Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik installed as WOU’s new Chancellor

It was a historic day for Wawasan Open University as Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik was formally installed as Chancellor during a special ceremony at the main campus on 19 November 2011.

In installing Tun Dr Lim as Chancellor, Wawasan Education Foundation Chairman Dato’ Seri Stephen Yeap mentioned their shared vision to serve the educationally less fortunate of society – with WOU a result of this vision and Tun Dr Lim very much the driver in its establishment and subsequent progress. He added that a former Prime Minister described Tun Dr Lim as “someone who is focused, passionate, dedicated and committed to the task.”

Meanwhile Parti Gerakan President and Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon described Tun Dr Lim as “outspoken and direct... always with good intention, good ideas” and also as “daring and yet very caring, often going to great extent to help those in trouble’. Koh added, “So, you have in the new Chancellor of WOU, a great leader with a good mind, a big heart and a sharp tongue.”

Contents
Vice Chancellor’s voice 2
WOU’s Star Students 3
in the limelight
WOU degrees gain JPA recognition following accreditation by MQA 4
LOOKING EAST
Kuching FO opens to same East Malaysian workforce
WOU welcomes new dean of SBA
5
in the know
Achieving the DREAM
WOU’s newest graduates speak out!
5
6
Green shoots set for growth
WOU Alumni gets started
7
Experts from diverse fields in WOU’s new Board of Governors
8
Unraveling the mysteries of space
9
WOU academics part of international team working on the world’s most powerful multi-terabit telescope
WOU represented at the ICDE World Conference
Enhancing Tutoring Skills
WOU holds CCL tutor training workshop
Final Project Tips for Master’s Students
Continuous improvement in tutoring quality
in the schools
WOU celebrates a year of achievements
Thriving on diversity in nation building
Enhancing HR through lifelong learning
10
Inside the minds of ‘Generation Y
11
Introducing the NEW WawasanLink!

Highlights of the second Convocation

Following his installation, Tun Dr Lim presided over the morning session of the second Convocation ceremony, conferring degrees to 76 graduates of the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration (CeMBA) and the inaugural batch of four Commonwealth Executive Master of Public Administration (CeMPA) graduates.

The same ceremony also saw the pioneer batch of 70 Bachelor’s degree graduates – 56 for Bachelor of Business (Hons) and 14 for Bachelor of Technology (Hons) – ranging in age from 24 to 63 years receiving their scrolls.
Vice Chancellor's Voice

The last quarter of 2011 was certainly a busy period punctuated by a number of important milestones. November 19 saw the installation of Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik as the University’s 2nd Chancellor in a simple but historic ceremony. His appointment was greatly welcomed by all sectors of the Wawasan learning community as well as the wider Malaysian public since it was Tun LVK’s great vision and tenacity which drove the dream that led to the establishment and rapid growth of WOU. He is a true champion of WOU and its ideals and we look forward to benefiting from his experience, stature and wise counsel for many more years to come.

On the academic front, WOU’S initial suite of 11 Bachelor’s degree programmes and two Master’s programmes were awarded full accreditation status by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA). Very simply, this means that each programme had completed a full cycle of delivery, produced its 1st batch of graduates and met the stringent quality standards set out by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) and the MQA for accreditations as a quality programme and its contributors in recognition by Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam (JPA). It was an important step in the University’s progression as a provider of quality tertiary education. Over the next few years, further WOU programmes will follow this course as more of our students complete their studies and graduate.

November 19 was also special as we held our second Convocation ceremony and proudly witnessed the 1st batch of 70 Bachelor’s degree holders as well as 80 holders of the MBA and the Master of Public Administration degree receive their scrolls, thereby adding another 150 trained professionals to the country’s talent pool. These graduates are rather special as they are already equipped with years of work experience. My heartfelt congratulations to these highly motivated and dedicated individuals who had made numerous personal sacrifices to achieve their academic ambitions! I have no doubt that our graduates will contribute significantly to the workplace and society in general.

The same month saw the announcement of the membership of the University’s Board of Governors which replaces the former council. We are pleased to welcome the appointment of Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Dr Gajarat Dhanaraj as Chairman and the other respected individuals (see page 9) as members of the Board. Guided by the rich blend of experience from both the academic and industry sectors, the governing Board will bring WOU to the next level of its development.

As a progressive institution of higher learning, WOU proactively pursues local and international collaborations to continuously enhance academic standards, equip ourselves with cutting-edge knowledge and implement best practices in ODL. In the last quarter of 2011, WOU hosted the 25th AAOU Conference and co-hosted the Commonwealth of Learning (COL)’s Regional Focal Points Meeting for Asia in partnership with MOHE. We are proud to be accorded the honour of leading the 46 institution-membered Asian Association of Open Universities and hosting these two international meetings that brought together leading international ODL leaders, academics and practitioners.

On 18 November 2011, we welcomed the formal establishment of the WOU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION with the holding of its inaugural Annual General Meeting attended by 42 founding members. I congratulate MBA graduate Harry Ho for his election as Alumni President. I am confident that under the leadership of Ho and his Executive Committee, the WOU Alumni will grow by leaps and bounds. Like most universities, WOU sees the ALUMNI ASSOCIATION as an important stakeholder of the institution. It is the intention of the WOU management to consult and work closely with the Alumni in the future development of the University. We look forward to strengthening this partnership in time to come.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to wish all our new students a warm welcome to the WOU learning community. To all continuing students ‘Welcome back’. Most of you would be at least 10 credits closer to the finishing line. You must continue to persevere for soon you will be crossing the finishing line and be rewarded with the degree that you have aspired for so long. I wish you ‘all the best’ in your continuing studies in WOU and look forward to welcoming you as the proud holder of a WOU degree on your graduation.
WOU degrees gain JPA recognition following accreditation by MQA

WOU’s commitment to provide an academically rich learning experience to its students and maintaining high quality academic standards was rewarded when MQA recently awarded full accreditation for the University’s initial suite of 11 undergraduate programmes and two postgraduate programmes.

MQA full accreditation is a stringent assessment exercise to ascertain that the teaching, learning and all other related activities of a programme provided by a higher education provider have met the benchmarked quality standards in compliance with the Malaysian Qualifications Framework (MQF). Full accreditation can only take place once a programme has completed its full academic cycle i.e. just before the first batch of students graduate.

This brings the total number of fully accredited WOU programmes to date to 13 - the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration (CeMBA) received its full accreditation status in 2010.

To date with the full accreditation status, 12 of these 13 programmes have also received recognition from the Public Service Department (JPA), with CeMPA to follow suit shortly. It is a practice for programmes to be first accredited by MQA before recognition by JPA.

Recognition provided by these two significant regulatory bodies (MQA and JPA) will guarantee eligibility to graduates for job hunting in public and private sectors.

All of WOU’s other academic programmes already have met the MQA quality requirements and awarded the provisional accreditation status prior to the full accreditation exercise when the pioneering batches of students enter their last semester of studies.

This positive outcome marks an important milestone as it signifies the achievement of quality, which is the underlying hallmark of the University. With this full accreditation status, WOU can now offer these programmes “offshore” to other local or overseas institutions.

To find out more about the MQA accreditation process and WOU internal quality assurance process on programme development, visit: http://www.wou.edu.my/study_know_approval.html
LOOKING EAST

Kuching RO opens to serve East Malaysian workforce

The Kuching Regional Office (KCRO) was launched in a ceremony officiated by Sarawak’s Minister of Welfare, Women and Family Development, Datuk Hajah Fatimah Abdullah, marking WOU’s first learner support centre in East Malaysia.

Datuk Fatimah acknowledged that “WOU is playing a vital role in helping working adults to upgrade their knowledge and skills and I want to thank them for their contribution towards producing a knowledge-based society”.

“Adult higher learning as provided by WOU offers a lifeline since it supports the government’s initiatives to bring about a knowledge-based workforce and society,” she added.

WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Wong Tat Meng explained that the launch of the KCRO would allow WOU to extend its “geographical coverage in line with our mission to bring quality, affordable tertiary educational opportunities to adult Malaysians located throughout the country”.

“We look forward to working with the Government of Sarawak to identify academic as well as professional training programmes that are of relevance to their human capital development needs,” said Prof Wong.

Also present at the launch were Deputy Vice Chancellors Prof Dato’ Dr Ho Sinn Chye (Academic) and Dr Seah Soo Aun (Operations), Regional Operations Director Chong Kong Hoong and KCRO Director Jimmy Chai.

WOU welcomes new dean of SBA

In January 2012, Prof Dr N V Narasimham joined WOU as dean of the School of Business and Administration (SBA).

He was formerly Director of the School of Management Studies at the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi - one of the world’s largest open universities - where he served as faculty member of the School for some 25 years.

Prof Narasimham has long years of experience in curriculum planning, development and in implementing academic programmes in distance teaching and open learning at IGNOU. He was also involved in developing video and audio lessons for various courses.

His focus for SBA is to widen the choice and scope of quality and cost-effective market oriented courses that WOU offers at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. “As such, we will consolidate the existing offerings at undergraduate level and plan for new MBA programmes in the functional areas of marketing, international business and finance,” he stated, adding that they will collaborate with local professional institutions and international bodies in the future development of new types of programmes.

Prof Narasimham holds a PhD from the Department of Commerce and Administration, Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapur, India and obtained his Master of Commerce and Bachelor of Commerce from Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, India.
Achieving the DREAM

WOU’s newest graduates speak out!

WOU’s first woman CeMPA graduate

Teaching at the Kubang Kerian Nursing College in Kelantan, she decided to join CeMPA to broaden her knowledge of government health-related policies and public administration.

“I felt it was my duty to do so, not just because I am a nursing lecturer, but also as a Malaysian I need to fully understand and analyse government policies. My analytical skills have been enhanced by the programme and I understand the broader pictures,” she said.

Besides fine-tuning her analytical skills, See was also very determined that she should be a positive role model for her three sons, the youngest in secondary school and the two eldest studying at university.

Nursing lecturer See Teik Lan

Old friends get reacquainted

Abdul Jabbar Ahmad Shah, 54, and Tan Kee Teng, both school headmasters from Johor Bahru, have been firm friends since their teacher training days. They happily shared each other’s joy on being conferred their CeMPA degree.

Abdul Jabbar credits good time management and a supportive family behind his success.

Meanwhile Tan was thankful to the dedicated WOU tutors who encouraged him in his academic quest. “I chose to study at WOU because of the flexible study times as my own teaching schedule is very packed. I also wanted to upgrade my own skills and set a good example for my staff.”

Headmasters Abdul Jabbar Ahmad Shah & Tan Kee Teng

Family support in learning

WOU celebrated the first husband-and-wife graduates for the CeMBA programme. High-flying Fazilah Sirajuddin found her studies highly relevant to her career as section head of a public-listed company. “From a manufacturing industry perspective, I found CeMBA very useful,” said the mother of four.

Husband Zahir Abas Abdul Razak, the general manager of an engineering firm, stated, “I think CeMBA gave me more confidence from a business perspective, as I’m a civil engineer by training.”

He continued, “All the modules were applicable to real-life working situations and weren’t just theoretical.”

As to how they both coped with work, study and raising a new addition to the family, Fazilah replied, “It helped a lot that we studied the same subjects so we could really push each other.”

Couple Zahir Abas Abdul Razak and Fazilah Sirajuddin

For Dr Pasupathi, completing his CeMBA programme was the culmination of a dream that began when he was fresh out of medical school and serving in a government hospital. “My ambition back then was to learn how to manage people.”

Today, he puts his management skills to good use, overseeing the operations of five GP clinics in Kuala Lumpur.

“I’m glad I chose WOU because of the flexibility of the open distance learning method. Taking up an MBA at a conventional university would have just been too hectic for me with my busy career,” he explained.

Dr Pasupathi Nadarajan, a medical doctor
Love blossomed for the 35-year-old finance executive on the grounds of the WOU main campus after she laid eyes on her future husband, Cheong Choy Wan, in tutorial class during their first semester. The couple tied the knot in September 2011.

It was therefore a double celebration when Yong was conferred the Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Accounting. Her husband, a retail equity manager, is pursuing his banking and finance degree programme at WOU and will graduate in 2012.

"I now know how to apply the principles of accounting and costing, and produce more presentable, well-written reports in English," said Yong, who has been in the accounting line for over 13 years.

Yong Choy Wan, Finance Executive

Wife Subhashini Maniam gamely planted a congratulatory kiss on graduate Kumaresan's cheek, after watching her husband receive his Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Logistics and Supply Chain Management degree from WOU.

He has been working as regional logistics coordinator for an oil and gas company in Singapore for the last five years. "I was drawn to the programme structure and the subjects," he explained.

He continued, "I manage projects and logistics. Being in management, I now have a better appreciation of accounting, and how to apply this to cost and transport management to improve the processes in my company." The degree has also built his confidence when facing top-level managers and in finding a systematic way of solving problems.

Kumaresan Jayaraman, 43, Regional Logistics Coordinator

Chong Kwai Yong manages a distributorship in Perak for a large food and beverage company, and has a team of about 15 people working for her. A Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management graduate from WOU, she stated, "I feel more confident in handling issues that arise at work."

"I took up the course so that I can better manage my own business," said Chong, a former teacher, and currently director of her own distributorship company for more than 10 years.

"With ODL I can plan my leisure and study at my own speed. You however must have self-discipline. Also, my work experience as a distributor really helped me to tackle the assignments given," said the mother of three kids aged 16, 17 and 22.

Chong Kwai Yong, 50, company director

Wife inspired by husband to upgrade herself

Lim Lee Loong, an engineer in printed circuit board design for the last six years, is a Bachelor of Technology (Hons) in Electronics with distinction graduate from WOU. He took up the programme to gain knowledge in electronics. "I am able to better carry out printed circuit board design. I also feel more confident in dealing with the technical stuff and with the people at work with what I've learnt from WOU."

Lim from Penang considers his sacrifice of his Sundays and public holidays to study worth his effort, and recommends others to take up the challenge to improve their knowledge and work performance. Not surprisingly, through his encouragement, his wife Lee Kim Ai, administration manager at an accounting firm, is presently doing CeMBA at WOU.

Lim Lee Loong, 35, PCB design engineer

The Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management graduate retired in July as manager of an oil and gas company in Johor Bahru after five years. The grandfather to four kids, when asked his motivation to study, said: "All my sons, sons-in-law are graduates. That drove me to earn a degree, to succeed."

"It has made me a better manager. The programme was very applicable to my job," he added. Not one to sit idly by, he took up an executive MBA from another university while studying for his degree – he graduated in April 2011, after which in June the same year he enrolled at another institution to do his Doctor of Business Administration. He will also be serving as WOU tutor at the Johor Bahru Regional Office.

Leslie See Kew Him, 63
Rewarded with a job promotion
This 33-year-old graduated in Bachelor of Technology (Hons) in Electronics with distinction. She was among three women from the inaugural batch of 16 B.Tech degree graduates.
She has been a technician at a semiconductor organisation in Penang for five years. With a diploma in electronics, she decided to pursue a degree to "gain more knowledge about my job, and a higher salary".

"I was promoted from junior to senior technician six months after starting my degree programme in 2007. I am able to use the theory to relate to my work and better understand what I am doing."
Ng Cheng Bee

32-year-old Lau who works in the construction industry in Penang was one of the youngest CeMBA graduates in 2011. He decided to sign up for the programme to advance his career prospects. "I spent a lot of time checking out newspaper ads and doing my own research on the different universities. In the end, I decided to study at WOU because of the flexibility of the (CeMBA) programme, which allowed me to continue to work."
He was full of praises for the CeMBA programme. "I felt it was current and very industry focused. It is very relevant for my career."
Lau Sun Wah

Green shoots set for growth
WOU Alumni gets started

In true WOU style, a series of video conferences between the Alumni board committee and WOU representatives – including Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Wong Tat Meng, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sin Chye, Registrar Yeong Sik Kheong and Senior Executive (Registry) Cheryl Ooi Hui Hui – began in 2010 to deliberate on the formation of the WOU Alumni, as well as its objectives, plans, membership structures, activities and constitution.

The first AGM was held at the main campus of WOU in November 2011, where the new eye-catcher logo was unveiled, along with the Alumni Executive Committee.

Alumni president Harry Ho, formerly managing director in a large corporation, currently lends his expertise as a consultant. Meanwhile Tan Keat Fong is the finance and administrative executive of a hi-tech tooling manufacturing company; May Ang is a marketing and promotion manager; and Foo Chuat Meng is a secondary school teacher. The other Exco members also bring a wealth of experience as they hold positions as managing director, bank manager, regional manager of a leading energy beverage company, and senior executive in marketing research.

You can access the Alumni website at http://alumni.wou.edu.my for further details on Alumni gatherings and activities.
Experts from diverse fields in WOU’s new Board of Governors

WOU’s Constitution was revised in 2011 to comply with a Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) prescribed template.

In accordance with the new WOU Constitution, a Board of Governors was formed to replace the role played by the former Council. The membership of the new WOU Board of Governors was confirmed on 18 November 2011.

The University congratulates and welcomes this new Board, which includes:

• Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Dr Gajaraj Dhanarajan who has been appointed as the Chairman of the WOU Board of Governors
• Dato’ Seri Stephen Yeap Leong Huat
• Dato’ Seri Chet Singh Ali Karam Singh
• Dato’ Thilainathan Ali Ramasamy
• Mr Loo Choo Teng
• Mr Goi Teng Chew

• Chief Executive of the University – Prof Dr Wang Tat Meng
• Professorial staff member elected by the Senate – Prof Dr Tham Choy Yoong

The Board has a wealth of experience in open distance learning (ODL), development, administration and financial planning. Prof Dhanarajan has worked in the ODL environment for over 25 years, while Dato’ Seri Stephen Yeap is a prominent banker and Executive Chairman of a Penang-based company with interests in education, property development and investment.

Dato’ Seri Chet Singh led the Penang Development Corporation for 20 years as general manager and was a key player behind the development of the Penang Free Trade Zone. Dato’ Thilainathan comes with over 10 years experience in banking, and Mr Loo is the CEO of a large corporation. Finally, there is Mr Goi with more than 25 years experience as a public accountant, and Prof Tham, a registered professional engineer and currently dean of SST.

Unravelling the mysteries of space

WOU academics part of international team working on the world’s most powerful radio telescope

Prof Dr Tham Choy Yoong, the Dean of School of Science and Technology (SST), talked to WawasanLink about his work on the Atacama Large Millimetre/Submillimetre Array (ALMA), the world’s most powerful radio telescope.

ALMA which will eventually consist of 66 huge dishes in total, is located high up in Chile’s Atacama Desert. According to BBC Online, the massive telescope will “give the observatory an unprecedented view of the cool universe – all the gas and dust that goes into building stars and planets. It will also enable astronomers to see events in the very early cosmos that are beyond the detection of current technologies.”

WL: WOU’s Institute of Research and Innovation (IRI) has provided a research grant to your team to create an “initial mixer design” – what does this mixer do?
Prof Tham: The mixer is the main part of the instrument used in a radio telescope to detect signals that come from deep space. It is extremely sensitive and can detect extremely faint signals.

WL: How will the new mixer enhance ALMA’s capabilities?
Prof Tham: ALMA is currently the world’s most powerful radio telescope operating in the millimetre and sub-millimetre frequencies. Currently its instrument can detect signals of frequency from 30 GHz to 950 GHz. This new mixer we want to develop will enable it to detect signals up to 1,200 GHz (or 12 THz).

There are a lot of signals out there from deep space which we can study to learn more about the universe, especially how the universe came into being 13.8 billion years ago following the Big Bang. In short, the origin of our very own existence!

WL: Could you elaborate on the collaboration between WOU and Oxford University on ALMA?
Prof Tham: Some colleagues and I from WOU will team up with a team from the Astrophysics Department of Oxford University to develop the design of the mixer. At WOU we will be involved with computer simulation of the optics system.

The team at Oxford University will handle the rest of the work including the detectors and the electronic systems. Once the design is complete, the mixer will be built and tested in the laboratory at Oxford University.

The complete mixer will finally be installed into the ALMA radio telescope for astronomical observation to be carried out.

For more information on ALMA, visit: http://www.almaobservatory.org/

Artist’s conception of the antennas for ALMA
A view of the near-Future ALMA antenna array once it’s completed
© ALMA (ESO/NA/NAO/ESO)
WOU represented at the ICDE World Conference

By Ishan Abeywardena

The 24th International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) World Conference was held on 2-5 October 2011 in Nusa Dua, Bali, Indonesia under the theme "Expanding Horizons – New Approaches to Open and Distance Learning."

The conference was hosted by Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia and was the venue for rich academic discourse on matters related to ODL. Close to 600 delegates from all across the globe participated in the conference bringing insights on cutting edge research in the arena of ODL from different geographic, demographic and socio-economic environments.

Five plenary sessions, with distinguished speakers including Hal Plotkin, Senior Policy Advisor to the US Under Secretary of Education, and Lawrence Lessig, lawyer, activist and founder of Creative Commons, were held, followed by panel discussions with experts such as WOU’s own Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Dr Gajaraj Dhanarajan.

In addition to Tan Sri Roi, WOU was represented by – Prof Dr Wong Tat Meng, Vice Chancellor and President of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU); Prof Dato’ Dr Ho Sinn Chye, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic); Prof Dr Mohandas Menon, Assistant Vice Chancellor (Academic Support); Prof Dr Rahil Mahyuddin, Acting Dean of the School of Education, Languages and Communications; Dr Andy Liew, Quality Assurance Manager; Dr Ghanshyam Kumar Singh, Associate Prof, and Ishan Abeywardena, Senior Lecturer, from the School of Science and Technology – to present research papers.

Prof Wong, who also represented AAOU, took part in a number of high profile roundtable sessions and discussions with global leaders and ODL policymakers; one of the roundtable meetings was on the Global Taskforce on Quality Assurance.

The three-day conference was a melting pot of cultures and a great avenue for networking which allowed the WOU delegation to renew existing ties and forge new relationships, to enhance the ODL teaching and learning experience at WOU.

Enhancing Tutoring Skills

WOU holds COL tutor training workshop

November 2011

The purpose of the three-day workshop co-organised and hosted at WOU was to help tutors and course coordinators handling the CeMBA and CeMPA programmes to use case studies more effectively in tutorial sessions and in their course delivery, including assessment.

Under the theme “Case Based Learning in Open Distance Learning (ODL), 25 international delegates from Pakistan, Ghana, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Guyana, Papua New Guinea, and Malaysia gathered at WOU’s main campus.

The workshop was facilitated by Prof Dr Ravi Shanker, a Commonwealth of Learning (COL) consultant, and by former WOU Professor and Director of Centre for Graduate Studies, Prof Madhulika Kaushik (who is currently a COL Education Specialist for Higher Education).

According to Prof Ravi Shanker, integrating case studies into the curriculum will take students “closer to the corporate realities, otherwise they are restricted to textbook learning. They write exams, get grades. At the end of the day, we produce only mediocre MBA graduates who are not resourceful enough to meet the needs and expectations of the industry.”

He shared that case studies could be either text or video-based; the advantage of video footage is that it is more lively and interactive for students. At the workshop, the participants learnt how to develop effective teaching notes and cases for teaching and assessment, and how to use a case in class to problem-solve or teach specific concepts.
WOU, through the Centre for Graduate Studies (CGS), organised the 5th Residential School and Project Workshop at the main campus from 8-9 October 2011, themed Capital Market Development and Foreign Investment in Malaysia – A Corporate Governance Perspective, which was open to all CeMBA and CeMPA students.

After Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) Prof Dato’ Dr Ho Sinn Chye welcomed the students, Dr Cheah Foo Seong, President of MAICSA (Chartered Secretaries Malaysia), updated the audience on the proposed Capital Market Development and Corporate Governance Framework in Malaysia.

The second keynote speaker, Raymond Corray, Director of RC Advisory Services Sdn Bhd, spoke on Corporate Governance – the Challenges from a Performance Perspective.

Workshops were conducted by outgoing School of Business and Administration (SBA) Dean, Prof Dr Chee Kim Loy, and SBA course coordinators. Senior lecturer Chong Fook Suan spoke on A Guide to Carry Out Research in the CeMBA/PA Project: Administrative Issues.

Prof Chee explained about Conducting Management or Business Research: A Pragmatic Approach. His background in strategic development combined with his adept knowledge and skills in statistics allowed the students a very unique view of conducting a research project.

He also offered A Guide to Data Analysis using SPSS Software in Quantitative Research in anticipation of the actual process of number-crunching that students would have to go through to analyse their research data. Guest speaker Dr Amirul Shah Md Shahbudin of the School of Management, Universiti Sains Malaysia gave the audience the other side of research with an Introduction to Qualitative Research. This gave students a better idea of two alternative types of research.

SBA senior lecturer Dr Oei Hong Lim spoke on Guideline and Practical Insights on Project Report Writing. Her presentation was complemented by first-hand insights from Dr Janet Toh, a project supervisor to CeMBA and CeMPA students since the course began, and Gilbert Gim, who had just completed his CeMBA research project.

Continuous improvement in tutoring quality

In every quality ODL institution, good tutors and strong tutorial support play a vital role in the learner support system. To continuously enhance the professional development of tutors, WOU regularly hosts Commonwealth of Learning (COL) supported tutor training workshops and annual conventions.

Recently the third Tutor Convention themed Tutoring in Open Distance Learning (ODL) was held at the main campus and attended by 28 tutors from all regional offices.

“We have a fairly rigorous system in place for the selection, training and monitoring of the tutors’ performance,” said WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Wong Tat Meng. He described how tutors’ performance on iWawasanLearn – the online learning management system (LMS) – is evaluated according to how frequent they log on and what they post. He also appealed to the tutors to share the learning opportunities at WOU with their friends and relatives, under the Tutor Ambassador Programme.

The opening was followed by an interactive ice-breaking session conducted by School of Foundation and Liberal Studies senior lecturer Jasmine Emmanuel. WOU Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) Prof Dato’ Dr Ho Sinn Chye then spoke on the special needs of distance learners and how to be a tutor that makes a difference, sharing some good practices of a tutor.

The final session on tutor and course coordinator networking saw very vibrant discussions moderated by then School of Education, Languages and Communications Dean Prof Dr Mogana Dhamotharan.
WOU celebrates a year of accomplishments

The year ended with a bang for WOU as staff celebrated the close of another successful year with a Hula Beach Party held at the main campus on 30 December 2011.

Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Wong Tat Meng set the celebratory tone for the gathering as he paid tribute to the staff who received promotions and those who had graduated during the year. The inaugural Vice Chancellor’s award of excellence, went to QA Manager Dr Andy Liew and School of Science and Technology senior lecturer, Ishan Abeywardena. They each received a certificate, plaque and RM2,000 sponsorship to attend workshops or conferences.

A recap of University highlights included, hosting the Silver Jubilee AAOU Annual Conference (WOU academics took top awards for papers presented), full MOA accreditation for 11 degree programmes and CeMPA, with recognition from the Public Service Department (JPA) to follow and the provisional accreditation for 13 new programmes.

“The MOA recognition and accreditation will now enable us to franchise these programmes to other colleges, both locally and overseas. So, in terms of branding we have established ourselves as a provider of quality education,” said Prof Wong. He also shared that the total student numbers had risen by 21%, new student growth by 27.8%, and total revenue by 20% in 2011.

As expected, there was plenty of food, fun and fancy dresses as many staff made an effort and put on their most fetching beachwear (including coconut bikini tops!). The night came to an end with the traditional lucky draw - Linda Tang (Prof Menon’s office) won a flatscreen TV, while second prize of an i-Pad 2 went to Sewar Peak Lean (Registry), and third, a Sony Ericsson smartphone, to K. Ranjini (School of Foundation and Liberal Studies).

Thriving on diversity in nation-building

It was a full house at WOU’s main campus as visitors packed the main lecture theatre to hear former Inspector General of Police Tun Hanif Omar speak on Nation Building and Good Governance – Challenges and Opportunities for Malaysia in the 21st Century.

Looking back on pre-Merdeka Malaya, Tun Hanif observed that, “We didn’t have a distinct race of people, common descent, or common language. We also cannot completely say we had a shared history.”

Highlighting a few provisions, he said the Constitution had good governance and safeguards for the nation to “thrive on the advantage of our diversities to develop and to compete favourably against other countries” as we progress towards a positive nation-building.

During the Q&A, on whether the current education of the young leads to nation-building or disintegration of races, he responded: “I blame the education system as it doesn’t place emphasis on the history of the country, the constitution, and how we developed over the years. Having a lopsided view of things based on race or religion makes it all the more difficult to build a united nation.”

Tun Hanif was the keynote speaker of the seventh annual Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Lecture organised by the Penang Free School Foundation with the support of WOU. Among the attendees were event organising chairman Prof Dato’ Anwar Fauzi, WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Wong Tat Meng, and PFS Foundation chairman Dato’ Haji Kamal Khalid Ariff.

Tun Hanif (centre) with Dato’ Kamal (left) and Dato’ Anwar.
Enhancing HR through lifelong learning

True to its ethos to promote lifelong learning among working Malaysians, WOU organised a well-attended talk on Lifelong Learning and Human Resource Development for members of the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF).

WOU Assistant Vice Chancellor (Academic Support) Prof Dr Mohandas Menon explained that a good learning society is one of the prerequisites needed to create a knowledge society. He observed that education and technology are two important equalisers in life, as access to both can empower an individual to any level of development.

During the Q&A session, a number of MEF members expressed the belief that the conventional educational system in Malaysia is too exam-oriented, and shared that young jobseekers today exhibited poor general knowledge. Prof Menon agreed that if students are simply focused on passing exams, they would not have a wider perspective of knowledge or be well-informed about current affairs.

Another MEF member suggested to all the attending employers and human resource practitioners that they consider promotions or salary increments as incentives for their employees to learn.

Inside the minds of ‘Generation Y’

An academician, with 35 years experience teaching the young, highlighted the changing values of youth over the past few decades, during a public talk organized by WOU in partnership with the Indian High Commission.

Speaking on Role and Identity Pattern of Youth in India and ASEAN countries, Prof Indra J Parikh, President, Foundation for Liberal and Management Education, remarked that the lifestyle of ‘generation Y’ is qualitatively different. “They live in a world of plenty, come from smaller families, [are] educated, and have prosperity. Their attitude is that the world belongs to them, we should get what we deserve and want. So it is difficult for them to take ‘no’ and wanting things here and now is dominant.”

While the concerns of youths in the 1970s were family, siblings’ education, and aging parents, youth of today are concerned with moving ahead in their career – changing jobs often, travelling widely, and even moving to other countries.

She observed that the family is an anchor and provides a sense of belonging to youths, teaching youngsters to differentiate between right and wrong, and that when they do wrong, there are consequences. “You have to be a good family member first, a good employee, good citizen, and good to yourself.”

Introducing the NEW WawasanLearn!

In July 2012, WOU students will discover some exciting features in the new WawasanLearn that will enhance the e-learning experience at WOU!

The new features include an improved interface, additional resources directly linked to YouTube and Merlot.org - a shared, free and open online community of resources on learning materials and pedagogy from around the world.

The new WawasanLearn will also include an enhanced messaging outlook that provides students with better communication capabilities such as a feedback/comment block.

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 mediainfo@wou.edu.my

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