WAWASAN OPEN UNIVERSITY

WAWASANLINK

Engaging Students and Communities

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CONTENTS

EDITOR'S NOTE

In the past quarter, WOU unveiled four new programmes, ranging from a TVET-focused bachelor's to a doctoral degree. These programmes are designed as flexible upskilling pathways for working professionals in mechatronics, data science, smart manufacturing, and engineering science.

We remain committed to empowering Malaysians with accredited qualifications that enhance their professional credentials. A highly skilled workforce is crucial for sustaining thriving industrial sectors such as the electronics and semiconductors, and for driving our nation's economy.

In our quest to deliver world-class education, we have also explored the impact of our ongoing collaboration with the global online learning platform, Coursera, participating in their CampusTalks webinar series.

The first half of 2024 was a period of busy endeavours. In January, our School of Digital Technology (DiGiT) hosted the inaugural International Conference on Digital Application and Management Innovation (ICDAMI). In May, we co-organised the Malaysia Board of Technologists (MBOT) Northern Symposium. The month-long Digital Bootcamp, pioneered by DiGiT, was a resounding success, with participants earning professional certifications in digital skills.

In June, we witnessed a showcase of ingenuity and creativity as finalists of our first ever International STEM Innovation Competition pitched their projects. The response was overwhelming, with 866 teams ranging from primary students to professional inventors.

The competition is the culmination of a successful STEM initiative led by our School of Technology and Engineering Science, where primary school students undergo a 10-week STEM Apprenticeship programme learning about 3D design and printing, robotics, coding, Android app development, bridge building, and Scratch 3.0 programming. Nurturing STEM talents requires a 360-degree approach. Through competitions like these, we support the government's national education initiatives by generating early interest in STEM fields.

As part of our thought leadership engagements, WOU had the privilege of speaking at several international conferences both locally and abroad. We explored topics such as gender revolution, disruptive technologies, open education, and collaboration between academia and think tanks in climate action, green, and sustainable development.

Finally, discover more about our partnerships with Penang Free School and MIMOS Academy, and how these alliances are advancing higher education and scientific research.

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DIGITAL BOOTCAMP: A PIONEER INITIATIVE BY DiGiT

▲ The students proudly show their certificates.

The WOU's School of Digital Technology (DiGiT) concluded its successful inaugural 'Digital Bootcamp', held from 15 April 2024 to 10 May 2024, at Bangunan Wawasan, our city campus. This pioneering initiative equipped participants with the essential digital skills needed to thrive in our increasingly tech-driven world.

The recent bootcamp catered to individuals interested in exploring the digital landscape. Whether out of curiosity about the possibilities or unsure where to begin, the camp provided a valuable starting point.

The comprehensive workshop covered a wide range of digital skills from programming foundation to UX/UI design to Digital Business fundamentals and 21st century skills, giving participants a solid foundation in theory and practical application, propelling them into the world of digital literacy. By equipping learners with industry-demanded skills, WOU empowers them to be more competitive in the job market and to thrive in the continuously changing digital economy.

Committed to catering to a wide range of learners, the DiGiT offered a flexible hybrid learning model. This approach combined in-person and virtual participation options, ensuring no aspiring digital enthusiast was excluded due to location or personal obligations. The state-of-the-art ClassIn system further facilitated participation for interstate students.

Associate Professor Dr Andrew Tan, also the Head of DiGiT, said, "Some students found coding concepts tough, such as variables and loops, but the extra practice and help provided during interactive sessions quickly made coding lessons less daunting and more enjoyable."

There is no denying critical thinking, interpersonal and communication skills are essential in any role or job. Lecturer and Head of the Centre for Foundation Studies, Jasmine Selvarani, observed, "The students were open with each other while discussing intercultural communication, asking questions about other cultures and why they do things differently."

"They learnt how to be more culturally sensitive, work in teams, make effective decisions, improve their emotional quotient, manage their time and stress and be successful online learners. They were especially keen to discuss mental health issues and ways to cope effectively," she added.

When asked about their favourite part of the bootcamp, student Caylen Tan responded, "UI/UX Design because it is interesting how customers could interact and navigate the stream of art."

"This bootcamp sparked my interest in Computer Science, which I will study later in university," said Ng Jie Ying.

"I want to enrol my son in a Software Engineering course but am afraid he might not be able to cope, "Puan Careemah said during the graduation ceremony. "I now know he needs to acquire more knowledge and skills," she added.

Another parent, Puan Surrayya, stated, "The bootcamp is not something new to my son as he was exposed to it in school when he was in the computer science stream. Some topics were like a refresher course while some were new to him, especially the new module on AI."

The Digital Bootcamp was not just a learning experience – it was a launchpad! Students are now fired up to pursue further studies and careers in tech, thanks to the valuable digital skills they gained. Positive feedback from students and parents confirms the bootcamp's impact on sparking a passion for the digital world.

The positive impact of the Digital Bootcamp is evident in Chiew Pau Lian, Lee Chin Phang and William Thomas Raymond, who all enrolled in the BDSE Professional Certificate Programme for the May Intake!

WOU remains committed to providing these transformative learning experiences that prepare future-ready graduates.

MBOT NORTHERN SYMPOSIUM GATHERS INDUSTRY LEADERS IN PENANG

▲ YB Jagdeep Singh Deo presenting his opening speech.

The Malaysia Board of Technologists (MBOT), in collaboration with the Technological Association of Malaysia (TAM), recently hosted the MBOT Northern Symposium 2024. Held on 11 May 2024 at WOU (Wawasan Open University), the symposium brought together industry leaders, technologists and academics for a day of discussions and networking.

The event, co-organised with WOU and the IEEE Malaysia Section through the IEEE Malaysia ED/MTT/SSC Penang Joint Chapter, was themed 'Technological Innovation Through Tech Talents.'

The President of Technological Association Malaysia (TAM), YBrs Ts Tung Chee Kuan said, "The symposium focused on harnessing smart technology through optimum productivity and fostering technological excellence for sustainable societal enrichment."

"This symposium offers a platform to deliberate ideas, share knowledge, experiences and best practices and address our priorities for the future," he added.

▲ YB Jagdeep interacts with the guests.

▲ Prof Yap Eng Hwa.

Professor Yap Eng Hwa, WOU's Associate Vice Chancellor, stressed the importance of talent in the Electrical & Electronics (E&E) industry. He stated, "Skilled individuals are the foundation of innovation and providing a strong pool of highly qualified professionals is crucial for maintaining a steady flow of top talent."

During his opening speech, Penang Deputy Chief Minister II, YB Jagdeep Singh Deo, highlighted the importance of education, particularly in science and technology. He said this focus aligns with his current responsibility to oversee the Penang science and technology portfolio.

"Penang is a leader in the E&E sector in Malaysia, contributing roughly 5% of the global semiconductor industry."

"To meet the demands of new companies coming to the state, Penang is looking to attract over 10,000 new talents and upskill its workforce," he said.

The MBOT Northern Symposium 2024 served as a rewarding platform for knowledge sharing and networking within the technological community in northern Malaysia. The insights and connections made at the event will likely contribute to advancements and innovation in the region. Here at WOU, we believe that STEM talent is the lifeblood of innovation. This further solidifies our commitment to STEM education, emphasising lifelong learning, adaptability, and the continuous acquisition of new skills. "Create for Good" with WOU.

Driving the Innovation Agenda

▲ Ts Ir Dr Khor Jeen Ghee, Prof Dato' Ts Dr Mohamed Ibrahim bin Abdul Mutalib, Dato Shanmuganathan Palanisamy and Puan Latidah Daud.

The MBOT Northern Symposium explored an insightful theme, delving into "Technological Innovation Through Tech Talents". In the one-hour session moderated by Ts Ir Dr Khor Jeen Ghee from Technological Association Malaysia, Director of Business Processes and IT, Escatec Sdn Bhd, the panel of distinguished speakers emphasised the need for collaborative efforts between academia, industry and government to harness Malaysia's potential as a hub for technological innovation.

A discussion centred around the role of universities in fostering innovation and integrating practical industry experience with academic learning. Prof Dato' Ts Dr Mohamed Ibrahim Abdul Mutalib, Board Member of MBOT Board and Vice Chancellor, Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS (UTP) highlighted UTP's initiatives to produce graduates with a growth mindset and the capacity to drive continuous innovation.

On the importance of technological innovations to drive the nation forward, the panel concurred that Malaysia has the capacity and competency to innovate.

Latifah Daud, former Executive Director and Head of Strategic Capital Management, at Khazanah Nasional Berhad, underscored the strategic importance of human capital management in driving innovation agendas.

"The challenge is to observe the specific things that we should innovate to solve some of the perennial problems in the country," she said.

Chief Executive Officer of Kontron Asia Pacific Design Sdn Bhd, Dato' Shanmuganathan Palanisamy, echoed the need for innovative thinking in the industry. He emphasised the rapid evolution of technology and the importance of adapting to global trends to maintain competitiveness.

The forum concluded with a call to action, urging stakeholders to unite and develop policies and frameworks that ensure Malaysia's readiness to embrace future technological advancements.

A CREATIVE DISPLAY OF INNOVATION AT WOU'S INAUGURAL INTERNATIONAL STEM INNOVATION COMPETITION

Clever and unique innovations by students and professional inventors took centre stage at WOU's inaugural International Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) Innovation Competition 2024 (ISIC-WOU24).

Some outstanding innovations that bagged top accolades were a disaster alert system, a smart waste detector, a sustainable alternative for seedlings cultivation and a creative educational aid. These ingenious projects were selected from 22 entries shortlisted for the ISIC-WOU24 grand finals held at WOU's main campus on 26 June 2024.

Spearheaded by its School of Technology and Engineering Science (STE), the competition aimed at championing STEM education to nurture future tech talents for the digital era.

It attracted more than 7,100 innovators, representing 866 teams, from all over Malaysia and countries like Indonesia, Thailand and Botswana. Participants, ranging from primary school students to professional inventors, competed in four categories: Junior Innovator, Young Innovator, Tertiary Innovator, and Professional Innovator.

Penang Deputy Chief Minister II, YB Jagdeep Singh Deo, who leads the state's Human Capital Development, Science, and Technology Committee, lauded WOU's efforts in promoting STEM literacy.

"Penang urgently needs skilled talent for its high-tech industries. With 400 MNCs and 6,000 SMEs here, our students must develop the skills to support this growing ecosystem," he said.

WOU's Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor, Prof Dr Lily Chan, underscored the University's commitment to STEM education and workforce upskilling and reskilling, focusing on the manufacturing sector.

"The strength of a nation's tech industry is directly linked to the quality of its STEM workforce. Hence, we have strategically designed unique, interdisciplinary engineering and IT programmes to meet the demands of a high-investment industrial environment," she said.

The competition was intense as finalists demonstrated the effectiveness and functionalities of their prototypes during the evaluation sessions judged by industry experts, senior WOU academics and representatives from the Technological Association Malaysia (TAM) and Malaysia Board of Technologists (MBOT).

▲ A group photo with the ISIC-WOU24 winners.

In the Junior Innovator category, Jared Tan Jun Hao from SJK (C) Sin Ya Penang won the Diamond Award with his "Terra Guard" project. His solar-powered Internet of Things (IoT) disaster alert system, designed using micro accelerometer functions and temperature sensors, aims to provide early warnings about landslides and forest fires. The 12-year-old, who developed his project with guidance from his father and teacher, hopes that his innovation will aid in reducing fatalities from disasters.

Students from SMK Damansara Jaya, Selangor, emerged as champions in the Young Innovator category with their innovation, "AI Trashzilla", designed to address the issue of littering, particularly in night markets and tourist attractions. The team, comprising of members - Teoh Zhi Syuen, 15; Gabriel Tai Herng, 15; Kok Wen Zheng, 15; Sek How Zhe, 14; and Cheong Hye Yan, 14, impressed the judges with their practical approach to waste management, which detects waste using Raspberry Pi and EV3 Mindstorm Bluetooth connectivity.

In the Tertiary Innovator category, the Diamond Award went to SMJK Heng Ee Penang for their project on "Biodegradable and Sustainable Method of Seedlings Cultivation." The team of 19-year-olds - Esther Chan Yin Hei, Saw Zhen Wei, Joseph Ho Kah Hong, Cindy Kang and Tan Jie Hui, successfully developed a novel bioplastic derived from eggshells for seedling cultivation, offering an eco-friendly alternative to non-biodegradable seedling bags.

Under the Professional Innovator award, Ezrul Helmi Bin Muhamad Razali's project, "Multifunctional Card (MFC)", was awarded the Diamond Award. The 38-year-old professional innovator from SMK Padang Terap, Kedah, impressed judges with his research on using flash cards to improve Form Four students' understanding of Force and Motion in Physics.

Other innovations which won the Platinum award include an ingenious washroom occupancy monitoring system, a moon phase educational model and a floating sea house prototype.

The ISIC-WOU24 is the culmination of the University's STEM Apprenticeship Programme tailored for primary school students around Penang. Faculty members from STE work alongside teachers to coach student apprentices in Micro:bit, 3D design and printing, bridge building, Scratch programming and Android app development.

As a result of the 10-week training, 26 outstanding apprentices were chosen to conduct workshops and demonstrate their prowess in 3D design & printing, Micro:bit, and bridge building on the sidelines of the grand finals at WOU. About 130 students from six schools participated in the sessions.

▲ Booth preparation by one of the group participants.

▲ Students take part during the bridge building workshops.

CLOSING THE GENDER GAP IN STEM

▲ Prof Dr Lily Chan.

In a presentation addressing the theme of 'Gender Leadership and the Digital Revolution,' WOU's Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor, Prof Dr Lily Chan, shared data-driven insights on gender participation across the University's academic programmes, graduate demographics, STEM enrolment and their workforce.

Prof Chan delivered her talk at an online workshop organised by the Beijing Normal University (BNU), China, on 22 May 2024. During her talk, she advocated for greater female participation in STEM fields.

In the session moderated by Prof Asha Kanwar, panellists from BNU, the University of Johannesburg, South Africa, and the University of the South Pacific, Fiji, exchanged ideas and explored strategies for building a more inclusive and resilient education system.

Prof Chan emphasised the critical structural barriers and gender biases that hinder a woman's progress into leadership positions. To overcome these barriers, she underscored the necessity of systemic changes, including gender-sensitive policies and practices that promote equity and inclusion.

Highlighting the stark under representation of women in STEM leadership roles, Prof Chan cited data from a 2021 Jobstreet report that revealed that women constitute only 35% of Malaysia's technology workforce and a mere 23% of the Academy of Sciences Malaysia.

She further stressed the importance of addressing gender stereotypes, adding that it is imperative to create an empowering environment for women to pursue and excel in STEM fields.

EMPOWER YOUR FUTURE: WOU'S LATEST PROGRAMMES

WOU (Wawasan Open University) is proud to announce our latest academic programmes designed to empower graduates for the future. These exciting offerings span the School of Digital Technology (DiGiT) and the School of Technology and Engineering Science (STE), providing students with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

School of Technology and Engineering Science (STE)

Bachelor of Technology (Honours) in Mechatronic System

The Bachelor of Technology (Honours) in Mechatronic System is an innovative TVET-based programme designed to provide students with the skills and knowledge to succeed in the field of mechatronics. This programme integrates principles from mechanical, electronic and computer engineering, enabling graduates to design, develop and maintain complex mechatronic systems.

The programme features a strong emphasis on hands-on learning and practical skills development. Students will gain valuable experience through blended learning, laboratory work, and industrial internships. This focus on real-world application equips graduates with the ability to solve problems, think critically, and adapt to technological advancements.

The Bachelor of Technology (Honours) in Mechatronic System caters to individuals passionate about a challenging and rewarding career in various industries, including manufacturing, automation, robotics and the Internet of Things (IoT).

Master of Science in Smart Manufacturing

The Master of Science in Smart Manufacturing is programmed to equip graduates with the expertise to lead and innovate in the age of Industry 4.0. This advanced programme explores the integration of cyber-physical systems, the Internet of Things (IoT), big data and artificial intelligence (AI) within manufacturing processes. Students will gain an extensive understanding of smart factory technologies and how to leverage them to optimise production, improve efficiency and enhance product quality.

The Master of Science in Smart Manufacturing is suited for professionals seeking to advance their careers in manufacturing or individuals with a background in engineering or related disciplines interested in pursuing a specialisation in smart manufacturing.

Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering Science

The Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering Science is a research-oriented programme designed to cultivate critical thinkers and future leaders in engineering science. Through independent research and under the guidance of experienced faculty, doctoral students will delve into complex engineering problems and develop innovative solutions. The programme equips graduates with the necessary skills to conduct high-quality research, contribute to the advancement of insight and make significant contributions to the engineering profession.

The Doctor of Philosophy in Engineering Science is suited for highly motivated individuals with a Master's degree in Engineering or a related field who are passionate about research and innovation.

School of Digital Technology (DiGiT)

Master in Data Science

This cutting-edge postgraduate programme is designed to equip learners with the principles, theories, and tools of data science, providing them with the flexibility and accessibility of online learning.

Students will benefit from specialised elective tracks such as Digital Business Analysis and Smart Manufacturing Analytics, allowing them to focus on high-demand industry areas. The programme also emphasises future-ready skills like big data analysis, AI applications and predictive analytics, which are crucial for tomorrow's tech-driven jobs.

Enhancing career prospects is an essential feature of this programme. With dual certification from WOU and Google, graduates will enjoy a significant competitive edge in the job market, opening up a wider range of career opportunities in technology, healthcare, manufacturing and finance.

Graduates can make immediate contributions to their organisations by leveraging data to drive strategic decisions, improve efficiency and optimise operations. In the long term, they will advocate for data literacy, lead digital transformation projects and drive innovation with their advanced analytical skills.

These latest programmes underscore WOU's commitment to providing students with the relevant skills and knowledge they need to succeed in the digital age. By empowering graduates to become future-ready professionals, WOU is not only shaping successful careers but further contributing to the growth and advancement of industries in Malaysia and beyond.

FUTURE-PROOFING HIGHER EDUCATION

▲ Prof Yap shares his presentation.

Disruptive technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and machine learning are reshaping traditional "paradigms of teaching and learning" in higher education.

WOU's Associate Vice Chancellor Prof Ts Dr Yap Eng Hwa shared this insight in his keynote speech on "Embracing Disruptive Technology: A Path to Inclusive Higher Education". He was addressing delegates at the 2024 International Conference on Information Technology, Data Science and Optimisation in Taipei, Taiwan, on 23 May 2024.

According to Prof Yap, the integration of AI, data analytics, and hybrid learning models has ushered in a transformative era similar to the Industrial Revolution in its scope and impact.

He illustrated how AI enhances administrative efficiency and academic performance, data analytics supports personalised learning, and hybrid learning models provide flexibility and continuity.

Elaborating on the challenges associated with these technologies, Prof Yap discussed the various obstacles, such as high implementation costs, digital disparities, faculty support, resistance to change, security and privacy concerns, pedagogical adaptations, over-reliance on technology and cultural and ethical implications.

Prof Yap stressed, "Higher education institutions must decide whether to fundamentally transform themselves to embrace these disruptive technologies fully or to make incremental changes that may not suffice in the long term."

To address these challenges, Prof Yap proposed several strategies for integrating disruptive technologies into higher education.

"Successful implementation hinges on adopting a multi-faceted approach that involves faculty development, infrastructure enhancement and pedagogical adaptation," he said.

Another strategy is leveraging technology to create more collaborative and interactive learning environments. Prof Yap explained that "tools with lower entry barriers such as virtual discussion platforms, real-time polling and collaborative documents can mimic and enhance the traditional classroom experience".

He further advocated for continuous assessment, inclusive design and accessibility, and partnerships with technology providers, educational institutions and professional organisations to effectively scale digital initiatives.

In his presentation on future trends in higher education, Prof Yap pointed out that emerging technologies will crucially shape higher education.

"Technological innovations are not merely add-ons but are central to the transformation of educational practices and strategies," he opined, adding that "institutions adopting these technologies will likely lead in educational outcomes and student preparation for modern complexities".

In offering strategies to future-proof higher education, he outlines several forward-thinking institutional strategies such as a focus on lifelong learning, offering flexible, skill-based learning opportunities such as micro-credentials and competency-based education (CBE), which promotes student progress based on skills mastery rather than time spent in class.

WOU & COURSERA: A PATH TOWARDS ADVANCING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The innovative partnership between WOU and the global online learning platform, Coursera, is a crucial enabler in propelling WOU toward the next level of academic excellence.

In emphasising the significance of this collaboration, WOU's Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor, Prof Dr Lily Chan said that integrating Coursera with a new learning management platform signifies a revolutionary digital transformation for the University.

Speaking to Bibin Shivas, Coursera's Director of Customer Success for Asia-Pacific, during Coursera's CampusTalks webinar broadcast live on 29 May 2024.

She shared that WOU now integrates Coursera content into selected courses, with up to 50% integration for some courses. The meticulous process entails blending external courses with WOU's materials to meet the stringent quality standards set by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA).

WOU's School of Technology and Engineering Science (STE) and School of Digital Technology (DiGiT) have adopted these integrations for their postgraduate programmes on system design engineering, smart manufacturing, and data science.

To enhance their employability, students now have the opportunity to acquire professional credentials such as the IBM Machine Learning Professional Certificate and Google Data Analytics Professional Certificate upon completion of selected modules.

Prof Chan added that as one of Coursera's early adopters in Malaysia, WOU's commitment to nurturing industry-ready students has garnered positive feedback from employers for prioritising a skills-first approach in their hiring practices.

WOU currently allows the unbundling of degree programmes into packaged content to train the workforce in specific job roles. This is made possible with industry collaborations to repackage courses offering credit-bearing micro-credentials.

Through flexible and adaptable pathways provided by WOU, students can accumulate these credentials and progress towards a degree at their own pace.

In terms of driving student engagement, she emphasised the importance of a robust learning management system (LMS) that functions as a versatile communication tool and personal assistant to guide students on their academic journey.

Looking ahead, Prof Chan envisions LMS evolving into a collaborative platform where local and international students can 'form chat groups and study together'.

Her immediate priority for WOU is to improve learning outcomes, boost student engagement and promote re-enrolment by optimising LMS through seamless integration with Coursera.

WOU PLEDGES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS WITH SPECIAL BURSARY AWARD

▲ Dr Thomas presenting the mock cheque to the President of PGTM.

WOU (Wawasan Open University) strengthens its commitment to early childhood education through a special bursary award presented to Persatuan Guru Tadika Malaysia (PGTM) on 2 June 2024.

Associate Professor Dr Thomas Chow Voon Foo, Dean of the School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences (SEHS) at WOU, attended the *Majlis Anugerah Perkhidmatan Guru-guru Prasekolah Swasta Berdaftar Sempena Hari Guru 2024*. This event, co-organised by PGTM and the Private Education Unit of the Penang State Education Department, celebrated the contributions of educators in private preschools.

Dr Thomas presented a mock cheque for RM500,000 to Sally Ng, President of PGTM, witnessed by the Penang State executive committee chairman (EXCO) for Social Development, Welfare, and Non-Islamic Religious Affairs, YB Lim Siew Khim. The WOU Special Bursary Award provides financial aid to PGTM members pursuing professional development.

The bursary is available to the first 125 qualifying PGTM members who enrol in the Diploma in Early Childhood Education (DECE) programme at WOU by the end of 2024.

The DECE programme is designed to equip educators with a strong foundation in knowledge and skills to excel in nurturing and guiding young children. It aligns with the government's vision to elevate preschool teaching standards, making graduates well-positioned for success in various early childhood education settings. This initiative highlights WOU's dedication to supporting educators in enhancing their qualifications and enriching the early childhood education landscape.

BUSINESS MIXER GATHERS MBA ALUMNI AND DBA STUDENTS

WOU's School of Business and Administration (SBA) successfully hosted a business mixer at Homestead, WOU Main Campus, on 22 June 2024.

The event brought together current Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) candidates and Master of Business Administration (MBA) graduates, who seized the opportunity to expand their network and exchange valuable experience with their peers, both in academic and professional endeavours.

SBA's Executive Dean, Assoc Prof Dr Gary Tan Peng Liang, reiterated WOU's commitment to nurturing future business leaders through practical networking opportunities and mentorship. In a heartfelt sharing session, Dr Tan offered useful advice on navigating doctoral research and underscored the University's support for academic excellence and professional growth among its students and alumni.

▲ A group photo with SBA's Executive Dean, Assoc Prof Dr Gary Tan.

▲ Students/alumni considering on their future path with WOU.

WOU AND PENANG FREE SCHOOL FORGE A POWERFUL EDUCATIONAL ALLIANCE

▲ Prof Chan exchanges the NoU signing document with Principal of Penang Free School, Encik Syed Sultan Shaikh Oothuman.

Penang Free School (PFS), a cornerstone of academic excellence in Malaysia, specifically Penang, has joined forces with WOU (Wawasan Open University) to create a dynamic educational alliance. This partnership, signed on 24 May 2024, paves the way for a shared commitment to enriching the growth of future generations.

The milestone of this collaboration lies in its focus on academic excellence. PFS educators will be empowered to pursue advanced degrees, like the Master of Education (MEd) and the Master of Arts in Psychology (MAP), offered by WOU's School of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences (SEHS). These programmes will equip teachers with the latest knowledge and skills, allowing them to become even more effective educators and leaders within the classroom.

Beyond postgraduate opportunities, the partnership extends to enrich the academic landscape for PFS students. They will have the chance to explore a diverse range of undergraduate programmes offered by WOU. It includes degrees in Primary Education, Psychology, English Studies and Liberal Studies, as well as programmes in Business Administration, Technology and Engineering Science and Digital Technology. With a wide array of options, PFS students can pursue their academic passions and prepare for rewarding careers in various areas of expertise.

This innovative collaboration represents a significant step forward for both institutions. PFS will benefit from a highly qualified and motivated teaching staff with the latest pedagogical advancements. WOU, in turn, will gain valuable insights from collaborating with a prestigious institution like PFS. Ultimately, this partnership serves a greater purpose – to enrich the educational experience for all involved and contribute to a brighter future for Malaysian education.

The agreement was formally signed at Homestead Penang by Chief Executive and Vice Chancellor, Prof Dr Lily Chan and Principal of Penang Free School, Encik Syed Sultan Shaik Oothuman.

WOU PREPARES FUTURE TECH STARS WITH MIMOS ACADEMY

It is a momentous occasion for WOU (Wawasan Open University), as we are now the authorised training partner for MIMOS Academy on 22 June 2024. The official recognition took place during the launching ceremony of The Industry Technology Innovation Centre (ITIC), Semiconductor Research Consortium and MIMOS Academy. This ceremony was graced by, YB Tuan Chang Lih Kang, the Minister of MOSTI (Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation).

Prof Ts Dr Yap Eng Hwa, Associate Vice Chancellor of WOU, proudly received the Certificate of Partnership, signifying the official collaboration between MIMOS Academy and WOU. This partnership is a significant step towards bridging the talent gap in the technology sector through the Talent Development Programme.

Both WOU and MIMOS Academy are enthusiastic about this collaboration. By working together, they aim to provide extensive training programmes that equip graduates with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in the rapidly evolving technological landscape. This initiative directly addresses the critical need for qualified personnel in the Malaysian technology sector.

The details of the specific training programmes offered under the Talent Development Programme are yet to be announced. However, the emphasis on lessening the talent gap suggests that the programmes will target in-demand skills in semiconductor technology, artificial intelligence (AI) and other key industry sectors.

This partnership is a positive development for the institutions and the Malaysian technology sector. WOU's established reputation in online education, combined with MIMOS Academy's expertise in advanced technology training has the potential to create a powerful force in nurturing the next generation of Malaysian tech talent.

▲ WOU academia represented by Prof Yap receive the certificate of partnering from MIMOS Academy.

A PRE-SUMMIT DISCUSSION PAVES THE WAY FOR A GREENER FUTURE

▲ WOU hosts the Pre-Conference Roundtable Discussion.

A discussion on how universities and think tanks can collaborate for climate action and a sustainable future kicked off the pre-conference roundtable at WOU on 24 June 2024. It wasn't just any conversation but a productive event that brought together key stakeholders from academia and research both local and international or environmental NGOs. These experts weren't here to merely chat – they were there to brainstorm solutions and pave the way for a greener future.

The energy from the roundtable didn't stop there. The momentum continued as these discussions translated into action at The World Green & Sustainability Summit on 25 June 2024 at Jen Hotel Penang. This summit promises to be a significant platform for furthering the crucial dialogue on climate action. It's not every day that we see such a clear path from brainstorming to action on such a critical issue.

The WOU roundtable signifies a growing recognition of universities and think tanks' vital role in tackling climate change. Universities are hubs of academic expertise, while think tanks specialise in research-driven solutions. Combining these strengths means a collaborative approach offering a powerful force for positive change. Imagine the impact when cutting-edge research meets real-world problem-solving!

While details on the specific initiatives and their outcomes are expected to be released shortly. The WOU roundtable acknowledges the universities and think tanks' vital role in tackling climate change. By combining academic expertise with research-driven solutions, this collaborative approach offers a powerful force for positive change.

THROUGH THE YEARS

The WOU campus is a harmonious blend of history, culture, and modernity. At the heart of this picturesque campus lies Homestead, the cherished heritage home of Towkay Yeap Chor Ee, a testament to our rich cultural heritage and historical legacy.

Over the years, regular monitoring and scheduled maintenance works have been carried out to ensure the safety and functionality of Homestead. This charming structure, with its classic design and meticulous craftsmanship, offers a glimpse into a bygone era while continuing to serve as a vibrant hub for cultural and social gatherings. Our curated collection of photos captures the essence of its elegance and the warmth of its enduring legacy. We invite you to explore these images and discover the stories etched into every brick and beam of this beloved landmark.

Over the years, various enhancements have been carried out to upgrade the landscape of WOU's outdoor grounds. These enhancements, generously donated by several benefactors, include strategically placed decorative objects that have contributed to refining the campus ambience.

■The Multiverse - Where Transformative Learning Unfolds

This sculpture, consisting of 60 different-sized metal balls, is the creation of local artist Low Chee Peng. Installed in May 2023, its futuristic design resonates with WOU's commitment to transformative learning in the digital AI era.

■Synergy Stream - The pillars of Continuos Learning, Community, Culture

The magnificent 3-bowl fountain water feature, installed in January 2023, offers a soothing and energetic welcome with its stream of gushing water. It signifies the three strategic

■Wisdom's Flow - Where Wisdom Flows For All

This one-spout fountain, also installed in January 2023, and placed at the rear of the campus, symbolises the constant pursuit of knowledge.

■Scholarly Blooms - Where Knowledge Blossoms Forever

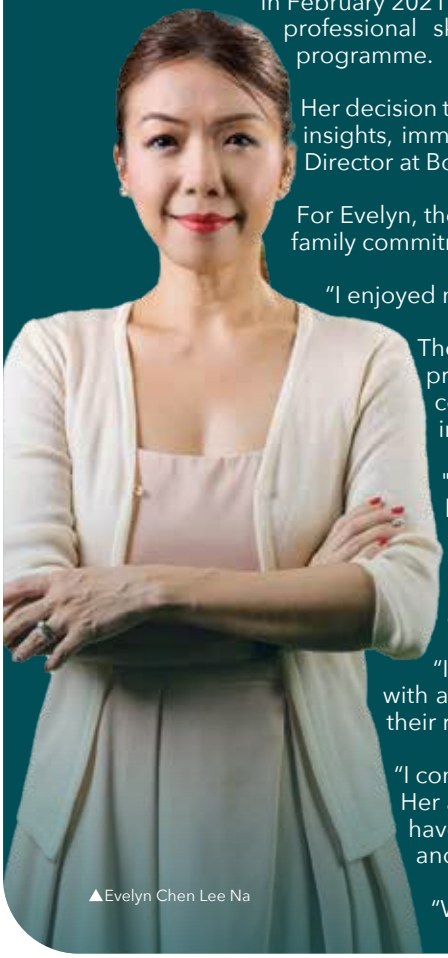
The latest gift received by WOU is a 9-panelled fused glass of floral pieces by artist Wong Keng Fuan, installed in May 2024, which is a striking sight along the road path. The blooms, aside from being beautiful, can be said to symbolise growth and renewal, just like the endless cycle of learning and evolution that is the core of WOU.

WOU Achiever

A SHINING EXAMPLE OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Evelyn Chen Lee Na, at 48, exemplifies the spirit of lifelong learning and professional growth.

Currently based in Ipoh, Perak and originally from Kuching, Sarawak, the professional accountant by training transitioned her career from managing finance and business development for a large property developer to spearheading operations in education six years ago.



▲Evelyn Chen Lee Na

In February 2021, motivated by her passion for education and a profound ambition to enhance her professional skills, Evelyn took up the challenge to pursue WOU's Master of Education programme.

Her decision turned out to be a game-changer. The programme empowered her with invaluable insights, immersive learning experiences and the skill set necessary to excel as the Executive Director at Bonanza Educare.

For Evelyn, the flexibility offered by WOU allowed her to balance her studies with her work and family commitments.

"I enjoyed my complete freedom with ample support from the academic team," she said.

The knowledge and skills Evelyn acquired have significantly impacted her professional practices. Conducting interviews with teachers as part of her coursework opened her eyes to the challenges schools face and motivated her to implement changes in her organisation.

"The amount of reading and research I did for this course brought about ample knowledge. I applied them to our schools and the results have been astounding!" said an enthusiastic Evelyn, who graduated in November 2023.

Evelyn attributes her success to her disciplined approach to studying. When asked about her secret to academic excellence, she emphasises: "Read, read, read!"

"I always try to start an assignment early. Even if I don't have the points, I will begin with a cover page. Then it's off to more reading and writing down ideas, regardless of their relevance to the assignment.

"I continue to perfect my essay until I feel it is good enough to submit," she shares. Her advice to others considering upskilling is straightforward yet powerful: "You don't have to sacrifice your work while you work on yourself. It is not long term; work hard and sacrifice fun time for a year and a bit, and enjoy the fruits of your labour.

"Walking up on stage after having your name called is priceless!"

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