The Committee on International Education (CIE) has met twice so far this academic year: on October 20, 2008; and on March 10, 2009. A third meeting is planned for later in the Spring Quarter (perhaps also a fourth, if needed). As usual, CIE’s meetings dates are coordinated with the schedule of the corresponding system-wide committee, UCIE, whose meetings the Chair of CIE attends. Up to this point there have been two of the latter as well, on November 20, 2008, and on March 12, 2009, with a third meeting scheduled for May 14, 2009. In addition, the Chair of CIE is now serving as the representative of CIE and the Academic Senate on UCR’s administrative committee for international research and education, the International Services and International Programs Committee (ISIPC, as I will abbreviate it), currently chaired by B. Jenkins-Deas. That committee’s meetings so far have been: on August 18, 2008; on December 8, 2008; and on January 26, 2009.

Like in the recent past, the main topic in our meetings this year has been the rapidly changing state of UC’s Education Abroad Program (EAP). Last year, EAP’s operating budget was cut by 15%. This led to several major changes, including: a drastic reduction of staff in EAP’s main office in Santa Barbara; the termination of several EAP programs; and the streamlining of various others. The latter included not only the reduction of staff in study centers abroad, but also the elimination of more and more in-residence faculty center directors (a distinctive feature of EAP so far). It should be noted that EAP has, thus, been hit even harder than most academic programs by the financial problems UC is currently experiencing. One of CIE’s concerns was, and still is, that, if the current trend continues, this may well lead to the end of EAP, at least in anything like the form it has had over the last 30-40 years (and this may be intended by UCOP at this point, as it seems to be pushing for a much more decentralized, campus-based version of UC’s education abroad offerings).

The main new event in connection with EAP this year was that its current interim director, Michael Cowan, was asked to come up with a new business plan for EAP in the fall. He was given a very short time frame for doing so, and the background was clear: further drastic reductions of EAP’s budget were on their way. There was quite a bit of activity around this event, especially as it looked initially like there might not be time for the Academic Senate to play any significant role in UCOP’s decision process, given the timeframe. Both CIE and UCIE moved up their meetings for the fall to be able to provide input on the case before it was too late. The Chair of CIE, Erich Reck, and the local EAP Campus Director, Kiril Tomoff, also met, separately, with the Chair of the Academic Senate, Anthony Norman. These meetings were to have two effects: first, to make Chair Norman aware of the unusual nature of recent developments concerning EAP, thus ensuring appropriate input by the Senate, including at the December meeting of the Academic Council; second, to explore the
possibility of a meeting with UCR’s new Chancellor, Timothy White, to talk about the problems EAP is facing and what UCR’s response could or should be.

Some of the outcomes, or failed outcomes, of these activities were the following: CIE and UCIE submitted responses to the new business plan for EAP—CIE’s response is attached to this report. At the November meeting of UCIE, the committee members also urged Michael Cowan to be even more transparent than so far about the financial situation of EAP, so that it would become clearer which further responses, at this point, were realistic at all; and UCIE started, for academic reasons, to resist some of the closure and streamlining plans of EAP. Moreover, UCIE invited Larry Pitts, Interim Provost and Chair of the new Joint Senate-Administrative Task Force on international education, to its March meeting, thus obtaining further information that way. One of the outcomes of the Senate Council Meeting in December was to ask President Yudof to give EAP a larger timeframe for implementing the demanded budget reductions (from two years to five years), given their magnitude. According to our latest information it appears, however, that this timeframe has been shortened instead (basically to one year). As a different kind of reaction, concerned UC faculty have set up a website and are, in that connection, preparing a petition to the Regents to reconsider, or reverse, some of the drastic budget cuts to EAP (see http://petition-eap-uc.info/). Based on recent events, it seems very hard to predict what exactly will happen to EAP; but the current signs are far from good.

Beyond EAP, the other main topics addressed in CIE’s meetings this year were or will be (in the spring meeting): (a) further feedback on the restructuring plans for the Academic Senate at UCR, in particular as far as they involve CIE; (b) the coordination of campus activities concerning international research and education; (c) more specifically; improvements to the website that is currently under construction, by the International Services International Programs Committee, for that purpose; (d) the start of an investigation concerning the current participation of graduate students in international education activities, as well as future possibilities for it, e.g., in terms of research agreements that involve graduate students; and (e) the investigation and exploration of connections between the activities of CIE and EAP, on the one hand, and the UC Mexus Program, on the other, including possible new uses for the recently renovated Casa de California in Mexico City. Points (b) and (c) involve increased communication between CIE and ISIPC, which has so far taken the form of presentations by C. Stark (initially chair of the latter committee) and B. Jenkins-Deas (its new chair) in two CIE meetings this year, as well as a presentation by the Chair of CIE (E. Reck) in a meeting of the latter committee. Evidently this increased communication has been beneficial for both sides already.

E. Reck (Chair); I. M. Ethell; B. L. Li; G. Xu; Y. Ye; and L. Zanello; also ex officio: S. Duffy (UNEX Acting Dean, Interim VC-IEP); D. Elton (Director, International Services Center); B. Jenkins-Deas (Director, UNEX IEP); and K. Tomoff (Campus Director, Education Abroad Program); as well as A. Agarwal (GSA) and J. Nam (AS).
Iryna Ethell
Larry Li
Guanshui Xu
Yang Ye
Laura Zanello
Kiril Tomoff, Ex Officio
Sharon Duffy, Ex Officio
Bronwyn Jenkins-Deas, Ex Officio
Diane Elton
Erich Reck, Chair
Joon Nam, ASUCR Rep.
Arun Agarwal, GSA Rep.
November 19, 2008

TO: Tony Norman, Chair of the Academic Senate, UC Riverside
FROM: Erich Reck, Chair of the Committee on International Education

RE: CIE RESPONSE TO MICHAEL COWAN'S NEW BUSINESS PLAN FOR EAP

The Committee on International Education (CIE) has been asked to respond to a new business plan for the UC Education Abroad Program (EAP), as presented by Professor Michael Cowan, the Interim Director of EAP, in a recent letter to the Academic Senate. In the current financial climate, it seems unavoidable that severe cuts to programs like EAP will be part of such a business plan – and this is certainly the case here. The main question is, then, to what degree the cuts and other proposed changes will damage EAP, and especially, whether they will change its character fundamentally and irrevocably.

With that in mind, we will address four main topics: (1) faculty involvement in EAP; (2) equitable student access to EAP; (3) funding for campus operations in support of EAP’s operations; and (4) EAP as an academic program. (To put the new business plan into a broader context, we have also appended CIE’s response to a similar plan from last year, as contained in the Report of the University of California Joint Ad Hoc Committee on International Education. Several of the worries voiced in that response apply again in the present case. What follows is directed specifically at the new business plan, however.)

(1) Faculty Involvement in EAP:

In one of its most significant and far-reaching suggestions, the new plan calls for the elimination of two-thirds of the faculty-in-residence study center directors. We have a whole list of questions, and foresee various potentially crippling problems, in this connection. They concern: (i) academic oversight; (ii) safety and security operations; (iii) negotiations with host institutions; (iv) staff cuts; (v) the elimination of faculty opportunities; (vi) the international presence of UC; (vii) perceptions of EAP's quality.

(i) Currently the faculty-in-residence directors provide academic oversight for EAP's operations abroad, among other things. The plan notes the importance of the academic oversight function and suggests that an alternative oversight model is envisaged. But that alternative is never discussed further; nor is any specific funding for it indicated in the plan. Are we supposed to assume that the alternative model consists in something like annual program reviews for each operation abroad, as currently performed by UCIE less frequently? If so, would faculty be involved in performing these (numerous) reviews; and how effective could they be, compared to the current practice? If not, how does EAP...
envision ensuring the academic quality of its operations abroad? The lack of further details, given the importance of the academic oversight function, is clearly worrisome.

(ii) Besides providing on-site academic oversight, another central function served by faculty-in-residence directors is: directing and further developing (in cooperation and with training provided by UO EAP) safety and security operations at the study centers. Up to this point, EAP has had an exemplary record in this respect. When there have been serious safety or security issues that required quick redress, including accidents (as in Ghana and India recently), injuries (in Italy and South Africa) and natural disasters or terroristic attacks (China, London, Madrid, and Moscow during the last several years), UC faculty study center directors have proved especially responsive, to the students' benefit. With the elimination of so many faculty-in-residence directors, such responsiveness will be largely eliminated as well, as should be clearly recognized.

(iii) Yet another important function served by faculty-in-residence directors is: acting as representatives of the university in negotiations with host institutions. Currently half of EAP’s study centers operate without a faculty-in-residence director, relying instead on faculty or academic staff of partner institutions to fulfill this role. However, is this a suitable model in the large majority of cases? Note here that, while the business plan foresees eliminating fourteen of the twenty remaining faculty-in-residence directors, it does not indicate which fourteen would be eliminated; nor does it provide evidence that their function could always be adequately performed by liaison officers or resident directors. In some centers, they may well be; but is this realistic in all cases? In at least a few, the proposed cuts could undermine the adequate functioning of the study center completely.

(iv) The concern just voiced is compounded by the following worry: In addition to the elimination of most faculty-in-residence directors, the business plan points to a phased elimination of local staff at study centers. Here too, virtually no further information is provided. This may amount to nothing more than a beneficial increase in efficiency; in combination with the elimination of most in-residence faculty directors it may, instead, entail nothing less than the precipitous dismantling of the university’s international infrastructure; or it may amount to something between these two extremes. Without more information, it is impossible to predict where EAP will fall on this spectrum. There is little doubt that study center operations can, and have to be, made more efficient. One may also argue that these centers ought to serve the University’s international goals and activities more broadly. But adopting a new business model that entails deep cuts, not only with respect to faculty presence but staff support as well, may prove disastrous.

(v) While the concerns brought up so far have to do with negative consequences of the new business plan that are more or less likely, there are also some direct and certain
negative effects that have to be mentioned. The main one is this: With the proposed cut of faculty-in-residence directorships an opportunity for UC faculty to do academic work abroad, while serving the University and its students in essential ways, will largely disappear. And not only will the envisaged cut take away a valuable opportunity for UC faculty members to work abroad; it will also undermine their motivation to be involved in, and generally supportive of, EAP operations on their home campuses. The former means a loss for faculty members, the latter a loss for EAP and for interested students.

(vi) Another way in which the proposed cuts will have a direct effect is this: They run counter to recent trends in internationalization, at various American institutions, in which field offices are augmented and universities are investing more resources in sending faculty abroad. By reducing the number of faculty-in-residence directorships in such a drastic way, the international presence of the University of California will be reduced accordingly. UC will, thus, fall further behind other universities in this respect. Perhaps the idea is to increase faculty involvement in international education and research in other ways instead (see below). But then, the question becomes whether there is enough money available for such increases, also whether they could not, in a more cost-effective way, be combined with preserving and restructuring the existing EAP infrastructure.

(vii) A final concern in connection with faculty involvement in EAP: Such faculty involvement would seem to be essential in ensuring that the program is seen, and remains to be seen, as an academic program of high quality, especially by students who consider participating in it. Undermining such a perception of the value of EAP will jeopardize other assumptions inherent in the new business plan too, not least of which is that student enrollments can be maintained despite sharp increases in student fees. If both faculty and students loose confidence in the academic quality of this program (not to speak of the other concerns raised above, concerning safety and security etc.), enrollments will drop; and given the basic structure of the new business plan, this will entail less revenue for EAP. The effect may be a downward spiraling in enrollment that will be hard to reverse.

Overall, the following conclusion seems inevitable: Before two-thirds of the faculty-in-residence directorships are eliminated – a rather drastic cut – a mechanism, and the funding basis, for ensuring continued faculty participation in this academic program should be elaborated in much more detail (including addressing all the concerns expressed above). Or preferably instead, the elimination of faculty directorships should be reduced to a much less damaging size, while still ensuring EAP's sustainability.

(2) Equitable Student Access to EAP:

By shifting to a student-fee-based funding model, Professor Cowan’s business plan
assures that EAP will remain at least minimally funded as long as it attracts students willing to pay its fees. While this aspect is commendable, it also leads to concerns about student access to the program, in general and specifically in the case of UCR.

The general concern is this: With a nearly 20 percent increase in fees over a three-year period, the plan as presented provides no evidence that its assumption of an initial reduction in enrollment by 8.5 percent (in FTE) followed by a slight increase in the third year of the plan and subsequently is justified. UO EAP and Professor Cowan may have further data to establish the validity of this assumption; but without it, an alternative – a drastic drop in enrollments to a low plateau – seems possible as well, especially if faculty involvement and subsequent support for EAP erodes (see above). More specifically, any drastic increase in student fees raises the specter of undermining equitable access to the program, especially at UCR. Our campus has long prided itself, not only in the diversity of its general student population, but also in the fact that its EAP participants come close to mirroring that diversity. However, the sharp increase in fees envisioned now may well jeopardize the continuation of that pattern and, therefore, introduce a new challenge to realizing the goal of equitable access to all of the University’s academic programs.

(3) Funding for Campus Operations in Support of EAP:

It is important to be aware that the new business plan foresees the complete elimination of central support for campus study abroad operations. In a model that devolves as much responsibility to campuses as possible, this policy may seem sensible. But in order for campus operations to survive, this will require substantial increases in allocations from campus funds. (To continue at its current bare-bones level, the UCR operation will require just over $100,000 annually in additional campus funds.) How realistic is that?

It may be hoped, on the other hand, that some of the potential problems sketched above will be offset by a significant increase in revenue for the campuses under the new plan. In that case, functions so far provided by UO could be taken over by them. Thus, campuses could set aside special funds to offset the dramatic cost increase for students participating in EAP; they could also facilitate faculty participation in EAP and other international activities in a number of ways, e.g., by funding research and teaching trips, by underwriting the creation of campus-based and faculty-led study abroad programs, etc. As a matter of fact, the new business plan suggests that – if its assumptions prove accurate – in 2011-12 some $11.4 million in additional revenue would be allocated to campuses; and while it does not specify explicitly how that allocation will take place, other proposals within the plan indicate that it is likely to be allocated according to each campus’s respective share of student FTE participating on EAP programs. If this is the case, UCR should expect to receive roughly 5 percent of the total, or $633,000. Setting
aside $104,000, which the campus office currently receives from UO each year, this leaves $529,000 remaining to perform the other functions. So far, this sounds fine.

However, two questions about these funds arise immediately. First, is it really more efficient for each campus to undertake such activities on its own; or do economies of scale not, instead, make it more effective for most, or at least for some, of these functions to remain centralized? Thus, might it not be better, also economically, to retain centrally a larger portion of the allocation so as to maintain the international infrastructure of EAP (including preserving some of the threatened faculty-in-residence directorships)? This could be done by dropping the General Funds allocation from $19.3 million to, say, $7-9 million, instead of dropping it to $4.4 million. Second, as all UC campuses already face severe budget cuts and competing priorities, will the campuses actually allocate all, or even most, of the funds mentioned above to international activities? In other words, will internationalization be considered an important enough priority, in the present climate, to attract sufficient campus resources; or instead, will the reconfiguration of resources proposed in the new business plan lead to a net loss for the University’s international education operation in the end? The latter prospect is another serious concern for us.

(4) EAP as an Academic Program:

Both in the new business plan, submitted by Professor Cowan, and in the previous one, as part of last year's Ad Hoc Report, there is a tendency to view EAP as a service program, rather than an academic program. In its response to last year's plan, CIE already objected to this tendency – EAP is, and should remain, an academic program. An additional consideration has just been brought to our attention that complicates this issue further.

The further complication is this: It seems to be the case that the student fees to be used for financing EAP, according to the new plan, cannot be used to support an academic program in principle (given UC rules concerning such fees). If this is in fact the case, as some people have assured us, then shifting EAP to a fee-based model will inevitably transform it into a student service. That is to say, adopting the new business model will force such a transformation, contrary to the convictions expressed by the Academic Senate already. Apart from all financial details and the concerns expressed above, this would seem to be a reason to oppose the new business plan on principle. If EAP is to be preserved as an academic program, a different kind of business plan is needed.

A final suggestion: UO EAP should work with the Academic Senate to produce such an alternative business plan in the near future – a plan that is both fiscally responsible and ensures the continued existence of EAP as an academic program. Ideally, such a plan would integrate EAP more into other internationalization projects in the UC system.