

# UC expands its overseas endeavors

## Foreign studies help ease enrollment crunch here

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The University of California is aggressively expanding its study-abroad program, with some officials dreaming of eventually sending most students to a foreign country for at least a semester.

That ideal, however, is far from reality. And it's not all about expanding cultural horizons. It's as much about freeing up housing on overcrowded UC campuses.

UC's system-wide Education Abroad Program hopes to triple participation within 10 years. The program has grown by about 15 percent over the past three years.

"It has literally taken off," said John Marcum, director of Education Abroad, which is based near the UCSB campus. He said he would like to see a majority of students take part in the program someday.

The program relies on cooperation with more than 130 foreign universities serving 2,700 UC students for at least a semester. Another 1,000 from other countries enroll at UC campuses.

Funding to expand the program abroad became available when a surge in enrollment taxed the UC system's ability to house all eligible students.

UCSB, for example, is nearly at its current capacity of 20,000 students. As a result of the crowding here and on other campuses, UC is turning to off-campus programs such as Study Abroad, a program in Washington, D.C., and satellite campuses, such as the UCSB center in Ventura.

And UC is expanding its reach with new programs in Europe, Asia and Latin America. In a London office building this fall, for example, up to 100 students will take courses in rooms rented by UC.

University officials hope to attract more students through a program that's available for a single semester rather than a year, as early as a student's sophomore year, rather than junior year. By the junior year, it can be more difficult to break away because of upper-division requirements for graduation.

"It's not as though we're creating a University of California there, but we are providing facilities to teach classes," Mr. Marcum said. "Will there someday be a UC campus in London? I don't know."

UC is also starting two new one-semester programs in Paris for about 100 students at American University. One will be available for those who aren't fluent in French but want to learn. And UC plans to purchase a building for its Casa de California in Mexico City. When opened in fall 2003, it will house research facilities and new classes for a one-semester

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# Program could ease crunch on campuses

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program of 100 students.

"If we could churn out hundreds more students who have a better understanding of Mexico, that would be great," said Barbara Jilkes, regional director for Education Abroad in Latin America and Spain.

Mr. Marcum calls the offerings in London, Paris and Mexico City the "great cities" programs, established at popular locations with enticing museums and other cultural attractions. "Having the skills, the language, the ability to deal with other cultures is vital for California to be competitive," he added.

There is one unknown — what impact Sept. 11 will have on enrollment outside the country.

Officials hope students will join out of a renewed desire to learn about other cultures.

"I think it should be almost required," said Andrew Radsch, who wants to work abroad after spending spring semester last year at University College in the Netherlands. Reading "On the Road" by Jack Kerouac inspired him to escape the "same old same old" of UCSB.

"It made me reevaluate my own culture and society. I had the realization that people, even if they're poor, they love their way of life, they don't



STEVE MALONE / NEWS-PRESS

**Education Abroad counselor Jennifer Merriss talks with UCSB junior Mike Hexter, right, as another adviser, Andrew Radsch, listens.**

necessarily want to come to the U.S." he said.

Education Abroad officials have a lot of work to do.

There were 137,272 undergraduate and 27,201 graduate students in the university system last school year, up from 118,106 and 26,094 in the 1994/95. Only 2,700 of those studied abroad.

For some, it's the cost. While UC fees are the same, there are airfare and living expenses to consider. Many programs are cheaper, but Tokyo is pricey and could exceed some financial aid limits.

There are some scholarship packages available, and Education Abroad is trying to offer more.

There are also GPA requirements that could be lowered. In addition, some students find it hard to fit the foreign courses into their study schedule. Science majors must take a series of classes that build on previous

knowledge; if they miss out on one, they could be held back for a year.

So the system is trying to coordinate better with foreign institutions, similar to the effort to coordinate with community colleges for transferable courses.

UC is trying to encourage students to use their time abroad to fulfill elective requirements. "I didn't need to take Milton, Chaucer and Shakespeare all in order," explains Jennifer Merriss, a senior literature major who spent last spring in Venice, Italy and now counsels students at UCSB.

The program also requires support from the student's department, and some faculty are more accepting than others.

"They should expect that their students are going to have that study abroad experience as part of the normal course of their education," said Mr. Marcum.

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