

**Annual Study Center Review
CIEE Study Center at the University of Cape Town, Arts & Sciences Program
Cape Town, South Africa
2007**

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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 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 the CIEE Resident Director and 2006-07 students, the program is meeting these goals extremely well.

New & Noteworthy Features

Academic

There were no major changes to the academic structure of the program over the last academic year. Students enroll directly in a full load of courses at the University of Cape Town. Feedback from students continues to be positive with regard to the quality of academic instruction and range of course choices. CIEE staff encourage students to take at least one course that does not have an African focus in order to integrate CIEE students more fully with local students. CIEE students took courses throughout the full range of UCT academic departments, including Science, Humanities, Social Sciences, and specific African Studies offerings.

Although there is no language requirement for this program, a small group of students enrolled in either Xhosa or Afrikaans during the 2006-07 academic year. Feedback on these language courses was mixed. While most students enjoyed the Afrikaans course, there were some concerns about the Xhosa language courses. According to the CIEE Resident Director, the UCT African Languages Department did not receive sufficient funding in 2006. With additional funding this year, the department was able to improve the Xhosa course and add additional language tutorials. Xhosa is starting to gain popularity among the CIEE group. Both languages are valuable for CIEE students, as these are the languages most commonly spoken by the communities in which the students are volunteering. As a result, the students who took a language were able to practice the language at their volunteer sites. The students who took Afrikaans were also

able to use their language while they were on their three day homestay weekend in Ocean View.

Non-Academic

The CIEE Cape Town program orientation received very positive feedback from students this year. The combination of a strong resident staff and an enthusiastic group of CIEE Student Orientation Leaders (SOL Mates), local students who work with the program, allow for an educational, interactive, and enjoyable orientation to the university and life in Cape Town.

The program includes a series of local field trips, group activities, and overnight excursions. As the size of the student group has increased, the CIEE staff have made every effort to organize smaller group activities to address the specific interests of various students. Here is a sample list of the local excursions that occurred this year:

- Visit to District Six Museum to learn about the forced removals of the people of District Six.
- Cape Point day-trip
- Excursion to Robben Island
- Attended a play at the Baxter Theatre that dealt with domestic violence.
- Whale-watching day trip
- River-rafting day trip
- Rugby game at Newlands.
- Soccer game at Athlone Stadium.
- Attended a local South African film festival
- Wine tasting and Cellar Tour.
- Attended a concert featuring a South African band called ‘ Freshly Ground.’
- Additional small group visits to local Cape Town museums

CIEE Cape Town continues to offer students the unique opportunity to spend three nights in Ocean View, a small re-settled community south of Cape Town. This valuable experience, often rated by students as the most rewarding part of the program, allows students to live with a local family in a “coloured” community, exposing them to positive images of previously disadvantaged groups of people in South Africa, including the “coloured” and Muslim communities. The bonds formed between the CIEE students and their host families are very strong, and many of the students this year returned individually to spend additional weekends with their hosts. Several even brought US visitors and family to meet their South African hosts in Ocean View.

The CIEE Cape Town Arts & Sciences program offers students three different housing options. This year, approximately 50% of the students opted to live in CIEE houses located in the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the UCT campus. Approximately 30% of the students each semester lived in Liesbeeck Gardens Residence, a UCT-managed student residence hall near campus, while a small number of students lived with CIEE homestay families. This mixture of options seems to work well for the students, as housing feedback was generally quite positive. Additional housing challenges will be discussed in the “Challenges and Future Directions” section of this report.

Community Engagement and Integration

Many CIEE Cape Town students chose to get involved with local communities for non-credit volunteer projects. CIEE continues to assist students with volunteer placements with various UCT and independent organizations. These include:

SHAWCO (Student Health and Wellness Centres Organisation): This organization operates in cooperation with UCT and also works directly with CIEE for the CIEE Cape Town Service-Learning Program. It offers 15 projects in four different communities. A large number of CIEE Arts & Sciences program students work with SHAWCO each semester.

The Ark: Several students volunteered at this safe home for homeless people. They worked with the school at this organization to help set-up a library and assisted teachers with the Arts and Culture classes. Two students helped choreograph a dance piece with the Ark students and performed at local theatre as part of a fundraising initiative for the organization.

Baphumelele and Emasithandane: CIEE maintains strong relationships with these two local orphanages. Students volunteered at these orphanages in both the fall and spring semesters.

CHAT (Community Health and Arts Trust): Based at the Brooklyn Chest TB Hospital, this organization invited CIEE students to volunteer with local children in the hospital.

LEAP School: CIEE students volunteered at this unique school that offers high school students from previously disadvantaged communities the opportunity to gain advancement in the sciences.

Tembaletu: This is a local school for people with disabilities. A CIEE student who uses a wheelchair volunteered at this school and helped to establish a Sports Day for the Tembaletu students.

Challenges & Future Directions

There are no significant problems with the academic component of this program, and students continue to be generally pleased with their courses at UCT. Improvements to the Afrikaans and Xhosa courses should lead to better language outcomes in the next few semesters. CIEE staff continue to work with students during orientation to assist them with the UCT course registration process. Although the process is somewhat challenging, the students were able to register for their courses more easily this year than in previous years.

There continue to be several challenges associated with the CIEE Cape Town Arts & Sciences Program. Safety in South Africa is a serious concern that CIEE has proactively addressed each semester. CIEE made significant improvements to the security of the student houses this year. These included the addition of new ADT-supported security systems, student keychain alarms, and improved coordination with UCT Campus Security, ADT, and the local police. CIEE staff continue to work closely

with students to remind them of the importance of following CIEE safety protocol carefully throughout the semester. Beginning in fall 2007, CIEE will implement additional measures to help assure the safety of students in CIEE student homes. These include:

- Discontinuation of rental properties along specific streets near campus due to concerns about continued safety problems
- Addition of local students (CIEE SOLMates) to each home in order to help integrate the housing and provide students with additional support
- Hiring of guards to monitor safety and security at CIEE rental properties

CIEE is the only U.S. program that has access to the UCT student dormitories. The dormitory is quite safe, has a full-time guard, and allows students to live with local UCT students.

Some students have expressed concerns over problems with the wireless internet access in the dormitory. This is an on-going issue, but students do have access to internet in the dormitory computer lab as well as other computer labs at UCT. Students in the CIEE houses expressed concerns about the high price of internet access. The system is quite different from the typical US internet “unlimited use” system, and thus students who spend large amounts of time using the internet, sending photos, or downloading large files are surprised by their monthly costs.

In order to encourage more student integration, CIEE staff plan to do more to encourage students to get involved with UCT student clubs and societies. The university holds a large Student Activities Fair each semester that allows students to learn about these student organizations very easily. Beginning in fall 2007, CIEE will also hold three reflection sessions (beginning of semester, mid-term, and end of semester). These sessions are designed to provide a forum for discussion and reflection about the students’ experiences in South Africa. The mid-term reflection session will be done off-site during a weekend.

The CIEE Cape Town Arts & Sciences Program remains one of the most popular CIEE programs available. This is largely due to the combination of an outstanding CIEE resident staff, a strong academic program, and numerous opportunities for learning about South Africa through unique excursions and volunteer opportunities.