

Academic Consortium Board

Evaluation of the Community Public Health Summer Program in Santiago, Dominican Republic

Summer 2014

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CIEE Center evaluations are conducted every 10 years and evaluation teams are asked to focus on the following dimensions for each of the programs reviewed: 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, and quality of facilities.

- I. **Evaluation Team members:** Kathleen Fairfax, Assistant Vice President for International Affairs and Outreach, South Dakota State University (team leader) and Katie Grove, Clinical Professor, School of Public Health, Dept. of Kinesiology, Indiana University.
- II. **Colleagues with whom the Evaluation Team met:** The team met several times with Dr. David Simmons, Resident Director of the Community Public Health program, as well as the support staff for this program, Ryan Bowen, Resident Coordinator and Melba de Jesús González González, Program Assistant. The team also met with Dr. Lynn Guitar, Center Director, administrators from the Applied Linguistics Department at the host institution (PUCMM), several of the faculty who teach on the program, and all 35 students enrolled in the program this summer.
- III. **Last evaluation Conducted on:** Summer 2003
- IV. **Program Background/History:** Students on the Summer Community Public Health (CPH) program explore the state of healthcare in the Dominican Republic and Hispanic Caribbean through a combination of traditional classroom instruction, local homestays and field work in both urban and semi-urban communities. The 7-week program consists of six weeks of language and healthcare courses, and a week-long semi-rural clinical field rotation. Towards the end of the program, students also participate in an urban community service practicum in an underserved area of Santiago as part of the academic curriculum. The program requires students to take three courses (two health-focused content courses plus Spanish language).

The program is long-standing, having been operating every summer since 1996. Enrollments have been strong, with the summer 2014 cohort the largest ever, at 35 students. It is anticipated that enrollments may grow even more as more students in the pre-health and allied health profession fields become interested in, and able to, study abroad.

The program has benefitted from stable leadership, with Dr. David Simmons serving as Resident Director since 2001. Dr. Simmons' focus on the social determinants of health on resource-poor contexts has been a real boon to the program in building on and reshaping much of the program's original focus. Although Dr. Simmons resided in Santiago at the beginning of his tenure as Resident Director, he relocated to the U.S. in 2004 and now only resides in the Dominican Republic in the summer while leading this program. During Dr. Simmons tenure, the program's enrollments have tripled, and the Santiago CPH curriculum has become a model for the other CIEE public health programs.

The program is physically located at the CIEE Study Center in Santiago, which is housed in two office suites at the Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra (PUCMM). CIEE's relationship with PUCMM is strong and collaborative. PUCMM provides all the instructors for the CIEE courses.

V. Focus of Evaluation: The evaluation team was asked to specifically consider the staffing model of this program (both having the Resident Director only on site for the summer, and having the general oversight of the program under the Center Director), student and staff impressions of the academic content (which is largely controlled by PUCMM), and the planned lengthening of the program from seven to eight weeks (and from nine to 10 credits).

VI. Key Discussions/Findings: The CPH program in Santiago appears to be a true gem in the stable of CIEE programs. The combination of relevant academic coursework, Spanish language instruction, and experiential learning in health-care settings has proven to very successful for this program. Feedback from all constituents (students, sending institutions, host institution) has been uniformly positive. The program is clearly meeting its stated goals.

In terms of the staffing model, this was the first year in which the Center Director has overall responsibility for the program, which in the past was solely administered by the summer Resident Director. However, in reality the program is primarily administered and supported by the summer Resident Director. Given his long-standing tenure with the program, and the prior absence of the Center Director during the summer, this is both to be expected and not a problem. Dr. David Simmons, the Resident Director, is an excellent RD with a deep personal and academic understanding of the mission and goals of the program. His leadership, combined with the excellent support provided by the rest of the staff team, contributes to the exceptionally high quality experience for the students. Despite the fact that Dr. Simmons is only on-site during the, he appears well-connected and well-respected by his colleagues in the Dominican Republic. No doubt these connections have been built and sustained over the many years he has been associated with the program. CIEE is fortunate to have someone of Dr. Simmons' quality and character leading this program.

As mentioned, the Center Director had not previously been involved with the summer CPH program. In this first year of her new role, the Center Director has made herself available to handle some of the more administrative tasks of the program (such as budgeting and finance), thereby freeing up the resident director to focus more on program delivery. The role of the Center Director in overseeing the summer CPH program will undoubtedly grow, and will be critical if there were ever a transition in the

RD, but the structure currently in place appears to be working well, given the individuals in the various roles.

Although previous student evaluations of the quality of the academic classes have been mixed, this year's cohort is mostly satisfied with their content courses. There was some concern that the two classes involve too much overlap and could be better coordinated, but the quality of instruction in both content courses was good. Students did complain, however, that the syllabi they received prior to the start of the program was quite different from the ones they received on-site, making some afraid that the credit transfers they had worked out with their home institutions would need to be revised.

In terms of number of credits offered, if the program is to go from 9 to 10 credits, then an additional credit would need to be awarded for some aspect of the academic program. The language instruction on the program is already divided into two parts: typical grammar/conversation at intermediate and advanced levels, plus a film component. There was significant confusion among the students regarding the film component of the language class, since it is taught separately (by a different instructor) and is taught to all students together, regardless of language level. The film component of the language class does not appear in the syllabi for the classes, so it is understandable that it would cause confusion. The review team suggests that the film component be more formalized, and be described in a syllabus, including how it will be assessed. The additional credit on the program could be awarded for the film component of the language class, thereby giving it more structure and legitimacy.

VII. Priority Recommendations: As mentioned, the program is in excellent shape and only relatively minor adjustments or improvements are recommended. The following three recommendations are the most important:

1. **Syllabus:** Ensure that students are given the correct syllabus prior to attending class so that home institution credit transfer is accurate. Update the course syllabi to include specific information about course expectations for the students. Add the film component of the language courses to the syllabus so that students understand it is part of the Spanish Language course and not a separate course.
2. **Film Component of language courses:** Review the purpose of the film section of the course to ensure that the student is gaining maximal educational experience from it. Consider focusing on films which reflect aspects of Dominican history or culture, something students felt was not covered adequately in any of their courses. Add a section of the film component, based on language ability, to reflect the Spanish Language course.
3. **Differentiation of the two content courses:** Better coordination between the professors of Medical Sociology and Community Health should occur so that the same material is not covered in both classes.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation site visit team was composed of

Kathleen Fairfax, Assistant Vice President for International Affairs and Outreach, South Dakota State University (team leader) and

Katie Grove, Clinical Professor, School of Public Health, Dept. of Kinesiology, Indiana University

The two 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 Community Public Health Program. They contacted the top sending institutions from the Academic Consortium to learn of their concerns. Finally, they reviewed the CIEE strategic analysis of the program.

In preparation for the site visit, the team chair wrote a memo which was distributed on site by the Resident Director to the entire teaching faculty of the program inviting the instructors to give us comments either in writing or orally during the visit. A similar memo went to all students.

During the 2-day site visit, team members had an introduction to most aspects of the program. The team met several times with Dr. David Simmons, Resident Director of the Community Public Health program, as well the support staff for this program, Ryan Bowen, Resident Coordinator and Melba de Jesús González González, Program Assistant. The team also met with Dr. Lynn Guitar, Center Director, administrators from the Applied Linguistics Department at the host institution (PUCMM), several of the faculty who teach on the program, and all 35 students enrolled in the program this summer.

The team attended each of the classes offered on the program.

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

CIEE Action Plan

In response to the Academic Consortium Board (ACB) Evaluation of the CIEE Study Center at Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra, Santiago, Dominican Republic, Community Public Health Summer Program

September 2014

Overview

CIEE staff are pleased to provide this Action Plan in response to the Academic Consortium Board (ACB) report on the CIEE Study Center in Santiago at PUCMM. 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 evaluation team leader Dr. Kathleen Fairfax, Assistant Vice President for International Affairs and Outreach, South Dakota State University, and team member Dr. Katie Grove, Clinical Professor School of Public Health, Department of Kinesiology, 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.

Actions

ACB Recommendation

Syllabus: Ensure that students are given the correct syllabus prior to attending class so that home institution credit transfer is accurate. Update the course syllabi to include specific information about course expectations for the students. Add the film component of the language courses to the syllabus so that students understand it is part of the Spanish Language course and not a separate course.

Action

The Center Director has worked with the program's Resident Director to update and correctly format all program syllabi so that they are now correct and up-to-date in both form and content.

ACB Recommendation

Film Component of Spanish language courses: Review the purpose of the film section of the course to ensure that the student is gaining maximum educational experience from it. Consider focusing on films which reflect aspects of Dominican history or culture, something students felt was not covered adequately in any of their courses. Add a section of the film component, based on language ability, to reflect the Spanish Language course.

Action

The course instructor has been informed of this change and will be implementing a revised course syllabus – focusing on the relevance of the use of films – to be reviewed and, as necessary, revised at the beginning of Winter 2015, well in advance of the 2015 summer program so that changes can be published and distributed as necessary to the website, prospective and actual students, and others.

ACB Recommendation

Differentiation of the two content courses: Better coordination between the professors of Medical Sociology and Community Health should occur so that the same material is not covered in both classes.

Action

In future summers, the newly appointed Center Director will be taking a much more active oversight role vis a vis the administration and delivery of this program, working both with the RD and also our host institution PUCMM to ensure academic quality in all respects, including the differentiation of courses. In the past, as this was left solely to the Resident Director who worked only during the summer, it has been somewhat difficult for him to address issues such as this during the academic year. The Center Director has already begun meeting with administrators and instructors for PUCMM to address ACB recommendations in advance of the summer 2015 program. In a recent report based on a meeting with the PUCMM faculty and administrators, the Center Director noted that there was unanimous recognition that there was too much repetition between the three course syllabi. The head of the PUCMM Medical Department expressed his determination to reduce the repetition as much as possible for summer 2015 and assigned key faculty to work with CIEE on the revision of the course syllabi. Additional revisions will be made in order to include more background medical and social history to help explain the particular health and disease problems facing the D.R. today. This is in line with the ACB evaluation team's recommendations and should help strengthen the overall program. The revised syllabi will be presented to the CIEE Santiago Center Director by the end of fall 2014.

Written by:

Catharine Scruggs, Executive Director, Program Management

Date: September 2014