

**2008 PROFESSIONAL ADVISING LEADERSHIP (PAL) FELLOWS PROGRAM
PROGRAM REPORT - MAY 13-22, 2008**

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Executive Summary

Project Description

Title: Advising on Short Courses & Certificate Programs

Goals and Objectives

My major goal was to help advisees in their search for short professional development courses and offer them choices which make them legitimate students with F1 visas. The specific objectives to meet this goal were:

- a) to find governmental organizations that offered such programs (eg. USDA)
- b) to contact the American Association of Community Colleges and identify whether the programs that community colleges offered to their local communities met the needs of international students as well
- c) to find what the specific professional organizations had for foreign students

In all items listed above (a, b and c) I planned to find out about the short programs setup, their purposes, whether or not they were convenient to international students and how they advertised their programs.

The outcomes of the research would lead to a) a survey specially designed so that targeted institutions would complete it in a regular basis with the information about the short programs they offer; and (b) a page on the Educational Advisor's webpage, containing the information from the survey displayed in a logical and easy-to-find format to all Educational Advising Centers (e.g. per field of study)

Specific goals included:

GOAL 1: To be well trained on the issues related to short professional programs

Objective 1: Investigate the American institutions that offer short professional development programs

Objective 2: Prepare a list of institutions to visit

Objective 3: Plan how to approach the selected institutions

GOAL 2: Be a reliable and good source of information about short professional programs and sources in the U.S. to peer advisors and advisees

Objective 1: To publish the information gathered about short professional courses in the webpage

Objective 2: To design and prepare a workshop on short professional programs

Objective 3: To update the information about the programs offered and informed by institutions bi-monthly.

Activities/Appointments

Due to the nature of my Project, I planned to visit several universities in California, known for offering Short Professional Courses through their Extension Programs, the New York University, through the School of Continuing and Professional Studies, and some Community Colleges also well known for offering Certificate Programs. With the advice and help from College Board and the PAL Fellows Faculty Consultant, Amber Kelleher, I came up with the following list:

- a) Graduate School, USDA
- b) University of California, Irvine
- c) Santa Monica College
- d) San Diego Miramar College
- e) San Diego State University
- f) UC San Diego Extension

Moreover, I visited the following organizations:

- g) American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)
- h) AMIDEAST
- i) State/ECA Educational Information and Resources Branch

Findings

The difficulty encountered by many advisors, including myself, in helping students to find appropriate information about short professional programs to be taken during vacation time, school recesses and even in longer periods (3-6 months) is legitimate. There is no database available to search from, and even though, occasionally, advisors receive brochures or emails from institutions advertising such programs, they are not offered consistently or systematically. We end up suggesting programs offered by the same universities and the same programs (e.g. UC Extension), which advertise about their programs aggressively. Another important issue is that depending on the institution and the length of the program, I-20s are not issued so students cannot receive their student visas and may jeopardize their plans to study in the States by traveling with Tourist Visas. In my visit at the AACC, I asked about the possibility of their compiling the information about the short programs offered by their affiliated CC and was informed that Institutions are not required to submit their short programs for

AACC approval as 50% of the students who attend the programs are non-degree seeking, they are only registering for professional enrichment. However, I was also informed that there is a tendency for AACC to start collecting data about these programs, and they believe that in two or three years a database could be created. In this meeting, I also learned that the most sought short professional programs were the ones related to the fields of Information technology, Health Care and Automotive.

Acknowledgements

I gratefully acknowledge the support I received from my REAC Rosemarie Arens, my Country Coordinator, Rita Moriconi, who not only endorsed my nominations but contributed with suggestions for the project. Many thanks to College Board, specifically Janine and Carol, and the Faculty Consultant, Amber Kelleher, for offering their valuable expertise, and for making the PAL project a take-home assignment. Thanks to the colleges and universities visited and their staff for offering their time, insights and guidance about the issues researched. My deep thanks are also due to my home institution, FAE Centro Universitário, for supporting me throughout the completion of the PAL Program. To my fellow advisors in Brazil and South America, who, upon receiving my email requesting their feedback on difficult issues in advising, replied promptly and provided the first suggestions for the project on Short Professional Development Programs. And finally, to Department of State, whose support was crucial for the successful completion of my project.

Follow-up/Next Steps

When I proposed exploring the topic, I believed that it would be easy to contact the institutions and have them send me the information about their offers of short professional programs. This is a challenging task that requires persistence and dedication, and constant updates. As mentioned before, professional programs are seasonal; many of them are offered to meet the needs of a local population. They are not designed to meet the needs of international students. But I do believe that a great number of students, who are not interested in or cannot afford a degree in the United States, would benefit from a webpage specially designed to help them in their search for short development programs, something like what is offered by College Board (College Search) and the Petersons website.