Nilai gets full ‘university’ status
Graduation 2012
Theatre & Acting module students stage play
Mission accomplished! We are now officially a ‘University’. It has the right ring to it – Nilai University. This was what we set out to achieve when we first opened our doors in 1997 as Nilai College (as it was then known). We have always had that goal in mind and it is greatly satisfying to have achieved it. We are always striving to provide the best education possible along with the best facilities in a beautiful campus. To be given full university status by the Ministry of Higher Education is testament to the efforts of all academics, staff and students who helped us achieve this milestone.

I have stated many times, graduation is the event I most look forward to in our calendar. It is the time when the academics see the fruits of their labour as the graduates take their first step into the world as professional and socially confident young adults. It was extra special this year as this is the first batch of students to graduate from Nilai University. All the graduates and parents that I spoke to were equally excited and proud of our new university status.

As we prepare to offer more home grown degrees, we are getting the certifications and exemptions from the relevant professional bodies. In this issue, you will read how our Accounting and Finance degree students will benefit from more exemptions when they sit for their professional examinations.

I would also like to commend all who took part in the first ever production by the Theatre and Acting module’s pioneer batch. Their performance radiated courage, confidence and professionalism. Exactly the sort of values we want to instill in our students. To all those who wanted to break out of their shells and try something new, sign up for the Theatre and Acting module, I look forward to watching you perform for your final term project.

Prof. Emeritus Tengku Dato’ Shamsul Bahrain
PRESIDENT

Although many of the Explorer team members have experienced graduation process numerous times, it does not in any way dim the excitement or the pomp and pageantry of the event. Everywhere you look there were proud smiles of parents and graduates walking with their chests puffed out with pride. Their pride and joy is what everyone at Nilai University strives for.

Congratulations to all who got their diplomas and degrees on the day. We wish you all the best in your future endeavours. However, to those who have any aspirations to have a close association with their alma mater, you can follow the lead of your Valedictorian and apply for a job at Nilai University!

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FIELDS OF STUDY @ NLAU
A Valedictorian Speaks

Nilai University valedictorian of class of 2012 says he owes success to teachers.

La Chee Hoe (centre) flanked by his proud parents who travelled from Sandakan to share in this momentous occasion.

"The dedication and perseverance of my lecturers are the key reasons why I have done well in my studies," says La Chee Hoe modestly. The 24-year old Sandakan native was named the Valedictorian for Class of 2012 at Nilai University's (Nilai U) recent convocation. The ceremony on 8 Sept at the campus’s President Hall saw a total of 851 students receive their scrolls, of which 21 received first class honours. Among them, of course, was Chee Hoe, who obtained first class honours in the BBA (Hons) in Human Resource Management.

Chee Hoe admits that he did not think about getting top marks when he first joined Nilai U’s Foundation in Business programme. "My main aim was to get into a degree of my choice the fastest way possible, and the Foundation programme did just that. It did prepare me for the rigours of the degree programme and gave me a solid foundation in the key areas." He says he chose the BBA (Hons) in Human Resource Management because he truly believes in the mantra that "the employees are an organisation’s greatest asset". "Managing the employees and trying to provide things like improved healthcare benefits and on-going training are things that will make a company successful. One only has to look at Google HQ to see how that model works. It will attract the best talent and also keep them loyal to the company," explains Chee Hoe.

Encouraged by his early grades during the first year of his programme, Chee Hoe’s lecturers began to plant the seeds in his mind that a first class honours degree was within reach. "The lecturers were very subtle. They didn’t put any pressure on me or any other student. Instead, they gently nudged us along the path and kept telling us that we could achieve great things. Their guidance was critical in helping me achieve my grades. With the many hours of private tutoring and the mentoring system with academic staff who were constantly reviewing my performance, I was definitely in good hands," says Chee Hoe.

While academic performance is a key determinant in electing the Valedictorian, Nilai U’s Senate Committee, which selects the candidates, also takes into consideration their extra-curricular activities and other contributions on campus. This is to reflect the Nilai U philosophy of producing well-rounded graduates who are professionally competent and socially confident. In other words, graduates who will make a difference to society. In this regard, Chee Hoe certainly made his mark at Nilai U’s campus serving as President of the Student Representative Council. During his tenure, he organised a number of high-profile events designed to improve the student experience. He and his committee successfully organised a glamorous prom night. The team also hosted hundreds of visiting secondary school students during the International Cultural Festival. Of the latter event, he says the idea was to highlight to secondary school students the international flavour of a university campus. "Many secondary school students do not realise that they will be in a university classroom with people from all over the world. The International Cultural Festival showcased the many cultures and the diversity of the student population, encouraging youngsters to break out from their shells and embrace a broader world view," he explains.

Chee Hoe was excited about the graduation ceremony as his parents were in attendance to watch him deliver his Valedictorian Speech. "I used to be quite nervous about public speaking but having served as Masters of Ceremony on various Nilai U functions and events such as the Future Leaders Camp, I was quite confident of not fluffing my lines," he laughs. "I am thankful that my parents gave me the privilege of higher education and I am grateful to Nilai U for helping to mould me into what I am today."
Clean Sweep

Double-prize winner says there are no substitutes for hard work and good planning for academic success.

"I managed my time very well and prepared for my examinations well in advance. I never left things to the last minute, to avoid panicking," says Tan Kah Mun, who graduated from Nilai University (Nilai U) with first class honours in the Accounting and Finance degree programme. She is one of the very few students in Nilai U’s history to win both the Graham Upton and BDO Award. The former is an annual award honouring Prof Graham Upton who served as the Vice Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University, UK from 1997-2007. This award is given to the outstanding graduate in the 3+0 Oxford Brookes University degree programmes at Nilai U. The latter is presented to the student who obtains the highest CGPA in the BA (Hons) in Accounting and Finance programme.

This petite young lass from Kuala Lumpur says she is shocked to have bagged both prizes. "I admit I had been working hard with the aim of winning one of them but to win both is truly an honour. This will definitely make my résumé look more outstanding," she smiles as she poses for photographs with her classmates and proud parents at Nilai U’s Graduation ceremony. She had kept her double success a secret from her parents. Already beaming with pride that their daughter had scored first class honours, they were gobsmacked to see her go on stage to receive two mock cheques for her success. They were even more pleased to hear that their daughter plans to use the prize money to take them on a short holiday to Pulau Perhentian. "It is the least I can do after all they have done for me."

The former SMK Bandar Baru Seri Petaling student joined Nilai U’s Foundation in Business programme four years ago after visiting the campus and deciding that the peaceful campus environment is the perfect place to continue her studies. "I had made up my mind to pursue a business degree after completing Form V and my parents encouraged me to do so, believing it to be a pathway to a financially rewarding career," she explains. Kah Mun opted for the Accounting and Finance Degree as she found herself enjoying the accounting modules in the Foundation programme the most, even though she had no prior accounting knowledge. "Besides improving my English and presentation skills, Nilai U’s Foundation in Business programme gave me a solid basis in accounting to be brought into the degree programme."

Kah Mun is currently employed at BDO Malaysia and is enjoying her work, tremendously saying it is wonderful to be able to put what she had learned at university into use. She is also diligently pursuing her professional qualifications and is similarly aiming high. "I hope to complete both Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and Institute of Chartered Accountant of England and Wales (ICAEW) professional exams to ensure my résumé looks as outstanding as possible," she declares.

She says that the Accounting and Finance degree programme taught her the importance of critical thinking. "I was constantly taught how to analyse the numbers and current accounting standards. It also gave me great exposure to the world of finance. Without it, I doubt I would be able to understand financial reports and articles," she says.

Her parting advice to students who are looking to emulate her success is to work hard diligently throughout the programme. She warns against last-minute cramming and spotting questions. "You must be fully prepared for all subjects and this can only be done with consistent study. Plan your time table well so that you have the right balance between studying and socialising. Trust me, you will be fully rewarded for your dedication," she smiles.

BDO Award is sponsored by BDO Malaysia, who is a member of the BDO International, the world’s 8th largest network of professional services firms. In Malaysia, the BDO group is a leading professional services firm providing audit, advisory and tax services. Nilai University’s convocation last weekend saw a total of 851 students receive their scrolls with 21 scoring first class honours in their degree programmes, while 103 students scored distinctions in their diploma programmes.
Highest Standard of Healthcare

The latest batch of Diploma in Nursing graduates featured 13 students who scored distinctions in the Nursing Board examinations.

Both Mastura Norden and Chua Sin Yee are soft spoken and humble. However, beneath the polite exterior, lies a steely determination to be the best in the nursing profession. These two girls were part of the 13 students from Nilai University’s Diploma in Nursing programme who scored distinctions in the external Nursing Board examinations. It is the highest number of distinction scorers yet from a single batch and is reflective of the high calibre of students entering this noble profession.

Mastura’s choice to enter the nursing field was born out of a personal tragedy as she lost her mother to cancer four years ago. She spent a lot of time in hospitals and witnessed firsthand the important role nurses played in her mother’s treatment. "The nurses played a big part in making my mother feel more comfortable in the hospital and also gave her plenty of moral support in her battle against cancer. Their dedication and sincerity in caring for my mother inspired me," recalls Mastura. She was already registered for an English programme but applied for a government scholarship to do nursing. She promptly got the scholarship and was sent to Nilai University (Nilai U).

Sin Yee confesses that she had originally planned on pursuing medicine but was not able to get the grades to get into medical school. She admits that she had not worked hard enough in her school days and was somewhat crestfallen. However, a teacher noted her ambitions and suggested she apply for Nilai U’s Diploma in Nursing programme, as it would allow her to be still involved in the healthcare profession. She had learnt her lesson and has worked extra hard in her diploma programme, resulting in her graduating with a distinction and obtaining high scores in the Nursing Board exams.

Both girls plan to pursue their degrees after getting the necessary work experience and possibly further obtain a Master’s degree in Nursing. “I want to have the option of teaching. Also, having a Master’s will help me get into a senior position in my career,” says Sin Yee. Mastura says she wants to get into teaching as a means of giving something back to the nursing profession. “I hope to share my knowledge and experience and to help train better quality of nurses.”

While acknowledging that the attraction of high salaries for nurses abroad played a role in getting them to join the nursing programme, they both agree that there must be a sincere wish to help the sick and the infirm. “Without such a commitment and sincerity, you will not be able to last long as a nurse. You will not be able to provide quality care and service if you are only motivated by money,” says Sin Yee.

On their success in the Nursing Board exams, both girls unreservedly credit Nilai U lecturers. They reveal that the lecturers drilled them with mock exams which are even more difficult than the Nursing Board exam. “Having gotten used to a more difficult level of tests, we found the Nursing Board exams to be relatively easy. But it also included a lot of hard work,” cautions Mastura. Sin Yee says the lecturers take great effort to ensure students properly understood lessons and the key concepts. “The test is up to the students and how much effort they want to put in,” she smirks.

They both recommend Nilai U’s Diploma in Nursing programme to students who are keen to enter the healthcare profession. “Nilai U lecturers are great. They are patient and understanding, and really do want to share their wealth of knowledge and experience with the students,” says Sin Yee. Mastura concurs and says there is no other profession that provides greater job fulfillment than nursing. “When you have helped a patient successfully recover, the satisfaction is second to none,” she concludes.
To get full university status has been our aim from the very beginning," declares Prof Emeritus Tengku Dato’ Shamsul Bahari, President of the newly minted Nilai University. "The administrators were very focused on this as a means of accomplishing our goal of producing well-rounded graduates. Getting 'university' status will allow us to fully realise our motto of Enrichment for Life as we usher in a new age in the undergraduate experience."

Tengku Shamsul's eldor mood is understandable given that Nilai University has been working hard towards achieving this goal ever since opening its doors in 1998 (with Fedela as a 50% stakeholder). Its primary focus has always been on the quality of education. Being a private university it has always aimed to have higher standards compared to other universities. It has always had a strong emphasis on research and this is reflected in the various research grants that have been received over the years.

Building Blocks

It is on the academic front that getting this new university status will have the greatest impact. This is principally to allow graduates to have the benefit of holding a university qualification. When a graduate earns a degree from N.U.V., it is acknowledged that the person has undergone a strict regime of study and examinations from an institute that has met the stringent criteria set by the Ministry of Higher Education. In addition to the qualifications, syllabus, and facilities, students are also awarded the title of Master and Doctorate qualifications with the requisite Master's and Doctorate qualifications in place.

I also meant that there will be avenues for staff to conduct research and to do their thesis as well as being a university. By providing opportunities for research, our academics can attain a higher degree of knowledge and skill which ultimately is passed on to the students. This is how we build the foundation of our nation. So, this provision of qualified and skilled workforce the explains. Tengku Shamsul firmly believes that having highly-qualified and dedicated teaching staff is one of the most important aspects of a university. Current staff are being encouraged by Nilai University to upgrade their qualifications and will have an active role in the design and planning of the home grown degree programmes.

Having a large campus in the city outskirts also allow for the building of large number of sports facilities. There are courts for basketball, volleyball, tennis and table tennis as well as indoor badminton courts. Students can opt to work out in a full-equipped gymnasium or enjoy the fresh air on the lakeside jogging track. A full-sized football pitch is available and plans are also to add rugby and cricket facilities. Nilai University encourages a sporting lifestyle as we believe a healthy body leads to a healthy mind. A number of events are organised yearly to keep staff and students occupied with energetic pursuits. These include the annual Fun Run and the Campus Games, says Tengku Shamsul. "The Ministry of Higher Education has also picked Nilai University as one of the institutions to nurture and develop athletes in the sport of tennis. We are very excited about introducing this sport to our student population."

Nila University has also introduced the Master's Degree programmes in Business Administration and there are plans to follow up with more to meet the huge demand from working professionals. Many students are also seeing the wisdom in finishing their studies in one go and many are applying to do their Master's before venturing into the working world. This shows that paper qualification is still highly valued in this day and age," adds Tengku Shamsul.

Nilai University is also working with a British university with plans for it to validate its programmes in the future. It is also constantly working towards adding international universities who accept credit transfers to its roster. It is clear that the institution will not be resting on its laurels despite achieving its goal of getting full university status. "We are aiming to be one of the top universities in the region. This is an ongoing process that will require dedication and perseverance of all staff and students who have helped us get this far. We are determined to build an institution that will be recognised worldwide as a leader in the field of higher education," concludes Tengku Shamsul.
Directors’ Cut
Nilai U students talk up the positive experiences gained from joining the Theatre and Acting module.

“Successfully staging our own play was such a hugely rewarding and satisfying experience,” says Joyce Choong Miao Chen (Nilai University BA (Hons) in Business and Hospitality Management). She was referring to the staging of four vignettes under the theme of ‘This Thing Called Love’ by the pioneer batch of students in the Theatre and Acting module. Mentored by veteran thespian Mano Maniam, students were presented with variety of tasks and exercises designed to groom them into confident young men and women through the medium of acting. “The fact that the course promised no books or notes made it seem even more interesting,” laughs Joyce, who hails from Seremban.

A total of 19 students opted to try out this textbook-free course, and they were graded based on the staging and production of a play, which to the delight of the participating students; was performed to a standing room only crowd at the campus’s President Hall. Eliciting shrieks of delight, laughter and much applause, the actors were intensity personified and went about their performing duties like seasoned professionals. However, the directors of the four plays and the overall producer - Joyce, Chung Ji Eun (Korea / BA (Hons) in Business and Hospitality Management), Girisha Manickam (Malaysia / BSc (Hons) in Biotechnology), Cheyenne Tan Chya Ying (Malaysia / American Degree Transfer Program), and Kafala Kaweche (Kenya / BBA (Hons) in International Business) – said this was not the case at the start.

Like all productions, they suffered from teething problems, disagreements and a host of other difficulties, testing their patience and wherewithal. “In the beginning, it was really difficult to keep the discipline of the actors as they were unable to stay in character and often did not internalise the lines properly,” says Cheyenne Tan, whose play ‘Tangled Lies’ dealt with amorous relationships and a overbearing brother who has a tendency to erupt into violence. Cheyenne says the entire process was democratic as everyone in each group was allowed their input from writing and developing of storyline to the props.

Girisha Manickam, who took on directorial duties for ‘Hormones’, nodded in agreement and says that the key lesson that everyone learned from the experience was the importance of teamwork. “There were no ‘stars’ or prima donnas. Although we were randomly grouped, all of us already had a sense of purpose as we were the pioneer batch of students in this course and we were about to put on the very first play in Nilai U’s campus!” she says. Her segment of the play was inspired by the attitude amongst youngsters towards relationships and sex, with the male character drawn up as the villain who ends up impregnating two of his classmates.

Chung Ji Eun says that after having to perform in front of an audience, she no longer has a fear of public speaking. “I joined Nilai U principally because the syllabus is in English and I wanted to improve my language skills. After learning how to cry and display other emotions in front of an audience, presenting projects and other speaking engagements seem real easy now. I feel so much more confident now,” smiles the lass from Seoul, who aims to be a general manager of a top hotel someday. She directed an all female ensemble in ‘Unforgettable Childhood’ which dealt with a family’s meltdown under the grip of an alcoholic father.

Joyce’s play - ‘The One That Got Away’ - was inspired by a brainstorming session between her and her male cast members who were inspired by their own experiences of having their overtures rejected by the fairer sex. She admits to feeling butterflies in her stomach. As the opening night approached, cast members were still prone to making mistakes despite repeated rehearsals.

But cometh the hour, cometh the Nilai U students as the entire hour-and-a-half performance ran smoothly with nary a glitch, flubbed line or missed cue. Kafala who was on production duties said much credit had to go to their mentor Mano, who was always on hand to give advice and guide them. “He is so patient with us and he really exudes this positive vibe which inspired us. His enthusiasm for theatre and acting was infectious, and we really enjoyed learning from him,” she smiles. All five of the ladies say that all the participants are so pumped from the experience that they are looking forward to setting up a Drama Society to further
promote the course and the overall appreciation of the stage arts. “I really recommend that students check this course out, it was interesting, mind-blowing and really good fun!” exclaims Kafula.

Nilai U offers a number of non-core subjects for students to choose from. Apart from the Theatre and Acting module, students can opt for Ethics & Social Responsibility, or General Anthropology to complement their credit average. This is with the aim of producing well-rounded graduates who have a broad perspective and are well-versed in other topics outside their field of specialty.

The pioneer batch of the Theatre and Acting module celebrate the successful staging of the play with their mentor Mano Maniam.
The Professionals

Nilai U Accounting and Finance degree gets vital exemptions from professional accountancy bodies.

"To qualify as a chartered accountant is the aim of many of our accounting and finance students. As such, we have gone to great lengths to facilitate this process by getting as many exemptions as possible from the relevant professional organisations," says Dr. Evelita E. Celis, Dean of Nilai University (Nilai U) School of Business.

Among the various programmes offered at Nilai U, the BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance is one the most popular among applicants, and the administrators have been working with the likes of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) to facilitate graduates pathways towards being professional accountants.

Dr. Evelita explains the continued allure of Nilai U’s degree in BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance programme and the benefits of getting the exemptions from these regulatory bodies.

Why is the Accounting & Finance Degree so popular among applicants?

Basically, accounting is the language of business and is a basic and requisite tool in every business organisation, be it small, medium or multi-national. Accounting has a very wide purview covering public accounting, finance, cost management, auditing, taxation, government accounting, management information system, environmental accounting, budgeting, and banking. Hence, a good background in accounting open doors to various career opportunities.

Outline the exemptions that graduates of this programme will receive from the professional bodies.

Nilai U’s BA (Hons) in Accounting and Finance has been awarded seven (7) credits for prior learning (CPL) / exemptions by ICAEW. The programme has also been granted seven (out of a possible eight) paper exemptions by the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA).

What are the main benefits of these exemptions?

Basically, having these exemptions will make it easier for graduates of Nilai U’s BA (Hons) in Accounting and Finance to pursue professional qualification with either ICAEW or CIMA.

In addition, graduates of the programme may also choose to obtain an ICAEW Certificate in Finance, Accounting and Business (CFAB) with only one (1) further assessment. CFAB of ICAEW covers the key areas of business and finance, and is a great way to build skills and understanding that can be used in any industry. CFAB is a popular choice as it provides a straight forward, flexible way to enhance one’s knowledge and skills and gain a recognised certificate from ICAEW.

There are no formal entry requirements and one would not need to be working to start. CFAB is also an entry route to the Association of Chartered Accountants. So if one is looking to develop one’s knowledge and skills and demonstrate commitment to his/her future career, CFAB could be the ideal first step.

What other benefits does Nilai U get besides exemptions from these organisations?

Nilai U is also a recognized ICAEW Partner in Learning. As such, ICAEW has provided our lecturers with free online access to inspection copies of learning materials and other resources as well as the use of ACA (Associate Chartered Accountant) and CFAB past exams as part of their teaching materials.

Alongside Nilai U’s recent tie-up with the SAP University Alliances, provides our students the opportunity to acquire sound entry-level usable skills to reflect on the realities of a modern business environment in which they will work.

How would you advise students on which professional body examinations to take?

The choice really depends on the student. One’s affiliation doesn’t matter at all since the practice of accounting is universal and is governed by a standard set of generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP).

What would you say to students and their parents to convince them of the merits of Nilai U’s Accounting & Finance degree?

I would say that Nilai U’s Accounting and Finance Programme is well structured to cover all the basic and major areas in Accounting, Finance, Audit, Taxation and Business Law. It was designed in consultation with external advisors as well professional bodies such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), Association for Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA), and Malaysian Institute of Certified Public Accountants (MICPA).

The Nilai U BA (Hons) in Accounting and Finance programme has been accredited by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) and approved by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). Nilai U’s School of Business also offers diploma programmes and a host of BBA programmes in specialised fields.
Capturing the Spirit of Graduation
Mementoes from Nilai University’s Convocation 2012.

Graduates from the Bachelor of Business Administration programmes celebrate their success with their lecturers.

Lecturers from Nilai University’s Aircraft Maintenance Engineering department share a proud moment with some of their charges who graduated with distinction.

These School of Business graduates look like they cannot wait to start counting the profits of their endeavours!

These Diploma in Nursing graduates were among the high scorers in the Nursing Board exam.

Ravindra Rao (in mortar board) graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Accounting & Finance and is surrounded by family and friends.

Hospitality and Tourism graduates are all smiles along with their lecturers.

Graduates from the Oxford Brookes University, UK dual award programmes (which include Degrees in Accounting and Finance, Computing, Business Management, and Business & Marketing Management) bask in their glory.

The traditional flinging of the mortar board to signify the graduates’ entry into young adulthood.
University Status

August, 2012,
Putra Nilai Campus:

The Ministry of Higher Education has conferred university status to Nilai University College.

The institution is now known as Nilai University (Nilai U).

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Management,
I thank staff for your dedication in ensuring high academic quality and for creating a conducive environment for our students to experience an enriching and wholesome education.

I also thank our academic and industry advisors who have worked with us closely to enhance our curricula so as to enable our programmes to be recognised by professional bodies and foreign partner universities.

Most of all, I extend my gratitude to our students and their parents for the trust that they have put in this institution.
Keep in touch, you are all part of the Nilai family.

PROF EMERITUS TENGGU DATO’ SHAMSUL BAHRIN
President
Nilai University