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Uni embarks on a voyage of discovery

By Jordan Baker
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THE casinos will be turned into libraries and the



The swot boat ... the Scholar Ship will be a floating campus.

ballrooms into lecture theatres, but studying will still be a cruisy experience for students aboard the luxury floating uni campus.

Six institutions, led by Macquarie University, have teamed up to run The Scholar Ship, a five-star cruise liner that will sail the globe to encourage "intercultural learning".

The first Royal Caribbean Cruises vessel is due to leave Athens next January for a 16-week voyage. Some 700 students paying \$US19,500 (\$25,000) apiece will visit eight countries and five continents.

The aim is to create an international learning community and teach students skills they need to work in a global market, said Tony Adams, international pro vice-chancellor at Macquarie University.

While not the world's first shipboard academic program, Professor Adams said no one before had done "a university-level program that's studying issues of global concern, whether it's cultural matters, international relations, politics, environment".

"All sorts of issues are discussed in a hothouse environment aboard the ship. Then, when they go to port they'll be involved in activities which will support the subjects on the ship."

Universities from China, Morocco, Mexico and Ghana are part of the consortium, but Macquarie will be the only institution issuing credits towards degrees. But students won't spend all their time swotting. The ships, provided during the European off-season, boast pools, theatres and sporting facilities.

Organisers have taken steps to stop the voyage turning into a drinking binge. Students will be searched for alcohol every time they board and there will be a limit to the alcohol they can buy. A student council, elected on each cruise, will also set its own rules.

"We have got to be fairly strict," said Peter Gainey, the Asia-Pacific director for The Scholar Ship. "... We have to satisfy parental concern."

Macquarie hopes the venture will boost its reputation.

"International strategy is an important part of what we do and when this is successful, it will provide us with a lot of global positioning," Professor Adams said.

Student applications open this month. Academic staff are also being sought.

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