

Academic Consortium Board

Site Evaluation Executive Summary

Evaluation of the CIEE Alcalá Summer Language and Culture Program at Alcalá de Henares, Spain

Summer 2019

Date of last site evaluation: N/A

CIEE Center evaluations are conducted every 10 years and evaluation teams are selected to review the programs and study centers for best practices in study abroad.

Evaluation Team members:

Dr. Maxine Sample, Professor of English/Africana Studies and Director of International Education, Virginia State University, ACB member and team leader

Dr. Luis Martin-Estudillo, Professor, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, and Director of European Studies Group, University of Iowa

- I. **Program Background/History:** *General background on the program, statistics, history, background on host institution, and summary of academic and co-curricular program dimensions.*

The CIEE Alcalá Summer Language and Culture program is currently a satellite program of the CIEE Global Institute in Madrid, Spain. It offers a Spanish language immersion program during the summer only at the CIEE Alcalá de Henares center. Students with at least four semesters of college-level Spanish take two courses taught in Spanish during each four-week summer session. Students may participate in one or both sessions. In addition, homestay and co-curricular activities enhance students' advanced Spanish language proficiency and cultural literacy during the program. Since 1989, the center had originally offered both semester and academic year programs, but low enrollments in the semester programs resulted in the program being closed. The more successful summer program opened in 2008 and in 2015 was absorbed as part of the CIEE Madrid center's program offerings delivered through the Universidad de Alcalá's Instituto Franklin. The Universidad de Alcalá de Henares (UAH) is one of the oldest universities in Europe as well as a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site. Since 1987 the Institute has been delivering specialized educational programming to American undergraduate students who want to study in Spain. The Director of the Global Institute in Madrid provides oversight for the CIEE Alcalá program at the University.

- II. **Key Discussions/Findings:** *This section would not only include a brief summary of the items explored from the terms of reference, but it would also include noteworthy conversations and clarifications of program dimensions that might be particularly useful to member schools and home school advisors.*

The CIEE Alcalá Summer Language and Culture program is a well-managed language immersion program that continues to receive high levels of satisfaction from program

participants. The location of the program at a UNESCO World Heritage site combined with Spanish content courses and enriching intercultural programming makes it attractive to students from diverse academic majors. Particularly popular is the Spanish for Healthcare Professions course with its integrated internship. A committed staff ensures that program services are well coordinated and responsively delivered in coordination with the Universidad de Alcalá de Henares Instituto Franklin, a host partner with whom CIEE has had a lengthy positive relationship.

The program has performed well in all key program aspects and has not required additional monitoring. Though the direct enroll Spanish content courses are a strength of the program, the unevenness in quality has been noted and has received past attention. While appropriate interventions have been taken to address student complaints about specific courses and instructors, consideration should be given to the establishment of a more formalized process for collaboratively addressing academic integrity and effectiveness of instruction to better address these issues.

The program has experienced steady growth over the past four years. However, while program growth is a welcomed aspect of this program, it has brought with it a number of housing challenges, including a shortage of the advertised homestays as well as the conundrum of how to maintain a Spanish-language-only environment once students are alternatively assigned to the residence hall.

Finally, the high caliber of the CIEE Alcalá staff notwithstanding, the program may need to expand its staff so that proactive strategies can be implemented to manage current and anticipated challenges associated with the program's growth before they adversely impact program enrollment or sacrifice the quality and high levels of satisfaction that this program has enjoyed.

III. Priority Recommendations: CIEE and the Evaluation Team have selected the following priority recommendations as actionable items:

1. As the centerpiece of the Alcalá program is content courses taught in Spanish, the evaluation team recommends that CIEE Alcalá establish a means to work collaboratively with the Instituto Franklin to ensure that faculty assigned to teach the content courses have appropriate academic credentials and acceptable levels of expertise in the content disciplines. Purposeful articulation with the Institute focused on enhancing faculty credentials could result in the identification of content specialists currently available at the Universidad de Alcalá.
2. To ensure that course syllabi are more aligned with the described courses and that course content in the disciplines is appropriately updated, the evaluation team recommends that CIEE Alcalá work collaboratively with the Instituto Franklin on a process that will provide for formal oversight from content specialists in the creation of program curricula and the establishment of a protocol for approving new courses and assessing Institute courses offered to study abroad students.
3. Should the program continue to experience growth, CIEE Portland should reconsider CIEE Alcalá staff needs. Of particular need is (1) the employment of a designated full-time staff person at Alcalá during the critical 5-6 months of

program preparation and implementation and (2) a graduate assistant or other appropriately credentialed staff person available in the residence hall to help enhance the language immersion nature of the program.

4. While the homestay experience creates avenues for students' engagement with the local culture, students' concerns regarding a lack of sufficient peer-level engagement with the locals suggest a need for CIEE Alcalá to identify and implement strategies that enhance program participants' interactions with the local community.

IV. Action Plan/Program Update: Response to Priority Recommendations

1. **CIEE Action Item:** CIEE staff will initiate meetings with the host partner institution to share and review strategies on appropriate faculty assignments for summer courses, in sync with credential verification, and make it clear that U.S. college standards require at least a master's degree for instructors in the relevant field of discipline.
2. **CIEE Action Item:** CIEE staff will initiate meetings with the host partner institution to share and review strategies on appropriate protocols to develop program curricula and formal oversight from content specialists. CIEE can make its needs clearly known, but final decisions on courses and content rests with the host institution.
3. **CIEE Action Item:** CIEE staff will review staffing needs to ensure academic quality delivery based on the ACB report suggestions and adequate staff support in the residence hall housing if the host university needs to use this housing option to place CIEE students there during summer sessions.
4. **CIEE Action Item:** CIEE staff will share local community resources with CIEE students who are in homestays and that are available in Alcalá during the summer months (author lectures, film screenings, library access, dance classes, community groups, etc.). CIEE staff will also review and present information to students who are placed in the Residence Hall on how students can access local resources (theatre plays, film screenings, language exchange events, etc.) on their own that will help with their language immersion.