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### Ileana Chirila, Assistant Professor of French (COLA) travel to France

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**University of  
New Hampshire**

**UNH Global**

# Ileana Chirila

## **Assistant Professor of French (COLA) ~ France**

At the end of June 2018, I was able to explore the possibility of a new faculty-led short study-abroad program for UNH students, thanks to the UNH Faculty International Development Grant that partially funded my travel to Toulouse, France. Although this project was already taking shape on paper before my visit to France, meeting with the team from CIEE (Council on International Educational Exchange) helped consolidate my conviction that we have chosen the best institution to facilitate this two-week program for our students. For over 65 years, CIEE's mission has been to "develop and deliver international programs and support services to help people gain understanding, acquire knowledge, and develop skills for living in a globally interdependent and culturally diverse world" (CIEE Faculty Handbook), and beginning with 2019 the institution will become our trustful collaborator in bringing UNH students to the south of France.

During my stay in Toulouse, the resident staff of CIEE study center in Toulouse, led by Isabelle Jaffe, assisted me in gathering pertinent information on potential student housing, cultural issues, health and safety protocol, and local logistics, and accompanied me to CIEE-arranged site visits, in order to prepare for this new mobility. We convened that we should develop the program as a culinary exploration of Southern France, and agreed on the details concerning accommodations, transportation, meals, local excursions, the number of students participating, and the type of assistance and support offered by CIEE. With Isabelle, I visited several potential lodgings for our students, and I decided on an "aparthotel" that will provide accommodations for the program duration. Placed in a nice residential area, close to food venues and transportation facilities, the aparthotel offers double occupancy including a small kitchen, private bathroom, bed linens, Wi-Fi,



Reddish-pink bricks give Toulouse the nickname La Ville Rose "The Pink City"

dynamic place that offers an ideal opportunity to learn about France's past and present while experiencing a slice of French culture.

My visit to CIEE study center in Toulouse led to the completion of the proposal for the new short study-abroad program that our students will surely appreciate. This travel will provide a "living lab" experience, where students apply in a global setting knowledge acquired during the regular term and practice their French language and/or cultural skills in an immersive situation. The in-country activities will expose students to diverse elements of regional and national French culture. Co-Curricular activities will

and cleaning service once a week. Another resident staff of CIEE, Eric, will be the students' guide in France. A retired professor of history, Eric is passionate about the capital of the Midi-Pyrénées region.

Toulouse is the fourth largest city in France, with the second largest student population in the country. It offers easy access to the Atlantic, the mountains, the Mediterranean, and has a wonderful year-round climate. Known as the Pink City for the reddish-pink bricks that feature prominently in many of its buildings, Toulouse is consistently rated as one of the best places to live and study in France. Home to French aerospace giant Airbus and other top technology companies, the city has become a European aerospace and technology hub, and our students will easily fall in love with this





Carcassonne, fortified city one hour away from Toulouse


include, for example, a visit with local food producers, a workshop on the sociology of hip-hop in France, a presentation on regional Occitan dance and music culture, and guided visits to local sites of historic and cultural significance, like Carcassonne, a fortified city located one hour away from Toulouse.



I am extremely grateful for the support provided by the Global Education Center, which made it possible for me to have my first “in-person” contact with Toulouse and CIEE. I consider this visit very productive, as it helped me make important decisions regarding the logistics of the new short study-abroad program.

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