Faculty Report Template

Name: Allen Wittenborn

Faculty/Rank: Full-time Lecturer (ret.)

Department: Center for Asian Studies

College: Arts and Letters

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Proposal title: Perspectives on Vietnam, Perspectives on Thailand

Country/ies visited: Vietnam, Thailand

Institution visited: Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Foreign Trade University, Hanoi, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

Dates of travel: June 1 – June 25, 2010

Number of student participants: Each program is designed for 15 participants

Previous IP proposals submitted and grants awarded (list titles, countries and dates):
  - Awarded OIP Faculty Intl. Travel and Activities Grant, Thailand, January 2004
  - Awarded OIP Faculty Intl. Travel and Activities Grant, Thailand, June 2005
  - Awarded OIP Faculty Intl. Travel and Activities Grant, Malaysia, June 2006
  - Awarded OIP Faculty Intl. Travel and Activities Grant, Thailand, June 2008

Have all required reports been submitted? Yes. Final reports were submitted for all OIP grants awarded.

Other funding for this activity available/applied for: Awarded Center for Intl. Business Education and Research (CIBER) grant for air fare.
Proposal Abstract (75 word maximum): The Center for Asian Studies currently offers a summer study course in Bangkok, Thailand (Perspectives on Thailand) that earns each participants six units of upper division General Education credit. Both undergraduate and graduate students are eligible. In addition, the Center will offer, beginning in 2011, a summer study program in Vietnam, also designed to earn six units of GE credit. This program is tentatively entitled Perspectives on Vietnam.

Travel report:

I. Opening/overview of intentions/activity

Faculty member visited three universities in Vietnam in order to determine the most feasible to set up and operate a summer study program. Faculty member also met with officials at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok to discuss procedures for reinstating its summer program which ran for five years but suffered a lapse of two years due to low enrollment.

II. In preparation for the trip abroad

For Vietnam, prior to departure I contacted three universities by email and by phone after researching their status and educational standards. These included Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, and Foreign Trade University, Hanoi. It should be noted that the two VNU institutions are independent and separate. According to Internet information all three were similar in makeup to SDSU in organization, scholarship, and student enrollment. All three are also recognized by Vietnam’s Ministry of Education as among the top tier of educational institutions in the country. All three also expressed interest and enthusiasm in working with SDSU on the proposed program.

I also contacted faculty and officials at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand to set up meetings there to discuss re-instating the former program that ran from 2004 through 2008.

III. Upon arrival/specific activity

I met with Dr. Le Thi Thuy Trieu, International Relations Department, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City; Dr. Nguyen Thu Thuy, Dean, Foreign Trade University, Hanoi; and with Prof. Do Thanh Long, Center for Economic Development Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi and Dr. Nguyen Thi Anh Thu, Director, International Relations Department, Vietnam National University, Hanoi.
I explained to each representative that the program is designed to benefit undergraduate and graduate students in the Humanities and Social Sciences. In particular, those majoring in Asian Studies, Political Science, Sociology, History, Anthropology, Communications, Women’s Studies, International Business, and ISCOR will find the program pertinent.

IV. Conclusion, recommendation, and next step?

I ultimately decided to choose Vietnam National University in Hanoi to work with because they are a full-fledged academic institution that can meet the needs of SDSU students. The campus is located in downtown Hanoi, and therefore provides immediate access to its amenities. While it is true that its sister city in the south, Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) is a dynamic center of business activity, I felt that being located in Vietnam’s capital provided its own advantages, especially the opportunity to meet with the country’s leaders which has been scheduled in the program. In addition, my contacts at VNU, Hanoi expressed abundant enthusiasm for working with SDSU on this project.

In talking to students and faculty at SDSU I have found a high degree of interest in visiting and studying in Vietnam. Furthermore, San Diego County is home to a large and growing ethnic Vietnamese community that harbors a natural desire to see Vietnam.

Any study abroad program is valuable in providing students with a wider perspective on international affairs, and the opportunity to experience a different culture and society. Traveling to Vietnam will certainly allow for such a rich adventure. But more than any other country, the time spent there will go a long way to dispel some of the old feelings of Vietnam as an “enemy” that has for too long been a legacy from the recent war. Students will learn that the Vietnamese people are eager to move beyond that unfortunate debacle and develop a more positive relationship with Americans.

Student participants will take part in a variety of educational and cultural activities, including lectures by Vietnamese professors and professionals, visits to both natural and human monuments, a one-week trip to Ho Chi Minh City in the south, and the opportunity to carry out any personal research that may be on their agenda.

I will work with the College of Extended Studies and with representatives at the Imperial Valley campus to disseminate information on this program. I will also meet in various classrooms with students, and with certain student groups on campus. As the Instructor of Record I will work with the Dean’s office in Arts and Letters to help promote this program.
V. Additional Information

In addition to meeting with faculty from the above mentioned universities, I also had meetings with the Foreign Affairs Officer at the US Consulate in Ho Chi Minh City who provided invaluable information about the educational and university system in Vietnam, including contacts with professors from other universities already running similar study abroad programs.

I also met with the Director of the Vietnam Fulbright program at the US Embassy in Hanoi who provided insights into that program and its functions, and how SDSU students might benefit.

All information should be sent to The Office of International Programs via e mail:

oip@mail.sdsu.edu