

New Colombo Plan produces new crop of Indonesia-literate Australian agriculture graduates

PERTH – 22 December 2016. A national program has been launched to encourage Australian agriculture students to spend a semester of their undergraduate studies in Indonesia. Spearheaded by the Australian Consortium for 'In-Country' Indonesian Studies (known as ACICIS), this year undergraduate students from the University of Western Australia, La Trobe University, and Western Sydney University have enrolled alongside their Indonesian peers at Bogor Agricultural University (IPB) in Bogor, West Java.

The ACICIS Agriculture Semester Program (or 'ASP') is the first national program of its kind: a semester-long program in Indonesia available to Australian undergraduate students of science and agriculture. The program allows students to take subjects— taught in English – alongside Indonesian students in areas of agribusiness, food technology, plant protection, conservation, forestry, and environmental science for academic credit towards an Australian undergraduate degree.

With Australian agricultural exports to Indonesia totalling nearly \$2 billion in 2015, an expanding Indonesian consumer-class increasingly hungry for Australian agricultural products, and collaborative research between the two countries on the rise, agriculture is set to remain a key component of the Australia-Indonesia bilateral relationship. As near neighbours and the two largest regional economies, Australia and Indonesia each stand to play a vital role in ensuring food security and environmental conservation in the Indo-Pacific in the twenty-first century.

Current program participant and La Trobe University agricultural science student, Rose Samson, explained that she was keen to combine her two passions. "I visited Indonesia last year and completely connected to the place. I've focused my studies around food security and hope to work in this field after my studies, in Indonesia."

Ellen Watson, a conservation biology student from The University of Western Australia, applied "to learn more about conservation from an international perspective and in a rapidly developing country – like Indonesia – where I think conservation will play an important role in the future."

Besides their formal university studies in Indonesia, students also have the opportunity to intern at a variety of Indonesian and international agribusiness and food technology companies, government agencies, and non-government research institutes. Students gain practical, first-hand knowledge of, and unparalleled access to, the agriculture sector of Australia's nearest Asian neighbour.

ACICIS' Resident Director, Elena Williams, is pleased to see the current cohort of students blossoming in their new context. "It's fantastic to see Australian students studying agriculture in Indonesia", Ms Williams said. "It can't help but set the stage for a new generation of Indonesia-literate Australian agriculturalists, and this can only be a boon for the Australian industry", Ms Williams added. "The connections students make on their semester and during their internship will give them the experience, institutional knowledge, as well as the network of personal contacts in Indonesia that will be vital for building closer agricultural links between Australia and Indonesia."

The Australian Consortium for In-Country Indonesian Studies known as ACICIS (pronounced "ah-chee-chis" as an Indonesian would) has been opening doors to tertiary institutions throughout Indonesia since 1994, offering a range of study options and in-country support to help students gain invaluable first-hand experience of one of the richest and most diverse countries in the world.

ACICIS Study Indonesia

Media release



Students participating in the program do so with financial assistance from the Australian Government's New Colombo Plan – a Commonwealth initiative which aims to lift knowledge of the Indo-Pacific among Australian undergraduates. ACICIS has secured over \$400,000 in New Colombo Plan funding to support 68 students from across the consortium's 24 Australian member universities to study in agriculture in Bogor between 2016 and 2019.

ACICIS Consortium Director, Professor David Hill AM, remarked that "There has never been better time – from the perspective of the financial assistance available – for Australian agriculture students to head up to Indonesia for a semester." "The New Colombo Plan provides students with up to \$7,000 to subsidise a student's program expenses", he explained.

Professor Hill also acknowledged the considerable interest in the idea among key Australian universities. "It's still early days yet, but we're very pleased with the initial reception that ACICIS' Agriculture Semester Program has received from academics at the Australian National University's Fenner School of Environment and Society, the University of Western Australia's Faculty of Science, and the agriculture program at Western Sydney University's School of Science and Health", said Professor Hill.

In February 2017 ACICIS will welcome students from Western Sydney University and The University of Sydney for a semester of study in Bogor. All are supported by New Colombo Plan funding. Student applications for second semester, 2017 are now open and close 15 April 2017.

The Australian Consortium for 'In-Country' Indonesian Studies known as ACICIS (pronounced "Ah-Chee-Chis" as an Indonesian would) has been opening doors to tertiary institutions throughout Indonesia since 1994. Today ACICIS is the longest running provider of in-country Indonesian study programs for Australian university students and the primary mechanism through which Australian students pursue study in Indonesia for academic credit. The ACICIS consortium currently counts among its membership twenty-four Australian universities (including all of Australia's Group of Eight) as well as overseas centres-of-excellence in the field of Indonesian and Southeast Asian Studies such as SOAS University of London and Leiden University. The consortium's activities are coordinated by a national secretariat hosted by The University of Western Australia. For more information, please visit: www.acicis.edu.au

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