

ACB Evaluation Executive Summary

Film Studies Program, CIEE Study Center at the Prague Film and Television School of the Academy of the Performing Arts (FAMU), Prague, Czech Republic

Spring 2011

The CIEE Film Studies program is designed to give serious film students a unique international opportunity to hone their production and screenwriting skills through direct involvement with some of Europe's leading film professionals. Students gain a greater understanding of the techniques used to produce film and write screenplays. The program allows student to create 16mm films and feature-length screenplays through collaborative work with other local and international students and FAMU faculty and staff.

The program began in the fall of 2008. Until this spring, the screenwriting option had not attracted students. This spring, three students are enrolled in this track and 17 are in the production track. We are very impressed with the opportunities this program gives students to work closely with distinguished filmmakers, and we hope it will draw a greater number of applicants. A more competitive admissions process should guarantee that only the most serious and committed applicants will be admitted.

This program as well as the larger CIEE Central European Studies Program is extremely well run. Under the leadership of Lucie Zacařarová, the program delivers student services that are first-rate. Students receive very useful and timely information prior to and during their time abroad, are provided with excellent housing near the site of their classes, and are offered multiple ways both within and outside the academic curriculum to acquaint themselves with the local culture. The program makes excellent use of its location to enrich the students' experience. The staff is responsive and knowledgeable and highly regarded by the students. FAMU courses have been well reviewed by the students, though some expressed disappointment at not having more access to filmmaking equipment before they actually have to shoot. We were impressed by the strong mentoring skills of the teachers and the professional atmosphere that they created in the class.

Students in the Film Studies program take Czech language for 50 hours over nine weeks. After an intensive week or two, they have Czech class only once a week. We think that this is not the best format for learning a new language and suggest that they meet at least twice a week for an hour each time rather than once a week for 1.5 hours, though even that is less than ideal for language learning.

We think this program has much potential and should be attracting many strong students. In searching out members for the evaluation team, the team leader came across faculty in film studies who were interested in learning more about the program. Perhaps there could be a faculty development program in Prague that features FAMU and its faculty.

CIEE Action Plan

Film Studies Program, CIEE Study Center at the Prague Film and Television School of the Academy of the Performing Arts (FAMU), Prague, Czech Republic

September 2011

Overview

CIEE staff are pleased to provide this Action Plan in response to the Academic Consortium Board (ACB) report on the Film Studies Program at the CIEE Prague Study Center at the Prague Film and Television School of the Academy of the Performing Arts (FAMU). The report of the site visit was received by members of the ACB at the Spring 2011 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 (Dr. Nancy Kanach, Princeton University) and, where appropriate, from other members of the evaluation team, Dr. Kelley Conway, University of Wisconsin-Madison, and Dr. Lisa Fetheringill Zwicker, 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.

ACB Recommendation

More effort should be made on the part of CIEE to market the Film Studies program to departments of film & media in the U.S. so that more committed, mature, talented students can be attracted to the program.

Action

CIEE has increased its outreach to appropriate departments at CIEE Academic Consortium member institutions over the past year. Some of the top film schools in the U.S. continue to operate their own, independent study abroad programs, but several other top programs have continued to send small numbers of students on this program. Based on feedback from senior administrators and faculty at FAMU, the quality of the CIEE students has improved noticeably over the past few semesters.

ACB Recommendation

Investigate ways of allowing the production students opportunities to use the filmmaking equipment well before they shoot their films so that they can hone their technical skills.

Action

CIEE continues to work with FAMU faculty on opportunities for training prior to the start of the actual production of the independent student projects. In fall 2011, students are receiving additional training on specific film-making equipment prior to starting their projects, so CIEE hopes to see improved feedback from students this semester. FAMU faculty have also

recommended that students reach out more to staff and faculty if they feel that they need additional help with production equipment.

ACB Recommendation

Investigate offering Czech language twice or four times per week before they start their Practicum.

Action

While the intensive nature of the film projects makes it extremely difficult for CIEE to increase the number of Czech language contact hours towards the middle and end of the semester, it may be possible for CIEE to increase language contact hours at the beginning of the semester. It should be noted, however, that student feedback indicates that while some would like more language instruction, others appreciate the extra time that they are given to work on their projects towards the end of the program. CIEE will continue to review the situation and consider adding more language contact hours in fall 2012.

ACB Recommendation

Circulate a short bibliography to the Film Studies students well before they leave the U.S. to help them become more familiar with film history and aesthetics before starting the FAMU program.

Action

This action was addressed during summer 2011. The spring 2012 pre-departure program handbook will include a revised bibliography for the students.