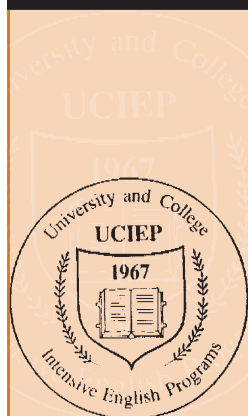


UCIEP's united front

MARY BROOKS, President of the Consortium of University and College Intensive English Programs (UCIEP), which represents state-sector English language provision in the USA, answers our questions about UCIEP's new promotional strategy and the consortium's position on Sevis.

Fact box



Full name: Consortium of University and College Intensive English Programs

Year established: 1967

No. of members: 69

Membership criteria: completed application questionnaire. If this report is approved, there is an on-site visit.

Government recognition: no

Agent workshops or fam trips: no

Code of Practice: we follow Nafsa guidelines

Association's main role: to maintain standards in intensive English programmes and to provide a forum for professional development. Advocacy has now become one of the main goals.

Association complaints procedure: Members can always speak with the Steering Committee.

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Q How has UCIEP evolved since its establishment to reflect the interests of its members?

A UCIEP began as a way to promote excellence in international English programme (IEP) administration, curriculum and instruction. Guidelines were established for member programmes, encouraging and sponsoring professional development. Communication among the members is also promoted. Now, advocacy is a major concern in the organisation. With new government regulations for international students, UCIEP must be proactive in understanding [changes in procedure], offering opinion to the State Department and Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS), and helping implement efficient laws.

Q How does UCIEP maintain its profile in the USA?

A We are an organisation of language programmes that work together and share ideas. We have been a rather quiet organisation, but now, we are doing more advertising through print media and via the Internet. We want students to be able to find us.

Q Do you work towards common goals with any other English language teaching associations?

A Many of our programmes are now CEA-accredited. We [also] work closely with the American Association of Intensive English Programs (AAIEP) in advocacy efforts. One of the main goals, as mentioned before, is advocacy. We intend to stay in touch with INS officials and provide input on pending regula-

tions. We need to support each other in this time of transition.

Q How does UCIEP assure the quality of its membership?

A In order to become a member, the programme must fill out an extensive questionnaire, and, on approval of the report, a site visit is conducted. Then, every five years, the programme must go through a self-study process. Representatives from each IEP must attend either the business meeting at Nafsa or the UCIEP conference [every year]. The UCIEP conference, [held] every February, is a wonderful way to work towards continuing professional development.

Q UCIEP has recently begun working to promote its name among agents. Why was this decided and how are you embarking on this initiative?

A The consortium decided to increase promotion during the past year. Previously, we have advertised mainly to attract other IEPs. Now, especially in view of September 11, we feel there is a need to show quality to potential students, embassies and advisers.

Q Are any members already gearing up to implementing the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (Sevis) and is the consortium involved in helping members introduce the Sevis technology and its processes?

A The membership is very aware of Sevis regulations. We send out information on

a regular basis to keep the membership updated. Members of UCIEP have also been involved in pilot programmes for Sevis. At our February meeting this year, we spent about two hours on the phone with INS officials in dialogue about Sevis. We will continue such efforts to work in collaboration with the INS.

Q What is UCIEP's position on Sevis and how do you think it will affect the US market?

A UCIEP is backing the implementation of the Student and Exchange Visitor Programme, which mandates the implementation of Sevis. We are quite willing to work with the government, and provide information and feedback about our students. We have always done this and will continue to do so in the future. We were relieved to hear that the tracking fee [of US\$100 to be paid by students] will not be [introduced] for the time being. This fee could create efficiency problems in processing students. Overall, we fear that anti-terrorist measures will target the wrong people. International students make up two per cent of the entire number of visitors to this country. They provide the basis of long-term friendship across nations and are a tremendous asset to the USA. There is also concern that science and research departments will be deprived of valuable talent from other countries. Ultimately, the vaunted openness of the American university system could be damaged. International exchange has been a shining success story for this country in the past; it is our necessary link to a peaceful future. International students are vital to national security.