



# ENGAGING RETURNEE STUDENTS AS PARTNERS IN PEER ADVISING PROGRAMS

## THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE EXPERIENCE

Presented by  
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International Relations Office

# INTRODUCTION OF NUS

## ○ Vision

- A leading global university centred in Asia, influencing the future

## ○ Mission

- To transform the way people think and do things through education, research and service
- A global, research-intensive university
  - ✓ 14 Faculties and Schools across 3 campuses
  - ✓ Total student population: 31,000 (u/g 26,400, postgrad 10,500) students from 100 countries
  - ✓ 6 Overseas Colleges
  - ✓ 22 Research Institutes and Centres
  - ✓ 3 of Singapore's 4 Research Centres of Excellence
  - + partnership with Nanyang Technological University in the 5th



# STUDY ABROAD AT NUS

## Student Exchange Programme (SEP)

- 1 or 2 semesters at an overseas partner university
- 180 active partners in 27 countries
- Number of Students on SEP per year
  - > 1300 (outgoing)
  - > 1300 (incoming)
- Scholarships & Awards
- Language Preparation Programmes:
  - French, German, Korean



# STUDY ABROAD AT NUS

## Global Opportunities

To provide students with short-term academic immersions and cultivate interest in non-traditional destinations

➤ **Internships:**

**i-intern (~25 students/year, 4 countries)**

➤ **Research Attachment Programs:**

**i-RAP (~10 students/year, 4 countries)**

➤ **Summer Programs:**

**i-SPs (outbound: 240 students/year, 9 programs, 7 countries)**



# PEER ADVISING PROGRAMME

- ◉ Founded at NUS in May 2010
- ◉ Operated under the Global Education team of the International Relations Office
- ◉ Three paid student workers run the programme with guidance from IRO staff
- ◉ Focus on the gaps - exchange, short-term students
- ◉ A rapidly growing & progressive programme on campus



# PEER ADVISING PROGRAMME

## Returning NUS Students

- Platform to share wealth of knowledge
- Support system during re-entry

## Incoming Exchange Students

- Avenue to seek help
- Promotes interaction with student body

## Outgoing NUS Students

- Avenue to seek advice
- Good source of unofficial information

# NUS' CURRENT INTERACTION WITH RETURNEES

- ◉ Returnees receive an e-mail prior to their return from abroad
- ◉ Returnees encouraged to sign up to be Peer Advisors – give back!
- ◉ Re-entry briefing
- ◉ Reentry discussed in Pre-departure briefings
- ◉ Asked to participate in International Education Day and other IRO events
- ◉ Writing opportunities: articles for Step Out! newsletter, facebook entries, exchange reports, etc

# RETURNEE INVOLVEMENT WITH INCOMING EXCHANGE STUDENTS

By engaging with incoming exchange students, returnees become aware of their own growth while abroad and new ability to relate and assist the incoming students.

- ◉ Welcome Party to meet and befriend incoming exchange students
- ◉ Places reserved for returnees in all Peer Advising events (social, cultural, sporting)
- ◉ Invited to participate in and lead Travel Clinics





# RETURNEE INVOLVEMENT WITH OUTGOING NUS STUDENTS



We have found that returnees relish the opportunity to 'give back' to NUS by advising upcoming batches of outgoing students. This outlet makes them feel their experience is beneficial to others, as well.

- ◉ Conduct Outgoing clinics (region-specific) for NUS Students
- ◉ Assist with Pre-departure briefings for outgoing NUS students
- ◉ Update information & tips on Peer Advising Facebook page that will be helpful of outgoing students
- ◉ Volunteer to be contacted by any student interested in going on exchange

# OBJECTIVES

- 1) **Recognize and value returnees' unique experiences** and encourage them to use skills learned while abroad
- 2) Allow returnees to share their knowledge and experiences with NUS students who are considering study abroad
- 3) Make valuable connections between NUS students and incoming students. Returnees are able to relate to those who come to NUS on exchange
- 4) Provide academic, social and psychological outlets for returning students

# EVALUATION

- ◉ **Re-entry briefing (August 2010)**

- 88% experienced reverse culture shock
- 62% found the briefing somewhat helpful
- 38% found the briefing very helpful

“I really appreciated the Re-Entry Talk at the beginning. It really triggered my thoughts and got me thinking about the things I bluntly ignored in daily life.” Derek Chen, NUS Faculty of Engineering

- ◉ **Welcome party**

“It was a great time yesterday, and we even did an after-party hangout with friends from Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Holland, Germany and Singapore, of course... I think the greatest thing I gained yesterday was to be able to meet people from all over the world.” - Chua Ying Shean, School of Design and Environment

- ◉ **Dragon boat Outing**

“...Dragon Boating is awesome! It's Singaporean but so unconventional. Creative!” - Daphne Tan, Faculty of Arts of Social Sciences (Linguistics)

- ◉ **Mid-semester BBQ**

“I had a great time helping out and meeting new people! It's very interesting to find out how people are having a fun time here on exchange and it kind of feels like reliving moments of my own exchange!” - Andy Chia -Faculty of Science (Math)

- ◉ Direct feedback and suggestions from returnees are taken into account after each of our events. Feedback is gathered via surveys, word of mouth, email and Facebook comments.

# LESSONS LEARNED

- Learning through doing
- Peer Advising and the focus on Returnees will take some time to catch on and become an established, well-known aspect of NUS
- Suggestions and feedback are given serious consideration as we form our semester itineraries and events
- Returnees need more outlets to express their feelings and experiences of SEP
- Need to move entire NUS community away from 'Shoebox Effect'

# PLANS TO IMPROVE

- Refine re-entry briefings to be most effective
- Create 'reunion' times for GO short-term student returnees
- New IRO website to have a section on re-entry and resources for returning students
- Photo contest
- Educating professors and staff on the unique perspective returning students have and can contribute to class discussions etc
- Create stronger links with Counseling & Psychological Services on campus in case of student difficulties with re-entry adjustment





## SUGGESTED FIRST STEPS:

- Make sure returning exchange students are not forgotten! (Even if it is a small gesture such as sending out a welcome back e-mail )
- Take time to meet with returning students, hear about their experiences and what would help them as they reenter their home university life again
- Review information available to better understand what returning exchange students can offer

# THANK YOU!

*Presented by:*

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