

Evaluation Executive Summary
CIEE Study Center in Cape Town, South Africa
April 2014

Executive Summary

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.

Evaluation team

The evaluation site team was comprised of the following individuals:

Cheryl Matherly
Vice Provost, Global Education
The University of Tulsa

Ana Maria Wiseman
Dean of International Programs
Wofford College

Jennifer Allen
Director, Institute for Sustainable Solutions and Associate Professor in Public Administration
Portland State University

David Bell
Associate Professor of the Practice of International Development and Social Change
Clark University

Colleagues with whom the team met

CIEE Resident Staff:

Quinton Redcliffe, Center Director
Felicity Inns, Resident Director A&S program
Ronel Stevens, Resident Director Service-Learning program
Dominique Webb, Residence Life Manager
Jesse Twum-Boafo, Programme Assistant
Penny Alexander, Regional Director of Operations
Director and Assistant Director, UCT International Office
S-L Program Faculty for "Poverty & Development" and "Social Research Methods"
Primary contacts, community organizations supporting S-L projects
Host families

Last evaluation:

UCT Study Center – 2004, 2008
Service Learning Program – 2008

Program background and history

CIEE is the largest, longest-standing study abroad partner of the University of Cape Town. The first students enrolled in 1998 in what became the Arts and Sciences program, and it has since become one of the largest programs in the CIEE portfolio. Students directly enroll in regular courses at UCT. The social sciences and humanities programs are the most popular, specifically courses with a South African or African focus, although CIEE has successfully attracted students from business, engineering, and the sciences. The Center Director and the Resident Director have taught the Seminar on Living and Learning since it was launched seven years ago.

The Service-Learning Program was launched in 2006 in order to prepare “students to be active in service while providing opportunities to reflect upon the complexities and challenges facing Cape Town specifically and South Africa generally.” The program is based on an academic service-learning model that incorporates the principles of engagement, reflection, reciprocity, and public dissemination. Students enroll in five courses, including either Afrikaans or isiXhosa language, and complete an on-going service project and Capstone project.

The Community Development and Social Justice Summer Program is based on the Service-learning Program and combines coursework with an embedded service experience. It was originally offered as a four week program, but in 2012 was expanded to 6 weeks.

Focus of the evaluation

Prior to the program evaluation, CIEE staff noted several areas upon which they wished the evaluation team to focus: problems associated with how the UCT credit system is recognized by US institutions; the structure of the courses associated with the Service-Learning Program, specifically the Social Research Methods Class; student dissatisfaction with the current summer program; and strategies for managing a very large, complex, and growing study center, especially in relationship with the program at the University of Stellenbosch.

Key findings

The team considered that Cape Town and UCT provided a very rich learning experience for students, and we were extremely impressed with the staff expertise and investment in directing quality programs. We considered the academic program for the A&S students, in particular to be very strong. The major issues we identified were related to academic advising and matters affecting student enrollment in appropriate courses. For example, UCT has a very brief drop/add period, which requires a lot of effort on the part of CIEE students to complete the UCT paperwork in time. The problem is made more frustrating because the UCT course information is very difficult to find online, a problem that the IAPO staff did not anticipate would change any time soon. A second, and perhaps more complicated issue, is with the manner in which UCT assigns credit. UCT follows the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) credit system, which awards credits based on workload and level as opposed to seat time. Per this system, CIEE requires all study abroad students to take between 70 and 82 HEQF credits. This system has created issues for students seeking to take courses in particular fields. In engineering, for example, credits are awarded for courses taken as part of a total ‘basket’ that equals the requisite HEQF credits for the semester. A course when considered singly, however, may not carry the same credit hours as an equivalent on the US campus.

The Service-Learning Program is conducted in accordance with its stated goals and meets the mission as determined by CIEE. It has also grown substantially and offers potential for further growth, but with some possible opportunity cost related to overall program quality. Additionally, due in part to its responsiveness to previous ACB evaluations that proposed the strengthening of the ‘independent research’ component in order to strengthen the overall academic rigor of the program, CIEE faculty, in

its current program configuration, have placed significant emphasis on the production of 'research' associated with students community engagement and service experiences. This has led to some confusion and stress among students who attempt to balance authentic community engagement and reflective/reflexive learning - with the associated rigor of conducting more conventional primary modes of research - on topics related to their service and community engagement. Grounded in its current philosophy of building strong, reciprocal and sustainable relationships with community partners, the program needs to redefine its expectation of student 'research' to embrace a broader range of 'field-research' and 'engaged scholarship' models of inquiry, reflection, action and production. It also needs to consider a reconfiguration of course offerings to allow for more interaction of S-LP program student with mainstream UCT courses and campus culture more generally. This will be challenging but it may be a necessary adjustment in order to maintain program integrity and quality.

Based on a review of the syllabi, conversations with staff, and students' evaluations, the Community Development and Social Justice Summer Program seems to be reasonably effective with accomplishing its goals. The team was concerned, however, about whether the current program design made most sense for this site. The program was extended in summer 2012 from 4 to 6 weeks, in response to feedback from CIEE member institutions that indicated they could not otherwise give credit for a service learning program. This change has made the program extremely difficult for staff to manage for some important structural reasons, and we have recommended other models be considered for a summer offering in South Africa.

One of the biggest challenges facing this center is simply size. The Cape Town study center is one of the largest in the CIEE portfolio. The city itself enjoys a reputation for attracting students who like to party, and the staff said that they have had problems with large groups of students from the same institution travel together and request to live together, further contributing to a non-academic atmosphere. While these students constitute a minority of those choosing to study in Cape Town, it is clear that these students are affecting the experiences of the others on the program. One of the factors that seems to moderate this kind of behavior seems to be living with local students or families. The staff said that the number of incidents involving students living in the homestays or the residence halls was much lower than for those living in houses or the apartments. The team encourages CIEE to continue to explore options that would require greater housing integration with UCT students and the Cape Town community and ways to create smaller interest groups to create a greater sense of community among the students.

Finally, the Cape Town staff are extremely qualified and dedicated professionals. Even with the rapid program growth, the staff makes a priority to get to know students and provide individual attention as much as possible. The resident assistant program is key for the existing staff to be able to manage the program. The size of the programs, however, has stretched staff. The staff-to-student ratio is approximately 1:33 (7 staff available to the approximately 230 students currently in AS and SL programs). As CIEE evaluates additional growth at the Cape Town study center, we strongly recommend that staffing be evaluated to determine that there are enough people in place to continue to deliver a high quality program.

Priority recommendations

1. Address academic advising issues for the Arts and Sciences program:
 - CIEE can make more relevant information available to students and advisors and possibly have a more direct link or guidance available to navigate the UCT website.
 - There need to be more support structures in place for students for academic advising on site.
- The rapid growth in the program makes it difficult for the small number of CIEE staff provide the timely advising required for students to make course changes within the drop/add period.

- Decrease the emphasis on study options such as commerce and engineering which contain the most difficult challenge for students either because of their challenging content or their inherent credit situation. Reconsider the inclusion of the independent study option, which is an option that is not readily available to students.
2. Eliminate the S-L Research methods course and replace with options at UCT: (#4-5)
 - The Social Research Methods course should be eliminated as a required course for the S-L program, given that the content of the course is dissociated with the actual capstone projects conducted on site. The 'research' expectation could be reframed as basic 'field-research' or even as 'engaged scholarship', although both terms may lead to their own contestations.
 - The Social Research Methods course should be replaced by three pre-determined elective courses taught at UCT by core UCT faculty on the UCT campus, in the fields of education, health and development. This proposed change will also allow for more integration of S-L students with the UCT academic campus and course offerings.
 3. Rethink the summer program
 - CIEE should explore alternatives for summer programs in South Africa that would not require that the Cape Town study center to host on-site a six-week program.
 4. Prioritize homestays and residence halls
 - CIEE should more strongly advertise, promote, or recommend the homestay. For example, when presenting housing option, the homestay should appear first on the list.
 - CIEE should allow the S-L students the option to not live with other students on the program.
 5. Review staffing
 - CIEE should evaluate staffing levels in context of expectations for future program growth, recognizing the tremendous strains that a program this large is risking both with the delivery of quality services and with the burnout of staff members themselves.

Methodology

The evaluation site team was comprised of the following individuals:

Cheryl Matherly
 Vice Provost, Global Education
 The University of Tulsa

Ana Maria Wiseman
 Dean of International Programs
 Wofford College

Jennifer Allen
 Director, Institute for Sustainable Solutions and Associate Professor in Public Administration
 Portland State University

David Bell
 Associate Professor of the Practice of International Development and Social Change
 Clark University

The team evaluated the three programs based at the University of Cape Town: Arts and Sciences, Service-Learning, and Community Development and Summer Justice Summer. (This same team also evaluated the Sustainability and Community Program at Stellenbosch University, which is addressed in a separate evaluation.) The members of the site visit team each reviewed the history and evaluation of the program produced by CIEE. They studied the course catalog, and reviewed course syllabi for all program courses; they read end-of-session reports; they reviewed statistical information on the participants (numbers, gender, and ethnicity statistics, sending institutions, etc.). They reviewed staff and instructor curriculum vitae. They reviewed the pre-departure orientation handbook, and the on-site orientation schedule. They reviewed the student evaluation summaries and all the evaluations covering the program. They contacted the top 10 sending institutions to learn of their concerns. Finally, they reviewed the CIEE strategic analysis of the program.

During the three-day site visit in Cape Town, team members met with the Center Director, Resident Director for each program, program assistants, and staff with the UCT international office. The team observed UCT and CIEE courses for students in both the Arts and Sciences and Service-Learning programs, and met individually with faculty who teach courses for the Service-Learning program. The team visited one site that hosts service-learning students and met individually with one service-learning site supervisor. The team toured student housing and met with four homestay host families. They met with students in both the Arts and Sciences and Service-Learning programs to discuss their experiences. Finally, two members of the team met with the Resident Director of Operations.

The site visit team jointly drafted and agreed on recommendations that are made part of this report.

CIEE Action Plan

In response to the Academic Consortium Board (ACB) Evaluation of the CIEE Study Center at The University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa Arts & Science and Service Learning Program.

October 1, 2014

Overview

CIEE staff is pleased to provide this Action Plan in response to the Academic Consortium Board (ACB) report on the CIEE Study Center Arts & Science Program and the Service Learning Program at the University of Cape Town the report of the site visit was received by members of the ACB at the fall 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 Cheryl Matherly, the University of Tulsa and, where appropriate, from other members of the evaluation team, Ana Maria Wiseman, Wofford College; David Bell, Clark University; and Jennifer Allen, Portland State 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

1. ACB Recommendation:

Address academic advising issues for the Arts and Sciences program:

Advising for the students in the Arts & Science program should be more comprehensive, relevant and timely. Information on course work should be from diverse sources: CIEE staff, UCT website and faculty and/ or Department Chairs. With the provision of stronger student advising, commerce and engineering major students are better informed about the credit conversations and the rigor in the course work.

Action:

CIEE agrees that with the growth of the program and continuing onsite obstacles, this area needs additional attention. CIEE has created a new position, Program Assistant: Academic Affairs effective in October 2014 essentially replacing the advising role that Felicity Inns had previously). The Program Assistant: Academic Affairs advises students on the most appropriate courses to take during their study abroad experience. The Program Assistant will reach out to the UCT Department Chairs, faculty and advisors for their assistance so that advising is accurate. Finally, the Program Assistant will make program participants aware of the wealth of academic resources at the University such as the writing center, math tutoring and science assistance. As suggested by the ACB team, CIEE is also exploring both adding additional staffing in this area as well as the creation of a peer advisor team to help advise students during the busy one week long drop/add period but also to show them how to use the library, navigate registration, and writing center, and how to get tutors, etc.

2. ACB Recommendation

Prioritize homestays and residence halls

Homestays should be highly promoted on the website and on all written materials and as a viable and recommended option for students in Arts & Science and Service Learning Program.

Action:

CIEE agrees that homestays are an amazing option allowing students to integrate much more deeply into South African society; however, similar to the situation at many of our programs, students overwhelmingly prefer to live in dorms or apartments. That said, the Center Director and RDO have reviewed the website and print materials, with a view to highlighting the homestay options. The housing presentation on the OPDO and the blog will also be utilized as a way to further promote this excellent option. Additionally, CIEE will allow students on the Service Learning program to partake in the homestay program as an idea way to integrate more deeply into the culture.

3. ACB Recommendation

Eliminate the S-L Research methods course and replace with options at UCT: (#4-5)

In the Service Learning Program, the Social Research Methods Course should be replaced by pre-selected University of Cape Town rendered courses from the humanities department: education, health and development. The shift would allow S-LP participants to be more academically and socially integrated within University of Cape Town while taking a course that assists with their service work in the community.

Action:

Based on the program and course evaluations of the Social Research Methods Course (SRMC) over the past year, the Cape Town staff redesigned this course to better meet the overall learning objectives for the course and Service-Learning Program. At the end of the spring semester, a qualified faculty member who well understands the students' differing academic abilities and the learning objectives for the program was hired to redesign and teach the course. The adapted course began in fall 2014 taught by this new faculty member. CIEE believes that the newly structured course will better address the challenges surfaced in the ACB evaluation. In fact, current students (Fall 2014) and the RD of the program report a high level of satisfaction with the redesigned course, specifically with the improved integration between course content and the field service component. Throughout the semester, the course instructor met individually with students to provide personalized one-on-one support. Given these successes, CIEE would like to retain the course for the spring semester and reassess at that time for a final determination of whether to drop or retain the course.

4. ACB Recommendation

Review staffing

The staff configuration of the Cape Town Study Center should be maximized to support programmatic excellence, future programming and more importantly, promoting staff's vivacity in their positions.

Action:

In recent years as the Cape Town study center has experienced rapid growth, and especially since the advent of the RDO structure, CIEE has been carefully studying the Cape Town organizational structure. As cited in the report, the Cape Town staff to student ratio is approximately 1:33. Upon study of similar programs in the CIEE portfolio (direct enrollment programs with high student participation), CIEE determined that this ratio falls in the middle of the range of peer programs. That said, the environment in Cape Town poses some more complex challenges than some of these other programs, and therefore CIEE acknowledges that additional staff are needed to support the full range of activity in Cape Town. Additionally, CIEE's study of the staffing situation in Cape Town revealed the need for the existing organizational structure to be reconfigured to play to the strengths of the professionals there. So in addition to adding more human resources to the team, CIEE has also reorganized the office to achieve the goals stated in this recommendation.

Key operations have been moved from one or two core staff, to several qualified staff; consciously making all the services more student-centered. New hire, Paula Mapeka, has been appointed Director for Finance and Administration. Paula will serve in a multifunctional capacity covering supervisory roles in Accounting, Payroll, Taxes, Human Resources, Facilities and Office Management. This role will allow Center Director, Quinton Redcliffe, more time to focus on important areas such as student integration into campus and the community, intercultural development and community development, his natural areas of strength. Dominique Webb has been promoted to Student Services Director and will be responsible for the management, evaluation, and development of non-academic support services for the Arts & Sciences program. Jesse Twum-Boafo has been appointed Program Assistant: Student Services. Jesse will primarily work with Resident Assistants who support our students in all types of CIEE housing options. Mugove Chiwashira has been appointed Program Assistant: Academic Affairs. As described above, Mugove will be advising students on the most appropriate courses to take during their study abroad experience. She will manage issues around grade appeals, exams, and University of Cape Town's academic protocols. Michelle Diedericks is now the Housing Coordinator, coordinating all housing for all students, including recruiting and training host families, dormitory placements, negotiating housing contracts, overseeing housing assignments, and dealing with residential problems

as they arise. She will also be responsible for a team of cleaning staff. CIEE believes this staff structure will result in a Study Center that is better able to serve the students with quality programming without staff fatigue. The structure was put into place in October but early indications from staff are positive. CIEE also plans to add additional staff this year, most likely in the area of Student Services and summer programming with the overall goal of better integrating students into South African society, through interest groups and other means.

5. ACB Recommendation

Rethink the summer program

The Study Center should seek options for the six-week summer program currently being hosted in Cape Town.

Action:

The six-week summer program currently hosted in Cape Town is a vibrant and important part of the CIEE portfolio. In addition, CIEE has experienced demand for additional short-term programs in Cape Town and is seeking to enhance our offering to the Academic Consortium. That said, CIEE acknowledges the challenges with the existing summer program in Cape Town, and program management staff have been engaged in finding solutions to address the issues surfaced in the evaluation. With the additional staff resources and restructured team described above, the new Study Center facilities, and the involvement of the Stellenbosch RD who does not manage a summer program, the CIEE Study Center in Cape Town is much better prepared to host summer programming. One of the specific goals of the new staffing model will be to put measures in place to overcome some of the logistical challenges caused by programs that overlap. One such measure would be to designate a summer manager for all program activity happening in Cape Town during the summer period. This would allow the program staff to devote their full time and attention to the outgoing students and the incoming cohort of semester students that arrives during the last two weeks of the summer programs.

Written by:

Quinton Redcliffe, Study Center Director; Cape Town and Stellenbosch
Penny Alexander, Regional Director of Operations, Africa

Date: October 1, 2014