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## WOU awards scholarships to 10 deserving students

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WAWASAN Open University has granted scholarships to 10 deserving students who enrolled in the September 2023 intake.

Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow, who graced the awards ceremony at the university grounds in Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah today, presented the scholarships to nine of the 10 students present. One was, however, unable to attend the ceremony.

The total sponsorship for the 10 recipients amounted to approximately RM345,000.



*Chow (front row, fourth from left), Dr Koh (fifth from left), Lim (second from right) and Ong (right) in a group photo with the WOU scholarship recipients.*

Chow said the collaborative endeavour, forged between WOU, the Penang Women's Development Corporation (PWDC) and the state government, reflects their shared dedication to expanding access to higher education, particularly for those facing economic challenges.

Of the 10 recipients, four were identified by PWDC and the remaining six were selected by the state government. They are Tan Lih Ling (Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management), Yarshini Karunakaran (Diploma in Early Childhood Education), Prashanti Kalimuthu (Master of Education), Noor Hayati Noorkan (Master of Education); Ng Chuen Chuen (Bachelor in Software Engineering (Honours)), Foong Hean Chan, Heah Hui Xuan, Siti Rahana Awang, Tan Yung Yee and Jonathan Devandran Anthony (all Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management).

Chow said today's event was more than just awarding scholarships; it represented transformative opportunities for the awardees to compete on an equal footing and elevate the standard of living for their families.



*Chow says education plays a pivotal role for many to break free from the cycle of poverty.*

"It also signifies our joint dedication to breaking down barriers, empowering individuals, and envisioning a future where talent thrives irrespective of economic constraints.

"Regrettably, individuals from low-income households are often compelled to forego higher education prematurely to enter the job market, either to support their families or alleviate financial burdens.

"This dilemma underscores the significance of scholarships as beacons of opportunity, guiding individuals to acquire skills, enhance their employability, and unlock their latent potential.

"Higher education serves as the key for many to break free from the cycle of poverty, and through financial support, we take significant steps toward narrowing the talent and economic gap, not only in Penang but also the entire nation," Chow said in his speech before the scholarship presentation.



*Dr Koh (left) presenting Chow a plant as a souvenir at the Wawasan Open University scholarship award presentation ceremony.*

Chow also mentioned the Penang Future Foundation (PFF), an initiative by the state government since 2014 that has supported 700 scholarship holders in critical fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, Accounting and Finance.

He said programmes like these, alongside today's event and the collaborative efforts of agencies like InvestPenang, contribute significantly to Penang's success in attracting foreign direct investment.

Chow encouraged recipients to uplift those less fortunate and contribute to society when they have realised their dreams.



*Having a tea break (from left) Yeap, Dr Koh, Lim, Ong, Sheng and Dr Carmichael.*

Also present at the ceremony were Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, former chief minister of Penang cum chairman of the Board of Governors of WOU, Lim Siew Khim, the state executive councillor for Social Development, Welfare and non-Islamic Religious Affairs; Datuk Ong Bee Leng, the chief executive officer of PWDC; Datuk Seri Stephen Yeap, the chairman of WOU Sdn Bhd and his wife, Datin Seri Irene; Tan Sri Andrew Sheng, a member of the WOU Board of Governors, and Dr Douglass Carmichael, GIOAS International Advisory Board member.

Koh expressed gratitude to Chow, the state government and PWDC for their support and collaboration with WOU in expanding higher education opportunities and access to more Penangites, especially those in the B40 and M40 categories.

"WOU is a university not for profit, dedicated to giving a second chance to the working adults in Malaysia to continue higher education programmes that they have missed out early in their lives.

"We partially subsidise our fees through donations and other earnings.

"More importantly, we are recruiting more academic staff as well as administrative staff to support all these efforts.

"Therefore, we are very happy that by today, almost 30,000 students, mostly working adults, have experienced WOU's innovative model of open, flexible, distance learning (OFDL). And we are in the process of recruiting more by networking with the communities and industries," Dr Koh said.

After receiving their scholarships, four recipients shared their thoughts and aspirations.

Yashini, a 20-year-old preschool teaching assistant enrolled in the Diploma in Early Childhood Education (DECE) programme, expressed her aspiration to become a teacher. Her single mum, Parameswari, is also a student of WOU in the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Psychology (BAPS) programme and a nurse at an international school.

“Working in a kindergarten has truly ignited my passion to be a teacher because I want to encourage children to realise their true potential,” she said.

Another recipient, Tan Lih Ling, a 28-year-old tutor pursuing a Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management (BBMG) degree, manages the delicate balance of family life with a young son. With her father working as a lorry driver and her mother dedicated to homemaking, Tan actively engages with NGOs, volunteering at orphanages and old folks’ homes. She aims to become a business entrepreneur.

Ng Chuen Chuen, 36, currently the head of IT at Synergy Central Academy Sdn Bhd as well as an IT lecturer, is undertaking the Bachelor of Software Engineering (Honours) (BDSE) at WOU’s School of Digital Technology (DiGiT). His father is retired and his mother is a full-time homemaker.

“Through my experience in teaching and working in the field of computer networking, I have come to realise the paramount importance of programming skills in the modern IT landscape,” Ng said.

Siti Rahana, 31, serves as a tutor at Synergy College and plays the pivotal role as the sole breadwinner for her family. Supporting her homemaker mum and unemployed brother since her father’s passing, Siti Rahana is pursuing a Bachelor of Business (Hons) in Management programme.

“This degree symbolises the realisation of a long cherished dream that has fuelled my passion for education and business,” said Siti Rahana.

Story by K.H. Ong

Pix by Siew Chia En

Video by Adleena Rahayu Ahmad Radzi

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