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University of Northern Iowa. Culture and Intensive English Program.

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Do not be intimidated by today’s challenges that are negatively affecting international student enrollment in the United States. By experience, we know that opportunities and enrollment in international education are cyclical. International student recruitment has been a challenge during the past five years due to new immigration regulations, a polarized political environment and new educational markets around the world. Nevertheless, the key is the same as it is always been: dream big and never give up. That’s has been our motto at CIEP, particularly during the past year.

It is hard to give up when we know our efforts contribute to the university’s strategic goals: to recruit, educate, retain and graduate lifelong leaders and global citizens who demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and perspectives necessary to understand the world and work in an international or cross-culture environment.

Throughout the years, CIEP has been UNI’s front door for many international students. Our primary mission has been to provide the academic language skills and cultural orientation that help students succeed in any American higher learning institutions.

To fulfill our mission, we also facilitate in-class and out-of-class interactions between domestic and international students; these interactions can enhance student learning and development in the areas of global knowledge acquisition and intercultural competency. In this issue of the International Panther, we are including notes about new creative CIEP initiatives to attract students to UNI and help them be successful in degree seeking programs at our university. Last semester, for the first time, CIEP collaborated with the UNI Language and Literature Department to co-teach the international students section of College Reading and Writing, a Liberal Art Core Course for freshmen students who will be mainly majoring in Business and Industrial Technology.

In this issue, we are also featuring our TESOL graduate students who work as teaching assistants in our program. For many years, CIEP has worked closely with the TESOL department to provide practicum opportunities for their graduate students and teaching experience for future ESL instructors. Lately, we have been collaborating with the TESOL Club, which has been a very rewarding experience for both parties. TESOL undergraduate students have been organizing cultural activities and social gatherings with CIEP students. Please read the article by Quinn Fiddler, TESOL Club Former President, about his experience meeting friends from around the world right here on campus.

Last semester, we also welcomed a group of students who participated in customized programs. We offered an immersion program for 10 high school students of Gammon Presbyterian Institute from Lavras, Brazil. In addition, 26 Mexican college students came to study as part of the Proyecta Initiative that was created by the Mexican government with the intent to send 100,000 English learners from Mexico to study in the US by the year 2020. The program corresponds with USA and Mexican initiative 100,000 Strong in the Americas, a program that also aims to encourage student mobility in the western hemisphere. In this newsletter, we are also including some notes and pictures about these customized immersion programs.

During the past months, the CIEP instructional and administrative staff, including student employees, have been working efficiently in creating new offerings and promoting the program around the world. Do not miss the notes about the CIEP new online course, publications, and leadership awards.

The current challenges in international education have given us the opportunity to re-think our services, mission and collaboration with partner institutions. We have happily taken on the quest to continue bringing the world to campus and dreaming big for our students and community.

Stay tuned to learn about our 2019-2020 projects! Our next big dream is to implement a new English program to serve local high school English learners at Waterloo West High.
Our Mission

The overall mission of the Culture and Intensive English Program (CIEP) is to provide International Students with quality intensive academic English language instruction and a cultural orientation to the United States in preparation for study at the University of Northern Iowa or other institution of higher learning.
LIBERAL ARTS CORE COLLABORATION

This fall, one ENG 1005: College Writing and Research course offered by the Languages and Literatures Department has been reimagined to serve as a better resource to international students at UNI.

“Teachers across campus are finding that [international] students need a little bit more support than just knowing the language,” said CIEP instructor Jaime Lyon. “So that’s what my role is: to help them learn a little bit more about the academic culture, get them to understand what it’s like to write an essay in the Western style, to work on vocabulary, grammar, all of those things that they need to go into academic classes.”

Lyon is co-teaching the course along with UNI professor Travis Landhuis. Most of the students enrolled in the class are international students; some are even CIEP graduates. Like all academic students at UNI, they are required to take this course as part of their Liberal Arts Core requirements. However, this course is unique because of the additional support of a CIEP instructor. It also includes a weekly lab to provide more academic assistance for these students who do not speak English as a first language.

“It’s something that we’re still developing, but on Thursdays I teach a lab in addition to the normal classes,” said Lyon. “If we need to go over some grammar points, or if I need them to do a second draft of an essay and fix some mistakes they made, we work on that in the lab course on Thursdays.”

The curriculum of the course is similar to other sections of the LAC credit, but the support of a CIEP instructor gives students valuable insight into the academic culture of UNI and the United States in general.

“A lot of international students come just knowing that they need a TOEFL score, or an IELTS score, and so they go into academic classes and they realize, ‘Oh, I don’t know about the culture. I don’t know about how to write or structure an essay,’” said Lyon.

Lyon stated that her favorite part of co-teaching this class was getting to know academic students outside of CIEP. She has even taught some of the students before, both in CIEP and at a partner university abroad, so this course provides a unique opportunity for international students to grow throughout their time at UNI.

This is the first course collaboration between CIEP and academic departments at UNI, but its success is promising for future courses.

“We’re trying to have more collaboration with academic courses and CIEP,” said Lyon. “So we’ll see what happens in the future, but you might see more CIEP teachers co-teaching some courses.”
UNI’s Culture and Intensive English Program makes every effort to offer CIEP students a wide array of fun and engaging activities. These include trips, conversation opportunities and more.

Students enjoyed a day trip to Des Moines that included a tour of the state capitol building, shopping at the mall and a visit to the farmers’ market. The farmer’s market offered a wide variety of international cuisines, so some students were able to have a little taste of their home country. The students were also able to participate in a day trip to Minneapolis. Highlights of this trip included visiting the famous Mall of America, taking pictures in the Sculpture Garden, and trying foods from all over the world at the Midtown Global Market.

All of the CIEP students attended the farewell party to send off the Brazilian exchange students before their return home. The students were presented with certificates signifying their completion of the program. The Gammon students made great friendships during their time here at UNI.

TESOL Club member Quinn Fiedler offered up his knowledge of American football and gave lessons to the CIEP students in the form of informal two-hand touch football games on campus.

CIEP students had the opportunity to be paired with American UNI students with similar interests to practice their English skills and experience UNI college life with a seasoned guide. This experience is beneficial for both parties as it gives both students a chance to learn about a culture other than their own and make friends with someone they may not have ever met otherwise.

Families throughout the Cedar Falls/Waterloo area have opened their homes and lives to CIEP students for many years by participating in our Host Family Program. Sometimes it can be hard for these students to be so far from their own families, so this program provides opportunities to spend time in a family setting and experience a different side of American culture. The potluck was the perfect introduction for these students and their new host families. Each family brought a covered dish and had a meal with their student so they could get to know each other.

Our lives are shaped by our experiences. Wherever we may travel or go, we meet people that are different from ourselves, our views, and our ways of life. That is why it is so important to say yes and go out and experience all you can while you are in a foreign place. This is the best opportunity for you to see other people’s perspectives. You may find a life long friend right on campus.

That is why college participation in clubs, events, and making friends are so important to exploring new countries. A way to get involved can be simple as making friends with people on campus. Making the first step towards this will have such a positive effect on your life. American culture involves doing a lot of outgoing activities which includes: going to the movies, eating out, going to sporting events, hanging out in the dorms, or as simple as eating lunch together at the dining center. Be sure to look for events on Facebook, look at posters on campus, read emails of events, and accept invitations from friends to do something fun.

From personal experience, I came from a small town where we had little diversity. College life gives everyone the chance to meet people from China, Europe, Latin America, and of course other Americans. Without going to college, I would never had the opportunity to explore the minds and hearts of the people that I met along the way.

CIEP offers the chance for students around the world to explore the peaceful and rural part of the United States. They not only teach you English, they offer programs for students to learn about the culture from American students. One such program is “Conversation Partners.” This program pairs up International students with Americans to not only help them learn English through conversation, but also, through friendship, they learn about the culture and social life of Americans. There are other clubs and cool events around campus to get students involved. One such club is the TESOL Club. This club is full of friendly students who would love to take International students out on adventures. They went paintballing, laser tagging, bowling, eating out, and hanging out all of last year. This year they had a Halloween party and saw a few spooky CIEP students there. Check them out on Facebook @University of Northern Iowa TESOL Club.

Be sure to remember that life is adventure. Whether it may be filled with meeting new friends in far away places or seeing a different and interesting culture, we are destined for a great opportunities in this era. We have never before been so connected to those around us. Friends and family are a phone call away. Why not make a few friends here in America that change your view on the world and the path that you are traveling on.
Fourth Entourage of Gammon Presbyterian Institute Students Visits UNI

From August 19th to September 14th, 2018, The University of Northern Iowa received the fourth entourage of Brazilian students enrolled at Gammon Presbyterian Institute. The activities, coordinated by the Culture and Intensive English Program, encompassed English classes (writing, speaking, listening and reading), immersion in American culture and historical tours. The partnership, which began in 2012, has already incorporated dozens of students and is part of the internationalization project of the school.

GAMMON

Founded in 1869 by American missionaries, the Gammon Presbyterian Institute is located in the municipalities of Lavras (headquarters) and Guanhães, state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, and offers all segments of basic education, from preschool to high school. Currently the institution is under the direction of professor Alysson Massote Carvalho and is preparing to launch another campus, this time in the midwest of Brazil.

THE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

The criteria for participants from the Gammon Presbyterian Institute includes a pedagogical evaluation of the candidates. Traditionally, students in the first and second years of high school apply for the exchange program through CIEP, which occurs annually during the second semester.

The group is accompanied by two adult chaperones who have the task of supervising the daily life of the exchange students. On the first day after arrival in Cedar Falls, students take the English language test and receive orientation on the classes and the complete itinerary of the extracurricular activities that take place between August and September, specially tailored for the visitors from Lavras. In addition, the group participates in a medical evaluation and is informed about the rules of access and transit on campus.

English classes take place Monday through Friday in the morning and afternoon. Intercultural experience, provided by the presence of students from other countries such as China, Saudi Arabia, Japan and other nations, is one of the hallmarks of the project.

Gammon’s entourage is housed in UNI dormitories and, over the course of the day, mixes with undergraduates and postgraduates in study routines, homework preparation, room organization and personal items (cleaning, laundry, etc.). “Autonomy is very important for us, especially at this stage, when we are close to choosing our profession. The exchange program at UNI was fundamental for me to develop this capability,” says Lucas Bittencourt, a student of Gammon’s second year of high school.

Student Amanda Rebonatto, who also attended the 2018 session, feels that all her expectations have been exceeded in what she describes as an “unbelievable experience.” According to Amanda, “The opportunity to attend the exchange program in the United States was anticipated since the end of elementary school. We always get the information from those who participated in the previous editions, and what I experienced at UNI will remain forever in my memory.”

NEW PROJECTS

The partnership between Gammon and UNI continues to pay off. In the last semester, eighth-grade students participated in the first online English course broadcast live from the United States. The next step includes the possibility of exchanging graduate and postgraduate students at the Gammon Unit in Lavras.
Each year CIEP is fortunate to receive teaching assistants (TAs) from the TESOL graduate program on campus. The graduate coordinator, Dr. Joyce Milambiling, assigns TESOL graduate students to programs that will provide hands-on experience for what each student desires to take away from their graduate studies to further their education. The number of TAs that CIEP has depends on the amount of students enrolled. Thanks to an increase of enrollment, three well-experienced TAs joined our faculty and instructors this year.

Claudia Jiménez de la Hoz started working in CIEP as a TA in June 2018. She has been a graduate student at UNI since January 2018. She is originally from Barranquilla, Colombia. While she originally started her college career studying to be a French and Spanish teacher, she changed to be English teacher after being inspired by her English professor her first year at the university. In Colombia, Claudia has been working as an English instructor in the bilingualism program for many years. She wanted to pursue a graduate degree in TESOL so that she could better her teaching skills and methods to provide the best learning experience to her students. When asked about what she enjoys about CIEP she said, “Everything! Everyone has different tasks to do, and it is all done in a very efficient way.”

In August 2018, Tammy Harris joined the CIEP staff as a TA and brought with her over 10 years of teaching experience. Tammy earned her undergraduate degree in secondary education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1995. It was easy for Tammy to choose a college career because she knew she always wanted to be a teacher. Both her parents are educators, so she grew up realizing the important impact teachers made on the community. She chose to pursue a graduate degree in TESOL because she loves languages and teaching so she thought TESOL would be the perfect opportunity to combine the two. The advice she wants to give to students is always to take the trip or opportunity. She has never taken a trip that she regretted; the only trips she regrets are the ones she didn’t take.

Even though Amanda Albertsen is the youngest TA, she still has plenty of teaching experience. After graduating from Iowa State University in 2014 with an undergraduate degree in liberal studies, Amanda was introduced to a non-profit organization that focused on giving teacher training to those who had non-teaching backgrounds. Through that organization, she moved to Laos where she taught English for two years in rural areas where she saw some educational needs not being met. This inspired her to pursue a graduate degree in TESOL back home in the United States. One of her favorite aspects about the CIEP is the students’ passion to study English.

CIEP is truly grateful for all the hard work our TAs bring to our program, so we always do our best to offer various classroom experiences for them to gain as many learning opportunities possible. CIEP is very proud to be a part of all our TAs’ journeys, and we wish them all the best for their future. Thank you for all you do, Claudia, Tammy and Amanda.
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:
EMI TANI

Meet Emi Tani. Emi is a CIEP student from Osaka, Japan. She came with a group of students from Kansai Gaidai for the fall semester. When she heard there was a group of students coming to the United States she thought it would be a great opportunity to learn English and meet new people. Emi also mentioned that she has grown up in a very urban area with a lot of people, so when learning about Iowa she wanted to see what it was like living in the countryside.

Emi is heavily involved in Orchesis Dance Company. Twice a week she meets her team to practice their dance routine. Before coming to the CIEP, Emi had said that she has always danced in Japan, but joining Orchesis was something completely different. At the beginning, it was very hard because of the language barrier, but with some help from a friend she has been able to communicate with her team and make new friends. Emi also really enjoys all the amenities UNI has to offer, one of which being the Wellness Recreation Center. She loves being able to go and work out in the WRC.

One of the reasons Emi has enjoyed her time at UNI is her involvement with Orchesis. Her favorite memory was being able to perform during UNI’s Homecoming. Another reason she loves being in Cedar Falls is the people. She says the people here are very open and outgoing. When asked why she has enjoyed her time here she said, “UNI and Orchesis make me very happy.”

One of Emi’s favorite classes is listening and speaking. She loves getting to practice and improve her English. Her favorite part about this class is that she is given very good feedback on her class work. She greatly appreciates her instructors for all their help.

It is Emi’s junior year of college and she is planning on getting a job when she returns home. Since coming to UNI, her dreams of the future have changed. She would love to one day live in the United States. Eventually, she would like work in an airport to be able to travel and use the English that she has learned.
In the spring semester of 2018, CIEP director Carolina Coronado-Park nominated student employees Hayley Till and Jennifer Curtis to the Student Employee Leadership Academy (SELA). Both were selected. While the program strives to represent a diverse group of university programs, both Hayley and Jennifer were selected from the same program because they are both such high caliber workers.

The purpose of this program is to expand the skills of student leaders on campus while “focusing on future career endeavors.” This is an eight-month program that will cover the following topics: meaning and purpose, cultural fluency, civic mindfulness, professionalism, leadership, solving the big challenges and servant leadership.

In the month of September, T.J. Warren, assistant director of career readiness and employability at the university, spoke with the group about meaning and purpose. The main point he discussed was “Finding Your Why.” To understand your “why” is to understand the purpose behind your passion and why you do what you do. He guided the group in making lifemaps about the goals they hope to accomplish in life while leading the group in the direction to find each of their own whys and how that can further motivate them in their careers.

In October, Charles Pearson, CEO/president of Pearson Consulting, talked with the group about cultural fluency.

I'm very excited to share that my chapter, “Evaluating the Assessment Qualities of Teacher-Created Tests,” can be found in the edited book Handbook of Research on Assessment Literacy and Teacher-Made Testing in the Language Classroom published in November 2018 from IGI Global. I submitted my proposal in the end of 2017 and revised several times, thanks to the editing comments from some CIEP colleagues as well as anonymous feedback from the book editors. It was a real challenge to write an academic paper, something I have not done since graduate school. I also struggled with correct citation formats, something I teach in our CIEP classes. It reminded me that APA is challenging! The chapter is a collection of successful procedures that we have used in the CIEP to align our outcomes with our assessments. I described our norming process, peer-critiques, and pass-fail rates analyses; all of these procedures help the CIEP to support our accreditation and provide a high-quality program for our students using best practices in ESL teaching. The collection of chapters serve as a reference on reliable and valid language testing in the classroom. Editors Eddy White and Thomas Delaney have compiled chapters from in-service teachers, teachers-in-training, teacher trainers, language program administrators, researchers and many others in the English language teaching field. More information on the handbook can be found at https://www.igi-global.com/book/handbook-research-assessment-literacy-teacher.
For some of our contacts within the Cedar Valley community, Thanksgiving this year brought along some special visitors this year. The CIEP welcomed a cohort of 26 students from Mexico through an initiative called Proyecta, a program created by the Mexican government, with the intent to send 100,000 English learners from Mexico to study in the US by the year 2018. The program corresponds with US initiative 100,000 Strong in the Americas, a program that also aims to encourage study abroad participation between the US and Latin America. The CIEP has hosted four cohorts of students through Proyecta 100,000; in Summer 2015, Summer 2016, Fall 2016 and now Fall 2018.

The arrival of these students was accompanied with a burst of excitement as many UNI students awaited their arrival. The CIEP collaborated with the Spanish Department on campus to develop cultural activities for these students as well as allow them to meet people from Iowa who are learning to speak their language. Spanish majors at UNI were excited for the chance to participate in the CIEP’s Conversation Partner Program, a program in which CIEP students practice English with a native English speaker for at least one hour a week.

The students were enrolled in all three CIEP courses, reading, listening and speaking and writing. When asked about how the classes that they have taken will help them in the future, Carlos Juarez, a student studying in the program, said, “The CIEP courses that I am taking will help me a lot (in the future), especially with writing documents.” The courses offered at the CIEP are designed to help our students improve their English skills, but also give them the ability to problem solve and think critically with the goal of setting them up for academic success should they continue in their studies after the CIEP.

The dates of this special program happened to overlap with a traditional holiday here in the United States, Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is a major holiday during which many American families come together and enjoy a wonderful meal while spending time together and giving thanks. During the week of Thanksgiving, some students chose to spend the break living with a local family. By doing this, the students were immersed in the English language, and were given the opportunity to celebrate a real American holiday, which was perhaps one of the greatest cultural immersions that the students experienced.

One student, Joel Trinidad Rivera, talked a lot about how spending time with a local family not only gave him the chance to practice his English, but also allowed him to fully experience the American culture. “The people (that I am staying with) accept us and are so friendly, and they treat us like their sons,” he said when describing how he was enjoying his time with his host family while living in one of the “most beautiful and oldest home in Cedar Falls”.

For many students, the greatest part about this five-week special program was meeting students not only from Iowa, but from all around the world. Currently, the CIEP is proud to have students from 11 countries, which gives our students the opportunity to learn more about cultures that may be new to them. “The CIEP classes are incredible because I meet a lot of people from different countries and I can meet other cultures and make international friends,” said Claudia Rodriguez when asked about her favorite thing about the CIEP. We at the CIEP feel so thankful to the families who volunteered to host these students, as well as the members of the Cedar Valley Community for being so welcoming and kind to our students each and every day.
Sujeong Seo came to snowy Iowa at the very end of December 2010. After two days of cancelled flights from Chicago O’Hare airport due to the wintry weather, she started her Iowa adventure sitting next to the driver on one of the buses that had to be rented for all of the passengers. Her first impression of the landscape around her was, “Wow, this is the definition of the middle of nowhere,” but after arriving late at night in snow-covered Cedar Falls, she says the town seemed cozy.

The South Korean student’s ambition and desire to get out of her comfort zone is what drove her to choose CIEP. CIEP didn’t have a very large Korean population at the time, and Sujeong saw this as an opportunity to really be immersed in different cultures and improve her English skills. Although very far from home, she really didn’t feel a huge difference in the cultural or physical environment around her. She grew up in her grandparent’s house surrounded by dairy and other farms, and strangers greeted each other just like the people of Cedar Falls.

Sujeong’s favorite part of the CIEP program was all of the activities, such as conversation partners, field trips and RSVP. She also loved exploring campus life with all of the UNI students and being with her host family for events such as Christmas and Thanksgiving, which gave way to a relationship lasting long after she graduated.

After studying with CIEP for close to a year, Sujeong transferred to the technology management major and graduated with a manufacturing technology design minor in August 2014. She then studied applied statistics at the Rochester Institute of Technology from 2015 to 2017. Currently, she is a data analyst/scientist in the financial industry. She recently moved to New Jersey and is excited to start a new part of her life after settling in.

She believes her time in CIEP really enabled her to understand everyone’s unique English style. Her advice for anyone considering studying at CIEP is to truly be engaged.

She believes her time in CIEP really enabled her to understand everyone’s unique English style. Her advice for anyone considering studying at CIEP is to truly be engaged. She said classes may seem easy enough to pass, even with after missing a few, but without participation in class and the cultural activities you will miss out on the changes in your life provided by being in a new country. When talking about whether CIEP is a good fit for a student she said, “If you are looking for a place to learn American culture and language at the same time, you found the right place. CIEP is the best place to do so.”
There is the famous quote which says, “The world is like a book and those who do not travel read only one page of it.” It has always been my dream to see as much of the world as possible. Traveling broadens your horizons and allows you to get to know other cultures, and I simply cannot think of anything better than having friends all over the world. When I found out about the partner universities that my home institution, Alpen-Adria Universität, offers, I was totally excited. I was dreaming about being part of an international student community. Finally, I found what would end up being my favorite place to study that just so happened to be on the other side of the world. I got the opportunity to be part of the exchange program for one semester at the University of Northern Iowa.

For me, the United States of America has always been this long-distance, mysterious destination that everyone talks about but that hardly anyone ever visits. It is the “other side of the world,” which must be a whole lot different from all the things we know in Austria. I always wanted to experience the “American way of life” and what better chance is there than studying and living for one semester among American students?

My major is elementary education and UNI has one of the best colleges of education in the Midwest. I am taking four classes during the semester and additionally, I am taking an intensive English course at the Culture and Intensive English Program. This gives me a great chance to extremely focus on improving my English skills, which is one of my biggest goals. Also, I will have the opportunity to participate for one week in an elementary school in Iowa, where I will be in a classroom doing observations and cooperating with the teachers. I think that this is an “once-in-a-lifetime” experience, and I am very excited for that. As I am starting with the teaching profession in Austria soon, it is very interesting for me to see the differences of the two school systems in the United States and in Austria. I believe that I will definitely benefit from the knowledge that I will gain, which I will be able to implement in my own classroom someday. I am looking forward to my future career and I am ready for all the challenges that it may bring.

I like living on the campus and I feel comfortable being in my apartment which I share with another girl. I study hard in order to achieve my goals but I am also enjoying my free time. When studying, I often go to the library because it is a good place to work on things and I always meet some of my friends there. I got to know an American family, have a conversation partner, have domestic friends who are from Iowa and I also have a lot of international friends. The area around the University is quite safe and there are lots of activities to do. Mostly, I am doing workouts to reduce the stress a little bit.

Compared to my hometown, which is Klagenfurt, the campus at the University of Northern Iowa is a lot larger. Studying in the U.S. is completely different. I am trying to travel around during my exchange semester when there is time, and I have already had the chance to see Iowa City and a big football game, Minneapolis and also Chicago for a couple of days. During Thanksgiving break I went to the West Coast of the U.S., to San Francisco and Los Angeles, with two of my international friends with whom I got very close. Also, I am excited for all the other American things which I will get to know, such as homecoming at UNI or Halloween.

I am definitely trying to make the most of my time in the United States, although I do miss my family and my friends at times.