

# **Academic Consortium Board**

## **Evaluation of the CIEE Study Center Program at Ashesi University, Accra, Ghana**

**Spring Semester, 2008**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Academic Consortium Board (ACB) of CIEE is pleased to present the following report on the CIEE Study Center Program at the Ashesi University in Accra, Ghana. Members of the ACB received the report of the site visit team. After review, the ACB accepted the report, and presents it to the Academic Consortium. The “Plan for Program Evaluation” is available at <http://www.ciee.org>.

We wish to make clear at the outset that we greatly value the cooperation of Ashesi University. This report is a review of CIEE's program and not a review or evaluation of Ashesi University as an institution. The review focuses on the program offered by the CIEE Study Center and on the Twi courses offered by CIEE as part of the International Study Program at Ashesi. In addition, the site visit team has examined CIEE's relations with Ashesi University and its analysis has been presented to CIEE staff.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Mission Statement of the CIEE Study Center program at Ashesi University is: ‘To understand and learn to live with the challenges of living in a developing country while appreciating the efforts of locals to improve their lot.’ This mission statement needs to be strengthened to include mention of academic study, to identify ‘locals’ as Ghanaians, and to speak to Ghana as a fast growing and dynamic country as opposed to talking about efforts “to improve their lot.”

CIEE's Study Center in Ghana at Ashesi University (<http://www.ashesi.edu.gh/>) is based at a small, six year old private university in Accra with a hybrid curriculum offering strong courses in business, economics, accounting, and computer science alongside liberal arts courses, including Africana Studies courses. Ashesi, and its dynamic president, is representative of Ghana as a stable, vibrant, and fast-growing country with a long, rich history and strong cultural traditions. This is the second year of CIEE's program at Ashesi, and students are responding favorably to their experiences there.

The academic program at Ashesi is solid and the CIEE students report they are mostly satisfied with their courses. With less than 400 students at the university classes are small and interactive. Teaching is far more dynamic than the traditional lecture style typically found at public universities in Ghana. This style of teaching is facilitated by the class size at Ashesi of between 10 and 40 students, and students receive on-going assessment of their work throughout the semester. The courses are rigorous and are particularly valuable for students in economic and business. CIEE students report wonderful exchanges occurring among students within and beyond the classroom.

During the first year of the CIEE Program at Ashesi (2006-07) the university did not offer the number of Africana course that CIEE had expected to be available. This resulted in an outcry from students and their home campuses. The Africana Studies curriculum has been expanded and now features five courses with at least two more expected to be added next year. We believe Ashesi has taken significant steps to expand the African course offerings and we do not anticipate this being a serious future issue.

The program begins with a well thought through and delivered ten-day orientation program that is followed later in the semester by a series of weekend excursions that introduce students to Ghana, mostly beyond Accra. The orientation program and accompanying in-country handbook cover life in Ghana and issues that students simply must pay close attention to—matters of safety and security and health. Although Ashesi is in a relatively safe neighborhood, students do not spend all their time there and so need to be reminded to follow the safety guidelines they are given and not become lax in following them as they grow comfortable living in Ghana. On the health side, the new malaria ‘contract’ that students agree to and sign, which allows the director to send a student home who is not taking his malaria medication, is working well at reducing the incidence of malaria infection. The program also brings the students together 30-days after the initial orientation for a follow-up session is a plus, and that they do so again after another six weeks or so and conclude with a re-entry workshop, are all very positive features.

Students are housed in university hostels with Ghanaian roommates and in homestays. The challenges of a homestay includes the need for students to follow family rules which often include curfews, which once adjusted to prove to be rich and valuable learning experiences. Hostel living is comfortable and students speak fondly of this arrangement, although there can be a few weeks of flat mates adjusting to living with each other. Housing is the major limitation on CIEE expanding its enrollments at Ashesi which is limited to 20. The Ashesi administration thinks the opportunity to expand homestays in this area are favorable, and in particular recommended CIEE consider working with local Rotary clubs in Accra of which there are quite a few.

In the RD and the local staff, CIEE is indeed fortunate. Students uniformly report the local staff as being amazingly helpful and supportive. Students appreciate the challenges they regularly face living in a different environment, and having the CIEE staff and U-Pals to guide them through their experiences in Ghana, makes for their having a positive experience. Female program staff is particularly valuable as a resource to whom women students can turn to address certain gender-specific issues. Kwasi Gyasi-Gyamerah is a special person who serves as an excellent model for the rest of his staff in terms of what he expects from them, and it is clear they respond. His long-term experience with the program and CIEE students is of inestimable value to the program. The evaluation team has a clear sense that together, the director, the staff and the students make up a well functioning CIEE family.

### **Recommendation:**

- 1) Improve and update the Mission Statement for the program with Ashesi University as this one is inadequate and does not reflect the academic focus of Ashesi. For the time being it might be better served by simply using the mission statement of the CIEE Study Center program at Legon. This might be particularly appropriate since Ashesi has consciously hired so many international, especially African, faculty members.

Additionally, once re-crafted, the program would do well to work with CIEE staff in Maine to also add specific learning goals and/or objectives that emerge from the mission statement so as to be able to assess better the learning of the students who enroll in and complete the program.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The evaluation site visit team consisted of

Neal Sobania, Executive Director, Wang Center for International Programs and Professor of History, Pacific Lutheran University, Team Leader]  
Dianna Shandy, Associate Professor of Anthropology, Macalester College, and  
Jeffrey Allen Tucker, Associate Professor of English and Director, Frederick Douglass Institute, University of Rochester

The three members of the site visit team each reviewed the history and evaluation of the program produced by CIEE. They studied the course catalog, and reviewed course syllabi for all program courses; they read end-of-session reports; they reviewed statistical information on the participants (numbers, gender, and ethnicity statistics, sending institutions, etc.). They reviewed staff and instructor curriculum vitae. They reviewed the pre-departure orientation handbook, and the on-site orientation schedule. They reviewed the student evaluation summaries and all the evaluations covering the program. The chair contacted the top seven sending institutions since the program began drawn from the Academic Consortium to learn their perspective on the program. Finally, they reviewed the CIEE strategic analysis of the program.

In preparation for the site visit, the team chair wrote a memo, which was distributed on site by the Resident Director to the students inviting them to give the team comments either in writing or orally during the visit. We were able to talk with five of the ten students on the program about aspects of the program over lunch, with one student during a visit to her at her homestay, and during times before and after two classes the chair was able to attend on his last day of the visit (Ashesi was on spring break during the week of the visit). (See the appended site visit schedule).

We met with and had an excellent free-flowing conversation with Patrick Awuah, the President and founder of Ashesi University, and Carol Asamoah, the Acting Registrar and Director of Admissions. We toured the campus' three compounds with Aileen Adu Sobeng, the CIEE Program Assistant, and Allison Cohen, a part-time instructor at Ashesi and part-time CIEE staff member, who is a former CIEE student in Ghana. We spoke with the new Head Librarian, Nina Chachu and were impressed that when we asked about a particular book after touring the library, she was immediately on the Internet trying to track it down, we presume for purchase. The chair also met with Prof Molar Ogundipe, who we originally understood was head of the new Africana program but learned later that she is presently Professor of English and Africana Studies. It is indeed the intention of Ashesi for her to become the head of Africana studies, but since this is only her first year they are treating it as a probationary year and the position of head of this unit will only come next year after evaluating her work this semester.

And as noted, the chair visited two classes on the last day of his time in Ghana, a third year course on International Trade and Policy, and an Africana course on African

Repertory: Dance & Music taught by Prof. Yartley. He also reviewed the syllabus for the Africana course, West African Cultural Values through Print and Film Texts.

More informally, we enjoyed a dinner of traditional Ghanaian dishes with the staff members and U-Pals from both the Legon and the Ashesi program. This came on the first evening of the review, and set an excellent atmosphere for the subsequent meetings and time we spent with all of these staff members whether as individuals or in groups.

Team members spoke at length with the RD, Kwasi Gyasi-Gyamrah, in both formal meetings and in more informal settings, including traveling from Accra to Cape Coast and back.

The site visit team jointly drafted and agreed on the recommendations that are part of this report.

## **ENROLLMENT STATISTICS**

Current enrollment: 10

**Average enrollment:** 8.5

**Highest Recent Enrollment:** 10

**Lowest Recent Enrollment:** 7

## **EVALUATION**

In accordance with the Program Evaluation Plan for ACB Program Review, the evaluation report is divided into twelve sections below, corresponding with the terms of reference specified in the plan.

### **I. Quality of the Academic Activities**

Ashesi University is a private university in its sixth year of operation. It is small with 360 students now enrolled and a capacity at the present location of 600. Today, the campus consists of 3 compounds in the midst of an upper middle class residential neighborhood. Preliminary architectural drawings have been made for a college campus to be built north of Accra, with the intention that the university will move to this location in five years. Even with the new campus the overall enrollment goal is between 1500 and 2000 students.

To hear President Awuah describes Ashesi as a purposefully built hybrid system with students doing majors and a type of liberal arts curriculum to create a new generation of leaders who are critical thinkers, have studied ethics, and yet have hard skills that employers and the country need now. Today the curriculum is focused on business, computer science, economics, math, research methods, leadership, and Africana courses. The Africana courses ground Ashesi degree-seeking students with a solid sense of the context of their country's history and cultures. As the university grows, they expect to add majors and other professional programs.

As part of the liberal arts core that each student must take to graduate is a series of Leadership courses; one at each of the four class levels (e.g. Challenge of Leadership; The Good Society and the Rule of Law; Leadership and Service).

Indeed, as part of these courses students must participate in a community service program and often work with NGOs and other volunteer organizations. Ashesi arranges these opportunities, and CIEE students taking a Leadership course also must meet this requirement. In all cases the service opportunity needs to be linked back to the classroom learning (e.g. at orphanages students assist with financial planning; at hospitals computer science students create programs for record keeping). Some of the Ashesi students we spoke with were using their spring break to meet this requirement.

At the same time they welcome international students even though it might be thought such students they take up places that Ghanaian students might possibly occupy. The President assured us that this is not the case. Rather, from the Ashesi perspective, international students are part of introducing their students to the broader society in which they will work, and to do so the university notes that it needs diversity in the faculty, staff and students (both cultural and economic diversity). Although CIEE is only one of two US-based study abroad programs at Ashesi, only CIEE students are fully integrated. There are also students from other countries in Africa. Together the international students bring different perspectives on the world, and make Ashesi intellectually stronger. The Ashesi goal is to have 10% of their student body be international students. For now the limitation on CIEE enrollment at a maximum of 20 per semester is housing in the Ashesi hostels. If homestays can be expanded so can enrollment.

### **A. Teaching**

The CIEE students report they are very satisfied with their courses. The courses are rigorous and are particularly valuable for students in economic and business. CIEE students report wonderful exchanges occurring among students within and beyond the classroom. Teaching is far more dynamic than the traditional lecture style typically found at universities in Ghana. This style of teaching is facilitated by the class size at Ashesi of between 10 and 40 students. For example, in the International Trade and Policy course the day's readings were actively discussed in class. These consisted of two serious case studies taken from two well-regarded academic journals: the *Journal of Development and Change* and the *Journal of Asian Studies*. There were 37 students in this class, and the instructor raised questions and asked for definitions and the students participated.

The African Repertory class is quite different but certainly has all the class members fully engaged, singing, dancing and making music. All of this is done within the context of learning more about Ghanaian culture and will by the end of the semester result in the student being able to perform a number of dances, all the music, song and steps that this involves. They will never again look at an African dance or hear African music without questioning the cultural components that it represents.

### **B. Assessment**

Classes include continuous assessment and students write papers. As one student declared, "Ashesi is for real!" She went on to explain that it is different from what she had expected from talking with peers on her campus that had done study abroad on other programs elsewhere.

### **C. Appropriateness of Academic Offerings**

For students in business, accounting, finance, economics, computer science, politics, and African Studies, Ashesi can be a good fit. There is also the possibility for students who need a general education requirement to find it here, e.g. a math economics, sociology course. Along with clear catalog copy and on-line materials, careful academic advising of students from Maine will be critical.

#### **Recommendation:**

2) The new CIEE catalog and the staff in Maine need to give a better sense of what the strengths of the Ashesi curriculum are and a more accurate description of what is available by way of Africana courses.

#### **Africana Courses:**

During the first year of the CIEE Program at Ashesi (2006-07) the university did not offer the number of Africana course that CIEE had expected to be available. This resulted in an outcry from students and their home campuses. The Africana Studies curriculum has been expanded and now features five courses including, West African Cultural Values, Comparative Politics, Conflict in African States, Gender & Women in African Literature & Film, and African Repertory: Music & Dance. Ashesi has now taken significant steps to correct this and we do not anticipate this being a serious future issue.

We spoke with students who are enrolled in these courses; they report satisfaction with some of these courses, and distinct dissatisfaction with others (namely the Cultural Values and Gender & Women courses, which are taught by the same instructor). More specifically, they've criticized the instructor of these latter two courses for lack of preparedness and an antagonist tone toward American students for their incorrect assumptions about Africa. The challenge is that this instructor is the same instructor who Ashesi has hired, a Nigerian national who has taught African literature at various institutions for many years in the United States, with the intention of her heading the Africana course section. They have not yet made this appointment and are treating this year as a kind of probationary year. We understand she will offer these same courses again in the fall 2008, and develop two new courses for spring 2009. Therefore, it will be important to monitor carefully the development and offerings of new Africana courses, how students are reacting to them, and to be sure that the syllabi are using readings that are more up-to-date texts and articles than a couple of the present courses are using. They may be thought of as classics to some but they will not be well received on home campus by Africana faculty members who may be asked to review a syllabus before a student receives academic credit.

It is also worth noting, that these courses are a required part of the liberal arts core for Ashesi students who must take two Africana courses to graduate.

**Recommendation:**

3) Continue to monitor carefully the development and offerings of new Africana courses, and be sure that the readings being used reflect more up-to-date current texts and articles.

**Twi Language Classes:**

The Twi-language class offered to CIEE students provides foundational grammar, pronunciation guides, and vocabulary and is offered for six weeks meeting for two hours four times a week.

Twi classes appear to be working quite well for the students, although the instructor, Mr. Safo is recommending that the course be offered for only four hours per week over 12 weeks. He also wants to take students (or already does take them—this is not entirely clear and there appears to be some contradiction from what he presents and what the students report) to various locations for them to practice particular vocabulary, e.g. the beach, the market, etc. This model of actually going out with the instructor and actively using the language makes sense given past and current enrollment numbers, but if the class size climbs to 15 this may not work as well. Still there may be some advantage to a two-hour in class session followed the same week by a second two-hour practical lab session in the community.

**Recommendation:**

4) Have Mr. Safo submit a formal proposal complete with syllabus and learning objectives/goals for a redesigned course and have this appropriately reviewed. We would, however, suggest he consider front loading the language basics when students could continue to attend class four times a week, but thereafter only two hours a week for the following 10 weeks. This could help address the concern that engagement with Twi is lost after the first 6 weeks of the program. Students felt there were pros and cons to this recommendation. They thought it could enhance their overall experience with Twi. Moreover reducing the number of class sessions per week would free up space in their schedules earlier in the program to begin participation in a volunteering or internship opportunity. On the other side, completing Twi after 6 weeks also opens up space in students' schedules albeit according to a different timetable.

5) Purchase and provide to each student a copy of the Twi text by Dolphyne that is available in the University of Ghana-Legon bookstore for about \$5. Students have been encouraged to purchase it but claim not to know where to find it, and at UG-Legon Twi classes refer to the text in class frequently and all have a copy.

**II. Quality and Appropriateness of Services****A. Pre-departure services**

Sending institutions report no serious complaints about getting questions addressed by CIEE. However, student evaluations from the past couple of years have included enough negative feedback on their interactions with CIEE-Portland—from getting information to receiving it in a timely fashion—that we need to note it. We have no

way of knowing if this is a matter of staff in Maine being less familiar with this program, or symptomatic of something else in communications. What is clear is that with small growing programs such as this one, we cannot afford to lose interested students over issues that we should be able to control.

There also appears to be somewhat of a disconnect between information CIEE is providing pre-departure and to a lesser degree on-site and what the students are taking on-board. One reason for this disconnect seems to be that students may not always read per-departure information completely or thoroughly. There may be many reasons for this including their preparation for departure coming at a hectic time (e.g. end of semester exams), a naïve realism, i.e. the perception that we're all pretty much the same and that things cannot be all that different in Ghana.

There may also be an issue with the form of the handbook—the sheer volume of the material to be digested, the presentation of information as written material, and the datedness of some handbook material. Clearly things are rapidly changing in Ghana in terms of availability of certain items, youth culture, etc., and there may be a gap between what is said and what is understood, e.g. understanding and appreciating that Visa and Mastercard are in fact really different.

#### **Recommendation:**

6) CIEE should consider using digital electronic options to communicate with students prior to their departure for Ghana: These might include:

A) a podcast or other downloadable video on the Legon program (and Ashesi as well) which could be placed on the CIEE website. Given the RDs considerable communication skills, an online video featuring his description of the programs in Ghana, or an interview between CIEE administrator and the RD, would be particularly effective.

B) Another possibility is creating a student-generated wiki, which responds to the rapid change occurring in Ghana and assists students through peer advising. Student-to-student communications drawing on first hand experience is usually very effective, and is in fact what is happening on US campuses when students who have studied in Ghana encourage others to do the same. Issues that could be addressed include the local availability and costs of toiletries, attire for class versus hostel, and access to Cedis via cash, credit card and travelers checks.

Suggested handbook revisions:

While we will not go into detail on all the changes that seem appropriate to consider, allow us to cite one example to illustrate the point. Students continue to find CIEE's recommendations about clothing suggestions to be inaccurate or unhelpful. Students claim 1) that the warnings about failing to dress modestly are overblown, and 2) that they didn't realize that Ghanaian students always make an effort to look their best, leaving the American students feeling (and looking) like slobs in comparison. Still, students need to understand that they are looked at askance by Ghanaians, or have unwanted conclusions drawn by Ghanaians, especially men about women, when showing of bra straps with tank tops. Also, flip flops are not worn in class, although both of these are acceptable in student housing. One



student told us she would have liked to have been told pre-departure that she should 'dress to impress' to better fit in with Ghanaian cultural norms surrounding attire at the university.

### **Recommendation:**

7) Review current norms in Ghana with current handbook language. e.g. how students dress on US campuses is usually not found in UG classrooms, e.g. flip flops, pajama bottoms, and shorts. Rather, a premium is placed on being neat, clean and presentable.

8) Give consideration to updating the 'Books on Ghana' including listing shorter pieces or journal articles rather than entire books, as a way of encouraging students to engage with some of this material before departure. For example, this list might usefully include Maya Angelou's *All God's Children Got Traveling Shoes* (Angelou's biographical book on her time living in Ghana which includes her experience in meeting W.E.B. DuBois and her experience of living in Ghana as an African-American). Being mindful of copyright issues, explore ways to include links or other electronic access to useful resources. A list of suggested books is attached some of which might be usefully used in the pre-departure materials, or for purchase as a gift to the Ashesi Library.

9) Although the RD addresses the issue of Ghanaian attitudes toward homosexuality explicitly and appropriately in the handbook that students receive upon arrival in Ghana, CIEE must also, tactfully and respectfully, alert students pre-departure that those attitudes are less tolerant than they are in the U.S. (One of the first signs greetings arrivals at the airport states the nation's intolerance of "pedophiles and other sexual deviants;" a statement that could be interpreted as equating non-heteronormative behaviors with child sexual abuse.) It is not the right or responsibility of the program to transform Ghanaian society, but all students, including GLBT students, considering study abroad in Ghana need to know about such attitudes early in the decision-making process.

### **B. Orientation**

The orientation provided on site is uniformly appreciated, consistently receives high marks, and takes place over about a week and a half. Upon arrival students are taken to a hotel for the first two days of orientation. Here they are introduced to Ghana today, culture issues from customs and etiquette to gender, race, and sexuality. Sessions are also held on safety and security, health issues, local transportation, communication and finance. Following sessions on rules and regulations related to housing the students depart the hotel for their housing assignments. The weekend after the hotel-based orientation and the move to their housing includes an introductory tour of Accra. The following week focuses on academic advising, registration for classes, which is time consuming and is supplemented with a series of lectures. These lecturers are designed to bring students up to speed on Ghana by introducing them to topics that include literature, the Ghanaian economy, and Ghanaian culture and society.

In many ways the orientation continues throughout the semester with a series of field trips/excursions, which have been thoughtfully chosen and continue to

introduce the students to different aspects of Ghanaian history, and non-Accra regions. For more on the excursions see the section noted as 'Other' below.

### **C. Academic Advising**

Academic advising takes place as part of the extended orientation program and is not particularly complicated because of the small selection of classes. As on their US campus, students need to match the course they want with the time slots in which they are offered. Students express satisfaction with the courses they have available, and the time table makes clear when each one meets.

### **D. Housing**

- Homestays: 3
- Ashesi Student Hostel: 7

The homestay housing options seem quite workable with at least one student having her own room with attached bathroom. They are effective at providing a full-immersion experience, especially with regard to Twi language, even if the home family speaks Ga or another Ghanaian language. The difficulty with homestays is for the student to understand, and then sometimes negotiate, the rules they will need to follow. The issue of rules and hours needs to be better addressed in the handbook, along with the many benefits that accrue from living with a family. The Ashesi administration suggested that CIEE contact some of the Rotary groups in Ghana (we saw references to some eight to ten different clubs posted in the airport) as these are internationally minded people, many who travel and may be open to having students in a homestay situation.

The Ashesi female hostel consists of a 3 large apartments each one housing 8 students in 4 double bedrooms. It took awhile for the Ghanaian female students to warm up to the Americans but the situation was described to us as now being okay and all getting along and enjoying each others company. The largest issue the CIEE students faced was that especially in the common areas of the apartment, the Ghanaian students are fastidious about keeping it neat. This does not match well with what American students who live in apartments consider to be neat. It also came as a surprise to the CIEE student that periodically the Ashesi Dean of Students and university clinic nurse pay unannounced inspections. Again, some appropriate language about this needs to find its way into the CIEE handbook so students have a heads up as to what they will find, and then allowing the CIEE staff in Ghana to reinforce all of this in the on-site orientation.

As the homestays are offered on a first come first served basis, we recommend the program inform the students in advance of their arrival as to whether they will be in a homestay or hostel. This will allow the students to plan accordingly as to what to bring for their specific housing arrangement.

### **Recommendation:**

10) Add appropriate language to the CIEE program handbook to give a better description of the housing options available at Ashesi and the fact that there are

basic rules that need to be followed and these are not like US university residence halls.

11) As it adds homestays, CIEE should regularly meet with homestay families, especially the mother, to help the mother understand their American student and the background they come from, especially with respect to university housing and rules, in the US. Similarly, the staff should make it known to the CIEE student, that if they need help in negotiating curfews and other matters that the staff is ready to assist.

12) The program should inform students well in advance of their departure for Ghana as to whether their housing will be in a homestay or hostel, allowing them to plan accordingly as to what to bring for these different sorts of housing arrangements.

### **E. Accommodation of Special Needs**

It was not clear to us if Ashesi has physically challenged students enrolled. Because the university is in three residential compounds, although all quite near each other, we are unsure of their ability to accommodate special needs students. Each situation needs to be addressed on a case-by-case basis and we suggest that students with special needs get in touch with CIEE early so that accommodations may be made.

### **F. Other**

Medical services seem very adequate in case of illness or injury. CIEE has been in Ghana long enough to have established which of the variety of clinics and hospitals they should be using. There is a small clinic staffed by a nurse at Ashesi and the Nyaho Medical Centre, which is a small private hospital, is not far away and open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The US Embassy often recommends the Trust Hospital in Osu, which is also private and not too far away. Both are more expensive than other options, but the students have insurance and if it is anything more than a minor illness or injury the staff tend to use one of the other of these.

#### Field Trips and Excursions:

The program sponsors a number of important field trips throughout the semester. In some ways it is worth considering these part of an extended orientation program. Because these excursions are called 'field trips' which we believe has the connotation in students' minds of something more akin to a high school outing (we participated in one to three different Accra sites), we feel strongly the need for these excursions to include some sort of context beforehand, possibly including short readings or at least direction for those students who want to know more. This again will support the British/UG education model of the students being responsible for their own education: 'Here is where you start if you want to know more.' To this end we suggest consideration be given to offering a short lecture or presentation on slavery and the place of Ghana in slavery prior to the excursion to Cape Coast. Without this students will only hear what a tour guide has to say. Before visiting the Nkrumah Mausoleum and the DuBois House consider an introduction to who these people were and their place in history. Before traveling to Kumasi something on Ashante culture, the retention of traditions such as *kente* and *adinkra* cloth making and the place of chieftaincy in historical and contemporary Ghana. Discussions of

matrilineality will help students relate to the complexity of how gender is reckoned in African settings. Travel to the Volta region and the Akosombo excursion both suggest the possibility of topics related to conservation and environmental issues, both of which are often of considerable interest to US students.

**Recommendation:**

13) The program should consider providing a more popular-type presentation—as opposed to scholarly/academic—prior to each program excursion, and students be given a short reading(s) related to the excursion. These presentations need not be given by Ashesi faculty members but might draw on appropriate MA or Ph.D. students at the University of Ghana.

Volunteer opportunities:

As noted above, volunteer opportunities at Ashesi are part of the Leadership course curriculum. Student not participating in one of those courses may not be aware of volunteer opportunities, although the CIEE Handbook for the program speaks about internship and community service opportunities. Students did not mention this option and it is not clear how many of the students actually take up such an opportunity. It is our sense that because the academics are so very different from the UG courses, Ashesi students may have less out of class time available. The introduction in the Handbook that only seriously committed students should apply is well said. However, the list of possible internship/community service sites is nothing more than a list. At the very least, each should contain a few statements about what the organization is and what students who have volunteered there before have done. Also as this aspect of the program develops, as we think it should, CIEE Staff will probably need to work closely with the Ashesi administration so CIEE does not appear to be taking away volunteer opportunities from the Ashesi courses.

**III. Quality and Appropriateness of the Students Who Participate**

Students are well qualified, well motivated, and find their way to Ghana for a wide variety of reasons, including simply wanting to go to Africa. Increasingly children of the Ghanaian diaspora are finding their way to Ghana via study abroad programs. Still, students regularly find challenges in local culture, from male and female roles and misconceptions about malaria to food and using a *trotro*.

Women: cultural roles of males and females—Ghanaian men and US women. As in the past, female students report forwardness on the part of Ghanaian men toward them, but most say that they are prepared to handle or are in the process of acquiring skills to handle such situations.

Students have a tendency, desire, and expectation to stay or be out after 9:00 pm, later than most Ghanaian students and curfews at homestays. Timely return home, however, contributes to students' safety (see the Safety section below).

Re: African-American Students:

At the present time the Ashesi program is not attracting the same diversity of students as the program at Legon. The campus also presents a different atmosphere in part because the student body is generally economically better off. African-American expectations of a “homecoming” experience in Ghana have been reported in the past. These problems are not evident among the group of students with whom we met. Black and white American students have friendly social interactions. Moreover, African-American students, though valuing the opportunity to learn more about the history and cultures of Africa in general and Ghana in particular, understand and appreciate their differences from Africans and discuss those differences with Ghanaian students. One CIEE student in particular is completing an independent study on the distinctly different attitudes toward Africa of three literary movements: the Harlem Renaissance, the Black Arts Movement, and the New Black Aesthetic. Such a project demonstrates an ability to think critically about the relationship between Africa and America.

LGBT students: again, we want to draw attention to the national study underway of university student attitudes toward gay students. When study findings become available in the next year or so, recruiting staff in Portland need to be carefully and fully briefed as to how to respond to questions about LGBT students studying in Ghana. It will also be important for an appropriate statement about LGBT students to be included in both the pre-departure handbook and the on-site Ghana handbook.

#### **IV. Quality of Facilities**

##### **A. Office and Class space**

CIEE has a small office in the main compound of Ashesi and it seems to meet the program’s needs. Because the campus has a high-tech computer lab and other spaces with computers in them, students do not depend on the program office for access to the Internet and e-mail.

##### **B. Library**

Ashesi is building the content of its library, and while the Africana section is not particularly up-to-date the head librarian seems quite open to having titles suggested for purchase. CIEE might want to consider periodically making a gift of books to add to the library and a list of some more contemporary titles on Ghana is appended to this evaluation.

##### **C. Computer and e-mail facilities**

Because Ashesi’s academic focus on business and computer science, fuelled in part by the president’s prior career in the high tech world, Ashesi will always have computers, Internet access and e-mail high on its list of priorities. It is not an area CIEE should have to concern itself with.

## **V. The Program's Plans for Improving its Teaching and Services**

These matters are addressed throughout the other sections of this report

## **VI. Relationship with the Host University**

As previously noted, CIEE is one of only two US-based study abroad programs at Ashesi, and only CIEE students are fully integrated. Because of the value Ashesi places on having study abroad students on campus and enrolled in courses, the program seems to be an excellent fit. CIEE's enrollment is presently capped at 20 students but this is dictated by the availability of Ashesi housing for these students. If additional homestay housing can be located, there would seem to be room for some additional students.

## **VII. Perceived Satisfaction of the Consortium Member Institutions**

Before departing for Ghana, the chair communicated with representatives of the top sending institutions: Columbia University, University of Rochester, Brown University, Macalester College, and Franklin and Marshall College. The program is too new for sending institutions to have strong opinions one way or the other about the program, and the number of students remains small. With Ashesi offering more Africana courses, most initial concern with the program should dissipate.

## **VIII. Perceived Satisfaction of the Student Participants**

Students generally express satisfaction with the program. They are especially pleased with the staff, with off-campus excursions arranged by the program, and the relationships they are making with Ghanaians. As the program grows and better academic advising is done to match students with the strengths of the University, there should continue to be a high level of satisfaction.

## **IX. Safety and Security Issues**

The upper middle class residential neighborhood in which Ashesi University is located, and also where the students are housed (hostels and homestays) is a relatively safe area. As a result there have been very few problems with safety and security at or near the university. Still, it is too easy in Ghana to have a false sense of security. The friendly, outgoing and ever-helpful people can lead students to forget Accra is a large urban city and must be treated as such. If students follow the guidance given them in the CIEE pre-departure handbook, take to heart the advice given them during orientation and periodically review what is written in the Program handbook they can largely remain safe and secure. Difficulty arises when they do not follow this guidance, ignore some basic rules and succumb to the 'invincibility' factor that students of this age are known to harbor, whether in the US or abroad.

The CIEE staff and the staff of Ashesi University are well aware that the safety and security of students is a serious issue. The greatest factor in keeping safe

needs to be focused on what the students themselves are doing. To this end we recommend that the orientation program at the hotel not only include talks to the students about safety and security issues, but also create a series of 'critical incidents' drawing on past examples of incidents students and faculty have experienced, and then use these as the lead into engaging the students in a discussion of safety. The students need to appreciate that they cannot do things here in Ghana that they would not do in the US, e.g. meeting strangers on the street who are friendly and not only telling them their name, but where they live and inviting them in. Having them work on considering such incidents in small groups and then through a broader discussion will perhaps give greater reality to their place in the community and provide forewarning of some of the occurrences they themselves will likely experience, so when they move during orientation to their on or off-campus housing they will be better prepared.

Because the issues of safety and security are so much on the minds of parents and study abroad advisors, we also recommend that the program keep accurate records (date, time and event) of any safety and security incidents. We should be readily able to demonstrate with statistics that there have been few problems, compared to the UG-Legon program.

We also recommend that the CIEE pre-departure handbook and the program handbook include a sidebar on the Ghanaian sense of time and what is 'night.' Specifically, in Ghana people begin to retire to their homes around 6pm when it begins to get dark (and sunset is much quicker and more sudden near the equator). 9 p.m. is 'late' and many people are already in bed at this hour, so having a nap after class and going out at 8 or 10pm as a student might do in the U.S. is not only inappropriate, it is not safe. It is only fair to students that they begin to understand before they arrive that life in Ghana is focused on the daylight hours, i.e. people get up and are ready for the day when the sun rises, and go home and to bed much earlier. This also needs to be reinforced in study abroad advising for the Ghana programs.

Similarly, the handbook and on-campus study abroad advising for the Ghana programs needs to address gender issues, as these too can relate to safety and security. Female students in particular, and of course who dominate in this study abroad program, need to be prepared for the forwardness of Ghanaian and other African men. They need to be prepared for the possibility of being physically grabbed in the market, being proposed to four or five times a day, or having X-rated things said to them outside the Ashesi neighborhood. The female students especially, need to be regularly reminded of how to respond to these situations and/or deflect these comments, how to stay safe when they are out, and to not let their guard down, especially after they have been on site for a few weeks and later in the semester.

Malaria is the principal health concern in Ghana, and staff responds quickly when malaria is even remotely suspected. The issue of malaria should not be an issue, and the reason it is seems to focus on two related factors: students' sense of invincibility and misconceptions that surround Ghanaians not taking malaria prophylaxis. The program's recently instituted 'malaria contract' and its straight forwardness is working. The contract simply states that if a student fails to take their malaria prophylaxis they will be terminated from the program and sent

home. Because of the potentially serious nature of not taking a prophylaxis, it is imperative that in at least in this one area, each CIEE student has an obligation to let the staff know if one of their colleagues is not taking their medication. At the least sign of a student showing symptoms of malaria, the staff immediately mobilizes and gets the student to the hospital for a test. If test results are positive, they ensure the student begins the appropriate medication.

At Ashesi the students are given mosquito nets and use them in their hostels (they are given these as part of the Ashesi new student program and Ashesi pays for them). As with the use of critical incidents in orientation about safety and security, we also encourage the program staff to incorporate into the onsite orientation, one of two health-related critical incidents for group discussion. As with crime statistics, we also recommend that detailed records (date, time and event; names should not be kept) of all serious health occurrences, and especially malaria. This must include incidents staff discovers later of students having taken themselves to hospital for treatment. The reason for this is as with safety and security issues, because concern about health in Africa is on the minds of parents and study abroad advisors, and only with accurate records can some of these concerns be countered.

#### **Recommendation:**

14) The RD and program staff need to create a series of 'critical incidents' that draw on past examples of incidents students and faculty have experienced with respect to issues of safety, security, and health (malaria) and use these critical incidents to engage the students in a discussion during orientation.

15) The RD should keep accurate records (date, time and event) of any safety and security incidents.

16) The CIEE pre-departure handbook **and** the program handbook needs to include a sidebar on the Ghanaian sense of time, when it is understood to be 'night' and how typical Ghanaian students and families spend their evenings, i.e. at home after 9pm. These should also be more upfront about cultural issues as these relate to be female in Ghana, and might also usefully note that two women students walking late at night do not constitute a 'group'.

17) The RD should keep detailed records (date, time and event; names should not be kept) of all serious health occurrences, but especially malaria, and that these records include incidents staff later discovers of students having taken themselves to hospital for treatment.

#### **X. The Program's Compliance with CIEE's Policies**

The program complies with CIEE policies.



## **XI. The Quality of Administration and Management of the Program**

### **A. Resident Director**

Students uniformly report the local staff as being fabulously supportive and helpful. We believe we experienced what the students experience all the time and completely agree with this assessment; they are extraordinary. We could not have asked for better people to guide us while we were in Ghana.

Kwasi is a unique personality and serves as an excellent model for the rest of his staff in terms of what he expects from them, and it is clear they respond. There is a clear sense that the director, the staff and the students together make up a CIEE family. Staff members know the students not only by name, but also as individuals. They recognize when a student is hitting a bad patch and will sit with them, chat and listen. The RD is available at all times to the students to attend to any need. Staff is available 24/7 in person or by cell phone, and often contacted after office hours.

### **B. Others**

Students praise the CIEE staff for their professionalism, accessibility, and attendance to their needs. The members of the staff are friendly, informative, and dedicated to the program. The RD identifies the quality of his staff as one of the most distinctive features of the programs at Legon and Ashesi; he also praises them for the “excellent connection” they have with the students and for their regular practice of “listening to” and “getting to know” the students. They are involved in all aspects of the program from offering advice on classes and meeting students at clinics to seeking out and then introducing students to volunteer placements and traveling with students on the weekend excursions. Female program staff is particularly valuable as a resource to whom women students can turn to address certain gender-specific issues.

We think it worth noting that in contrast to the RD, the program assistants at both Legon and Ashesi were unaware that they may have had gay or lesbian students on the program, which was very surprising, and claim that they have not had to counsel such students regarding encounters with prejudice or harassment.

The creation of the U-Pals program was brilliant! And the U-Pals, who are selected by the Director, also get rave reviews from the students. Currently there are two U-Pals at Ashesi—one male and one female. U-Pals live in close proximity to the CIEE students and are selected to achieve this geographic coverage. From the program side, the U-Pals are their eyes and ears to the students’ adaptation to life in Ghana. U-Pals show CIEE students “how to do Ghanaian things” such as cook Ghanaian food and hand wash clothes. U-Pals play a role in safety by reinforcing CIEE staff recommendations by showing students where to go and where to avoid. U-Pals serve as the most immediately available point of contact for students and express enthusiasm about their contact with CIEE students, describing themselves collectively as a “big family.” Judging from lunches with students, it appears that the feeling is mutual; at the level of social behavior, when they are all together, it is hard to tell the CIEE students from the U-Pals; only accents give them away. U-Pals are paid a monthly stipend for this work but they say the work they do is something they want to do and not something they are required to do.

## **XII. Relationship with previous evaluation**

This is the first evaluation of the Ashesi program.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The members of the evaluation team benefited greatly from the care and concern for this process by the staff of CIEE. Adam Rubin and Leslie Durgin put together the notebooks for our visit, and Adam shepherded us through the actual process. In Ghana Kwasi Gyasi-Gyamrah was ever-present and cheerfully guided us through the schedule, making the necessary and inevitable schedule adjustments, and more generally introducing us to Ghana as the students see it. He was as were all the staff members, forthcoming and friendly. It is readily apparent why they all receive such outstanding evaluations semester after semester from the students. We are greatly appreciative of the many courtesies shown to us by the CIEE staff; Aileen Adu Sobeng and Allison Cohen for guiding us around campus, and introducing us to the student housing arrangements available on the program, including a visit to a host family. They willingly and excitedly answered our many questions and Aileen produced written material when we requested it. Throughout our time in Ghana and at Ashesi we met and were able to speak with the U-Pals associated with the program. They are truly a special group and we are ever grateful for all they do for the students as their peers. At Ashesi University administrators willingly met with us during what was the spring vacation and faculty readily welcomed the chair into their classes on the first day back from vacation. All members of the team felt that this was a well planned and effective review process, and we all learned from the experience.

### **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1) Improve and update the Mission Statement for the program with Ashesi University, and add specific learning goals and/or objectives that emerge from the mission statement.
- 2) The new CIEE catalog and the staff in Maine need to give a better sense of what the strengths of the Ashesi curriculum are and a more accurate description of what is available for by way of Africana courses.
- 3) Continue to monitor carefully the development and offerings of new Africana courses, and be sure that the readings being used reflect more up-to-date current texts and articles.
- 4) Have Mr. Safo submit a formal proposal complete with syllabus and learning objectives/goals for a redesigned course and have this appropriately reviewed.
- 5) Purchase and provide to each student a copy of the Twi text by Dolphyne that is available in the University of Ghana-Legon bookstore about \$5.

- 6) CIEE should consider using digital electronic options to communicate with students prior to their departure for Ghana: These might include podcasts or wikis.
- 7) Review current norms in Ghana with current handbook language.
- 8) Give serious consideration to updating the 'Books on Ghana' including listing shorter pieces or journal articles rather than entire books, as a way of encouraging students to engage with some of this material before departure.
- 9) CIEE must tactfully and respectfully, alert students that attitudes toward GLBT students are less tolerant than they are in the U.S.
- 10) Add appropriate language to the CIEE program handbook to give a better description of the housing options available at Ashesi and the fact that there are basic rules that need to be followed and these are not like US university residence halls.
- 11) As it adds homestays, CIEE should regularly meet with homestay families, especially the mother, to help the mother understand their American student and the background they come from, especially with respect to university housing and rules, in the US. Similarly, the staff should make it known to the CIEE student, that if they need help in negotiating curfews and other matters that the staff is ready to assist.
- 12) Students should be given the information on what type of housing they will be assigned to for the semester in advance of their departure for Ghana
- 13) The program should consider providing a more popular-type presentation—as opposed to scholarly/academic—prior to each program excursion, and students be given a short reading(s) related to the excursion.
- 14) The RD and program staff need to create a series of 'critical incidents' that draw on past examples of incidents students and faculty have experienced with respect to issues of safety, security, and health (malaria) and use these critical incidents to engage the students in a discussion during orientation.
- 15) The RD should keep accurate records (date, time and event) of any safety and security incidents.
- 16) The CIEE pre-departure handbook **and** the program handbook need to include a sidebar on the Ghanaian sense of time, when it is understood to be 'night' and how typical Ghanaian students and families spend their evenings. There should also be more upfront about cultural issues as these relate to being a female in Ghana.
- 17) The RD should keep detailed records (date, time and event; names should not be kept) of all serious health occurrences, but especially malaria, and that these records include incidents staff later discovers of students having taken themselves to hospital for treatment.



**ACB Evaluation Itinerary**  
**CIEE Study Centers in Accra and Legon**  
Ghana  
March 10, 2008 – March 15, 2008

*The itinerary is tentative and subject to change*

***African Regent Hotel***  
***237/238 Airport West***  
***Tel:233-21-765180-2***  
[www.african-regent-hotel.com](http://www.african-regent-hotel.com)

Sunday March 9, 2008                      Depart the US for Ghana

Monday March 10                              Arrive in Ghana

**Tuesday March 11**

<b>8:30am</b>	<b>Meet Kwasi Gyasi-Gyamrah, Resident Director, CIEE-Ghana: Overview of CIEE Programs in Ghana/ Q and A</b>
10am	Depart Hotel for University of Ghana, Legon
1030am	Meet with CIEE Legon staff and U-Pals
1115am	Meet with Prof Naa Ayikailey Adamafio, Exams Coordinator, OIP and Lydia Nyako, Asst Registrar, OIP
1215pm	Lunch with CIEE Legon students at University Guest Center, Legon Campus
130pm	Tour University of Ghana Campus <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• On- and Off-Campus Housing/Homestays/ CIEE House</li><li>• Library</li><li>• Bookstore/Internet Cafe</li></ul>
4pm	Observed Anthropology class of J.A.K. Okoro, Lecturer in Applied Archaeology

	5:30pm	Return to Hotel
	7pm	Dinner with CIEE Ghana staff and U-Pals (both Legon and Ashesi) at Maquis Tante Marie
Wednesday March 12	8am	Depart Hotel to visit CIEE volunteer sites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dodowa Health Center</li> <li>• Peace and Love Orphanage</li> <li>• Hope Handi-Vangelism program</li> </ul>
	1pm	Lunch meeting with Prof Kwesi Yankah, Pro Vice Chancellor and Lydia Nyako, Asst Registrar, OIP
	230pm	Sit in a UG English class (JT)
	4pm	Meet with Twi Instructors and sit in the Twi Language class (DS & NS)
	5:30	Observe a UG Social Work class of Dr. Stephen Ayidia (DS & JT) Observe a UG Sociology class of Prof. Chris Abotenhie (NS)
	8:30pm	Dinner at Hotel
Thursday March 13	8am	<b>Depart for Ashesi University College Campus</b>
	830am	<b>Tour Ashesi Campus/CIEE office and meet CIEE staff</b>
	930am	<b>Meet with Dr Patrick Awuah, President, Mrs Carol Asamoah, Acting Registrar and Director of Admissions</b>
	1030am	<b>Visit the Library</b>
	11:00	<b>Tour Ashesi Apartments/Interact with CIEE U-Pals at Ashesi</b>
	1130am	<b>Visit Homestay housing and meet host mother</b>
	1pm	<b>Lunch with CIEE Ashesi Students</b>
	2pm	<b>Depart Ashesi</b>

	330pm	Sit in the Development Studies Core Course
	Evening	FREE
Friday March 14 Cottage	630am	Depart for Cape Coast: Tour Castle/Lunch at Hans
	6pm	Return to Accra
	Evening	FREE
Saturday March 15	10am National	Join CIEE LEgon students for extrusion to t the Museum, the DuBois House, and the Nkrumah Mausoleum.
	1:30pm	Lunch with students a Chez Africque
	7:30pm	dinner with Dr. Michael Williams, Academic Director of the CIEE Development Studies Track
Sunday March 16 evening		Report Writing day /Depart for the US in the
<b>Monday March 17</b>	<b>7:30am</b>	<b>depart for Ashesi University (NS)</b>
	<b>8:00am</b>	<b>Observe International Trade and Policy Class</b>
	<b>2:00pm</b>	<b>Meet with Prof. Molarra Ogundipe on Africana courses</b>
	<b>3:30</b>	<b>Observe African Repertory: Music &amp; Dance class of Prof. Yartley</b>
		Depart for the US