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Student leaders take their ideas to the world

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With ambitious afternoon activities that included designing an ideal society and writing a draft constitution, it was no surprise that the University of Sydney's Christine Ernst and Angela Ha returned from a recent leadership conference inspired and ready to change the world.

Christine Ernst, a fifth year student studying Economics and Social Sciences and Law, and Angela Ha, a fifth year student studying Arts/Law, were the University of Sydney's representatives at the recent Undergraduate Summer Program hosted by the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU) at the National University of Singapore.

The theme of the 2009 program "Rising to the challenge - Global Leadership in the 21st century," aims to develop a better understanding of leadership and its approaches to pressing global issues.

Christine and Angela spent the two-week program mixing with fellow young leaders from across Asia and the Pacific, to discuss how student leadership can impact global issues and global change.

"There was a real spread of students from across the Pacific rim but with the large concentration coming from the Asian Universities," said Christine.

"One thing that I found really interesting was that many of the students were not used to questioning or speaking directly to the lecturer, they were very used to a one-way style of teaching and learning, which we weren't accustomed to at all."

The program included seminars, forums and workshops with academic, political and industry leaders from Singapore. There was also a social program, which included tours of Singapore's major attractions such as the National Museum of Singapore and the zoo. It even included lessons in the southeast Asian martial art of Silat.

"The mixture of workshops and social activities helped us get to know people quite well and get a real sense of their culture".

"We met students who already held leadership positions in their own country, students from China who were members of the Communist party, students that led hunger strikes and students that worked out how to remove internet firewalls in their town or country, it was fascinating conversation," said Angela.

Christine and Angela were chosen to attend the program based on an essay competition. Each Dean put forward one student nominee and from that pool, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International) selected the two most talented students to represent the University of Sydney at the program.

€The students were funded by the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (International) with matching support by the students' Faculties.

The aim is to bring undergraduate students from leading universities around the Pacific rim to exchange ideas and experiences and to contribute to better understanding among the diverse cultures of the young people of the Pacific rim.



Angela Ha and Christine Ernst participated in the APRU leadership conference in Singapore.

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