

Evaluation Executive Summary
CIEE Saint Petersburg Study Center
March 20 – March 24, 2016

CIEE Study Center reviews are conducted every ten years by a two- to three-person team led by a member of the CIEE Academic Consortium Board. The following is an executive summary of the evaluation report.

I. Evaluation Team members:

Giorgio DiMauro, Director, Center for Global Education, Rutgers University
Lisa Little, Lecturer in Russian Language, University of California, Berkeley

II. Colleagues with whom the Evaluation Team met:

CIEE Saint Petersburg Study Center Staff

Irina Efimovna Makoveeva, Center Director
Anton Stepanov, Program Officer
Irina Vasilyeva, Student Services Coordinator
Svetlana Valentinovna Mantsvetova, Housing Coordinator
Julia Semibratova, Excursion Coordinator
Veronika Afanasieva, Administrative Assistant

CIEE Saint Petersburg Study Center Instructors and courses visited

Marina Grigor'evna Miroshnikova, RL – Grammar A1
Aleksandr Sergeevich Sherstobitov, RAS – Contemporary Russian Politics & Governance
Leonid Vladimirovich Loshenkov, RL – Mentality, Social Behavior, and Representation of Russia
Ekaterina Valer'evna Sokolova, RL – Advanced Translation A1
Mariia Viacheslavovna Arkhipetskaia, RL – Phonetics A2
Mikhail Arkad'evich Krundyshev, RL – Conversation B1
Elena Anatol'evna Predtechenskaia, RL – Grammar A2
Natal'ia Anatol'evna Khan, RAS – Elementary Russian
Irina Efimovna Makoveeva, RAS – Russian Cinema
Irina Gennad'evna Guliakova, RL – Analytical Readings 20th-Century Russian Literature; also visited her Russian Choir course
Irina Sergeevna Brodt, RL – Grammar B2
Tat'iana Iurevna Korepanova, RAS – Conversation, Intermediate Russian
Iaroslavna Vasil'evna Zemtsovskaia, – presentation of smart board
Anna Olegovna Fedotova – presentation of smart board

Saint Petersburg State University

Stanislav G. Eremeev, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science and Head of the Department of Russian Politics

III. Last evaluation Conducted: 2006

IV. Program Background/History:

The Saint Petersburg Study Center is the oldest one on the CIEE roster, having opened its doors in 1967. Throughout this time, it has maintained its close relationship with what was then Leningrad State University, now Saint Petersburg State University (SPSU). In 2009 CIEE's programs were placed under the support of the SPSU Department of Political Science, which formally hires all of CIEE's instructors for the programs. In 2010, The CIEE Study Center welcomed its new Center Director, Dr. Irina Efimovna Makoveeva. During the past six years, multiple aspects of CIEE Study Center work have been modified and advanced under her leadership. In 2011, CIEE launched its brand new Russian Area Studies summer program, offering content courses in English and comprehensive elementary- and intermediate-level Russian language classes. Starting in 2012, the CIEE Study Center (with the support of SPSU ACTFL-accredited language instructors) introduced the system of pre- and post-OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview) testing.

In 2014, CIEE staff created a new Alternative Break Program to help encourage students to explore other parts of Russia during the program break. In the past year, the Study Center established a system of training reliable Russian Buddies, Russian student volunteers, who currently play an essential role. As part of CIEE's worldwide commitment to intercultural learning, the Saint Petersburg resident staff are launching regular CIEE embedded intercultural component seminars in 2016, while continuing the implementation of various CIEE Faculty-Led and Customized Programs, as well as training SPSU faculty on implementing technology in the classroom.

The CIEE Saint Petersburg Study Center was one of the first to offer homestays, starting back in 1993. As of today, the Study Center has a roster of over 100 homestay families, with the majority of students opting to live with a family. Other program highlights include an extensive extracurricular program comprised of cultural tours, excursions, a signature Spring Ball, field trips, and language immersion activities with local peers, such as the "Sobesedniki" conversation partner mixers, a Discussion Club, Cinema Club, "Pub Quiz" Trivia Nights, Board Game Nights, and many more.

With the Study Center's 50th anniversary fast approaching, the resident staff is intensifying its efforts to seek and stay in touch with CIEE program alumni from the half-century long history of CIEE in Russia. For the past three years, the Study Center has been publishing regular CIEE Alumni Updates and holding annual CIEE Alumni Reunions in Saint Petersburg.

V. **Focus of Evaluation:**

Enrollments swing up and down in tandem with the vagaries of Russia's relationship to the West. The high-enrollment mark of over 100 students back in 2011 has given way to more modest enrollments of over 30 for the semester and over 60 for the summer. This means that the challenges of over-enrollment that were acute a few years ago are no longer an immediate concern, and the Evaluation Team was able to focus on the core issues of academic rigor, linguistic immersion, preparation of students for studying and living in Russia, the safety situation in Saint Petersburg, particularly for minority and LGBTQ students, and the relationship of the two semester programs to each other.

VI. **Key Discussions/Findings:**

The Evaluation Team found a program that is thriving, with a strong and committed administrative and academic team. Dr. Irina Efimovna Makoveeva has extensive experience in both the US and Russian academic systems, which has helped her to bridge the two successfully in the program design. She has assembled a dynamic local teaching staff who keep the students engaged and interested, has encouraged and developed the use of technology in the classroom, and has maintained strong collegial ties with Saint Petersburg State University. The Evaluation Team recommends some additional measures to strengthen the academic program to better meet the expectations of US universities and students, in particular giving students the option of additional credit-bearing research to supplement a course. The Evaluation Team also came to the conclusion that a dedicated Academic Coordinator would be an invaluable addition to the staff, so that instructors could be trained and assessed on a continuous basis.

The smaller enrollments mean that the students who do opt to study in Saint Petersburg are truly committed to the language and culture and are serious about their academics. The Evaluation Team found that students were largely looking for more challenges: more homework, more reading, a stricter enforcement of the language commitment. The Team strongly recommends that the language commitment be more strictly enforced, and that students be given more homework that would require them to engage their homestay families and other locals in meaningful and substantive conversations. Since the Russian Language Program (RLP) and the Russian Area Studies Program (RAS) are so closely intertwined, the Team also proposes to de-emphasize the barriers between them as much as possible, so that students with the requisite language ability in RAS can access advanced courses from RLP.

Despite the frayed relationship between Russia and the West, Saint Petersburg is a safe and cosmopolitan city, with little overt anti-Americanism and relative tolerance of diversity. This needs to be better communicated to university study abroad advisors, who have legitimate safety concerns when advising students, particularly minority and

LGBTQ students, about studying in Russia. There also needs to be better communication and training of the CIEE advisors in Portland who are responsible for advising and preparing students for study in Saint Petersburg. The visa process in particular has become very onerous, and was a source of considerable frustration for some students.

Overall, the Evaluation Team was impressed with the quality of the instructors, the dedication of the staff, and the vast array of opportunities for students to engage the culture and practice their Russian. The program has an extensive and committed network of homestay families, an active group of Russian students who act as formal guides (Russian Buddies), a broad list of volunteer and service-learning placements, and a busy and varied set of excursions and social events throughout each term.

VII. Priority Recommendations:

- 1) It is crucial that a qualified Academic Coordinator be hired to help the RD with developing cutting-edge language and content courses. The position would suggest new directions and methodologies in conjunction with the RD, review syllabi, visit courses, and assess faculty teaching.
- 2) Develop a separate, for-credit optional Independent Research course (either 1 credit in conjunction with an existing course, or a stand-alone 3-credit project).
- 3) The language policy should not be open to interpretation, and it should be enforced. Russian should be used at all times in the CIEE study center, with the possibility of a designated “English-language” space where students can go to take a break. Otherwise, English should only be allowed in English content course classrooms, on English-language tours, and in any meetings conducted in English.
- 4) Train the CIEE home office advisor/s in more detail on the Saint Petersburg program, perhaps through a site visit.

[These priority recommendations are boxed in the full report; secondary recommendations are simply bolded.]

VIII. Action Plan/Program Update:

- 1) CIEE St. Petersburg has hired Dr. Chernyaeva (Ural Federal University) for the position of Academic Coordinator. Her focus will be on development of the RL and RAS academic offerings.

- 2) In cooperation with Portland's Academic Affairs office, CIEE St. Petersburg plans to design an optional Independent Research course in conjunction with one of our existing courses for 2018.
- 3) CIEE St. Petersburg has been working on addressing this issue for many years. However, CIEE's limited space on campus cannot realistically allow for separating the students of the RL from those on the RAS program. Because of fluctuations in enrollment numbers it is prohibitive to make immediate changes. However, in summer program offerings the students are separated due to an additional space being available to the program in summer. As we analyze enrollments we will continue to explore options for separating the students and encouraging interactions in the host language for student of both programs.
- 4) A CIEE Portland study abroad advisor went on a site visit in April of 2015. For further collaboration, CIEE St. Petersburg has proposed there be an option of conference calls for Portland and St. Petersburg staff. Such calls can be scheduled (with presentations prepared by the on-site staff) for the recruitment periods when prospective students mostly interact with the office advisors in Portland.