

# Successfully bringing international students and Australians together: effective strategies of university community work

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## Abstract:

On the 13th April, 2005, “East-West”, an initiative promoting goodwill and friendship between International Students and Australians was launched at QUT. The event was attended by more than 200 people, 70 of whom were Australian Students, 50 were QUT staff from various units and Faculty departments and more than 80 QUT International Students representing all continents of the world. A few visitors from the community also graced the event.

This paper aims to share the success of the opening function of the said initiative called “East-West”. The basis of the initiative that stems from an understanding and the conscious linking of one on one counselling, support groups and university community work will be described. The steps and practical strategies of coordinating the event will be explored. A proposed calendar of activities following the initiative's launch will be provided. The outcome of some of the activities that have already taken place and a summary feedback from the participants will be reviewed. Reflections on major challenges will be exposed and plans to improve various activities and support systems that correspond to the aims of “East-West” initiative outlined.

## The Basis for “East-West” and Strategic Response

Most International Students wish to experience social interaction with the local Australians. Their fellow students of Australian origin are their immediate contacts although ironically seem most “unreachable” to them. This has been the situation for a very long time now and frequently aired at ISANA meetings both regionally, nationally and internationally.

Expression of the said wish is also evident from one to one encounters with International Students whether the meeting is of a counselling nature, language and learning skills advice or simply a drop in chance looking for answers for some very basic questions.

Reflected in various support groups, forums and seminars including “graduating students workshops” is the suppressed desire and unmet wish of a social encounter with Australians.

There are no secrets to this longing of International Students for a social encounter with Australians, therefore, bring it to your allies' attention what you want to do and why you want to do it. After all, they are the stakeholders who would appreciate being part of bringing up a satisfied clientele group of International Students. Link your findings from what students say in one on one counselling, support groups and other community network gatherings and be responsible to share your general assessment of the subject. Below is an extract of background information attached to the letters sent to the all the Faculty Deans and other key allies. The purpose was to expound the depth and long term roots of the initiative

“East-West” is a response to International Students’ long term aspiration to share a friendly and social interaction with Australians. Ironically it is not uncommon that International Students express their disappointment and feelings of alienation from their local counterparts. International Students who have been vocal about their disappointment come from all levels - that is from first year groups to seniors and graduating students. It would not be surprising if the same people would tell their “sad story” on their return to their home countries. A significant number of International Students who have attended “Graduating Students Workshops” have commented that “they wished they had had some opportunities to mix with Australians”. In the extreme, students would say: “I have no good memories of Australia”. This is a sad story and the staff of ISS (International Student Services) frequently hear this rather “sense of loss” or missed opportunity from International Students. ISS have responded to the various issues of International Students in many different ways over the years. It was high time in 2005 to initiate venues that will somehow link International and Australian Students to some organised events and common goals.”

The said letter proved to be enough to stir interest and support or sympathy. 8 out of 9 Faculty departments responded positively to the launch invitation. Each promised to send a staff representative and committed to circulate the invitation to their students from the 'Deans' list' to whom complimentary tickets were offered. One Faculty even offered to sponsor all its students from the 'Dean's List'. All the other allies also responded 100% positively and indicated intention to participate.

### **The Steps and Practical Suggestions:**

1. *Being clear with your goals and aims.* In this case, the main goal was to respond to International Students' wish to experience social interaction with local Australians. One of the more important aims therefore was to create and explore all feasible avenues of interaction and interest to both International Students and Australians.
2. *Giving your initiative a name that catches stakeholders' attention.* In this case, the initiative was named "East-West". In the author's experience, names with "international" in it seem to be intimidating to the local students and in the past may have discouraged them from participating in the many initiatives of International Student Services at QUT. A support group called "AusInc" (Australian –International Conversation) that the author initiated in 2002 for example attracted very few Australian students. Feedback from NESB (non English Speaking Background) Australians indicates reluctance to join events with "international" in its name because of a misunderstanding that the event is only for International Students. The "East-West" name proved to work in this case in bringing together International Students and Australians.
3. *Identifying or seeking your allies.* International Students themselves are number one allies in this initiative because it is their interest that is being addressed. However, it is helpful to look at the big picture of internationalisation, globalisation and multiculturalism because it brings initiatives into perspective. The process of identifying and seeking allies then not only becomes more efficient, it also encourages confidence and sense of assurance for the organisers and its principal target groups (i.e. International Students). In this case, the university and its players are your most immediate allies in launching the initiative.
4. *Inviting or cajoling your performers and speakers:* Your closest colleagues may be your best and most willing performers. Ask around your office or colleagues within your department. In the case of "East-West", the launch was presented by QUT students and staff. At least five from International Student Services staff including students on placement shared their artistic talents such as playing didgeridoo, Chinese bamboo flute, mandolin, solo singing and group yoga-dance. Also, the talents within your unit may be able to invite friends to perform with them. In this case, one Accommodation Officer invited his musician friends from the Aboriginal community. Also one Language Skills Adviser invited his musician friend with whom he plays Irish music with. The presence of these people from the community was most warmly appreciated by QUT folks. The community guests' presence and willingness to share their time, talent and support inspired depth in the affair and brought connectedness to people.

One very thoughtful counsellor from Counselling Services delivered a heart-warming poem she composed particularly for the event and of same title, "East-West". (a copy of the poem may be requested from the author of this paper) Typing the said poem and putting it in Powerpoint format was of course delivered by the Counselling Services Administrative Staff. The organisers were aware that behind the scenes people like the administrative staff care for and support the event and they too were cajoled to come along and share the community spirit the event aimed to nurture.

5. *Finding and Training Volunteers :* In this case, a series of advertisements through ISS News (International Students Services electronic ad ) was sent to all International Students. The ad entitled "Wanted, East-West Volunteers" and "Improve your Portfolio" captured the interest of a good number of International Students. A similar ad was sent to various interest groups at QUT including Q-Step (local students on special entry to the university). The organisers also set up a booth during QUT's market days at all campuses. Flyers were distributed and put up on display boards. One very precious Australian student volunteer was enough to bring a good number of Australian friends and friends of friends. This very committed Australian volunteer was also the "East-West" first

realisation of its title and aims. That is, International Students and Local Australians pursuing one project voluntarily.

All the volunteers were asked to complete an application form and indicate their volunteer areas of interest. However, all volunteers were requested to do a common job and that was to promote the event in whatever capacity they could manage. Flyers were made available for them to collect at ISS Office of their own accord.

Meeting with volunteers interested in promotions seemed most urgent. There were only four volunteers in this category but indeed they gathered their own volunteers and produced a very fine poster of their original and creative making.

As the event drew closer, the event organiser met with volunteers who were to perform more critical roles such as masters of ceremonies, social interaction facilitators (Please refer to appendix for social interaction prompt used in the event) and documentors (i.e. photographers and video camera recorders).

6. *Confirming the venue and catering requirements:* In this case, the event's coordinator suspected that the numbers might grow hence requested a venue arrangement that would be suitable in the event of a "full house". For example, minimum chairs were ordered to give more space for people. Catering was ordered for 150 people despite a less than 130 expected attendance two days before the event. Appropriate catering for varied dietary requirements was necessary.

7. *Promoting the Event:* There were various stages to the promotion of the event. The orientation in February 2005 was the first mass promotion when leaflets were distributed and announcements made to students attending the orientation. Flyers were also given to groups of new students both International and Local touring the campus and passing by the auditorium where the orientation was being held.

Other levels of promotion unfolded quite automatically and included:

- Sending the ad to ISS News, an electronic news which is received by all International Students.
- Sending an invitation to all the allies as indicated above
- Displaying posters at strategic places on three QUT campuses
- Distributing Invitations via the ISS Office and via the volunteers
- Organising stalls and display ads at the Student Guild's Market days at all campuses. Also performing Yoga- dance at those market days was a very visible and effective way of promoting the event and "making a statement" (i.e. "east-west" being inclusive) of what it was about.
- Sending the ad to QUT Home page under "special events"
- Mounting a collage of coloured pictures and posters on a foldable display board and exhibiting this board outside ISS Office. The pictures in this case involved both individual artistic performer (such as playing drums or didgeridoo) and group interaction activities (such as "people from cross-cultures on the round" seemingly playing a game of some sort). This makes a very eye-catching piece, every passer-by would take a curious peek at it.
- The rest is about word of mouth from all those keen to support and help.

8. *Selling tickets and giving complimentary passes:* The tickets were centralised at ISS reception although an alternative booking was accepted through sending the event's coordinator an e-mail. Complimentary tickets were in a form of invitation sent to key allies for distribution. The volunteers most of all became most prolific in rewarding complimentary tickets. This has been particularly central to honing their networking skills for both International Students and Australians

9. *Designing the program :* A pictorial of volunteers was set at the event venue's entrance. The plan was to use the photo for the program cover of a small greeting card size. The photo session itself was pretty straightforward. What was more challenging was to get a common time for all the people. The group had to proceed despite the fact that only a small number of volunteers could make it to the pictorials given the event is getting closer. Once the photo was taken, the printing of the program cover was simply left to the professional services. However the program had to be done on a separate occasion almost last minute, because of changes to performers' commitment at late notice. In this case, the performers were fully consulted of the event's order because of their professional, academic and other personal commitments. (Please refer to the appendix for a copy of "East-West" 2 hour launch program.)

10. *Run through the event with volunteers:* E-mails and phone calls were the most frequent form of communication with volunteers. It was important that the key players on the day like the MC's (Master of Ceremonies) and the social interaction facilitators knew what was to happen in chronological order. These key volunteers have also been responsible in plotting the program sequence and this helped them feel confident to assist on the day of the event despite there not having been any rehearsals held at the venue.

11. *Letting the event happen and savouring success.* The event coordinator and the volunteers needed to be watchful of the requirements of individual performers, audience, guests and volunteers-organisers including the catering services. But it was most satisfying for them to actually savour the success of the event by simply watching the program and being entertained just like everyone else. Of course this was not an easy dual role but not impossible. The event coordinator and the volunteers in this case enjoyed the performances as much as everybody else did.

12. *Seeking participants' feedback:* A mini feedback form was devised to help support in writing the obvious "good feel" of the event. It was also meant to seek people's suggestions to improve any future events of same nature. There were only three questions asked in this open ended feedback form. They are: 1. What did you enjoy most about this event today? 2. What good things can you think about this event today? and 3. What can you suggest for improvement?

Observing the crowd is also one practical way of gaining a feel of how the participants enjoyed the event. A casual quick chat with people during the lunch break and whenever possible is another way as it is in this spontaneous conversation that people express their thoughts based on their experience of the event. The volunteers are one of the most wholesome feedback gatherers. As people bid goodbye, note what they say and their expressions as well because non verbal signals are a great way of sensing feedback of contentment, confusion or otherwise.

13. *Sending thank you messages to all involved:* It is important to convey appreciation to all those who participated in the event. In this case, an electronic message was most efficient to reach the 200 or so people who attended. A special gesture of thank you to the performers and volunteers on this occasion was sending each a print out if not an e-mail of their good photos

A simple reply to your "thank you" email can provide rich qualitative information on the success of the events which will add to the form of follow up events..

14. *Congratulating the volunteers:* A prompt congratulations to the volunteers is essential. Once again in this case, e-mail is most efficient. Although the event itself was a celebration given the volunteers were given free passes and their friends and guests were invited and offered complimentary tickets, a separate celebration is expected. Straight after the event, one of the MC's

offered to organize a get together lunch for all the volunteers. It was not easy to gather everyone but it was a splendid effort for those who managed to come along. The capability of volunteers to organize their own gathering it seems, is a reflection of their group cohesion and sense of belonging that developed during their volunteer work.

15. *Other post event tasks* : Organising documentaries such as printing films, putting pictures in albums for display, installing still pictures in computer and sending people copies for appreciation are just a few. Preparing for the activities that were promised in the launch is also one of the many mini tasks that needed coordination with ISS staff in charge of the various incoming activities. Once again, those volunteers that were still available were called upon to help.

### **Proposed “East-West” Program of Activities**

A tentative calendar of “East-West” activities was made available during the launch. Conversation with stakeholders revealed that one of the things that attracted them to attend the “East-West” launch was the promise of all the interesting activities in store for 2005. (Please refer to the appendix of this paper for a copy of proposed calendar of “East-West” activities).

Although not all the activities were followed according to the proposed dates, most of the activities that materialized exceeded expectations. The coordinators for “ Chinese Business Culture” seminar for example initially aimed for 15 to 30 participants and amazingly ended up filling the venue capacity of 80 people. The support provided by the head of ISS provided to this event’s coordinator and volunteers had practical implications to the overall success of the event. The head of ISS utilized his community network and invited two additional speakers for the event whose differing presentations impressed and stimulated cross-culturally diverse perspectives. The audience and participants were accordingly delighted and appreciative of the practical learning tips they gathered from the speakers' stories.

### **Summary feedback of participants**

A unanimous joy and excitement was written all over the expressions of all the participants of the “East-West” launch. In this section, the author of this paper wishes to share some of the verbatim feedback of participants of the said event. ( A more comprehensive summary of participants’ feedback may be requested from the author of this paper via e-mail: [mv.mccarthy@qut.edu.au](mailto:mv.mccarthy@qut.edu.au) )

- “How warm and welcoming and special the occasion was, particularly enjoyed different brief stories of their time here, the Aboriginal acts as well as other cultural acts.”
- “I liked the mixing game and was wondering if I could have a copy of the sheet we were given as I thought we may be able to modify it for our Study Abroad and Exchange Students.”
- “That was a great triumph for internationalisation, for QUT, for ISS, for all those wonderful volunteers and of course for you;” (referring to the event's coordinator).

### **Managing Challenges**

1. *Persisting for the most appropriate venue*: If it's important for the students and you believe the issue is so great for them, aim for the most appropriate venue that will match their wishes or expectations. The venue preparation reflects how the organisers see the goals they wish to advance.

The event coordinator took the risk of booking “an ideal spacious venue” despite the uncertainty of support. Doubts were raised and particularly that the local Australians may not be attracted or easily encouraged to attend. However when the bookings started to rise, confidence mounted. Effective promotion had helped tremendously in attracting bookings for the event which consequently gave some very positive hope for a good attendance ratio of the target groups.

2. *Seeking the manager's support and rallying immediate colleagues to help*: It is most important that the event is owned by the organisation and not by a single individual otherwise,

fellow staff members may not respond to your e-mails or may be reluctant to commit. Understanding their position and the workload they try to reconcile helps you to hold on tight to an endearing patience. No matter how directive or persuasive the style of allocating each fellow ISS staff members an event to lead, the invitation tone was earnestly caring, offering assurance of support and most of all implying confidence to each person's leadership particular to the event requested of them to lead. However, respecting people's lack of interest, reluctance or resistance may well be a good thing because it gives an initiative the "benefit of doubt" and therefore greater attention to details or aspects that require strengthening or development and can only benefit in the end.

3. *Funding:* There was no definite funding allocated for this initiative when it started. However, it was not simply out of luck that some money came in as confidence for the numbers of prospective International Students and guests built up. The main sponsor on this occasion that the head of ISS was able to rally has a business interest in supporting and delighting International Students as they are their medical health cover customer and clientele group. Promoting the event effectively has been an excellent strategy in building up target groups' interest and convincing sponsors for support. The head of ISS in this instance has established networks with the prospective sponsor and was the lead navigator who took an efficient route to win funding support for this event. Hence, support by key people (i.e. the head of ISS) inside ISS empowered the initiative to gain impetus and recognition.

4. *Managing low level of interest or lack of support from perceived key allies:* When one key ally whom you thought would support the aims of your event seems cynical or lacking interest, end your disappointment by quietly and yet assertively seeking another person from the same unit who may have the energy and openness to the cause you are hoping to deliver. This perspective and strategy has worked very well in this case.

5. *Managing Volunteers:* Not all volunteers will work hard. A few who will work hard need no urging. Whatever level of commitment each volunteer offers, they all deserve to be acknowledged and appreciated. E-mails and phone calls are the most efficient forms of maintaining communication with volunteers. Follow up "face to face" meetings with volunteers is manageable in small numbers or one on one. In this case, the volunteers had been confided the liberty to meet on their own as they wish. They were also encouraged to be daring with their schemes in promoting the event or any other inventiveness they felt would support the aims of the event. Managing student volunteers is also about gently checking that they are managing their studies amidst the volunteer work. Inviting volunteers for tea, lunch meetings in groups or one on one are nice gestures that make everyone feel comfortable and enjoy working together. In this instance, it did not have to be expensive lunch meetings for volunteers to feel cared for and valued. For "East-west", some volunteers even offered to bring a small dish and dessert to share during a couple of scheduled meetings.

One very striking strategy that worked well in this experience was letting the volunteers echo the managerial voice that should have come from the event coordinator herself. Some volunteers for example pointed out that there were not enough publicity posters and the event was less than a week away. One volunteer also suggested to cater for maximum numbers in the event of last minute and 'on the day' booking. Examples are numerous. What worked effectively in this case was allowing volunteers to explore their own leadership qualities and unique individual approaches in helping.

6. *Managing Time and Priorities :* Do what is most urgent and what is most important and remember that timing also counts. This principle had been quite ironical and very challenging in various ways. Promoting the event for example during orientation was timely but almost no staff could be bothered to support this undertaking because as much as they saw the event's promotion as timely and important; they were also obviously preoccupied by the "heat" and urgency of orientation duties. Time management was extremely challenging in this case as the event coordinator was a novice and had always been a creative contributor rather than a planner or coordinator. What could have saved the time chaos would have been an organized delegation of tasks and this should have happened at planning meetings of ISS. This could have prevented the critical responsibilities falling on the hands of an inexperienced event coordinator.

7. *Catering Requirements of a cross-cultural group:* The “East-West” event is no different from most cross-cultural gatherings and careful consideration of the dietary requirements of the participants is a high priority. On this occasion, the catering service was requested to prepare for meat lovers, vegetarian, vegan and halal food. There was a balance of catering for rice and bread diets. Good business is perhaps being negotiable. The catering service in this case was willing to give a good discount on the total cost of food and beverages. It pays to reveal to the caterers some of the dynamics and altruistic qualities of the event and perhaps they will allow some genuine kindness in the business. It is a fact that the 200 or so guests who presented for lunch managed to get something to eat despite the catering order being only for 150 people. The catering manager in this case quietly added some nice sandwiches from the kitchen without charging extra.

8. *Actual Event Shuffle:* There were a few on the spot variations to the program. Two main critical ones that may be beneficial to mention were: 1.) a community representative to deliver Australian bush songs did not turn up because of family emergency crisis and 2.) one of the main speakers who was present at the event and actually volunteered through and through until on the event day decided to pull back from her speech about her journey as an Exchange student in one of the European countries. This student volunteer believed that her story needed to be expressed another time at a more appropriate venue. She noted that her story did not fit the happy mood of the event. She added that unlike the first male speaker, she could not toss humour into her painful experiences as a young sojourner. Her decision to withdraw from speaking was simply honoured without questions.

The event coordinator and stage managers needed to prompt the MC’s for any quick changes required due to the absence of a speaker or performer but the rest of the ball game was theirs to play and deliver. Encouraging spontaneity of the MC’s also helped in handling changes to the program.

9. *Getting feedback from the event participants and volunteers:* It was not an easy job getting all the forms back as many of the audience were either rushing back to their commitments straight after the 2 hour program or had to leave at the middle of the program. Despite this complication, 70 forms were returned the same day and the feedback generally conveyed a very positive experience of the event. ( Further details of participants' feedback may be requested from the author of this paper, via e-mail on [mv.mccarthy@qut.edu.au](mailto:mv.mccarthy@qut.edu.au))

10. *Post Event Toil:* There were four main aspects of post launch responsibilities:

- Thanking all the participants, volunteers and supporters
- Gathering feedback through e-mails as well as collating the data from evaluation forms completed by the participants on the event day. Summarising this information and relaying the outcome to ISS staff and the Student Support Services.
- Replying to the participants’ e-mails of praise which kept the network momentum going
- Following up and implementing proposed “East-West” events as promised at the launch.

### **Post Launch: Actualising Plans Successfully**

As indicated previously, the most well attended of the activities was an on campus seminar called “Chinese Business Culture” which was attended by 80 people (students and staff from cross- sections at QUT). The head of ISS and two International Student Advisers coordinated this event which was graced by speakers from reputable businesses in the community. Many participants gave many positive feedback of the occasion including the brevity, professionalism and the cross-cultural richness the speakers demonstrated.

Other on campus activities that were actualized include: bamboo flute workshop, pot luck lunch at the ISS courtyard, a series of yoga and dance lessons (such as folk dances from the Philippines, Middle East and Latin America), a “music lovers” meeting and presentation of a mini play (depicting a typical settlement

adjustment of an International Student) at QUT's "Multicultural Fiesta". All of these encouraged interaction between International Students and Australians and the aims of "East-West" appear to be slowly and successfully being met.

Both the "Music Lovers Group" and the Theatre Group" were not included in the proposed "East-West" activities. They sprang out of the "East-West" launch ideas of performing groups. To date, there are more than 30 people (students and staff) who expressed interest in joining the "Music Lovers" Group" while more than 10 students are currently actively involved in the "Theatre Group". These groups have been excellent venue for recognizing musical and artistic talents of both students and staff at QUT. One student commented that she did not need to attend a "Self Confidence Workshop" because she is learning a lot of it already by just participating in the "Theatre Group". These groups are also excellent ways to mix International Students and Australians. There are more than 10 Australians interested in pursuing the "Music Group" and there are 5 Australians who expressed interest in the "Theatre Group". There is also a mix of cultural background from the International Students side which is exactly what "East-West" intends to encourage.

Not all activities planned have been implemented, however sustained "high spirits" insured that a number of "East-West" activities that have been actualised have been successful. Perhaps because of this, there seems to be some "excitement in the air" and "forward looking attitude". People are expressing "what's next?" People seems curious and keen to hear about up coming activities as well as the goodwill, friendship and cultural interaction that these activities offer.

The "Chinese Business Culture" seminar was so successful it has stirred interest in follow up seminar on "Indian Business Culture". This is another exciting avenue for cross-cultural understanding, giving cultural specific representatives a chance to be at the center stage and a great event for those genuinely interested in gaining insight into the Indian perspectives. Assuming an optimistic stance, friendly initiatives like this can have a cumulative effect and may well contribute to long term practical solutions to international order.

People seem to bounce ideas off one another and share their own interest. The coordinator of "East-West" launch and the author of this paper actively notes down conversation regarding "East-West" subjects and based on this, a gathering of students in a forum and celebration of their faith seems of interest. A couple of ISS staff members have expressed willingness to lead this event. It may well be timely that students share how their faith inspires them with hope in this time of world atrocities and international trauma. It may also be exemplary that students share how their faith serves as their practical tool in surviving university life and the challenge of diversity they face in everyday interaction.

Overall, on campus activities reflecting "East-West" aims of goodwill and friendship, appreciation of diversity and internationalization seem slowly but surely showing positive and practical outcomes.

Off campus activities are also picking up and gaining support. There were three off campus activities which have shown positive beginnings; they were sailing with the local club, picnic lunch at the park and singing with the local church choir. All these activities served as "habit forming" strategies to open the doors for International Students to realise their wishes to integrate with the local Australians.

There is also a growing interest in pursuing an interaction between International Students and the community through a lunch gathering. To date, the activity is named "Aussie Lunch" and one or two International Students will be invited to a lunch or tea by an Australian family. From the survey list that is being circulated, the number of interested students is enough to pilot the initiative. The next step though is to promote the event to the community.

Activities are expected to continue until December, 2005 and will be reviewed during the ISS planning day sometime in November, 2005. At the time of writing this paper, the Office of the Director of Student Support Services at QUT has included in their "new framework" for 2006 Commencement Service the liaison with and participation of "East-West" organisers and student volunteers. "East-West's aims of goodwill and friendship is also suggested for the new framework as the new theme for 2006 "Commencement Celebration" at QUT.



Based on the said successes in 2005 and the ‘promise’ of “East-West” in 2006, it is most appropriate to endeavour to establish “East-West Centres” at all the three campuses at QUT.

### **A future for “East-West”? Outline of Plans**

1. Ensure an appropriate budget before the activities commence. Funding may be sought through Equity or other grants sources. The same funding organization that was generous in 2005 may be approached for assistance again. The “QUT Management Body” may be willing to support.
2. Plan ahead and advertise the calendar of east-west activities through “Inside QUT” or through “Special Events” at QUT’s homepage and other newsletters on campus or out in the community. Send photos to accompany the ads for greater attraction and promotion.
3. Link with other cultural diversity initiatives like the Student Guild’s “Multi-Cultural Fiesta” and other projects supported by the Equity Office.
4. Devise or encourage greater community participation.
5. Explore further innovative activities for the “East-West” Program both on campus and out in the community. Perhaps coordinate with the “Study Abroad and Exchange Students Program”, “Brisnet” and “Q-Step” students because they have been interested and actively involved in the pioneering “East-West” activities.
6. Follow through with grant submission request to establish “East-West” centres on all three QUT campuses be established.
7. Designate activity officers and committees responsible for organising “East-West” events.
8. Consider inter-university meetings and invitation to joint “East-West” events.
9. Redesign a more organised activity plan and improve the evaluation format.
10. Review and improve the program and system for training volunteers.
11. Celebrate with volunteers immediately after each event. Have a set date on the calendar planner. Award certificates of participation or testimonials on that day. “Special awards” may be presented for volunteers’ exemplary performance.
12. Explore areas of research that might help improve the initiative and its role in promoting a culturally tolerant and friendly population.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The “East-west” activities described in this paper reflect friendly and very practical solutions to the socio-cultural aspects of internationalisation. “East-west” seems to be a popular name that everyone can easily recognize and accept without qualms or much confusion. Looking at the experience from this initiative called “East-West” at Queensland University of Technology, the forging of internationalization may well be a process that comes from the basic values of “goodwill and friendship” that are sometimes forgotten amidst highbrow academic discourse that inevitably jades people’s authentic self and sense of community locally and internationally. It seems that at the conclusion of this paper it appropriate to challenge readers and anybody identifying themselves as vanguards or supporters of internationalisation to return to basics and revisit how the fundamentals become strategies of any given task; practical or visionary.

The “East-West” launch may appear as merely a feast of food and entertainment to some people. For those who were there for the whole two hour function, the launch was clearly not just about International

Students. Nor it is a one off event. Most off all, it is not a means neither an end in itself. Instead, “East-West” is a process of practical solutions bridging social distance between people and cultures.

“East-West” is about celebrating diversity. It is a venue for acknowledging artistic skills, self expression and cultural confidence. It is about listening to stories of sojourners both International and Local students who have been overseas as students. It is about both students and staff on an equal footing, sharing a good break in style and on campus. It is about instigating a new habit of cross- cultural attendance and being comfortable with it. It is about announcing a series of events thereafter that are all geared towards a sense of community, goodwill and friendship. It is an invitation to all to participate regardless of race, cultural origin, religious conviction, political beliefs, gender, age or professional orientation.

“East-West” is all of the above and perhaps more . But for it's coordinator, “East-West” was a beginning of International Students' dream coming true, whether they have expressed it in one on one counselling, support groups or any other university network gathering.

Based on the successful implementation of a series of activities following the “East-West” launch, the promise for continuing strategic activities promoting social interaction between International Students and Australians appears to be evident. It is most appropriate therefore to inform the “Management Body of QUT” of the outcome of “East-West” and the promise of future undertakings because it is not only practical, it is also responsible.

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Felix Tan who arranged for an International Student Club representative to speak of their cultural experiences at the “East-West” launch. Felix Tan is the 2005 International Student Director at QUT Student Guild

All the community volunteers and speakers.

All the community clubs and sponsors.

Merlo Kitchen for catering the lunch for more than the expected guests and generously offered a special discount to the “East-West” event.

All those who sent apologies and those who intended to participate but were inundated by their other commitments. May the next event be better timing for them.

## Appendix 1 Program for “East West” launch

Date: 13 April, 2005 Wednesday, 12-2pm,  
Venue: Gardens Theatre Foyer, Gardens Point Campus, QUT

“East-West” is an initiative of QUT International Student Services (also known as ISS). “East-West” is organized by ISS staff and students and community volunteers.

### Master of Ceremonies: Sandeep Johal and Nadia Zainuddin

#### Programme

- 12 noon Registration and fun Workshops for Early Birds
- 12:10 Multi-cultural Prayer lead by Father Clarke and student volunteers  
Eastern/Western Tunes by Josey Jou and Martin Reese
- 12:15 Honouring Aboriginal Heritage  
Didgeridoo Music by Nazrin Rashid and Friends from the Aboriginal Community
- 12:20 Welcome Address by Graeme Baguley, head of ISS
- 12:25 Warming up with Conga Beats by Nazrin Rashid
- 12:30 ‘Get to Know You’: Social Interaction  
Facilitated by student volunteers: Megha Gupta and Kwai Yee Ng
- 12:40 Dance and Music:  
Hip Hop by Joseph and dance group called “Flavour out of Control”  
Tango by Callum Dodd and Friend  
Irish Music by Martin Reese and Friend
- 1 pm Lunch whilst appreciating “East-West”:  
1. Poetry by Dr. Elizabeth Tindle  
2. Cross-Cultural Stories of “East-West” Journeys interspersed with songs and yoga dance  
Story1. journey in Sweden by James Norris  
Australian guitar/songs by Paul Allen  
Story 2. being an international student in Australia by Tine Nilssen from Norway  
Yoga demonstration by Maria’s yoga class  
Story 3. journey in Germany by Anna Crossin  
Chinese song/music by Jolie  
Saxophone Tunes by Justin Chaudoin
- 2 pm Farewell. Mini Workshops: Israeli Dance, Music & Forum for those who would like to stay around for another half an hour

## Appendix 2: “East-West” Launch Social Interaction : Get to know someone

Write your preferred name\_\_\_\_\_

Your nationality\_\_\_\_\_

Meeting someone and making conversation is nice. This exercise won’t give you much chance to have a long conversation but it’s a good start. **In my 5 minutes or less, find someone whose/who ..... and write his/her name on the space provided**

1. next to you \_\_\_\_\_
2. from Australia \_\_\_\_\_
3. from Asia \_\_\_\_\_
4. from Europe \_\_\_\_\_
5. from Middle East \_\_\_\_\_
6. from Africa \_\_\_\_\_
7. from USA \_\_\_\_\_
8. from South and Latin America \_\_\_\_\_
9. birthday is this month April \_\_\_\_\_
10. reminds you of someone \_\_\_\_\_
11. seems most similar to you (in your own terms) \_\_\_\_\_
12. seems most dissimilar to you (in your own terms) \_\_\_\_\_
13. find anybody you have not talked with and ask that person what brings them here today. \_\_\_\_\_

Please submit this paper to the facilitators. You might win something later.

Thank you for your participation. Hope you find this brief interaction friendly and entertaining.

“East-West” organizer, 13 April, 2005

## Appendix 3: Table of Proposed “East-West” Calendar of Activities

Table 3.1 “East-West” Weekday Workshops and Seminars

Proposed Activity	Suggested Contact	Proposed Venue
Calligraphy Lessons	Josey Jou	Beazley room, GP Campus
Ways to Academic Success	Kaye Toth and Peter Gathbonton	Beazley Room
Yoga/Aromatherapy	Maria McCarthy	Beazley Room
Weight Management	Cora Doody	Beazley Room
Self Confidence through Drama	Maria McCarthy	Beazley Room
Islamic Perspective	Graeme Baguley	TBA
Learning A Foreign Language	International Student Volunteers	TBA
European Culture	Lynda Lawson Alina Sarosiek	TBA
Groups Skills	Regine Ip Maria McCarthy	TBA
On Having Children	Alina Sarosiek	TBA
Working Overseas and Across Cultures	Peter Nelson	TBA

Table 3.2 “East-West” Weekday Special Events

Date	Event	Contact	Venue
April 27 Wednesday	Bamboo Flute Workshop	Josey Jou	Y Block courtyard
August 24 Wednesday	Vegetarian Lunch	Maria, Zarina and Cora	Y Block courtyard
Ocotber TBA	Simply Nutritious Cooking	Wendy Brown	KG Campus
November 15 Tuesday	“New Friends Day”	Lio Lay Helen Whittle	GP Campus
December 8 Tuesday	“Melting Pot”	Lio Lay	Y Block courtyard
December, TBA	Conga and Didgeridoo Appreciation	Nazrin Rashid	Y-Block courtyard
December, TBA	Irish Music Appreciation	Martin Reese	TBA
December, TBA	Halal Food Lunch	Zarina Shahban	TBA
December TBA	Aerobic-jazz dance	Tal Drori	TBA
December, TBA	“The Aussie Way”, ballads and aboriginal music	Lio, Nazrin and Maria	TBA

Table 3.3 “East-West” Weekend Events in the Community

Date	Event	Organisers/Contact	Venue
June 4 Saturday	“Great Australian Breakfast”	ISS Staff	Mowbray Park
May 15 Sunday	“Sailing for Fun”	Brisbane Sailing Squadron	Brisbane River
Between June to December, TBA	Dinner with suburban family	Wendy Brown	Brisbane family friends
All year every second weekends	Australian-Filipino Church Choir	Adela White, Evelyn and Mal Thompson	St. Peter's and Paul's Catholic Church