

Evaluation Executive Summary

CIEE Warsaw Study Center: Central European Studies, Warsaw, Poland

October 21-25, 2013

CIEE Center evaluations are conducted approximately every ten years. Evaluation teams focus on the following dimensions: Academics, Teaching and Learning, Students, Services, Health, Safety, and Security, Facilities, Stakeholders, Previous Evaluations, Future Plans, and Recommendations.

- I. Evaluation Team Members:** Mary Dando, Director Study Abroad, University of Colorado Boulder (team leader) and Dr. Barbara Craig, Professor of Economics and Chair of Economics, Oberlin College.
- II. Colleagues with whom the Evaluation Team met:** CIEE Resident Staff: Dr. Bogdan Radomski (Resident Director) and Malgorzata “Gosia” Nowicka (CIEE Program Assistant), Dr. Marek Gruszczynski (Vice Rector for Research and International Relations at the Warsaw School of Economics (SGH), three CIEE faculty, staff in the student dormitory, the library director, staff in the SGH international office, and all four students participating on the Fall 2013 program.
- III. Last evaluation conducted in:** 2004
- IV. Program Background/History:**

The CIEE Study Center in Warsaw is one of the longest-running CIEE programs in Europe. It began in 1989 when Georgetown University merged its program in Warsaw with CIEE, allowing the successful continuation of what was at the time the only semester length program for U.S. students operating in a Soviet bloc country. The program is small, enrolling five to ten students a semester. Nine years ago when this program was last evaluated, students enrolled primarily in the CIEE area studies and language courses; now, the majority of students select from the rich offerings in Business, Economics, and the Social Sciences at the Warsaw School of Economics (SGH), as well as from two to four CIEE area studies courses in Polish history, literature, culture, political science, as well as Polish language.

The stated mission of the program is to “imbue students with a greater understanding of Eastern and Central Europe with emphasis on the Polish experience in the realms of politics in the post-Communist era.” Regarding language, students should advance in speaking, reading, writing and listening in Polish. The evaluation team suggests expanding the program’s mission to include the program’s strengths in Business, Economics, Management, and the Social Sciences (not just politics) and to showcase Poland as an emerging and vibrant economy and player in “The New Europe.”

- V. Focus of Evaluation:** Prior to the program evaluation, CIEE Staff noted several areas upon which they wished the evaluation team to focus: the Polish language course, the number of the CIEE courses, the possible addition of a core CIEE foundational course, creating formalized internships, integration of students into the local culture, succession plans for the longstanding resident director, and possible ways to increase enrollments on the program, including renaming and rebranding. These areas were considered closely alongside the other standard areas of review.

VI. Key Discussions/Findings: The program is a hidden gem among the many rich offerings of CIEE programs in Europe. After the creation of the CIEE programs in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Germany, this program has seen plummeting enrollment which is truly a shame. Poland continues to attract heritage students and students in Political Science possibly planning a career in the Foreign Service. It could, however, also attract more students in Business, Economics, and the Social Sciences because of the strengths of the host institution. The Warsaw School of Economics (SGH) hosts at least 400 Erasmus students each semester, leading to an ever-increasing array of courses offered in English. The program staff have compiled a list of top-rated courses which they share with admitted students; giving examples of these courses on the CIEE web site should excite more interest among students.

The evaluation team found the program to be healthy with a few actionable items needing attention. The greatest concern the team found is the amount of credit that CIEE awards for the SGH courses. CIEE awards 3 credits for all SGH courses, which can range from 1.5 to 6 ECTS credits. For this program CIEE does not use a formula to convert ECTS credits to US credits. The evaluation team recommends that CIEE change that practice, especially since the SGH has been assiduous in assigning ECTS credits to comply with the requirements of the Erasmus program and the Bologna Process. This leads to a second area of concern, which is the light course load of CIEE students taking SGH courses. The evaluation team recommends that CIEE students take a course load that falls more into line with that of the Erasmus and Polish students.

Although the majority of the SGH courses receive high ratings from students, there will inevitably be some courses that are hit or miss; students can take advantage of the knowledge of the CIEE staff by being given access to the course recommendations very early in the process, preferably months before they arrive on site. Another issue that should be reviewed is the SGH calendar, and the fact that students in both the fall and spring will miss lectures and exams. While most faculty agree to give the departing students early exams, students cannot make up the lectures that they miss by leaving in December or May. If CIEE agrees, students could be given the option to remain on the program until the SGH semester ends in January or June. This could work since their dorm contracts go until the end of the SGH semester.

Another issue concerns the mixed levels in the language class. Unless CIEE does away with the language requirement (highly unlikely), this challenge will remain as long as the program has low enrollment. In contrast with the 2004 evaluation, the evaluation team does not think this is a major problem. The current language instructor is excellent, and has done a masterful job of teaching students in the Intermediate or Advanced levels whose language backgrounds can vary widely. The other CIEE instructors are also top notch, and the team recommends that CIEE continue to offer at least two area studies courses in the fall, and at least three to four in the spring.

The team would like to acknowledge the support offered to students by the longstanding Resident Director, Bogdan Radomski, and the Program Assistant, Malgorzata "Gosia" Nowicka. They are caring, responsive, available, knowledgeable, and encouraging. The RD is also a longstanding faculty member at the SGH, and is well-respected by his colleagues and the current Pro-Rector. Clearly his reputation and long history with the SGH are a key to the success of the program. While the 2004 evaluation mentioned the possibility of offering courses at the University of Warsaw, our team sees no reason to make that

change. Given the academic strengths of the Warsaw School of Economics, and the privileges that CIEE enjoys as a client of the School, the program should remain at the SGH.

The program continues to be a rich, although underutilized, CIEE program offering. The low enrollment is a disappointment, but the evaluation team makes several suggestions for rebranding and marketing the program which could help reverse this trend. One of the looming challenges for the program will be the inevitable retirement of the Resident Director, probably taking place in the next five years. In the team's view, the Program Assistant has the characteristics to be a successful RD, although she lacks the academic credentials currently required by the SGH for a CIEE Resident Director. Certainly there is plenty of time for CIEE to address this issue, so the team does not see this to be an urgent issue.

VII. Priority Recommendations:

Recommendation 1: Review and revamp the number of credits that CIEE awards on this program. Specifically:

- Use the ECTS credits assigned to each course as a guide in assigning CIEE credits
- Do the same with the SGH contact hours
- Doing both will result in a significant overhaul in credits assigned to each class, and students will end up taking more classes, similar to the course load of the Erasmus students.

Recommendation 2: Continue to offer several CIEE area studies courses, give the CIEE faculty more autonomy in creating their syllabi, and expand the list of SGH recommended courses. Specifically:

- Retain a choice of several CIEE area studies courses (at least two in the fall, and two to four in the spring.) These courses provide an important foundation and supplement to the SGH courses.
- Canceling these courses or moving to a single core course removes the history, literature, and the humanistic foundation to the program.
- Decide how many and which CIEE area studies courses will be offered prior to students' arrival, rather than canceling some area studies courses after students arrive.
- Give CIEE faculty permission to update their syllabi and provide them with more autonomy in making minor adjustments to their syllabi to suit student interests (which could change from one semester to the next)
- Continue to research and expand the list of recommended SGH courses and make these available to students well in advance of the start of the program to give them time to seek course approvals
- The list should include even more courses in Business, Economics, Statistical Methods and Management, taking full advantage of the SGH's strengths.

Recommendation 3: Succession plans: Discuss succession plans with the Resident Director and other stakeholders, including the administration at the SGH (already being done.)

Recommendation 4: Rebrand this program to differentiate it from the other Central European Studies programs in the Czech Republic and Hungary. Specifically:

- Change the program's learning goals to reflect the strengths of the SGH (Business, Economics, Management, Finance, Statistics, and International Law.)
- Provide a refresher for new and current CIEE advisors about the advantages of the Warsaw program, and its academic strengths.
- Rebrand, rename the program to differentiate it from the two other CIEE "Central European Studies" programs.

- Review the program marketing materials to showcase the programs strengths in Business, and the advantages of being in Poland with its growing, vibrant economy and its natural beauty from the sea to the north to the mountains in the south.

In sum, the team was delighted to have the opportunity to evaluate this outstanding program. The many positives of this program far outweigh the areas of concern noted above. The CIEE Study Center in Warsaw continues to offer outstanding opportunities to the lucky few students who enroll on the program. The program has unexploited strengths, and the evaluation team encourages CIEE to rebrand and market the program to help it reach its full potential.

VIII. Action Plan/Program Update:

CIEE Action Plan

In response to the Academic Consortium Board (ACB) Evaluation of the CIEE Study Center at Warsaw School of Economics, Warsaw, Poland, Central European Studies Program.

April 2014

Overview

CIEE staff are please to provide this Action Plan in response to the Academic Consortium Board (ACB) evaluation report on the CIEE Warsaw Study Center and its Central European Studies Program at the Warsaw School of Economics. The report of the site visit was received 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 from the evaluation, Mary Dando, Director of Study Abroad Programs at the University of Colorado Boulder, and, where appropriate, from the other member of the evaluation team, Dr. Barbara Craig, Professor and Chair of the Department of Economics at Oberlin College 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.

Recommendations and Actions

ACB Recommendation

Credits: Review and revamp the number of credits CIEE awards on this program, using the ECTS credits and the SGH (Warsaw School of Economics) contact hours as guides. This will result in a significant

overhaul in credits assigned to each class, and students will end up taking more classes, similar to the course load of the Erasmus students.

Action

CIEE has already started to implement this change and is now recommending credits as described above. As of spring 2014, the CIEE students are taking a combination of CIEE area studies courses and SGH (Warsaw School of Economics) courses in accordance with the ACB evaluation report recommendations. CIEE students are now taking one or two more SGH classes in order to raise the total number of credits to 16 semester / 24 quarter hours. One SGH class (30 contact hours) is translated as 2 credits for CIEE students. The revamped system will be applied to all future students studying at the CIEE Warsaw Study Center.

ACB Recommendation

Continue to offer several CIEE area studies courses, give the CIEE faculty more autonomy in creating their syllabi, and expand the list of SGH recommended courses. Specifically:

- Retain a choice of several CIEE area studies courses (at least two in the fall, and two to four in the spring.) These courses provide an important foundation and supplement to the SGH courses.
- Canceling these courses or moving to a single core course removes the history, literature, and the humanistic foundation to the program.
- Decide how many and which CIEE area studies courses will be offered prior to students' arrival, rather than canceling some area studies courses after students arrive.
- Give CIEE faculty permission to update their syllabi and provide them with more autonomy in making minor adjustments to their syllabi to suit student interests (which could change from one semester to the next)
- Continue to research and expand the list of recommended SGH courses and make these available to students well in advance of the start of the program to give them time to seek course approvals
- The list should include even more courses in Business, Economics, Statistical Methods and Management, taking full advantage of the SGH's strengths.

Action

All the CIEE area studies courses listed in the CIEE catalogue are available to students for registration. There are already five area studies courses on history, political science, sociology, literature, and three levels of Polish Language offered in CIEE Study Center in Warsaw. The number of the CIEE area studies courses effectively taught in each semester depends on the final students course enrollments. Typically, CIEE offers 2-3 courses in the fall semester and 3-4 courses in the spring semester. Students are asked to complete a "course pre-selection" prior to arrival in Warsaw. This helps CIEE Warsaw resident staff to more accurately gauge the academic interests of the students.

CIEE is supportive of the recommendation to expand the course offerings and will work more closely with students to help them select appropriate SGH courses each semester. The SGH course list is available on-line to all SGH and CIEE students.. If CIEE students apply for graduate program courses, their final enrollments have to be formally approved by the SGH dean of graduate studies. There is no such requirement for SGH undergraduate courses. The SGH course list varies somewhat each semester due to SGH faculty and the final list of courses offered in English. SGH courses require a minimum enrolment of 10 students. SGH courses are offered in a wide variety of academic areas, including Business, Economics, Applied Mathematics, Statistics, Econometrics, International Economics and Finance, Political Science, European Union, Transitional and Post-Transitional Economies. SGH courses are taught in Polish, English, French, German, Spanish, and Russian. CIEE students generally take the courses offered in English but may also choose courses in other languages if they have the required language skills. CIEE Warsaw resident staff provide CIEE students with the SGH on-line course list every semester and also shares a list of the most popular courses taken by previous CIEE students. The CIEE Resident Director meets with students on-site prior to the final course registration and assists them with their final choice of CIEE and SGH courses.

ACB Recommendation

Succession plans: Discuss succession plans with the Resident Director and other stakeholders, including the administration at the SGH (already being done.)

Action

The CIEE Regional Director of Operations (RDO) and CIEE Warsaw Resident Director (RD) are in discussion about succession plans, although there is no target date for implementation. The current staff set-up is likely to continue for several more years.

ACB Recommendation

Rebrand this program to differentiate it from the other CIEE Central European Studies programs in the Czech Republic and Hungary:

- Change the program's learning goals to reflect the strengths of the Warsaw School of Economics (SGH) (Business, Economics, Management, Finance, Statistics, and International Law).
- Provide a refresher for new and current CIEE advisors (U.S.) about the advantages of the CIEE Warsaw program and its academic strengths.
- Rebrand and rename the program to differentiate it from the two other CIEE Central European Studies programs.
- Review the program marketing materials to showcase the program's strengths in Business, and the advantages of being in Poland with its growing, vibrant economy and its natural beauty from the sea to the north to the mountains in the south.

Action

CIEE will review the catalog and website information to help highlight the strengths of the CIEE Warsaw program more effectively. Staff understand and agree that the program must be highlighted and differentiated in new ways. CIEE is also in the process of reviewing the naming conventions used for its semester and summer programs. This process will likely result in a change to the name of this program in the next few years. As such, a change to the name of this program must be done with full consideration of the overall CIEE strategic program name review.

Submitted by:

Caroline Maas, CIEE Regional Director of Operations, Northern Europe

Dr. Bogdan Radomski, Resident Director, CIEE Warsaw Study Center

Date: April 16, 2014