Overview of Review Process

The IES Abroad European Union Program Review was conducted from February 26 through March 5, 2016. The Review Committee was composed of:

- Susan Holme, Director, Off-Campus Studies, Whitman College
- Pamela Gann, Trustee Professor of Legal Studies, Senior Fellow, Kravis Leadership Institute, President Emerita, Claremont-McKenna College
- Hans Rindisbacher, Professor of German, Pomona College
- Reinhiilde Steingröver, Chair, Humanities Department, Professor of German, University of Rochester
- Susan Wiley, Associate Professor, Political Science, George Washington University

Faculty representatives to the committee were:

- Gert Fehlner
- Franziska Hensel
- Eric Heine
- Thomas Staub

Student representatives to the committee were the members of the Spring 2016 term Student Council:

- Audrey Baer, Lehigh University
- Phillip Habib, Wofford College
- Eric Lehmann, Bucknell University
- Jack Macintire, Ithaca College

Ullrich Lohrmann, Center Director, served as a resource to the Committee, and Nancy Kenyon, Program Dean, served as Secretary.

Over the course of the six days of the review the Committee:

- Met individually and in small groups with staff, faculty and students
- Observed all four sections of the Integrative Seminar
- Observed 14 area studies courses
- Observed 6 sections of German language courses
- Visited 3 housing locations
- Visited 2 local internship placement locations

Program Basics

The IES Abroad European Union Program was founded at the Freiburg Center in 1981 as the EC Program, and was renamed in 1993 with the advent of the European Union under the Maastricht Treaty. The program focus has evolved along with the development of the European Union, beginning in the early years with a strong
emphasis on economics and trade, and broadening since then to encompass now a range of pertinent issues that the European Union is grappling with from migration to climate change. In 2007 the EU Program was moved into its own Center and its own space, with Ullrich Lohrmann as Center Director. That same year the EU Center offered its summer program for the first time.

The IES Abroad European Union Program is an English-medium program offering German at various levels and one Political Science course taught in German. This program is distinguished by the required EU Studies Integrative Seminar course that spans the semester and is embedded with three distinct course-related excursions within Europe, each six to nine days in length. The Integrative Seminar course culminates in a program-wide capstone—a two-day Model European Union simulation.

A student on the EU Center’s fall or spring program takes a total of 16 credits as follows:

- Required Integrative Seminar, taught at the 200, 300, and 400 levels (4 credits)
- German language course; required for beginning- and intermediate-level students, optional for advanced German language students (3 credits)
- English-taught area studies courses (3 credits each)
- One optional German-taught Political Science course for students with advanced German (3 credits)

All courses are taught by IES Abroad.

All students participate in three course-related excursions that are incorporated into the Integrative Seminar:

1. **Europe: From Division towards Integration Trip**: Berlin and Prague (6 days)
2. **EU Institutions Trip**: Strasbourg, Luxembourg/Frankfurt, Brussels and Paris (7 days, 1 day Strasbourg)
3. **EU Member States Trips** (approximately 9 days each). Students attend one of three.
   - Northern Europe: Great Britain (London), Sweden (Stockholm), the Baltics (Riga or Tallinn) with themes of economic and social policies, Euroscepticism and EU relations with the United States, Baltic-Russian relations, Russian minorities, relations to the EU, East-West relations
   - Southern Europe: Italy (Rome) and Spain (Barcelona and Madrid) with themes of regionalism, environment, migration, ethnic minorities, youth unemployment, economic crisis
   - Southeastern Europe: Hungary (Budapest), Romania (Bucharest) and Greece (Athens) with themes of migration/immigration, stability, transition, energy security, corruption, financial crisis, democratic developments, member states’ relations with the EU

All students also participate in the Model EU, which is the capstone of the IES EU semester program in general and for the Integrative Seminar in particular. The Model EU is a simulation and role play of a summit meeting of the European Council that is held in the IES EU Center itself. Each student takes on the role of a player in European Union governance, such as commissioner of the European Commission or a Head of State/Government representing one of the 28 member states. Topics vary from semester to semester, based on the actual work of EU organizations.
Students on the spring program may apply to participate in an internship in either Freiburg or Brussels. Internships and the seminar course associated with them take place in the early summer after the end of the spring program and conclude in early July. Students who participate in these internships pay an additional fee and earn an additional three credits.

The European Union Center also hosts a summer program for eight weeks in June and July. Students on the summer program take the following courses, which are taught by IES Abroad:

- **Required Integrative Seminar (4 credits)**
- **One area studies course (3 credits)**

All summer students participate in approximately two weeks of excursions that are incorporated into the *Integrative Seminar*. These excursions usually go to Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the summer of 2016 for security reasons the Turkey excursion was replaced with an excursion to Greece (Athens) and Cyprus. This decision was made after the program review was completed.

**Executive Summary**

The IES Abroad European Union Program is a well-developed, highly-focused program that examines the history, institutions and issues of the European Union. Undertaking this review during a time of duress for the European Union due to the Syrian refugee crisis and in the wake of the terrorist attacks on Paris last November underscored to the reviewers how very relevant this program is and how vital it is for university students in the United States to better understand the challenges and opportunities facing Europe. The program primarily attracts students from the fields of Political Science, International Relations and Economics, but about one quarter of the participants come from various other disciplines. The students the Committee met with spoke nearly unanimously with enthusiasm about how much they were learning and the Review Committee observed a high level of motivation in the classroom. The Committee attributes this first, to the clear academic mission of this program – the study of the European Union; second, to the talented faculty who know how to engage US students in the classroom; and third, to the well-designed curriculum that ties classroom learning closely to highly-relevant course-related excursions in Europe. While some students who attended this program chose it because of the extensive academic travel (rather than because of a passion for the study of the European Union per se), they nonetheless seemed very enthusiastic about their learning.

The program has evolved from a more traditional, lecture-style program, to one in which students actively engage in lively class discussions, small group discussions, and field experiences. It has been finely tuned over the years by a cadre of dedicated staff and faculty. And the program benefits from its proximity to the Albert-Ludwigs-University Freiburg where it draws much of its faculty talent. In short, the review team found that the EU program fulfills its mission of in-depth, first-hand study of the European Union extraordinarily well.

The small city of Freiburg, a picturesque university town in southwestern Germany just east of France and north of Switzerland, is a valuable component of the EU
program. While Freiburg itself is not home to any European Union governing bodies, it is located in Germany, a key leader of the EU, and offers a home base location that students very much appreciate. Students expressed that they really enjoy coming “home” to Freiburg after the course-related excursions, because it is easy to navigate and not as overwhelming as some of the larger cities they visit. In short, Freiburg is small enough to be manageable for students, but large enough to have sufficient co-curricular and extra-curricular activities to give them opportunities to connect with the local community and keep them busy.

In this report the Review Committee intends to highlight its assessment of the many strengths of the EU program, including areas in which the program truly exemplifies “standards of good practice,” and to note several key areas that should be further developed to improve upon what is already an extraordinary study abroad program.

**Observations**

**Predeparture Information**

IES Chicago provides essential predeparture information about the academic program, travel and arrival information, medical insurance, packing tips, etc. Predeparture information comes in the form of written information (without images) that students access on-line from their myIESAbroad portal. While the information seems thorough, it is quite dry and focuses on logistics and regulations more than on the value of the learning experience that students are about to embark upon or words of encouragement to allay predeparture nervousness. When the Committee asked students about the predeparture materials, students had no distinct impressions either positively or negatively and in some cases could not remember if they had read them.

During the review, it became apparent that IES predeparture materials do not conform to new standards on US campuses for self-identification of gender beyond the standard male/female designations.

The predeparture materials contain some basic information about culture, specifically differences between German and US culture, but the information was quite dry and limited in scope. It might be beneficial to include more detailed cultural information that will help students function in a culturally appropriate manner as soon as they arrive and help them realize that there will be cultural differences, even if subtle. For example, predeparture materials could include information about how university student life for German students differs from that of a US typical student, usage of informal versus formal “you” (du/Sie), notions of privacy/closed bedroom doors in university apartments, personal physical space, etc.

**Recommendations:**
- Consider presenting predeparture information in an interactive web-based format with more audio-visuals (such as video clips and voice overs) and perhaps include questions the students must respond to so that it is more engaging for students. (Images of student housing were specifically requested by past participants, as housing seems to be an area of confusion and anxiety for students prior to departure.)
• Examine IES admission, medical and other forms that students fill out and revise these forms to conform to new standards on US campuses for self-identification of gender beyond the standard male/female options.
• Consider enhancing the content in the predeparture materials about cultural and social differences between the US and Germany to help students think about what to anticipate and get excited about their experience abroad.

On-site orientation

The on-site orientation is held at the IES EU Center and lasts one week. Some of the orientation overlaps with the first week of the Integrative Seminar, which meets intensively for 20 hours to give students sufficient academic background for the first Course-Related Excursion. The information provided by the Director of Student Services and others at the on-site orientation is comprehensive and detailed, and the staff at the Center should be commended for their thoroughness in this area. Materials provided to students include professional handouts with detailed information about academic policies, housing policies, photos of residence halls, maps, and pictures of the housing tutors. A safety poster is given to each student with emergency contact information and detailed instructions about what to do if they need to see a doctor, what to take to medical visits, and the numbers to call for emergency services. Brochures produced by IES Chicago about Alcohol & Drugs abroad and Sexual Harassment are also provided. Students also receive contact information for LGBTQ support services in Freiburg. In addition, detailed information about cultural activities and things for students to do in their free time, such as hiking in the area and visits to neighboring towns, is also provided at orientation.

For intercultural communication preparation, the first of three CORE™ (Cultural Orientation and Re-entry Experience) meetings is held during the on-site orientation, and students reported finding it beneficial. The current racial tensions in the US and on US campuses, as well as debates within Europe regarding how to resolve the refugee crisis and the rise of right-wing nationalist parties, makes race and ethnicity topics of importance that could impact a student’s experience abroad.

Given the priority that US colleges and universities today place on creating a safe learning environment free of sexual harassment and gender-based incidents, and the extent to which the US Office of Civil Rights is monitoring this, it is important for US-sponsored study abroad programs to ensure that protocols for supporting students and reporting when Title IX incidents occur abroad align with current practices in the US, to the extent permitted by local law. Currently students attending the IES EU program are encouraged to report incidents to any staff member, but there is no formally-designated Title IX official(s) at the EU Center. Orientation information does not include detailed information about reporting procedures or the level of support that students can expect from IES (e.g. getting medical assistance, reporting to police authorities, issuing a “no contact order” if the accused is a fellow student) nor does it include specific information about how IES reports to home campuses.

Recommendations:
• Expand upon the information about how to report sexual assault and gender-based incidents, including the type of support the student should expect and how IES reports to home campuses.
• Even though race and ethnicity are highly sensitive topics in the German context, strive to find ways to reach out to students of color regarding particular
challenges they may face and to identify issues that may surface while living in Europe.

- Consider moving away from using paper materials during orientation except for key documents that students may need in an emergency while keeping the level of detail, either via an IES EU program website/Moodle or through a phone app.

**The Integrative Seminar and Elective Courses**

Overall the Review Committee was extremely impressed by the student-centered pedagogy and engaging teaching style employed by IES EU faculty. The Committee observed all four sections of the *Integrative Seminar* and one session each of 14 out of the 21 area studies elective courses. Faculty held students accountable for the readings (which they seemed to have done) and involved students in myriad exercises during class, including small group discussions and mini group presentations. They used visuals such as PowerPoint presentations and some faculty used team exercises where students had to use Moodle materials during the class.

An exceptional aspect of the IES EU program is the degree to which the outside teaching during the course-related excursions is integrated into the classroom experience of the *Integrative Seminar* course. In this regard the IES EU program exemplifies a standard of good practice. The Committee observed many classes the Monday after the entire group returned from the week-long *European Union Institutions* trip to Brussels and Paris. In the *Integrative Seminar* and in elective courses alike the faculty brought outside learning from the trip into class discussion related to, for example, presentations that the students had witnessed by the Turkish representative to the EU, the Flemish representative, and representatives of the European Council and European Commission.

The *Integrative Seminar* is a tightly woven course with essential experiential components taught by experienced faculty who were adept at creating a safe space for discussion. The Review Committee also noted that the faculty had learned students’ names and were skillful at drawing out students for discussion, including quieter students. Class atmosphere was largely positive—students seemed to like each other and were willing to engage in activities.

Faculty use the Moodle on-line classroom platform primarily to provide reading and other materials for their classes. Some instructors ask students to use Moodle to post blogs or reflections, or for on-line class discussions.

The means of assessment for IES EU courses usually includes a mid-term and final exam as well as a significant amount of written work and in-class presentations. In terms of the amount of writing required, one elective course asks students to complete five short essays (2-3 pages each) and another course requires two term papers (12-15 pages each).

Students expressed a high level of satisfaction and enthusiasm regarding the academic program. They were virtually unanimous in reporting that they were learning a great deal about the European Union, indeed, much more than they had expected. More than a few of them commented that the readings were more than they could possibly complete, and that they needed to prioritize readings just as they do on their home campuses. While some students mentioned that the course
demands were less than at their home institutions, it was not exactly clear what they meant by this.

The required *Integrative Seminar* is taught at the 200, 300, and 400 levels by various faculty. Students are placed in the appropriate level according to their academic background in Political Science and International Relations. This system seems to work well. Most area studies courses are taught at the 300 level, with a few 200-level courses. As some students attending the program do not have background in Political Science, it was noted by program staff that it is important to have some 200-level Political Science courses offerings.

The fact that all students are required to take the *Integrative Seminar* and to participate in the three course-related excursions embedded in the Seminar, as well as taking a German language course, creates a common educational experience for all students. This helps unite them around a shared learning goal and focuses the program around a clear academic mission. The Committee found this clear focus to be a strength of this program, which distinguishes it from many other study abroad programs. At the same time, the three elective area studies courses (and the choice to participate in one of three different Member States course-related excursions) gives students flexibility and choice to customize somewhat their individual plans of study. In short, the program strikes a good balance between common curriculum and customized studies.

Elective courses are offered in the fields of Cultural Studies, Economics, Environmental Studies, History, International Business, International Relations, Political Science, and Sociology. One of the charges to the Review Committee was related to curricular design—how to create a nimble curriculum for a program that focuses on the European Union, an ever-evolving political body with new burning issues that can surface at any time. For the most part, the Committee found that the program is already rather nimble, as the *Integrative Seminar* content and the elective course offerings taught by adjunct faculty allow the Center to adjust curricular content as the issues of the times require.

The Committee does however have suggestions for augmenting elective offerings in two specific fields—International and European Human Rights, and Economics. Due to the polarizing debate that the Syrian refugee crisis has created and the questions it raises about the moral responsibility of states, the Committee believes that students interested in social justice issues may be attracted to the EU program and therefore adding human rights elective courses might be desirable.

Additionally, the Committee believes that there is room for growth within the Economics electives. The program already offers three Economics or Economics/International Business courses that all have a prerequisite of introductory micro- and introductory macroeconomics. Historically the IES EU program attracted a higher percentage of Economics majors, but today just 18% of the program participants major in Economics. Because it is not easy for Economics majors to find upper-division courses taught in English in a non-English-speaking country, the Committee believes it would be beneficial to offer at least one 400-level Economics course geared toward Economics majors with a prerequisite of intermediate microeconomics and intermediate macroeconomics. By doing so, IES could help fill a need that seems not to be filled by other providers.
The Review Committee notes that the EU Center is among the IES Centers that offer the leadership course, *Leading Across Cultures*. A member of the Review Committee observed this course, and considered it to be very well taught. The course also contains many elements that are common in leadership courses in the U.S.

Aside from issues related to the German language program (to be addressed in the next section), the Review Committee heard from students about just two relatively minor issues related to the academic program. The issues are the weekly schedule and the attendance policy.

IES EU program classes are scheduled Monday through Friday, with a few classes scheduled on Wednesday mornings, but with Wednesday afternoons reserved for course field trips and for make-up classes when a faculty member must reschedule. This weekly schedule leaves students with no three-day weekends for travel; only students who are not enrolled in one of the classes that takes a course-related excursion on a Friday to Geneva have an extra Friday during the term for travel. Students expressed frustration about having mandatory Friday classes, especially because, depending on which elective courses they are enrolled in, they may not have many Wednesday afternoon excursions. In their eyes, it means that their opportunity to explore Europe independently for a long weekend is given up for a free afternoon in the middle of the week. According to the Center Director, various models for the schedule have been tried and this one seems to work the best given all of the various facets of this complex program.

The second issue is regarding the attendance policy, which reads in part: “Any unexcused absence will incur a penalty of 3% on your final grade.” Students believe that this policy is too harsh as it does not allow for “human error” (such as a student who simply forgot to go to class one time) without a student incurring a significant grade penalty. IES EU staff expressed that this is an on-going complaint, but that they have experimented with various models and the current policy contributes to the strong academic culture of the program. It should be noted too that some of the students commented with some pride that this program is a serious academic program that requires them to work hard, which they contrasted to other programs that they heard about from college classmates.

Finally, one faculty member reported problems in the fall semester due to strong opposing opinions between undocumented (DACA) students and others in one of his classes. University campuses in the United States are currently facing a number of challenges: student protests about racism and racial inclusion; concern about sexual harassment/sexual assault and how colleges create a safe environment for all; the balance between freedom of speech and “trigger alerts,” etc. Communication about these issues between IES Chicago and the IES Centers abroad is vital, so that staff and faculty overseas are not blindsided by current issues on US campuses that spill over into study abroad classrooms. Credit should be given to the IES EU staff who responded promptly by integrating more ice breaker/bonding activities into orientation this semester to help foster respectful relationships among students. In addition, Center Director Ulli Lohrmann holds a meeting with all faculty at the start of each semester where relevant topics affecting US students are presented. In Fall 2015 this included the IES sexual harassment policy, the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (anti-bribery law), and the IES whistleblower policy.
Recommendations:

- Consider the addition of a course or courses about international and European human rights. (Details about this recommendation are included in the addendum at the end of this report.)
- Reach out to Economics departments at member institutions to find out what kinds of courses would be appealing to their majors, such as a 400-level Economics seminar for students who need upper-division Economics credits to fulfill major requirements.
- Offer students two long weekends (weekends without Friday classes) in order to permit students to travel independently Friday through Sunday at least twice during the semester. Announce these dates early enough in the semester so that students can plan their travels accordingly.
- Communicate clearly to students prior to departure that independent travel should be scheduled to take place primarily during breaks or after the end of the term.
- Consider modifying the attendance policy with a less harsh penalty, perhaps just 1-2% penalty for the first unexcused absence and 3% for the second and subsequent absences.
- To the extent possible, IES Chicago should continue to find ways to help faculty at their Centers be aware of sensitive issues that might result in classroom conflicts among students from the US while abroad and how to create a safe space for class discussion such as the “Current Issues in Higher Education” webinar that the Committee understands Academic Vice President Michael Steinberg offered recently to Center Directors.

Course-Related Excursions

The course-related excursions are the stars of the curriculum on the EU program and deserve much praise. The three major course-related excursions are imbedded into the Integrative Seminar course that all students take. Each trip is packed with talks by guest speakers, briefings at governmental organizations, and visits to important historical and cultural sites. Scheduled activities are related not only to the Integrative Seminar content but to the other area studies courses as well. The ways in which these trips—which provide a first-hand window into the workings of the European Union—are woven into the curriculum of the program and into the capstone Model EU simulation should be considered a “best practice” model for blending formal academic study with experiential learning.

In order to facilitate immersion and ease of travel during the course-related excursions, students are divided into groups. This means that with the 81 students attending the program in Spring 2016, there were three groups that averaged 27 students each. Each group typically stays in a different hotel, has its own bus for transportation and is accompanied by two IES EU Center staff—one faculty member and one staff member. For the EU Institutions trip the student groups are divided by academic discipline—Economics, Political Science and International Relations. The specific visits that each group makes in Brussels and Paris are customized according to the group’s primary field of interest. In addition, each individual student’s itinerary is customized further according to the elective courses in which the student is enrolled. For example, this semester students in IR 357 Reshaping the International Order: Power, Conflict and Change in the Black Sea Region attended a visit to the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the EU, and students in EC/IB 342
Finance and Banking in the EU attended a visit to the German Savings Banks Association in Brussels.

Karin Hunn, who organizes the course-related excursions, is to be commended for her masterful ability to organize the excursions, which are very complex logistically with a customized itinerary for every student on the program. It goes without saying that higher student enrollments impact considerably the time required for the logistics and individualized itineraries.

During the course-related excursions students may be asked to brief others in the group on topics of their individual expertise (based on research they have done for their courses or the role they are playing in the model EU). The accompanying faculty member leads small-group reflective sessions during each trip. The faculty member also prepares a written evaluative review of all of the speakers on the trip for quality control purposes and this report is shared with the Center staff to inform decisions about which presenters will be included in future excursions. The report also enables all faculty (even those who did not accompany the students on the trip) to prepare and facilitate debriefings in classes upon the students’ return.

The Review Committee’s visit occurred immediately after the EU Institutions Course-Related Excursion to Brussels and Paris, and the energy and enthusiasm from students about what they learned during that trip was palpable. It was clear that the students really appreciated and valued what they got out of this part of the program. Moreover, during its class observations the Committee noted that faculty did an excellent job debriefing with students about the positions and content of various presenters they had seen on the trip. However, there are some minor adjustments that may need to be made. Some students reported that they felt that speakers did not always offer them new information, and that speakers were sometimes not aware that the students had already studied the European Union. It was explained that some speakers, such as those provided by governmental organizations, may deliver a “canned” presentation that cannot take the previous experience of the students into account.

In addition, some students expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of reflection required as part of the course-related excursions. Each student participates in at least one reflection session during each of the three course-related excursions for the Integrative Seminar and, then again, during the first class sessions upon return to Freiburg, faculty in various courses elicit reflections from students about specific speakers. Some students resented the fact that the time spent on a reflection session on the road reduced free time in each city. One faculty member explained that for the group he led, he had changed the reflection activity during the course-related excursions from a group discussion to a written blog post and this was successful.

Recommendations:
- Whenever possible, inform speakers on excursions that students have been studying the European Union and that they do not need to cover “the basics.”
- Do not set due dates for papers or assignments so that students are expected to submit work the day after returning from a Course-Related Excursion.
- Use best practices for reflections around the course-related excursions to maximum efficiency and to help students understand the value of the reflective exercises.
German Language Courses and Curriculum

Members of the Review Committee observed multiple sections of the EU German language courses at the 100, 200, 300, and 400 levels, and had numerous encounters with language faculty and students. The Committee was impressed that four levels of German language are offered even when enrollments are small (e.g., 2 students in the 400-level course in the term of the review). The generally small class size allows for maximum interaction and individual attention. In the classroom, teachers aimed to create an engaging but serious academic climate. Teachers are devoted to achieving high learning goals.

Students who are registered for the EU program take an online German language placement test predeparture. This allows the Center to make initial class/language level assignments. While students may change sections if they are placed inappropriately, the Committee was informed that German level and section changes, post-arrival, are minimal.

The majority of German language instruction happens in the classrooms in immersive small classes, ranging from 2 to 14 students. In Spring 2016, approximately 60% of students placed at the beginning German language level, and the EU Center offered four parallel sections of German 101 for these students. All the students appeared to be quite engaged during class time. The German language teachers were approachable but contact with students outside class time is limited due to the status of the faculty, which is described below.

Some courses use the location of Freiburg well through excursions and occasional meetings in cafes. Participation in cultural and linguistic events enhances students’ learning experience. For example, Committee members accompanied German language faculty and students on a cultural excursion one evening, an author’s reading at a cultural center outside Freiburg. The event was very successful as a course activity and the 300-level students who attended indicated that they understood a good deal of the talk.

Overall, students whom the Committee encountered on the EU program showed an impressively high level of interest in and commitment to language learning.

Some general observations regarding the German language courses:

- The German language faculty consists of freelance part timers who have little time to spend with students outside of class; office hours are effectively nonexistent, and students report that their contact with faculty is mostly by email.
- In general, the language curriculum seems to operate separately from the content courses and should be better integrated, especially at the 300 and 400 levels, where this is linguistically feasible.
- The Committee did not observe any use of technology during the visits to the German language courses. Instead, faculty used whiteboards, paper handouts, group-work, or discussion. The choice of using technology in the classroom should be left to choice of individual instructors.
- It seems that Moodle is not used much for the language courses. Its major use seems to be as a communication tool and as a system to share course materials.
• The three long periods of student absences, during the integrated course-related excursions, are an undeniable challenge to the language instructors and to language learning as they impact study routines and ongoing learning.

• A direct comparison shows that the semester hours for German language instruction on the EU program are only insignificantly fewer than those at a typical U.S. sending school, i.e., the IES guidelines and learning goals should be manageable.

Recommendations:
• Create a centrally-coordinated curriculum, which would enhance the overall quality of the German language instruction.
• Provide for a language faculty retreat to develop coherent plans for activities, such as for outings into the community, including adaptation of textbook units on giving directions, on specific local foods, on local leisure activities, on clothing, or on school systems.

Faculty

(See observations and recommendations regarding German language faculty in the German Language Courses and Curriculum section above.)

In Spring 2016, 18 faculty members were teaching a total of 21 area studies courses on the EU program. All faculty members were academically credentialed with an MA or PhD. According to their biographies, most faculty indicated that they were active in their chosen fields, and the courses taught by each faculty member matched the individual’s expertise. Some faculty have academic appointments at the Albert-Ludwigs-University Freiburg, while others have backgrounds as academic researchers or work in business. Some faculty members were young and may benefit from faculty development and/or mentoring by more experienced faculty.

Recommendations:
• Provide faculty development and/or mentoring for faculty who are young or who have less previous teaching experience.

Internships

On the IES Abroad EU program, credit-bearing internships are available in either Freiburg or Brussels but only for students enrolled in the spring term program, as the internships begin when the spring courses conclude. At the end of the spring term, all internship students attend the first three weeks of the Internship Seminar course in Freiburg that covers intercultural communication, the culture of work in Europe, etc. Students who have been selected for internships in Brussels then travel to Brussels for their internships. Students who have been placed in internships in Freiburg may be in their placements for four to six weeks, depending on the placement. Students participating in internships in Brussels work at their internships for four weeks and return to Freiburg in early July to complete the work of the Internship Seminar alongside the students who have done internships in Freiburg. Examples of recent internships in Freiburg include international businesses, a bookstore, and the Carl Schurz Haus, a non-profit promoting German-American understanding. The internships in Brussels are with Members of Parliament (MEPs) for the European Parliament. In the term of the review, eight students planned to intern in Brussels and seven in Freiburg.
The on-site coordinator in Brussels identifies placements for students, assists them to integrate, and provides important information about European Parliament meetings and activities for students. Students on Brussels internships are placed in the office of a Member of Parliament (MEP), whose office usually includes one or two assistants and may include other interns. However, an IES student who is interning may or may not be given any specific tasks to perform by the MEP or his/her staff because, in reality, their assistance may not be needed. In addition, a student on an internship with an MEP may not have a designated place to work in the MEP’s office, but may, instead, be expected to work in a communal work space in the library that is shared by many interns, assistants, and others. The IES on-site Brussels coordinator works with students to identify meetings and activities in which they can participate and expects them to take advantage of networking and independent learning opportunities in lieu of specific internship tasks.

Based on our conversations with the EU staff and comments from past participants, the Freiburg internships seem to run quite smoothly. The majority of internship placements in Freiburg require intermediate- to advanced-level German language skills. While students often assume that international business is conducted in English, the reality is that German is the language of the work place in Freiburg and students who wish to work in business in Freiburg need to be fairly proficient in German. One exception to this is the Carl-Schurz-Haus, which can take students who have lower German language skills. For Spring 2016, the EU Center had seven students who were pursuing internships in Freiburg after the program. The EU staff, especially the Academic Dean, know all of the placement locations in Freiburg and have good personal relationships with the organizations. This allows them to find placements that closely meet students’ goals.

Recommendations:

- Explain more clearly in pre-departure materials and on-site that placements in internships in Brussels are very limited and competitive, and that placements require a high degree of independence and self-motivation.
- Explain more clearly in pre-departure materials and on-site that the chance of obtaining an internship in Freiburg is much higher if a student has relatively strong German language skills.

Cultural, Social and Academic Activities

Program evaluations show that students are sometimes disappointed with the level of cultural immersion that they were able to achieve in Freiburg. This is especially true of the students who did not connect well for linguistic or other reasons with their German or international student suitmates. Due to the academic calendar of this program, including the three week-long course-related excursions, the EU students never have more than two or three consecutive weeks in Freiburg. This naturally inhibits making local friends and participating in on-going social activities.

Nonetheless, the EU program does a good job making students aware of possibilities for cultural immersion. The Center uses bulletin boards in the Center and emails students to inform them of local activities and programs. The lobby of the Center space holds a large screen that displays information about Center and local events. Most faculty are associated with the Albert-Ludwigs-University Freiburg and local organizations, and they provide information and access to students about activities for cultural immersion. Some students have joined local sports clubs/teams on their own.
With respect to German language teaching, opportunities for students to get involved in local institutions for additional linguistics practice is done in an ad hoc manner, depending on individual instructors’ initiatives.

Examples of cultural and social activities include:

- Students can sign up for “tandem” language partners with the intention to speak English half of the time and German half of the time. This is available through the University and students are matched according to common interests.
- The EU program offers a “learn to ski class” that takes place in the Black Forest and Alps, and is led by a faculty member who is an avid skier. German graduate student Housing Tutors go along as helpers.
- The Carl-Schurz-Haus, a German-American association located very near to the EU Center, offers students the opportunity to participate in Inside America (formerly called Rent An American), a volunteer activity that links students to local public school classes where the students can talk about American culture.
- During the semester of the review, students reported to the Review Committee that at least one played pick-up basketball at the University, one joined a municipal lacrosse team, and another joined a local soccer team.

Recommendations:

- Encourage students to sign up for tandem partners and other immersive activities very soon after arrival in Freiburg.
- Assign the language coordinator to develop more systematic relationships with institutions in the community that can provide students with opportunities to practice German language.
- Continue to encourage students to purchase the RegioKarte, a transportation pass that allows them to travel free of charge by train to neighboring towns and other regional destinations during non-peak hours.
- Make clear to students the process for volunteering with Inside America and how often they are likely to be asked to present in schools; ask an IES Center staff member to contact Carl-Schurz-Haus on behalf of the students if students are waiting a long time for follow up.

**Re-entry into Home Culture and Home Institution**

IES appears to do a very good job with preparing students for the cultural adjustment of re-entry into the home culture through the CORE™ program.

**Administrative Staff**

The administrative staff, like the faculty overall, are well qualified and committed to ensuring that students have a first-rate experience abroad. Two key staff members have many years of experience: Ullrich Lohrmann, the Center Director, and Karin Thomas, the Director of Student Affairs. Both have more than 20 years of experience working with IES programs. Virtually all administrative staff have had considerable sojourns studying/living abroad (in the US, UK, Ireland and Australia) and many have engaged in research relevant to intercultural/cross-border issues such as Karin Hunn and Larissa Mogk who have both engaged in research pertaining to Turks in Germany.
The EU Center Director, Ullrich Lohrmann, holds a PhD in history from the Albert-Ludwigs University Freiburg, spent one year at Oxford, and studied in Virginia during high school. Dr. Lohrmann has an exceptional commitment to the EU program, having worked with the program since its early years when it was part of the IES Freiburg program. He helped develop the features of the program, and is a passionate and dedicated advocate for it. Mr. Lohrmann was enthusiastic about the program review, seeking peer-review feedback to continue to improve the program. He is also continually thinking about how to adjust the curriculum of the EU programs to reflect the rapidly changing realities of the EU, aiming to both retain a focus both on the history and fundamental organizational structures of the EU and finding ways to incorporate the extraordinary current policy issues of the EU.

The Director of Student Services, Karin Thomas, has many years of service with IES and is competent across the spectrum of student affairs issues. Karin is the major student services person for the Center, which had 81 enrolled students in the term of the review. The impression of the Review Committee is that this job is too big for one person as student numbers grow, and only works when everything is going well, with no emergencies. Karin gets some assistance from Melanie Witt, a young part-time staff member who assists in various capacities with customized programs, IT, etc. In addition, the Housing Tutors are local graduate students hired by IES to live in the residence halls and assist IES students. They help with housing check-in and check-out, and are on the front line with student issues, such as when a student has a medical problem after business hours.

The Academic Dean, Almut Meyer zu Schwabedissen, who holds a MA degree in Political Science and in German as a Foreign Language from the Technische Universität Dresden, is energetic and enthusiastic, and demonstrated a commitment to academic excellence. The Academic Dean has a broad range of responsibilities: working with the Center Director to develop curricula; hiring and mentoring faculty; working with faculty and Karin Hunn to coordinate the course-related excursions; assisting faculty with Moodle; student advising; monitoring class attendance; and managing internships. The Academic Dean also takes a large responsibility for the German language courses, in spite of the presence of a language coordinator.

The Field Studies Manager, Karin Hunn, has a very complicated portfolio of academic travel throughout the semesters and the summer sessions. This position takes on extra work as the number of students grows, increasing the number of cohorts on course-related excursions.

The other staff who work with academic affairs and with customized programs have been employed at the Center for a shorter time, but they also appeared to be very committed to the program and were totally engaged and helpful.

The Review Committee observed the interaction of staff with students in numerous contexts, and witnessed the fact that staff are available to students throughout the day, as students spend almost all of their days within the Center’s facility. In conversations with students, they were complimentary of the staff and the ways in which they were supported. The staff is organized to cover all of the needs of the Center: academic affairs, student affairs, customized programs, IT, and bookkeeping.
Recommendations:
- Continue to offer professional development opportunities for administrative staff, such as Student Services workshops, so that student support staff can learn from their colleagues at IES Centers.

(See also recommendations under the German Language Courses and Curriculum and the Faculty sections above.)

Center Facilities

The EU Center facility is a major asset of this program. The Center is located in an attractive historic residence, Villa Gleichenstein, near the central areas of the Albert-Ludwigs-University Freiburg and a short walk from the quaint, historic town center. It is located within a walk, a bike ride, or a tram ride to the various student housing locations. From the Center, students can easily get to the Mensa, a spacious, modern student dining facility, and to the new University library, which are one and two blocks away respectively. The IES EU Center is also just a two-minute walk from the IES Freiburg Center (home to the IES Freiburg Language and Area Studies and the IES Freiburg Environmental Studies and Sustainability programs).

The EU Center has been totally refurbished according to the needs of the Center. While maintaining the historic charm of the building, the space is built with the modern amenities needed to accommodate a study program, including excellent IT infrastructure. In spite of significant student traffic, the Center has been exceptionally well maintained.

On the main floor, the Center space provides private offices for the Center Director and for the Director of Student Affairs, while other staff share offices. There is a reception area for students to approach staff for support.

Students have the second floor dedicated to their needs: a large student lounge; a generous computer room with desktop computers and connections to use laptops; a resource/library center that also contains study areas; and a student kitchen area where the student council maintains a system to make coffee and tea available to students.

The five classrooms are all located on the third floor. Members of the Review Committee attended classes in all of the classrooms. They contained flexible furniture arrangements, which allow for variable teaching approaches (most classes sit in a circle to facilitate discussion); excellent newly-upgraded IT equipment permitting easy access to the internet and PPT presentations; and good acoustics. The program staff’s attention to detail and responsiveness is exemplified in things such as the special sound absorbing boards on the walls of the classrooms that were recently installed because faculty and students had reported that it was difficult to hear.

Physically disabled students can be accommodated on the main floor of the facility by an outside elevator that permits access to the facility, handicapped restrooms on the main floor, and a conference room that can be used for handicapped-accessible classes. The Center also provides a small room in which faculty can meet with students.
Freiburg is known as the “Green City,” and the Center is operated consistently with the exceptional sustainability approach for which Freiburg is known.

In summary, the EU Center space is architecturally pleasing and appears to meet the academic and staffing needs of the Center very well. The members of the Review Committee concluded that it was one of the best study abroad facilities that they have ever visited. In terms of physical space capacity, the Center Director commented that they believe their maximum capacity at this Center is about 100 students.

Perhaps most importantly, the students uniformly expressed how much they liked the Center space with the only downside being that it is so nice (especially the good WiFi) that they spend too much time there!

Recommendations:
- IES should retain the EU Center space, given its excellent location and how well its amenities suit the academic and staffing needs of the program.

**Research and Learning Resources**

The library/resources center at the IES EU Center has a small, modest collection of physical books that are arranged by subject matter. These materials are used primarily by students as additional readings for their courses and as research resources for term papers. The resources in the library, being primarily in English, are also valued by faculty who teach at the Center. Students have access to electronic materials through local electronic library resources, through EBSCO databases, and through their home institutions’ electronic library resources. The students indicated that they rely primarily upon electronic sources for their coursework but the library/resource center is used occasionally.

The EU Center is open from 8:30 am to 8:00 pm Monday through Thursday and 8:30 am to 4:00 pm on Friday, so students have access to the resource center, computers and study areas during this time period. The IES EU program hires local graduate students as “evening staff” to staff the front desk of the Center from 5:00 to 8:00 pm.

Internet access and speed are excellent in the EU Center. The only problem noted was the slowness of opening digital materials on Moodle. The problem has been reported to the IES Chicago office, but the source of the problem has not been identified. In addition, students live in student housing that includes Internet access, so they can easily work through the Internet in their student living facilities.

Regarding course readings and other materials, they are typically posted in digital form on Moodle. The only consistently printed materials are printed worksheets for the German language classes.

In theory, the IES EU students have access to the modern, new library at the Albert-Ludwigs-University Freiburg that is a five-minute walk from the Center. IES EU students may utilize the materials within the university library and check out materials, if they register for a library account. However, one significant disadvantage with the new library is that the status of the IES EU students does not allow them access to the Wi-Fi at the library. As a consequence, students told us that
they rarely use the university library. The Center staff indicated that they are working on trying to change this status so that future IES EU students will be able to access WiFi in the university library.

Recommendations:
- Obtain access to Wi-Fi at the university library for the IES EU students.

**Housing**

Members of the Review Committee visited three of the four main housing options—Vauban, Berliner Allee and The Fizz. There were grocery stores within a few blocks of each of these residences and public transportation to the EU Center very close by. Most students ride the tram or bicycle to class but some walk. Students appeared to be very satisfied with the location of their housing.

In Spring 2016 the vast majority of the EU students (71 of the 81 students) were living with German and other international students in university student apartments (Wohngemeinschaft) that are managed by a higher education housing organization (Studentenwerk).

In general the students who the Committee spoke with reported being quite satisfied with their housing and seemed to have had good interactions with their suitemates.

Recommendations:
- To increase opportunities to meet local students, continue to invite Housing Tutors to join extracurricular activities such as optional ski trips and when possible invite tutors to join additional activities as appropriate.
- Convey more specific housing information to students before arrival.

**Health, Safety, and Risk Management**

Overall the Review Committee found that the IES EU program takes great care with health, safety and risk management issues, including providing sufficient staffing during course-related excursions. Freiburg is a small, relatively safe city that students seem to feel very comfortable in. When asked, students this semester did not report any specific concerns or shortcomings in the realm of health and safety.

IES requires that all students purchase medical insurance, currently from Cultural Insurance Services International (CISI). EU staff provide students with information about how to access the insurance during on-site orientation and goes the extra step of guiding them in how to submit receipts for insurance reimbursement. The EU staff provides students with lists of local doctors and an English-speaking psychologist who previous students have seen in the past. If a student has a health problem that requires someone to accompany them and it is after business hours, the Housing Tutors are available to assist and they notify the Center Staff of the issue.

IES also requires all students to have a mobile phone that is charged and has credit available at all times. The task of helping students to get mobile phones and to monitor that these are available when needed is significant, and involves the IES Center staff and the Housing Tutors. The importance of these phones was made clear at the time of the attacks in Paris in November, 2015, when IES contacted students.
on all European programs to ensure that they were safe. The IES EU staff needed to call students one-by-one to check on their well-being.

The Paris incident also highlighted the importance of tracking student independent travel. Students who travel independently on the weekends and during breaks are expected to inform IES of their plans which Karin Thomas, Student Affairs Director, tracks in the event of an emergency. The IES EU Center has found that they are more likely to get a nearly 100% response rate when they ask students to fill out a travel itinerary for the weekend during the Integrative Seminar Friday classes, rather than relying on the students to enter the information on their own using IES’ electronic tracker system. The paper itineraries are then scanned and sent to all IES EU staff so that all staff have access to knowing where students are.

The EU staff expressed appreciation for the IES student services protocols and support structures provided by IES Chicago. The level of professional support provided by Chicago in the student services area appears to be a source of reassurance and alleviates some burden on local staff.

Recommendations:
- Encourage students to keep their cell phones on and active during emergencies because IES will send an SMS to each student. Use a group SMS system if possible, to broadcast a group message and streamline the work of IES EU staff.
- Continue to provide detailed information to students at orientation about how to access medical care and what to do in an emergency and continue to post this electronically on the relevant EU Moodle page.

Moodle

Students reported that Moodle has been primarily used by faculty to post assignments and articles, and by students to submit assignments. Students had very mixed reviews about the usefulness and user-friendliness of Moodle, depending on what they used on their home campuses. Based on our conversations with the Academic Dean, it seems that the Center staff could use assistance with training to use Moodle optimally, particularly the latest upgrade which has posed problems. Also, the comfort level with Moodle for faculty seemed to vary quite a bit. Additional training for faculty would be beneficial so that Moodle can be an efficient tool and not be perceived as a burden.

Recommendations:
- Provide more thorough and targeted training to EU staff and faculty for Moodle.

Summer Program

The Review Committee was charged with reviewing the Summer Program, but the Committee spent limited time on this because the summer term was not in session during our visit. The summer program follows closely the format of the regular semester programs. It includes the Integrative Seminar, elective area studies courses, and academic course-related excursions. Students take intensive German at the beginning of the program, as German language study is not required. Students live in the same student housing as those during the fall and spring term, and Center staff and faculty are those used for the regular semesters. The most significant issue the summer program seems to face is making a decision about whether or not to
travel to Turkey each summer, as part of the course-related excursions, due to security issues. In fact, during the Review it was decided that the summer program would not visit Turkey in 2016. Otherwise, no separate issues or challenges were identified with the summer program.

**Concluding Remarks**

The IES EU program is already a first-rate program that could reach even greater heights with adjustments as the Committee has noted above. The most critical recommendations are the following three: 1) resources for additional staff; 2) improvements to the German language program; and 3) reconceptualization of the Brussels internships.

Overall the IES EU program epitomizes best practices for study abroad in offering a program that has a clear academic focus/mission that is realized extremely well. It blends formal classroom learning with field experience and experiential learning to optimize in-depth learning about the European Union. The IES EU program employs exceptionally well-qualified faculty and staff who are devoted to student learning and safety. The success of this academic program could be discerned from the energy and passion that the students displayed about their study abroad experience and how engaged they were in their learning. The Committee members were heartened by the enthusiasm for German language, even among many of the students who had had no prior background, presumably because their exposure to international organizations through this program helped them see the value of being multilingual. And in terms of serving a greater purpose of higher education, the importance for undergraduates in the US to understand the EU could not be more relevant than it is today with the many burning issues (refugee crisis, economic recession, terrorism, Brexit etc.) that impact Europe, the United States and, indeed, the world.

And finally, Review Committee members extend a very warm and hearty thanks to Ullrich Lohrmann and the rest of the team at the IES EU Center in Freiburg as well as Nancy Kenyon and the IES Chicago staff for their hospitality, careful preparation, and support during the review process.