

Evaluation Executive Summary

CIEE Study Center, Rabat, Morocco

December 8-12, 2013

CIEE Center evaluations are conducted every 10 years and evaluation teams are asked to focus on the following dimensions for each of the programs reviewed:

I. Evaluation Team members:

Ellen M. Sayles
Associate Dean of Studies
Director of Programs for International Study
Oberlin College

John P. Entelis
Professor and Chair
Department of Political Science
Fordham University

Salman H. Alani
Professor of Arabic Linguistics
Associate Director of Arabic Language Resources Development
Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures
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II. Colleagues with whom the Evaluation Team met: Resident Director, Madiha DeRosa, two Program Assistants Sarah Robyn and Oumaima Farik, nearly all students and some teaching faculty

III. Last evaluation Conducted on: No previous evaluation had been conducted.

IV. Program Background/History:

The CIEE Rabat academic year Language and Culture program officially opened in 2008 followed by the summer Language and Culture program in 2009. The aims of both programs are to provide high-quality Arabic instruction for beginner through advanced language learners as well as to expose students to issues within contemporary Moroccan culture. It also aims to give students a broader view of the role of Morocco's ties to Europe and to the broad Arab world. In addition, it provides some content for students with a French language background to further develop their language skills. This mission is accomplished through required Modern Standard Arabic coursework along with a core course on contemporary Morocco. Elective courses mainly in English or French are offered in colloquial Moroccan Arabic (Darija), other humanities, and social sciences courses.

In addition to the academic work, the program has an important and strong cultural component, at the center of which is a very successful homestay program. Homestay families are chosen carefully and students are well-integrated into family and social life. Linguistic and cultural learning experiences are integrated through the homestay program. Cultural activities and

excursions to several other sites in Morocco supplement the in-class portion of the program. The small Rabat study center program staff is very strong with a skillful and experienced bi-lingual resident director and two additional staff who support the students in an impressive fashion.

While the history of the program involves relationships with several higher education institutions within Rabat, the current program functions as a free-standing study center located in Agdal, a bustling and modern commercial and residential area in central Rabat. Faculty from a variety of institutions within Rabat teach classes at the center. The center's space is small and was used to its fullest during the semester we visited to evaluate the program. Enrollment has been growing in the academic year program—22 students were participating in Fall 2013--while the summer program enrollment remains constant at 5-10 students. Students we met on the program were highly engaged with their homestay families, with each other and with language learning. Their thoughtful and insightful comments were integral to the writing of this report.

The Rabat Language and Culture program clearly offers an excellent alternative to other study abroad programs in Arabic speaking countries. As enrollment continues to grow, it is poised to expand its offerings in content courses as well as all levels of Arabic. Carefully managing the growth so as to continue to be able to offer the high-quality cultural components will be a challenge for CIEE staff in Rabat as well as Portland.

- V. Focus of Evaluation:** The evaluation focused on the following curricular and programmatic areas: Academic Framework, Teaching and Learning, Quality and Appropriateness of Students, Student Preparation for the Learning Environment, Quality and Appropriateness of Services, Health and Safety, Quality of Facilities, and Perceptions of Stakeholders.

VI. Key Discussions/Findings:

Students in the semester-long program begin with a two-week intensive Moroccan Colloquial Arabic (Darija) course. Once the actual semester begins, students are required to take a Modern Standard Arabic course (offered from beginning to advanced levels) for 4 credits and a three-credit core course on Contemporary Moroccan Society and Culture. Students can then take two additional three-credit elective courses. Courses are supplemented with 5-6 excursions that take place throughout the semester. In addition, co-curricular experiences involve cooking classes, volunteer opportunities at Dar Chabaab (an after school program), pick up football and yoga, films, etc.

While students had significantly differing opinions on the academic courses, particularly the core course, they were nearly unanimous in reporting positive growth in language acquisition, understanding, and intercultural learning and development. One student said that he couldn't imagine a program that allowed him to experience strong emotional, personal and spiritual growth along with intellectual growth and confidence within the Moroccan context.

The homestay program is a very strong component of this program and provides the main opportunity for intercultural learning and development, and growth in language and communication. All students are housed in homestays. The program staff works very hard at matching students to appropriate living situations. The benefits of this detailed matching program are clear: students were unanimous in their commitment to their families, their integration into the family unit, and the strong bonds that they form. The program has carefully cultivated a strong pool of potential homestay situations. Staff are to be commended for this wonderful (and very high functioning) part of the Rabat program.

The excursions have strong but somewhat mixed responses. Certain students felt that the excursions were “too touristy” while others greatly appreciated the structure of the excursions. The program meets or exceeds its learning goals in all areas with the possible exception of French language acquisition.

VII. Priority Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Consider establishing a part-time position of language coordinator. This person should be trained in Arabic language pedagogy and should coordinate the curriculum and syllabi and regularize the use of the *Al Kitab* textbook in order to be most effective. This would include briefing teachers on minimizing the portion of the text that deals with dialect.

Recommendation 2: Increase the opportunity for student interaction with local Moroccan students through further development of the CIEE Language and Culture Peers program or development of a language partner program.

Recommendation 3: Purchase “smart” classroom technology for at least one classroom to enable language instructors to use available media to support classroom instruction.

Recommendation 8: Create a standard syllabus for the core course that is academically focused and challenging. As this is a required course for all students, it should have high expectations for academic rigor and structure.

Recommendation 9: Consider offering an intensive research component to the core course that would enable students to use their Darija language skills and come to a deeper understanding of culture.

VIII. Action Plan/Program Update:

CIEE Action Plan

In response to the Academic Consortium Board (ACB) Evaluation of the Language and Culture Program at the CIEE Study Center in Rabat, Morocco

April 9, 2014

Overview

CIEE staff are please to provide this Action Plan in response to the Academic Consortium Board (ACB) report on the Language and Culture Program offered at CIEE Study Center in Rabat, Morocco. The report of the site visit will be submitted by members of the ACB at the Spring 2014 meeting. After review, the ACB accepted the report, and presented it to the Academic Consortium.

The Action Plan outlines the key recommendations from the Evaluation and the specific steps CIEE plans to follow to address the recommendation. While the Action Plan is authored by CIEE, staff solicited input from the ACB team leader for the evaluation Ellen Sayles, Associate Dean of Studies and Director of International Study at Oberlin College and, where appropriate, from other members of the evaluation team, Dr. John Entelis, Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science at Fordham University, and Dr. Salman Alani, Professor of Arabic

Linguistics and Associate Director of Arabic Language Resources Development in the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at Indiana University. The Action Plan should be read in light of the ACB Evaluation and with reference to the detailed description of the program available from CIEE.

The “ACB Plan for Program Evaluation”, the Evaluation report, the Action Plan, and program details are available at www.ciee.org.

Actions

ACB Recommendation

Consider establishing a part-time position of language coordinator. This person should be trained in Arabic language pedagogy and should coordinate the curriculum and syllabi and regularize the use of the Al Kitab textbook in order to be most effective. This would include briefing teachers on minimizing the portion of the text that deals with dialect.

Action

CIEE is exploring the possibility of hiring a part time Arabic language coordinator to help manage and expand its Arabic language courses in the near future. The goal is to build a language program that is on par with the programs offered by CIEE in Amman, Jordan. The CIEE Amman Study Center offers a highly developed, high quality, and multi-faceted range of Arabic language options. CIEE intends to have the current Director of Arabic Language in Amman oversee the growth and development of the Arabic language initiatives throughout the entire Middle East and Northern Africa region. The new language coordinator in Rabat would work with the Amman Director of Arabic Language to streamline the curriculum, oversee pedagogy, and recruit and train additional Arabic language faculty as needed.

ACB Recommendation

Increase the opportunity for student interaction with local Moroccan students through further development of the CIEE Buddies program or development of a language partner program.

Action

To increase student integration into Moroccan society, particularly at the student peer level, the CIEE Rabat Study Center introduced a newly designed Language and Culture Peer program in the spring 2014 term. Language and Culture Peers are recruited from the local universities with the requirement that they all speak French, Arabic, and English.

Peer activities are embedded in the Orientation planning from the very beginning. During orientation, peers lead city walking tours and help introduce students to local Rabat logistics and public transportation. These Language and Culture Peers also lead a scavenger hunt around town. They are invited to the CIEE welcome dinner

and given a small stipend that can be used to plan additional meals for smaller student groups. These local students also assisted with an orientation session on gender issues in Morocco. This same group of student peers helps to lead the day trip to Casablanca. Each peer takes a small subset of the larger CIEE group to different historical locations around the city. Finally, these peers are asked to help facilitate several cultural activities each month.

CIEE Rabat staff will consider new ways to expand this program and provide more opportunities for interaction between CIEE students, local Moroccan peers, and members of the community. All CIEE Rabat students live with local homestay families, providing another important opportunity for integration into the local community.

ACB Recommendation

Purchase “smart” classroom technology for at least one classroom to enable language instructors to use available media to support classroom instruction.

Action

The CIEE Rabat Study Center will purchase an LCD projector that can be used by CIEE faculty in the Study Center.

ACB Recommendation

Create a standard syllabus for the core course that is academically focused and challenging. As this is a required course for all students, it should have high expectations for academic rigor and structure.

Action

Following the visit of the ACB team in December 2014, and in response to evaluations given by students in the spring and fall terms of 2013, the CIEE Resident Director, Madiha DeRosa, promptly found a replacement to redesign the core course, Contemporary Moroccan Society and Culture. The revised course includes more academic readings and is designed to be more academically rigorous.

The revised course syllabus will also be vetted by the CIEE Vice President for Academic Affairs to help ensure that this course meets CIEE academic standards. CIEE staff will also review the spring 2014 student evaluations to gauge the impact of the changes that were introduced in spring 2014.

ACB Recommendation

Consider offering an intensive research component to the core course that would enable students to use their Darija language skills and come to a deeper understanding of culture.

Action

The CIEE Rabat core course, Contemporary Moroccan Society and Culture, is designed to introduce students to a wide range of Moroccan cultural perspectives,

societal issues, and history. CIEE Rabat staff will review feedback from the recently revised core course and give additional consideration to the the addition of a more substantial research paper to the course requirements in future semesters. Given the students' limited Arabic language background and even more limited experience with colloquial Moroccan Arabic (Darija), however, CIEE staff do not believe that it would be practical for the students to conduct significant research in Darija. The current core course includes a multi-day study tour to Fez and Marrakesh. During this study tour, CIEE students interview local students on a variety of topics in English and either Arabic or French.

The current program allows students to practice their Darija through volunteer opportunities and interaction with their homestay families. In addition, academic year students have the option to do a CIEE Internship during their second semester in Rabat, affording them additional opportunities to use the local dialect.

Submitted by: Janine El Tal, Regional Director of Operations, Middle East and Northern Africa

Date: April 9, 2014