WOU hosts Silver Jubilee edition of AAOU Annual Conference

The highly anticipated 25th Annual Conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) was hosted by WOU from 28-30 September 2011 at the main campus. Guided by the conference theme – Transforming Asia through Open Distance Learning – over 270 delegates comprising vice chancellors, presidents, rectors, chief executives and academics representing 68 institutions from 22 countries across Asia, Australia, Africa, Canada, Europe and North America shared research findings and deliberated on current issues.

In his welcoming speech, WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Wong Tat Meng, who is also President of AAOU, underlined that the conference’s silver jubilee marked an important milestone in the history of AAOU. “ODL has emerged to become a viable alternative and even the preferred mode of delivering knowledge and industry-relevant skills to meet the increasing demand for higher education and human resource development needs in a rapidly globalising world,” he said.

The conference was officially opened by the Minister of Higher Education (represented by Director-General of Higher Education Prof Dr Morshidi Sirat). Declaring that ODL is steadily gaining more and more recognition from the people and government authorities, Prof Morshidi stated, “Open distance education providers in Malaysia must ensure that quality control is practised throughout the whole value-chain or process, beginning from programme design right through to delivery.” He congratulated WOU for obtaining very good scores in a nationwide Academic Performance Audit conducted by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) in 2010.

Sir John Daniel, President and CEO of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), in his keynote address on Transforming Asia through Open and Distance Learning, spoke on the new Open Educational Resource University model being explored by a number of public institutions around the world. He explained that this would probably not be a new stand-alone accredited institution but rather an umbrella organisation for a network of participating institutions with longstanding reputations and accreditation.

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September 2011 marked the 5th Anniversary of our short existence as a university. As we celebrated the occasion by hosting a number of international events, it was also a time for stock taking and reflection on where we are and where we wish to go within the Malaysian and regional higher education landscape.

From 25-27 September we partnered the Ministry of Higher Education in hosting the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) Focal Points Meeting for Asia which saw 18 delegates from six countries in Commonwealth Asia meeting with the Senior Management team of COL to map out the use of ODL to address the education and training needs of the Commonwealth Asian nations. Valuable lessons were learnt from the experience of educators from other countries.

The 25th AAOU Annual Conference from 28-30 September saw some 270 international and local delegates from 68 open universities and other higher education providers across 22 countries in Asia, Australia, Africa, Europe and North America gathered in the WOU Campus to deliberate on the theme: 'Transforming Asia through Open and Distance Learning.' During the three-day meeting, 6 plenary lectures, one CEO Roundtable, 5 panel discussions/workshops and 127 oral presentations were made.

The sharing of research results, experience and good practices provided a very sound platform for WOU to benchmark our own delivery systems and learner support provisions and learn from peers on ways to enhance and improve on our systems and processes as we prepare for the future to contribute more effectively to the transformation of the national and regional education landscape through the expanded use of E-Learning approaches.

My deep appreciations go to all members of the local Conference Organising Committee for their dedication and hard work to ensure that the delegates enjoyed an event that was ‘intellectually stimulating, culturally enriching and gastronomically satisfying.’ The excellent feedback received from numerous participants suggests that this was largely achieved and the delegates left WOU and Penang with very fond memories of their visit.

For the WOU Learning Community, the icing on the cake came with the announcement at the closing ceremony that WOU staff members won the Gold and Silver medals in the Best Paper Award as well as the Gold medal in the Young Innovator Award. This is truly a proud achievement for an institution celebrating only its fifth year of existence.

5-year term and a vibrant alumni has also been formed. All these have been accomplished with only 2.3 fold increase in the staff complement. This is indeed an accomplishment that we can all be proud of.

Such achievements could not have been made without the dedication and tremendous efforts put in by the whole workforce. I wish to acknowledge and recognize the contribution of each and every member of our WOU fraternity, past and present, for making our University what it is today. It takes the commitment and sustained team effort of the whole learning community to provide the driving force to enable this institution to form, evolve and develop so rapidly. The sacrifices that we have all made now appear increasingly worthwhile and I humbly and sincerely thank all members of the WOU family for their contributions.

Of course, we are not ‘there’ yet. We are still a ‘work in progress’ but that is the more reason why we should use our youthful vitality and zest to bring our institution to the next level - and the next - until we become the higher education provider of choice for working adults and their employers in Malaysia as well as the region.

I foresee exciting times ahead as we leverage on the accreditation status of WOU’s degree and post-graduate programmes to expand on opportunities to bring our programmes to a larger segment of the community through partnership with other tertiary institutions locally and regionally.

A recurring theme of the AAOU Conference as well as the ICDE World Conference hosted by Universitas Terbuka in Bali a week later was the increasing availability and use of Open Education Resources (OER) by the global ODL community to enhance and promote access through the lowering of the cost of delivering education. WOU has embarked on this movement through a pilot project to develop a number of courses using various models of OER usage. A planned migration to the use of OER for content development will help WOU attain its educational and social goals at a faster pace than previously envisaged.

As we embark on the future development of the university, another institutional goal that we are targeting is to get the whole WOU learning community to continuously think about how things can be done better and improve institutional practices through the adoption of new innovative ideas. I am confident that the ‘WOU spirit’ that has guided us along these while will continue to unite and drive us in achieving this common goal for our university.

To all students who are enrolled into courses this semester, I wish you every success in your coming final examinations. I look forward to welcoming you back again in the January 2012 semester. To all those graduating in the coming Convocation Ceremony in November, please accept our heartfelt congratulations. We are very proud of your success and tremendous achievements. It gives us a lot of satisfaction to see your dreams come true.
The conference saw a total of five plenary lectures and over 128 technical papers presented in the five parallel sessions covering the five sub-themes: culture and social change; quality; business model and the role of partnership in ODL; technology; and future trends.

Among the plenary speakers of the conference were: Prof Zita Haji Mohd Fahmi, Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Quality Assurance), Malaysian Qualifications Agency, who spoke on the Development and the Importance of Quality Assurance in Higher Education; Brian McKay Epp, Assessment and Analytics Group Principal Consultant, Pearson eCollege, USA on Leverage the Promise of Technology to Solve Education’s Problems; and Dr Larry Johnson, CEO, The New Media Consortium on Reflections on the Future: The Horizon Project at 10 years, A Sociological Retrospective on Technology and What It Means in Our Lives.

The delegates were also treated to one CEO roundtable discussion on the latest in open learning resources, and six focus panel discussions where experts shared on issues like quality assurance, ICT applications, open educational resources, multimedia learning materials, learning outcome assessment and learning analytics.

The keynote address by Sir John Daniel and the plenary speeches were web-cast to the ODL community as far as New Zealand, Canada and Mexico.

The three-day conference was officially closed by Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department, Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, who remarked how open universities and distance learning had contributed to the human resource development of Asian countries. “Education is a major driver of economic development, not in terms of just producing skills but in generating revenue and income, as an economic sector.”

The conference came to an end with a video presentation by Dr Yoichi Okabe, president of the Open University of Japan, which will play host to the 26th edition.

"The conference was very well organised. It was indeed a learning experience."
Prof K Krishnakumar, Vice Chancellor, Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University, India.

"Thank you WOU for making our participation in the conference as productive and pleasant as possible."
Prof Maria Fe Villamor Mendoza, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, University of the Philippines Open University.

"Certainly, it was one of the best AAOU conferences I have attended."
Dr Nantha Kumar Subramaniam, Deputy Dean (Academic), Faculty of IT and Multimedia Communication, OUM.

"I have enjoyed the best hospitality in my past 17 years of conference life."
Assistant Prof Dr Jack Shu, School of Education and Languages, The Open University of Hong Kong.

"I was impressed with the efficient way WOU organised the conference and all related events."
Prof Asha Kanwar, Vice President of COL.

"I applaud the very good arrangements with regards to the talks and materials."
Prof K S Rangappa, Vice Chancellor, Karnataka State Open University, India.

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The AAOU

The AAOU, formed in 1987, has more than 60 institutional members, with 46 full members from 18 countries across Asia, while other open universities from Europe, Africa, Oceania and America joined as Associate Members. The AAOU had a total student enrolment exceeding 12 million in 2010.

The 25th conference was sponsored by Pearson Asia Pacific, Pustaka Union, PenangFon, Ministry of Higher Education, UNESCO, COL and Canon Marketing, and supported by Penang Global Tourism.
WOU takes top honours once again at 25th AAOU Annual Conference

WOU grabbed the gold medal for both the Best Paper and the Young Innovator Awards at the recent 25th AAOU Annual Conference. The winners received their awards from Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, at the closing ceremony.

The paper titled Implementation of Facebook Study Groups as Supplements for Learning Management Systems (LMS) in Adult ODL Environments garnered the gold medal in the Best Paper Award for Ishan Sudeera Abeywardena and Prof Tham Choy Young, from the School of Science and Technology (SST).

The silver medal went to Assuring the Quality of Online Teaching and Learning: The case of Wawasan Open University by WOU Quality Assurance Manager Dr Andy Liew Teik Kooi and Dr Teoh Ai Ping (Universiti Sains Malaysia and previously Deputy Dean of WOU’s School of Business and Administration).

Meanwhile the gold medal for the Young Innovator Award was won second year in a row by Vincent Chung Sheng Hung (SST). Last year, Vincent along with Karen Khor (SST) won gold for their joint paper.

For more details, visit http://www.aaou.net/aaou2011/

Best Paper Award
Ishan Sudeera Abeywardena and Prof Tham Choy Young
(Wawasan Open University)

Dr Andy Liew Teik Kooi
(Wawasan Open University)

and Dr Teoh Ai Ping
(Universiti Sains Malaysia)

Prof Insung Jung & Sook-Kyoung Choi
(International Christian University, Tokyo)

and Masayuki Kudo
(Hokkaido Institute of Technology)

Young Innovator Award
Vincent Chung Sheng Hung
(Wawasan Open University)

Al Francis D Librero
(University of the Philippines Open University)

Dr Nanthia Kumar Subramaniam
(Open University Malaysia)
The Ministry’s enculturation of the lifelong learning initiative has two objectives, to ensure that lifelong learning becomes a way of life for Malaysians to equip them with skills, and secondly to make lifelong learning the catalyst for establishing a learning community in every organisation in the country.

COL agenda setters gather at WOU

The University co-hosted the Commonwealth of Learning (COL)’s Regional Focal Points Meeting for Asia together with the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) from 25-27 September 2011.

This high-level dialogue brought together senior COL officials – president and chief executive officer Sir John Daniel, vice president Prof Asha Kanwar, Education Specialists Dr K Balasubramanian and John Lesperance -- and senior government officials and academics from Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Maldives for discussion on the use of ODL for development.

Malaysia’s Deputy Director-General of Higher Education, Prof Dr Morshidi Sirat, represented Malaysia while WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Wong Tat Meng attended as host of the event.

Evaluating ODL in the Asian Commonwealth

The primary objective of the Focal Points meeting was to share information on the status of open and distance learning (ODL), assess the COL’s efforts in each country, and to identify challenges and training priorities, as the COL prepares its 2012 – 2015 Three Year Plan.

This will ensure that COL develops country action proposals to meet the priorities of the member states, thus helping the respective governments and institutions expand opportunities for learning.

Speaking at the opening ceremony, Sir John noted, “In the field of ODL, Malaysia is a pace-setter, particularly in the corporate structures that are in place for this purpose.”

Malaysia’s focus

In the country report prepared by MOHE, the top five priorities for ODL in Malaysia included:

- opening up access to higher and continuing education;
- enculturation of lifelong learning to promote sharing of tools, experience, and expertise in the region;
- internationalisation of Malaysian education through online distance education;
- use of e-learning to enhance learning at all levels;
- and learning for livelihood especially for rural regions in Malaysia.

At the closing of the three-day meeting, Director-General of Higher Education Prof Datuk Rujhan Mustafa emphasised that “enculturation of lifelong learning” is one of the thrusts to transform Malaysia’s higher education system to meet the challenges of the future.

COL – a diverse grouping of nations

The COL is an intergovernmental organisation, based in Canada, created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning and distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.

- The Commonwealth of Nations includes 54 member countries.
- 60% of the population is below 25 years.
- The Commonwealth is home to one-third of the world’s poor, of which two-thirds are women.
- The Commonwealth includes 450 million out of the 800 million illiterate adults worldwide.
WOU community gathers at the ‘town hall’

A candid town hall session was organised on 26 July 2011 by the HR Department (as part of the Voice of the Employee initiative) to enable staff to familiarise themselves with the latest developments at WOU and also to encourage discussion and feedback.

Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Wong Tat Meng shared the corporate vision and new developments including upcoming programme offerings.

He thanked the staff for their efforts to enhance quality for which WOU received high commendations from the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) during the nationwide academic performance audit.

He also encouraged them to enhance their own qualifications through the Educational Assistance Programme (EAP) of the University, while congratulating those who will be graduating this year under the EAP.

Among the topics discussed during the one-hour session were the University’s goals by end of 2016, which included: a 20% enrolment of international students; to be a fully online institution with web-based content delivery; an online assessment system and fully online tutorials; and self-accrediting status.

The importance of tutoring in ODL

About 15 academics and academic support staff from WOU attended the latest modules on Learner Support in ODL and Tutoring in ODL, conducted by Assistant Vice Chancellor (Academic Support) Prof Dr Mohandas Menon (the two modules are components of the seven-module Certificate Course on ODL).

While discussing quality assurance in learner support, Prof Menon explained how WOU currently adopts a more quantitative approach e.g. how many students accessed the Learning Management System (LMS), or the number of questions asked. He believed that over time the University will place greater importance on the quality of learner-learner and learner-tutor interaction.

“We should cultivate in students a deeper learning approach, such as analytical thinking, practical thinking, judgement, developing one’s own views, and creativity, and not just facilitate a shallow learning approach. For deeper learning, there should be more activity-oriented discussions in tutorials, instead of only theories and lectures,” he pointed out.

Among the tutor’s roles and responsibilities are evaluating the learners’ work, such as the Tutor Marked Assignments, and providing specific feedback that contributes to learning. “Assignment is not merely an assessment tool but a learning tool facilitated by feedback.” He noted that an effective tutor makes constructive comments, clarifies points not easily grasped or correctly learned, motivates learners, explains where points are lost, and returns assignments promptly. “Through corrective feedback, the adult learners can know where they went wrong and how to improve.”

Prof Menon highlighted the need to strengthen the training programme for tutors in order to update them on all aspects of course delivery - especially conducting effective tutorial sessions, marking TMAs and providing effective feedback.

Finally, Prof Menon also shared the importance of developing a good repository of video clippings and CDs on effective tutorials which can then be used for training purposes. In future, good tutorials held at WOU will also be recorded and used for tutor training.
About 80 parents, babies and toddlers gathered for the Baby Love Music Fun/Toddler Music Magic free workshop organised by WOU’s School of Foundation and Liberal Studies together with Jammin Senzation, Conservatory of Performing Arts and Music at the main campus on 1 October 2011.

The Baby Love Music Fun session dealt with parents engaging actively with their babies by combining developmental milestone activities with music movement and live singing. Meanwhile the Toddler Music Magic session was to help toddlers (1-4 years) develop vocal exploration and rhythmic patterns, create and improve movements, enhance memory, listening and moves through singing, dancing and playing.

The three-hour workshop was conducted by Jasmin Khor, the Asian Region Trainer for this programme founded by Melanie Maslin, a qualified music, drama and early childhood development educator from Australia.

A talk on baby development and health was also given by Dr Adele Tan, a paediatrician from Lam Wah Ee hospital. A child psychologist, Anna Pease, was in attendance to help explain the reasons behind the type of training activities that were provided and how these contributed to the psychological well-being and holistic development of children.

To reach out to more potential students in a more informal, engaging manner, WOU ran an online video contest - Play2Learn – from May to July 2011. The aim of the contest was to create a greater awareness of the shift in the learning landscape away from conventional educational methods to one where learning takes place everyday, anywhere and at any time.

Each contestant created an original video – documentary, short film, instructional video, music video – up to five minutes long, on the theme A Vibrant Learning Community. Videos were then posted on YouTube and uploaded to WOU's Facebook page for viewers to vote for their favourites.

The video with the most number of 'likes' was The World is Your Classroom by grand prize winner James CK Tan who walked away with a Canon digital camcorder Legria and Final Cut Express 4.0 software.

The second prize was awarded to Nico Januz Kibrow Augustin for his work titled Learning to Remember, which also received the Viewer’s Choice award, while the third prize winner was Mohamad Afif Abdul Malek for Connected.

Visit WOU's Facebook page to view the winning entries.
WOU unveils new research grant

The Institute for Research and Innovation (IRI) was established in August 2007 to spearhead the University's research activities - the IRI is currently headed by Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan.

To encourage WOU academics to undertake research and generate new knowledge for WOU (especially in the area of ODL), IRI has announced that the Institute will be making research grants available.

Academics can apply for research grants of up to RM30,000 per project, with funding subject to availability and the approval of the IRI Board.

The WOU Family Day on 25 June 2011 served up a mix of entertaining, health-oriented and interesting activities to keep everyone occupied and on their toes.

The event themed Towards a Healthier Lifestyle kicked off with the Wacky Walk along Gurney Drive, with brainteasers and challenges en route. The Comm-queers (from Corporate Communications Department) came in first, followed closely by Deputy Vice Chancellor Dr Seah Soo Aun and family, and The Power Puff Girls.

For the Race to Health contest, groups participated in aerobics, health screenings and games to earn points. First was Puvanes (Library) and family, second was the team of Kevin Tan (SSI), Dr Tung Lai Cheng (SBA), Dr Leow Ghin Yin (SBA) and hubby, and third was the group featuring Lillie See (Marcom), Cindy Tan, Dr Annie and her daughter, Wai Pheng.

The official launch of the Green Living @ WOU campaign by Wawasan Education Foundation (WEF) Chairman Dato' Sri Stephen Yeap was a timely reminder not to take natural resources for granted. He applauded WOU’s energy-saving measures and green practices. "We are all in this together and the fate of our future generation rests on what we do today," he commented.

He later presented an iPod shuffle to Sim Foong Bee (GSA), the winner of the campaign naming contest, and presented plaques to the various exhibitors. Herbs and medicinal plants from WOU’s mini herbal garden were also given out to staff. Both Dato’ Seri Stephen and Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Wong Tat Meng planted a tree near the Yeap Chor Ee statue as a permanent reminder of WOU’s commitment to the environment.

The final event of the day was the fruit opening contest won by Kevin Tan and Dr Tung Lai Cheng, second place went to R. Rajasegaran (SSI) & K. Ranjini (SFLS), and third place went to Dr Leow Ghin Yin and family (the skilful contestants managed to avoid injury when opening the durians). About 150 people attended the event, including Datin Seri Irene Yeap, WEF director Loo Choo Teng, and WOU Sdn Bhd director Ooi Teng Chew who joined the staff for lunch.
Getting down to business

The Tea Talk on Manufacturing and Production Management held at the Penang Skills Development Centre (PSDC) was a joint initiative between WOU and PSDC to share information on WOU’s latest MBA in Manufacturing and Production Management (MBA-MPM) with working adults.

The participants who all worked within the Bayan Lepas FIZ were given a concise presentation on the MBA-MPM programme by Dean of the School of Science and Technology (SST), Prof Tham Choy Yoong, followed by a Q&A session.

Also present at the tea talk were Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) Prof Dato’ Dr Ho Sinn Chye, Director of Regional Operations Chong Kang Hoong, Penang Regional Office (PGRO) Director K. Manoharan and staff from the PGRO and Marketing and Communications Department.

WOU previews at Ivory and FMM

WOU conducted a briefing on its Master’s programmes for staff of Ivory Properties during a tea talk at Birch House in July to highlight the professional development opportunities available, especially in construction. The majority who attended came from the engineering division, while others were from architecture, interior design and human resources.

In his presentation, SST Dean Prof Tham Choy Yoong spoke about WOU Master’s degrees - CeMBA, CeMPA, MBA in Manufacturing and Production Management (MBA-MPM), and MBA in Construction Management (MBA-CM).

“You can choose the subjects relevant to you, and you don’t need to finish the programme,” he told the Ivory staff, emphasising that WOU’s students are mainly working adults looking to upgrade their on-the-job skills.

He informed the participants that they could request their company to send them for studies, since all WOU programmes are HRDF claimable.

The WOU team also dispelled the misconception that the MBA-MPM and MBA-CM differed from the CeMBA and CeMPA, due to the absence of the ‘Commonwealth’ prefix. Penang Regional Office (PGRO) Director K. Manoharan explained to the Ivory team that all the Master’s degrees are conducted and awarded by WOU and not by any external party.

A day after the Ivory presentation, WOU held a preview of the MBA-MPM programme at the Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers (FMM) Penang Branch office. The preview was attended by representatives from First Solar Malaysia (Kulim) and CPI Penang. These focused series of preview sessions will help WOU to better connect with working adults and showcase relevant academic programmes to them. It is also an opportunity for WOU staff to get a better understanding of the challenges and issues facing working adults from a range of industries.
For the third consecutive year WOU participated in the Young Enterprise (YE) programme, as the corporate sponsor and mentor of Convent Green Lanc team – Modulus X.

Under the guidance of the WOU advisory team, led by Deputy Vice Chancellor (Operations) Dr Seah Sook Aun and Lecturer Deebdanji Lakshmaya (SBA), Modulus X came in as second runner-up for Best Managed YE Company in the YE Annual Achievers Showcase on 22 September 2011. The team of 30 students turned ‘businesswomen’ also won the best overall stall at the YE Sales Fair in Queensbay Mall.

“Our participation in YE has become part of our staff training and development programme. We also believe in being good corporate citizens, undertaking the responsibility to train young minds to think critically, pool their talents and resources together, and work as a team for the good of their company,” explained Dr Seah.

Getting to grips with depression and suicide

In a public talk organised by WOU and Befriends Penang on 27 July 2011, Dr Lai Fong Hwa, consultant psychiatrist at Penang Hospital explained the link between depression and suicide and how to treat depression.

According to Dr Lai, “Usually the suicidal intent is short-lived, the will to kill lasts a few hours to 1-2 days. Therefore it is important to help them pass through this critical period.” Treatments for depression included, strenuous exercise, medication, and psychotherapy (counselling).

Earlier in her talk, Befriends Penang vice chairperson Saras Pillay, expressed concern over the growing number of suicide cases in the country especially among the 16 to 25 age group. Pillay’s advice for dealing with a suicidal person was to acknowledge and accept their feelings, give them full attention, encourage them to talk, listen without judgement, and avoid trying to offer solutions or belittle them.

According to her, depression heightens one’s sense of hopelessness and rejection. “Depression is not a sign of weakness or a state that people can just snap out of,” she explained, adding that depression often interrupts a person’s ability to work or sleep preventing them from functioning normally.

Recent statistics revealed that 99% of Malaysians suffer from depression, with the number increasing in children; women are twice as likely to get depressed than men.

The session – which was the first in a series of public talks organised by the School of Foundation and Liberal Studies – was also attended by 100 students from KDU Penang.
Community Engagement Activities

Changing global economic trends

Over 400 people crowded into the main campus’ theatre for Prof KS Jomo’s talk on Globalisation and Penang on 28 July 2011. Jomo, who is one of Malaysia’s best-known academics, is currently the Assistant Secretary General for Economic Development in the United Nations’ Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

He spoke of increased inequalities in the world as international terms of trade have deteriorated against developing economies, citing the falling prices of tropical agricultural products compared to temperate agricultural products, and the price of manufactured goods from developing countries relative to the price of manufactured goods from developed nations.

Jomo believed that reverse globalisation is spreading and expected more developing countries to impose greater trade restrictions or controls. The increased protectionism by many countries has led China to become less externally-oriented and to generate its own domestic market. “You cannot develop an economy on the basis of impoverishing your own people, and simply producing for exports. You need a domestic market. It becomes worse for us because Malaysia has been so externally oriented in terms of economic policy that we don’t even know how to think about the future in any other terms,” he elaborated.

He suggested that Penang – which used to be a leader in E&E manufacturing – must not only draw on its resources but also anticipate options like reversible globalisation. “It cannot and should not compete with the lower-end producers.”

Replying to questions on the major international financial institutions including the IMF, WTO, and World Bank, he observed that these are dominated by powerful nations. It is therefore important for developing countries to cooperate to advance their interests or form alliances with other countries facing the same challenges. The lively talk was organised by Think City Sdn Bhd and Penang Heritage Trust.

Penang a higher education hub

Penang has the potential to become an education hub in the Asian region, according to Prof Dato’ Woo Wing Thye during the ‘Penang in Asia’ Lecture series on The World Economy in 2012: Implications for Malaysia held at the main campus on 29 July 2011.

“Penang is a great place for institutions of higher education and high schools. This is a place where people in China are happy to send their children to be educated in English.” He noted that human capital development and efforts to stop the brain drain are vitally important for higher learning institutions are to flourish in the country.

Prof Woo also said Malaysia’s growth has slowed down to half of what it was before in the past 10 years because of a loss of private investor confidence. He stated that foreign direct investment (FDI) has decreased due to a number of factors including cheaper labour in China, inadequate local human capital and an immigration policy that favours low-skilled labour.

Another reason for declining investments is the discrimination against domestic investors, leading to the flight of world-class Malaysian firms and capital abroad. ‘Internal weaknesses had been masked by massive FDI, but the moment the FDI slowed down, the lack of domestic capital and domestic technical skills were felt,’” he explained.

Looking ahead, Prof Woo believed that Malaysia must develop into a knowledge-based society and move up the value-added chain by creating more skilled workers.
UPCOMING EVENTS

WOU Convocation Ceremony
Date: 19 November 2011 (Saturday)
Venue: WOU main campus

Student Info
Student Orientation
For the Jan 2012 intake, the student orientation to acquaint new students with the University, its facilities and the ODL mode of learning will be held as follows:
Date: 15 January 2012 (Sunday)
Venue: WOU main campus / Regional Offices nationwide

CALL FOR ARTICLES!
Tell us all about your experiences studying at WOU. Send your articles of not more than 300 words to wawasanlink@wou.edu.my. Prizes are awarded for stories published!

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Proud student ambassador

Excited at being able to continue his tertiary education, Faezal Azhar Jaffar — a manufacturing supervisor at an MNC in Johor — successfully convinced nine of his colleagues to upgrade their academic qualifications at WOU for better job prospects!

The 37-year-old enrolled for his Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management at the University in January 2011 and became a WOU Student Ambassador. Faezal’s enthusiasm rubbed off on his colleagues who were interested in discovering more about WOU’s industry-relevant programmes and how they could earn a degree without leaving full time employment.

The father of five received a rebate on his tuition fees for every successful recommendation, and he is even more motivated to spread the word about the University.

Since starting WOU’s Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management programme, Faezal believes that he has gained plenty of up-to-date management insights which he now apply to his job. “I have developed better leadership skills. I can also better manage my daily work schedule and improve my communication skills with colleagues,” he added.

He subscribes to the principle that knowledge and skills gained through education are never wasted, and his degree programme is a passport to a better future. “I am motivated to complete the academic journey I have begun at WOU!”

Using knowledge in psychology to help others

Having a heart for social work and wanting to give back to society motivated a chartered tax consultant at an established tax consultancy firm in Selangor to take up psychology at WOU.

Lee Chin Choo, 52, has worked in the tax and audit field for over 25 years and decided to take up WOU’s BA (Hons) in Psychology to learn more about human behaviour, especially as her line of work brings her into contact with people from all walks of life.

“I am really glad I made this move. I am beginning to appreciate why people behave in a certain way, and am learning not to be too judgemental. It has really been an eye-opener as I am now able to better manage my staff and relate to others,” she explained.

Away from the corporate environment, Lee volunteers at a special children’s home in Ampang, and is hoping to become more involved in such activities. “With a degree in psychology from WOU, I shall be prepared to take on bigger challenges at work and in other areas.”

Her aspiration is to eventually obtain a Doctor of Psychology degree. “I believe my niche in life is to undertake social-oriented work and contribute to society. I feel a great sense of accomplishment if I am able to impact other people’s life in a positive way.”

In the minds of our readers

We would like to hear from you. Whether it’s a view, a comment or even a question, don’t hesitate to drop us a mail at medianinfo@wou.edu.my

For more details, visit wou.edu.my

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