

Research article

Strategy for Internationalization Amidst COVID-19 Pandemic: The Success Story of Virtual Summer Program at Universitas Padjadjaran

Ersa Tri Wahyuni

Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia

ORCIDErsa Tri Wahyuni: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2767-8287>**Abstract.**

International Summer Programs have become one of the major activities to promote students' mobility and internationalization of many higher education institutions (HEI) in Indonesia. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many HEI canceled their summer program in 2020 as the government's lockdowns closed the border for international students. Many organizers then innovated to change their summer programs into virtual ones with a series of academic webinars. Although the virtual summer programs warrant some benefits, the Zoom fatigue and lack of physical interaction limit students' experience in terms of the traditional program benefits. Moreover, virtual summer programs require a different strategy for assimilating cultural experiences similar to the traditional pre-COVID model. This paper showcases the success story of an international virtual summer program organized by the Faculty of Economics and Business Universitas Padjadjaran, Indonesia in August 2021. Attracting 900 applicants from several countries, the virtual summer program was run successfully for eight days with 375 select participants. The program involved speakers from 8 countries and participants from 10 countries. Some success strategies learned from the case include targeted marketing strategy, innovative programs, small group interactions, and digital cultural experience. This study, therefore, contributes to the literature on internationalization of HEI by providing strategies for internationalization effort of HEI amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: summer program, virtual, internationalization, COVID-19

1. Introduction

Covid 19 pandemic has changed the landscape of education internationally. The effect of the pandemic to the higher education has been a major concern since the pandemic started in early 2020 [1, 2, 3]. The pandemic has a significant impact to the student's mobility where universities have to postpone their incoming international students to border closing. The number of international students has been a major variable in determining the international ranking of higher education institution worldwide.

Corresponding Author: Ersa Tri Wahyuni; email: ersa@unpad.ac.id**Published** 22 June 2022

Publishing services provided by Knowledge E

© Ersa Tri Wahyuni. This article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#), which permits unrestricted use and redistribution provided that the original author and source are credited.

Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the IOC Conference Committee.



Internationalization has been a top major concern over universities in Asia for the last decade [4-7]. Many universities in Asia have been trying to improve their international ranking reputation by recruiting international faculties and luring international students to study in their universities. International Summer Program has become one of major activities to promote students' mobility and internationalization of many universities in Asia. Compact short courses, often promoted as summer program has widely used in many countries, including South Korean universities for example, to improve their internationalization by recruiting international faculty to teach in their short courses [8].

Indonesia is not so much different [9]. The Ministry of Higher Education has been pushing the top universities in the country to earn better international rankings by providing grants to pursue international activities. Many Indonesian top universities use the grants to pursue international accreditation or establishing international programs running in English. Some universities also have offered summer programs during the semester breaks in collaboration with their international partner universities to run short courses, often embedded by many cultural activities to attract international students. Summer programs have become one of the strategies to increase international collaboration among Indonesian universities with their partners as well as increasing the number of international students registered in the university.

Before the pandemic, summer programs were organized in the small groups of students within class academic sessions and outdoor cultural activities. However due to Covid-19 Pandemic, many Indonesian universities cancelled their summer program in 2020 as government's lockdowns closed border for international students' mobility. Many organizers of summer programs innovated to adjust their summer program in to a virtual one with series of academic webinars. Although virtual summer program warrants some benefits, nevertheless, zoom fatigue and lack of physical interaction, limit the student experience from traditional summer program advantages. Virtual summer program requires different strategy as how to assimilate similar cultural experience as to the traditional pre-covid model.

Universitas Padjadjaran (Unpad) as one of the top government universities in Indonesia has been organizing international summer programs since 2017. Summer programs, before the pandemic, is an intensive student camp for two or three weeks. International students were involved in group projects, debating in classes with international professors and visited some of museums and other historic sites in West Java Island where Unpad is located. However, in 2020 Unpad has to cancel their summer program due to the covid-19 pandemic and ever since tried to find a new model to organize the virtual summer program for 2021.

This paper showcases the success story of international virtual summer program organized by the Faculty of Economics and Business Universitas Padjadjaran (FEB Unpad), Indonesia in August 2021. Attracting 900 applicants from many countries, the virtual summer program was run successfully for eight days with selected 375 participants. FEB Unpad 2021 Virtual summer program involved speakers from 8 countries and participants from 10 countries. Some success strategies learned from the case include targeted marketing strategy, innovative programs, small group interactions, and digital cultural experience. This paper contributes to the literature of internationalization of HEI by providing strategies for internationalization effort of HEI amidst Covid-19 pandemic.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Materials

The materials used in this paper is publications, notes of the meetings and participants handbook of the FEB Unpad Virtual Summer Program. The author of this paper is the chief of committee of the summer program, which is heavily involved in planning, executing and monitoring the activity.

Universitas Padjadjaran is a government university, established since 1957 and the Faculty of Economics and Business was among the first founder of the faculty from the total 17 faculties in the university. In total Universitas Padjadjaran has approximately 33,000 students, studying in 5 campus areas in the city of Bandung, Jatinangor, Garut and Pangandaran, West Java. The Faculty of Economics and Business Unpad established the office of international affairs (OIA FEB Unpad) in 2010 as the supporting unit of the internationalization activities. One of the annual (1)activities organised by OIA FEB Unpad is the short courses namely Summer Program (if it is in July/August Semester break) or Spring Program (in January/February Semester Break).

Traditionally before the pandemic, summer program of FEB Unpad was organised in small group of students between 30-100 international students. The course was designed as a full-time course where students have activities from 9 am to 5 pm, and often organised informal gathering or dinner in the evening. The course material was designed in a combination of a certain theme of academic course with cultural activities.

2.2. Methods

This qualitative case study is written in the chronological order of the FEB Unpad Virtual summer program from the planning activities starting in March, to the evaluation of the event in September 2021.

Chronological events then being analyzed to identify what are the strategies of the organizing committees to make the event successful. FEB Unpad Summer Program attracted 900 applicants which come from various Asian countries and at the end as many as 375 students from eight countries were participating in the activity. Not only it was successful in inviting international students, but the program itself was organised to bring more international flavor by involving speakers and moderators from 8 countries.

The paper mainly will focus on the strategies of the summer program and divided into strategies for two phases: planning and executions phases. The thematic analysis will be conducted to summaries the main strategies to achieve the successful summer program.

3. Discussion

3.1. Chronological events: From planning to evaluation

Planning the summer program in the middle of the pandemic uncertainties has its challenges. The summer program of 2020 had to be cancelled due to the pandemic and the University was still adjusting with the new normal activity. In the beginning of 2021, the pandemic situation in Indonesia was in the first wave (Figure 1).

In January 2021, FEB Unpad inaugurated a new Dean of the Faculty which one of its main strategic programs is to improve the international achievement of the faculty. In March 2021 it was decided than one of featured program to improve internationalization of the faculty is to organize a summer program in July or August 2021. At the time it was not very sure if the summer program should be organised virtually or offline just like used to be. By the end of March, the core committee members were established to plan and to organize the event.

Starting in April, the committee made a plan such as the duration, the theme, and the possible partners involved in the activities. Due to Covid 19 pandemic was still very strong in Indonesia at that time, the committee decided that the summer program should be a range of online or virtual activities. Series of meetings with overseas partner universities was taken place during April-May to gather support especially in term of

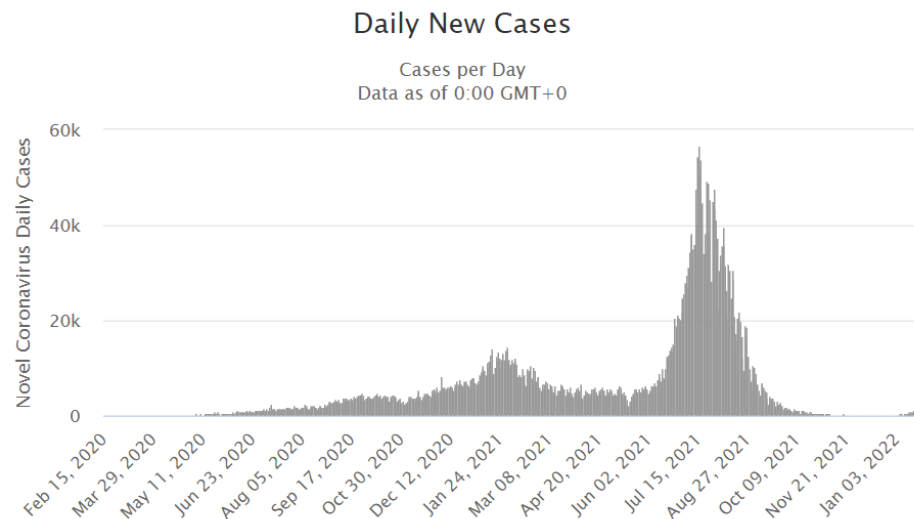


Figure 1: Covid New Cases in Indonesia Feb 2020 – Jan 2022. (Source: <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/indonesia/>).

possible lecturer who will be teaching in the summer program. The committee decided that the theme should be relevant to Covid 19 Pandemic with the scope of ASEAN economy.

Starting early May 2021, the committee was starting to promote the activities in to targeted partner universities. Due to the time constraints, the promoting activities were focused on the partner universities in Southeast Asian country such as Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. Although FEB Unpad have many partner universities in Europe and USA, the time difference would be too difficult for students in those country joining this activity. Philippines was the main target for promotion since FEB Unpad does not have strong partners in the Philippines at that time. On 1st May 2021, the chief of committee of summer program had a chance to promote the summer program in the PACSB Conference (Philippines Association of Collegiate schools of Business). After the presentation, many business schools in the Philippines sent email to show their interest joining the program.

Zoom meetings were also held with the partner universities in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to promote our summer program to their students and offered them to host or moderate a session in the summer program. With partner universities in Europe and USA, the committee invited them to participate in sending lecturers to teach or to moderate a session in the summer program.

Parallel with the promotion, the core committee members started to recruit student volunteers to support this event. Around 65 students were supporting the summer program as liaison officers, MC, media communication, registration and secretariat,

and also the digital content creators. Students committee members come from the undergraduate students of FEB Unpad which were selected based on the English ability and academic achievement. The first general meetings with all committee members and student volunteers took place on the 8th of June 2021. The full agenda of the event were discussed in detail (Table 1).

In July, the registration was opened. The committee sent the e-poster and also the program booklet to our partner universities in Asian countries. The registration was opened for one month and by the end of July we received about 900 applicants from eight countries.

The event was running with the opening ceremony on the 11th of August and ended on Wednesday 18th of August. During the whole eight days, participants joined the academic sessions and the group discussions in the afternoon. At the last day, during the closing ceremony the participants provides very positive feedback and evaluation for the activities. The event was considered as the most successful summer program hosted by Universitas Padjadjaran. During 2021, the Faculty of Economics and Business was not the only faculty organizing summer program, there were four other faculties hosted similar event.

3.2. Strategies for a successful virtual summer program

Organising a summer program during the pandemic requires different strategies compare to before the pandemic. Traditional summer program where students are interacting physically are no longer feasible during the pandemic. Many organizers pursue different strategies to ensure the aim and experience of summer program can also be achieved, albeit the virtual model is applied.

Lesson learned from FEB Unpad virtual summer program, there are four main strategies contributing to the successful outcome of the event.

3.2.1. Targeted marketing strategy

One of the main challenges of the summer program is how to promote and attract a good number of international participants. The main strategy of the FEB Unpad virtual summer program targeted a marketing strategy instead of mass promotion. The university partners were selected carefully and the committee requested a meeting with the university partners to explain in detail about summer program and how the program can bring benefit to both universities. Targeted marketing strategy creates a deeper

TABLE 1: The Agenda of the FEB Unpad Virtual Summer Program **ASEAN Business Environment Amidst Covid Pandemic: Opportunities and Challenges**

| Topics | Sessions | PIC | Duration |
|--|--|---|--|
| Monday and Tuesday, August 9 th -10 th | Pre-Event Briefing for all participants divided in a small group | Student's Liaison Officers. The LO of the groups will explain the summer program handbook to participants. | 2-3 hours, time is dependent on the agreement. |
| Day 1 : Wednesday 11th August 2021 | | | |
| 09.30 WIB | Welcoming Lecture <i>The Impact of Global Covid-19 on SDGs Achievement in ASEAN Countries</i> | Unpad's Lecturer or Guest Speaker Prof. Arief Anshory Yusuf | 1.5 hour and 10 mins online quiz |
| 13.00 WIB | Group Sessions <i>Group Ice-Breaking and Discussion of Group Project</i> | <i>Student's Liaison Officer</i> | 1 hour |
| Day 2 : Thursday 12th August 2021 | | | |
| 09.00 WIB | <i>SME Business in Indonesia and ASEAN amidst Covid Pandemic: Opportunities and Challenges</i> | Dr. Maria Lutgarda Punay (<i>Chairperson of the College of Business, Siena College of Taytay, Phillipines</i>) Rudy Suryanto, Founder Bumdes.Id Dr. Asep Mulyana, Head of Study Program Magister IMM Unpad Moderator : Dina Sartika, S.E., M.Si., Ph.D (Head of Study Program, International Business, Unpad) | 2 hours and 15 mins online quiz |
| 13.00 WIB | <i>Digital Business Potential in Indonesia and ASEAN</i> | Webinar Mode Sesi 2 : Pembicara dari Unpad dan niversitas mitra <i>The opportunities of syariah fintech in ASEAN</i> Dr. Ema Izzati Zulkifli (University Sains Malaysia-USM) <i>IT governance for Enterprise</i> Dr. rer. pol. Hamzah Ritchi, S.E., MBIT., Ak. (Direktur Pusat Studi Inovasi Digital, FEB Unpad Moderator : Dr. Fareesa Malik (NUST Business School, Pakistan) | 2 hours and 15 mins online quiz |
| Day 3 : Friday, 13th Agustus 2021 | | | |
| 09.00 WIB | <i>Business Reporting and governance Issues amidst Covid-19 Pandemic</i> | Mr. Zulainiah Abdul Rashed (<i>Head of Finance Prasarana Integrated Development Sdn Bhd</i>) Florenz Contreras Tugas, Ph.D, CPA, CISA. (<i>Accountancy Department of the Ramon V. del Rosario College of Business of De La Salle University in Manila</i>) Dr. SIEM Monileak (<i>Deputy Dean, Faculty of Finance and Accounting, National University of Management, Cambodia</i>) Ms Windy Angela (<i>Shopee, Special Project Lead. Singapore</i>) Moderator : Dr. M.M. Nanny Dewi Tanzil, S.E., M.Comm., Ak. (<i>President of ASEAN Accounting Education Workgroup, Dosen FEB Unpad</i>) | 2 hours and 15 mins online quiz |
| 13.00 WIB | <i>Introduction to Efficiency Measures in Business</i> | Dr. Grigorios Emvalomatis (Dundee University, United Kingdom) Moderator : Prof. Maman Setiawan, S.E., M.T., Ph.D (Vice Dean, Unpad) | 2 hours and 15 mins online quiz |

TABLE 1: (Continued).

| Topics | Sessions | PIC | Duration |
|---|--|--|---------------------------------|
| Day 4 Saturday 14th August 2021 | | | |
| 09.00 WIB | <i>The History of the Sundanese Kingdom and Culture and Student Cultural Activity, Museum Virtual Tour</i> | The Center of Digitalization and the Development of Sundanese Culture (PDP-BS FIB UNPAD) Keluarga Angklung FEB Unpad/ Angklung Student's Club (KAFE) | 3 hours and 15 mins online quiz |
| Day 5 Sunday, 15th August 2021 | | | |
| Individual Assignment: Essay Writing. | | | |
| Day 6 Monday, 16th August 2021 | | | |
| 08:30 WIB | <i>The Future of Business Landscape in ASEAN : USA Perspectives</i> | Dr. Eric Jones (Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Northern Illinois University) Prof. Popy Rufaidah (Atase Pendidikan Indonesia di Washington DC) Nikhil Parikh, Partner Anise Partners, LLC Moderator :Dr. Eric Santos Parilla (Northwestern University, Philippines) | 2 hours and 15 mins online quiz |
| 12.30 WIB | <i>Investment Prospect in ASEAN region amidst Covid 19</i> | Tina Meilina, CWMA Rudy Fang, CWMA Teguh Yudo Wicaksono, Head of Mandiri Institute, Bank MandiriModerator :Mr. Keen Len Chan, BA, M.E (Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Singapore) | 2 hours and 15 mins online quiz |
| Day 7: Tuesday, 17 August 2021 | | | |
| 09.00 WIB | <i>Celebrating Indonesian Independence Day Student's Group Activities: Group Project Discussion</i> | Student's Liaison Officer Group Project Presentations: Social Action Project on SDGs | 4 hours and 15 mins online quiz |
| Day 8 : Wednesday, 18th August 2021 | | | |
| 09.00 WIB | Closing and Awarding Ceremony | The Dean FEB UnpadProf. Dr. Hj. Nunuy Nur Afiah, S.E., M.S., Ak., CA. Awards: Best Participants Best Essay Best Group Project Best Tik Tok Challenge Best Instagram Story Best Traditional Costume Best Group Virtual Background | 3 hours |

engagement of the partner universities which then promote the summer program to their own students.

Targeted marketing strategy is not sending brochures and the promotion material to the partner universities and merely ask them to distribute them to their students. Students will not be encouraged to join a summer program unless there is credit transfer and they are encouraged by their own lecturer to join. Endorsement from the partner university's lecturer is crucial to encourage students apply the summer program. Students would be more likely to apply if the information about the summer program comes from their lecturer instead of a bulk email sent by the international office staffs.

During April-June, the committee has made one to one promotion to more than ten university partners. After the presentation, then the promotion materials were sent so they can distribute it to their students. The committee was not just asking the partner university to promote the event but also invite them to become a speaker or moderator in the program. This has improved engagement even more and sharing the ownership of the summer program.

3.2.2. Innovative program

Innovative program is crucial to change the interest of the prospective students into decision to participate. First, the program is free, participants did not have to pay to join the program. This has a significant impact to the big number of interested participants application. To fund the program, the committee were looking for corporate sponsors.

Second, the summer program was designed for young people who are actively involved in social media. Thus, the committee designed many interesting competitions such as Tik Tok Challenge, Instagram Story Challenge, best traditional costume, etc. The more serious competitions included essay competition with the theme of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and also group project presentations which discuss social action plan to achieve one of SDGs.

Third, great topic sessions and prominent speakers. The coherent of the topic sessions every day in relation with the grand theme of the summer program is important to ensure students understand the learning outcome of summer program. Each session also had prizes for best questions which make each session very interactive. Students were also incentivized to listen to the speakers as there will be online quiz at the end of every session. At the end of summer program, participants will receive certificate of completion if they get minimum average score of 68. The average score was calculated based on the attendance, daily online quizzes, group assignments, individual essays and group presentations.

3.2.3. Small group interactions

Two of the advantages of the traditional offline summer program is human interactions and the friendship built upon it. This could be a challenge for the virtual activity, as they joined the activities in their own home. To ensure that each of the participants made friendships during the summer program, they were assigned in a small group of ten students. Each group consists of students from at least 3 different countries.

Total applicants of the summer program were more than 900 students from more than 50 universities in eight countries. The committee then selected the participants based on GPA and also first come first serve basis for university. After the selection, the committee sent letter of acceptance for 404 applicants as detailed in Table 2. During the 8 days, many students could not pass the rigorous agenda and tasks due to internship or final exam, thus only 375 participants were granted certificate of completion.

TABLE 2: Initial Participants of FEB Unpad Virtual Summer Program.

| Countries | Participants |
|-----------------|--------------|
| The Philippines | 208 |
| Malaysia | 112 |
| Indonesia | 34 |
| Pakistan | 27 |
| Bangladesh | 12 |
| Thailand | 4 |
| Afghanistan | 1 |
| Russia | 1 |
| Total' | 404 students |

To build group cohesiveness, each group needs to pick their own group names based on the superhero movies such as Superman, Batman, Spiderman, Dr. Strange, etc. They also need to create their own group virtual background related to the group name. Each day in the afternoon, the group need to gather in zoom to eat lunch together, to play games together, or discussing their group projects for group presentations. This group assignments bring the group together and by the end of summer program they made long lasting friendship with their group members.

3.2.4. Digital cultural experience

The most rewarding experience of going abroad and being an exchange student is to learn new culture. Before the pandemic, the cultural experience has been the major attractions for students to apply the summer programs. Students were taken into museums, try traditional foods, wear traditional dresses, play traditional music and learn traditional dance as well as batik making experience (traditional fabric). Virtual summer program faces the new challenges to offer similar cultural experience for the participants.

During FEB Unpad virtual summer program, to provide new cultural experience, participants learned digital traditional instruments called Angklung and also learned traditional dances. The committee provides virtual museum tour and also a session

about Sundanese language and scripts. The cultural activities had been the highlight of the summer program as the participants from other countries learned a new culture. The digital cultural experience required a lot of preparation for example in making museum virtual tour and preparing the digital angklung application.

4. Conclusion

Covid-19 Pandemic should not limit the creativity and innovation to organize summer program as one of the internationalization activities of HEI. The silver lining of the pandemic, summer program can be organised virtually which is cheaper and easier to access by more students in different countries without leaving their home. FEB Unpad Virtual Summer Program 2021 offered some lessons on how to organize a virtual summer program successfully. Some strategies of virtual summer program have been discussed in this paper which include targeted marketing strategies, innovative programs, small group interactions and digital cultural experience. This paper contributes to the literature of internationalization of HEI especially amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.

References

- [1] Stein S, da Silva JE. Challenges and complexities of decolonizing internationalization in a time of global crises. *ETD-Educação Temática Digital*. 2020;22(3):546–566. <http://dx.doi.org/10.20396/etd.v22i3.8659310>
- [2] Tasci G. The impact of COVID-19 on higher education: Rethinking internationalization behind the iceberg: COVID-19 and higher education. *International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*. 2021;13(1):522–536.
- [3] De Wit H. The future of internationalization of higher education in challenging global contexts. *ETD: Educação Temática Digital*. 2020;22(3):538–545. <http://dx.doi.org/10.20396/etd.v22i3.8659471>
- [4] Wong MS, Wu SF. *The internationalization of East Asian higher education*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan; 2011. *Internationalization of higher education in East Asia: Issues, implications, and inquiries*; p. 197–213.
- [5] Knight J, De Wit H. Internationalization of higher education: Past and future. *International Higher Education*. 2018;95:2–4. <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2018.95.10715>
- [6] Buckner E. The internationalization of higher education: National interpretations of a global model. *Comparative Education Review*. 2019;63(3):315–336. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/703794>

- [7] Li A. “One Belt One Road” and Central Asia: A new trend in internationalization of higher education? *International Higher Education*. 2018;92:14–16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2018.92.10279>
- [8] Palmer JD, Cho YH. South Korean higher education internationalization policies: Perceptions and experiences. *Asia Pacific Education Review*. 2012;13(3):387–401. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12564-012-9204-2>
- [9] Dewi AU. Towards knowledge economy: A comparative study of Indonesian and South Korean internationalization of higher education. *KnE Social Sciences*. 2018;2018:63–83. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v3i10.2905>
- [10] Chapman DW, Pekol A, Wilson E. Cross-border university networks as a development strategy: Lessons from three university networks focused on emerging pandemic threats. *International Review of Education*. 2014;60(5):619–637. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11159-014-9439-8>