

**Annual Study Center Review  
CIEE Study Center at the University of Cape Town, South Africa  
Arts and Sciences  
2008**

CIEE Program Director: Adam Rubin, Program Director, Africa, Middle East, & Northern, Central, and Eastern Europe

CIEE Resident Director: Quinton Redcliffe

CIEE Academic Consortium Board Program Evaluation: [www.ciee.org](http://www.ciee.org)

CIEE Academic Consortium Board Monitor: Valerie Eastman, Scripps College

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](http://www.ciee.org).

### **Program Goals**

The Arts and Sciences program at the CIEE Study Center at the University of Cape Town provides students with a range of academic and intellectual experiences that enable them to reflect upon the complexities and challenges facing the new South Africa. Through integration in local communities, students become participants in, rather than mere observers of, this dynamic and evolving environment. Through this process, students gain a comprehensive understanding of social relations within South Africa.

Based on feedback from students and resident staff, this program successfully met its stated goals during the 2007-08 academic year.

### **New and Noteworthy**

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The CIEE Cape Town Arts and Sciences program continues to provide students with a rewarding academic and cultural experience in South Africa. As the number of American students studying at the University of Cape Town (UCT) increases, CIEE has maintained its commitment to providing students with the best possible on-site support, cultural immersion opportunities, and careful attention to health and safety issues. Many of the students this year commented that they were extremely pleased to have chosen this program due to the extra amount of support and activities that CIEE provides to its participants throughout the semester.

### **Academic**

There were no significant changes to the academic program. Students continue to enroll directly in courses at the University of Cape Town. CIEE encourages students to take at least one course that has a specific South African focus.

### **Host Country Languages**

Students are not required to take a foreign language at UCT. However, staff encourage students to take either Afrikaans or isiXhosa in order to help develop communication skills for interacting with various communities in and around Cape Town. A small number of CIEE

students opted to take a language course each semester this year. Overall feedback for the Afrikaans courses was quite good, while feedback for the isiXhosa courses was quite mixed.

### **Out of classroom activities**

The CIEE Cape Town Arts and Sciences Program is designed to provide students with a strong and multifaceted introduction to South African history, politics, society, and culture. While the language classes do not have any formal outside activities, students on the CIEE program have the opportunity to practice their language skills during the Ocean View homestay weekend and volunteer projects in and around Cape Town.

### **Subject Area Courses**

Students select from a broad range of courses offered at the University of Cape Town. As students choose from literally hundreds of courses in the social sciences, humanities, and sciences, it is impossible to include a full list in this report. Students this year were particularly positive about the courses that they took in Politics, History, Religion, Sociology, Social Anthropology, African Studies, and the natural sciences.

One of the current challenges stems from the fact that many of the foreign students flock to the courses with a South African focus. This has led to over-crowding in some of the more popular courses. In order to address this issue, CIEE staff recommend that students take the majority of their courses in other areas. For example, students who chose courses in the natural sciences commented that there were few other Americans in their classes.

Although most students were generally very satisfied with their courses at UCT, several of them commented that it was difficult to adjust to the UCT academic system. The course registration is cumbersome and takes patience to navigate. Changes to the CIEE orientation this year and increased support from CIEE student assistants did help make this process more manageable than in previous years. The UCT academic environment is quite different from the typical U.S. university academic environment in terms of assessment and faculty support. CIEE discusses this at great length during the on-site orientation. The majority of the students this year listened carefully during the academic orientation sessions and did extremely well academically each semester.

### **Out of classroom activities**

Students participated in a variety of day trips and weekend excursions with classes in the natural sciences. As mentioned earlier, these classes attract a smaller number of international students and thus give CIEE participants a good opportunity to interact with local students. Students had positive things to say about these UCT course-related excursions.

### **Non-Academic**

#### **CIEE Orientation**

Student feedback on the CIEE orientation was extremely positive in both fall 2007 and spring 2008. CIEE resident staff and CIEE SOLMates (Student Orientation Leaders) continue to get rave reviews from students for their energy, enthusiasm, support, and organization during this important orientation period. The SOLMates are a carefully recruited and trained group of UCT students who work with the program throughout the semester. This year, CIEE held a weekend training retreat for all of these valuable student assistants. The retreat focused on leadership development, facilitation skills, team building, and techniques for managing groups. It also allowed staff and assistants to plan a variety of activities for the upcoming semester. During the CIEE orientation, these student leaders are responsible for leading several important small

group discussion activities with the CIEE students. These small group interactions allow the local students to talk with the American students about various cultural issues in a comfortable “peer-to-peer” environment. Despite the large size of the program, CIEE is continually attempting to create smaller group activities to provide maximum support for program participants. Several students this year commented that CIEE provided much more support and a better overall orientation than any other group on campus. The orientation successfully balances important issues such as health and safety, academics, and cultural adjustment with fun activities designed to introduce students to local communities and resources around Cape Town.

### **Cultural Activities/Field Trips**

The program includes a variety of day and weekend excursions and activities designed to introduce students to South African history, politics, society, and natural resources. Students in fall 2007 and spring 2008 rated the following excursions and activities very favorably.

### **Day or Evening Activities**

CIEE resident staff included time for reflection and discussion after each program activity in an attempt to get students to think more about their experiences throughout the semester. According to the CIEE Resident Director, this worked very well, as many students were eager to talk about what they had seen, heard, observed, and done. These activities are clearly seen as an important part of the CIEE “value added” experience in Cape Town.

In general, the same types of activities were offered in both the fall and spring semesters. This is a sample of activities organized for CIEE students during the 2007-08 academic year:

- Robben Island Tour and Reflection Discussion
- Professional Rugby and Soccer Matches
  - These activities introduce the importance of sport in South African society and help the students gain a better understanding of the racial dynamics involved. (Rugby has a strong white support base, while soccer has a strong black support base.)
- “Mirror Mirror” – Students attended this South African play that discusses the importance of keeping the government accountable for its actions. They also had the opportunity to meet with the playwright afterwards.
- Wine Tasting and Discussion of the Wine Industry in SA
- Township tours
- Private concert with “Freshly Ground,” one of the most popular and diverse South African bands. CIEE Stellenbosch staff and students joined the CIEE Cape Town staff and students for this special private event.
- UCT sporting events
- Lectures and discussions with prominent leaders in South Africa through the Center for Conflict Resolution
- River rafting
- Sea kayaking
- Special group dinners at local Cape Town restaurants
- Summer concert in the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens.

## **Overnight Fieldtrips**

One of the highlights of the program each semester is the popular Ocean View Homestay Weekend. Many students rated this as the most rewarding part of their time in Cape Town, as it enabled them to live with local families who had been “re-settled” during the Apartheid period. These families open their homes to CIEE for the full weekend, and many of the students end up returning to Ocean View later in the semester for follow-up visits with their families.

CIEE also arranged a one night tour of the wildflower region near Cape Town. Students and staff stayed on a wildlife game farm. Although the reflection activities built into this excursion did not go as well as planned, the students enjoyed the opportunity to explore this beautiful region. CIEE staff plan to offer this excursion again next year but will arrange for it to occur earlier in the semester so as not to conflict with exam periods at UCT.

## **Housing**

CIEE offers students three housing options: UCT residence hall with local and international students, CIEE houses near the UCT campus, and homestays with local families. Here is a breakdown of housing choices for this academic year:

Fall 2007: 49% Residence Hall, 45% CIEE Houses, and 6% Homestays

Spring 2008: 34% Residence Hall, 58% CIEE Houses, and 8% Homestays

CIEE is the only program provider at UCT that offers these three options.

CIEE now places local UCT students (CIEE SOLMates) in the CIEE houses and the residence hall. This has helped the CIEE students to adjust more effectively to the local student community and has provided an extra layer of support for the overall CIEE safety and security strategy. The local students (often referred to as “house reps”) help lead reflection sessions and group meetings. They work closely with staff to help support the overall program goals. In addition, they act as local peers who help the American students to make informed choices as they explore Cape Town and the surrounding areas.

CIEE made several important changes in 2007-08 with regard to its overall safety and security strategy. In addition to the local students who now live with CIEE students, CIEE added a second security company in order to provide more reliable security personnel for the CIEE houses at night.

Student feedback on CIEE housing remains very positive. Students appreciate the choices offered through this program. CIEE support for the housing component of this program is very strong, and there is regular contact between staff and student assistants about any important housing matters.

## **Community Engagement and Integration**

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### **Not-for-Credit Community Service/Volunteer**

CIEE staff are committed to offering program participants a variety of community engagement opportunities throughout each semester. In contrast to the intensive, for-credit service projects organized for the CIEE Cape Town Service-Learning Program, this program provides students with a variety of short-term and more informal volunteer activities at both an individual and group level.

In fall 2007 and spring 2008, approximately 70% of the students participated in a volunteer activity. This is a sample of the organizations and volunteer projects during this year:

- The Ark
  - This is a faith-based organization that provides support services for homeless people. CIEE students volunteered at the school every week and helped pupils with mathematics and life skills. Some students also worked with senior citizens.
- Baphumelele Children's Home and Emasithandane Children's Home
  - Students must apply for volunteer positions at both of these children's homes and are carefully selected for special skills that are needed each semester.
- Brooklyn Chest TB Hospital
  - Students help provide support for children in this hospital by reading to them or playing games with them.
- LEAP School
  - Students assist with the "life orientation" sessions at this special school designed to encourage more South African children to become scientists. Students who can commit more time to their volunteer activities are sometimes able to become tutors at this school. Students also assist with the school's cultural activities
- Tembaletu School for the Disabled
  - A former CIEE Cape Town student in a wheelchair helped create a strong relationship between CIEE and Tembaletu. Students now are regular volunteers at this school, helping inside the classroom with languages, mathematics, and science and outside the classroom through the school's sports program.
- Scalabrini Centre of Cape Town
  - This is a meeting place for refugees. Students work with staff to help refugees with curriculum vitae and job searches. Students also help teach computer and internet skills, teach English classes, and assist with food and clothing distribution.
- Lawrence House
  - This is a children's home associated with the Scalabrini Centre. Students volunteer to help children with homework and other educational activities. Several students helped the children compile a cookbook that included photos taken by the local kids.
- Habitat for Humanity
  - CIEE organizes a building project with Habitat for Humanity at least one weekend each semester. The students enjoy these projects as it allows them to see tangible results at the end of each day.

Student feedback this year suggests that many students had valuable volunteer experiences during their participation on this CIEE program. CIEE staff are examining ways to strengthen this aspect of the program so that more students participate in future semesters.

## **Challenges and Future Directions**

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### **Academic**

The primary academic challenge concerns the increasing student enrollments in UCT courses with a South African focus. CIEE staff are making students aware of this situation during orientation. They have also met with UCT officials to express their concerns about the sharp

increase in the number of U.S. students studying at UCT and the various new programs that are being planned for 2009 and beyond.

## **Non-Academic**

### **Internet access**

Students have access to wireless internet in the CIEE houses and the dorm, as well as on campus in various computer labs. The connections are sometimes very slow, but the students generally have reliable access to the internet.

### **Housing**

Students are generally very satisfied with the CIEE program housing. CIEE staff are monitoring student behavior in the CIEE houses more closely due to some problems this year with complaints from neighbors about noise levels. The addition of a local student to each house (as a house representative) has helped keep the noise levels more reasonable on most weekends, but CIEE is hoping to improve in this area for next year.

### **Student Integration into Community**

The program offers a variety of community integration opportunities. This includes integration with local students and families in CIEE housing, direct enrollment alongside local students in courses at UCT, the involvement of local students (CIEE SOLMates) in a various CIEE orientation and program activities, the Ocean View homestay weekend, volunteer opportunities, and a wide variety of program excursions and activities that give students direct contact with different communities and groups. Despite this, several students this year commented that they found it difficult to meet local South Africans. It may be impossible to reach all of the students, but the program certainly does offer a multitude of opportunities for connecting CIEE students with local South African communities.

### **Future Directions**

Overall, the CIEE Cape Town Arts and Sciences program continues to receive positive feedback from all of the students. It provides a good balance between structured co-curricular activities and on-site support with direct enrollment in University of Cape Town courses. CIEE resident staff consistently receive positive feedback from program participants every year, and many students have expressed their gratitude for the support that they have received with a variety of personal and academic issues. The UCT International Office has also shared their appreciation for the amount of support that CIEE Cape Town staff provide each semester for the students.

In future semesters, CIEE will continue to fine tune its safety strategy to provide its students with the safest possible experience in South Africa. In addition, CIEE is adding a new non-credit seminar focusing on intercultural development in a South African context. This will enable students to work in small groups with CIEE staff on a variety of intercultural activities and to examine their personal experiences in South Africa through various intercultural models and theories. Finally, CIEE is actively seeking more science students for the program. Although CIEE has recruited a sizeable number of science students to this program for many years, staff believe that the science courses at UCT are very strong and can provide good options for more U.S. students with an interest in the natural sciences.