



Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

OXFORD SUMMER PROGRAMME

Oxford, England

JULY 2010 EVALUATION STUDENT ACADEMIC PROGRAMS COMMISSION



July 20-23, 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 Oxford Summer Programme (OSP), July 20-23, 2010. The site visit team members and Council participants were:

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

SCIO is a center of the CCCU in Oxford operating to advance the scholarly development and opportunities of academic leaders from member campuses (both North American and International Affiliates)—undergraduates, graduates, and faculty. The mission states: "SCIO is a center of the CCCU in Oxford operating to advance the scholarly development and opportunities of academic leaders from member campuses." SCIO operates two programs for undergraduate students. The semester-length program is the Scholars' Semester at Oxford (SSO). The summer program is called the Oxford Summer Programme. It is in its ninth year of operation. Enrollment in this program has been consistent since the beginning, ranging from 25-40 students. Currently, the goal is to take between 20-25 students each summer.

MISSION AND ADMINISTRATION

The Oxford Summer Programme was developed in 2001 and launched in 2002 in response to a significant change in relationship with the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. Under the direction of Stan Rosenberg, SCIO (Scholarship and Christianity In Oxford) developed a new 3-week summer program. The OSP originally focused on Christianity and the development of the West and combined a series of lectures with Oxford-like seminars. In a significant assessment of vision and student expectations the staff decided that the program was not offering a unique experience.

Key staff overseeing OSP are:

- Dr. Stan Rosenberg, the Director, who has been resident in Oxford since 1999 and is the founding director of SCIO and a member of the Theology Faculty;
- Dr. Elizabeth Baigent, the Senior Tutor, who bears overall responsibility for SCIO's academic matters and is Reader in Geography at Oxford and a long-time member of the Oxford community;

- Ms. Nichole Fazio-Veigel, the OSP Manager, who bears day to day responsibility OSP, and has studied in Oxford as a study abroad student and is currently completing an Oxford doctorate in art history;
- Mr. Simon Lancaster, SCIO's Dean of Students, who as a trained counselor oversees the student accommodation and student life and is part of the general managerial team; and has lived and worked as part of Oxford's academic institutions for the past 13 years.

The staff has experimented with a number of changes both in pedagogy and length of study in an effort to provide the most effective Oxford experience for students coming from the CCCU. Significant changes were made in 2007 in an effort to take advantage of the unique Oxford setting. Nevertheless, students still felt the program was too short and that it failed to provide a more complete Oxford educational experience.

In 2008-2009 Dr. Rosenberg and key staff (in cooperation with the tutors) developed a new curricular design for the OSP. They believe that what makes the Oxford experience appealing to American students is the Oxford education experience itself: the seminar and tutorial system. The program was also extended to five weeks to allow a more defined tutorial experience and students now receive 6 instead of 5 credits. In the current program, students attend lectures, seminars and tutorials that are closely linked to the overall seminar experience. The OSP faculty has clearly defined the seminars and they emphasize a unique Oxford approach to learning. Dr. Rosenberg described it this way: "Meetings are a mix of group seminars and private tutorials with the assigned essays given in the tutorial environment, as is the normal Oxford structure."

In addition to providing a summer Oxford experience, OSP in its early years also served as a "testing" ground for curricular and experiential learning components that were possible additions to the Scholars' Semester in Oxford program. Although actual staffing levels are not always easy to determine because of the overlap with administrative and teaching duties in the SSO, generally the director has maintained a staff of two who are primarily dedicated to OSP in the summer and are supported by the year-round academic and operations staff (who also offer some of the lectures) in the program.

The program drew 26 students this year with 22 female and 4 male students. Although the staff would have hoped to accommodate all students in the Crick Road house, the overall numbers were too large. The staff placed the 22 women in the house on Crick road with the men being apportioned out to other rental facilities in Oxford.

In summary, we (the SAPC visitors) focused on the academic effectiveness of the current curricular design and the overall quality of the summer student experience in Oxford. In conversations with the OSP administrators, we determined that the OSP had set learning and student life outcomes for the program. They also provided substantial evidence of student achievement (through portfolios, classroom evaluations and interviews) in the area of learning outcomes as well as the student life experience.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM

The OSP academic program is organized around lectures, seminars and tutorials. The structure of OSP is very similar SSO, SCIO's semester program. Upon completion of OSP, students earn the equivalent of two 3-credit courses. The credit earned is based upon attendance and completion of work assigned in the lecture series seminars and the more intensive writing experience in the tutorials. As was noted earlier, relying on student feedback and an examination of learning outcomes, in 2008 OSP was lengthened from 4 weeks to 5 weeks. In order to give students more of the "Oxford experience" of learning, in 2009 the tutorials were added to the curriculum. At the same time, seminar selection was reduced from a variety of disciplinary and topical seminars to just two topics per student. The faculty believe this has worked to focus student attention and academic work during an intense five weeks of study.

Tutors are chosen from among those who teach during the academic year for SCIO and are both known and respected as research-active, credentialed scholars and as excellent teachers. SCIO picks tutors who will both challenge and engage the students. As Wycliffe Hall, one of Oxford's 45 colleges and halls and a Church of England training school, sponsors OSP, a number of the tutors come from among its academic staff. Nichole Fazio-Veigel, working in cooperation with Elizabeth Baigent and Stan Rosenberg, invites the academics to teach and provides close guidance and communication in preparation for the program and after it commences. Tutors are given guidance on instructional matters and assessment and provided a copy of the 115 page student handbook SCIO authors.

Tutors and lecturers for OSP are:

- Andrew Atherstone MA (Cantab), MSt, DPhil (Oxon), FRHistS
- Elizabeth Baigent MA (Oxon.), DPhil (Oxon.), PGDipLATHE (Oxon.), FSA, FRHistS, FRGS, FHEA
- Nichole Fazio-Veigel BA, MA, MStud (Oxon)
- Elizabeth Hoare BA (Dunelm), MA (Cantab), PhD (Dunelm)
- Jonathan Kirkpatrick BA (Oxon.), MSt (Oxon.)
- Matthew D. Kirkpatrick MA (Oxon.), MSt (Oxon.), DPhil

- Simon Lancaster BMus, GradDipMus., Cert Christian Counselling (CWR)
- Richard Lawes BA (Oxon.), MSt (Oxon.), DPhil (Oxon.), MB, ChB (Edin.), BSc (Edin.), MRCPsych, PG Dip Cognitive Therapy
- Meriel Patrick MA (Oxon.), MPhil (Oxon.), DPhil (Oxon.)
- Emma Plaskitt BA (McGill), MPhil (Oxon.), DPhil (Oxon.)
- John Roche MSc, MA, DPhil (Oxon.)
- Stan Rosenberg MA, PhD (Catholic University)
- Canon Vincent Strudwick, BA, DipAdEd, MA

Assessment of student learning is accomplished primarily through preparation, attendance and participation in the seminars, and the completion of 4 significant papers (2 papers per 3-credit course) that are developed during the one-one-one tutorials with faculty. OSP provided ample evidence of the quality of student work and the improvement of work while in the Oxford Summer Programme.

In addition, student evaluations are consistently given, with feedback used to revise aspects of the program (e.g., adding tutorials; expanding to 5 weeks). The OSP faculty consistently examines the program and exhibits a commitment to the mission and objectives of the program. They also evaluate brochures and other communication pieces to make certain that they are clear and consistent and that they were adequately assessing program outcomes. In our conversation with students it was clear that they believed that the work is demanding but rewarding. Students also commented on how the program fostered a strong academic community because of the quality of student participants and because of its location in Oxford. Further enhancing the program experience OSP students have some access to significant Oxford resources, such as the Bodleian Library and Oxford faculty.

We interviewed all students in the 2010 summer program and reviewed documents from past cohorts. Students spoke of the benefit of having a summer program at Oxford and indicated that they wanted the Oxford experience without having to commit to a full semester and the costs associated with it. We asked many students why they did not take the full semester or year-long program. They explained that, because of their major or the manner in which the home campus counted course work in Oxford, they could not graduate on time and take the full year program. Thus the OSP is filling a unique and important niche for CCCU students. OSP enables a significant group of students to experience study abroad in the Oxford model all within a manageable time frame and cost.

Students also felt that the OSP provided a significant cross-cultural experience. One student expressed that since the city of Oxford is built upon the various halls and colleges that comprise the University, that so much of the daily life is based around the history and tradition of Oxford. While Oxford is an English city

and university, it is truly a cosmopolitan environment. Students and visitors come from around the world to learn, experience, and be enriched by Oxford University.

Students constantly referred to the “challenge of the Oxford experience.” They came seeking this experience (which we learned was really the experience of the tutorial and lecture system), although some admitted that they weren’t quite sure what that meant. In the five weeks they have been at OSP, they kept coming back to descriptions of this being an idea-saturated environment. Learning in the Oxford model allowed them to gain confidence in their own ideas, challenging them to dig into the books of the Bodleian Library (The Bod), in order to think critically about the topics of study. The seminars and tutorials forced them to prepare for the discussion with other students and dialogue with the faculty, respectively. This caused them to “think deeper” and write more thoughtfully, knowing that they would be questioned and pushed to go further in exploring topic.

RESIDENCE LIFE PROGRAM

It was clear from several meetings with students that their perceptions were consistent and positive concerning the academic and social experience at OSP. We met with 8 students in Wycliffe Hall on the morning of Wednesday July 21st and had dinner with all the students in the program that evening.

In our interviews with students we wanted to know first why they chose the summer program and also why they chose to study in the summer over the programs in Oxford during the academic year. Although each story was somewhat unique all persons noted that they could not afford time away from their campuses during the academic year. Primarily, it was the challenge of paying for a full academic semester away while trying to keep on schedule for graduation. They were clearly driven to the Oxford program by their desire to study cross-culturally and to experience the Oxford educational system. Several students noted that they wanted to learn in an environment surrounded by history and scholarly pursuit. They came expecting to be challenged academically although many admitted that they were not sure that they would be successful. Again, all students noted that the program had met their expectations both academically and socially.

The Junior Dean, Chris Royer, did a tremendous job with the Residence Life program. She lived in the same housing as the female students. Chris organized optional weekend field trips for the students. The students mentioned that this was very helpful, as it diminished the anxiety of trying to plan these trips. Chris was good at helping organize how meals would be prepared and shared. This helped to foster a strong sense of community amongst the students. The

students did indicate that they wish there was more free time during the field trips. One student suggested that they leave earlier and return a little later in order to have more time explore while on the field trips.

Female students living in the Crick Road house could not say enough positive things about community life. They applauded the work of Simon Lancaster and Chris Royer who effectively planned their life and work together and ensured that community worked in "tight" quarters. For example, the students were organized in "food teams" to ensure that everyone ate well. Each member of the team took responsibility for one meal a week. Each student was responsible for washing her own dishes and the kitchen was closed to the team when a member failed at this task. The student food teams shopped together and organized the meals for the week together. This enabled them to get to know the students in their group relatively quickly and to learn how to collaborate together. It also kept their costs for meals lower over the five weeks of the term.

In addition to the organization of the house, Chris planned community events like the "July 4th party" and organized local trips (Bath, Blenheim Palace, and others) and church visits. The students noted that Chris was a very effective house director and ensured that community life went well during the term.

During the 2010 OSP, the enrollment consisted of 22 women and 4 men. It was noted that this ratio of gender is not typical. So, the Crick Road housing was able to accommodate the female population, while the male students were split amongst two other locations. The men remarked on how it was difficult to feel a part of the community, but they understood why the housing was arranged this way. The four men were split into 2 different rental arrangements. The success of their experience was directly related to the distance to the Crick Road house and the rest of the community. The two men who lived farther away noted that their community experience was not all that positive. They were not able to interact much at Crick Road and therefore they did not get to know their student colleagues as well. Their food options were more limited and they did not operate in teams as the women did in Crick. There are not easy solutions to this issue but the team should explore the living options for the entire group. (Perhaps one thing to keep in mind here is that "bigger is not always better." Although it sometimes feels better to continue to expand the enrollment it brings other challenges as well. The Oxford spirit and experience are highly valued by these students because of the relational element. This is reinforced by the teamwork evident in Crick Road. Provide the finest experience for 22 students in Crick Road and raise awareness of this fine experience.)

SUMMARY

It is clear from students, faculty, and support staff, that OSP achieves the goal of fostering Christian scholars in the Oxford environment. The evidence that was provided through student evaluations, the portfolios of student work, interviews, and faculty tutor feedback, clearly indicates a consistent view of the development of student scholarship in the 5 weeks of this program.

Commendations

The SAPC visiting team would like to commend SCIO and OSP for:

1. The organization and effective presentation of OSP as found in the SAPC notebook (July 2010).
2. The coherence and teamwork of the administrative and faculty of the SCIO and OSP both during the visit and in its consistent work with students over the past 9 years. Nichole Fazio-Veigel's management of OSP in the past three years has contributed to this development and success.
3. Its efforts in developing and encouraging scholarly pursuit in the unique Oxford tradition and pedagogy within a five-week experience.
4. Its willingness to continually examine student learning and change pedagogy in order to enhance the primary objectives of the program.
5. Its very successful efforts in developing student community in the Crick Road facility.
6. Developing a small and unique program that focuses on the academic quality of experience and also the creation of genuine Christian community.
7. Identifying tutors that are supportive of the mission of OSP and the academic development of its students.
8. Finally, we want to commend the Director for hiring a staff that display competence, teamwork, and genuine concern for the academic and spiritual development of students. It is obvious that this team works well together.

Recommendations

The SAPC visiting team would like to recommend that the SCIO and OSP:

1. Reevaluate present list of program objectives with a focus on adopting objectives that are directly connected to the mission of the OSP. (The current listing is too long and the direct result of the commitments of a previous organization).
2. Consider the aspects of the community that would change if enrollment changed. The academic quality of the current OSP experience relies significantly on the community developed in the Crick Road facility. We

believe that the administrative staff of SCIO needs to carefully weigh whether any expansion of student numbers in the program would alter the academic and spiritual quality of the experience.