

New Seagoing Study-Abroad Program Has International Focus

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A new academic program allowing students to travel around the world on an ocean liner for a semester is set to embark next fall, giving students the opportunity to study alongside their peers from around the world.

Unlike studying abroad, taking to the sea for a semester affords students the opportunity to witness a variety of cultures, an experience the UC Berkeley-sponsored Scholar Ship program aims to enhance by creating an international student body on the ship, said John Lie, dean of the international and area studies department.

"The Scholar Ship represents a bold experiment in international and global education," Lie said.

The new program, for which UC Berkeley serves as the U.S. base, solicits students from all over the world to study for 16 weeks as they travel the world by ocean liner.


The cost of participating in the Scholar Ship program in the Fall 2007 semester is \$19,950. UC Berkeley resident undergraduates living in residence halls paid approximately \$12,654 each in expenses this semester.


Students in the Scholar Ship program are ineligible for state or campus financial aid, and can only receive aid from federal sources, said Jan Kieling, administrative director in the UC Berkeley study abroad office.

However, the campus does have five grants that cover the full cost of the program fee that UC Berkeley students are eligible to receive.

Organizers said they plan to outfit the ship to resemble a traditional college campus by providing activities, courses and student groups similar to what can be found at a school on land.

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Students will also be able to participate in both academic and recreational activities at the various ports, where the ship will stop weekly.

Unlike the University of Virginia-based Semester at Sea program established in 1963, UC Berkeley courses will be offered directly through the Scholar Ship and faculty will likely teach on the ship in the future, Kieling said.

The international composition of the student body, around which the program's academic and extracurricular structure will be based, makes it different from the traditional Semester at Sea program, Lie said.

"The intention is for there to be a smaller presence of Americans on the ship," Kieling said.

The Semester at Sea program also works to ensure an international experience by working with other universities at places the ship docks throughout the semester, said Lauren Heinz, spokesperson for Semester at Sea.

"We're very, very internationally focused," Heinz said. "We work with all kinds of international universities so that our students can interact with faculty and students from all over the world."

Regardless of the program students select when choosing to take to the sea, the experience of travelling throughout the semester is one that many said they chose to broaden their experience away from campus.

"I really wanted to go on Semester at Sea because the itinerary that was being offered ... was one that would allow me to travel in countries where I could gain perspectives that a traditional abroad program could not offer," said senior Jaclyn O'Mara in an e-mail. She traveled through the Semester at Sea program in fall 2005.

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