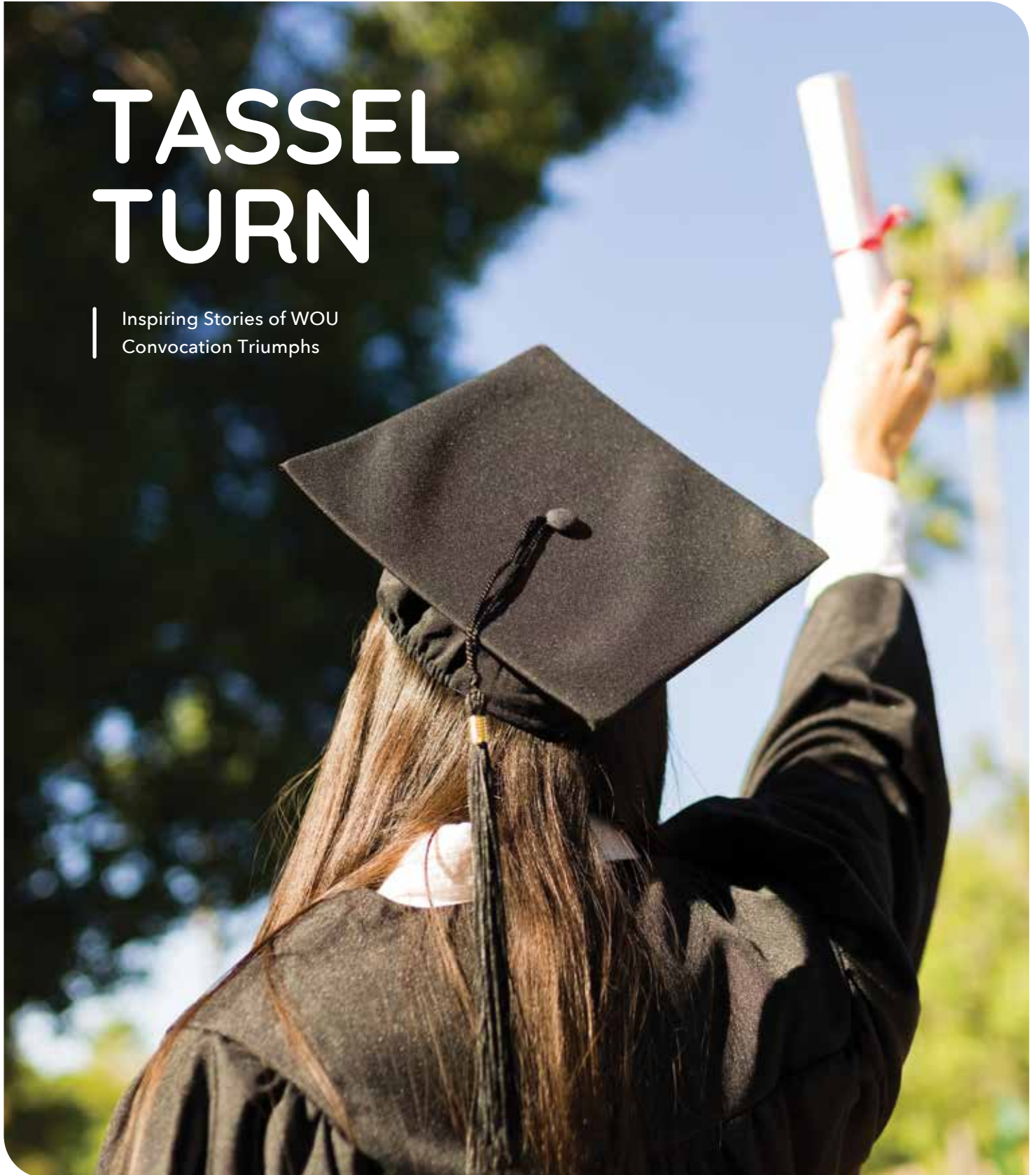


TASSEL TURN

Inspiring Stories of WOU
Convocation Triumphs



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EDITOR'S NOTE

We are delighted to share highlights from the 14th WOU Convocation Ceremony, held across six sessions from 25-26 November 2023. This significant occasion celebrated the remarkable achievements of 803 graduates, who now become part of a distinguished alumni community comprising over 8,000 individuals. Notably, nearly 80% of these graduates are under 40, underscoring WOU's dedication to supporting working adults and showcasing the adaptability and inclusivity of WOU's educational programmes.

The ceremony also honoured individuals who have made notable contributions to their respective fields. Emeritus Prof Dato' Dr Zuraina Abdul Majid, a renowned Malaysian Archaeologist, was conferred the Honorary Doctor of Humanities in recognition of her exceptional contributions to the field.

The ceremony also featured the presentation of esteemed awards to **Lim Hooi Jun** who received the inaugural LogM-WOU Best Student Award, **Phang Jing Mei** who was honoured with the Chancellor's Gold Medal, **Janice Lim Ee Lin**, the recipient of the Tun Lim Keng Yaik Memorial Gold Prize and finally, **Venothkumar Selvarajoo** who was recognised with the Tun Dr. Lim Chong Eu Memorial Gold Prize.

Among the graduating class were ten proud recipients from the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) programme.

WOU recognises the financial challenges encountered by students and takes pride in providing scholarships to alleviate their burdens. Among our recipients, **Eunice Lee Xin Yi** and **Ng Chen Tar** who successfully graduated with a Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management and Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Sales and Marketing respectively.

The 14th WOU Convocation Ceremony reaffirmed the university's unwavering commitment to academic excellence, innovation, and the nurturing of highly skilled graduates. This commemoration not only celebrated academic achievements but also the resilience and determination that empower every graduate to succeed.

Congratulations to all graduates and winners!

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KDN Permit: PP 14958/11/2012 (031535)

Published by

Wawasan Open University [DU013(P)]
Wholly owned by Wawasan Open University Sdn Bhd
[200501018250 (700364-W)]

Printed by

Cheong Seng Chan Sdn Bhd
Plot 10, Lorong Industrial Ringan Satu,
Juru Light Industrial Estate, 14100 Juru, Penang

WOU CONFERS DOCTOR OF HUMANITIES TO EMERITUS PROF DATO' DR SITI ZURAINA

WOU recognised the contributions of Malaysia's eminent archaeologist, **Emeritus Prof Dato' Dr Siti Zuraina Abdul Majid**, by awarding her with an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humanities at its convocation in the seaside campus on 25 November 2023.

WOU's Board of Governors Chairman Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon highlighted the many achievements of the "nation's first professionally trained archaeologist" in a career spanning over five decades.

He said, "This prestigious accolade recognises her pioneering work in Malaysian archaeological research and many outstanding contributions to the preservation and promotion of Malaysia's rich prehistoric past and cultural heritage."

Prof Zuraina was instrumental in many ways in helping Malacca and George Town to be successful as Historic Cities of the Straits of Malacca on the much-coveted UNESCO World Heritage List in 2008.

"It was especially significant to award her the honorary degree in the year that George Town's status as a heritage site celebrates its 15th anniversary," he added.

When Prof Zuraina returned to Malaysia after completing her PhD at Yale University in 1978, archaeology was not widely recognised as relevant.

Nevertheless, this did not deter her from pioneering and developing Malaysia's archaeological research and academic programmes, blazing a trail for future generations.

WOU hosted Prof Zuraina, Malaysia's first archaeologist and internationally acclaimed historian, at its main campus, where she addressed academics, professionals and industry leaders on 12 September 2023.

ARCHAEOLOGY PROMOTES INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING

In her presentation titled Lessons from Archaeology for 21st Century Education, she said, "Over time, the education landscape has transitioned from specialised, cubby-holed subjects such as geography, history, and biology, to a more holistic and integrative approach that encompasses interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and transdisciplinary learning, as exemplified in fields like biochemistry."

"Modern archaeology, which fosters problem-solving, analytical, and critical thinking skills, holds relevance for any profession. You can do anything because you possess the



skills, tools and mindset to apply to any job. It's a beautiful subject that links the arts and the sciences," added Prof Zuraina.

Her groundbreaking discovery of Kota Tampan, a 74,000-year-old Palaeolithic stone tool workshop in Lenggong Valley, Perak, and the 11,000-year-old Perak Man, Southeast Asia's oldest, most complete human skeleton, stands as a testament to decades of interdisciplinary collaborations.

THE ROLE OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDINGS

Prof Zuraina said her findings of the Perak Man and Niah 1977 skeletons which exhibited significant congenital deformities still observed today, "provided the earliest evidence and clues that are useful in medical science research".

Her discovery of Kota Tampan in Lenggong Valley filled a huge vacuum in Malaysian prehistory, providing crucial evidence that Peninsular Malaysia served as one of the migratory routes for early humans from Africa to Australia.

For over two decades, she devoted herself to excavating the sites at Lenggong Valley. In 2012, Lenggong Valley was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and continues to serve as a significant reference site for archaeologists.

Prof Zuraina also played a pivotal role in helping the Penang state government prepare for the successful joint inscription of George Town and Melaka as UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 2008.

TECHNOLOGY STARTUP FOUNDER ADDS DBA TO HIS CAP



Ir Bernard Lim Kee Weng, 50, from Bayan Lepas, is the Chief Operating Officer in Penang for Appscard Group As, a technology startup based in Norway. He is responsible for the global operations of the company. He pursued Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) to widen his knowledge and expertise to enable him to make meaningful contributions in his field.

Lim joined the company since its inception on 1 July 2020. He has more than 27 years of global operation experience working in MNC and EMS factories, holding various senior management roles including Managing Director, Vice President, Global Operations, Director of Operations, General Manager, and Deputy General Manager. Among the companies were SAM Meerkat, Jabil Circuit, Venture Electronics Services, Agilent Technologies, Osram Opto Semiconductor and Sony Electronics.

He has lately been involved in technology startups. He is

the co-founder and/or founder of four technology startups - Appscard Group AS (Norway/Malaysia) (2020-present), Logikhaus Sdn Bhd (Malaysia) (2019-present), Tactilis Sdn Bhd (Malaysia) (2015-2019) and Sandcomm Sdn Bhd (Malaysia) (Aug 2022-present). He is also a member of several professional organisations, including Institution of Engineers Malaysia (IEM) and ASEAN Chartered Professional Engineer (ACPE).

He graduated with the DBA degree at the recent WOU convocation ceremony.

He holds an MBA from a UK university and a Certificate in Computer Programming from the Association of Computer Professionals (ACP), UK.

Lim chose WOU as WOU's teaching structure is flexible for working adults to fulfil my doctorate" and the University has quality educators.

"The challenging and intellectually stimulating nature of the DBA programme is instrumental in fostering personal and professional growth. This journey enhances essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and strategic decision-making."

DBA STEPPING STONE TO BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENT

Yearning to establish his business legacy, **Saravanan Sivan Shummugam**, 44, from Skudai, Johor, graduated from WOU with a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) degree.

"I chose to further my studies with a DBA at WOU after experiencing quality education during my MBA at WOU," he said.

"The DBA has truly benefitted my career. It has built my confidence level, my tactical and strategic approaches in business development and in managing different stakeholders in the business hierarchy."

Saravanan has been the Project Director at Flexible Networking Solutions Sdn Bhd (FlexNet), Johor, since December 2020. He leads and monitors projects in Southeast Asia for the company, which is headquartered in the United Kingdom. He was previously the IT infrastructure project manager for the new Hershey's plant setup in Johor.

He has been working in IT infrastructure since 2004 and holds a Commonwealth Executive MBA degree from WOU

(2018) and a Bachelor's Degree in IT from Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM).

"I am happy and proud to be the first in the family to bear the affix 'Dr,'" he said, adding that his ambition was to become a business entrepreneur and build his own business legacy.

He hoped his success would inspire his daughter, who is doing her foundation in Law, and his son sitting for his SPM in 2024, to excel and achieve greater heights.



"I chose to further my studies with a DBA at WOU after experiencing quality education during my MBA at WOU."

FROM HOSPITALITY TO EDUCATION



Jackqueline Talucod Mangande, 38, discovered a newfound passion for teaching while working as a Training Manager in a restaurant. This ignited a fervent desire to work with young children, prompting her to enrol in WOU's Diploma in Early Childhood Education (DECE).

The senior restaurant manager at Italian restaurant Dopo Teatro in Singapore, embarked on her quest towards a certified early childhood education (ECE) qualification during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

At the height of global lockdowns when the F&B industry slowed down and international borders closed, Jackqueline seized opportunities to help out at preschool classes in Johor, where she lives with her husband. Additionally, she also conducted online lessons for young children.

Originally from the Philippines, Jackqueline was driven by the belief that the current generation of children needed significant support. She especially believed that the early years, particularly from aged three to five, were incredibly crucial in a child's development.

"To help children achieve their dreams, we need to equip teachers with the right skills and competency to guide the little ones and hone their young, impressionable minds," she said.

Currently pursuing a master's degree in ECE, Jackqueline dreams of being an educator after spending 14 years in the restaurant industry.

Finding fulfilment in working with children, she expressed, "The innocence of children, their smiles and witnessing their progress make you feel you can truly make a difference in the next generation."

For Jackqueline, learning is a continual process, and she exemplifies a strong commitment to lifelong learning.

"Let's do it for the children," she urged.

ENHANCING HER CAREER IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



Kindergarten teacher, **Rachel Anthonyday**, 25, was among those accredited as certified early childhood educators when she graduated with a Diploma in Early Childhood Education (DECE).

She said the decision to pursue the DECE was a progressive step forward after teaching in Tadika Methodist Penang for nine years.

"I started as a teacher's aide, progressed to become a teacher's assistant and am now a teacher. To continue as a qualified preschool teacher, it is necessary to fulfil the government requirements of getting the DECE," she said. Rachel said obtaining the qualification would not only enrich her knowledge but also boost her career in the area of early childhood education (ECE).

"The diploma provided me with essential skills and knowledge in understanding and handling children with different types of behaviours," she added.

Acknowledging that her academic journey had significantly enhanced the professional and academic aspects of her life, she said, "Even though I was working and studying at the same time, my studies did not disrupt my working schedule, and the timetable was convenient for me."

"Throughout my studies, I gained a lot of knowledge relevant to my workplace. I could connect easily to the lessons as my work experience helped me to better understand the course content."

Rachel expressed her pride in becoming a WOU graduate, and plans to diversify her knowledge by pursuing a programme related to digital business at WOU.

"The diploma provided me with essential skills and knowledge in understanding and handling children with different types of behaviours."

DECE OPENS DOOR TO A CAREER IN TEACHING



Yu Jun Ying, 22, from Ipoh, Perak, had set her sights on becoming a teacher and graduated with a Diploma in Early Childhood (DECE) after having enrolled in the programme in the January 2019 intake.

She started working three months ago at HiArt, an art enrichment center in Singapore that teaches students

of different age groups. She works in front desk administration, landing the job owing to her DECE qualification.

Her father encouraged her to enrol in DECE. He is a lifelong learner who graduated from WOU in Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management (BBMG) degree, Commonwealth Executive MBA (CeMBA), and MBA in Manufacturing and Production Management (MBAMPM) from WOU.

Jun Ying jumped at the chance to explore the work opportunity in Singapore because of the favourable currency exchange rate. Moreover, having worked as a tuition teacher after her SPM, she found she liked teaching. "I applied to HiArt because it is involved with education and located in Singapore."

With a desire to become a qualified educator, Jun Ying is drawn to working with children. "With DECE, I learnt how to manage people, how to communicate with parents, including how to have a conversation with them if any of the children have problems."

"With DECE, I learnt how to manage people, how to communicate with parents, including how to have a conversation with them if any of the kids have problems."

A HOMEMAKER'S INSPIRATIONAL JOURNEY TO TEACHING EXCELLENCE



A passion for lifelong learning and wanting to be an exemplary role-model to her daughter spurred **Uvaneswary Balakrishnan**, 43, to earn a Post Graduate Diploma in Education.

"My 13-year-old daughter is the reason I'm pursuing my dream. I was then a full-time homemaker but at the age of 35, I started teaching. It's never too late to chase after your goals,"

said Uvaneswary who is currently a primary homeroom teacher at Crescendo-HELP International School in Johor.

Apart from teaching core subjects like mathematics, science and English to students aged 5-11, Uvaneswary is also attached to WOU as a part-time tutor specialising in early childhood education courses.

"The programme's syllabus and course content were useful in developing my teaching career as it enabled me to seamlessly integrate my job. I could connect the knowledge I acquired to what I do in school and also as a tutor at WOU. So, it was easy to complete my assignments," she said.

Uvaneswary also expressed her profound gratitude to her supportive tutors and lecturers throughout her academic journey, describing it as an amazing learning experience.

"I had to juggle between meeting deadlines at my workplace and also assignment submissions, yet the lecturers were very helpful and understanding about my situation and commitments," she added.

"It's the overall support and guidance from them in knowing exactly where to obtain information, useful resources and how to complete my assignments that I am grateful for. They did not hesitate to respond to me at all times, and constantly showed genuine concern in my progress," shared Uvaneswary.

AWARD WINNERS: INSPIRATION FOR ALL LEARNERS

JANICE LIM EE LIN (Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik Memorial Gold Prize)

Janice Lim Ee Lin encourages youths to pursue higher education with dedication and curiosity, emphasising the importance of continuous learning. Fascination about world of applications and web development led her to pursue a Bachelor of Software Engineering (Hons) in 2020.

Currently working as a junior software developer at MYwave Sdn Bhd, she focuses on designing and developing projects for system enhancement and maintenance. The 24-year-old's foray into software engineering began with her industrial training at Inari Technology Sdn Bhd and internship at Public Gold Marketing Sdn Bhd provided her with valuable experience in web development.

Janice credits her analytical abilities, decision-making skills, and software engineering proficiency to her academic programme.

"I aspire to become professional in the field. My goal is to ultimately contribute to innovative projects, and for the opportunity to lead a team someday," she said. She attributes her academic success to hard work, staying organised and seeking help when needed. Her supportive and loving family helped significantly too.



PHANG JING MEI (Chancellor's Gold Medal)

The top student from the undergraduate programmes at WOU's recent convocation is hoping her psychology degree will open up career opportunities in counselling or psychology.

The Chancellor's Gold Medal winner, Phang Jing Mei, 40, graduated from the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Psychology (BAPS) programme, having enrolled via Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) in September 2018.

She has been running her own baking business since 2020, after having left her job in an MNC gas company of more than 10 years, taking care of customers' accounts and has 18 years of sales experience. Though not initially interested in psychology, but after working with people, she became curious about how people think, and thus enrolled in BAPS.

Phang uses her psychology knowledge in her day-to-day dealings with people patronising her baking business. "A lot of psychology is involved as I deal with customers, face to face," she added.

"My family came together during the COVID-19 pandemic, supported and motivated me with my studies" explained Phang who aims to take up a Master's degree, either in Counselling or in Psychology. "Learning for me doesn't stop with age and I will continue even if I reach 50-60 years old," Phang affirmed.



LIM HOOI JUN (LogM-WOU Best Student Award)

WOU has awarded the inaugural 'LogM-WOU Best Student Award' 2023 to Lim Hooi Jun, a graduate of the Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Logistics and Supply Chain Management (BBLC) recently at WOU. This qualification has earned her the use of the abbreviation *Log.* in front of her name.

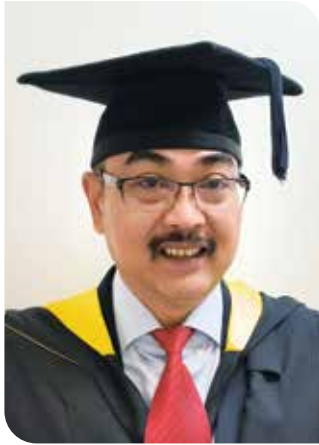
This prestigious award, established through a collaboration between WOU and The Society of Logisticians Malaysia (LogM), recognises *Log.* Lim's outstanding achievements in both academics and her professional career.

Log. Lim's exceptional academic performance in the dynamic field of supply chain and logistics is truly commendable. As a dedicated Freight Analyst at Agilent Technologies, she has played a pivotal role in optimising freight operations and enhancing supply chain efficiencies, demonstrating a remarkable ability to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application.

Her journey is particularly inspiring as she pursued her studies at WOU part-time since 2018 while excelling in her demanding role within the logistics industry. This unwavering dedication to academic excellence, coupled with a thirst for knowledge and a passion for continuous learning, sets *Log.* Lim apart as a forward-thinking and resourceful professional.



LEVELLING UP: OUR GRADUATES EMBARK ON MASTERS' JOURNEY



AUGUSTINE MAJA ANAK DAIS

Fifty-three-year-old Augustine Maja Anak Dais has been in the oil and gas industry his entire work life, and along the way, he obtained two tertiary qualifications from WOU.

He graduated recently with an MBA in Manufacturing and Production Management (MBAMPM), having enrolled through APEL in the July 2020 intake.

Stationed in Miri, he works as an Operations Supervisor for Petronas Carigali Sdn Bhd. "I work offshore in an oil rig, doing operations and maintenance. I maintain equipment and undertake operations after the drilling, for continuous flow of the gas from the platform," he explained.

He has been with Petronas for 30 years, since graduating from college with a professional electrical certificate.

He enrolled and graduated with a Graduate Diploma in Supply Chain Management from WOU while in his 40s. A few years later, he thought it would be a good 50th birthday present to enrol in the MBAMPM programme.

Augustine aspires to become a trainer in operations and electrical in the oil and gas field once he retires from Petronas. He added, "By having this MBA, I can show to management that I am qualified to come back as a trainer or consultant."

He credits his wife, a teacher, who reminded him to complete his assignments on time. Since he works offshore for two weeks at a time, he used the two weeks break to catch up with his studies. "At whatever age, WOU is giving you a chance to learn, even though you are busy with a career."

PARAMARAJ SUBRAMANIAM

The father of two toddlers and a five-year old from Sitiawan, Perak, Paramaraj Subramaniam, 35, is thrilled to have recently graduated from WOU with an MBA in Manufacturing and Production Management (MBAMPM), after having enrolled through APEL in the January 2021 intake.

He has been in Quality Assurance (QA) field for 13 years, since obtaining his Diploma in Electronics Engineering from Kota Bharu Polytechnic. He is now a QA supervisor at Malayan Flour Mills Bhd (MFM), joining the company four years ago. He supervises the quality of the products and processes at the poultry, hatchery, feed milling, and the processing plants of all the subsidiary companies of MFM.

Of his interest in QA, Paramaraj said, "Because QA is the backbone of any firm. It is quite an interesting field, and I am able to learn about the process and everything happening in the other departments."

He said the MBA degree enabled him to have a broader perspective, when performing his QA inspection of production and processing, and to enhance the growth of his work. "Every time the tutor or lecturer gives example, I am able to apply this knowledge to produce better output."

Paramaraj aspires to be a lecturer in a higher education institution, where he could teach about management systems at the workplace, and so forth. He is considering taking up the one-year Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) programme in the near future.

Paramaraj's advice for prospects, "For those considering higher studies, do it, as the knowledge you gain along with your bachelor's or master's degree is your asset."



CHIAM BEE CHOO

Carpeton Industries Sdn Bhd Contract and Commercial Manager Chiam Bee Choo, 39, from Kuala Langat, added another feather to her cap when she successfully earned her MBA in Construction Management from WOU.

“Open, flexible distance learning is highly suitable for busy working adults like us with packed weekdays. The online learning during weekends eliminates the need for commuting to classes, and provided me with ample time to attend to errands or engage in other activities,” she said.

“My work experience laid a solid foundation, so it was easy to understand lessons throughout the programmes. I only needed to gather additional resources to support my points when completing the assignments,” said Chiam who enrolled in WOU through APEL.

Despite the challenges of juggling between assignments and work deadlines, Chiam found her motivation in gaining a competitive edge over her peers. She aspires to pursue an arbitration course in future to focus fully on a career in contract management.



JOANNE LIEW WEE WEN

Upon graduating with a Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management (BBMG) degree from WOU, Joanne Liew Wee Wen, a 35-year-old asset manager from Kuching, Sarawak, immediately enrolled in the Commonwealth Executive MBA (CeMBA) programme.

She has been a Managing Partner at AHAM Asset Management Berhad for four years, having joined the company 13 years ago. Her job is to achieve group sales target, create new accounts, and reach the revenue and AUM (assets under management) target set for the calendar year.

She gained self-confidence and knowledge in business management through the CeMBA programme, besides communication and problem-solving skills. She aims to obtain a public speaker license as this will allow her to share more of her motivational skills with the public and in schools.

On her academic journey, she said, “If you are eager to achieve something in your life, no matter how hard is it, your willingness will triumph against all odds. My motivation was my parents who always wanted me to further my studies.”

ELIZA EMBAU ANAK SINGKI

The 47-year-old teacher at Institut Kemahiran MARA, a technical school in Kuching for post-Form Five students, has a passion for teaching and sharing knowledge with others.

Eliza Embau anak Singki, of Iban ethnicity, holds a teaching degree from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). She recently obtained her Master of Education (MEd) degree - with specialisation in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) - from WOU, after having enrolled in July 2020.

She has been teaching English to students aged 18 and above at the technical school for some 25 years. She explained her passion for teaching, “I like to see people learn new things and are willing to learn. I feel good being able to share knowledge with others.”

She came across a WOU roadshow in a shopping complex in Kuching, and while browsing, the MEd programme in TESL caught her attention. She found WOU courses to be very accommodating for working adult learners like her. “Throughout my journey with WOU, there were many challenges but with my supervisor and coordinator’s help, the two academics really helped me not only in my subjects but also in giving me motivation. So, if given a chance, again I would like to continue my studies, perhaps PhD in education, at WOU, in another two to three years.”

“It may not be a bed of roses pursuing your studies but if you have the passion, if you are willing, use whatever you have to achieve your success,” she advised.



STORY OF TWO BROTHERS “TWINNING” FOR SUCCESS



Chew Ching Siang, 31, and his brother **Chew Kooi Choon**, 29, are happy to be not just colleagues at work but graduated together with a Bachelor of Technology (Honours) in Mechatronics (BTME) degree from WOU.

They received their diploma in manufacturing technology from the Penang Skills Development Centre, a few years apart, about 10 years ago.

They enrolled in BTME at WOU in the July 2017 intake, and are now engineers at Seatrium Engineering Penang (formerly JED Centre). They travel to work together from their home in Balik Pulau to Bayan Baru.

Ching Siang joined the piping section of Seatrium 10 years ago as Assistant Engineer, and was promoted to Engineer upon completing his degree studies in March 2022. His job is to design piping for marine ships in Singapore.

"I took BTME as it is related to my job and offers good career prospects. For higher posts in the company, you need at least a degree". He owes the upgrade in his position and salary to the degree, adding, "I want to become a senior engineer and climb higher to management-level."

On graduating with his brother, he asserted, "It was good

that we can share information and help each other in studies. We work together now but in different sections. Morning I drive, and after work, he drives back."

Kooi Choon joined the company almost eight years ago as Assistant Engineer, and rose to become an Engineer in the electrical section.

"My brother informed me that there was a job opportunity, so I applied. I design electrical systems for maritime ships and offshore platforms, including cable ladders and cable weights," he said.

Like his brother, he pursued mechatronics to improve his work performance, adding, "I hope to become the lead of the electrical section." Having an interest in robotics, he hopes to obtain a master's degree in robotics in the future.

"It is amazing to be colleagues at work. We support each other in our studies with research, discussions, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when everything was online. So, we could graduate together."

Sharing their joy on graduation day were their parents and two elder brothers. Their father is a durian farmer and, mother, a full-time homemaker.

FAMILY SUPPORT KEY TO SUCCESS

When **Muhammad Hazique Wazien Bin Baharudin**, 31, first heard about WOU's mode of open, flexible and distance learning (OFDL), he recognised it as a good opportunity to pursue his tertiary education while working.

"My late friend, who was then a WOU student, had suggested that I enrol here. Since the Kuala Lumpur Regional Office was just nearby, I decided to give it a try," said Hazique.

The Majlis Perbandaran Ampang Jaya (MPAJ) accounts assistant decided to pursue the Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Accounting programme through the APEL (Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning) in 2018.

"As I had no formal training in accounting, this programme proved to be very relevant to my work and increased my proficiency level in this field. I was able to apply the knowledge and skills directly to my job," he said, hoping that his newly earned qualifications would contribute significantly to his career growth.

Elated with joy on his graduation day, Hazique credited his supportive wife and parents, describing them as his pillars of strength throughout his academic journey.

"When I started my studies, it was also around the same time that I got married, started a family, and bought a new home," said the father of two.

"Fortunately, my wife was very understanding of my busy schedule, especially during the times when I had to focus on my studies. Even when I felt like giving up halfway, she continued encouraging me to carry on. She is the reason I am graduating today," said a beaming Hazique.



ACCOUNTING DEGREE GIVES ADDED BOOST TO EXEC

Graduating with the Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Accounting (BBAC) degree has given **Tan Ka Sin** an added boost to manage her leadership role and responsibilities.

"I chose BBAC because WOU offers flexible study. Secondly, the programme structure covers accounting, management, law, entrepreneurship, and other business-related courses. It is an ideal match for my career objectives," she said.

"The BBAC helped improve my soft skills, such as how to communicate effectively with others, develop my emotional intelligence, cope with conflict, and become a skilled leader. Also, I am able to apply the practical skills, knowledge and confidence gained from the programme for my current position," she added.

The 33-year-old is the Deputy Manager (Vessel Account) at NYKSM Maritime Services Sdn Bhd, in Johor Bahru. She joined in 2016 as an account executive, and was promoted to Deputy Manager in 2021. She manages vessel operation costs, including budgeting, and is responsible for regular standard vessel closing reports, and assists in new projects.

She has been in accounting for 14 years, after her LCCI qualification. She started as an account assistant in Singapore before returning to Ipoh, where she worked as an account executive for five years.

For the future, Tan said, "I want to become a professional accountant by obtaining a CIMA certificate through the CIMA A-Star Programme, and eventually an entrepreneur."

When she enrolled at WOU, she set two goals for herself - which she accomplished. First was to complete the programme in three-and-a-half years, and, second, was to graduate with distinction. "Goal-setting keeps me concentrated on the tasks I aim to achieve, and to tackle them with passion and determination, and to not give up during tough times."

"Lifelong learning is not limited by age. Just because you took longer than others, doesn't mean you failed. Keep in mind that you are doing this to accomplish your goal, and keep fighting," she added.

*"Lifelong learning is not limited by age.
Keep in mind that you are doing this
to accomplish your goal, and keep fighting."*



ADVANCING TOWARDS A BRIGHTER FUTURE IN LOGISTICS

"The programme thoroughly equipped me with substantial knowledge, especially in SCM, which I find very useful for the next phase of my career."



The flexibility, freedom and fully online mode of WOU's tertiary education model were the unique features that appealed to **Uszhaa Nhandini Ashok Kumar**, who recently graduated from the Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Logistics and Supply Chain Management programme.

"We had the option of selecting our preferred classes at the point of enrolment. The availability of study and reference materials online was also a big plus," said the senior claims specialist at Lime Malaysia, a micromobility company.

"I had a positive learning experience that went on smoothly even during the COVID-19 pandemic. There were no disruptions such as cancellations or class postponement to our studies as we had all transitioned to online learning then," she recalled.

Uszhaa, 34, had enrolled in the logistics degree programme while previously attached with a forwarding company. She recognised the bright outlook in the lucrative industry, and even expressed her hopes to advance her career specialising in supply chain management (SCM).

"The programme thoroughly equipped me with substantial knowledge, especially in SCM, which I find very useful for the next phase of my career," she said, noting that she was able to hone her writing and critical thinking skills throughout the course of her study.

After taking a short study break, Uszhaa plans to return to WOU for her master's degree, potentially focusing on supply chain management. She credits her husband as her biggest supporter and motivator, and attributes her academic success to his constant guidance and encouragement.

EXPLORING A DIFFERENT PATH IN FINANCE



Working in finance and wanting a deeper grasp of the field led 31-year-old **Ken Sau Fong** to enrol in the Bachelor of Business (Honours) in Finance (BBFI) programme at WOU in July 2017.

Ken, from Kuala Lumpur, is an Elite Pro Life Planner with AIA Malaysia, having joined in June 2023. She previously worked for eight years in Hong Leong Bank as an

Assistant Manager. All in all, she has been in the banking and finance industry for 11 years.

"When I reached 25, I decided to get a degree to improve myself as otherwise I would continue to remain in the same state. I chose Finance because I work in a bank and I am more interested in the finance industry," she said.

On her learning journey, Ken said, "In the past six years, I often doubted myself when rushing for my assignments, but I still completed it, by giving due focus. Self-motivation got me through my degree as I knew why I started the journey."

"Manage your time well, maintain a good routine, maintain a good mood, and never give up!" advised Ken.

"In 2022, my Regional Manager wanted to promote me to branch manager, but I declined because I found that my daily work has become repetitive. If I continued, even with promotion and greater responsibilities, it would still be the same repetitive work."

"I gave myself a gap year to think about what I wanted, and be exposed to different things, and I finally chose to become an AIA Life Planner. I believe that in this process of constantly improving yourself, you will slowly find your own path," she added.

Ken's ambition is to become a Certified Financial Planner, and has plans to go for certification after a two-year break.

"Manage your time well, maintain a good routine, maintain a good mood, and never give up!"

CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT GRADUATE ASPIRES TO SHARE HIS EXPERTISE

When **Syed Najib bin Syed Mohd Zulkarnain** decided it was time to upskill, he looked around and found WOU's flexible and distance learning approach to be the best option for him.

Recently graduated with the Bachelor of Technology in Construction Management degree, Syed Najib, 32, was optimistic and enthusiastic about his promising future ahead.

The Public Works Department Assistant Engineer from Ampang, Selangor, said WOU's learning mode and online learning platform were suitable for working adults with a demanding work schedule like him.

"We have the freedom to study at our own pace, and I was able to set my own schedule. The support of an experienced teaching faculty, as well as highly responsive administrative staff, truly made my learning experience a favourable and positive one," he added.

"The programme is fully relevant to my job, and I could apply the knowledge in my work," said Syed Najib, who handles procurement and construction documents related to major road infrastructure projects such as the West Coast

Expressway and other ongoing projects.

He credits his late father, who was a source of great encouragement, as one of the driving forces especially when he decided to embark on his academic journey.

"My beloved father consistently emphasised on the importance of discipline and having a positive and calm mindset when faced with challenges and obstacles. I wanted to make both my parents and my wife proud of my achievement today," he added.

Syed Najib intends to pursue postgraduate studies and eventually establish a career in academia to contribute his knowledge and expertise to the field of construction engineering.



BECOMING A SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT AT SARAWAK ENERGY

With his electronics degree from WOU, 40-year-old **Aniq Irsyaduddin Johari** is focused on becoming a subject matter expert at Sarawak Energy Bhd in Kuching. He has been with this company and also in the energy sector for 13 years.

Irsyaduddin, of Melanau descent, recently graduated with a Bachelor of Technology (Hons) in Electronics (BTEL) degree, having enrolled in the programme in January 2018.

He was previously an Engineering Assistant at Sarawak Energy but progressed to become a Technical Executive in 2020. Prior to joining the company, he was a draughtsman with the Public Works Department.

He chose to do BTEL at WOU to further his studies in electronics since he holds a diploma in electronics from a polytechnic in Shah Alam. "In Sarawak, only WOU offers the electronics programme, part-time study, at degree-level," he said.

"Studying for the degree had helped me being promoted to an executive. I work in electronics and that is why I took up BTEL. In Sarawak Energy, I attend to the hydrometric network system. My main function is configuration, set-up, server, equipment, programming; all these involve electronics," he added.

Irsyaduddin has plans to enrol in the MBA in Manufacturing

and Production Management (MBAMPM) programme at WOU or doing a master's in electronics.

He studied civil engineering at a vocational college for SPM, and was then offered to further his studies with a diploma in electronics.

He won a full scholarship from his company to do his BTEL at WOU. He is eligible to apply for a scholarship from the company, after a period of 2-3 years, to do his master's. "I probably will continue with WOU because it gives me a lot of flexibility for work-life balance."

His ambition is to become a subject matter expert (SME) - equivalent to managerial-level - in electronics, servers, programming, and technical aspects, in his current company.

Having a wife, who is a teacher and a Universiti Malaya graduate, motivated him to get a degree, and he also wanted to set a benchmark for his three children. "I believe we must always try to improve ourselves, and not stay in your comfort zone. One of the ways is higher studies."



DREAMS FULFILLED: SCHOLARSHIPS PAVED THE WAY TO GRADUATION

Eunice Lee Xin Yi
Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management



WOU-LYL Scholarship recipient Eunice Lee Xin Yi, 25, was among those who graduated with a Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management degree.

Eunice enrolled in WOU in 2020 a year following a recommendation from her cousin who was also pursuing the same programme. When the COVID-19 began to

spread globally, it severely affected her family's economic situation. Fortunately, the scholarship she received played a crucial role in alleviating their financial constraints, enabling her to successfully complete her studies.

"Studying online has instilled in me strong self-discipline to stay focused. I'm glad I persevered until the end because once I start something, I am determined to see it through to completion," she said.

Currently employed at Keynes Resources Sdn Bhd, the administrative headquarters of a renowned chain of preschools, she said that her academic journey had equipped her with the essential soft skills for effective communication and interaction with others.

"I am responsible for liaising with the preschool principals and assisting them in resolving issues. This programme has improved my work performance significantly, and empowered me with plenty of valuable knowledge to apply on the job," she said.

Eunice hopes to be assigned more responsibilities at work, and looks forward to opportunities to further demonstrate her strengths and potential.

"I dedicate my achievement to my parents who are my biggest motivators. I want them to be proud of me," she added.

Ng Chen Tar
Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Sales and Marketing



The 23-year-old from Gopeng, Perak, recently graduated with the Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Sales and Marketing (BBSM) degree from WOU.

Ng Chen Tar enrolled in the September 2019 intake and completed his studies in May 2023. He decided to pursue the BBSM degree due to his

innate curiosity to understand what drives people to make certain purchases and for a better perspective of consumers' purchasing behaviour. "I am very interested in sales and marketing, particularly on how to improve one's selling skills."

His father works as a hair stylist and sells kelulut honey to further supplement the family income, while his mother is a full-time homemaker. As such, he appreciated the scholarship as it freed his family from going into any debt to support his studies.

"Thanks to the scholarship, I did not need help from my parents. Also, it reduced the financial burden that I need to bear with, and also allowed me to concentrate more on my studies. I need not worry about working part-time to pay off any education loan, and this enabled me to maintain a better grade in my studies," he said.

Ng currently works as a shipping specialist at Global Alliance, a freight forwarding company in Kampar. He started in June 2023, handling the documentation for this import-export logistics company. "I have so much to learn and I love working in logistics, so I intend to further my studies in this exciting field in the future."

He aspires to be a businessman but is eager to earn enough to repay his family for their sacrifice by providing them a better lifestyle.

PENANG CM: WOU SCHOLARSHIPS MAKE EDUCATION ACCESSIBLE



▲ Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon and Penang Chief Minister, YB Chow Kon Yeow with the WOU Scholarship recipients.

Ten students from Penang received full scholarships for their studies at WOU, pursuant to the University's collaboration with the state government and Penang Women's Development Corporation (PWDC).

The total amount of sponsorship for the 10 recipients, who had enrolled in the September 2023 intake, was approximately RM345,000. Applications for the scholarships opened in August 2023, to enable eligible candidates from Penang, especially from the lower income households, to pursue their academic dreams.

Penang Chief Minister, Chow Kon Yeow, graced the presentation ceremony of the 10 students at the WOU main campus on 11 December 2023. He said, "the collaboration between WOU, PWDC and the State Government reflects our shared dedication to expanding access to higher education, particularly for those facing economic challenges in Penang."

He added, "Today's event is more than just the awarding of scholarships; it signifies our joint dedication to breaking down barriers, empowering individuals, and envisioning a future where talent thrives irrespective of economic constraints."



▲ Happy, deserving recipients.

BFFs PURSUE PASSION FOR PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION TOGETHER

Thirty-five-year-old **Lee Pui Sum** and **Melanie Lee Yen Ying** recently graduated with Master of Education (MEd) specialising in Education Management from WOU. They bonded during their college days in Kuala Lumpur studying for their diploma in counselling 17 years ago, and have remained close friends since. Their families are close, taking getaways and holidays together.

Pui Sum is a Marketing Executive at a private university in Kampar. She has been in education for 12 years now, after getting her psychology degree. "I took MEd to learn more about management and leadership, and to climb to a managerial position in the education field," she said, adding that "the MEd is an advantage for me to go into management-level positions at any educational institution."

Both Pui Sum and Yen Ying spent a semester or six months at a Liverpool University to complete their degree studies in psychology. "We went to Liverpool 13 years ago, and stayed together in the same hostel. That bonded us further. We have been best friends since college days after Form Five. We have a shared passion for education," she said.

The two decided to defer their studies together for about two years during the COVID-19 lockdown as they could not cope with studies while working online from home, 24/7, besides wanting to graduate together.

They motivated each other to return as they had agreed that once they start, they must finish it. Besides they only had their thesis left to complete over two semesters. "We visit and encourage each other often."

Yen Ying is the Managing Director of Brighter Future, Ipoh, a center for special needs kids aged from three to 18. She

took over seven years ago from her mother because she has an interest in children. She has six teachers and helpers to help run the center, which registered 54 children in 2023.

She was previously a student counsellor at a private university for six years. She has a degree in psychology, and has been in education for about 13 years.

"I combine my psychology and my education knowledge to help the children. I oversee everything, including the syllabus of the teaching, the children's behaviour, and assessment." She is able to apply the knowledge from MEd on managing schools to help manage her learning center, and train her teachers.



▲ Pui Sum (left) and his best friend, Melanie Lee.

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