADING AUDIT FIRM

When **Mohamad Sanim Mohamad Saad** from George Town graduated with a Bachelor of Business (Hons) degree in Accounting (BBAC) it seemed that he was only fulfilling what was destined. The 22-year-old had developed an interest in accounting way back in secondary school and was exposed to the subject in greater depth during his matriculation studies.

"I feel like accounting suits me instead of other subjects like management or finance," he acknowledged recently. He had enrolled in WOU during the September 2016 intake as an on-campus student, having earned a matriculation certificate in accounts from a public institution.

As fate would have it, Sanim has been working as an audit associate at Grant Thornton in Penang since the end of September 2019. Grant Thornton is the sixth largest professional services network of independent accounting and consulting member firms in the world.

He performed his internship with the company from May to September when he reported directly to the audit director. Seeing his potential, the management offered him a full-time position after the internship period was over.

"They feel that I can catch up very easily with the auditing process like how to track transactions, where to find evidence.

All this stuff is very important in audit," he said. "So they saw that I have the potential and that I was interested." He was also soon elected as the vice president of the Grant Thornton Sports Club which handles events for the staff.

Sanim is the first in his family - he has two older sisters - to enter the auditing line. He aspires to continue with the company and is excited to experience the peak period in auditing which occurs from January until April. "I plan to gain more such experience in audit, and after that perhaps I may go for a professional qualification like the ACCA," he said.

He also readily admitted that he enjoyed his learning experience at WOU's seaside campus in Penang, declaring that the lecturers were all very helpful and accommodating.



ENGINEER BOOSTS CAREER WITH BTEL DEGREE



Lam Chee Seong, 27, of Ampang, Selangor, has found his studies for the Bachelor of Technology (Hons) degree in Electronics (BTEL) to be very helpful for his work as a project engineer. "What I learnt from BTEL is useful to my job, especially the basic theories like calculation," he said. "In the engineering industry there is a lot of calculation involved, such as in proving the performance of a product or a system. It's the backbone of my career."

Lam recently graduated with the BTEL degree after enrolling in the January 2013 intake. He has been working in 2R Control Automation Sdn Bhd in Puchong for the past two years. His job function encompasses designing a system, and also executing and troubleshooting.

On why he chose BTEL, he elaborated: "It is in my sphere of interest. I am very interested in electronics and technologies. With the working experience from my company and the knowledge gained from the degree programme, the combination will definitely help me in my career as an engineer."

Lam plans to further his studies and pursue a master's degree as he wants to register as a professional under the Board of Engineers in the future. At WOU he also learnt soft skills like communication skills since the students have to often meet with tutors and interact with coursemates from other states, directly and online. "We learnt a lot from each other. We shared a lot of information," he said.

He also surmounted the challenge of balancing work and study with much support from his family members, especially his parents. "They allowed me space as they knew I was busy, spending a lot of time, weekends and nights, on my studies," he said.

JOURNEY OUTSIDE THE COMFORT ZONE LEADS TO UNTOLD REWARDS

Learning never ends. The entire journey and process of learning brings untold rewards for one's personal and professional development.

Nadarajah Kupusamy, 41, holder of the Commonwealth Executive MBA degree from WOU and now pursuing the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) here, knows this only too well. When he first embarked on his MBA, he recalled in his address to graduates at the University's recent convocation ceremony, he was filled with excitement to learn and explore. But he also bore a deep fear of failure.

Nadarajah is currently the Chief Operating Officer of a liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) trading company in Bukit Minyak, Penang, since January 2014. He previously worked for seven years at Shell Malaysia in Johor Bahru as Account Manager.

Hailing from a middle-class family he initially struggled in trying to meet his personal responsibilities and his lessons. However, he found valuable support from his wife and daughters in completing his studies. "These challenges have made me a stronger and a more confident person today," he said.

The journey at WOU was outside his comfort zone as he had to take control of his own pace of study, Nadarajah confided. However, the case studies, group research projects and assignments for his MBA helped develop important skills which allowed him to implement changes like diversity and inclusiveness in his company by practising transformational leadership.

Nadarajah also expressed his admiration for the late Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, one of the greatest scientists of the 21st century and a former president of India, who had 37 honorary PhDs from all over the world. "He was from a very poor family and really ambitious in achieving his dreams. I felt that if he could do it, I could do it also."

"As Dr Abdul Kalam said: 'All birds find shelter during a rain. But Eagle avoids rain by flying above the clouds'. So, we must be like the eagle and capture the higher benefits in life by getting ourselves a proper education."



▲ Nadarajah shares how the learning journey at WOU has helped him.



▲ Yusnidar, an entrepreneur, shares her journey to success.

PERSEVERING TOWARDS THE GOAL IN THE FACE OF LIFE'S STRUGGLES



▲ Elated family members with graduates.

Her long-desired goal to get a degree persuaded **Yusnidar Abdul Rahman** of Jelutong, Penang, to sign up for the Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Accounting (BBAC) programme at WOU in 2007. This was despite her busy schedule; she held a full-time job and two part-time jobs of teaching tuition and coaching rhythmic gymnastics, and was also the secretary of a gymnastics association.

"While doing my accounting, I twice underwent surgery," she added when sharing the challenges she faced in her journey of lifelong learning and success. "I had to also accompany students when they participated in gymnastics competitions across Malaysia. I did not have time for myself, yet I was determined and so I gave up my coaching and secretarial duties. I knew obtaining a degree would give me the most satisfaction and help build up my career," she added in her address to WOU's new graduates.

Today, Yusnidar, 53, is an accomplished entrepreneur operating her own company. In addition to having earned the Accounting degree, she holds a CeMBA degree from WOU and is currently enrolled in the DBA programme.

In the midst of her pursuing the MBA, she moved from being a manager to a management consultant for a few small business enterprises. The knowledge she acquired from the MBA helped her in dealing with the rigours of work and scaling upwards in her career.

Education does not end with graduation, Yusnidar stressed. Lifelong learning is an obligation to oneself. "If we stop learning, it would affect the knowledge and skills of the nation's workforce, thus hampering the progress of industries."

She urged the graduates to always persevere despite the difficulties they face if they want to achieve success. "The ball is now in your court as to how you will use the knowledge and skills gained at WOU to transform your life and that of your family, your community and mankind," she said.

PASSION FOR LIFELONG LEARNING USHERS A MEDLEY OF SCROLLS

Chay Foo Soon of Segamat, Johor, is the quintessential lifelong learner. When he recently stepped onto the stage to receive his scroll for the Master of Education (MEd) degree specialising in Education Management few people knew that it was his fourth qualification from WOU.

Indeed, the 41-year-old's learning journey with WOU has spanned over a decade thus far. He was in the pioneer batch of 38 graduates for the Commonwealth Executive MBA (CeMBA) degree at the University's inaugural convocation in 2010.

Chay went on to obtain his Graduate Diploma in Sales and Marketing in 2013, and his Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Sales and Marketing in 2016 from WOU. Incredibly, in addition to these he had also earned a Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) Electronics from a private university in 2003.

At WOU's 10th convocation ceremony on 7 December 2019 Chay emerged as the top student from the open distance learning (ODL) postgraduate programmes. He was presented with the Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu Memorial Gold Prize by the Chancellor.

Explaining his motivation to keep choosing WOU as his study destination, he said: "With ODL, I could manage my time well. Everything we do is online. It is very convenient to communicate with tutors and the course coordinators anywhere and anytime."

Another interesting aspect about Chay is that he has excelled in different careers in his life. He worked as an engineer for two years before making a career turnaround to become a self-employed tuition teacher in 2007. He currently operates



▲ Chay with the Chancellor (left), Tunku Tan Sri Imran Tuanku Ja'afar, and Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

a home tuition centre which he started in 2017, and which now has about 30 primary and secondary school students. He switched from engineering to education when he found himself increasingly enjoying teaching. "I discovered my passion for teaching later in life," he said. He now hopes to pursue a doctoral degree. If he does, it would make it a total of five qualifications from WOU.

Chay is happy he is able to apply the theories and knowledge from his MEd programme to teach his students to better organise and schedule, while improving their learning efficiency and productivity. "For example in cognitive learning, I would need to repeat things to help my students to better understand, and I also demonstrate how to easily memorise notes and facts with the use of mind-mapping."

Chay added that his tendency for over-preparation in everything like TMAs, examinations, and his final year project helped him to excel academically. His final year project focused on mobile learning adoption among working adults, examining the factors behind why not many people use smartphones for studies.

"It was the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure," he said in describing his formula for success. He also stressed on the importance of equipping oneself with new skills and knowledge to help face the challenges and obstacles that appear in life.

FINALLY FULFILLING HIS DREAM OF AN ACCOUNTING DEGREE



Although **Ramead Yap Ping Seong** has had substantial work experience in management and accounting for some years he missed having a suitable degree qualification to augment his professional functions. It was therefore a special moment when the 48-year-old who lives in Subang Jaya, Selangor, graduated with a Bachelor

of Business (Hons) in Accounting degree from WOU.

Yap has been working as an Implementation and Support Manager at a software company for about three years, and before that he was a Senior Accounts Executive in a

manufacturing company. He presently manages clients' complaints and training when customers purchase software from his company.

"It was my dream to get an accounting degree because I had previously worked for many years in the accounting line," he said. He deals with financial software in his current job. "The learning experience has made me more confident in speaking to clients as I am equipped with the knowledge besides the practical experience," he added.

"Education is very important," he said in explaining his drive to study. "We must embrace lifelong learning, being motivated always to upgrade, to equip ourselves with as much knowledge as possible, in any field of interest."

SWITCHING HANDS AND PROFESSIONS WITH DISTINCTION

Sarawakian **Belinda Chee Jin Wei** has not let her disability hinder her aspiration to become a teacher and operate her own tuition centre for children. The 38-year-old suffers from a nerve problem that has affected her right side since birth. The congenital defect slows down movements of her right hand, forcing her to learn to perform tasks with her left.

Chee proudly received her Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) at WOU's recent 10th convocation ceremony on 7 December 2019, after having enrolled in January 2017. She attended the event with her husband, Lister Lou, who is a software engineer, along with her parents, nephew and nieces.

She also holds a Bachelor of Electrical and Computer Systems Engineering (Hons) degree from Monash University, Australia. She worked as an engineer for ten years before she decided to switch her profession to teaching in 2015.

The Open Distance Learning (ODL) system offered by WOU came as a boon to help her gain the necessary qualifications and competency in her desired new field. "I checked the universities and found this programme to obtain a postgraduate diploma in education that would help me in my profession," she said. "I coped with my studies by taking less courses per semester thanks to the flexible ODL system, and therefore I took two years to complete."

Among the courses she took for the PGDE were Co-Curriculum in Educational Institutions, Management and Leadership in Education, and Curriculum Planning and Implementation. "This programme has helped me learn all



▲ Husband, Lister Lou (standing, centre) and family look proudly at Chee.

the theories and how to put them into practice to deal with the different ages and levels of children," she explained.

Chee, from Johor, has now been working as a teacher at a tuition centre in her husband's hometown of Kuching for the last five years, teaching pupils aged four years to those in secondary school. She also runs an arts and crafts centre with a partner since early 2019, and does relief teaching at private primary and secondary schools in Kuching which has "added to my teaching exposure and experience".

"I plan to continue working as a teacher and open up my own tuition centre to teach primary and secondary school kids in three years' time," she proclaimed. She also aims to undertake a Master of Education degree in the near future to help her venture higher in her profession.

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