

# Students defy world fear to study abroad

The terrorist attacks on the USA in September last year, and the subsequent military action in Afghanistan, have had far-reaching effects on many industry sectors worldwide. Initial reports from education institutions throughout the world show that the majority of students are continuing to travel overseas for long-term education courses, although some are choosing alternative destinations to the USA.

Unsurprisingly, the worst affected student markets for many US institutions have been countries in the Middle East. "I have noticed a decline in email enquiries from the Middle East," said Charles Spencer, Assistant Director of Admissions at Cabrini College in Pennsylvania.

"Some parents from the Middle East region withdrew their students for fear of possible future terrorist attacks," said Cecilia Barajas, International Admissions Officer at Eastern Michigan University in the USA.

But interest from many major student provider markets has remained consistent since the attacks. "We have maintained the same level of interest in our institution. The majority of applicants are from India, followed by China and various other countries in those geographic regions," said Barajas.

However, agents around the world have reported that, while their students are still interested in studying abroad, they are more likely to be looking at alternative destinations to the USA. Emin Paksoy, Director of Bil-merk Overseas Education in Turkey, said, "We already observe that demand for other English-speaking countries such as Australia and Canada is getting higher. We don't see many students who are totally cancelling their plans to study abroad. It's just now they think twice when deciding the country they want to go to."

Student movement to the USA may be further restricted by plans to tighten up student visa procedures, after news reports that one of the hijackers entered the country on a student visa and failed to turn up for lessons at an English language centre. An initial proposal by Senator

Dianne Feinstein for a six-month moratorium on issuing student visas has since been abandoned, but proposals to speed up plans for a student tracking system – formally being discussed as a project known as the Student and Exchange Visitor Programme, SEVP (see *Education Travel Magazine*, July 2001, page 16) – look likely to take place.

In a letter to Senator Feinstein, David Ward, President of the American Council of Education – supported by Nafsa: Association of International Educators – backed the full implementation of the SEVP. He also submitted proposals for colleges to take immediate steps to improve the issuance of student visas and the tracking of overseas students in the USA. These steps would require colleges promptly to inform the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) when an I-20 recipient does not actually enrol, or withdraws prematurely, from a programme, and delay the issuance of an I-20 form to students from countries on the State Department watch list – those countries whose governments are suspected of sponsoring terrorism – until after the student has formally accepted admission.

While educators and associations in the USA are providing full support for the implementation of a student tracking system, many also fear that the fee imposed on students to finance the tracking system could be a significant factor in dissuading students from studying in the USA in the future. Marlene Johnson, Executive Director of Nafsa, said, "It remains true that 99.99 per cent of the foreign students enrolled in our institutions wish us no ill. As the administration seeks to define an effective anti-terrorism strategy, we cannot afford to punish the many for the acts of the few."

While student mobility remains relatively unaffected in many areas of the world, the flow of students either to or from countries immediately surrounding Afghanistan is being severely restricted for a number of reasons. Mohammed Qadri, from Qadri International in Pakistan, said, "Most of the High Commissions are closed so there is no way students can get visas. Even those who can afford to go abroad and have valid student visas are reluctant to go because of ethnic riots and discrimination against Muslims."

In the US outgoing student market, Harriet Gershmann, from Academic Counselling Services in the USA, reported that while some study abroad trips to Israel and other Middle Eastern countries had been cancelled, other markets remained unaffected. "Currently the situation is causing some trepidation [among] students but they are a resilient lot and little truly stops them from reaching their goals."



PHOTOGRAPH: LANGUAGES INTERNATIONAL



**Name:** Business School Lausanne  
**Location:** Lausanne, Switzerland  
**Total number of students:** 90  
**Percentage of overseas students:** 85%

Located in the centre of Europe and 35 minutes away from Geneva, Business School Lausanne is the only business school in Europe to be accredited for its BBA and MBA programmes by the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programmes (ACBSP) in the USA.

#### Has the number of overseas students at your school grown in recent years?

Yes it has, due to the fact that our current and former students are actively recommending the school.

#### Which international marketing strategies do you find to be most effective?

Our promotion is based on different elements including [participating in] MBA fairs, [using] agents in different countries [and being listed] on several educational websites. Word of mouth is nevertheless the most effective means to recruit students.

#### How do you ensure a successful working relationship with your agency contacts overseas?

We explain to them exactly what we expect from the

students. So people who [come to] the Business School Lausanne will [therefore] be fully satisfied [and] recommend the school. This is a big help for the agency in recruiting other students in their markets.

#### What percentage of your annual student intake comes through agents?

Currently, a rather small percentage. We would like to increase this percentage because good representatives can help us in selecting students with a higher level [of academic ability].

#### Which student markets are showing the most promise for the future?

We deliberately don't want to concentrate on a restricted number of markets. Currently, we have more than 30 different [student] nationalities at BSL in a total of less than 100 students. So the student body is truly international. We want to keep this balance, because such an international exposure is a big advantage for the students, and extremely few business schools worldwide can compete with us in that field.

# Government scholarships remain unclaimed in Vietnam

The government of Vietnam has enlisted the support of the Vietnamese Education Consultants Association (Vieca) to help it find institutions overseas to provide courses for a potential 400 scholarship students. Since 2000, a total of US\$10 million has been made available in the form of scholarships for Vietnamese students to undertake undergraduate, masters, PhD and doctorate degrees, but, due to a lack of coordination, most of the fund remains unclaimed.

Dao Thi Lien Huong, Vice Chairperson of International

Affairs at Vieca, said, "In 2000 only 40 candidates could get these scholarships and went [overseas]." Huong blames this on a lack of capable candidates who have the necessary English skills to study abroad and the difficulties faced by the candidates in finding suitable institutions by themselves. This year 178 candidates have been shortlisted for the scheme and Huong hopes this will continue to grow.

Priority for scholarships for postgraduate students is given to government officials who are academic researchers, policy

makers and university lecturers, but a number of undergraduate scholarships are also available for students who achieve top marks in university entrance exams.

"Previously, all the best students in Vietnam could get scholarships and went to study in many Eastern block countries. This scheme has been stopped since the collapse of the communist parties in these countries," says Huong. "All academic researchers and lecturers at universities [in Vietnam] need new staff with [up-to-date] knowledge from different sources in the world."

The subject areas covered by the scholarship scheme include information technology, biotechnology, material technology, automation technology and machinery manufacture, petrochemistry technology, energy, sea-construction mechanics, infrastructure, sciences, social sciences and humanities.

In order to make the most of the money available, the association is looking for institutions to provide free language training and reduced tuition fees in return for a fixed number of students.

## Increase in availability of online learning in Asia

Asia is tuning in to the benefits of online learning as a cost-effective way of increasing student access to higher education, as the number of virtual universities in this area continues to grow.

Last year saw the inauguration of the Indonesian Bangkit University Teledukasi and the announcement by the Ministry of Science and Technology in Pakistan that the country's first distance-learning university – to be called the Virtual University – would open in February. Both universities aim

to fill a gap in the IT education sector and encourage more local students to undertake higher education studies.

"The driving factor in the establishment of the Virtual University was the shortage of manpower for the IT sectors in Pakistan," Naveed Malik, the main consultant and spokesperson for the project, told the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. "Conventional universities can't support the demand for the high-tech sector."

The Virtual University in Pakistan will offer undergraduate

courses in computer science and other IT fields, but aims to be able to offer masters programmes within three years.

Reports that students in some countries do not want, or are unable, to travel abroad for overseas study following the terrorist attacks on the USA last year, means that the potential market for on-line learning could be on the increase. "Everyone is [keen to study] information technology in Pakistan," said Nadeem Butt, Managing Director of Foreign Links International in Pakistan. "The

availability of on-line courses in information technology will encourage more students to stay in Pakistan."

However, Hasnain Haider, Director of Ed-tech International in Pakistan, said that for many students the prestige of a foreign degree was a key factor in their decision to study abroad, and this would continue to entice them overseas in the future. "The students are interested in studying abroad because they want to have a foreign degree and finance their studies by working part-time," he said.

## on the move



Helen Simpson became International Marketing Consultant of the export marketing group Cairns International Education Providers (CIEP) in Australia last year. Ms Simpson hopes to take the group from a small dependent industry development cluster to an independent-driven body marketing the benefits of Cairns as a study destination throughout the world.



Kai Peters has been appointed Dean of Rotterdam School of Management in Holland. Previously Director of MBA programmes at Erasmus University of Rotterdam, Mr Peters hopes to continue the development of the RSM as a global leader in business education around the world.



Caron Abramson has recently joined the Hothouse Media team as Sales Executive for *Education Travel Magazine*. Previously a marketing and business development assistant for a design consultancy in London, in her new role, Caron is looking forward to communicating with education institutions throughout the world.



David Pasley has been appointed the first Director of Marketing at Clifton College in Bristol, UK. His role will be to consolidate the school's position as one of the foremost names in independent education. Mr Pasley has a background in management and marketing consultancy and has been the head of leading international advertising agencies.



**Full name:** UKCOSA: The Council for International Education

**Year established:** 1968

**Organisation's main role:** promoting educational mobility and providing support to international students and the professionals who work with them. We work with funders and providers of education to ensure a quality educational experience for international students.

**Government recognition:** yes

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### What is UKCOSA and who are its members?

UKCOSA was founded as a charity to promote the interests and welfare of international students studying in the UK and UK students studying abroad. Its members include all UK universities and most internationally active colleges of further and higher education in the UK, as well as other relevant associations and bodies such as the British Council.

### How does UKCOSA help overseas students who want to study in colleges and universities in the UK?

UKCOSA provides information and advice about the regulations and procedures which affect international students wishing to study in further or higher education in the UK. International students can access a wide range of guidance notes on such topics via our website.

### What kind of support does UKCOSA offer its members?

UKCOSA offers advice, training, information and networking opportunities to our members. We are the

definitive source of advice on regulations, policies and procedures that affect international students in the UK and we lobby and advise government departments and agencies on such legislation.

### What would you say was the association's most important achievement over the past year?

Most of our work is advising and training staff in UK colleges and universities who will be helping international students. In the past year, we have worked closely with those staff and with the newly established Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner to make sure that international student advisers are aware of the new legislation that affects everyone in the UK seeking to give immigration advice.

### What will be the main challenge for UKCOSA in the future?

We would like to expand our research agenda and ask more questions about the experiences of international students in the UK. We want to be sure that students coming to the UK get the best experience they can.

## Singapore university branches out

The National University of Singapore (NUS) is to establish five new overseas campuses by 2005, in an effort to create links with established technological and science hubs in the USA, China and India.

The first campus is due to open in January 2002 in Silicon Valley in the USA, where an initial group of 10 NUS students will participate in one-year internships with technology-based companies while also studying engineering at Stanford University in California.

Further campuses are due to open over the next three years in Shanghai and Shenzhen

in China, Bombay or Bangalore in India and on the east coast of the USA, probably Boston. "Each college will have its distinctive niche and focus," said Shih Choon Fong, President of the NUS. "For example, NUS college in Silicon Valley is focussed on high-tech entrepreneurship combined with academic excellence. Our forthcoming colleges in Shanghai and Shenzhen will focus on business opportunities in manufacturing and services."

The university aims to have 20 per cent of its students studying overseas at any one time, either by attending one of

the overseas campuses or by participating in one of the number of student exchanges already available.

This increasing internationalisation is part of a wider plan to promote Singapore as a hub of learning in the southern hemisphere. "The established knowledge hubs of the world are found in the northern hemisphere – North America, Europe and northeast Asia. We need to create the requisite infrastructure and supporting systems that come up to, and even surpass, international standards for knowledge hubs," says Choon Fong.

## Alphe Asia proves a winner for all

For the first time the Alphe Workshop was held in Phuket, Thailand at the end of last year. Universities, high schools and language schools met with agents from markets as diverse as Bangladesh and Australia.

Feedback from the event was positive, with Alphe Asia being praised for its convivial atmosphere. "Alphe is not very formal, so we can work as friends and hopefully develop long-term partnerships," commented Sophie Liu from Sino-American Education Services in Taiwan.

Le Thi Van Tho, from International Study and Communication in Vietnam, said that visas for some countries were presenting problems for her students, but that Alphe had enabled her to discover new destinations. "[As a result of Alphe], I have decided to focus on five or six destinations from now on, [including] Switzerland, Australia and Malaysia."

Exhibitors also found the event valuable. Marion Moore from Edith Cowan University in Australia reported that she had met with agents from markets they were keen to break into. "There are some new markets that I'm interested in entering so meeting agents from those countries has been useful."

## New marketing brand promotes New Zealand worldwide

A government-backed New Zealand marketing brand was launched last year in order to promote New Zealand as a key study destination for international students worldwide.

The brand was developed by the New Zealand International Education Marketing Network (NZIEM) – a group of government and private organisations – and is part of a strategy to increase the number of overseas students studying in New Zealand and reach foreign

exchange earnings of NZ\$500 million (US\$205 million) in tuition fees by 2005.

The brand provides education institutions in New Zealand with a unified image which will enable them to promote education in New Zealand more effectively. Seven key qualities of New Zealand are promoted in the brand, including the British-based education system, high quality living conditions and outstanding recreational opportunities. The

image is also accompanied by the slogan, "The new world class – educated in New Zealand", and individual profiles of the achievements of international students who previously studied in New Zealand are presented throughout the standard promotional material.

"As well as highlighting what makes New Zealand education different, it is also important to prove conclusively that a New Zealand education can and does lead to the main

desired outcome – international employment and success," said Peter Laurenson, Project Manager at NZIEMN.

Elizabeth Berti, from Castleways Educational Consultancy in Argentina, welcomed news of increased promotion of the opportunities available in New Zealand. "Since the tragic events of September 11 in [the USA], there has been an increased interest in New Zealand. Increased promotion would help a lot," she said.

## agent speak

**Q. How do you think the suicide hijackings of planes in the USA and the subsequent military action in Afghanistan will affect demand for education travel in your market?**

"After the terrorist attacks on the USA we have seen quite a few clients cancelling or postponing their trips and [also] a decrease in the number of enquiries for future travel. Besides that, our currency has been devaluing [against] the American dollar. It is not an easy scenario but we do not think it will continue like this. We believe that, in the forthcoming months, the fear of travelling will be overcome. Some people might choose destinations other than the USA but they will keep on travelling, especially for educational purposes."

**Nathan Manfro, CI – Central de Intercâmbio, Brazil**

"Immediately after the attacks, some clients cancelled or postponed their courses in New York and San Francisco. There is a slowdown in the bookings for other destinations as well. Depending how long the fight against terrorism [goes on for] there will be a slowdown. If the situation calms down, in the long term, the business will be the same as before."

**Jörg Bohnsack, Bohnsack Management & Kommunikationstraining, Germany**

"[The recent] events have already affected our educational market. Some students, who had already been accepted to US universities, refused to go and asked for redirection to more safe and tranquil places – such as New Zealand. The American Embassy in Moscow has again temporarily stopped issuing all kinds of visas. Parents and grandmothers whose kids are already in the USA and the UK call me daily and I try to calm their agitation. In short, it is bad for our market as a whole, while some destinations – such as New Zealand – gain, and get additional students."

**Leon Kashnitski, Director of the University Council, Russia**

"It does affect our market in many ways. People are now thinking about survival, spending money on international education is not their priority. Many people who used to [be able to] afford foreign education are now jobless because of economic problems and they now have limited funds which they want to spend on necessities, not on foreign education."

**Mohammed Qadri, Qadri International, Pakistan**

# Canada promotes education on web

Two new websites were launched last year with the aim of providing international students with more information about studying in Canada. The website, [www.educationcanada.cmec.ca](http://www.educationcanada.cmec.ca), was launched by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) – an organisation comprising the ministers responsible for education in every province or territory in Canada. The website provides information on the education systems in Canada, as well as practical information, distance education opportunities and facts about the country.

Glenn Hagel, Chairperson of CMEC and Saskatchewan's Minister of Post Secondary Education and Skills Training,

said, "It is my hope that [the website] will help potential learners, educators and government officials from every corner of the globe find the education information and opportunities that they seek – and can take advantage of – in every corner of Canada."

Mary MacKay Vilén, from Canada Live agency in Switzerland, said, "I think that Swiss students are increasingly prepared to regard Canada as an attractive alternative to the USA and Great Britain. However, there is still a lot of competition from Australia and New Zealand, particularly in terms of price. For these reasons, I see this as the ideal time for effective promotion [of Canada]."

The CEC Network has also launched a website, specifically directed towards the Thai market. The website, [www.studyincanada-thai.com](http://www.studyincanada-thai.com), provides information in Thai to students interested in studying in Canada. The site is part of a wider campaign by the CEC Network to increase promotional activities in Southeast Asia.

Tusneebul Sukriket, from World Splendour Holidays in Thailand, claimed that the new website was a little complicated. "You have to sign in and the sign-in procedure is very long and [they] want too many details. Sometimes students just want to get to know about [different] methods of studying in Canada, the expenses and scholarships."

So far, figures for the first six months of 2001 show that the number of Canadian student authorisations granted to students in southeast Asia have increased by 8.5 per cent on the same period in the previous year. Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand are showing the biggest increases, with visas issued in Malaysia up by 28 per cent, in Singapore up by 27 per cent and in Thailand up by 18 per cent.

However, Sukriket warned that, while Canada was becoming more popular as a study destination, the terrorist attack on the USA last year had affected student's study choices. "At present students are reluctant to further their education in the USA and Canada."

## next issue

In issue 2 2002, *Subject Focus* will look at film studies in the UK and the USA, as well as agricultural courses in the UK and Australia. *Consultants' Report* will cover the outgoing student market in Russia and *Destination Analysis* will feature colleges and universities in Canada. *Destination* and *Focus* will investigate the experiences of students in Sydney and the US west coast.

## Vice-Chancellors in Australia call on government to promote education

The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) has released a discussion paper calling on the government to put their backing behind strengthening Australia's international education industry – currently the country's eighth largest export earner.

The paper entitled, *Defending an export success story: strengthening Australia's international education industry*, was published in September last

year and warns of the danger of complacency in the face of new competitive challenges from countries vying for a larger market share of students.

AVCC President, Ian Chubb, said, "Australia's universities have made great strides in recent years in developing this very significant export industry. The worst thing we can do would be to sit on our hands and congratulate ourselves

on what a good job we have done. Our competitors are moving vigorously with the support of their governments to try to wrest our share of global education away from us."

The discussion paper calls for an increase in government funding to promote international education from AUS\$13 million (US\$6.5million) to AUS\$35 million (US\$17.6million), stronger government support for student

exchange, the automatic inclusion of work rights in student visas and the removal of the AUS\$30 (US\$15) "student information service fee".

Marianelly Nunez, Director of Travel and Learn in Chile, welcomes the prospect of increased promotion. "I sincerely think that more promotion [of Australia is needed] like [the promotion] that New Zealand and Canada have done in Chile."

## Amendment

In the feature on sports science in the October issue of *Education Travel Magazine* (page 3), we wrongly attributed comments made by Adrian Kerr from Aoraki International College in New Zealand to a Bachelor of Sport programme. The comments are in fact referring to a Diploma in Outdoor Recreation, Leadership and Management programme offered by Aoraki Polytechnic.

## consultant questionnaire



**Name of consultant:** Napaporn Ongwijitwat  
**Position:** General Manager  
**Name of company:** TIE Thai International Education  
**Location:** Pathumthani, Thailand  
**Other branches:** none  
**Number of staff:** 5  
**Average number of students per year:** 50-60

### How did you become an education agent?

Before establishing this company we had extensive knowledge of foreign educational institutions and [their] various application processes. The number of Thai students who wish to continue their education in a foreign country has been steadily increasing. We established TIE to take advantage of the current academic demand in Thailand and to simultaneously help students find foreign educational programmes suitable for them.

### Tell us about your client profile.

We are located near several local universities, such as Rangsit University, Bangkok University and Thammasat University - Rangsit campus. Undergraduate students from these three universities represent the majority of our clients.

### How do you market your services and how have you adapted your marketing techniques in the past three years?

We always attend education fairs and set up booths in

several college/universities to attract potential clients. Apart from that, we advertise ourselves on our website, [www.riannok.com](http://www.riannok.com), by providing free advice to students by email or telephone. The students can also post enquiries on our web [notice board] for our counsellors to answer.

### Do you think the plans to establish Singapore as an international learning hub will have an impact on students' study abroad plans?

Yes, studying in Singapore is going to be popular among high school students. Some parents would like their children to continue their education in Singapore because Chinese and English are the official languages for Singaporeans, which are becoming more important in doing business.

### What do you think will be the future growth areas in the education market?

Group study tours in New Zealand and student exchange programmes in the USA for students aged between 13 and 18 years old.

