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ESSAYS

The Heritage Major within the Bachelor of Arts in International Studies at UTS 1996–2007

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Abstract

The Heritage Major was introduced in 1994 specifically for those students who had a language facility and ethnic identification with a country that was not offered in the broad suite of sites available to Bachelor of Arts in International Studies (BAIS) students enrolled in country-specific Majors at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). These are my reflections as the coordinator of the program between 1999 and 2007.

Keywords

BAIS; UTS; In-Country Study; Multiculturalism; Global Citizenship; International Education

The Heritage Major was introduced in 1994 specifically for those students who had a language facility and ethnic identification with a country that was not offered in the broad suite of sites available to Bachelor of Arts in International Studies (BAIS) students enrolled in country-specific Majors at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS).

As the Heritage Major Co-ordinator, it was my responsibility to make sure that the students attended a reputable university in their country, to sign off on their additional language choice prior to going on In-country Study, and to liaise with the university regarding suitable subjects that would be studied whilst the student was overseas, and the nature of the agreement whether it be fee for service or exchange.

The first co-ordinator for the Heritage Program was Rhondda Brill who supervised an Australian-Polish student going to the University of Warsaw in Poland, and an Australian-

Croatian student going to the University of Zagreb in Croatia. After Rhondda left in 1999, I took on the role in addition to my other duties.

The list of countries to which UTS sent Heritage Major students is as follows:

Croatia (University of Zagreb)
 Greece (University of Athens)
 India (Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi)
 Israel (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)
 Lebanon (University of Beirut)
 Philippines (Ateneo University, Manila)
 Poland (University of Warsaw)
 Russia (St Petersburg State Technical University)
 South Korea (Yonsei University, Seoul)

Students who went to Hong Kong and Taiwan were also Heritage Major students but they were managed and supervised under the umbrella of the China Major. Those students going to Russia were an anomaly within the Heritage Major, as none of the students who studied there were Australian Russian students, but students who had a particular interest in Russia. Russian language was not offered at UTS. Instead, they studied Russian through an arrangement with Macquarie University. In Russia they continued their Russian language study at St Petersburg State Technical University. Situated in the far north of Russia, the students left Sydney in January, arriving to freezing temperatures with long dark days. It is a tribute to those who went there that they made the most of their time further studying the Russian language and culture. Dr Ilya Kruzhkov was the liaison person there who provided steady on-going help and support for the duration of the program.

The University of Athens was a particularly helpful university that Australian Greek students chose to attend. Mr Elias Marsellos was the head of European and International Relations Department at University of Athens and was our designated liaison person. The students who went there studied subjects pertaining to their professional degree at UTS. In one case, Leah Georgakis, a law student was able to obtain qualifications in both Greece and Australia which stood her in very good stead in her later legal professional life. Other students, Chrisanthi Giotis, Theodora Paraskevopoulo, Vivienne Skordas, Paraskevi Frangakis, Panayiota Belessis, and Angelo Vassos, all went to Greece for their In-country Study. They, too, have continued to use their Greek and Australian educational pathways.

In 2006, one student chose to go to the Philippines. Carlo Velayo went to the University of Ateneo in Manila. While there he made a film depicting the life of Jesus as it is enacted on the streets of Manila at Easter time. His career in film-making has advanced since those student days. In the Philippines, he was generously assisted by the late Professor Raoul Pertierra. Shifra Symonds went to Israel where she studied law subjects. Peita Davis went to Lebanon and worked with the Lowy Institute upon her return.

2004 saw four young women go to Seoul in Korea: Sharon Bae, Hee-Jung Kim, Andrea Lee, and Herina Lee. Sharon, Andrea, and Herina included in their subjects Introduction to the Korean Law and Legal System. Hee-Jung studied subjects such as Video Production and Broadcasting Directing. They opened the way for future students. It was a difficult time for all the students in north Asia because of the threat of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or SARS.

The Heritage Major was a concept that could only advantage a few students. That made it too expensive to continue. That said, those students who were able to fully accept their multicultural identity and feel the advantages and disadvantages of wherever they were in the world, lived out the globalization mission of the Institute for International Studies at UTS as happier and more productive cosmopolitan citizens.