

PARTNERING FOR BETTER DIGITAL FUTURE



Together We Rise: A Blueprint
in the Digital Revolution

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EDITOR'S NOTE

WOU's dedication to advancing Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education is exemplified by a significant technological contribution, benefitting a primary school in Penang.

This partnership underscores our educational social responsibility to bridge the digital divide and shape an inclusive tech-driven future. It further entails a STEM Apprenticeship Programme, where students will receive guidance from WOU's faculty members from the School of Technology and Engineering Science (STE).

The International STEM Innovation Competition (ISIC-WOU24), currently accepting online entries, will culminate with a face-to-face event in June. We anticipate it to be an exciting platform that showcases promising talent in innovation.

In this issue, we shine a spotlight on the inaugural International Conference on Digital Application and Management Innovation (ICDAMI), hosted by our School of Digital Technology (DiGiT) in January, in collaboration with renowned research and academic institutions from China. The Academic and Industry Symposium, also organised by DiGiT, provided a platform for thought leaders, experts and industry practitioners to exchange insights and ideas.

In expanding educational opportunities and access to learning, we have established strategic linkages with other higher education institutions across Malaysia. Through initiatives like the Digital Transformation Bootcamp, more participants were able to acquire in-demand digital skills.

At the Public Forum on Climate Action organised by the George Town Institute of Open and Advanced Studies (GIOAS), speakers presented numerous ideas, action plans and projects addressing climate issues. Read also about the tribal art exhibition, 'Spirited', which drew visitors into the ancient world of indigenous peoples of the *Nusantara* region.

As we embarked on meaningful community engagement initiatives that included book giveaways and mangrove planting efforts, we were reminded to continuously make a positive impact beyond the confines of academia.

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INTERNATIONAL SCHOLARS CONVENE IN PENANG TO DISCUSS SUSTAINABLE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



▲ WOU academia with ICDAMI participants.

The 1st International Conference on Digital Application and Innovation Management (ICDAMI) 2024 successfully left an indelible mark in the global research and academia landscape, addressing pertinent issues related to digital technologies, the economy and management innovation in the 21st century.

It was conceptualised as a strategic initiative to strengthen institutional collaboration between WOU and China's renowned research and academic institutions, in addition to connecting established scholars and researchers who are committed to the exchange of knowledge and sharing of novel perspectives in research and innovation.

The conference, aptly themed, "The Effects of Digital Technologies on Society and their Impact on Sustainability, particularly in relation to Sustainable Development" attracted participation from renowned experts and leading researchers in diverse fields including healthcare, open distance learning, educational technology, e-commerce, heritage, biology and business.

Organised by WOU with the support of partners, Sunflare Industrial Supply Corporation and the Association of Graduates from Universities and Colleges of China (Penang), the one-day conference was held at the WOU City Campus (Bangunan Wawasan) on 21 January 2024.

She noted that the organisation of ICDAMI "aligns with the global shift towards a future increasingly marked by digitalisation, automation and innovation", emphasising WOU's commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of providing quality education by fully embracing a technology-based approach.

A total of 31 research abstracts submissions were accepted by ICDAMI, with 16 selected research topics discussed during the conference. Four abstracts including two submitted by WOU's faculty members were presented with the Best Abstract Award by Prof Chan and Prof Li Qi from China's Xi'an Jiaotong University.

Sean Ooi Li Hsien from the School of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences co-authored the paper "The Effects of Open Distance Education on the Professional Development of In-Service ESL Teachers" with Juliana Othman from Universiti Malaya's Faculty of Education.

The School of Digital Technology team comprising Dr Ramona Ramli, Dr Andrew Tan and Dr Lee Heng Wei submitted their winning abstract on "Enhancing Errand Management for Individuals with Cognitive Impairments: A User-Centric Evaluation". The conference kicked off with keynote presentations delivered by experts from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Southeast University China (SEU), and Minjiang University China (MJU).

Prof Dr Putra Sumari from USM delivered a keynote address on "Quantum Neural Network in Computer Vision: Concepts, Applications and Challenges", where he discussed the capabilities of quantum computing and provided a comparison between quantum and classical computing.

In the second keynote presentation, Assoc Prof Qiu Shanhu of SEU spoke on "Digital Technology for Physical Activity Promotion in Type 2 Diabetes". He shared key findings from his research on the use of wearable devices such as step counters and continuous blood glucose monitors to improve physical activity compliance in patients with Type 2 Diabetes.

Dr Chi Han from MJU presented an intriguing concept of integrating virtual reality (VR) technologies to bring tangible heritage assets to life in his keynote presentation, "Digital Presentation of Cultural Heritage using Virtual Reality: A Case Study of Three Lanes and Seven Alleys in Fuzhou".

Over 60 local and international delegates representing institutions from Malaysia, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Australia, India and the United Kingdom participated in ICDAMI 2024. Proceedings of the conference, which was streamed live, can be viewed on WOU's YouTube channel <https://www.youtube.com/@WawasanOpenUniversityLive>.

CULTIVATING INDUSTRY-READY EDUCATION

Concerted efforts to prepare students for the future workforce must include industry-relevant education, practical learning experiences for students and proactive engagement with emerging technologies to increase productivity.

In the forum on “Advancing Education Through Research and Industry Collaboration”, panellists comprising industry practitioners, academics and government representatives envisioned a collaborative ecosystem characterised by fast-paced innovation, lifelong learning, and a shared commitment to national development.

Hosted by WOU’s School of Digital Technology, the panel discussion was part of the Academic and Industry Symposium held at Bangunan Wawasan, WOU’s City Campus on 22 January 2024.



▲Bob Lay (left) moderates the Advancing Education Through Research and Industry Collaboration.

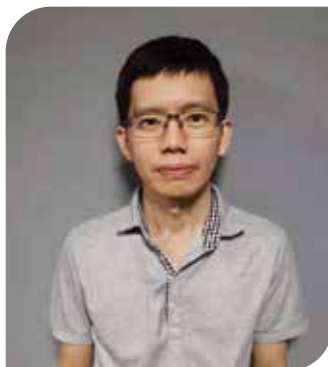


The session, moderated by **Bob Lay**, Chief Executive Officer of Digital Marketing Networks Sdn Bhd, saw panellists sharing their unique perspectives in addressing challenges in education and the workforce. They unanimously acknowledged the critical need to bridge existing gaps between academia and industry.



Ir Dr Koay Loke Kean, Academic Head at ViTrox College, outlined his institution's industry-centric approach to education, emphasising hands-on learning experiences and industry immersion opportunities for its students

"We have developed a work-based learning model where students collaborate with engineers on real-world projects," he said. The ViTrox education model was created to effectively address the company's urgent need for talent to form the right ecosystem to build the country," he added.



Similarly, **Samuel Lim**, co-founder and Chief Technology Officer of Legaxus Technology Sdn Bhd, stressed the importance of real-world problem-solving experience in preparing students for the workforce.

Lim discussed Legaxus Technology's unique internship approach, where interns are tasked to solve authentic problems under guided mentorships.



Assoc Prof Dr Zhang Chen of Minjiang University, China, emphasised the need for robust industry-university collaborations to address industry needs and promote innovation.

She explained how her university has established a platform that connects academia, industry, research, and application.

She explained how her university has established a platform that connects academia, industry, research, and application stakeholders, offering in depth insights into real industry requirements for technology and knowledge development.

"We additionally have a programme that enables academics to engage in part-time employment at companies related to our expertise. By doing so, we have a better understanding of the industry and can enrich our teaching with relevant industry experiences," she added.



Leonard Tan, Director for Client BIOS RTS Development at Dell Technologies, highlighted the importance of continuous upskilling at the workplace. To illustrate his point, he provided an example of a senior staff member in his organisation who successfully resolved a longstanding problem within just one week.

Tan further stressed the importance of understanding one's value propositions and continually developing skills to enhance them.

"You need to know what problems you can solve and how you connect with the other stakeholders in the ecosystem. Then, develop your skills towards that direction to add more value to your proposition," he said.



Abby Toh, Chief Executive Officer and co-founder of Colla Team, stressed the importance of closing the gap between graduates and industry needs through practical experiences and early exposure to real-world settings.

"When learning theories, it is paramount for students to know where they can apply the knowledge.

"By engaging in part-time jobs, gigs and projects while studying, they gain invaluable real-world experience. They can then explore the types of roles that interest them and develop the relevant skill sets before they graduate," she said.



Ong Kok Leong, Vice President of Sales (ASEAN) at Arrosoft Solutions, spoke on the transformative potential of emerging technologies like AI in enhancing learning outcomes and improving work efficiency.

"It's essential to embrace and learn new technologies, not just AI, if they can help in learning when utilised positively," he commented.

To significantly close the gap between academia and industry, Ong urged industry players to create early exposure opportunities for students as part of their learning process.



Dr Gwee Sai Ling, General Manager of the Penang Youth Development Corporation (PYDC), underscored the importance of government-industry-academia collaboration in fostering youth empowerment and bridging the skills gap.

The agency partnered with Universiti Sains Malaysia to organise the Penang Young Digital

Talent programme, which comprises digital skills training workshops tailored to industry demands.

"The initiative not only equips students with academic skills but provides them with hands-on experience in real-world contexts," said Dr Gwee.

By harnessing the collective expertise of academia, industry as well as government stakeholders, we can nurture a culture of innovation and drive socioeconomic progress.



▲ Some of the education experts at the symposium.

EXPANDING HORIZONS IN ACADEMIC PURSUIT INDUSTRY OPPORTUNITIES

WOU (Wawasan Open University) and DISTED College solidified their long-standing partnership with a strategic alliance aimed at fostering collaborations to benefit students and staff at both institutions.

A Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) signing ceremony was held at WOU's main campus on 20 February 2024 to signify a renewed collaboration between the two parties.

The MoA was signed by Prof Dr Lily Chan, Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor of WOU and Dato' Lim Si Boon, Chief Executive of DISTED College. Witnesses included Chong Kong Hoong, WOU's Director of Regional Centre Operations and Marketing and Prof Dr Vikneswaran Nair, President of DISTED College.

In her welcome speech, Prof Chan expressed optimism about the partnership's potential for growth and strengthening ties between the institutions.

"By leveraging our combined strengths, expertise and resources, we can cultivate a dynamic partnership that not only pushes boundaries but unlocks potential and breaks down barriers in pursuit of academic knowledge and industry opportunities," she remarked.

Similarly, Dato' Lim extended an invitation to WOU employees and students to utilise DISTED's facilities on weekends.

Under the agreement, DISTED employees and their immediate family members are entitled to rebates upon enrolling in academic programmes at WOU. DISTED, on their part, will commit to providing internship opportunities for WOU students.

Additionally, both institutions will actively engage and explore collaborations in the form of joint events such as talks, seminars, webinars and forums.



▲Prof Lily (WOU) and Dato' Lim Si Boon (DISTED) sign the MoA document.

WOU FORMS ALLIANCE TO FACILITATE COLLABORATION IN IMPROVING LIBRARY SERVICES



▲WOU proud to be part of the PHEIL Consortium.

In response to escalating database subscription costs, an alliance of seven prominent private institutions of higher learning has established the Private Higher Education Institution Libraries (PHEIL) Consortium to enhance library and information services through increased cooperation, resource sharing and the implementation of cost-effective strategies.

WOU is a proud member of the Consortium which includes UCSI University, HELP University, International Centre for Education in Islamic Finance (INCEIF) University, Universiti Tun Abdul Razak, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman and Multimedia University.

Through this platform, WOU can look forward to establishing collaborative efforts with the Consortium members by sharing and exchanging scientific information resources, library materials and research publications. The initiative further opens avenues to jointly develop and conduct library-related workshops, events and training, in addition to collaborations in other areas of mutual benefit.

The formalisation of the PHEIL Consortium was marked by a signing ceremony held at UCSI University Kuala Lumpur on 7 February 2024, with Prof Dr Azlinda Binti Azman, Director-General of Higher Education, gracing the occasion.

In welcoming the collaboration, WOU Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor, Prof Dr Lily Chan said, "Partnering with private higher institutions in a consortium is a strategic and timely move for libraries to thrive in the digital age."

She added, "By fostering collaboration and leveraging interconnected technology, our library can offer higher value-added services and enable resource-sharing opportunities, enhancing expertise (knowledge and best practices) within the consortium."

ENHANCING AND UPLIFTING COMMUNITIES

PROMOTING LITERACY THROUGH BOOK DONATION

Regardless of the type of institution, collection maintenance and weeding are essential components of a library's management system. An optimal library collection is regularly assessed for accuracy, currency, usage, diversity and subject area gaps. Weeding, or the deselection of materials, is critical to collection maintenance and involves the removal of resources that no longer meet the collection's needs. All materials are then compared for weeding based on accuracy, currency, and relevancy.

In early January 2024, WOU's Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu Library embarked on a comprehensive weeding activity to curate its collection, ensuring that it meets the current curriculum, research and informational needs of faculty and students. This initiative aims to maintain a collection that is relevant, up-to-date and aligned with the institution's educational objectives.

Happy beneficiaries. ▶



WOU's Head of Library, Chew Bee Leng stated, "Through book donation activities involving used books, we aim to engage with our patrons and local communities to promote literacy. By sharing the joy of reading and discovering new knowledge, we hope to build a more literate and connected society, fostering learning and educational initiatives."

"We spread the joy of reading to staff, students, and the local community by inviting everyone to take home pre-loved books for free. Our aim is to make reading accessible to all and to create a culture of lifelong learning," added Bee Leng.

By combining efforts to maintain a relevant and up-to-date collection with community engagement initiatives, WOU's Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu Library is playing a vital role in promoting literacy and fostering a culture of learning within the community. Through these efforts, they are not only supporting the academic and research needs of their users but making a positive impact on society as a whole.

FROM SEEDLINGS TO PLANTS: WOU'S ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVE EDUCATES ON SUSTAINABILITY



▲ The mangrove saplings grow beautifully.

It's a cause for celebration! In October last year, in honour of National Environment Day, WOU and SM Teknik Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra (STAR Putra) students joined forces for a fantastic project by planting a whopping 400 mangrove saplings along the scenic riverbank of Malindo Beach in Balik Pulau. We're proud to announce that our mangrove saplings have grown beautifully after a few months.

This exciting initiative, organised by WOU's Centre for Foundation Studies (CFS) hand-in-hand with the Penang State Government and the Penang City Council (MBPP), is all about protecting our precious environment and fostering a spirit of community involvement.

Imagine the smiles and enthusiasm as 31 WOU students and lecturers, with 20 students and three teachers from STAR Putra, came together to plant these saplings. It wasn't just about planting trees; it was about planting the seeds of environmental responsibility in the hearts of future generations.

The project was made possible thanks to the fantastic support of the State Government, WOU, and several local companies, proving that when we work together, amazing things can happen! With an estimated cost of RM8,500, this project demonstrates the collective effort and investment towards a greener tomorrow.

Professor Dr Lily Chan, Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor of WOU, highlighted the project's educational value, explaining, "It's a fantastic way to educate our students on the importance of protecting our environment and creating a more sustainable future for our planet. The students will be empowered to know that their simple act of planting these mangrove trees will make a real difference and contribute positively to combating climate change."

This project beautifully aligns with WOU's mission of incorporating environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles into their curriculum. By actively participating in such initiatives, students gain valuable firsthand experience and develop a deeper understanding of the impact they can have on the planet.

A big round of applause to WOU, STAR Putra, the Penang State Government and the local community for their incredible collaboration and dedication to environmental stewardship. Their efforts serve as an inspiration for all of us to take action, one mangrove sapling at a time, and create a thriving Penang for generations to come!

PARTNERING FOR A BETTER DIGITAL FUTURE

POWERING UP YOUNG LEARNERS TOWARDS STEM MASTERY



▲ Students with the donated computers at the school's digital lab.

The generous contribution by WOU to a primary school in Penang has provided greater opportunity for students to enhance and apply their Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) knowledge in a diverse range of applications.

The donation of 32 desktop computers to equip Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina) [SJK(C)] Hun Bin's digital lab demonstrates WOU's commitment to educational social responsibility, seeking to bridge the digital divide and equip underserved communities, to help them thrive in today's increasingly tech-driven world.

To formalise the collaboration, a Note of Understanding (NoU) signing ceremony was held on 21 March 2024 at the school. WOU Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor, Prof Dr Lily Chan and Principal of SJK (C) Hun Bin, Madam Tan Geat Chun signed the NoU in the presence of guest of honour, Sunny Seowfuddin Bin Abdullah, Deputy District Education Officer from Penang's North-East District Education Office and other notable guests.

Prof Lily then represented WOU in a symbolic handover of computers valued at close to RM50,000, received by Chairman of the school's Parent-Teacher Association, Cheng Kwong Chin and Vice Chairman of the School Board, Keong Chee Khoon.

In the school's newly-equipped digital lab, students have begun utilising the computers to work on their creative multimedia projects using the Scratch coding application.



▲ Signing ceremony between WOU (Prof Lily) and SJK(C) Hun Bin (Madam Tan).

The collaboration includes a flagship STEM Apprenticeship Programme targeting the school's Standard 4 to 6 students who will be introduced to different STEM fields such as robotics, programming, computing, construction, and engineering concepts.

Under the guidance of mentors from WOU and SM Teknik Tunku Abdul Rahman, these students will receive the necessary support and training as they develop their innovation projects independently. The pinnacle of the apprenticeship programme is the opportunity to participate in the upcoming International STEM Innovation Competition, scheduled to be held at WOU in June this year.

In her speech, Prof Lily stressed on the importance of instilling values of good digital citizenship in students. "We cannot deny the Internet's integral role in education as a fundamental learning tool, but we can empower our young learners with the necessary knowledge and skills to think critically, behave safely and participate responsibly in the digital world," she said.



▲ Developing skills with patience.

She then emphasised WOU's unwavering commitment to supporting capacity building initiatives for the school's STEM educators.

"We encourage teachers to collaborate with our faculty on developing innovative STEM learning content and to enhance their skills through WOU's professional development courses and training programmes".

Expressing her gratitude to WOU, Tan envisioned that the collaboration would further strengthen the school's digital infrastructure and serve as a catalyst to integrate digital technology into the school's learning ecosystem.

"I hope that our collaboration doesn't end in just three years, but can be extended with the goal of empowering and producing students to be digital-ready," she said.

In his officiating speech, Sunny Seowfuddin acknowledged that the university-school collaboration aligns well with the Ministry of Education's National Digital Education Policy and its objectives to produce digital-savvy students.

"The expertise of the university's faculty will serve as a source of inspiration for students to deepen their STEM knowledge, eventually furthering their studies in the fields of technology and engineering," he added. Also present at the ceremony were WOU Associate Vice Chancellor, Prof Ts Dr Yap Eng Hwa, WOU deans and lecturers.

WOU'S INTERNATIONAL STEM INNOVATION CHALLENGE CELEBRATES SCIENTIFIC ACHIEVEMENTS

The International STEM Innovation Challenge (ISIC-WOU24) is a collaborative effort that promises a vibrant display of creativity and groundbreaking innovation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields. It aims to recognise and reward outstanding achievements in STEM innovation and education among students and professionals.

The competition welcomes participants of all ages and backgrounds, both locally and internationally. Young minds from primary and secondary schools can showcase their inventions in the Junior and Young Innovator categories. Aspiring inventors from colleges, polytechnics and universities can compete in the Tertiary Inventor category. Seasoned professionals from any field are welcome to participate in the Professional Inventor category.

Prospective participants can register and submit abstracts online now until 31 May 2024. Following this, a period of online judging by a distinguished panel will take place from 1 to 26 June 2024.



The competition will culminate in a grand finale, a face-to-face competition and award ceremony, held at WOU from 27 to 29 June 2024. This exceptional experience will offer participants a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in a collaborative journey of learning, sharing, and exchanging innovative ideas within the dynamic world of STEM.

CLIMATE CHANGE NEEDS GLOBAL SOLUTION



▲ Tan Sri Andrew Sheng



▲ Meena Raman



▲ Tan Sri Azman Mohktar



▲ Jan Vasbinder

Climate change at its crux is a global issue. Complex interventions, rather than linear ones, are essential when reaching for solutions. This was the overarching theme of the recent Public Forum on Climate Action, organised by WOU's George Town Institute of Open and Advanced Studies (GIOAS) held at the WOU main campus on 13 and 14 January 2024.

Chairman of GIOAS, **Tan Sri Andrew Sheng**, shared that instead of linear solutions, holistic and systemic solutions are urgently needed for climate action. He was speaking at a special session focusing on a review of COP28, the 28th annual United Nations (UN) climate summit held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates in 2023 and global perspectives on climate action.

He argued that climate action is about adopting a "business as unusual" thought process, to find solutions that best fit unique situations, not just best practices.

"We need to have inclusive conversations at all levels - global, national, state and village - to form a narrative that resonates and inspires change.

"If we weave that narrative into what we should do and what we are doing right, we will start to make changes where we can," he added.

Head of Programmes at Third World Network, **Meena Raman**, highlighted several of COP28's key outcomes, particularly the Global Stocktake, an assessment of a country's progress in achieving the Paris Agreement goals, the framework for the Global Goal on Adaptation on enhancing resilience and strengthening the capacity of governments in dealing with climate change and the historic agreement to operationalise the loss-and-damage fund.

Raman shared the various global mitigation efforts related to renewable energy, energy efficiency, methane emissions, carbon markets, financing, and an introduction to transitioning away from fossil fuels.

Chairman of the Malaysia International Islamic Financial Centre Leadership Council, **Tan Sri Azman Mokhtar**, said that the COP platform is required but is insufficient in addressing climate change.

He emphasised the necessity to work with the international system but be realistic about the limitations of the multi-lateral platform. Speaking on the concept of 'climate sovereignty', Tan Sri Azman cited the tiger conservation project in Pahang's vast forestland led by the Crown Prince and Regent of Pahang, Tengku Hassanal Ibrahim Alam Shah.

Founder of Para Limes, **Jan Vasbinder**, said that energy and climate concerns are manifestations of an extremely complex system. He argued that science unintentionally created a belief that we can increase our understanding and control of the world.



▲ Prof Stephen Oppenheimer



▲ Prof John Crawford



▲ Dr Douglas Carmichael

Mankind's long term grievances began to grow when linear thinking replaced our capability to handle complexity at a human scale, he said.

Vasbinder proposed a shift from linear thinking, returning to the ground level of applying knowledge stored in traditions, communal memories, and cultures.

Prof Stephen Oppenheimer from the University of Oxford offered a focused preview on human and natural causes of global warming, speaking particularly on methane emission.

Methane, he explained, is a greenhouse gas much more potent than carbon dioxide and is known to warm the planet 86 times more than the latter over a period of 20 years. He said that atmospheric methane levels are three times higher than recorded since the Industrial Revolution and still rising.

Prof Oppenheimer cautioned that the vanishing ice in the Antarctic Sea would cause less reflection of sunlight and absorb more heat, inevitably leading to a rise in global methane levels.

Prof John Crawford from the University of Glasgow talked about the initiatives carried out under the Global Soil Health Programme (GSHP) and the Global Creative Commons platform for farmers.

Speaking via Zoom, he described soil as the most biodiverse and functionally important ecosystem on the planet, contributing between USD 1.5 and 13 trillion annually to the value of ecosystem services.

Prof Crawford called for support for farmers, connecting them to value chains and research organisations in a more transparent and empowering manner.

According to **Dr Douglas Carmichael**, Strategy Consultant at the Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET), the burning of fossil fuels is a real problem.

He pointed out that all the carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere weighs as much as all the cars in the world, or specifically, 100kg of CO₂ for a single tank of petrol in a car.

The special forum was moderated by the Chairman of WOU's Board of Governors, Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon. Over 60 people from local and international organisations representing various sectors attended the two-day conference.

'SPIRITED'- HUMAN ART OF THE NON-HUMAN



▲ Tan Yu Kai (left) and David Goh (middle) explain to Dato' Seri Anwar Fazal.

The George Town Institute of Open and Advanced Studies (GIOAS) launched David Goh's 'Spirited' tribal art exhibition at the WOU main campus on 16 December 2023. The launching ceremony was graced by Dato' Seri Dr Anwar Fazal, Chairman of Think City Sdn Bhd.

The exhibition, the first of its kind in Penang, features 60 art pieces collected by David Goh, the founder of Entopia, from indigenous artists throughout Southeast Asia during his butterfly-collecting expeditions from Peninsular Malaysia to Papua New Guinea.

GIOAS, an institute within WOU, sought to highlight the ancient cultures of tribal communities. This exhibition reflects on historical violence and inequities inflicted on the indigenous people and the consequences these had on our 'modern' perception of their lives and forms of expression.

Tan Yu Kai, the curator of this exhibition, envisioned visitors stepping into a magical world of meaning that most of us do not have direct access to and experiencing a way of relating to nature, largely lost in urban lifestyles.

Tan described 'Spirited' as a unique trove of treasures. Of the exhibition, he said, "We celebrate Goh's clarity of vision, and his monumental collection that continues to serve the global and local community as a source of inspiration, a library of research data, a portal to our collective past and futures, and an attraction for aficionados around the globe, propelling the status of Penang as a cultural and intellectual hub of the region towards international acclaim."

The exhibition featured spirits in the woods, angry ancestors and immortal creatures telling tales of yesteryear.

The 'Spirited' tribal art exhibition at the Homestead was open to the public until 16 January 2024. The art pieces testify to Goh's imagination and passion in gathering them for the enjoyment of future generations.



▲ Some of the David Goh's collections displayed at the exhibition.

WOU AND THE SILICON VALLEY OF THE EAST



Penang boasts more than just its UNESCO World Heritage Site status and delectable street food. It is often referred to as the "Silicon Valley of the East" due to its thriving electronics and electrical (E&E) industry.

Penang's journey as a tech hub began in the 1970s. The arrival of pioneering companies like Intel, AMD, and HP, marked the beginning of a transformation. These giants established their operations in the Bayan Lepas Free Industrial Zone (FIZ), a government initiative aimed at economic development. The influx of foreign investments created a ripple effect, attracting numerous multinational corporations (MNCs) and propelling Penang into the global E&E manufacturing landscape.



But Penang's success story goes beyond just attracting big names; it also lies in the development of a highly skilled workforce. This is where WOU emerges as a pivotal player. WOU's curriculum is meticulously designed to blend theoretical knowledge and practical application, ensuring that students are well prepared for real-world challenges. WOU collaborates closely with industry leaders to ensure our programmes are current and relevant to the dynamic demands of the E&E sector. This focus on industry collaboration ensures graduates are equipped with the skillsets most sought after by Penang's tech giants.

Beyond technical expertise, WOU also nurtures a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship. The university's curriculum is strategically designed to cultivate essential 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. These capabilities are crucial for success in the thriving tech ecosystem. This focus on promoting future tech leaders aligns with Penang's ambition to move beyond just manufacturing and into the realm of research and development.

The story of Penang and WOU is one of symbiosis. The state's booming tech sector creates a demand for skilled professionals, and WOU acts as a catalyst, providing the necessary education and training. This virtuous cycle ensures a steady stream of talent fuels Penang's continued growth as the Silicon Valley of the East.

As Penang looks towards the future, WOU remains a key partner. The university's commitment to providing accessible, industry-relevant education is crucial for sustaining Penang's position as a global tech leader. With its focus on innovation and entrepreneurship, WOU is not just shaping the careers of its students but also moulding the future of Penang's tech landscape.

So, the next time you savour Penang's famed char kway teow or marvel at its colonial architecture, remember that beneath the surface lies a vibrant tech hub. And at the heart of this ecosystem, WOU is silently playing a critical role in preparing the next generation of tech pioneers, ensuring Penang's reign as the Silicon Valley of the East continues for many years to come.

Source of photos: Google

EMPOWERING EDUCATORS: IT'S MORE THAN JUST A DEGREE



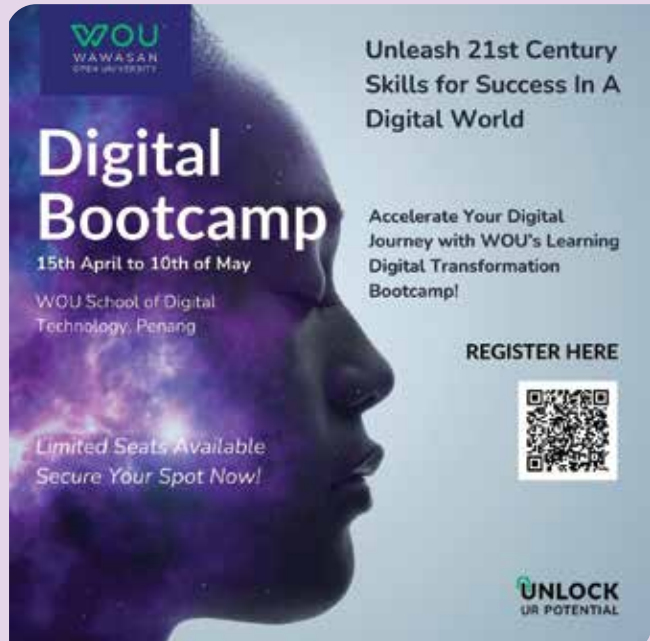
WOU's School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences (SEHS) recently held its "Discover SEHS" event at both the WOU main campus and the WOU KL Regional Centre to shine a spotlight on the school's academic offerings, with a particular focus on the new Bachelor of Education programme.

Prospective students were invited to explore the diverse range of programmes offered at SEHS. These included gaining valuable insight into the newly launched Bachelor of Education programme, designed to equip aspiring educators with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in today's classrooms.

Beyond the new programme, "Discover SEHS" served as a timely reminder of the school's established programmes in various fields. Our diverse range of SEHS programmes is designed to cultivate academic achievement and personal growth. Attendees had the opportunity to learn about established programmes, ask questions and engage with faculty members.

This informative event provided a valuable platform for prospective students to explore their academic options and discover their potential within the dynamic environment of SEHS. Whether you're interested in pursuing a career in education or another field offered by SEHS, "Discover SEHS" shared a glimpse into the enriching academic journey that awaits.

UNLEASHING 21ST CENTURY SKILLS FOR SUCCESS IN A DIGITAL WORLD



In this new world where digital literacy is a must, WOU's School of Digital Technology (DiGiT) organised a month-long digital bootcamp from 15th April to 10th May 2024.

Students nationwide from Penang and Kuala Lumpur joined our exciting programme. They learnt a wide range of digital skills, from 21st-century basics to UX/UI design and digital business tools.

One of the distinguishing features of this bootcamp was its flexibility. Recognising the diverse circumstances of its participants, DiGiT adopted a hybrid approach, offering both physical and virtual avenues for learning. This ensured that no aspiring digital enthusiast was left behind, regardless of geographical constraints or personal commitments. With our state-of-the-art Class In system, students also participated from other states.

Participants had the chance to interact with like-minded enthusiasts and learn from our dedicated digital gurus, gaining insights into real-world applications. This emphasis on mentorship underscores DiGiT's commitment to nurturing digital talent.

As the digital landscape continues to evolve at a rapid pace, now more than ever, it is crucial to equip oneself with the requisite skills and knowledge to thrive. DiGiT's digital bootcamp serves as a catalyst for unlocking one's digital potential and charting a course towards a successful future in the digital realm. These students have the opportunity to join WOU's Bachelor of Digital Business and Bachelor of Software Engineering after completing the bootcamp through our Professional Certificate and Diploma programmes.

EXPANDING UPSKILLING OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR VOCATIONAL STUDENTS

As part of WOU's academic outreach programmes, a delegation from WOU's School of Technology and Engineering Science (STE) and the Ipoh Regional Centre visited Kolej Vokasional (KV) Seri Manjung and Kolej Vokasional (KV) Lebuh Cator on 15 February 2024 to promote TVET (technical and vocational education and training) upskilling.

In a sharing session with the students, STE Dean, Assoc Prof Ts Dr Sean Tan Koon Tatt presented an overview of WOU's innovative open distance learning (ODL) model. Emphasising the flexibility of an ODL education, he highlighted how students can seamlessly pursue their higher education and professional commitments simultaneously.

The students were then briefed on the array of programmes that align with their vocational skills and interests. Additionally, Dr Tan assured students of access to high-quality learning resources and support from dedicated faculty members throughout their educational journey at WOU.



▲ WOU academia and staff from the Ipoh Regional Centre visit Kolej Vokasional Lebuh Cator in Perak.

Discussions at the institutions proved fruitful, encompassing plans to establish a robust partnership to develop customised educational pathways for KV students. One notable recommendation was to offer joint programmes that leverage the strengths of WOU and KV in an initiative aimed at bridging the gap between vocational training and higher education.

All parties agreed to explore potential collaborations that will empower vocational students to achieve their academic aspirations and reach their full potential.

WOU BROADENS LEARNING HORIZONS WITH SAYLOR ACADEMY



WOU has entered a new partnership with e-learning provider Saylor Academy (Saylor) to offer flexible and accessible learning opportunities for its students and those interested in pursuing WOU programmes.

The partnership was formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding signed by WOU Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor, Prof Dr Lily Chan and Saylor Deputy Executive Director, Global Strategy, Sheila Jagannathan, on the sidelines of the 36th Asian Association of Open Universities Annual Conference held in Istanbul, Türkiye from 28 to 30 September 2023.

As part of WOU's mission to support student progress throughout their careers, learners will be able to earn Skill Development certificates from Saylor's suite of professional development courses.

◀ Sheila Jagannathan (left) and Prof Lily.

The 3-year collaboration that began in August 2023, will enable the WOU community, including its students, training participants and employees, to access Saylor's learning materials free of charge.

To access Saylor's list of over 100 upskilling courses, learners need to register an account at <https://www.saylor.org/partners/skills/#universities> and start learning.

PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT'S ENTREPRENEURIAL JOURNEY COMBINES PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATION

Four years ago, **Ridhwan Shariff**, driven by a passion for helping individuals achieve good mental and psychosocial well-being, enrolled in WOU's Master of Arts in Psychology programme. It was a seamless continuation as he had previously pursued a minor in Psychology during his undergraduate years at Universiti Sains Malaysia.

In 2021, leveraging his extensive experience in manufacturing and education, Ridhwan, 36, established two organisations dedicated to delivering services in psychology and education.

The first, Mind and Soul Center, is a modern psychological and counselling company providing online consultations to clients seeking personalised support and guidance. His second venture, RS Star Learning Center, specialises in providing small face-to-face tuition classes to primary and secondary school students. Ridhwan currently serves as Director at both organisations, headquartered in Penang.

His decision to enrol in the postgraduate programme was driven by the WOU's outstanding reputation and the unique curriculum "that aligned with his career goals".

"The opportunity to learn from the programme's faculty members, who are experts in their respective fields, significantly influenced my choice," said Ridhwan, who was born and bred in Penang.

For him, the knowledge and skills gained from his studies have profoundly impacted his professional practices.

"The insights I've acquired have been instrumental in refining my approach to education and therapy," Ridhwan shared.

Reflecting on his academic journey at WOU, Ridhwan described it as both stimulating and enriching. "The academic environment at WOU is challenging yet supportive. The faculty are approachable and genuinely invested in their student success," he said.

He also relished the opportunity to connect with like-minded peers and participate in various extracurricular activities.

When asked about his academic success, Ridhwan attributed it to his mantra of embracing challenges as opportunities for growth and development. Having completed his programme, he looks forward to graduating during the upcoming convocation. He attributed his success to his family and friends for their instrumental role in motivating him to excel and achieve his goals.



▲ Ridhwan Shariff

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