

OUM's flexibility appeals to learners

WHEN Open University Malaysia (OUM) came to the fore in 2001, it breathed fresh air into the local higher education milieu. As a novice open and distance learning (ODL) institution, the university strived to reach out to people from different walks of life to democratise education.

Fast forward through eight years of hardwork and tribulations, OUM has lived up to the expectation of the masses. This is reflected in the university's cumulative learner population which has surpassed 81,000.

With OUM, there is a light at the end of the tunnel for working people who wish to

continue learning. As a proponent of lifelong learning, the university caters to the learning needs of a varied group of people, from teenagers to those in their 80's.

What makes OUM appealing to learners is its flexible and convenient learning approach. The university leverages on technology to provide feasible learning options to learners who are dispersed throughout the country and across borders.

Besides technology, another crucial aspect of the university is its tutor community. The tutors form the backbone of OUM as they

embrace the blended pedagogy comprising modules, tutorials and e-learning in teaching and learning. Learners enjoy face-to-face interaction with their tutors three to five times in a semester, besides communicating via the online forum that is accessible 24 hours a day.

Through tutorials, the tutors help learners understand their modules better and also clarify issues and queries pertaining to their courses, examination and assignments.

The strength of OUM tutors lies in their willingness to walk the extra mile to encourage learners. Balancing studies



OUM's dedicated tutors were honoured at a recent colloquium.

with personal and social commitments is a tall order. Therefore, the encouragement from tutors is highly sought so that learners can stay focused in their academic pursuit.

For their selfless contributions, a national colloquium was organised recently to honour the tutors. The three-day colloquium, by the Centre for Tutor Management and Development (CTMD), received overwhelming support from the tutors.

Present were OUM's president and vice-chancellor Prof Tan Sri Anuwar Ali and senior vice-president Prof Dr Mansor Fadzil who thanked the tutors for their undivided support. They expressed hope that the tutors would give their best towards the university's teaching and learning excellence.

Fifty long-serving lead tutors were pleasantly

surprised when OUM presented them with laptops as a gesture of appreciation for their contributions.

As the first ODL institution in Malaysia, OUM rose to the challenge to eventually gain a strong footing in the local higher education scene. The enduring contributions of the tutors was a contributing factor in OUM's growth.

The colloquium sets the stage for the tutors to put forward their views and ideas on how to propel teaching and learning to the next level. The tutors were also updated on OUM's developments and its aspiration of being a mega university.

CTMD director, Associate Professor Dr Santhi Raghavan, was happy with the success of the colloquium.

"I find this colloquium relevant as it brought together tutors from all over Malaysia. OUM is evolving over time, and it is imperative

that the tutors be on the same page for the university to realise its goals. By fostering camaraderie among the tutors, we hope to promote solidarity through which teamwork can be espoused."

According to Dr Santhi, the colloquium's positive outcome has inspired OUM to organise similar colloquiums at regional level annually.

"I believe that it would be good to get the tutors together on such platforms on a regular basis. We have to be sensitive to the learning needs of our learners for them to enjoy a conducive learning environment.

For that, we have to constantly innovate and this is achievable with the help of the tutors."

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