

**Evaluation Executive Summary**  
**CIEE Legon, Ghana**  
**Spring 2017**

The Academic Consortium Board (ACB) of CIEE is pleased to present the following report on the CIEE Study Center Programs at the University of Ghana, Legon. The report of the site visit team was received by members of the ACB. 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 the University of Ghana. This report is a review of CIEE's program and not a review or evaluation of the University of Ghana as an institution. The review focuses on the program offered by the CIEE Study Center and on the courses offered by CIEE as part of the program at the University of Ghana. In addition, the site visit team has examined CIEE's relations with the host institution and its analysis has been presented to CIEE staff.

**I. Evaluation Team members:**

- Maxine Sample, Ph.D., Professor of English and Director of International Education  
Virginia State University
- Rebecca Bergren, Dean for Global Initiatives and Director, Center for Global Education  
Gettysburg College

**II. Colleagues with whom the Evaluation Team met:**

- CIEE Legon Study Center Staff: Resident Director, Resident Coordinator, and Program Assistants
- University of Ghana Dean of International Programs Office; Pro Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs; Ghana Assistant Registrar for International Programs
- CIEE Legon program faculty; Legon Upals; CIEE Legon program students
- Three homestay families
- University of Ghana direct enroll classes (5)
- CIEE Twi language classes (2)
- Internship partners: West African AIDS Foundation, Home Community Orphanage, Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition, and Anane Memorial International School
- Program directors of other study abroad programs: ISEP, SUNY-Legon, and UC-Berkeley Education Abroad Program (UCEAP)
- Ashesi University Director, Office of Diversity and International Programs; Provost

**III. Last evaluation Conducted on: Spring 2008**

**IV. Program Background/History:**

The CIEE Legon Study Center at the University of Ghana opened in 1994 and continues to appeal to a wide range of students across academic majors. The mission of the program is “To expose students to a variety of Ghanaian and African Perspectives in their academic pursuits and as a result, to provide opportunities for them to obtain insight into Ghanaian intellectual, cultural and social life.” Founded in 1948 as the University of the Gold Coast, the University of Ghana is the nation’s premier public university and serves a student body of about 38,000 students from over 70 countries. The Arts and Sciences program is a direct enroll program that allows students to take classes with students at the University of Ghana. Students live on campus in the International Student Hostel or in homestays with

Ghanaian families. Academic study may be combined with internships, research, and volunteer service to enhance students' understanding of Ghana and their engagement with the culture. Students have the option to take a Twi language course designated for CIEE program participants. Students in the January and Summer Ghanaian Studies programs take CIEE theme courses. In 2007 the center launched what later became the International Business and Culture Program at Asheshi University, a small private liberal arts program that focuses on computer science, engineering, and business. However, declining enrollment in the Asheshi program has led to the program's pending closure after spring 2017. CIEE Legon program enrollment averages about 57 students per year, with a high enrollment of 83 students during 2013-14. It also hosts faculty-led groups during the summer.

#### **V. Focus of Evaluation:**

The evaluation of the CIEE Study Center addressed the following terms of reference: academic framework; teaching and learning; quality and appropriateness of students; student preparation for the learning environment; quality and appropriateness of services; health, safety and security; quality of facilities; and perceptions of stakeholders. Much of the review and conversations during the site evaluation were guided by concerns about the academic quality of host university courses; students' feedback about campus facilities and the learning environment; security and safety; overall delivery of services; and CIEE Legon's branding as a direct enrollment program.

#### **VI. Key Discussions/Findings:**

The information gathered indicates that CIEE Legon enjoys a positive and supportive relationship with the university and its community partners; in addition, semester and short programs continue to be favorably rated overall by program participants. The successful and locally respected internship program and meaningful cultural immersion provided by structured experiential learning activities have enabled the program to meet its mission. The study center is well run by a dynamic staff whose care and professionalism are consistently highly rated by students and sending institutions. Student evaluations along with consortium member feedback reveal a clear endorsement of the program.

CIEE study center staff take full advantage of technology tools and social media to enhance communication with students during the predeparture phase. An interactive onsite orientation program is not only coordinated with the UG international student orientation but also appropriately focused on facilitating students' smooth navigation of UG's rather complex registration process. However, students voiced a desire for more time to get to know other students in the CIEE group, particularly since students are taken from the airport to their homestays; more attention on how to navigate Ghana; and help dealing with university hierarchies and classroom culture. The team noted a need for more consistency in information contained in program handbooks issued during both pre-departure and onsite orientation.

CIEE courses and direct enroll courses have consistently drawn contrasting views about the quality of academic program components. The CIEE courses, including the optional Twi language course for CIEE students, generally receive highly favorable ratings. However, the learning environment and quality of direct enroll courses at UG continue to be concerns of participants in the Ghana Arts and Sciences program. Students appear to have difficulty adjusting to such host university issues as faculty absenteeism--particularly in the early weeks of the term, a learning environment characterized by large classes and a faculty-centered pedagogy, and exam-driven assessment despite the attention given to these differences during orientation sessions and materials.

The quality of facilities toured ranged from adequate to excellent, including homestay facilities examined by the visiting team. The CIEE Legon staff are acutely aware of the cycles of health, safety and

security issues that occur each semester and appropriate health, safety and security measures are in place for the CIEE Legon program. However, student concerns about the secure vetting of visitors accessing the international hostel should be discussed with the university.

CIEE Legon's continued viability as a program of choice in West Africa may be better served by adjustments in the program name and web site profile. While the program is called the "Arts and Sciences" program, the promotional language on the web site highlights the arts, humanities, and social sciences; except for public health and agriculture, options in the science fields are not as prominently promoted and are generically described as "science." In this way, the program quickly loses the STEM student who does not readily see a path to his or her specific major. Over the past three years, students in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) fields constituted only 15% of program enrollment. The "Arts and Sciences" umbrella may not be ideal for attracting students in the sciences.

#### **VII. Priority Recommendations:**

**Recommendation 1:** The ACB team recommends that the CIEE study center staff identify strategies to enhance student's cross-cultural communication and interpersonal dynamics associated with the direct enroll experience. Americans do not often see themselves as having accents or being difficult to understand. Perhaps role-playing activities during orientation or other interventions would prepare students for incidents where interactions with host country nationals might be misread by American students. While CIEE students may struggle with Ghanaian accents, they should be made aware that Ghanaians also struggle with Americans' accents and speed of talking. Miscommunication can therefore occur both ways.

**Recommendation 2:** Given that CIEE Legon cannot control the quality of UG courses or manage UG faculty matters, the ACB team recommends that the CIEE study center staff continue to identify strategies that help students navigate the academic environment of the host university. In addition to guiding students through the registration process and compiling syllabi for recommended courses, these strategies might include more attention to the level of courses taken by students, role play activities to accompany written information about differences in classroom culture, and helpful college "survival tips" appropriate to the discipline (where to sit in large classes, ways to engage host faculty, etc.).

**Recommendation 3:** The ACB team recommends that the CIEE Legon staff work with Portland to revamp the program's profile on the web site, giving greater attention to STEM programs offered by the University of Ghana in addition to noted opportunities in public health.

**Recommendation 4:** The ACB team recommends that CIEE Portland work with the CIEE Legon study center to articulate demonstrable program goals that can be prominently displayed in program handbooks and other appropriate and accessible places.

**Recommendation 5:** The ACB team recommends that the CIEE Legon staff review all program handbooks to assure consistency of information across programs. This consistency includes the use of images such as the image of the International Certificate of Vaccination that appears in the Ghanaian Studies Summer Handbook but not in the others. In addition, the sections on Race, Gender, and Sexuality should be reviewed for consistency in presentation of those issues and given more prominence in all of the program handbooks or other published information.

#### **VIII. Action Plan/Program Update:**

First, CIEE Portland, the Regional Director of Operations for Africa and the resident staff of the CIEE Legon study center would like to express our gratitude to the ACB team for the time they took to visit the Legon Study Center and prepare the very thoughtful and insightful report with excellent recommendations to improve our existing program. We would also like to confirm that each one of the recommendations in the full report will be considered and implemented to the best of our ability. For the purpose of this report we will respond specifically to the five priority recommendations listed above.

**Recommendation 1:** The ACB team recommends that the CIEE study center staff identify strategies to enhance student's cross-cultural communication and interpersonal dynamics associated with the direct enroll experience. Americans do not often see themselves as having accents or being difficult to understand. Perhaps role-playing activities during orientation or other interventions would prepare students for incidents where interactions with host country nationals might be misread by American students. While CIEE students may struggle with Ghanaian accents, they should be made aware that Ghanaians also struggle with Americans' accents and speed of talking. Miscommunication can therefore occur both ways.

**Action to be taken:**

CIEE will revise the onsite orientation to include a more comprehensive review of Ghanaian teaching styles and expectations within the classroom. In addition, two weeks into the term, and before the drop/add period ends, the resident staff will host an open discussion for all CIEE participants, as well as a few Ghanaian students, to talk about their experiences in the classroom thus far, the challenges they are facing and ways they could overcome them. Roleplaying would be introduced using real live examples to gain insight on how to manage their challenges. Including Ghanaian students would enable the CIEE students to gain insight on how they would manage their expectations in the classroom. Meeting in a group would allow for an interesting sharing of experiences and brainstorming coping techniques, all the while building a strong sense of community among the students.

**Recommendation 2:** Given that CIEE Legon cannot control the quality of UG courses or manage UG faculty matters, the ACB team recommends that the CIEE study center staff continue to identify strategies that help students navigate the academic environment of the host university. In addition to guiding students through the registration process and compiling syllabi for recommended courses, these strategies might include more attention to the level of courses taken by students, role play activities to accompany written information about differences in classroom culture, and helpful college "survival tips" appropriate to the discipline (where to sit in large classes, ways to engage host faculty, etc.).

**Action to be taken:**

CIEE will be introducing an online course evaluation process in the summer of 2017. Results of the evaluations can be compiled into a report that can be shared with new students for additional insight and guidance on selecting their courses based on peer review, in addition to a more intentional academic advising by the CIEE resident staff. In addition, the CIEE resident staff have developed an 'Academic Survival Guide' to be incorporated into the onsite handbook and distributed at the onsite orientation. The guide includes tips for students to develop a rapport with the faculty, how to use the online learning management system of the University of Ghana, make a friend in class to get advice on coursework etc. We will also share this with other CIEE study centers as a recommendation for best practices.

**Recommendation 3:** The ACB team recommends that the CIEE Legon staff work with Portland to revamp the program's profile on the web site, giving greater attention to STEM programs offered by the University of Ghana in addition to noted opportunities in public health.

**Action to be taken:**

With the spring term coming to an end, CIEE Legon will revise the website to impact the prospective spring 2018 students highlighting the range of course offerings at the University of Ghana, specifically promoting a selection of STEM courses and areas where the University of Ghana has gained international recognition such as Public Health and the fact that the Business school is applying for accreditation by the AACSB. In addition, we will ensure that an interesting selection of STEM courses is listed on the website.

**Recommendation 4:** The ACB team recommends that CIEE Portland work with the CIEE Legon study center to articulate demonstrable program goals that can be prominently displayed in program handbooks and other appropriate and accessible places.

**Action to be taken:**

CIEE Legon will revise their program goals and ensure that they are included in all printed material on the program (website, catalogue, pre-departure handbook, onsite handbook, etc.)

**Recommendation 5:** The ACB team recommends that the CIEE Legon staff review all program handbooks to assure consistency of information across programs. This consistency includes the use of images such as the image of the International Certificate of Vaccination that appears in the Ghanaian Studies Summer Handbook but not in the others. In addition, the sections on Race, Gender, and Sexuality should be reviewed for consistency in presentation of those issues and given more prominence in all of the program handbooks or other published information.

**Action to be taken:**

The Regional Director of Operations, along with the CIEE Legon Resident Director will review and revise all material related to the Legon program to ensure consistency, clarity, streamlining and minimizing redundancy in the material shared with our students. Our primary focus will be on the pre-departure handbook and the onsite handbook, but we will also review the materials and presentations developed for the onsite orientation and pre-departure orientation.