

and exploring areas of life that are not too culturally or politically sensitive. Then, even after a topic has been settled, the student might have to revise it multiple times in response to exigencies of the research environment. When the pivotal person is unavailable to be interviewed or the temple priest refuses to talk about the rituals specified for the project, the topic has to be reworked around the information that is available. Fortunately, the University of Pune professors have been outstanding mentors for American students struggling to conduct worthwhile research in a culture that is still so new for them.

Having twice worked as the American Coordinating Representative for this program and as the faculty director for another study abroad program in India, I am impressed again and again with how the students' learning is enhanced within the structure of this program. Students, in their evaluations, describe their experiences as having changed their lives in ways they could never have anticipated, while clearly deepening their understanding of Indian culture.

While the program is well suited for students with particular interests in the humanities and social sciences, it can also work for science students who are willing to be creative in their independent research projects. More information about the program, as well as application forms to be downloaded, can be located at: www.acm.edu. Correspondence may be addressed to the ACM Program Officer who works with this program, Sarah Marino.



Photo courtesy of Cathy Benton

Davidson College Semester-in-India Program Job Thomas, Davidson College

Davidson's Semester-in-India Program provides students an opportunity to live as members of a group, learn from Indian scholars and travel to important cultural sites in a safe and comfortable manner. The Program, located in Madras, gives participants an intellectual and cultural experience that cannot be duplicated in the U.S.

Started in 1981 and offered during alternate years, 13 programs have been successively conducted. The Program in its entirety is under the auspices of the faculty of Davidson College. The Program Director is required to have spent significant time in India and teach courses significant to the region. He/she is also required to make a visit to India a year in advance to structure the program in detail.

The program is designed for 14 or 15 juniors and seniors; however, sophomores with exceptional preparation are occasionally included. Since the Program is advertised nationally, Davidson reserves approximately 25% of the slots for students from other schools. Admission is competitive with preference given to those whose academic preparation includes courses relating to the sub-continent.

The program contains three vital components: the academic program, travel within India, and living arrangements.

The Academic Program starts with a week of orientation prior to departure for India on the Davidson campus with lectures from Davidson faculty on the history, religions, art, society, economy, music, and environment of South Asia. In India, the academic program consists of four courses, the regular academic load for a semester at Davidson. Over the past 20 years, the focus of the courses has varied depending upon the quality of scholarship available in India and the Director's field of expertise. In Madras, the program has an advisory committee of academics and others who are familiar with Davidson. This committee advises the Davidson Program Director and his/her counterpart in Madras Christian College about resource personnel and field trips. All lectures are given by Indian scholars, and each course consists of about 20 lectures and contains at least two field trips relating to the lectures. The Director of the program will be assisted by a coordinator for each course. Speakers are drawn from all over India and many of them are alumni of Madras Christian College. Most have lunch with students, thus providing potential for further contact and resources.

The Fall 2004 program will offer the following four courses. 1) *India: Past and Present*. A series of lectures will introduce students to the cultural history of India viewed through the writings of Indian women. 2) *Issues in Contemporary India*: These lectures will focus on issues currently vigorously debated among Indian scholars. Topics include the condition of the environment, position of women, economic policies of the government and mass media. 3) *Public Health in India*. These lectures will view public health

from economic, social, political and medical perspectives. Some of the topics are: AIDS, health status of women and children, occupational health and the impact of the environment on health. 4) *Religions of India*. In addition to site visits, lectures will examine such topics as the rise of religious fundamentalism and the politicization of religious literature.

Travel within India. Davidson is very proud of the fact that their program offers extensive and well-structured travel opportunities. There will be guided tours and lectures by scholars at all sites. The group will travel by the most efficient, safe and comfortable means, and will stay usually in the best and safest facilities in each city.

In addition to long weekend visits to nearby Mahabalipuram, Kanchipuram and Pondicherry, there will be five major study tours, each lasting from a week to ten days. The southern tour to the Thanjavur, Trichy and Madurai areas focuses on traditional Hindu culture. During the tour of Kerala, which focuses on the history and culture of the region, the group will visit Trichur, Kochi, Munnar and Trivandurm. Travel to the Karnataka region will take the group to Bangalore, Somnathpur to visit the Hoysala temples, and to Mysore to see the splendors of the erstwhile princely states. The tour of Eastern India will introduce the students to the Tantric art of Khajuraho, the Nawabi culture of Lucknow, the meeting of Buddhist and Hindu traditions in Benares, and the Bengali culture of Calcutta. The program concludes with a fortnight-long travel to Delhi, Agra, Gwalior and Jaipur to study Mughal art and culture, to Ajanta and Ellora to study Hindu and Buddhist art, to Bombay to visit museums and observe the remnants of the Parsi community and to Goa to study Baroque Portuguese architecture and culture.

Living arrangements. Davidson's program is housed on the campus of Madras Christian College. The relationship between the colleges is based on historical affinities and shared educational convictions. Both founded in 1837 by Presbyterians, the two schools remain church-related and steadfastly committed to liberal arts education. The 400-acre residential campus is a clean and safe haven from the crowded bustle of Madras, yet close enough for our students to benefit from the city's resources.

Students will stay in the International Guest House of Madras Christian College, built by a Swedish architect to western standards. The Program is a self-contained operation in the sense that everything from food preparation to laundry service is tailored to meet the Program's needs. Residing within the campus, Davidson's students will have many opportunities to meet with their Indian counterparts. Moreover, each student will also be able to interact with a host family that lives within the campus and has comparably-aged children.

Fees. Davidson charges its one semester comprehensive fee to participate in the program. This fee covers all expenses: visa fee, round-trip plane fare, full boarding and lodging, all travel expenses within India and tuition for four-course load.

So far 200 students from Davidson and thirty other institutions have participated in Davidson's program. Nearly half of them have returned to India, and many have chosen careers in non-profit organizations. Participants from the 1981 program still maintain contact with one another, indicating that the program not only provides them a rich intellectual and cultural experience, but it also builds among its participants lasting relationships.

Information about the Fall Program is available at http://www.davidson.edu/academic/sasian/semester_in_india.html.



2002 Freeman Student-Faculty Research Project
Colorado College Presentation, 2003 ASIANetwork Conference



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