South African Internship Program

CIEDA assisting development through professional internships

January 1996 marked the beginning of a new Office of International Programs development assistance project which brings mid-career professionals from South Africa to spend two-month internships in a range of U.S. organizations and businesses.

The South African Internship Program, developed in coordination with the United States Information Agency (USIA), and the Council for International Programs in Washington, D.C., has three major goals: (1) to promote institutional development, enhance professional skills, and develop new ideas and philosophies based on the American experience; (2) to support the emergence of democracy, a market economy, and social reconstruction in South Africa; (3) to engage Americans in the fields of public administration, business development, and social services management in co-sponsoring such training programs and developing long-term professional partnerships with counterparts in South Africa.

Management of the South African Internship Program is now being coordinated by the Office of International Programs' Center for International Education and Development Assistance (CIEDA), directed by OIP Associate Dean Charles Reafsnyder.

SAIP Program Officer Jane Schlegel, together with CIEDA staff members Steve Driehaus and Mary Lou Kessler, work with local host organizations across the United States to match agencies and businesses with the particular skills and interests of each cohort group of interns, who are recruited in South Africa through regional United States Information Service offices. When fully funded, the projected three-year program is expected to bring 50 to 60 interns per year to participate.

The first group of 14 interns arrived in mid-January, despite embassy closures and East Coast blizzards. Nine interns are working in Columbus, OH, three in Indianapolis, and two in San Francisco. Their areas of interest vary widely, from mental health and developmental disabilities to finance and consumer lending. In Indianapolis, the three interns have been placed with Fifth Third Bank, and in Columbus, they work with Fifth Third Bank and the Council for International Programs in Washington, D.C.

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the Office of the Mayor, and the IV Center on Philanthropy. A second group of 26 interns is expected to arrive in mid-March. The list of host cities includes Philadelphia, Cleveland, and the Chicago area, and in future may expand to include cities such as Atlanta, Kansas City, and Washington, D.C.

In addition to professional development, the South Africans are introduced to many American cultural and community activities. In each host city, local organizations identify families willing to provide lodging to interns, giving them a taste of American family life. On Fridays, the interns meet community leaders and visit local projects which address the needs of the communities. Weekends are spent attending cultural events, traveling, and exploring new surroundings. For their part, the interns bring with them a fresh enthusiasm and eagerness to develop new skills and practices which they will apply upon their return home.

Overseas Study for Commuter Students: A New Design

Close to two-thirds of the total undergraduate population on the eight campuses of Indiana University are enrolled at the commuter campuses. With the average commuter undergraduate student at 27 years of age, most of these students have to incorporate their IU studies into established job and family schedules. These off-campus commitments make it virtually impossible for them to consider a study-abroad stay as part of their undergraduate education. Moreover, the typical estimated cost of a summer session—potentially the most attractive option for working students—is about $2,200 for in-state residents, still too much to be within their reach. Participation in study abroad programs has thus remained low at IU’s commuter campuses.

Concerned faculty at three of these campuses, Giles Hoyt at IUPUI, Gabrielle Robinson at IU South Bend, and myself at IU East went back to the drawing board to think of new ways to attract more of our students to overseas study. We reasoned that there must be some way to design a viable course with a two-week component abroad, one that even working students could fit into a vacation schedule. To get around the problem of too few students, we would offer the course simultaneously at our three campuses. Since most commuting students are enrolled in pre-professional programs that do not require foreign language, the overseas component would have offered in English. Mindful of the six-week summer sessions offered by our campuses, we decided on an intensive four-week seminar followed by a two-week optional unit overseas. Each component would carry its own academic credit. We then dealt with the questions of locating a collaborating institution overseas, deciding on course content and format, and figuring out student costs.

A determining feature was our collective professional ties with Central Europe: Hoyt heads the German language department; Robinson is an Austrian, and I am a German historian. Believing that a European site would be more familiar and attractive to our students, we decided that Germany would be a good country to focus on, as most students have heard about and understood the implications of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The special topics course, called The United States, Germany, and the Future of Europe, would concentrate on modern relations between the two countries. We were able to recruit Richard Fredland at IUPUI and John Lewis at IUSB, both political scientists, who worked with me to design and teach the initial four-week course at our respective campuses. For the Germany component, IUPUI already has an agreement with the University of Oldenburg, and our colleagues there, Antonius Holtmann and Wolfram Grams, were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the experimental program. With an intercampus startup grant from the Office of International Programs, we were able to consult frequently, and work with Claudia Grossmann, IUPUI’s overseas study coordinator, who arranged all the logistics on travel and lodging at Oldenburg, and also helped advertise the program. By letting Oldenburg take full responsibility for local arrangements and supervision of students, we eliminated the need for an IU faculty presence overseas.

For the two weeks at Oldenburg, our students joined a class of German students studying German-American relations from the German perspective. The class was taught in English, and they found their German fellow students friendly and helpful. Of the original total...