

# BRAZIL, RUSSIA, INDIA, CHINA, AND SOUTH AFRICA (BRICS) SUMMER SCHOOL PROGRAM 2017 REPORT



Pre-departure:

Upon receiving correspondence from Fudan University informing me that I have been accepted to attend the BRICS Shanghai Summer School Program, I was very happy, but suddenly realised that I need funding for the trip. That's when I approached the University of Johannesburg (UJ) International House for assistance. With having good grades, leadership qualities and extra-curricular activities outside my studies I got 100% funding. The next step was to apply for a visa of which I did that like a ball of lightning with a big smile on my face 😊! The visa process took four days and it was ready for collection.

This was my first trip travelling abroad and inside a plane 😊, but I am so thankful to UJ International House for making this possible and granting me an opportunity to deepen my insights. The level of personal attention that each student receives from the office is truly encouraging and makes one realise that the staff are devoted to student mobility. During this time this was highlighted to me.

### **Experience at Host University:**



The Shanghai Summer School BRICS Program offered by the Center for BRICS Studies at Fudan University commenced on July 6, 2017. I had no idea of the prestige that this university ensures and the depth of the program. The program was thoroughly planned and modelled itself as a rich learning experience because we had different lectures for the topics presented throughout the course. Most of them are people who has an interest and studied the cooperation about the BRICS countries. The BRICS Program had three main areas of focus namely, Global Governance and Cooperation among BRICS members; China's Politics and Diplomacy; and Chinese Cultural Studies. The first part of the program focused on Global Governance and Cooperation among BRICS members and covered topics relating to the future of South-South Cooperation. The themes that were explored were the restructuring of global governance, global multi-polarity, the global financial reform, and development cooperation. These theses were coupled with areas of global energy cooperation, international cyberspace governance, and data sovereignty of BRICS members. This was a unique learning experience as the learning environment was more of a think tank model where we had to prepare and acquire knowledge for the class to explore

the topic and provide a group presentation at the end of each day providing advice and proposing ideas about the topic at hand. The lectures came from a number of different institutions such as Harvard and Fudan Universities, think tanks, private companies, and so on.



The second part of the program focused on China's politics and diplomacy where we looked at China in the context of the BRICS configuration and the relationship China advances with each BRICS country. This part of the curriculum was also exciting as we got to be critical of China's position and influence within BRICS. Usually classes were in the form of lectures in the first half of the day, and after lunch it was discussions on the content that was presented to us. In this process of learning and deliberating we had to write two papers on the two parts of the curriculum as a form of assessment. The first paper was on the pragmatic economic and trade relations among BRICS countries, and the second paper was on the diplomatic relations China has with your country, in my case, South Africa. After these papers were graded we had to present them individually. The program was an excellent platform where young activists from the fields of International Relations, Economics, Law, Politics, and Public Governance came together to debate about our divergent political realities, but also our converging economic interests. The exchange of knowledge resulted in greater cultural appreciation.

Alongside our studies we had the opportunity of experiencing the culture of Shanghai from day to day living to visiting significant cultural sites around the city, which was the third part of the curriculum. Shanghai is so vibrant that sometimes I just stopped to appreciate the moment, experiencing a completely different city and university culture. One thing that I appreciated of Fudan University is that the social culture and experience was not in isolation from who the students were, but rather a space for them to reaffirm themselves beyond the academic life.













## **RETURNING TO SOUTH AFRICA:**

With the experience that I acquired in China from the program, locals, and friends, I now see the world in a different perspective. From this, I aim to pass the information to my fellow students and encourage them to utilise the resources of the International House so that they can get the same exposure as I did. I aim to pass the information to South Africans outside the university arena so that they could take advantage of these opportunities of south- south cooperation. Such as applying for the youth summits of the BRICS members so as to have the same and even better exposure as I had since the summits alternates between the BRICS countries.

I wish to express my utmost gratitude to the University of Johannesburg International House for giving me this platform and exposure to learn about the BRICS countries cooperation and cultures. I thank you so much.

Sincerely,

Mphelane, TD