

**Annual Study Center Review
CIEE Tropical Marine Biology and Conservation Program in Bonaire
Summer
2008**

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CIEE Academic Consortium Board Program Evaluation: www.ciee.org
CIEE Academic Consortium Board Monitor: This program was evaluated during the 2007-08 academic year.

Each summer, program directors write a Study Center Review for each CIEE Study Center program commenting on the previous academic year. The program director writes the review based on input from the CIEE Academic Consortium Board members, resident directors, sending institutions, and student evaluations. Each report is made public on the CIEE website at www.ciee.org.

Program Goals

The CIEE Tropical Marine Biology and Conservation in Bonaire is designed for students with biology-related majors who have completed at least one semester of biology or environmental science and seek an intensive and innovative two-week classroom and field-based academic program focused on diverse tropical ecosystems in the Southern Caribbean with a focus on marine plant and fish life.

The program goals were fully met through the specially-designed CIEE courses and accompanying co-curricular activities.

The 2007 monitoring process recommended that readings be sent prior to student arrival. In addition, there was a full ACB evaluation in spring 2008 of the summer and semester programs.

New and Noteworthy

Academic

Beginning in summer 2008, two sessions were offered, each teaching one course intensively. Both courses were very well evaluated by students. The program integrates out of classroom learning as an integral part of the academic program. As part of the overall academic curriculum, students completed dives around Bonaire and Klein Bonaire. During these dives, students learned to identify various underwater species of fish and coral, observe the behavior of these various species, and learn various field research techniques.

Students also went caving, kayaking and snorkeling and visited Washington-Slagbail National Park to support the academic curriculum.

Non-Academic

Upon arrival, students had a circle tour of the island to understand its topography. There was also a casual and very enjoyable cook-out at the conclusion of each session where staff and students could mingle and enjoy a typical, Bonairean barbecue.

CIEE Orientation

Upon arrival, students participate in a brief orientation that includes group icebreakers, information on living in Bonaire (cultural awareness, environmental issues such as conservation of water & electricity), practical information about living at the center, academic information on the course, and understanding safety and security guidelines. The orientation was well evaluated by participants and deemed very appropriate.

Housing

All participants live at the CIEE Research Station. All meals are taken at a restaurant across the street. Students indicate that they would prefer more flexibility and independence in their dining options.

Diving Safety

CIEE Bonaire is an organizational member of AAUS (American Academy of Underwater Sciences). AAUS is an organization that provides guidelines for dive safety and enjoys a global membership including universities in the US and Australia, American governmental organizations like NOAA and consulting agencies. CIEE Bonaire adheres to the dive safety guidelines and Rita Peachey and Caren Eckrich attended the AAUS Annual Symposium in March 2008. Caren Eckrich is the site's Dive Safety Officer.

Community Engagement and Integration

As the program is only two weeks in length and very intensive academically, students have little time to participate in either a for-credit or non-credit internship or volunteer service in addition to their challenging coursework.

Challenges and Future Directions

Academic

The course was well received by students, although they did cite that it was very intensive. In lieu of sending students reading in advance of arrival, each program session was lengthened from two weeks to two and one half weeks.

Non-Academic

Students did not like the restriction of only eating in one establishment, despite the quality of the food.

Future Directions

In response to the spring 2008 ACB Evaluation, CIEE will propose that the Fundamentals of Scientific Diving Methods course be divided into two distinct courses. If approved, beginning in summer 2009, student participants in the second session will enroll in a one-credit practical course teaching SCUBA skills and a three-credit theoretical research methods course.

In addition, beginning in summer 2009, there will be much more flexibility and variety surrounding eating options.