

NYU Sydney Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday October 23rd, 11:00 AM EST

Bobst 1218

Attendees

- Janet Alperstein (Global Programs)
- John Burt (NYU Abu Dhabi)
- Colby Hepner (Global Programs)
- Linda Mills (Global Programs)
- Fred Myers (FAS – Anthropology, Faculty Chair)
- Gbenga Ogedegbe (School of Medicine & Global Programs)
- Malcolm Semple (Site Director)
- Aurora Wallace (Steinhardt – MCC)
- Lamar Sanders (Tisch)
- Nancy Morrison (Global Programs)

Meeting Minutes

The director's report was distributed/reviewed in advance of the meeting; discussion centered on expanding or clarifying elements from that report.

Mal Semple, Site Director, raised for discussion the topic of building a stronger site identity, beyond being a site where students can take lab science courses. The science courses attract sophomores quite well but lags attracting juniors. However, it was noted that courses focused on Australian culture, history, or environmental topics continue to have high enrollment, which led the committee to discuss building out additional courses in these topics as a way to increase enrollment during the fall semesters. Lamar Sanders of Tisch proposed developing more partnerships in Sydney within the film and media fields to attract students majoring in these disciplines.

The meeting closed with a collective consensus that, in order to build stronger bonds within the cohort and build up NYU Sydney's identity as a unique study away site, there needs to be a concerted effort to highlight the uniqueness of Sydney and Australia through the courses that are offered. Some examples included leveraging more unique internship opportunities and expanding connections with local organizations.

NYU Sydney Site Director Report: Fall 2019

1. Curriculum

a. New Developments

A new SPS course exploring Australia's cultural connection to sport, *Sports Media Strategies*, Sports Management majors, was launched this semester. The course offers exceptional access to media in sports across Australia, so we were disappointed that only two students enrolled. Nevertheless, the opening of this course appears to have inspired five students from NYU's Sports Management program to come to Sydney, with four enrolling in our *Internship Seminar and Fieldwork* course. Those placements (all in sports industries) appear to be progressing particularly well. We look forward to growing interest from Sports Management students.

This Fall fifteen students are enrolled in *Internship Seminar and Fieldwork*, more than double the number in any previous Fall semester. Many of these students were attracted to the course by positive reports from former students. We are particularly pleased with the quality of internship placements available to students now, and anticipate further growth in Internship applications.

Two new courses will be offered in Spring 2020: *Management and Organizations* (Stern), and *Cognitive Neuroscience* (Psychology). Both are core courses for majors. Stern students, in particular, have often reported that Sydney's offering of just two core Stern courses can be a deal-breaker if a student has previously taken one of those courses. We are optimistic that this addition of a third Stern core course will encourage more Stern students to consider Sydney.

Sydney continues to attract many students with interests in Global Health, but few are electing to enroll in our Fall offering of *Health and Society in a Global World*. Most of our Global Health students report having taken Health and Society in New York before coming to Sydney. CGPH has under new academic leadership began a review of the curriculum, which previously had not required a sequence for major core courses and which has led to low enrollments in this class at multiple study away sites.

b. Academic Programming and Sydney's Site Identity

NYU Sydney's opening in Fall 2012 coincided with a major shift in NYU's approach to programming at the global sites. Prior to 2012 the model had been for NYU global sites to build local connections to generate much of their academic content. In contrast, Sydney's development was guided from the outset by a New York based faculty advisory committee, which soon gave way to the current site-specific faculty committee and the development of academic pathways. Sydney has benefited greatly from this arrangement, with all of our courses chosen thoughtfully to allow students to study away while still making progress towards their degree.

Without a prior independent history, NYU Sydney's site identity is framed primarily by our course offerings. Since Spring 2013 our site identity has been dominated by pre-health science courses (*Organic Chemistry, General Physics and Principles of Biology*), and by courses that attract heavy enrollment by pre-health science students (e.g., courses in Psychology, CAMS, Core Curriculum, Global Health, etc.). This focus has worked very well for attracting students to Sydney for Spring, but efforts to encourage enrolment in Fall science courses has been less successful. Although our Fall 2019 enrollment of 50 students is our largest so far, this remains significantly lower than our largest Spring enrollment (150 students).

A likely factor affecting NYU Sydney's Fall enrollment is that our Fall courses are not promoted under a compelling umbrella akin to Pre-Health sciences. Sydney's site identity has become so tied to the Spring programming that our Fall offerings may seem less cohesive by comparison. I believe that we should change that narrative to help prospective students understand the potential value of the Fall non-science courses. Australia is an extraordinary stage on which many of the world's most significant issues are in the spotlight: from indigenous rights to multiculturalism, immigration to nationalism, climate change to species extinction, and much more. NYU Sydney's location is the site of the colonial invasion into a continent that is home to the world's oldest culture. Two hundred years later, Australia is coming to terms with all aspects of that story and many of our courses directly engage with this topic. As an island continent, Australia has fascinatingly distinct fauna and flora that are now increasingly endangered by thoughtless introduction of non-native species. The impact of climate change is starkly apparent in the rapid bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef.

Many of our current courses intersect with some of these issues, and a few carefully chosen course additions may be enough to inspire students about the broader possibilities and global relevance of a semester in Australia.

2. Special student programming

For Fall 2019 NYU Sydney introduced a significant new student opportunity: a four-day trip to Uluru, the sandstone monolith rising above the surrounding red dirt near the geographic center of Australia. Uluru is sacred to indigenous Australians and is a place of spiritual, cultural and aesthetic significance for all Australians. Our students had the privilege of visiting several sacred aboriginal sites and dreaming trails. Our faculty instructor and local Anangu people helped students to understand the connection indigenous people have maintained to this location for thousands of years.

Highlights from our trip included a dot-painting workshop, guided walk and bush medicine demonstration with Anangu representatives (<https://maruku.com.au>); sunset and sunrise viewing of Uluru; walking tours of the Valley of the Winds and Walpa Gorge; a tour of the Alice Springs Telegraph Station and Desert Park; a visit to the Araluen Art Gallery; a visit to the NPY Women's Council (<https://www.npywc.org.au/>), and a documentary screening at Watch this Space (<https://www.wts.org.au/>).

Due to Uluru's remote location, a visit can be expensive and difficult. Those very few students from previous cohorts who have reached Uluru lacked the local knowledge necessary to take full advantage of the experience. This first NYU Sydney sponsored trip to Uluru brought 12 students; we hope to expand this offering to many more students as the signature trip for future Fall cohorts.

3. Co-curricular engagement

Most of our courses include at least one field trip. This Fall, for example, Indigenous Art students toured the NSW National Parks Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park to engage with rock art and petroglyphs and learn about historical art practices and contemporary practices of caring for art. Anthropology of Indigenous Australia students participated in an Aboriginal Heritage Tour at the Royal Botanic Gardens—addressing a course component on indigenous relations to the land. Students in The Australian Experience were guided through Kings Cross & Darlinghurst in order to explore the gay past of Sydney, including the significance of Sydney’s gay and lesbian mardi gras, both as an expression of human rights and as an expression of Sydney’s identity.

NYU Sydney also devotes a lot of effort to make Student Life programming support the curricular goals. One major focus is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences that intersect with several courses. Other areas of extra-curricular focus intersecting with course content include Politics and Government; and Multiculturalism and Immigration.

4. Program evaluations

Last semester I noted that although Sydney’s Fall 2018 evaluations were consistent with the positive evaluations that the site has received since opening in 2012, only 26% of the cohort had completed the evaluation. I mentioned during the Spring 2019 meeting that we had embarked on a new effort to encourage more students to contribute evaluations, and I was delighted to learn that 76% of the Spring 2019 cohort submitted evaluations. Overall, despite the much larger participation rate, Sydney’s Spring 2019 evaluations were broadly positive in all measures. Based on comments submitted with the evaluations, together with feedback that we have received in other channels, the one area of concern raised by a handful of students is that our rules concerning attendance are too rigid. Nevertheless, 72 of the 74 Sydney students (97%) who contributed evaluations reported that they would recommend Sydney to a friend.