The University of Iowa is offering a unique three-week study program this winter which involves visits to Rural India. The states covered include Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. The program utilizes the best of cultural immersion and tourism concepts to enable participants learn directly from and interact with leading social entrepreneurs, environmental and non-profit organizations and academic institutions within the cultural, socio-economic, and geographical diversity that is India. It is called INDIA Winterim.

The leading Indian collaborators that the University works with the program employ a variety of approaches to address social and environmental problems such as poverty, access to health care, rural development, and conservation. The diverse group of students and participants from geography to public health and business to social work observe learn, and collaborate with these groups to develop new perspectives on pressing global challenges and methods being used to address them.

Over the last three years, Professor R. Rajagopal has orchestrated this collaborative program between the University of Iowa and several highly successful research and non-profit organizations across India. He has taken a number of students from Iowa University for a 3-week structured program to learn about Rural India.

During January 2009, he took 70 students (all Americans) with majors spread across a variety of subjects. On their return in Feb 2009, they made a day-long presentation on their work in India.

16 courses are being offered in India this winter.

Anybody interested in India can take and benefit from these courses.

Professor Rajagopal believes that students from any university in the world (including the US and India ), NRIs and PIOs, interested Americans, interested Indians, and any others could benefit from these courses.

Participants can take these courses for credit or for audit (non-credit).

The details below make interesting reading.

Academic Program

The INDIA Winterim 2009-2010 program will offer 16 different courses related to public health, children's health, environment and development, rural development, culture & arts, and social entrepreneurship. Course descriptions and other information including the program's various Indian partners and hosts is available at: http://www.uiowa.edu/~geog/india/index.shtml

001 Empowering Villagers

002 Gender and Justice
Transportation to & from India

The expected departure date from Chicago is December 27, 2009, with a return arrival in Chicago on January 16, 2010. Refer to the web site for details.

Program Cost

The winter 2009-2010 program fee for University of Iowa students is $2123. The program fee includes tuition; orientation meetings in Iowa; double-occupancy lodging in India; all program-related transportation in India, including baggage handling, and program-related airport, train terminal and bus station pick-ups and drop-offs, translators and field guides, excursions and cultural programs, and conference registration, luncheons, and banquets. Roundtrip airfare is not included in the program fee. A cost sheet outlining all the anticipated expenses is available on the web site. The program fee for students attending other U.S. universities and for any other interested individuals will be $2323.

Financial Aid & Scholarship

Combined with university, private, and Indian-collaborator contributions, the program strives to provide as accessible and enriching an experience as possible to all participants.
Eligibility & Application - Deadline is September 25th, ACT NOW!

Applications to the Winterim course is open to University of Iowa (UI) students in good academic standing who have a clear interest and commitment to the specific course topic. Students attending other U.S. universities, students in India, and community members may also participate in the program. Completed applications should be submitted to the UI Office for Study Abroad by September 25, 2009. Acceptance into the program will be determined by faculty review. Applicants will be notified of their status by mid-October. Applications received after September 25th will be considered on a space-available basis.

Next Steps

Prospective participants interested in the 2009-10 INDIA Winterim program should do the following:

1) visit the website http://www.uiowa.edu/~geog/india/index.shtml

2) select the top 2 courses of interest

3) review 'General Information for All Courses,'

4) review 'Tuition, Fees, And Expenses,'

5) complete and submit an application,

6) apply for financial aid, if needed,

7) e-mail cory-petersen@uiowa.edu , if they have any questions.

What are the students saying?

....Visiting the rural villages was another new experience. The most notable part of the villages, however, was the incredible generosity of the people. They invited us into their homes and offered us food and gifts without a moment’s hesitation; and it was impossible to make them accept anything in return. -- An engineering major

....The jasmine women were so proud to show their successful enterprise and share their gifts with us by making flower decorations for Jenna and myself. Not only are they empowered, but they maintained a humbling perception on life which was exuded by their unconditional love toward us. These women had given us their hearts and there is no stronger inspiration than seeing the betterment of humanity in action. - An engineering major

....Time after time, without prompting, farmers would lead us on tours of their villages’ irrigation systems while women would show us their self help group’s accrued profit and loan payoff ratio. It was these exchanges that provided me a sense of India as it continues on the fast track of development and
showcased the pride, excitement and empowerment being generated in rural Tamil Nadu. A liberal arts and science major

.... I commend the efforts that Satya Special School (for the disabled) has made, and am grateful to have had the opportunity to experience social entrepreneurship in its truest form. A nursing major

What are the professors saying?

....We read about microfinance in different parts of the world and looked at different models. But much of the real learning occurred in India. My hopes are that the students will have a broader perspective, not just on microfinance, but on what it’s like to be running a small business by the shoestrings when your family depends on it to eat. We saw a couple with their two children living in a ten-by-ten hut. They bend metal to make fasteners for stainless steel buckets. They have a fire going, and the baby's there, and the two-year-old is there, and they do this work every day, all day long. Seeing that gives students a very real perspective on the world. Speaking personally, I've never felt richer than I did when I came back here.

....Immersion learning experiences like this one are important for people planning a career in social work and similar fields. We can become more open minded in our practice when we have experiences that show us that our way is just one of many ways of living.

....Studying the sustainability of these systems within the cultural diversity of India was enlightening in ways hard to imagine. Most importantly, the contrasts and comparisons to regions back in the United States provided a new perspective on sustainability issues right here at home that would not have been possible otherwise.

....I felt privileged to have enjoyed this experience. Despite the brief time in country, our group experienced several outstanding examples of great feats accomplished with very little. Successful programs motivated by care and concern for the well-being of others ran more on vision, will power, and idealism than financial largess. The Meenakshi Mission hospital, the palliative care center in Kerala, and the social entrepreneurship program for the poorest rural schools were each unexpected creative gems functioning in an environment of overwhelming challenges. Students were rapidly drawn into these vortexes of positive energy and accomplished wonderful projects in record time. Group meetings provided a multiplier effect allowing each to do a better job than if they'd been working independently. Since returning home, I have already had numerous exchanges with several of the friends made while there. I'm sending another student to the country in a couple of weeks to be hosted by people we met.

...After years of search and struggle, we find that true happiness can be had by devoting ourselves to selfless service. Such an opportunity was afforded to seven of our final year medical students on their 'India Elective'. I hope, they now have a deeper appreciation for the process of improving the lives of all and will use the lessons learned in India to change the lives of those they will touch as doctors.