



Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES PROGRAM

San Jose, Costa Rica

OCTOBER 2010 EVALUATION STUDENT ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMISSION



October 24-29, 2010

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Members of the Student Academic Programs Commission (SAPC) of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) conducted a scheduled on-site review of the Latin American Studies Program (LASP), October 24-29, 2010. The site visit team members and Council participants were:

Prof. Richard Clark (invited area specialist)

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PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Latin American Studies Program of the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities, giving special attention to the issue of credit-worthiness of the academic program. To that end, student experience, especially the extent to which learning outcomes are achieved, is the central focus of this review.

Student experience encompasses a broad umbrella of topics, particularly given the experiential education emphasis of off-campus studies programs. For that reason, on the way to conclusions regarding academic strength, observations will be offered that range from program ideology to host family arrangements, from faith experience to administration. However, our primary goal and most central responsibility are to evaluate credit-worthiness and program viability, and those will be the emphases of this report.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW:

The CCCU's Latin American Studies Program was founded in the mid-1980s to enhance understanding of a part of the world that was prominent in the news; specifically, the aim of LASP was *to heighten Christian college students' global awareness and concern, and to provide the basic tools and foundation necessary for a truly Christian response and future involvement*. Although headlines in the U.S. are less focused now on Latin America exclusively, we remain neighbors in a global world. Our practices and policies affect each other and our need, as Christians, for empathy that crosses national boundaries is as salient as ever. In this context, the Latin American Studies Program, the first CCCU international off-campus program and one that has served more than 1500 students, remains an important leader in global education.

From the start of the SAPC review, it was clear that the Latin American Studies Program has a unique contribution to make to CCCU students with its carefully-crafted curriculum and strong immersion component. Students are passionate about their LASP experience, despite the fact that it is challenging on virtually every level. Staff members are talented, committed and deeply embedded in Costa Rican culture. It is apparent that this is a program of considerable strength and an exceptional educational opportunity for students.

It was also clear, from the start, that LASP is a program facing a number of challenges given the ideological complexity of its context. For though CCCU institutions share in common deep commitment to Christ, models of education vary considerably around that common theme. Given the challenging environment of Latin America in political, theological and cultural realms, LASP may serve as a lens through which institutional differences are revealed and intensified. On one level, SAPC does not hold authority over ideological matters; however, we offer observations and suggestions, hoping that these comments may ultimately help strengthen a valuable CCCU program.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION:

The Latin American Studies Program is administered by program director, Dr. Anthony Chamberlain. Anthony has recruited a staff of gifted professionals and provides an empowering ethos that fosters autonomy and responsibility for both staff and students. We heard accounts of the staff's ability to speak openly, disagree with each other, and yet still work together as an enormously productive and talented team. Director of LASP since 1990, Anthony is a knowledgeable and dedicated leader; his deep understanding of Costa Rican culture, his entrepreneurial spirit and his passion for the program are great strengths that echo throughout the experience of students.

Other staff members are similarly gifted and dedicated. Assistant Director Trevor Poag, LASP alumnus and doctoral candidate, demonstrates deep understanding of history and culture, and lived commitment to the people of the Costa Rica. Javier Arguedas Ruano, recognized legal and political science expert and doctoral candidate, serves as a faculty member. Laura Barnard, also a faculty member, has completed degrees in international education, international studies and Spanish and provides an invaluable social work perspective to the program. Jéssica Sánchez Alpízar, Administrative Coordinator, holds a degree in human resource management; she oversees accounting processes and host family selection. Each staff member, including the program's administrative assistant, multi-tasks across areas of responsibility, yet remains competent and effective. Together, they provide skilled academic instruction, mentoring and support. SAPC members heard much about staff members' personal availability to students as well as the high quality of instruction they provide. It is clear that this is a bright and committed team.

One impressive characteristic of the staff is their high degree of immersion in Costa Rican culture, even among those originally from the U.S. Their empathy and commitment add to the authenticity of students' experience, open the door to vast opportunities for home stays and cultural enrichment, and probably contribute to students' safety. Staff members' knowledge of local customs certainly enhances the learning that staff can offer.

We noted, in reviewing the administration of LASP, that in any organization with a central authority (such as the CCCU) and satellite branches (i.e., off-campus sites), there is a natural tension between needs of the umbrella organization and concerns of the program in the field. It is challenging to balance these competing needs. This natural tension manifests itself, for example, in approaches to marketing. There is a strong need for coherence across programs for which the CCCU is responsible; at the same time, the local LASP bears some responsibility for program enrollments, and thus some responsibility for marketing. The latter is particularly important if there is concern about home institutions understanding the LASP program, and LASP faculty understanding the needs of member institutions. In brief, it seems that a natural difference of perspective places pressure on the satellite program to communicate regularly and to hold the perspective of the whole. It places pressure on the central agency to find ways of coordinating and standardizing programs that are empowering and support the flow of information. We were encouraged to observe the open and honest exchange of information between Dr. Ken Bussema, CCCU Vice President for Student Programs, and LASP staff, and encourage them to continue in dialogue about administrative needs on both sides so that both LASP and the CCCU benefit from the partnership.

PROGRAM PARADIGMS:

While SAPC does not hold authority over the ideological direction of programs, issues surrounding ideology and students' resulting worldview perspectives have had impact on views of program effectiveness. For that reason, as members of diverse CCCU institutions, we offer observations and recommendations on this topic, hoping simply to be helpful, and to strengthen both the reality and perception of program direction.

Questions regarding ideology have focused on dominant religious and political views defining LASP. On the one hand, questions have been raised regarding the extent to which Christian faith is challenged, the degree to which a singular theology of liberation is taught, and the extent to which a dominant anti-North American political perspective is espoused.

In the political realm, the program explores recent U.S. history in Central America, and that history no doubt creates a different perspective on U.S. involvement in the world than many students have previously heard. From all that we could discern, that history is congruent with Latin American perspectives on U.S. involvement; it would be hard to claim that students had been exposed to Latin American perspectives without having been introduced to that history of intervention. At the same time, there is room for disagreement about political perspective. Students seem, during their LASP semester, to experience a strong sense of challenge to their traditional views, yet they also express appreciation for the fuller understanding of how the others in the world view the U.S. While it is possible that not every student would welcome or be prepared for that, among current students there was appreciation for exposure to these new and challenging perspectives. Where we would caution the program is in speaking of Latin American perspective as if it were monolithic. In any area of the world, on virtually any topic, it is hard to imagine that a singular perspective captures views completely, and this is no exception.

In the realm of faith, and of theology, we were struck (positively) by the diversity of speakers and perspectives represented in the curriculum. Thoroughly evangelical views are incorporated into the range of perspectives to which students are introduced as they explore their Latin American context. Again, the language of “Latin American perspective,” sometimes used in the program, probably does not adequately convey the variety of perspectives to which students are exposed. And special responsibility is placed on staff to identify conservative, evangelical perspectives that are as credible as some of the powerful voices of challenge. But in general, from perspectives both of academic balance and evangelical inclusion, we found the curriculum to be consistent with approaches taken under the broad umbrella of CCCU schools, realizing that falling under the umbrella does not mean being fully representative of the preferred approach of every institution. Overall, in both political and religious realms, we found the range of views presented to be representative and varied, while also challenging and educational.

Finally, we offer a word about student experience (through the curriculum; we will address co-curriculum later in this report). The feedback conveyed both by current students and in alumni surveys is one of feeling tremendous support from faculty, even as world views are being broadened and challenged by exposure to very different perspectives than have been encountered before. Students, we discovered, were challenged and “in process” but not in distress. They have a sense of safety net—wise people who are available to them and interested in their journeys, who offer both empathy and authenticity. Students have a sense that they are encouraged to see the world—the world’s issues and needs—through the eyes of Christ. The Christ-focused mission of the program is central and reiterated. What is missing are some of the supports for personal faith that many are familiar with on home campuses. This latter need will be addressed under co-curriculum, later in the report, but it is worth noting here that this is where the gap seemed to fall for students with whom we spoke.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT:

The curriculum of the Latin American Studies Program is guided by six learning objectives: form relationships with Latin Americans; analyze Latin American realities from a Christian perspective; critically examine (one’s own) world view; articulate how we will practice our faith through church, community, work and study; explore Latin American realities through the lens of a specific concentration area; and become agents for change in a world characterized by challenges evident in the Latin American context. Educational experiences are identified that help achieve each outcome, direct and indirect measures are outlined, and levels of expected performance/grading criteria are listed in LASP materials.

On the one hand, it is very good to have program goals/learning objectives identified, and all of the goals described have clear value. On the other hand, as is often the case at educational institutions, many of the goals cited are not strictly stated as specific learning objectives, and some objectives speak more to means than ends. We recommend that more work be done to define learning objectives, so that they are truly written in a specific and parallel format, and so that assessment measures are directly tied to each objective individually. In addition, level of expected performance should be written for

each objective in terms so specific that an outsider would be able to determine whether or not outcomes have been attained. (Please see also the “assessment” section below.)

In addition to these general comments, we offer the following observations of specific components of the curriculum:

Spanish Language Study-ICADS

Spanish language instruction for LASP students is provided through the Institute for Central American Development Studies (ICADS). Overall, this agency offers exceptionally strong language training, relying on a small-group model of instruction. The small-group focus of the program makes it appropriate for a variety of skills levels, and allows for regular assessment, feedback, and flexibility of instruction. The program’s use of the (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Inventory, administered by qualified personnel, allows for accurate and helpful initial and weekly placements using an assessment system that is widely recognized for quality.

A considerable strength of the ICADS program is the close working relationship with LASP staff; LASP faculty provide regular feedback and ICADS staff are responsive. Probably the central weakness of the program, though not insurmountable, is that quality of language training varies with each instructor. Again, ICADS has been nimble in response to LASP requests, so this seems workable, but it is an area that requires vigilance.

In brief, we would encourage LASP faculty to continue to work with ICADS on creating professional development plans for their instructors. In addition, we encourage LASP to work with ICADS to do all that is possible to ensure coherence and continuity across instructors and units of instruction. At the same time, we applaud the responsiveness that ICADS has exhibited to LASP feedback, as well as their use of the OPI, an excellent tool, recognized for reporting proficiency.

Core Seminar

The LASP Core Seminar offers a five-week overview of socio-political and economic development issues in Latin America. This seminal course includes regular class presentations, a study trip to the Caribbean province of Limón, regular process group sessions, group fellowship opportunities for spiritual reflection, and weekly student-led worship services. The combination of traditional instruction and experiential learning is masterful. Course components are thoughtfully-conceived, well-constructed and rigorous.

The following are features of note in the core curriculum: course readings are challenging, Costa Rican/Latin American experts serve as guest speakers, and assignments (including a major position paper) require student engagement and writing. In addition, the course is impressive in thoroughness and range; speakers represent a variety of points of view on political and religious matters. It is noteworthy, we believe, that publications, formal language, and class format all reflect multiple Latin American perspectives (appropriate, given that there is no single North American, Latin American or CCCU viewpoint on most significant matters). At the same time, it seems that the program still faces some challenge of perception (belief that a monolithic anti-American attitude is espoused) among

constituents. Perhaps this misperception supports the need for additional marketing opportunity identified by staff. Perhaps this speaks to constituent expectations or need for informal language within LASP that is as conscientious as formal language in recognizing diversity of views. The other factor that may contribute to perception of ideological tilt is some variation in effectiveness of presenters. In other words, admirable effort has been made to offer a variety of points of view on complex matters. At the same time, speaker credibility should be monitored with comparable care to ensure that commitments to variation and equity are evident.

In summary, the core seminar is one of LASP's great strengths. It is challenging and thorough and provides an excellent foundation for the other experiences that occur concurrent with and subsequent to the seminar.

Nicaragua Study

The Nicaragua study trip, that runs through weeks seven and eight of the program, receives exceptionally positive reviews from students—surprising considering the very hard conditions in which they live. As in other facets of the program, learning occurs through readings, lectures, journal writing and intensive experience. The extensive logistical work that goes into planning a carefully-crafted course run largely in another country is impressive. Home stays are arranged, and students are guided through a range of appropriate behaviors. Students are likewise guided through careful analysis of their experience; they are asked to observe and reflect on community life, public systems, history, politics, economics and personal encounters. Strong partnerships with churches provide the backbone for arranging home stays and other important experiences.

It is clearly valuable for students to have the different cultural, ethnic, religious, political and socioeconomic experiences that Nicaragua and Costa Rica provide. Students seem to understand the contrast, and to gain appreciation that Latin America, even Central America, is not a single unified reality. It is a valuable lesson about the complexity of culture, and we applaud the LASP staff for the effort required to create this different opportunity.

Academic Concentrations

The final six weeks of the semester in LASP cover an area of focus or concentration. This period begins with two weeks of classroom instruction; those are followed by a one-month community immersion/internship experience. The final segment of the concentration involves a study trip. This end-of-term opportunity to focus on a specialized area has tremendous strengths; differences in interest and major are accommodated, and students can explore in depth what has been covered more briefly earlier. Further, there is considerable pedagogical strength in the model of experiential learning employed. As students are on their own in relatively isolated areas, they truly have an immersion experience.

Latin American Studies Concentration—An extension of the very successful and demanding core program, this follow-up study includes readings that extend discussions of faith (for example, students read *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes*, and the *Bible*). This phase of the program also

moves students outside of the metropolitan area of San José, into more rural communities. The center of assignments is a faith and practice essay; it's clear that, by design, this course offers a unique and extended opportunity to explore the implications of one's Christian faith in a Latin American context.

Advanced Language and Literature—This extended opportunity for language study draws again on the resources of ICADS as well as coursework offered by LASP faculty. A consistent strength of this program is the individualized attention and relationship that develops between students and faculty; “The instructors showed an interest in me as a student” is rated a very high 4.74 out of 5 on evaluations. In upcoming terms, this language concentration promises to be even stronger than in the past, as an experienced literature instructor who has received high ratings from students has been hired to teach the literature class.

While students seem to make significant gains in language through their LASP experience, it is recommended that staff continue to create learning situations that require extensive use of Spanish outside of class.

Environmental Studies—While Costa Rica offers rich and unique opportunities for environmental exploration, numbers of enrolled students in this concentration have not been strong. We recommend careful examination of the feasibility of the program, especially in consultation with CCCU campuses. It seems likely that one of the barriers to student enrollment is an assumption on home campuses that this concentration is aimed at science students, who typically are involved in tight curricular programs that don't permit entire semesters off campus. In fact, it may be appropriate to explore and emphasize a cross-disciplinary focus on sustainability that draws students from business, politics, economics, sociology, and other fields.

International Business—LASP has continued to build strong partnerships with many for-profit and non-profit organizations and has much to offer the myriad U.S. students drawn to study business. A more intensive partnership with World Vision, being piloted this semester, seems to be very promising. Overall, there is exciting potential for the international business concentration. Indeed, students respond to the international business concentration with enthusiasm, rating the practicum experience with a 5 out of 5 possible points (who wouldn't love those course evaluations?).

Re-entry Workshop

The final week of the LASP semester is spent debriefing the term and preparing for the “reverse culture shock” of the return to the U.S. The LASP staff has identified the need for students to learn strategies for making change constructively when they return to their homes and campuses; faculty members provide guidance in reflecting on the past and planning for adjustments back home.

In recent years, the help of a facilitator with missions expertise has been enlisted in the debriefing process. Given the intense experiential learning of the term, this final phase is worth evaluating. Factors such as additional time decompressing, active

alumni networks, identification of a mentor/contact person at home, a reunion...all of these ideas, and more, are worth considering if staff determine that more support for reentry is needed. In addition, the conflict resolution curriculum should be reviewed to determine if it is accomplishing the intended goals of the experiment.

ASSESSMENT:

In reviewing the self-study information provided by LASP staff, the SAPC team noted the extensive amount of course and program data that is collected via surveys of program participants and observations of student performance. In addition, from interviews with LASP staff, it is clear that changes to courses and the program as a whole, based on this information, occur regularly. As an example, changes have been made to the selection of core seminar speakers based on student-completed evaluations and from LASP staff assessment of the degree to which learning objectives have been satisfied.

The SAPC team noted the extensive use of pre- and post-assessments in the language-training program. These OPI assessments are recognized by international language education professional groups and exhibit reliability and validity in measuring student progress.

The LASP self-study includes an assessment map, along with syllabi, course-by-course goals, and program learning objectives; it is evident that LASP staff members are consistently focused on and strengthening the assessment of student learning. With this in mind, the SAPC team believes that the LASP program can benefit not only from more specific student outcomes (as mentioned earlier) but from quantifiable performance measures that can be compiled (e.g., rubrics, percentage targets for assignments, portfolios). This entire assessment process needs to begin with program objectives, followed by course objectives that are derived from and aligned to the program objectives. In reviewing the assessment map, it was noted that some of the indirect measures and direct measures of goal attainment were not actually measurable and that there was some confusion in the use of the labels direct and indirect. It will be important to revisit the assessment map systematically, examine terminology, and ensure that assessment measures are truly measurable and appropriately assigned.

Once measures are clearly established, it is important to compile assessment data, in order to communicate to students and for program review. Most of all, it is critical for staff to document how assessment data is used to guide programmatic changes. Issues and trends should be identified in a systematic way on a regular basis, with documentation of how the data was collected, analyzed, and used to guide program change.

COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE AND SUPPORT:

Building community, living independently

Remarkably, though students spend most of the semester living with host families, they still retain a strong sense of community within LASP. This community extends to relationships with faculty and staff, as well as with peers. It appears that faculty

accessibility, regular processing groups, and a general ethos of engagement all contribute to the experience of community despite independent living.

In addition, students benefit from a thoughtfully-structured community. Clear behavioral standards, and reminders of culturally-appropriate behavior reiterated through courses, all provide valuable structure. There is a sense in which high standards of behavior are expected, but at the same time there is great independence and trust. Expectations are high, but students rise to meet that challenge. There is also strong commitment to safety with extensive instructions for emergencies and alternatives for accessing help. When challenges, issues or medical concerns arise, they are clearly documented and appropriately addressed.

Home stays

Cultural sensitivity, along with history and immersion in local culture, has allowed staff to develop long-term relationships with Costa Rican families. This rich personal network provides an unusual level of strength and stability in home stays. It may also be that the sensitivity of staff to the stresses of being a host family adds to the loyalty and stability of the host family network. In summary, a great deal of care and attention are devoted to nurturing home stay arrangements; these efforts are of critical importance, for the home stay system provides an invaluable center to experiential education experiences.

Preparation

According to student reports, most preparation for the LASP experience occurs once students arrive in Costa Rica. This is intentional; the philosophy of knowing just as much as one needs to know for the next step is part of the introduction to a different cultural experience.

Once students arrive in San José, it appears that they feel well-equipped and supported for each next step along the way. Students seem to understand that, though the one-step-at-a-time approach to life is new and difficult, it is an important part of the learning. Far more understanding than distress was conveyed by students about this approach.

It may be very important for institutions back home to understand this philosophical approach so that it doesn't catch anyone by surprise. Faculty and off-campus representatives may be especially helpful in selecting and preparing students if they understand this program philosophy.

Debriefing

Debriefing occurs on a regular basis throughout the duration of the semester; it is wise that it is not relegated exclusively to a week at the end of the term. Students can count on regular process group sessions with a group of peers and a faculty member (faculty rotate). They report looking forward to these sessions.

Given the 2004 LASP evaluation that suggested placing importance on process groups, it seems evident that staff have followed through on that recommendation in a way which has contributed to student satisfaction, to staff-student relationships, and to learning.

Spiritual/faith experience

In virtually every discussion (where SAPC members gathered feedback), the topic of faith experience was brought up spontaneously by the students. The way it was described, students reported dramatic growth in their understanding of God's work in the world, and their role in it. They also described having a view of God that had been enlarged; God is God of the whole world, and God is with them no matter where they are in the world. These are wonderful and moving realizations, and we commend the LASP staff members for nurturing the theological discussion and spiritual insights that are commonly gained through this program.

What we also heard was that some students miss markers of faith experience that have been important to them in other settings. For some, church attendance in Costa Rica is more of a cultural than a personal worship experience and the student-led worship time seems a bit unstructured. What we heard was desire for additional times when people would be invited to pray together, for example, or engage in Bible study. There was a sense that these would actually assist in the process of reconciling faith assumptions of the past and their present new realizations. To be engaged in Bible study, for instance, with a group that is sharing cultural insights, could be rich and important.

What we sense from the staff is concern about not allowing easy reliance on old patterns that may gloss over hard global realities. This we support. At the same time, more explicit expressions of faith and worship may be enriching and sustaining in this significant period of growth.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION REGARDING CREDIT-WORTHINESS:

The Latin American Studies Program is committed to cultivating *a Christ-centered community of learner-scholars; it seeks to expand global awareness and integrate kingdom values via experiential learning in the Latin American context*. In both curriculum and co-curriculum, it fosters challenge and growth through a thoughtfully-planned sequence of study, from home stays to language study, from a focused area of concentration to overview of Latin American economics, politics, and culture. It is a demanding program but one in which students are supported well to benefit from these demands. Both in rigor and in the nature of ideas presented, LASP stretches students. For those who are prepared for challenge, it is an invaluable experience. It is, according to students with whom we spoke, educationally rich and life-changing.

Upon review of the curriculum, including the strong complementary role of the co-curriculum, SAPC team members affirm the credit structure for this program. It appears that the curriculum is aligned with CCCU institutional standards (i.e., the courses are very worthy of the credit they are assigned). Interviews with staff and students, along with review of student learning artifacts, substantiate the rigor of all of the program components and the appropriateness of the assigned course credits. Class experience covers considerable ground from a curricular perspective; presentations, readings, papers and a range of assignments give backbone to course structure. In addition, extensive experiential learning, from home stays to internship placements to process groups to journals, is built into the learning environment in exceptionally effective ways.

PROGRAM STRENGTHS:

The following are items of note that constitute exceptional program strengths; these are features that CCCU member institutions may find helpful to know.

1. **The LASP program offers an exceptional educational experience that embodies principles of effective instruction and experiential learning.** Language instruction, education about cultural context, and immersion experiences are exceptionally well-designed.
2. **The LASP program likewise offers a traditional academic core that is rigorous, well-organized and thoughtfully-conceived; students work hard yet are enormously positive about their experience.** In every sense, this program offers a model of effective challenge; faculty model willingness to engage in difficult ideas with openness and skill.
3. **Program director Anthony Chamberlain and the LASP staff embody entrepreneurial passion for our students, for Costa Rican culture, and for the LASP program.** Anthony has assembled a high quality staff that includes people from North American and Central American backgrounds who live out commitment to the Costa Rican community and model cultural empathy and skill. Their deep relationships in the community of San José and in other communities in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama and Cuba provide a context for valuable learning experiences for students, and enhance student safety.
4. **LASP staff members demonstrate healthy working relationships and respect for one another.** They model well the ability to think independently and make individual contributions, yet work together in support of the program, its students and mission.
5. **The LASP team demonstrates strong entrepreneurial spirit, willingness to adapt and commitment to program development.** There is a sense of movement and improvement in this curriculum, of self-critique, of interest in enhancing program offerings.
6. **LASP members offer a unique and admirable blend of challenge and support for students throughout the program.** In the curriculum, there is thoughtful balance between orientation toward a Christ-centered mission and willingness to fully engage challenging ideas. In the co-curriculum, including all of the more personal and community experiences that contribute to growth, there is likewise a skilled balance between giving students autonomy and walking with them so that they are not alone. Staff members are exceptionally skillful at achieving this blend of challenge and support, and they are to be commended.
7. **The home stay structure, a foundation for student learning, is exceptionally well-planned and managed.** Host families complete contracts (expectations are clear) and are carefully selected; they offer a rich experience for students. In fact, students participate in multiple home stays, and so have a broad range (economically, culturally) of immersion experiences. It is no surprise that this is one of the more powerful parts of students' educational experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Based on SAPC observations, the following are suggestions that are aimed at strengthening the LASP program:

- 1. Continue the process of future planning that has begun, exploring the viability of concentrations, and possibilities related to the uniqueness of the LASP program and location.** We recommend evaluation of new initiatives according to the following criteria:
 - Take advantage of unique resources that Costa Rica has to offer;
 - Benefit from unique capacities and gifts of the LASP staff;
 - Offer opportunities that build on staff gifts and avoid duplication of other programs (evaluate the content of other off campus programs in Central America/Costa Rica to which CCCU students have access);
 - Address the needs and fit with changing curricula of CCCU Institutions.
- 2. Review the program assessment plan, beginning with learning objectives (both curricular and co-curricular), making sure that objectives and measures are quantifiable.** In particular, be sure to systematize a plan for using data for program review and future planning.
- 3. Strengthen efforts, already a priority, to present a range of voices, representing a variety of Latin American perspectives on political, social and theological issues.** As much as possible, include equally credible voices on complex issues so that students understand the integrity and value of each. When opposing points of view are difficult to present in balanced manner (e.g., some speakers are more compelling than others), it is important that LASP help students to understand major points of disagreement and the rationale for each position. We are sympathetic to the importance of faculty being able to speak in authentic ways; we are also aware of expectations (in the academic world) that presentations be ideologically balanced to allow students true freedom of conscience. In addition, continue development of themes of oppression, poverty, justice and so forth as issues that run across national lines; many of these themes are not solely themes of contrast between North and Latin American perspective, but are themes that are present in both contexts.
- 4. Provide big picture perspective wherever possible in the course.** If students understand the overarching paradigms for classes, it will enhance learning and give coherence to a program that relies heavily on individual voices (e.g., guest speakers). These varied voices are extremely valuable, but need to be tied to the larger schema whenever possible.
- 5. Provide leadership to students' opportunities for worship and Bible study.** Although we value the spirit of autonomy which students are allowed in the program, we heard consistently from students about the desire for staff presence in those programs that are specifically related to expression of faith. We believe that staff presence would not have to undermine student autonomy. Because students are attempting to connect personal faith with issues presented in the program, the more their conversations about this new integration can include faculty, the more helpful they are likely to be.