Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh City
SPRING SEMESTER 2010 PROGRAM HANDBOOK

This program is offered by International Academic Programs (IAP) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in partnership with the Council for International Educational Exchange (CIEE). Throughout the course of your study abroad experience you will be communicating with both IAP and CIEE staff. It is essential that you pay close attention to all information provided to you from both organizations. This IAP Program Handbook supplements handbook(s) or materials you receive from CIEE as well as the IAP Study Abroad Handbook and provides you with the most up-to-date information and advice available at the time of printing. Changes may occur before your departure or while you are abroad.

CIEE handles the program’s day-to-day operations. Generally, questions about aspects of your program abroad should be directed to CIEE (e.g., program housing options, program facilities abroad, cultural tours offered as part of the program, etc.) Questions relating to your relationship with UW-Madison or your academics should be addressed to International Academic Programs at UW-Madison (e.g., course credits, equivalents, UW Madison registration, etc.)

This program handbook contains the following information:

- CONTACT INFORMATION
- PROGRAM DATES
- PREPARATION BEFORE LEAVING
- THE ACADEMIC PROGRAM
- STUDENT TESTIMONIALS
Contact Information

ON-SITE PROGRAM INFORMATION
Your contacts will be:

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UW-MADISON INFORMATION
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www.studyabroad.wisc.edu

For Program Advising & Grades:
Erin Polnaszek
IAP Study Abroad Advisor
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For Financial Matters:
Judy Humphrey
IAP Financial Specialist
(608) 262 6785
jhumphrey@bascom.wisc.edu

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION
In case of an emergency, call the main IAP number (608) 265 6329 between 7:45 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday; after-hours or on weekends call the IAP staff on call at (608) 516 9440.
U.S. EMBASSY REGISTRATION

All program participants who are U.S. citizens must register at the U.S. Embassy before departure as this will help in case of a lost passport or other mishap. You can register on-line at https://travelregistration.state.gov. If you are not a U.S. citizen, register at your home country’s embassy or consulate.

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uscongenhcmc@state.gov
http://hochiminh.usconsulate.gov

Program Dates

Spring 2010

Program start date: February 24, 2010
Program end date: June 14, 2010

*All students must participate in the orientation and must arrive at the student dormitory no later than the dates given in your acceptance materials from CIEE. The orientation will help you to familiarize yourself with the campus, its facilities, and surrounding areas of interest. It will also cover academic issues, health and safety in Vietnam, and culture shock.

Preparation Before Leaving

IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS

Passport: A passport is needed to travel to Vietnam. Apply immediately for a passport if you do not already have one. Passport information and application forms can be found on the U.S. State Department website http://travel.state.gov/passport/. If you already have your passport, make sure it will be valid for at least 6 months beyond the length of your stay abroad.

Visa: Participants will need to obtain a student visa for this program. CIEE provides detailed information on the visa process in their acceptance materials online, which you should follow closely. Contact CIEE with questions regarding the visa process.
The Academic Program

GENERAL INFORMATION
Newly established in 2007, the CIEE Study Center at Ho Chi Minh International University offers students the opportunity to gain meaningful insight into Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos through studies in language, history, culture, literature, economics, and society. All courses offered provide a deeper understanding of the region while encouraging interaction with local scholars, students, and citizens.

The program is located in Ho Chi Minh City. In the spring, students spend 4 weeks of the program in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

The goal of the 4-week course in Siem Reap is for students to gain an understanding of Cambodia’s history and culture with particular focus on the causes and effects of the genocide of 1975-1979. Students are encouraged to approach Cambodia as a case study for several of the world’s most pressing geopolitical problems, including nation-building in societies recently at war, confronting radicalism, combating official corruption, and promoting democracy and stable economic development in smaller, less-developed countries.

HO CHI MINH CITY INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
Ho Chi Minh International University, a division of the Vietnam National University, is the first public international university of Vietnam, and its faculty is 60% Vietnamese and 40% invited foreign instructors. Students study at the Hanoi College of Social Sciences and Humanities for the last five weeks of the fall program. The Center for Khmer Studies where students spend the last four weeks of the spring program, promotes research, teaching, and public service in the social sciences, arts, and humanities, as they relate to Cambodia.

Vietnam National University www.vnuhcm.edu.vn/en/
Ho Chi Minh International University www.hcmiu.edu.vn

ORIENTATION
A four-day orientation session, conducted in Ho Chi Minh City at the beginning of the program, introduces students to the country, the culture, and the academic program, and provides practical information about living in Vietnam. The Resident Director leads a similar, two-day orientation at the beginning of the Siem Reap-based module. Students receive ongoing orientation on various topics in Vietnamese culture through the courses and individual appointments with the Resident Director.
COURSE INFORMATION

Courses: Students attend classes Monday through Friday. Language classes are a mandatory and key component of the curriculum. Area studies elective courses meet twice weekly while the required area studies courses in Hanoi and Siem Reap meet daily.

For all students, each academic course requires approximately six to eight hours of reading and other preparation per week. Class sessions normally consist of lectures, discussion of readings, field trips, field reports, and presentations. Especially in lectures taught by local scholars, students are encouraged to be flexible in adapting to new teaching styles and ways of organizing academic material.

Language classes are offered at beginning through advanced levels. Students are placed in appropriate language classes based on a proficiency examination given in Ho Chi Minh City at the beginning of the program. Beginning level students are usually grouped into a class of 5–6 program participants. Area studies courses, taught in English, include a variety of full-day and weekend study trips that are taken in addition to the three-week course in Cambodia.

From time to time, local students from Ho Chi Minh International University may audit the CIEE content courses. However, the vast majority of class participants are CIEE students.

Registration: Registration information will be provided by CIEE. In general, CIEE will communicate with you by email. You will receive detailed information on courses and requirements in your online CIEE acceptance materials. Read all of the CIEE materials carefully and return all CIEE forms directly to CIEE by their deadline date.

Equivalents and Course Equivalent Request Form (CERF): Each course you take abroad must be assigned a UW-Madison “equivalent” course in order for your grades and credits to be recorded on your UW-Madison transcript. In order to establish UW-Madison course equivalents for your study abroad courses, you will submit a Course Equivalent Request Form (CERF). Information on the UW course equivalent process is available in the IAP Study Abroad Handbook.

CREDITS

Conversions: All of the courses offered in Vietnam are CIEE courses. The majority of courses are assigned 3 UW-Madison credits and have 45 contact hours.

Limits and Load: The recommended course load for UW-Madison students is 15 credits per semester.

PASS/FAIL/DROP/AUDIT

Please refer to the IAP Study Abroad Handbook for academic policies.

GRADES AND GRADE CONVERSIONS

In content courses, students are graded on the basis of attendance, quizzes, exams, presentations, and sometimes a final paper. In the language courses, assessment is based on a mid-term and final
exam, quizzes, homework, and participation. Final examinations or term papers count up to 40%. Letter grades of A, B, C, D to F are given with pluses or minuses.

CIEE will report grades to UW Madison using their CIEE equivalent grades. The grade conversion scale for this program is as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CIEE Equivalent</th>
<th>UW-Madison Equivalent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>A-/B+</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-/C+</td>
<td>BC</td>
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<tr>
<td>C/C-</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+/D/D-</td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
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</tbody>
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**Student Testimonials**

The testimonials below are from past participants; they reflect various students’ experiences and are included to provide different perspectives. IAP does not endorse any specific view expressed in this section.

**PACKING**

Don't pack a lot. No need to pack toiletries, Vietnam has most of your usual American brands in the shopping malls, etc., although for the ladies, tampons were harder to find.

Bring a laptop.

Pack less than you think you should. They told me this before I left, but I still brought WAY too many clothes. Don't worry too much about forgetting things, as most essentials are available here (often cheaper than at home). The main thing you might have trouble finding is typical American food (if you want American snacks, bring 'em, cause the import tax is crazy and it's really hard to get things shipped in to the country).

Bring a backpack for school/weekend trips.

Bring some nice shoes/ clothes.

**ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

The Vietnamese testing and grading system is much different. Academically speaking, history was the best class that fulfilled my expectations of the structure, complexity or learning, and degree of difficulty.

I didn’t always feel challenged in my classes.
Be prepared to have a lot of homework.

I found myself spending so much time on classes, and wished I would have had more time to get involved with the community and city in other ways (volunteering, internships, etc).

Courses are easy to set up. We only have a few options anyway, and there's a 2 week add/drop period once you get here. I would recommend taking intensive Vietnamese if you haven't taken it before.

**STUDENT LIFE**

True immersion into foreign culture requires adaptability of personal values. The best aspect of the program was getting to know about Vietnamese culture and life. The worst was struggling with the cultural differences and language difficulties.

Central Vietnam was really hot – I got a heat rash from the sun.

Living with a Vietnamese roommate was one of the best. She helped me not only learn how to live in Vietnam, but she taught me very personal things about Vietnam that you do not see on the outside.

I loved living in Vietnam. There is such a wide range of landscapes, lifestyles and environments to see.

It was definitely a challenge not being able to speak Vietnamese, and not to have any previous experience with Vietnamese or any Asian culture. But I found this challenge the most rewarding in the end - it was truly an eye opening experience, and I learned and grew so much because of the cultural and linguistic differences. I really think Vietnam is a great place to go for everyone, whether familiar or completely unfamiliar with the country.

My favorite places in Vietnam were away from the cities, up in the mountains in the smaller villages. The quiet and beauty of places like Sapa and Ba Be Lake, and it was really great learning about the cultures and communities of the minority groups in Vietnam.

The best field trip was Sapa!

Saigon is huge, worldly, and awesome. You can do anything you want here, but you might have to do some work to make things happen.

**SAFETY**

As a woman, I found that I always felt really safe in Vietnam - safer than I sometimes feel in the United States.
Don't freak out. I was scared with the anticipation/fear, etc. The moment I got here I realized that I had no reason to worry. CIEE takes great care of us, and the city is a really great and safe place to be.

**MONEY ABROAD**

Although we haven't yet found out what the situation in Cambodia is, in Saigon there are ATMs everywhere. Living in District 1, where most of the popular tourist destinations are, makes it extremely easy to access ATMs, banks, and places to exchange currency. I would recommend bringing some cash on the plane, but not too much. Once you get into the city the ATMs are the best (though they charge a little less than $2 US per transaction and your bank takes a small percentage of every transaction for exchanging).

Don't be stupid. Although we haven't had any incidents of theft in the program, it's still a third world country. Don't go to ATMs alone at night, don't carry all your money/ATM card in the same wallet/purse, don't flaunt money, don't carry valuables in a bag, as people are known to speed by on motorbikes and grab your stuff.

A little goes a long way here, but they'll try to take advantage of the relative weakness of the Dong by overcharging westerners quite a bit. Some places are fixed price, but be prepared to be quoted up to 300% of the value of things at the market. You've got to haggle. You'll never get the same prices as the locals, but we like to think we can get better deals than everyday tourists.

**TRAVEL**

Don't plan travel ahead of time. It's easy to do here and usually cheaper than if you try before you leave. When you get here, travel on the weekends! We don't get too much time to do it, and you'll find that time really flies.

**COMMUNICATION**

Internet access is available everywhere. Buy a prepaid phone when you get here. It's cheap. Call home using the internet, skype, etc. Put money in your skype account before you come, because it's a pain to do here.