Dear Readers,

Who are the most influential people in the CIEP students’ experience at UNI? I would bet that most of our students would name a CIEP instructor; many would name Sally Roos, the CIEP Student Services Coordinator, one of their CIEP conversation partners, or host families.

Since July of this year, I have been honored to serve as interim director of the CIEP. The best part of this new responsibility is to have the opportunity to work with a great staff that is passionate about what they do. During this past summer, instructors have been working very hard on various special assignments. Jaime Lyon and Emily Luftreit have been reviewing the reading curriculum in all seven levels of our program; Tom Riedmiller has created course materials to implement for online English courses; UNI MBA graduate Laura Sether, CIEP staffers Mike Williams and Caitlin Dau have been refining the Business English academic materials. Christina Tsimplides has started to develop curriculum guidelines and Lauren Rein has been reviewing students’ success rates and academic material efficiency for the assessment process. No doubt that everyone’s efforts will keep the CIEP in compliance with the Commission of English Accreditation (CEA), especially now that we are seeking reaccreditation. Mike Williams has been appointed the Self-Study Coordinator and with assistance from Petra Maier, Tom Riedmiller and Christina Tsimplides, will be writing the self-study report for the CEA during the academic year.

Of course, CEA reaccreditation motivates us to seek excellence through the review of our policies, procedures, language learning curriculum, and other areas. However, I believe that the CIEP staff focuses on best practices because they want to assure a world-class intensive academic English language learning service to our international students and partners. I often see instructors and other staff sharing and celebrating CIEP alumni who are accomplishing important milestones. This was the case when we learned about Redgie Blanco’s restaurant, “La Calle” or Leila Rod-Welch’s good work at the UNI Rod Library… Be sure to read about their stories in this issue.

Students successfully learning and using academic English as well as experiencing American culture is key at the CIEP. Sally Roos ensures that CIEP students receive countless opportunities to experience American culture. Sally plans and implements many cultural activities for the students: field trips, culture talks, conversation hours and many exchanges with people from the community that often develop into long-lasting friendships. This summer, Sally added a service-learning component to CIEP activities. Students had a chance to learn about volunteering and the rewarding experience of contributing their time, work, and knowledge to help others in need. In this issue, you will be able to see the students’ participation in these culture activities. The CIEP promotion team has also been working very hard this past summer. Cristy Steffen has been reviewing and improving the settings of our online application platform. She has also been working closely with our Latin America and Middle East recruiters in order to communicate and inform prospective students and partners about the program. Zach Wright, the CIEP Media and Video Assistant, has produced fine promotional videos that you will be able to watch in this publication.

We are also proud to showcase Dongyub Back who is an instructor from South Korea and currently enrolled in our program. Dongyub has been conducting research for the Young People’s Book and for the World Leisure Organization’s 50th Anniversary book.

All of these efforts at the CIEP are focused on quality of teaching and service. That is our mission as an institution and UNI unit. It’s true, too, that we not only expect our program to provide all of the resources for international students to learn and improve their academic English language skills, but also to help them grow as citizens of the world.

Carolina Coronado-Park
CIEP Interim Director
The Culture and Intensive English Program has many great partnerships with the different departments at the University of Northern Iowa, one of which is with the ROD Library. Conveniently situated in the middle of campus, the ROD Library offers a wide range of services to international and CIEP students.

Under the direction of Leila Rod-Welch the Outreach Services Librarian, the library just finished implementing a brand new CIEP Section in May 2014. Located on the third floor by the Youth Collection and Special Collections, the CIEP Section currently contains over 100 books and is constantly growing. In addition the section also has multiple computers available for students and study areas. Leila hopes the new section will help CIEP students to find the resources available to them quickly. She states, “I’m familiar with the challenges [international students] face because I was a CIEP student and an international student. I’m hoping that [the library staff] can help them to overcome their challenges and feel more comfortable at UNI.”

The new CIEP Section’s proximity to the Youth Collection is also a major benefit for English language learners. The Youth Collection offers a multitude of easily accessible books for varying levels of English proficiency. Another perk for students is the full time librarian nearby in the Special Collections section. This librarian is able to assist students with any questions they may have about the library.

The ROD library also gives a tour to all new CIEP students and offers one-on-one research consultation to assist students with the ever daunting college research paper. Students may also check out and use materials such as lockers, laptops, chargers, and flash drives. If students ever need a break from studying, the UNI Museum is now located on the first floor of the library and showcases a myriad of different cross-cultural artifacts including some specific to the history of UNI.

Another unique area of the library is the Tree Room nestled in the back of the Youth Collection. This room has a fun atmosphere and is a favorite of CIEP alumna Leila Rod-Welch who says it is one of the only places you can see green on campus even during the winter. Students can also check out the Special Collections for an interesting place to study. Dean of Library Services Chris Cox says it is a fantastic place to focus thanks to its rare materials and exceptionally comfortable furniture. Chris echoes Leila’s dedication to providing resources to all UNI and International students, “…the more that we can do to help [international students] by providing resources and services, the better!”

Thanks to the work of the great staff at the ROD Library, the number of exceptional services provided to CIEP and international students is always growing and improving. The partnership the ROD library has with CIEP is one that will continue to help our students learn and prosper at UNI.

Library Resources

LibGuide for CIEP Students
http://guides.lib.uni.edu/ciepguide
This guide provides many resources for CIEP students. It includes English learning materials to improve writing. It also includes practice materials for the TOEFL and IELTS exams. Finally, this page includes fun and easy reading books.

Lunch and Learn Program for International Students
During the academic year, the library provides several short programs for international students to help them learn more about resources available to them.

Library Instruction for CIEP Instructors
The library also offers library tours for all CIEP Instructors. These tours also include training on special equipment and tips on how to find teaching resources in the library.
Meet Dongyub!

Meet Dongyub! He is a current CIEP student from Jeonju, South Korea. He has been studying in CIEP this summer. Dongyub has previously earned a Bachelor’s degree in Sports Medicine and Korean Language Education, as well as a Master’s degree in Physical Education from Korea. The past few years he has spent his time teaching at an Alternative school in South Korea, but made the decision to uproot his life and to come study English.

“In Korea, English is important to get into a good school, to get a job, and for businesses to promote their company,” he said.

However, the primary motivation for Dongyub to learn English is so that he may broaden his teaching abilities, study and work in other countries, and continue working on the two books he previously began research for.

Dongyub discovered the CIEP through his work with Miklos Banhidi, who is a professor at the University of West Hungary. Dongyub had been working with a group of professionals on an ongoing research project through the World Leisure Organization. Their goal was to analyze 50 years and over 1,300 journal articles -- all written in English -- and publish an article about their research. UNI Professor, Dr. Christopher Edginton described Dongyub’s work on this project saying, “Dongyub was extensively involved in categorizing and analyzing those articles. He had to understand the material and how it fits in the framework of our field…. We all collaborated together. We had a great interplay of international groups.”

The article titled, “A Content Analysis of the World Leisure Journal 1958-2012” has now been published in the World Leisure Journal [56(3) p 1-19]. The others that contributed to the article include: Edginton, Miklos Banhidi (University of West Hungary), Abubakarr Jalloh (UNI Doctoral Student, Sierra Leone), Rodney Dieser (UNI Professor), and Nie Xiafei (UNI Master’s student, China).

After completing CIEP, Dongyub will continue research for The Young People’s Book on Leisure and for the World Leisure Organization’s 50th Anniversary book.

So far, Dongyub said that the CIEP has really helped him improve his listening, speaking, and pronunciation skills. CIEP classes have challenged him to concentrate more on the details as he studies, because he didn’t have to as much when he studied in his native language.

Dongyub has also been active in a variety of CIEP events, and recalls the trip to St. Louis as one of his favorite memories of his time here so far. He was awed by the St. Louis Arch and how much attention to detail the construction of it must have called for. In Korea, Dongyub enjoyed his home city’s old and traditional architecture, as well as its calm lifestyle. However, he also really loves the openness of the Iowa sky. “It is so high and clean,” he said.

Dongyub also loves the barbecues here, because they are somewhat similar to Korean food. He spends his free time studying at the park or relaxing, and going to the WRC to play soccer, swim, or climb the rock wall. After Dongyub leaves the US, he dreams of opening his own school in Asia or Africa! But for now, he is enjoying his time to study and have new experiences here in CIEP.
CIEP ALUMNI

Redgie Blanco

Redgie Blanco came from Venezuela to study at the University of Northern Iowa and after he finished the Culture and Intensive English Program in 2000, he enrolled at the Leisure Services department, getting a degree with an emphasis in Tourism. Now Redgie is the owner of La Calle (Meaning 'Street' in Spanish), a Latin American Bistro on College Hill in Cedar Falls.

By Hilda Betancort, CIEP Marketing Assistant

What did you do after you completed CIEP?
After the CIEP, I enrolled at UNI in the Leisure Department and earned my degree in Leisure Services with an emphasis in tourism. Right now, I own a restaurant here on College Hill in Cedar Falls and we are really popular nowadays!

How did the CIEP program impact your life?
The CIEP program impacted me in many ways: culturally, professionally, and personally, of course! CIEP gave me the opportunity to work in the field that I loved, tourism. Now, my education has given me the opportunity to open my own restaurant and know this great language, which is English.

What would you consider to be your greatest accomplishment since graduating from CIEP?
Coming here, learning the culture, continuing to learn the language because every day I continue to learn a little bit as I was taught in the CIEP. There is a continuous learning in any language and the CIEP program opened my eyes to continue pushing the limits and learning more and more about the culture and the language.

Do you recommend the CIEP to others?
I do highly recommend the CIEP program to anybody. It opened doors for me to become a great professional and learn about my culture and other cultures around the world.

What is your favorite memory at UNI? What is your advice for new students?
There are way too many great memories to choose from! Fortunately there are too many to list! I think you have to come in and experience all that you can. Come with an open mind and experience CIEP for yourself because it will give you the opportunity to have those memories for the rest of your life.

Watch the video interview with Redgie Blanco, owner of La Calle, by clicking here!

Above: CIEP Alumn, Redgie Blanco, stands outside his new restaurant, La Calle, a Latin American Bistro.

Right: La Calle’s menu features flavors of Latin America with gourmet burgers and hot dogs.

Bottom: La Calle is located on College Hill in Cedar Falls, Iowa. For more information, visit: www.facebook.com/lacallefood
Conversation Hour
On June 11th, we kicked off the summer with our first Conversation Hour! Every Wednesday, CIEP students gathered with a group of local volunteers to practice their conversational English for an hour together. The small group discussions allow for CIEP students to gain an American perspective, and also allow the volunteers to hear an international perspective on a variety of topics.

Summer Barbeque
After the first week of classes, we had a barbeque! New students met current students and enjoyed grilling, a game of ultimate Frisbee, and watching the beginning games of the World Cup.

Sports Activities
Every Wednesday night this summer, students gathered to play sports. The favorites throughout the summer were basketball, soccer, and volleyball.

Trip to St. Louis
June 21st - 22nd was dedicated to our big summer trip! We travelled from Cedar Falls to St. Louis, Missouri, and spent two days exploring the city. Students visited the City Museum, the Old Courthouse, the famous St. Louis Arch, Forest Park, and the St. Louis Zoo.

CIEP Summer Activities
In addition to the events listed here, students had the opportunities to participate in class exchanges, social gatherings, and service-learning opportunities. To see more photos from these events, visit our Facebook page at: https://www.facebook.com/uniciep

Volunteering Day
Putting what they learned into practice, students gathered at the Wesley Foundation for the first volunteer opportunity of the summer. They made small projects to help out the Waterloo Grout Museum and New Aldaya in Cedar Falls.

Salvation Army Diversity Day
As one of the last volunteering events of the summer, students were able to prepare something to share about their culture with the families at the Salvation Army’s “Diversity Day.”

Community Meal
Another opportunity for the students was to help make and serve a meal at the Catholic Worker House in Waterloo. Students donated ingredients for a spaghetti dinner, cooked the meal, and served it!

Piano Bar at New Aldaya
The Piano Bar at New Aldaya was another unique opportunity for students to engage with the local community. They served food and drinks to the men and women living at New Aldaya while practicing their conversational English.

4th of July Fireworks
The fireworks display in Waterloo on July 5th was a great memory for many students. They got to ride in a yellow school bus and take in the sights of a small-town Iowa fair atmosphere.

Culture Talk: Volunteering
To introduce CIEP’s Summer Service-Learning Activity Program, two volunteers from the community, Allan Stalnaker and Laura Folkerts, presented a Culture Talk about volunteering. Students were able to gain a basic understanding of what volunteerism looks like in America and in our local community, as well as why people volunteer, and the types of volunteer opportunities that exist.

Culture Talk: Independence Day
Throughout the summer, we continued to have Culture Talks. To help students understand Independence Day, Bill Teaford gave a speech about the meaning of July 4th and how Americans celebrate gaining independence.

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To see the Fall Social & Cultural Activities, visit: www.uni.edu/ciep/calendar_activities
When Petra Maier was ten years old, she was given the choice between studying two languages. She chose English for fun and enjoyment, and she never looked back.

“I had a wonderful teacher!” said Petra. “She basically made it happen, so I did enjoy learning English.”

English became her favorite subject in high school and her major along with History as she went on to study at Palacky University in the Czech Republic. Her plan to become a teacher of English as a foreign language changed through a series of events, starting with a study abroad experience in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Petra was working on a thesis about immigrant women and knew she could find the resources she needed at the National Czech and Slovak Museum and Library in Cedar Rapids. She studied as an international student at Mount Mercy College for a year with a Merrill Scholarship and volunteered at the museum and the Catherine McAuley Center in her free time. Toward the end her stay, she started to fall in love with an American man, Andrew Maier, and she decided that she wanted to come back to Iowa.

Petra remembers her past and can understand the challenges of being an international student. She understands concerns about accent, shyness, homework load, and homesickness. She gives her empathy for students on a regular basis. She understands the difficulty in balancing work and play. Her advice to current CIEP students is: “...focus on your studies and learning English, but at the same time, don’t isolate yourself from others. And enjoy your experience here in the U.S. At UNI, make new friends, participate in activities, and have fun at the same time.”

During the past seven years, Petra has adapted to many changes in her personal and professional life. As a professional, she has seen the program improve tremendously because of the accreditation processes. She has adapted to positive changes of a new building and has said goodbye to former instructors who had become dear friends.

In 2008, Petra married Mr. Maier, who she had met during her time in Cedar Rapids. On her husband’s birthday in 2013, Petra had her first baby daughter, Emma Kathleen.

“Her name is Emma, not because it’s popular, but because I simply like the name,” she explained. “It’s also becoming more common in Czech. I wanted a name that would be easy to pronounce for my family.”

In between sessions, Emma Kathleen will take her first trip to Czech with Petra—a trip that she has taken annually—to see her grandparents for the first time.

As a fluent English language speaker, Petra remembers her past and can understand the challenges of being an international student and a second language learner. This experience gives her empathy for students on a regular basis. She understands concerns about accent, shyness, homework load, and homesickness. She understands the difficulty in balancing work and play. Her advice to current CIEP students is: “...focus on your studies and learning English, but at the same time, don’t isolate yourself from others. And enjoy your experience here in the U.S. At UNI, make new friends, participate in activities, and have fun at the same time.”
Assessment & Student Success
By Lauren Rein, Academic Support Specialist
Tests. Quizzes. Exams. These words do not bring up pleasant feelings for students. Assessment can be something very informal, like calling on students individually while reviewing homework in class. These quick checks help us see that students are getting it. Assessment can be something very formal as well—something stressful, like final exams. Yet how do we know if the test or exam is a good one?

This is the project I began this summer; to evaluate the tools that we use to assess our students’ learning. To assure ourselves that we are assessing the students correctly, we need to make sure we match CIEP Student Learner Outcomes (learner outcomes established for each class) to the tasks on all our quizzes, tests, and exams. We need to make sure these assessments are reliable and valid across terms, teachers, and student groups.

So how do we evaluate this? I have asked CIEP instructors for some input in a survey and have already received very insightful feedback. In the fall semester, I will assemble a focus group of instructors to further discuss and evaluate exams. I will work with newer staff to analyze past exam results for measures in validity and reliability. The end result will be tests and quizzes that better demonstrate students’ learning abilities and further our mission here in the CIEP: to provide quality English language instruction in preparation for higher learning.

Business English Courses
By Caitlin Dau, CIEP Academic Support Assistant
I get the privilege of working six hours a week with the special program from Dianji University in Shanghai. The purpose of this class is to support the students’ English language ability, and complement Dr. Schrage’s Global Trade class. We focus on American pronunciation, idioms, customs, and business vocabulary. We work on all the skills, but pay special attention to speaking and listening, as they have little opportunity for authentic interaction with native English speakers at their university in China. We also discuss a variety of business culture differences between the U.S, China, and a few other countries.

Intensive English STEM Component
By Ashley Jennings, CIEP Program Assistant
During the first week of August, we have the pleasure of providing a week-long special program course to our students from the Brazil Scientific Mobility Program. These students have strong academic backgrounds from their native Brazil and are preparing to enter academic classes here at the University of Northern Iowa. This week-long course will help prepare the students for their academic programs by focusing on academic English skills such as reading and responding to challenging academic texts, interpreting and discussing STEM-focused lectures, and writing organized responses and reflections on a variety of topics. It is our hope that this extra practice applying their academic skills in English will help give these students the confidence they will need to be successful at UNI and beyond. We are looking forward to working with this outstanding group!

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CIEP Staff Projects

By Mike Williams, CIEP Academic Support Coordinator
CIEP instructional staff have been involved in several projects this summer session. Academic Support Specialists Jaime Lyon and Emily Luttrell-Narigon of the ongoing Reading Committee have been researching student learning outcomes, academic vocabulary, reading strategies, activities, evaluations, assessments, textbooks, and other materials to update this part of the curriculum.

Program Assistant Caitlin Dau taught Intensive Business English to students from Shanghai Dianji University in China during their special UNIBusiness Global Partners program here July 14-August 8.

During the first full week of August, Program Assistants Ashley Jennings and Lynn Kovacs-Reid instructed a special prep program of academic English for the new group of Brazil Scientific Mobility Program students who began CIEP classes July 7.

CEA accreditation committee members Petra Maier, Tom Riedmiller, Christina Tsimplides, Carolina Coronado-Park, Mike Williams and Phil Plourde have begun reviewing accreditation materials for the CIEP’s next site visit.

By Caitlin Dau, CIEP Academic Support Assistant
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CIEP Online Course Project

Tom Riedmiller, Academic Support Specialist, spent time this summer outside of the classroom on a special online learning project. Because of the growth of e-Learning all over the world, Tom wanted to find what types of English language courses work well online. Tom said that, “You really have to think about this… can we do it better on the computer or do we need a human element? Can we make online learning more human?”

Tom observed that students experience simpler types of online learning situations where they may watch a video of a professor’s lecture and take notes. It was very much a one way experience and the student felt isolated and not engaged with a class. Because of that, they may not learn as much as they could. However, with new and inexpensive video conference technology, teachers in online classes can add interaction and collaboration into their courses.

“It’s amazing how technology can add the human factor to online learning which requires interaction… the kind of interaction students get in actual face-to-face classroom experience.”

To investigate this question, Tom and his colleague, Jaime Lyon, held several cultural exchange classes with an English class in Turkey. They wanted to provide a speaking opportunity for students and see how the new videoconference service encouraged interaction. Despite some technical problems, the students had a great time and earned homework credit for participating in these activities. This amazing experience led Tom to develop and propose CIEP courses such as General English, Pronunciation and Writing for students outside of UNI.

In the general English course, students will have chances to improve their general English skills, and learn practical English for work, business, study and travel. The students spend time studying online on our eLearning system where they practice listening, speaking, reading, writing and pronunciation. Twice a week, students meet in a live class. During this live online classroom, students have the chance to meet each other, discuss the topics from the class and practice with the teacher.

In the writing class, students meet live to discuss their compositions and ask the teacher for ideas. The students can even meet as a class or in special live private groups to develop ideas for their writing. The pronunciation class lets the teacher listen to their students and help them as a group or individually live or with audio/video recordings. This type of class works well for students who don’t have access to native speakers of a language.

In any situation, Tom hopes that a live, human component may be the future on online learning and he believes that videoconferencing will be the key.

From May 11-25, while most were breathing a sigh of relief after finishing the spring semester, CIEP Academic Support Specialist Lauren Rein traveled to the Gammon Presbyterian Institute in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. She went to further promote a positive relationship between Gammon and the CIEP and to learn more about the institute and its students, as well as to present information about the CIEP and the University of Northern Iowa to Gammon staff, students, and families.

When she arrived in Brazil, Lauren had the opportunity to observe English classes at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. She gave presentations showcasing life in the U.S. to the elementary and middle school students and a lesson on idioms to the high school students. Later during her visit, Lauren traveled with the elementary students to the Portuguese colonial town of Ouro Preto, which is famous for its Baroque architecture, cobblestone streets, intricately decorated churches, and many museums. She learned all about the city from the elementary students who explored the city with her and translated when possible.

She was also able to meet with the Gammon English teachers and administrative staff to learn about their approaches to English teaching, the textbooks being used, and to talk about the possibility of developing an English curriculum in collaboration with the CIEP and the Universidade Federal de Lavras (UFLA), the University that is about 5 minutes away from Gammon. Additionally, Lauren was able to give presentations to Gammon students’ families and to university-level students about the CIEP and UNI.

While meeting the faculty, staff, students, and families of Gammon, Lauren was able to learn about the Brazilian educational system and culture through traveling and listening to presentations given by the students at Gammon. She learned about the Language Schools in Brazil, and about the approaches used to teach English in various learning institutions. Finally, she met with faculty at the Universidade Federal de Lavras to learn more about the English teaching needs in Brazil.

Lauren’s trip to Gammon successfully helped solidify a positive relationship between the Gammon Presbyterian Institute and the UNI CIEP. Plans are underway to develop a standardized English curriculum at Gammon (with the help of the CIEP), to develop more specialized programs for Gammon students at the CIEP, and to establish teacher exchanges and collaborations between Gammon, the Universidade Federal de Lavras, and the CIEP.
A year ago, I started my journey as an international student recruiter for the Middle East at UNI. For me, it was an exciting, mysterious, and challenging journey that allowed me to grow. Recruiting is not only about getting a number of students to come to study at your campus, it’s much more than that. It’s a process of learning, building relationships and trust, and helping students succeed. Once you work with one student, you are building trust and a relationship with the student. This relationship is never ending because once the student applies, there are many things I can do to make sure the student has completed all the necessary steps. Not only that, but once the student is on campus, I am able to help students settle in and get oriented to UNI and the community here.

For me, recruiting is divided into two main categories. The first part is to work with the student and maybe his/her parents to apply to UNI, work with school counselors, embassy representatives, and other people who can establish a good and long term relationship. The other part is retention in which you need to work with the students once they are on campus. It is very important to work with students to get them oriented, learn about the university and the culture so they can get the benefit of being abroad, and get the whole experience they are looking for here at UNI and start to acclimate to the new environment.

When I traveled, I visited Embassies and EducationUSA representatives in Washington DC in order to introduce myself, build a good relationship with them, teach them about UNI, learn about scholarship programs and ways to best recruit students from their countries. These visits were successful and the representatives found it interesting and unique that UNI put the effort to hire someone from the Middle East who knows the language, culture, someone who is able to help the students in many ways.

One of the things I did during my traveling is college fairs. I participated in one here in the U.S. that was completely organized by volunteer students from Saudi Arabia to bring 100 U.S. universities and colleges to help students from the Middle East learn about conditional admission opportunities. I got the chance to deal with students face-to-face which was helpful to explain things, see their reactions, and help them get the information needed. Often students that I meet spread the word there is someone who speaks the language and is helpful to Middle Eastern students applying at UNI. In time, trust was established between me and students that I had not met before.

During my travel overseas, I met with counselors who became more interested in allowing me to present to students about UNI and share my experience. They found me as role model for the students, especially females, who could encourage students to work hard to get their degree and do something different during their life. Beside school visits, I met with some locals who were volunteering in Non-Profit Organizations, setting up events and sessions to help students who are interested in studying abroad. So, I have agreed to work with them in the future to do Skype sessions during my next visit.

One thing that I was happy to learn about during my travel is that there is an increase in interest from students with disabilities to come and study in the U.S., and I talked with someone who volunteers to help them with the admission process. This person opened my eyes to find out what we can do to accommodate these students when they decide to apply and enroll at UNI.

This year allowed me to grow personally and professionally. I was able to develop, learn, and build more skills. Sharing my experience with other professionals was a great addition to me also in which I learn from them and they learn from me. Getting to know the students, their abilities to do exciting things, and see them grow within the time has made this year unforgettable.
Egypt is known worldwide for its rich ancient heritage. It is considered the cradle of civilization and it is well known for having the pyramids on its land. There are 138 pyramids discovered in Egypt; most were built as tombs for the pharos.

The most famous Egyptian pyramids are those found at Giza, on the outskirts of Cairo. Several of the Giza pyramids are counted among the largest structures ever built. The Pyramid of Khufu in Giza is the largest Egyptian pyramid and is the only one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World still in existence. It has been estimated that Egypt contains about one third of the most valuable monuments and antiquities in the whole world.

Today, the most popular places for tourists are not only the monuments of the Nile Valley and the souks, mosques and madrassas of Islamic Cairo, but also fantastic coral reefs and tropical fish, dunes, ancient fortresses, monasteries and prehistoric rock art. Besides monuments, Egypt abounds with natural wonders. Edged by coral reefs teeming with tropical fish, the Sinai Peninsula offers superb diving, snorkeling, and palm-fringed sandy beaches.

Some of the ancient traditions remain evident in modern Egypt. Egypt's rich cultural heritage is an integral part of its national identity, having endured various foreign influences, including Greek, Persian, Roman, Arab and Ottoman. The population of Egypt is relatively homogeneous. The overwhelming majority (over 90 percent) are Arabic-speaking Sunni Muslims. About 6 percent are Christians, who are indistinguishable in other respects from the Muslims. Most of the Christians belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church: the historic church of Egypt.

The family is the most significant unit of Egyptian society. The family consists of both the nuclear and the extended family. Here people put special respect for family values and family relations.

Commonly, Egyptians are quite adjustable in nature and they love to help people. If asked, the people will always share their knowledge and enthusiasm with the people whom they hardly know. In Egypt, besides its excellent travel attractions and cultural ambiance, the smiling faces of the locals are an added charm.

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