



SEMESTER AT SEA®

A HISTORY OF SHIPBOARD EDUCATION AND SEMESTER AT SEA

Nearly 100 years ago, the idea for a floating university that would travel the world became the passionate pursuit of James Edwin Lough, a psychology professor at New York University. He believed changes needed to be made to traditional teaching methods of American universities and soon became a leader in a new educational movement. Travel and first-hand experience, he felt, must be part of every scholar's education and he set out to find others who shared this vision.

One of Lough's most significant counterparts was Constantine Raikes, a Greek student who supported the effort and assisted with necessary academic and itinerary preparations. Although the program was successfully planned, enrollments fell short of expectations and the sailing was postponed for one year. Embarrassed, New York University dropped its sponsorship of the program and James Lough took a leave of absence.

Despite the setback, Lough's original vision eventually led to the successful maiden voyage of the *SS Ryndam* on September 18, 1926. Departing Hoboken, New Jersey with a capacity 504 students and a faculty and administrative staff of 63, Lough sailed as Dean and Raikes served as Voyage Director. Because the program was no longer sponsored by a single school, colleges and universities were eager to participate, and applications poured in.

It was an exciting sail. Imagine: the glorious *SS Ryndam* decorated with flags from stem to stern; thousands lining the Fifth Street pier to see off their loved ones; excited students waving from the decks. The students, representing 143 colleges, came from 40 states as well as Canada, Cuba, and Hawaii. During the 7.5-month voyage, the ship covered 41,000 miles and visited 35 countries and more than 90 cities, including Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manila, Bangkok, Colombo, Bombay, Haifa, Venice, Gibraltar, Lisbon, and Oslo.

As the ship set sail, Lough tried to describe what lay ahead: "This shall not be a mere sightseeing tour, but a college year of educational travel and systematic study to develop an interest in foreign affairs, to train students to think in world terms, and to strengthen international understanding and good will." Upon their arrival home and again years later at their 1976 reunion, the students aboard described the sailing as "the greatest educational experience of our lives."

Although the voyage was a great success, the concept of shipboard education did not fully take hold until the 1960s when it was resurrected as the University of the Seven Seas by a visionary California businessman named Bill Hughes. In February 1963, a charter contract was signed with the same shipping company that had provided the *SS Ryndam-Holland America* and preparations began to create the university aboard the *MS Seven Seas*.

Although the University of the Seven Seas was authorized by the state of California to issue transcripts and award diplomas, it was never fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. This prevented it from assuring students that their credits would be transferable to, or even recognized by, any other school. So in 1965, Hughes decided to affiliate with Chapman College in Orange, California who provided the program with academic credentials and the new life it needed as World Campus Afloat.

In the late sixties, Dr. M.A. Griffiths, a professor of Middle Eastern history at Chapman, was named Dean and Academic Vice President, (later Vice President of International Studies) and headed up World Campus Afloat. In 1969, Dr. Griffiths sent his associate, Dr. Lloyd Lewan to travel as Dean on board the ship. This would be the first of many voyages for Dr. Lewan, who became Director of Operations and Associate Dean for the program. Dr. John

Tymitz served at the time as Associate Director of Operations. In 1966, The Holland America Line exchanged the old Seven Seas for a new ship called the *SS Ryndam*, the same name as the original floating university. But in 1970, the Holland America Line went through reorganization and withdrew its ship from the program.

Enter C.Y. Tung, of Hong Kong. This distinguished Chinese gentleman and shipping magnate had dreams of a United Nations University on a ship. He was fond of saying that "ships could transport more than cargo, they could carry ideas." Through negotiations between Dr. Griffiths and Mr. Tung, an agreement was struck and C.Y. Tung provided World Campus Afloat with the ship and ship management expertise to launch the program into a new era. The first ship Mr. Tung provided was the *Queen Elizabeth*, sister ship to the *Queen Mary*, which he completely refurbished. Unfortunately, it was destroyed by a fire. But Mr. Tung kept his commitment, and purchased another ship for the program. That ship was christened the *SS Universe* and would sail for many years to come.

In 1976, Chapman College underwent financial problems, compounded by the oil crisis, and had to abandon World Campus Afloat. With the full support of C.Y. Tung, Dr. Griffiths left his tenured position and took the ship program with him. Mr. Tung and Dr. Griffiths then founded the Institute for Shipboard Education with Dr. Griffiths serving as Executive Director, and Dr. John Tymitz second in command. Soon after, Dr. Lewan also joined the program. Working out of a small office in Laguna Hills, California, Dr. Griffiths and Dr. Tymitz moved boxes, licked stamps, recruited students, and searched for a sponsoring university. The University of Colorado was that university, enabling the program, now named Semester at Sea, to sail again, after only a one semester hiatus. Around this time, Dr. Griffiths also brought Dr. Max Brandt into the program, a man he called "a true internationalist." This core team grew as the years went by into a strong ISE family comprising many.

In 1981, the University of Pittsburgh took over the sponsorship of the program - a sponsorship which continued for 25 years. Dr. M.A. Griffiths retired in 1984 as Executive Director, though he continued for a number of years working in fund raising and alumni affairs. Dr. Tymitz was named the new Executive Director—later renamed as Chief Executive Officer of ISE—and ably led the program through many strong and exciting years until his retirement in 2007. In 2006, the program found a new home and academic sponsor at the University of Virginia. With Dr. Les McCabe at the helm as the new leader of ISE, the program continued to thrive with the purchase of its floating campus, the *MV Explorer*. Interestingly, in full circle fashion, Dr. McCabe had been originally hired as a young man 23 years earlier by Dr. Griffiths. In 2014, the Institute hired Dr. Kenn T. Gaither as McCabe's successor. He serves as president today.

These pioneers and all those who followed were united in their dedication to the vision of shipboard education. It is their legacy and the continued passion of those presently working for the program, that allow Semester at Sea to continue forward as a life-altering experience for countless students, faculty and adults. Semester at Sea is now truly the premier global comparative study program in the world.

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