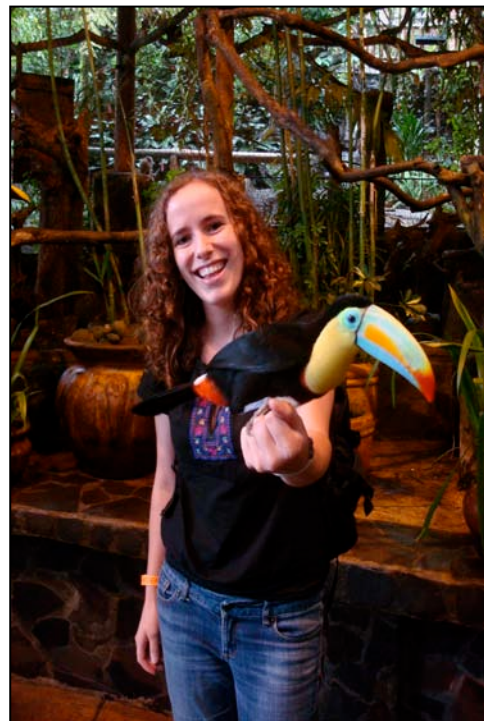


Associated Colleges of the Midwest
Costa Rica:
Field Research in the Environmental, Social
Sciences, and Humanities



Student Handbook ♦ Spring Semester 2011

*Beloit Carleton Coe Colorado Cornell Grinnell Knox Lake Forest
Lawrence Luther Macalester Monmouth Ripon St. Olaf*

Congratulations on your acceptance to the ACM's program on Field Research in the Environment, Social Sciences, & Humanities in Costa Rica. You will be participating in a program that has been in existence for forty-five years and has produced many distinguished professionals in the natural, social sciences and humanities in Latin America and other regions.

This ACM Costa Rica program handbook is intended to help prepare you for your semester in Costa Rica and to give you an initial sense of what to expect academically and personally while you are there. It is revised each year based on comments from the previous program participants to include more current information and contains details regarding various logistical arrangements for your trip. It is, in effect, a reference tool that provides you (and your parents, to whom a copy will also be sent) with the information you need as you make arrangements to participate in the program. It is important that you read it carefully as preparation for the telephone orientation session and raise any questions you may have either in that orientation session, or individually with the ACM Program Associate, Heather Everst, or the Director of International Study Programs, Carol Dickerman. You should also take it with you when you travel to Costa Rica, as it contains important contact and schedule information, as well as information about academic and other arrangements for the program.

The ACM Costa Rica staff members are ready to help you in any way they can. You should feel free to come to them with your questions and problems. They are always willing to provide assistance or advice, particularly on cross-cultural matters. We hope you will learn a tremendous amount about Latin America, that you will form lasting friendships, and that you will come to love Costa Rica and its people. May your experiences in Costa Rica be rich and memorable. ¡*Que la aprovechen!*

Program Overview

Central America is a region of great historical, cultural, and biological diversity, with approximately 40 million people who inhabit Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua sharing much in common. Governed in Spanish colonial times as a single unit, today they are separate countries sharing similar economic pursuits. While in the past they may have been characterized as "coffee" or "banana republics," today their economies continue to grow more diverse as the region takes on the twenty-first century challenges of building justice and prosperity in the context of globalization. As Costa Rica continues to grapple with issues such as poverty, public health, and environmental conservation, "Ticos" (as Costa Ricans call themselves) are committed to universal health care, social programs, and democratic government. Over the years Costa Rica has always stood somewhat apart from the historical dramas of Central America, making it a fascinating comparative case and a safe observatory on progress in nation-building and sustainable development in this region so closely tied, both politically and economically, to the United States.

The ACM Spring program in Costa Rica, "Field Research in the Environment, Social Sciences & the Humanities," aims to give students first-hand experience with field study and a chance to develop the skills for successful research and inquiry.

The Program's learning goals focus on developing the skills to design and execute independent, in-depth research in Central America that is tailored to students' major fields, whether the natural or social sciences or the humanities, with guidance from topical experts. These skills include advanced Spanish, research design principles, cross-cultural study and analysis.

In addition to a Spanish language requirement (two years or more), students are expected to come into the program having begun work in their major and having some background in research methodologies in their major field. Under the supervision of Costa Rican specialists and scholars, students draw upon local resources and their own previous coursework to undertake a significant research project. The quality and level of this research often provides a strong foundation for a senior thesis or other advanced work. Coursework, in which students refine their research proposals, advance their Spanish language skills, and learn about research methods, prepares students during the first part of the semester for the field study during the balance of the program.

II. Calendar

Field Research (spring)		
Weeks 1-4	Weeks 5-12	Weeks 13-16
Orientation (San José) Select a research topic, confer with advisor, write the research proposal, and visit the field site.	Field Research (sites throughout Costa Rica) Conduct research, collect data, and periodically confer with advisor.	Research Paper (San José) Confer with advisor, write the research paper, and present the paper.
Spanish Language & Culture		Spanish Language
Home stay in San José	Home stay near the research site	Home stay in San José

January 29 - May 21, 2011

Saturday, January 29, 2011: Students arrive in San José

Monday, January 31, 2011: First day of classes

Saturday, February 26, 2011: Students depart for field research sites

Sunday, April 24, 2011: Students return to San José

Friday, May 20, 2011: Last day of classes

Saturday, May 21, 2011: Students depart

Weeks 1-4: Orientation in San José

Intensive course in Spanish language and Costa Rican culture

Select a research topic, confer with your advisor, write a detailed research proposal and visit the field site

Weeks 5-12: Field research

Conduct research, collect data and periodically confer with your advisor

Weeks 13-16: Wrap-up in San José

Continue Spanish language course

Confer with your advisor and complete the research paper

Present research results

III. Academics

Spanish Course

Spanish for Researchers

Instructors: Dr. Mario Morera and additional instructors

Required course, 4 credits

Instruction at the ACM center is provided by experienced Costa Rican teachers working under the direction of Mario Morera. Instructors rotate among the small classes to expose students to several native speakers. Classes meet 17 ½ hours/week during the first four weeks of the semester and focus on comprehension and conversation, Costa Rican idioms, and grammar review.

Research Process

- **Introduction.** The research process at ACM Costa Rica has been likened to conducting research for a master's degree because the student goes through all the steps that a graduate student undertakes for a master's thesis.
- **Selecting a research project and advisor.** After being accepted in the program and based on your expressed research interests, the ACM Costa Rica Director will choose and put you in contact with you a Costa Rican advisor. Prior to traveling to Costa Rica, you should begin a literature search for published articles pertinent to your proposed research project. Your college library, with its on-line search engines/databases, is a good place to start, and we suggest that, if possible, you download pertinent articles onto the computer which you take to Costa Rica. You'll have access to this database while at the ACM center in Costa Rica, and can also use facilities at the University of Costa Rica, which is a short distance from the ACM center.
- **Research Proposal.** Most of February will be spent improving your Spanish language capacity, accustoming yourself to Costa Rica culture and writing your research proposal. Your proposal should follow the guidelines given to you by the ACM Director and found on the following website <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/processes/science/>. Students will design a data sheet to help organize taking data; multiple copies should be made of all data in the case of loss. Information on ethical guidelines for human subject research must be considered if you are dealing with humans in your research.
- **Field Research.** Students will conduct research for a minimum of 40 days during an eight-week period between February 26-April 24. Vacation days might include: a) weekends, three days during Holy Week and c) the three-day interim report period in late March. Your project advisor will determine your research and vacation days so consult with him/her and then the Director and main ACM office. Emergencies are exceptions. During the research period the student must keep a daily activity record with a field or spiral notebook, take pictures and carry out preliminary data analysis if possible. You should consult frequently with your advisor and area coordinator by phone or email to ensure you are collecting data correctly. Be adaptable to changing your experimental design if necessary in consultation with your advisor. Organize your schedule realizing that the 40 days of field work end in late April. Above all, consult frequently with your advisor, the research coordinator and Director whether you have problems or not.
- **Midterm data analysis and presentation.** This will be done at the ACM office. Bring your data in a format that allows it to be reviewed and analyzed so you can give preliminary results. You will meet with your advisor, area coordinator and the Director.
- **Final Paper** The final paper will include the following parts: Title, Abstract, Introduction, Methodology, Results, Discussion, Conclusions, and Literature Cited. Figures, tables and graphs will be presented at the end. The final paper will follow the guidelines given to you by the ACM Director and the following website <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/processes/science> . Students will devote the last four weeks of the program to data analysis and writing a minimum of two drafts and a final paper. All research papers are normally written in English unless the Director, Language coordinator and advisor agree to the student's petition. The final paper must

be typed (including graphs, charts, diagrams) and double-spaced, with final copies to the Director and your advisor and a copy saved on the server in the final paper folder. Photographs, charts and appendices will also be placed on the server. Keep a copy of the final paper for yourself as well, as your work in Costa Rica may become the basis for an honor's thesis, a senior project, publication or postgraduate research. The paper is due at the time and on the date indicated in the program schedule.

- **Oral Reports.** Three oral reports using Power Point will be given: a) before leaving for the field where the student explains the proposed research proposal, b) at the midterm as a progress report, and c) based on the research project and final paper. You will be assisted by ACM staff so that you prepare a professional final oral presentation using the earlier two oral presentation and your final paper.

Advisors and Consultants

The responsibility of your advisor is to direct and advise you in formulating and carrying out your research project in its various stages, including the proposal, paper format, field methods, work standards and schedules. Your advisor will visit you at your site at least two times, in addition to taking you to your field site when you are writing up your research proposal. The advisor will read and grade the final paper and assign the final grade based on the field research. Moreover, the advisor will have supervisory and administrative responsibilities, such as the handling of the monies assigned for room, board, transportation and miscellaneous expenses of the student during the field research period. The Director and research coordinator will also visit you in your field site. An occasional consultant, recommended by an advisor, may be a secondary source of information in a specific area (ornithology, statistics, visual arts, etc.). He or she usually is a professor at a Costa Rican university, a professional in business, in a ministry, an autonomous governmental institution, or an international organization. The consultant's responsibility is only advisory. Since these individuals are not employed by the ACM, this office has no control over the time they will spend with you. Please be considerate of their time and other obligations.

Logistics

A number of matters require clarification before you go into the field and when you return:

- Do not forget to leave a copy of your research proposal with the Administrative Assistant; send a copy to the Director via e-mail and also copy it to the server. You will also want to be sure your advisor has a copy.
- Before leaving for the field site, you will be given your host family's address, nearest telephone number and the name and number of the nearest medical clinic.
- Everyone should speak to the Director and Financial Assistant about equipment needs (for the field research) as early as possible. We have to evaluate all requests to determine what the budget can cover. Take special care to return any books, articles, equipment, or materials you have borrowed. Should an advisor loan you some of his/her books or equipment, treat them with utmost respect and care! It may be an out-of-print source or an expensive instrument. If you do not return any personal property you have borrowed, the ACM will hold your grades until the problem is resolved.

Finances

- The ACM pays monthly for all expenses of full room and board, and laundry at the research site. While in San Jose, the ACM pays for partial room and board (breakfast and dinner M-F and all three meals on the weekend), in addition to laundry services.
- Only trips to San José authorized in advance (to see the project advisor, to use library resources, or for other project-related purposes) are paid by the ACM. When you are visiting San José, we expect you to stay in the home where you lived during February. Please contact your family ahead of time to make sure that they can host you. Also, tell the Financial Assistant exactly which days you were at the home, so that the family can be properly reimbursed.
- ACM pays for the round trip to San Jose at the time of the interim report.

Credits and Grades

ACM recommends a total of 16 semester credits, as shown in the course descriptions, for your academic work in Costa Rica. **Before you leave your home campus you should find out from your registrar exactly how many credits you will earn and what graduation requirements they will meet.** Different colleges have different policies about credit, and it is your responsibility to inform yourself about pass/fail options and how your Costa Rica program credits will appear on your transcript. (More detailed information about ACM and individual college policies can be found in this handbook.) You should also discuss your plans for your independent project with your advisor and academic department, particularly if you want to use it to fulfill a requirement or serve as the basis for an honors or senior project.

Your grades will not be reported until you have fulfilled all the ACM requirements.

Total credits for the semester = 16. You will be graded according to the following criteria and percentages:

- **Field Research** (8 credits)
 - 33% = Research Proposal and subsequent effective use of research methods
 - 33% = Understanding of data and ability to analyze it (as conveyed in the midterm oral report and any written reports, and through discussions with the advisor.)
 - 33% = Dedication in the field.
- **Field Seminar and Paper** (4 credits)
 - 25% = Final oral presentation.
 - 75% = Final paper.
 - The advisor submits a written evaluation explaining all the components of your grades to the ACM office.
- **Spanish for Researchers** (4 credits)

Expected Participation

You are expected, unless excused, to attend all ACM classes and events and to participate in the field trips. **As a general rule, students will not be excused from ACM activities to attend to visitors from the United States, whether friends or family.** As a courtesy to your fellow students and to your host family, be sure to attend all ACM social activities. Those who participate fully in the program will definitely benefit culturally and socially. Keep in mind that visitors may not take precedence over your academic responsibilities; a prolonged visit by family or friends causes an inevitable regression in your Spanish learning and may cause you to fall behind in your research.



View from the ACM building.

IV. Preparing to go and Arrival

Passport and Visa

Passport

You will need a valid passport. Make sure that your passport is valid at least six months from the day you board the plane to return home. If it expires during that time, you should renew it immediately. Passport information is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.

As a precaution against a lost or stolen passport, ACM recommends that you make a photocopy of the front page of your passport and also write down the passport number as well as the place and date of issue. Carry this information separately, together with a few extra photos; having this information easily available can make the replacement process both quicker and simpler. (In Costa Rica it is possible to travel throughout most of the country carrying a certified copy of your passport, which will be provided for you during the first days of the program. The exceptions are regions near the country's borders, where it is recommended that you travel with the actual passport. In that case, keep your passport separate from your wallet in a money belt or other concealed carrier—if you lose your wallet, you won't have lost your passport as well.)

Visa

Costa Rica automatically gives 90-day tourist visas to incoming visitors from the United States and you will be no exception. Once students arrive in San José, the ACM program legal advisor, in coordination with the Administrative Assistant, will arrange for the extension of student permits for up to one week after the end of the program. As the ACM cannot request different visa lengths for different students, please be aware that if you arrive to Costa Rica early, those days will be subtracted from the extra days built in for travel at the end of the program. **Under no circumstances should students arrive in Costa Rica more than one week before the program begins**, unless for some reason a trip outside of the country is part of your travel plans. Please consult with the ACM office in Chicago—and before making definite plans—to be sure that an early arrival does not create immigration problems for you. **You must arrive in Costa Rica with a round-trip ticket or an on-going ticket out of the country. Students without a return or on-going ticket can have trouble entering the country, and the ACM legal advisor will not be able to request an extension from the migration authorities without evidence of a return or on-going ticket out of the country.** The ACM Chicago Office will send you a letter explaining the program's visa procedures which you can give airline personnel if you are questioned at the check-in counter.

The ACM staff will obtain the necessary extension of your tourist visa after your arrival. During that time, you will carry a notarized copy of your passport. When your passport is returned after the permit is obtained, you will be notified, and we will make a copy of the page with the permit. You will then carry with you at all times a copy of your passport and the permit (it's best to leave your actual passport in a safe place unless you are travelling near an international border).

If you are not a U.S. citizen or not flying to Costa Rica from the United States, please inform the Chicago office as soon as possible. Visitors from certain countries must undergo a special process to secure a tourist visa, and this process can take a long time and should be started as soon as possible.

Travel Arrangements

You should make your travel arrangements as soon as possible after you accept the offer to participate in the program: keep in mind that earlier reservations are likely cheaper. You will need to arrange to fly from your home to the **Juan Santamaría International airport (SJO), arriving on Saturday, January 29, 2011**. You can choose to make your reservations through the internet, through a travel agent in your home town or near your campus or through STA travel (800-708-9758). Once you have made your reservations, please fill out the ACM Travel Form (the blue sheet, included in your acceptance packet) and return it to Heather Everst in the ACM Chicago office.

Communication

Mail

Your mail should be addressed to you in care of the ACM office, because delivery to your host family's street address is not always reliable. The ACM will distribute student mail. In San Pedro, the post office is located on the ground floor of the Outlet Mall, 200 meters north of the ACM. The ACM mailing address can be found at the back of this handbook.

Shipping

ACM does not recommend that you receive any packages in Costa Rica. Customs charges a flat fee on all incoming packages containing books, used items, or things for which no value is declared in the shipping documents. If a value is declared on the package, however, you (the receiver) will be charged 20% of the declared value for customs fees, plus an additional 20% for value-added tax. One recent participant received a box of books from home with a declared value of \$200 and was forced to pay \$60 to get the package out of customs. It is a huge hassle to get items out of customs and for those reasons we ask that packages not be sent.

Despite the hassle and cost, if you still plan on mailing a package through a shipping service such as DHL, you must use the physical location listed at the back of the handbook.

Computers

It is advisable to bring a laptop computer as there is limited access to the ACM computers. You can store your laptop overnight and during extended stays outside of San José in your ACM locker, and have access to it whenever our building is open. Although we cannot assume liability for it in case of loss or theft, students have found this to be a good way to have the freedom to use their laptops throughout the ACM building, without worrying about the risks of carrying it on the street.

Telephones

It is not necessary to bring your U.S. cell phone with you to Costa Rica. Although many U.S. cell phones will work in San José with an international service plan, calls are expensive, and most past participants do not regret having left them at home. Instead, they recommend using Skype to keep in touch with friends and family at home or purchasing an international calling card, which you can use from public phones.

Money

Students rely on debit and ATM cards almost exclusively to obtain *colones* for daily expenses. (For information on what expenses you can expect to have, please see the Cost Information sheet for the Costa Rica program included with your acceptance materials.) ATM machines (known as ATHs or *A Toda Hora* in Costa Rica) are readily available, and you should have no problem withdrawing funds in *colones* from your U.S. bank account. Before you leave for the program, however, you should notify your bank that you will be abroad. (If you neglect to do so, you may find that your bank, fearing that your card has been stolen, will freeze your account after several withdrawals.) You will also want to check on the transaction charges your bank may levy. While the exchange rate is typically good when using an ATM or debit card, you may find that such transaction fees discourage multiple withdrawals of small amounts. You'll also want to keep careful track of your debit card; there have been incidents of students leaving their debit cards in the machines. Have the information you need on hand to cancel your debit card immediately should it be lost or stolen.

While ATM and debit cards work well, this should not be your only means of getting money—ATM and debit cards can get lost, stolen, or eaten by cash withdrawal machines. You should also bring along some hard currency in dollars—perhaps \$100 or \$200 (preferably in smaller denominations as \$100 bills are not accepted by many businesses)—and a credit card. You should not plan to use credit cards with the frequency that you likely do in the U.S., as many small businesses in Costa Rica will not accept credit cards. Be sure to carry some *colones* in case of emergencies or when you travel outside of San José.

Packing Considerations

What to Bring

Packing can seem like an overwhelming task, but using common sense and the suggested packing checklist can make it much less daunting. If you see something on the list you can do without or would never use in the U.S., don't bring it! Use your own judgment. If you have any questions, please call the ACM office for clarification. Remember when packing certain items that most Costa Rican houses use 110 voltage so U.S. electrical appliances also work there.

Don't forget to leave some extra space for things you'll buy when you're abroad. Airline luggage restrictions can be strict and you are likely to be charged for excess luggage. Check with your airline to find out what the exact weight and dimension limitations are. If you exceed the weight and/or size limits for baggage, you'll probably be charged an additional fee. Try to take as little as possible while still covering your essential needs, and remember that when you travel to rural areas of the country by bus, taking along a large suitcase is usually neither convenient nor secure. Be sure to pack a backpack or duffel bag for your time in the rural areas.

We strongly recommend that you carry your money, passport, and any valuables in a money belt or pouch beneath your clothes while you're traveling. You can buy one for a few dollars at specialty travel shops and discount stores like Target or Wal-Mart.

Put anything you'll need immediately upon arrival into your carry-on bag. **Never put prescription drugs or valuables in your checked luggage.** Bring copies of the prescription using the generic name since brand names may vary from country to country. If you wear glasses or contacts, bring an extra pair.

Clothing

Costa Rica has two seasons: the wet season, usually from late May through November; and the dry season, usually from December to May. During the wet season in San José, it will rain almost daily for brief periods of time and, during October and November, it is common for the rains to last all day long. The weather in San José and its environs is generally mild year-round. The daytime temperature rarely exceeds 80°F in San José, but evenings are brisk and Costa Rican homes do not have heat. Temperatures can get quite low in the mountains and very high in the tropical lowlands, accompanied by high humidity.

You should bring items that you normally wear at home and take enough clothing to provide for your basic needs, but pack sparingly. Clothes in good condition are appropriate, and your appearance should always be neat. Excessively informal, revealing, or sloppy attire can attract unwanted comments or attention, particularly from men.

Try to select clothing that will adapt to different seasons and situations. Avoid a piece of clothing you'll wear only once or twice during the semester. Wash-and-wear clothing is recommended, since dry cleaning is expensive and clothes tend to get dirty quickly from air pollution and dust, especially in the dry season. Laundry is included in your housing costs but host families do not use dryers so your clothes will drip dry on clothing lines.

Gifts

It is a wonderful gesture to take a gift to your host family. Choose something representative of your college, town, or culture, but keep it within a moderate price range. When choosing presents for your San José family you may wish to make use of the information sent to you by the ACM office in Costa Rica. Here are some general recommendations:

- T-shirts or pennants from your college or sports teams
- Calendars with scenes of your home state or town
- Specialty foods (wild rice from Minnesota, bread mix)
- Handmade sweets from your state or region
- Picture books about the U.S. or your home region
- Mugs
- Artwork from your hometown (small pottery, weaving, watercolors)

Suggested Packing List

Documents

- Passport
- Certified copy of your birth certificate (in case of loss of passport)
- ATM card, credit card, cash

Clothing

- T-shirts and a few light, long-sleeve shirts
- Jeans and casual pants
- Swimsuit, sandals, beach stuff
- Shorts for exercise and excursions to the hotter parts of the country. Very short shorts can attract unwanted attention in the city.
- Dressy outfit. At least once during the semester you might want to dress more formally.
- A few sweaters and/or a light jacket
- Rough, “camping” clothes for group field trips and the rural stay portion of either program.
- Comfortable walking shoes and a pair of field boots for hikes and camping. The ACM has some pairs of rubber boots available though the quantity and sizes are limited. If you wear a size 11 or larger, you will not find your size available in Costa Rica. Sandals are not safe for hiking in the rain forest.
- Sneakers you won’t mind getting wet such as Chaco, Teva, Merrell, or Crocs.
- Raincoat and an umbrella
- Slippers to wear around the house (it is not acceptable to be barefooted)
- Baseball/sun hat

Personal and Miscellaneous Items

- Toiletry articles in travel and traditional size (buy in Costa Rica)
- Portable toilet paper (Charmin makes travel rolls)
- Hand sanitizer
- Glasses or contact lenses + extra pair and copy of your prescription. Contact lens solution is expensive, so you might want to bring a semester’s supply.
- Enough prescription medicine to last your stay and copies of prescriptions (with generic names)
- Medicine for an upset stomach
- A bath towel and a beach towel (do not expect to use your host family’s towels) (buy in Costa Rica)
- Sunscreen
- Bug spray
- Flashlight
- Camera with memory card , AC adapter and cable
- Travel alarm clock (preferably not an electric clock due to power outages)
- Backpack for routine daily use in San José (some students bring larger backpacks to use on weekend travel)
- Money belt
- Binoculars
- Guidebook
- Laptop computer
- USB flash drive
- Pictures of your family, home, and college to show to your host family and friends in Costa Rica. These items provide an excellent way for your family to get to know you better and make for good conversation.

Arrival in San José

The Director and your host family will meet you at the Juan Santamaría airport (SJO) near San José on Saturday, January 29, 2011. The ACM Chicago office will gather student travel information in advance and send it to the staff in Costa Rica. Upon meeting the Director and your host family at the airport, you will go directly to your new home, and will meet the rest of the ACM staff on Monday morning.

You are responsible for your transportation to and from Costa Rica. You should arrive at the international terminal at least three hours before your departure time. Even if you have an intermediate stop in the United States, you should be sure to check in at the international counter since all baggage will be checked through directly to San José and there are special security procedures for international flights.

Students are provided a phone card so that they can phone their parents or guardians to inform them of safe arrival.



ACM building.

V. Host Country Information

People

Costa Ricans are progressively moving away from a national identity based on dubious notions about European origins and “whiteness,” and towards more awareness of the diversity of the population. For example, an estimated 10% to 15% of the population is made up of recently-arrived Nicaraguan immigrants. Descendants of 19th-century Jamaican immigrant workers are an important (and frequently English-speaking) presence in the Atlantic province of Limon--at 3% of the population--and are probably the most significant historical minority in Costa Rica. Few of the native Indians survived the first 100 years of European contact; the indigenous population today numbers about 29,000 or less than 1% of the population. However, indigenous communities are a visible and sometimes vocal presence in several parts of the country. A small population of Chinese immigrants, some with origins dating back to the 19th century, and others of more recent arrivals, add to the country’s diversity.

History

In 1502, on his fourth and last voyage to the New World, Christopher Columbus made the first European landfall in the area. Settlement of Costa Rica began in 1522. For nearly three centuries, Spain administered the region as part of the Captaincy General of Guatemala under a military governor. The Spanish optimistically called the country "Rich Coast." Finding little gold or other valuable minerals in Costa Rica, however, the Spanish turned to agriculture, at first based on coerced indigenous labor. Indigenous communities quickly declined under this arrangement (through both disease and flight to several remote zones of refuge), leaving Costa Rica’s small landowners the challenge of surviving without coerced labor. The small landowners' relative poverty, the population's ethnic and linguistic homogeneity, and Costa Rica's isolation from the Spanish colonial centers in Mexico and the Andes all contributed to the development of a relatively autonomous and individualistic agrarian society. An egalitarian tradition also arose. This tradition survived the widened class distinctions brought on by the 19th-century introduction of banana and coffee cultivation and consequent accumulations of local wealth, and has served as a constant spur to social reform whenever the tradition and the reality have grown too far apart.

Costa Rica joined other Central American provinces in 1821 in a joint declaration of independence from Spain. Although the newly independent provinces formed a Federation, border disputes broke out among them, adding to the region's turbulent history and conditions. Costa Rica's northern Guanacaste Province was annexed from Nicaragua in one such regional dispute. In 1838, long after the Central American Federation ceased to function in practice, Costa Rica formally withdrew and proclaimed itself sovereign.

An era of relatively peaceful democracy in Costa Rica began in 1889 with elections considered the first truly free and honest ones in the country's history. This began a trend that continues until today with only two lapses: in 1917-19, Federico Tinoco ruled as a dictator, and, in 1948, Jose Figueres led an armed uprising in the wake of a disputed presidential election. With more than 2,000 dead, the 44-day civil war resulting from this uprising was the bloodiest event in 20th-century Costa Rican history, but the victorious junta drafted a constitution guaranteeing free and independently-supervised elections with universal suffrage and the abolition of the military. Figueres became a national hero, winning the first election under the new constitution in 1953. Since then, Costa Rica has held 15 presidential elections, the latest in 2010.

Government

Costa Rica is a democratic republic with a very strong system of constitutional checks and balances. Executive responsibilities are vested in a president, who is relatively weak by Latin American standards. There also are two vice presidents and a 20-plus member cabinet. The president and 57 Legislative Assembly deputies are elected for 4-year terms. In April 2003, the Costa Rican Constitutional Court annulled a 1969 constitutional reform which had barred presidents from running for reelection. As a result, the law reverted back to the 1949 Constitution, which permits ex-presidents to run for reelection after they have been out of office for two presidential terms, or eight years. Deputies may run for reelection after sitting out one term, or four years. In October 2007, the country ratified the U.S.-Central American-Dominican

Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) by a slender margin in its first national referendum, and the treaty went into effect in January of 2009.

Political Conditions

Costa Rica has long emphasized the development of democracy and respect for human rights. The country's political system has steadily developed, maintaining democratic institutions and an orderly, constitutional scheme for government succession. Several factors have contributed to this trend, including enlightened leadership, comparative prosperity, flexible class lines, educational opportunities that have created a stable middle class, and high social indicators. Also, because Costa Rica has no armed forces, it has avoided military involvement in political affairs, unlike other countries in the region.

In May 2010, Laura Chinchilla of the National Liberation Party (PLN) assumed office as Costa Rica's first woman to be elected President. Eight political parties are represented in the 57-member unicameral Legislative Assembly, with the governing party, PLN, having a 24-seat plurality.

Economy

After experiencing 8.8% growth in 2006, the Costa Rican economy experienced a reduction to an estimated 3.6% in 2010. Compared with its Central American neighbors, Costa Rica has achieved a high standard of living, with a per capita income of about U.S. \$10,569 and an unemployment rate of 6.7%. Consumer price inflation is high but relatively constant at about a 10% annual rate in the last decade. Both the central government and the overall public sector ran fiscal surpluses in 2007.

U.S. – Costa Rica Relations

The United States and Costa Rica have a history of close and friendly relations based on respect for democratic government, human freedoms, free trade, and other shared values. The country generally supports the U.S. in international fora, especially in the areas of democracy and human rights.

The United States is Costa Rica's most important trading partner. The U.S. accounts for almost half of Costa Rica's exports, imports, and tourism, and more than two-thirds of its foreign investment. The two countries share growing concerns for the environment and want to preserve Costa Rica's important tropical resources and prevent environmental degradation. In 2007, the United States reduced Costa Rica's debt in exchange for protection and conservation of Costa Rican forests through a debt for nature swap under the auspices of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act. This is the largest such agreement of its kind to date.

The United States responded to Costa Rica's economic needs in the 1980s with significant economic and development assistance programs. Through provision of more than \$1.1 billion in assistance, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supported Costa Rican efforts to stabilize its economy and broaden and accelerate economic growth through policy reforms and trade liberalization. Assistance initiatives in the 1990s concentrated on democratic policies, modernizing the administration of justice, and sustainable development. Once the country had graduated from most forms of U.S. assistance, the USAID Mission in Costa Rica closed in 1996. However, USAID completed a \$9 million project in 2000-01 to support refugees of Hurricane Mitch residing in Costa Rica.

Over 50,000 private U.S./North American citizens, including many retirees, reside in the country and more than 700,000 American citizens visit Costa Rica annually. A few vexing expropriation and U.S. citizen investment disputes have hurt Costa Rica's investment climate and have occasionally produced bilateral friction.

VI. Cultural Norms and Expectations

Enrollment in an ACM program obligates you to conduct yourself as a responsible member of that program. While on an ACM off-campus program, any behavior by a student that discredits the student or the program, as determined by the program rules and the Program Director, may result in disciplinary action. The Program Director reserves the right to discipline or dismiss a student whose conduct is seen as being in conflict with the best interests of the program and in violation of its rules, either academic or social. The Director of the program also has the authority, in consultation with the ACM Chicago office, to remove a student from the program because of a medical or psychological crisis or any other serious situation that might arise. Life-threatening events, serious involvement with the police, unscheduled loss of contact with a student, and incidents having the potential for serious public relations consequences may also warrant dismissal.

Local Adaptation

The cultural experience is rich and unique and calls for a series of adjustments by the student. It is a two-way process in which your family and community will learn about North Americans and you about Costa Ricans. Adjustment requires time, patience, and persistence. Here are some points to remember during your initial adjustment.

- People may not seem open when you approach them to ask questions. “Confianza” is important for establishing working relationships and requires informal conversations, so people will get to know who you are.
- Explain yourself to each person. This may be frustrating, but again, you establish personal rapport through one-on-one relationships. Make up your mind to master and enjoy the process.
- Family life/sex roles may be different from the North American lifestyle you know. For example, the television may be always blaring; lots of kids may follow you around; men may not do dishes; and you may not have space to work at home. You will have to figure out where you can work effectively. Kids can be great for learning the language, helping you find a place, and telling you about the area. Adult attention is focused on children; so take an interest in them as well. Especially in the rural areas, a good way of learning about life is to help the men or women with their chores—it is also a nice gesture as a family member.
- **Machismo.** If you are a young single female you must prepare yourself for catcalls and comments by some males. You will find it helpful to remember that some Costa Rican men do this even to older women. Such behavior is usually harmless. Your best tactic may be to ignore it, although you may find this difficult. If you have a friend or a child who likes to accompany you, you may not feel so conspicuous or alone. Machismo can be a problem for males as well. They may feel pressured into behavior with which they are not comfortable.
- Ticos are interested in the U.S. way of life. They will ask you questions about yourself, your family, holidays, and customs.
- While you are in the field, remember the behavior we recommended in the information on living with a Costa Rican family and which we discussed in our orientation sessions. Be sensitive to local cultural norms. Norms in rural areas may, and probably will, differ from those in San José!

Unanticipated difficulties during the fieldwork period are unavoidable. Expect them and be prepared. No research project ever gets carried out exactly as planned.

Cultural Considerations

When you first arrive in Costa Rica the greenery and lushness of the Central Valley and the superficial similarities with the United States may mislead you. San José has a modern facade and many U.S. businesses, traffic problems, and smog, all of which you may find familiar. However, beneath the surface, you will discover much that is unfamiliar—the language, politics, interpersonal relationships, thought patterns, and attitudes. You will feel rather than see most of these differences. Though intangible, they are both real and pervasive, and you will have to come to terms with them in order to be reasonably comfortable.

Some of the differences you will understand easily. For example, people in Spanish-speaking countries often eat a big meal at noon and dine later in the evening. In Costa Rica, some families do not even eat dinner. Students should expect to eat dinner even if the family does not. You will also find that Ticos express their emotions more openly than most U.S. citizens do. Hand-shaking, kissing, and hugging are common forms of greeting and leave-taking among friends, relatives, and in some cases even among people meeting for the first time. Female friends usually greet each other with a light kiss on the cheek or by grasping forearms. Men and women normally greet each other with handshakes and kisses on the cheek or by grasping forearms, depending on their familiarity. Other differences are subtler yet profound, and they can become aggravating if you are not open to new ways of doing things.

Cultural sensitivity and open-mindedness will help to make your experience a valuable one. Such sensitivity is needed in terms of language and is also relevant to your relationships with your family as well as to your appearance and behavior. For example, most Latin Americans consider themselves to be Americans in that they reside on the continent America. It may be discourteous for a U.S. student to refer to him/herself as an *Americano/a* when referring to his/her status as a citizen of the United States since, in that context, the term excludes Costa Ricans as Americans. In Spanish you should refer to yourself as *estadounidense* or *norteamericano/a* when questioned about your nationality.

Another difference is that the conversational distance between two people in Latin America is typically smaller than in the United States. You may find yourself talking to someone and occasionally taking a step backward, only to have your acquaintance take a step towards you. This occurs almost unconsciously as you and the other person attempt to adjust to your respective comfortable speaking distances.

Central Americans generally place much less importance on punctuality than North Americans do, particularly on social occasions. If you arrive at a Costa Rican family's home for a party at the designated time, you will probably be the first guest there and may find your hosts unprepared. The first guests usually show up about a half hour after the designated time. For office appointments, however, it is unwise to show up late. Being familiar with such details will make a difference in how you are treated in Costa Rica as well as in your comfort in adjusting to a different culture.

As is true for foreign students coming to live and study in the United States, you may encounter prejudices either in your home or on the streets. Just as in the States, you may find both racial bigotry and homophobia. Since Costa Rica is a predominantly Catholic country, Costa Ricans tend to be more traditional and less accepting of gay and lesbian lifestyles than many in the U.S.; however, no one who behaves in a discreet way should have problems. Women will also notice more overt sexism in Costa Rica than in the United States. Men frequently make comments to women on the streets, especially when they are unaccompanied. The majority of Ticos are warm, friendly people who will accord you as much respect as you show them.

You will not find it easy to shed the feeling that your own way of thinking and doing things is the right way; yet one of your principal goals should be to develop a cultural humility and openness to Costa Rican culture which will allow you to learn from your hosts. It is also important to be patient with yourself as you go through the process of cultural adjustment. Acceptance by and friendship with Costa Ricans will result from your willingness to adapt to and become an active participant in their way of life. This includes speaking Spanish even when the people you are with speak English. It may also mean adhering to more conservative customs of etiquette, dress, and speech in order to be accepted by the older generation.

This does not mean you should try to transform yourself to conform to the Costa Rican way of life. It does mean that you will need to be considerate and sensitive. For example, it means being responsive to your Costa Rican family's concern about the hours you keep, even though at college no one has given your personal schedule a second thought. It means attention to the tone and level of your voice and your language in public places. It means openness to hearing a wide array of political opinions, some of which may be contrary to your own views. It also means conforming to Costa Rican standards in clothing and general appearance, an area in which U.S. students have a reputation for slovenliness. Extremes in long hair and beards and ragged denim jeans are generally not acceptable to Costa Ricans.

The language and customs of Costa Rica may be different from those with which you have grown up. You have come here to learn about them, rather than to read about them from afar. Experiencing the language means to hear it and use it daily in numerous situations in which you are a real participant, and in which your behavior has real consequences. This is what we mean when we talk about language “immersions.” By the same token, when we speak of cultural “immersion” we refer to the full participation of a student in different social and cultural situations, in which the values, beliefs, and attitudes of both student and the target culture meet and must be taken into account in order to get along in the target culture.

Food

Part of the cultural experience involves the daily act of eating. Since cultures do not mold themselves immediately or perfectly to fit one individual who comes to study, live and travel within them, you should understand that when it comes to eating, you will probably have to make some adjustments in order to get along here.

We do not recommend that students eat food sold on the street, especially slices of fruit. The possibility of contamination is high and not worth the risk of dysentery or hepatitis.

A 10% tip is automatically figured into the bill at restaurants (as well as a 13% sales tax). It is therefore unnecessary to leave a tip unless you really want to do so. The typical dish of rice, beans, fried plantain, meat or egg, and a salad is called a *casado* and is generally a good buy. A hint for vegetarians: *carne* often implies beef; so if you ask for a dish without *carne* be sure to specify whether or not that also means pork, fish and chicken. When you are ready to leave, ask for *la cuenta*.

On some occasions, as when you travel with the ACM group, we will be eating food ordered for an entire group, and it is very likely that even a vegetable dish will be prepared with meat broth. It is understandable that cooks have learned and been trained to cook in ways that are appropriate and appreciated in their culture. Some Costa Rican families are deliberately trying to eat less meat; however, the majority still considers meat, in some form, to be an important part of most meals. While your family will make adjustments to try to accommodate your dietary needs, it would be culturally insensitive to expect them to entirely modify what they traditionally eat in order to adapt to a very strict vegetarian diet. Although your host family receives a monthly stipend for your room and board, the essence of the family stay is to nurture your cultural growth. We ask that you keep an open mind when faced with these situations and remember that they are a part of the culture you have come to experience firsthand.

Extra-curricular Activities

Studying in a cross-cultural setting is an absorbing experience which requires a total commitment. The ACM staff will attempt to make the experience valuable for you, but one of the purposes of these programs is to give you responsibility for your own learning. Although the ACM provides a high quality academic program with classroom work, assigned readings, papers, and exams, the program staff is also committed to experiential education and encourage students to become involved in social activities, sports, and in university and community events. The ACM has an agreement with the University of Costa Rica which allows students to participate in aerobics, yoga, mountaineering, karate, drama, dance, and other classes. A small number of students have also participated in choirs, bands, debates, and activities sponsored by student organizations at the university. In San José, some students also volunteer to work a few hours each week with the elderly and at the local childrens' hospital. The staff will be available to help you get involved in volunteer activities and answer any questions you may have.

Courtesy in Costa Rica

A person's understanding of courtesy is culturally-based. Our understanding of what it means to be courteous is not necessarily the same as a Costa Rican's. The following list highlights some differences:

- Drivers in Costa Rica normally do not stop for pedestrians. Stepping off a curb without looking may result in serious injury. Drivers make turns at high speeds, frequently without signaling. Do not assume drivers will respect your rights. **WALK DEFENSIVELY! The ACM staff worries more about traffic accidents than about any other hazard.**

- The notion of keeping to the right when walking in supermarkets or on the streets is not well established in Costa Rica. People will approach you on the sidewalk three or four abreast and only make way for you at the last moment.
- Time is not as precious a commodity in Costa Rica as in the United States. Banks and governmental agencies often allow customers to wait longer than is usual in the U.S.
- Do not expect to find non-smoking areas in all restaurants and public places.
- What we would perceive as name-calling is often used as an affectionate greeting (for example: *gordito*, *machito*, *negrito*, *chinita*). These terms are based on physical appearance only and are not intended to offend.
- Titles are more commonly used than in the U.S. Honorifics like *don*, *doña*, *Dr.*, *profesor*, reflect the sense that being polite includes using appropriate titles of respect. The social hierarchy these titles reflect may not interest you except as a sociological phenomenon, but you should be aware of it.
- When someone is eating, the custom is to convey the hope that the person is enjoying the meal. The standard expressions are: *¡Que le aproveche!*; *¡Buen provecho!* These expressions communicate an interest in the other person.
- Greetings tend to be much more effusive: for example, women friends kiss each other on the cheek, as do men and women friends; acquaintances shake hands frequently, etc. Certain expressions, used with regularity, convey enthusiasm for the other person: *¡Gusto en verlo!*, *¿Cómo amaneció?*, etc.
- When a person enters someone else's home, he or she usually says *con permiso* (with permission); the expected response is *adelante* or an equivalent expression. *Con permiso* is also used when ending a conversation and moving on to speak to someone else in an office or a social setting or when leaving the room or the table.
- Fellow bus passengers are often more helpful than their counterparts in the U.S. If you are trying to get a bus driver to stop and cannot get his attention, others will whistle or call out for you.
- In ministries, agencies, etc., you may be invited to have a ritual cup of coffee. This courtesy is uncommon in the U.S.

Men and Women in Costa Rican Society

North American men and women traveling abroad for the first time may be surprised at the rigidity of gender roles in other societies. Expectations for behavior based on gender extend not only to the people of the country in question, but to visitors as well. This section of the handbook attempts to prepare ACM students for the differences between U.S. and Costa Rican societies and to give you a brief overview of the customs and attitudes of many Ticos. We will return to this subject in depth during program orientations; however, some preliminary information may be useful. Please bear in mind that the following are generalizations and that you will encounter exceptions as you form relationships with Costa Ricans.

The structure of the Costa Rican family has been undergoing a constant process of change during the last two decades. Several factors have come to play in the modification of the more traditional family structure in which the father played the role of bread-winner and decision-maker, while the mother filled the role of a financially dependent housewife. A significant increase in financial stress due to inflation has led many women to find a way of contributing to the family income. The presence of women in the Costa Rican labor force increased from 18.4% in 1970 to 41.7% in 2008, and women are now present on all levels. However, they are still somewhat behind men at the administrative and managerial levels. The greater economic independence of women combined with the creation of the "law to promote the social equality of women" in 1990 have given women many options they previously lacked. A significant increase in the incidence of divorce attests to this process of change in the traditional family structure.

In your host family's home, you are likely to encounter a mixture of more "traditional" roles and very "modern" ones. Whether or not your host mother has a job outside the home, she will often continue to carry the main responsibility for housekeeping and child rearing. It is not uncommon for a husband to influence whether or not his wife can go out, with whom, where she may go, and at what time she should return. You may also find that host siblings of your own age are less independent than you are, and that they require parental approval of their friendships and activities. *Marcar*, a courting tradition in which the man must ask the woman's parents for permission to date, is still customary among some Costa Ricans.

Three main stereotypes are often applied to North American women (known as *gringas*) in Costa Rica:

- *The easy gringa*: A *gringa* is often stereotyped as an “easy catch”; in other words, she is easy to seduce.
- *The approachable gringa*: Costa Rican men usually see a woman from the States as more approachable than a Tica. A Tica tends to be reserved and cautious when approached by a man she does not know.
- *The wealthy gringa*: North Americans, both male and female, are seen as being wealthy. The possession of U.S. dollars is seen as a sign of wealth.

These stereotypes are the result of many factors, including the influence of television, radio, movies, and magazines, all of which convey images of U.S. culture. Occasionally, the behavior of a visitor from the United States seems to confirm these stereotypes.

Culture Shock

No matter how much you prepare for your time abroad, there will be surprises, both good and bad. As one study abroad student said, “It doesn’t matter what you expect—it won’t be what you expect.” It’s not unnatural to go through a period soon after you arrive when you’re homesick and everything looks more foreign than you can bear. Often labeled as “culture shock,” these periods pass; for some, they come and go quickly, while for others, they may last longer.

In the first weeks when you arrive on site it is not uncommon to experience culture shock, surprise, dismay, and even anxiety at the cultural differences in a new location and the unfamiliar situations in which you find yourself. The on-site orientation program is intended to help ease this adjustment, and you will in all likelihood find yourself adapting to the new culture and situations in a surprisingly short time. You’ll also likely discover that being able to settle in and “learn the ropes” can give you an enormous sense of self-confidence.

Research has shown that many students go through a three-step adjustment process in acclimating to their host country. In the first stage (once they have gotten over jet lag, if traveling internationally), they are likely to be excited and entranced by the novelty of being in a new location and delighted with most things around them. In the second stage once the initial euphoria has worn off, they may focus on the ways in which everything is different or “foreign.” The tendency is to highlight the differences and compare them unfavorably to things at home—the food is bad, the computer facilities are inferior, services are badly organized, etc. During the third stage, their view of home and their program location is more nuanced—they are likely to take a more analytic approach to both locations and to find good and bad things in each.

As a student studying abroad, you will undoubtedly feel uncomfortable at times, especially in the beginning, and likely hear your fellow students expressing similar responses. This is not unusual, and we anticipate that after a time these feelings of discomfort and insecurity will dissipate. We encourage you to speak with the program director and other on-site staff about your concerns and to raise any questions about the host country and the new culture to which you are learning to adapt.

VII. Health and Safety

While studying off-campus offers new educational opportunities, it can also present challenges and risks that are different from those on your home campus. Just as you prepare for a new mode of learning on the program, you should also think about living in a new environment that may contain new kinds of risks and will not have the same support systems or forms of assistance that you have turned to on your home campus or in your home town. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind as you prepare for your semester in Costa Rica.

Health

While you are in Costa Rica, you need to be aware of your health and your responsibility for dealing with medical concerns. Pay particular attention to sanitation and food and water, especially in rural areas. Costa Rica has a good system of water and sanitation, with potable tap water in about 95% of the country. However, check with the staff and your host family in rural areas.

The challenges of adjusting to a new culture are an important part of what you will be experiencing in Costa Rica. Adjusting to this new environment can be especially difficult when you are away from friends, family, and college faculty or staff who know you well. You will have days that are exciting and rewarding and also days when much seems strange and exhausting. Program staff, host families, and new friends can help you recognize and talk through these pressures and staff can also recommend counselors if you feel they might help.

The medical and dental facilities in San José are good. The program staff will help you to obtain any necessary medical treatment. The ACM Costa Rica office has worked with the Clínica Bíblica Hospital for many years where there are bilingual doctors, including specialists in all areas. Health services are also available outside the urban area and treatment for most minor problems can be obtained without returning to the capital.

If you have special medicinal needs, you may want to write our San José office to check on the availability of certain drugs. On the plane, be sure to carry any needed medicine in a carry-on bag rather than in checked luggage, in case your luggage is lost.

Although most students are concerned about intestinal parasites and resulting diarrhea, far more serious problems are sexually transmitted diseases and various skin disorders. If you are thinking of being sexually active, take precautions, such as using latex condoms, to protect yourself. Skin problems usually occur when people do not take showers regularly or when they expose themselves to too much sun. Be prepared for warm showers since hot water is not always available. **Frequent hand washing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. By washing your hands, you wash away germs that you have picked up from other people, from contaminated surfaces, and from animals and animal waste.** For mild stomach disorders, we advise you to bring some over-the-counter medication because these are quite expensive in Costa Rica.

Medications and Other Medical Preparation

As part of your preparation to go abroad, please carefully read the information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) about medical conditions in Costa Rica and the recommended precautions for Americans traveling to Central America. The website is:

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/destinationCostaRica.aspx>

You should share this information with your doctor or the physician who signs your Medical History form and your parents. You will want to make sure that you have the recommended vaccinations and are aware of and take precautions against the various health risks, as recommended by the CDC.

If you take one or more prescription drugs regularly, you will want to be sure you can continue this medication while abroad. Speak with your physician about the possibility of obtaining a supply to take with you. (And please make sure to keep it in its original container, and in your carry-on luggage.) If you cannot get a supply to take with you, you will want to see if this medication can be obtained in Costa Rica and to have the generic name. You should not plan to have drugs (of any kind) sent to you while abroad.

Psychological Counseling

The ACM has a short list of bilingual counselors in the San Pedro area. However, the level of English proficiency of counselors is not something we can guarantee. If you require regular sessions with a counselor, we recommend that you make the ACM staff in Costa Rica aware of your needs and discuss with them the availability of appropriate counseling services in the San José area well ahead of your travel to Costa Rica.

Insurance

ACM provides health insurance coverage for all students participating in its programs. This coverage is through HTH Worldwide, a company with long experience and excellent service in providing health coverage for students abroad.

The policy with HTH provides a broad range of coverage for students' medical treatment while abroad. Among the features of the policy are:

- Coverage for both routine office visits and hospitalization;
- No exclusion for mental disorders or alcohol-related accidents or illnesses;
- Coverage for prescription drugs;
- No exclusion for pre-existing conditions (except in the case of pregnancies beginning before the start of the program);
- Medical evacuation coverage; and
- No deductible.

The policy covers students from the day before the start of the program through the day after the program ends, and thus includes the time to travel to and from the program. The coverage is valid not only in the host country, but also for any travel to another country during the inclusive dates of the program—e.g., during program vacation periods.

The policy, however, should **not** replace any coverage you have in the U.S., nor should you discontinue your U.S. American health insurance coverage—it provides only limited amounts of coverage for follow-up treatment of illnesses or injuries which begin while you are abroad and only for up to 60 days.

The cost of this coverage is included in your program fee, and ACM will handle your registration for the insurance. It is also possible for you to purchase independently additional coverage to extend the days that you will be covered by the ACM policy. (If, for example, you plan to leave early for the program site or to do some traveling after the program, you can extend the policy.) The cost of this additional coverage is \$8.75/week. HTH will email you in the next several weeks a welcome letter and an ID card; the welcome letter will describe how to log on to www.hthstudents.com to view the tools available to you and to purchase any additional coverage. (You will need the ID number provided in the card and also a credit card to which the cost of the additional coverage can be billed. It is also possible to purchase the additional coverage by phone.)

Remember, medical insurance does not cover personal property. Insurance coverage for loss or theft of personal property may need to be purchased in addition to one's medical insurance.

Program staff will help you to use your HTH Worldwide insurance if you have medical problems while in San Jose. In other areas of the country, you may need to pay for your medical attention and request reimbursement. Program staff will also help you with this process.

Personal Safety

In San José you will be living and studying in a larger city than most of you do on your home campus. In the city, you will travel by foot, bus, or taxi. Public transportation is inexpensive and available to most parts of the city and country but may be crowded.

San José is well-known for its high rate of car accidents. Students should exercise extreme caution as pedestrians. **Pedestrians do NOT have the right of way.** Even when crosswalk signs show the walk signal, look out for cars. Driving with Costa Rican friends in private cars is not encouraged. Students are not permitted to have or drive motor vehicles. This rule is strictly enforced and any violation of it may result in suspension from the program. Your host family and program staff can advise you about how to ensure your safety as you travel around San José and more generally in Costa Rica.

Crime and Random Violence

Crime has become a problem in San José, as it has in most large cities in the world. Crimes against property are, however, much more common than crimes of violence. Theft is common; assault is not. Just as you would be careful with your backpack or wallet on subways and buses in New York City or Chicago, you should do the same in San José. Thieves are notorious for opening or cutting off purses (while they are being worn), slitting open backpacks, ripping gold chains off a person's neck, and taking wallets from pockets. North Americans are often easy targets in San José, especially on crowded buses, since they are usually unfamiliar with the city. Always remember to take proper safety precautions, including the following:

- Always carry your wallet in your front pocket and keep your hand on it in crowded areas. It is wise not to carry large amounts of cash in your wallet. Also, do not carry a driver's license or other important items that you do not need.
- Put your arm over your backpack or purse and be aware of what is happening around you.
- Program staff will make notarized photocopies of the pages of your passport with personal information and your stamp of entry. The ACM office will keep a copy on file in case your passport is lost. You should carry the notarized copy on you at all times and also keep copies in your wallet, backpack, and other luggage.
- It is wise to have at least one locked suitcase at your Costa Rican household for keeping valuables or things of personal significance.
- Avoid walking around in dark and/or solitary areas at any time of the day or night.
- As in most U.S. cities, women should try not to be out alone late at night, and all students are advised to take taxis home in pairs or groups at night.
- Try to look self-assured; never look lost.
- Check your map before going to a new place, so you won't have to consult it on the street (since this makes you look like a tourist). **If you are confronted with a thief or assailant, under no circumstances should you resist or attempt to flee. It is best to simply cooperate, and then to report the incident as soon as possible to the ACM Program Director or other available ACM staff member. In addition to helping you in any way possible, the ACM will need to notify your home campus of the incident. Your home campus will also be notifying your parents, so it is best for you to notify them first.**

Weekend Travel Safety Tips

- **You must tell the ACM Administrative Assistant and your host mother if you plan to travel on the weekend.** If you do not know the telephone number where you will be staying before you leave, please call your host family once you reach your destination to give them the number where we can contact you. You do not need

permission to travel in Costa Rica but in case of an emergency, we need to be able to reach you.

- Do not travel alone. It is always best to be with at least one other person should problems arise.
- Make your travel plan so that you get to your destination before it gets dark and do not have to travel at night.
- Carry a notarized photocopy of your passport with you, and your list of ACM emergency phone numbers. Take a taxi to and from downtown San José bus stops rather than walk downtown with luggage, as that makes you a target for theft.
- **Never leave any possessions unattended.** This goes for the bus stop in San José as well as in the countryside. It is common for Ticos to place their belongings in a line alongside the bus to mark their place; however *thieves frequently steal belongings left on the curbside*. Keep your hands on your things!
- Take your possessions on the bus with you. If it is absolutely necessary to stow your gear under the bus, be sure that *you personally see your luggage put in the compartment below by an official representative of the bus company*. A common practice of thieves is to pretend to be workers of the bus line, they receive bags from passengers and then they take them. On a similar note, when the bus stops along the way to let people off before reaching your destination and the compartment below is opened, *watch to see that your bags are not taken out*.

Whitewater river rafting is increasingly popular in Costa Rica, and there are a number of excellent whitewater rivers. However, you are advised to check into the policies and security measures of several rafting-tour agencies before choosing one. Inquire about the skill and professional training of the river guides, about the quality and maintenance of the equipment (rafts, oars, life vests, helmets), about precautions they take to avoid accidents (number of guides per raft, additional kayaks accompanying the group) and how they prepare participants for the experience, and about considerations of weather and water levels. Demand clear answers. **Please take this advice very seriously.**

Consult with Staff

You will face risks in Costa Rica, just as anywhere else. Part of what you want to learn on this program is how to recognize dangers and danger signs that are different from those you know at home. In most cases you can learn how to recognize and avoid these risks. In any case, let people know if you are feeling concerned or unsafe. Program staff, host families, and others can help you learn to deal with the risks in Costa Rica, just as they can help you learn to understand the history and culture of the country.

Legal and Ethical Issues

Drugs

Costa Rica is not a haven for drugs users. Costa Rican authorities make raids, stop people on the street, take unkempt-looking people into custody without explanation, and generally let people know that they mean to put an end to illegal drug use in Costa Rica. Anyone caught using illegal drugs can expect a long jail term, with little chance of early release. To date no ACM students have been questioned about drug-related activities and we hope to maintain this record. *You are on your own if you violate Costa Rican law. The ACM cannot and will not intercede on your behalf nor will the U.S. Consulate.* All drugs that are illegal in the United States are also illegal in Costa Rica.

Pre-Columbian Antiquities

It is illegal to take or send any pre-Columbian antiquities out of Costa Rica. This includes all artifacts, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant (pottery shards, stone tools, gold, jade, etc.). Many foreigners and Costa Ricans disregard this law, but the law serves a vital function in protecting Costa Rica's cultural heritage, and the ACM expects full compliance from its students.

While it is legal to buy and sell antiquities within Costa Rica, provided they do not leave the country, archaeologists affiliated with our programs strongly urge you to refrain, for ethical reasons, from trafficking in artifacts in any way. Since pre-Columbian artifacts are the only surviving physical vestiges of the prehistoric, indigenous cultures of Costa Rica, they have enormous historical, cultural, and scientific value which is lost forever if artifacts are removed from their original context and treated as commodities.

Any excavation of archaeological sites without official permission from the National Museum is strictly prohibited. Students who plan to participate in archaeological fieldwork in Costa Rica will be under the supervision of professional archaeologists with proper authorization.

Political Situation in Costa Rica

In the 1940s and 1950s many Latin American countries attempted to create reform parties and democracies. Costa Rica is one of the few that succeeded. In 1948, Costa Rica experienced its last violent conflict, which lasted only 40 days. As a result of this short civil war a new constitution was drafted, the military was abolished, and suffrage for women and minorities was established. The years since 1948 have been peaceful in Costa Rica. The government has continued to promote its democracy and to publicize its national health and educational programs. Ticos are often heard to say that there is an army of teachers but no soldiers in Costa Rica, and they are proud that they have the highest literacy rate in Central America.

In this environment, foreign students are received with great friendliness in both rural and urban areas. Because the quality of ACM students has been excellent in the past, the ACM enjoys a high level of cooperation from both private and government organizations with which the students work. We take all reasonable precautions but firmly believe that Costa Rica provides valuable educational resources and a peaceful, receptive environment for our academic programs.



Downtown San José

VIII. Program Arrangements

ACM Building

While the ACM building is a comfortable space, there are some living adjustments that need to be made when a large group is present. Please be courteous towards others and pick up after yourself in the various rooms of the building. Students must wear shoes at all times in the ACM center. We urge you to adopt an “early morning schedule,” that is to say, get to the ACM early to use the computers, to consult with the staff, and so on. Please do not leave backpacks and other personal items lying around. Use your locker to store your things as there are often people not associated with ACM in the building.

The main classroom is for your use when classes are not in session. You can use it to study, use your laptop, meet with other students, and to eat lunch, but again please keep it neat. Especially toward the end of the semester when papers are being written, please remember that studying always takes precedence in the ACM building, and be considerate of those trying to work in the various rooms of the building by taking conversations outside and listening to music with headphones. Not surprisingly, the lounge is a favorite place for students to be, but it is best to spread out a bit. For example, if it is not raining, the patio and lower patio areas are good places to be. The two major daily newspapers are available in the lounge, but can be read elsewhere as long as they are returned. Every Friday the “Viva” section of the daily newspaper *La Nación* lists music, movies, and other events for the weekend. The weekly newspaper of the University of Costa Rica (UCR), *Semanario Universidad* also announces academic and cultural activities on the UCR campus. Please do not take or cut out parts of the newspapers.

As for the kitchen, coffee and tea will be available for you on a daily basis. You are expected to wash, dry, and put away any dishes and utensils you use. The ACM recycles and composts organic materials, so please cooperate with those efforts. **Please do not assume that you can take food to class with you.** Professors may request that you not eat in class, and eating during the presentations of speakers invited to the ACM is not permitted. Eating is not permitted on the second floor of the building where the library and computers are located.

The ACM building opens at 7:00 am and closes at 5:00 pm from Monday through Friday. This closing hour is strictly observed, for security reasons. During academic “crunch times” the Director may also decide to open the building from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturdays and Sundays. The ACM staff will be available to help you from Monday through Friday, from 7:30 am to 12:00 pm, and from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. If you work best in the evening, then it is strongly recommended that for academic and cultural reasons you take advantage of the UCR and the San Pedro student neighborhood that are only blocks away. The UCR comes alive in the early evening, as many students take night classes. Studying in the UCR libraries or in internet cafés in San Pedro will give you the opportunity to mingle with Tico students.

Building Rules

The security of the ACM building, contents, and grounds requires certain rules. The ACM has arrived at the following rules as a result of long experience. We appreciate your cooperation and ask for your understanding.

Students:

- must leave the building by 5:00 pm;
- may not stay overnight in the building and may not return after hours to pick up items they may have forgotten;
- should make sure that all computers are turned off before the building’s closing time;
- must keep the gate of the ACM building closed
- may not open the gate if someone comes to the ACM gate who is unknown. Have a staff member attend the person.
- may not bring alcoholic beverages into the building and may not smoke in the building (smoking is permitted in the patio area but please be sensitive about the desire of many to avoid cigarette smoke);
- may not sleep on the lounge furniture; if you are feeling ill and need to lay down, there is a small room with a bed and a toilet that you may use upon request.
- may not entertain visitors in any area other than the building’s lounge or after office hours (7:30-4pm);

- must always wear shoes in the building.
- can use Skype in authorized areas of the program office to avoid disturbing other students and detracting from the Spanish-only environment in the building. Headphones must be used with all media.

Computer Facilities

The ACM computer facilities available to students include five personal computers, a black and white laser printer, and access to a color inkjet printer and a scanner. The ACM provides wireless internet access during our limited building hours.

Library Facilities

The ACM has a small library with a collection of some 5,000 books, among other bibliographical materials. It is ideal for taking out books and for studying and working on projects. However due to the limited space and the distraction for others, involved conversations should be reserved for other areas of the building. The same applies to the computer room. If you like to listen to music while you work, please bring headphones and use them in these study areas.

The ACM library contains a reference section, an open shelf collection, leisure reading section and topographical map collection. Items from the general open shelf collection and leisure reading materials can be checked out for two weeks. Library check-out slips are located beside the main library door. Please be sure to fill out a slip for **each item** that you take out of the library, even if you intend to use it only in the ACM building. The ACM cannot issue your grades until all library materials on loan have been returned.

The ACM will request an ID card for you from the University of Costa Rica that entitles you to use the University's library and sports facilities. However, the ACM cannot apply for your ID card until all students have handed in their passports to the Administrative Assistant. Your ID card will allow you to utilize all of the libraries of the UCR, both on the main campus and on the regional campuses. You will receive orientation on how to use the UCR library system during the first week of the program.

Use of Spanish

In the building we (ACM staff and students) speak Spanish as much as possible, although we understand that on several occasions English will be necessary to communicate essential information. If you prefer to speak to a staff member in English in order to avoid misunderstanding an important issue, please explain that to the staff member. As far as is possible, help us to maintain a Spanish-speaking atmosphere in the program office and encourage others to do so. Please reserve the use of English for important communication with program staff. One of the major reasons for coming to Costa Rica is to improve your Spanish; so please practice it with us and with each other! In addition, since you are in a Spanish-speaking country, it is polite to use the host country's language in communicating with others.

Telephone Calls

We ask you to use only the portable phone located near the front door for your local personal calls. As discussed in the information about families, all local telephone calls incur a separate charge. Please keep the number of calls to a minimum and limit each call to 5 minutes. Do not arrange for someone to call you and talk for an extended period; limit those conversations to five minutes as well. Remember: our phone is for business use and we receive important calls during office hours. Public telephones are always available and inexpensive for local calls. In case of emergency, you can make a collect call to the ACM from any local phone using the number 110. This may be necessary if you have no coins available or cannot use a public phone. In Spanish, a collect call is *una llamada a cobrar*.

If you want to make a long distance call from the ACM office, the portable phone can be used to make collect calls and calls with calling cards; ask the Administrative Assistant for help. It is much cheaper to be called from the U.S. than to make a call to the U.S. Prepaid phone cards (Viajera, Colibrí) for local and international calls can be purchased in *Más X Menos* and other supermarkets and bookstores in the San Pedro area. Prepaid values range from C/2,000 to C/10,000, and can also be purchased in dollar amounts. It is important to be aware that U.S. "1-800" numbers do not function the same in Costa Rica as in the U.S. These numbers are charged and are not "toll free" unless they are specific to companies in Costa Rica.

Skype works well through our network, although “Skyping” is limited to certain sections of the ACM center, since it tends to lead to distracting and lengthy conversations in English.

Photocopying

Students should not operate the photocopying machine. There are many convenient and inexpensive photocopying shops in the San Pedro area near the UCR campus. Students should use these shops for all photocopying needs.

Toilets and Personal Hygiene

In many Costa Rican homes, the custom is still to place used toilet paper in a wastepaper basket because the plumbing is not very good. Please follow that custom in the ACM building and never put a sanitary napkin or tampon in the toilet. It is important that you wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the bathroom.

IX. Housing Arrangements

Living with a local family provides an excellent opportunity not only to learn about the culture, but to learn about yourself as well. It will allow you to observe and reflect on a different way of life. Your family can be a wonderful source of cultural information. The most interesting insights often involve subtle differences, and you must develop your ability to recognize these nuances through persistence and patience. The amount of time you share with your family will influence the growth of this ability.

Spending time with your host family and asking questions is the best way to learn about local customs. Asking about the culture and listening to explanations is an ongoing process, and occasionally a frustrating one. Explaining your lifestyle, preferences, and customs is the other side of this coin.

Be patient with yourself and your Costa Rican family as your relationship develops. It takes time and work to overcome the feeling of being a guest or an outsider and to begin to feel like a member of the family. Before the semester begins, think about what you expect from the family situation and how much you are willing to give. Being able to laugh at the many mistakes you will make in trying to understand the culture speeds the adjustment process, as does the ability to be open about things you do not understand.

The ACM emphasizes that students should not be given special treatment during their home stay. Students are expected to adapt to the family setting and to rules applying to all of its members, not vice versa. Many Costa Rican families cannot afford to travel in Costa Rica and rarely go out to the movies or for dinner. Typically, they spend leisure time visiting relatives, engaging in community activities, or being at home. Thus you should not expect the host family to entertain you with trips to exotic parts of the country. The family is, however, responsible for creating a positive environment that will encourage you to participate in the culture, and you should feel welcome to take part in daily activities.

The family will provide you with a room, laundry service, breakfast and dinner during the week, and all meals on weekends. With regard to the food, the family will serve the typical Costa Rican dishes they customarily eat. Some Costa Rican families consume a lot of fruit and vegetables. For those that do not, fresh produce is available at any of the local farmers' markets (*ferias del agricultor*) and supermarkets in the metropolitan area.

The following list contains advice which may help you to avoid unnecessary problems with your Costa Rican host family:

- Personal hygiene is very important in Costa Rica and most Costa Ricans bathe daily. They expect you to follow this custom.
- It is unacceptable to walk barefoot in the house. You may want to bring a pair of slippers for indoor use.
- Telephone use: Local telephone service is expensive in Costa Rica with every local call incurring a separate charge. Therefore, ACM policy does not encourage the student to make calls from the host family's house. You should always ask for permission and use a phone card if you use the family phone. Public telephones are always available and inexpensive, and one can call anywhere in the country for less than ten cents.
- Please do not ask to make collect calls to the U.S. from your Tico family's home. Calls are sometimes charged to the residence by mistake (even when a calling card is used), and needless hassles and unpleasantness can result. Long distance phone calls may be made from any public phone by dialing 116 for an international operator, or 175 for international collect calls. During office hours, the Administrative Assistant can help you with collect calls and with calling card calls as well.
- If you plan to stay out late or not to arrive for dinner, you should notify your host mother well ahead of time, so that she can plan accordingly.
- Host families will wash all clothing at least once a week. Some families consider women's underwear personal and prefer that the student wash it herself. Women should ask their host mothers to show them the sink, or *pila*, for washing, and to provide them with soap so that they can wash their personal laundry by hand.

- Controversial topics relating to politics, religion, and alternative lifestyles should be avoided at the dinner table. As you will learn, most Costa Ricans still maintain many traditional values which may contradict some beliefs held by the average U.S. college student. There are Costa Ricans with whom you can discuss such topics, but it makes sense not to bring up potentially divisive issues with your host family.
- Please be sensitive and careful in your relationship with the host family's children. In this society, children are disciplined only by their parents.
- Learn to listen carefully for "dos and don'ts" that are not explicit. Costa Ricans generally use non-confrontational language and always try to stay on good terms (*ser amables*) with others. One example of this is the indirect language used to indicate social/cultural norms. If your host mother says, "On nice sunny days, we like to hang our towels out," she probably expects you to understand, "Please hang your towel outside so it can dry."
- The ACM cannot guarantee that your host family can host you before or after the program. If you do stay with your host family outside the established program dates, you will need to pay them for each additional night. Also, if you leave your luggage with the family for a period of time after the termination of the program, expect to pay them for storage. Similarly, if you return from your rural site during the two week rural stay in the fall or during the field research period in the spring for personal reasons (not related to your project or to your health), you will be expected to pay your host family. We encourage the host families to contact us if a student spends extra time with the family without offering to pay. We then request that the student make the appropriate payment. If the payment is not made, then the ACM pays the family and invoices the student. We have a good relationship with our host families, and it is important to maintain it.
- If you receive a visitor from the United States, your host family may offer to host him or her for a short period. However, please do not put pressure on your host family to do so, and do expect to pay for your visitor's stay. Avoid any arrangement beyond a couple of days as the presence of an extra visitor can become an inconvenience to your family and also can hinder the development of your relationship with the family and of your linguistic skills. Please be considerate of your family at all times.

Social Life While Living with Your Costa Rican Host Family

Neither the ACM Program Director nor your host family is interested in micro-managing your social life during your stay in Costa Rica. We will only become involved where we perceive your behavior is a serious threat to your security, to the security and tranquility of your host family or to the overall wellbeing of the program. It is crucial to remember that for these 4 months, you have **chosen** to live in an environment very different from a college dormitory, and for good reason. Your Spanish will improve incredibly simply due to living with a family, and we hope you will form friendships there that will last a lifetime. Keeping this choice, its implications and the multiple benefits that it brings firmly in mind will help to avoid most problems that may emerge from living with your host family.

Sadly, however, it is not infrequent for the ACM Director to be notified of students who are unwilling to control their social life, and particularly their use of alcohol to reflect. If your abuse of alcohol becomes a problem for your family (loud late night returns home, vomiting, etc.), they are under no obligation to keep you in their home, and the ACM director will not attempt to persuade them to do so. Unfortunately, it is also difficult for us to place you with another family if you have already demonstrated your inability to live within the rules of a Tico household. The homestay is a crucial part of our program. If a student's behavior indicates that he or she cannot be placed with a family, the ACM director may be obliged to consider dismissing that student from the program.

In any host family situation, questions and misunderstandings are normal. They should be treated as such and discussed openly whenever possible. The ACM staff is always willing to help and counsel you with any family issue.

X. Travel within Costa Rica

Travel during the Program

One of the advantages of studying in Costa Rica is the relative ease with which you can travel throughout the country. The quality of the main roads ranges from poor to good and buses serve almost every town that can be reached by a passable road.

In the capital you will travel by foot, taxi, or bus. Bus service in San José is good, although buses are frequently crowded. Fares range from about 25 to 45 cents per ride, there are no transfers. Taxis are plentiful and reasonably priced; from the center of San José to the ACM office is 2.5 km and costs about \$6. Most registered cabs (San José Público) use taximeters, so be sure to ride in a red taxi that has “SJP” painted on the doors and on the license plate. **Walking alone, (or in pairs in lonely places), is not recommended after dark. It is better to take a taxi to the door of your house after a night out, and to travel together in the taxi as far as possible (for women especially).** A woman should never sit in the front seat next to the taxi driver as this may lead to unwanted attention from the driver.

Addresses in Costa Rica are not usually given by street and avenue number; instead, familiar buildings, churches or landmarks are used as points of reference. Distances are measured in meters. One block equals about 100 meters. Most blocks are not actually 100 meters in length, even though that is the way distances are described.

You will be traveling by public transportation from your host family’s home to the ACM office for your classes. As mentioned above, the bus system in San José is considered safe and fairly reliable. A member of your family will accompany you to and from the ACM office until you are familiar with the route.

You may not travel outside of Costa Rica before the program has ended, and you must complete all exams and papers before your departure.

Travel before and after the Program

Students sometimes want to remain in Costa Rica beyond the end of the program. . **When traveling after the program, remember that the ACM is limited in the amount of extra time it can request for your migration permit to allow for in-country traveling and you will only have on additional week in country.** An easy way to renew your tourist visa after the country is to travel to Panama or Nicaragua for 72 hours. After your return your tourist visa will be renewed for another 90 days. **Remember, all foreigners are required by the Costa Rican Department of Immigration to have a valid round-trip airline ticket in order to enter the country.** It is best to buy a round-trip ticket and then change the return half later.

ACM is not responsible for you beyond the dates of the program. If your host family is willing to host you, you will be responsible for paying them for the extra days. Please consider that your family may have plans that make it impossible for them to continue to host you.

In the past, interested students have traveled in small groups to other parts of Costa Rica or to other Central American countries before returning to the U.S. Travel agencies in Costa Rica can help you with arrangements. Students will do such travel at their own risk.

Departure and Airport Tax

You must pay the airport departure tax of \$26 to leave Costa Rica. The tax may be paid at the airport, or prior to departure at several banks in the San Pedro area. This amount may go up by the time you are ready to leave, so please save enough cash

to pay this expense. Also keep in mind that you may need to take a taxi to the airport, which will cost you \$20-\$30. The ACM Costa Rica staff can help you with you prepare for departure.

XI. Evaluations and Surveys

Over the course of the program, you will be asked to complete questionnaires at several intervals. These surveys allow us to better understand the impact that off-campus study has on students and to use feedback from you to make improvements in our programs. Rather than simply spring these on you from time to time, we'd like to give you a sense of the total, of what you can expect to be asked and how your responses will be used. **In all cases, your responses will be anonymous.**

- Shortly before (or just after) you travel to the program site, you will be asked to complete an on-line survey that is part of a broader national research project in which ACM is participating. The purpose of this survey, which asks about your background, attitudes, and responses to specific scenarios, is to enable us to measure the broad impact of off-campus study on students. Students often say that the personal growth that results from off-campus study is the most important part of the experience, but our evidence for this is largely anecdotal. Your participation in this survey will provide us with data on the impact of off-campus study. Your responses will not be available to ACM or program staff and will have no impact on your grades. We ask that you answer as honestly and realistically as possible—there are no right or wrong answers. At the end of the program, shortly after you return home, you'll be asked to complete a follow-up survey, thus providing a "before" and "after" picture about yourself and your experiences. We anticipate that the survey will require approximately 30 minutes of your time.
- After the first month of the program, ACM will ask you to complete a mid-program evaluation, also on-line, which asks for your feedback on such aspects of the program as ACM's assistance in preparing you to go abroad, pre-departure and on-site orientation, and the extent to which the program to date is meeting your goals for off-campus study. Your responses enable us to assess the effectiveness of our materials and services in the critical first weeks of the program and to make any necessary changes. Summaries of responses (but **not** individual responses) for each of our program sites will be shared with program staff and faculty, and with faculty advisors at ACM campuses. This survey will require approximately 15 minutes to complete.
- At the mid-point in your program, you will be given a short survey in each of your courses which asks you four short questions about the course. Your feedback allows the instructor to assess his/her effectiveness and provides an opportunity for changes in the course if appropriate. Your responses, which will be collected by one of your fellow program students, are for the instructor alone and will not be shared with ACM program site or Chicago office staff.
- Shortly before the end of the program, you will be asked to complete a final, on-line survey about the program. The program director will set aside time for you to do this, and as with the mid-program evaluation, your responses will enable us to review program arrangements and course offerings and make any necessary changes for future programs. As with course evaluations on your home campuses, a summary of responses are shared with program instructors and staff only after the program is complete and your grades have been submitted. Faculty advisors at ACM campuses will also receive the summary. This survey will require approximately 20 minutes of your time.
- Soon after you return home, you will receive a reminder to complete the "after" survey that complements the "before" survey about your experience, attitudes, reactions to specific scenarios you took at the beginning of the program. As with the first survey, it should require approximately 30 minutes of your time. And we'll be glad to share with you what we learn in this projects as we gather data over several semesters; we think you'll find it interesting.

Thank you for your help in this. We need your feedback!

XII. ACM Program Rules and Policies

The Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM), is a consortium of 14 small liberal arts colleges in Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and Colorado. ACM's programs reflect the academic standards and policies of its member colleges, and the standards and rules in the paragraphs which follow are applicable for all of ACM's off-campus study programs.

Tuition, Program Fees and Refunds

As outlined in the separate sheet on Program Payment Policies included in your acceptance materials, each ACM college has its own arrangement for setting program prices, and you should consult with the Off-Campus Study Office on your campus to confirm what those arrangements are. For all ACM participants in the program, the general policy is that ACM bills your home college for all of the program costs except the \$400 deposit and your college in turn bills you (and your parents). Non-ACM participants should speak with the study abroad offices on their home campuses about billing arrangements and discuss with the ACM Program Associate how this will be handled. Whether you are an ACM or a non-ACM student, it is also important that, if appropriate, you inform your Financial Aid office that you will be participating in this program and confirm that your financial aid will apply to program costs; you may also wish to ask if your financial aid package will change to reflect program costs, including the price of the plane ticket. (Program-specific costs are outlined in the Cost Information sheet which was included in your acceptance packet.) In addition, we also recommend that you verify that any scholarships you are currently receiving will, as with financial aid, continue while you are participating in the program. It is also useful to be clear about how and when any financial aid and scholarship moneys will be released to you; we recommend that you make arrangements to have them paid into a U.S./North American bank account or sent to your parents or legal guardians to handle on your behalf. In any case, you should NOT have them sent on to you while abroad.

Once you are admitted into the program, you will need to reserve a spot on the program by returning to ACM the Reply Form (the pink sheet in your acceptance package), along with a \$400 non-refundable deposit. This \$400 deposit allows ACM to set aside a spot for you on the program, and **it must be received within 15 days of your acceptance.**

If you withdraw from the program at any time before the program begins, you will lose the \$400 deposit and will be charged for any unrecoverable expenses already incurred on your behalf. If you leave a program once it has begun or are sent home for cause (please see the Study Abroad Contract), the program fee cannot be refunded. Tuition refunds will be calculated based on your home school's policies. And finally, please be aware that you are liable for any expenses for medical care as well as damage to hostel, hotel, or other housing during your time on the program and that ACM will bill you for such costs. Your grades and credits from the program cannot be sent on to your college's registrar until all outstanding bills are paid.

ACM Off-Campus Grading Policies

Students from non-ACM institutions should consult the home campus registrar's office for grading policies in effect on his or her own campus.

Beloit

All courses (including internships) must be taken for letter grades. Grades will be recorded on the transcript for all programs, but only domestic programs will be calculated in GPA.

Carleton

Letter grades will be included on transcript but not calculated in GPA. No more than one course per semester may be graded on a S/CR/NC basis.

Coe

Internships are S/U only. Other courses must be taken for letter grades unless a student chooses the S/U option before mid-term of the program in accordance with the S/U grading policies stated in the Coe College catalog. The letter grade is reported and the Coe College Registrar converts the letter grade to a S/U. In order to convert to an S, the grade must be a "C" or higher.

Colorado

No restrictions on grading options except that all grades recorded on the Pass track must be verified by the letter grade. Letter "G-track" grades will be calculated into the overall GPA. Grades of any "D" or "NC" will not transfer for credit.

Cornell

Letter grades will be annotated on transcripts but not calculated in GPA. Only grades of "C" or higher will be accepted. Short term courses taught by Cornell faculty are exceptions to both of the preceding statements; these courses are graded in accordance with Cornell's standard grading policy.

Grinnell

Only off-campus courses for which students earn a grade of "C" or above will transfer to Grinnell as earned credits. Grades below "C" will be posted to the transcript with the grade received and zero earned credits. No courses may be taken on a pass/fail basis, regardless of individual program policy. Grinnell students may not take "incompletes" on off-campus study regardless of the policy in effect on their program. Courses in which incompletes are taken will not be recorded on the Grinnell Transcript even if completed at a later date.

Knox

Credit is granted for only those courses receiving letter grades. Grades received for courses taken off-campus are not factored into GPA.

Lake Forest

Students may choose to receive a grade of CR (credit for C- or better), D (no plus or minus), or F (Fail) in any course they take. Students choosing this option, or changing back to regular letter grades, must give written notification to the Registrar before the end of the first two weeks of the semester. Prior approval of the student's advisor is required. Internships will be graded Credit/D/F.

Lawrence

Courses taken on a non-letter grade basis will not be credited toward a major unless the Subcommittee on Administration and the major department give special permission and may not exceed the usual limit of S/U options (1 per term for students who have earned 54 or more units; maximum of 4 on record at any one time).

Luther

All courses must be taken for letter grades. Only grades of a "C-" or above or will transfer for credit; grades will not be calculated into overall Luther GPA.

Macalester

All courses taken on approved study away programs are counted towards the student's Macalester grade point average, unless taken on the S/D/NC grading option. Students may take one course per semester on the S/D/NC grading option.

Monmouth

All courses must be taken for letter grades.

Ripon

All courses must be taken for letter grades. Students wishing to utilize the S/U option must make those arrangements with the College Registrar prior to the program, or during the first half of the program.

St. Olaf

Grades from St. Olaf-sponsored off-campus programs are recorded on the student's official transcript, but do not count in the St. Olaf grade point average or toward the 24-graded-course requirement. See catalog for additional information.

ACM Policy on Sexual Harassment

Policy

It has been and remains the policy of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) that sexual harassment of students and employees is prohibited. Violation of this policy may result in discipline or dismissal of students or discipline and discharge of employees. However, allegations of sexual harassment are serious and may be extremely prejudicial to the alleged offender. Accordingly, allegations not made in good faith may subject the complainant to disciplinary action.

Sexual Harassment Defined

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature when (1) submitting or refusing to submit to such conduct is used as a basis for any decision affecting an individual's academic status or employment, or (2) such conduct has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment.

Grievance Procedure

Any student who believes that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment has recourse to informal and formal grievance procedures designed for the purpose of investigation and resolution of such allegations. Informal grievance resolution is encouraged although not required prior to initiating the formal grievance procedure.

As a preliminary matter, any student who believes that she or he has been sexually harassed should report the incident promptly to any of the following:

Director of the program in which the student is enrolled or other appropriate local staff or faculty member
Director of International Study Programs at ACM Chicago office, Carol Dickerman
Director of Chicago Programs, Sally Noble
Vice-President of ACM, John Ottenhoff

Assistance in presenting a grievance may be obtained from another employee or student. However, attorneys or other third persons may not participate in any facet of the grievance procedure unless ACM and all interested parties otherwise agree.

Informal Procedure

An informal procedure is designed to resolve sexual harassment allegations without having to invoke the formal grievance procedure. This can be initiated through contact with any of the staff named above. The goal is to resolve the problem through discussion with the student, the alleged offender, and any other relevant persons. The student and/or staff member grievance officer may elect to terminate the informal procedure if it appears that no progress is being made in resolving the dispute and initiate a formal procedure.

Formal Procedure

1. Students who wish to lodge a formal complaint must sign and submit it in writing to any staff members named above within 120 days of the alleged harassment.
2. Thereafter, the President of ACM (or if the President is the alleged offender, the Chair of the Board of Directors) shall assign a grievance officer to investigate the complaint and report his/her findings to a grievance board comprised of the President, the investigating grievance officer, and one other grievance officer selected by the President. No employee accused of harassment may serve on the grievance board.
3. The investigation shall include interviews with the complainant, the alleged offender, who shall be informed of the allegations against him/her, and other relevant persons. The grievance board may supplement the investigating officer's investigation by itself conducting interviews and reviewing relevant evidence.

4. Within 21 days after the investigation concludes, the grievance board shall decide by majority vote whether the complaint allegations are supported by substantial credible evidence. It shall then inform the complainant and alleged offender of its decision.
5. Any disciplinary or other corrective action resulting from a violation of this policy shall be determined in accordance with ACM disciplinary procedures.

Third Party Harassment

Any student who has been sexually harassed by a third party (i.e., vendor, guest speaker, internship setting) should report the incident promptly to any grievance officer who will then investigate and attempt to resolve the problem.

Confidentiality

All complaints and investigations of sexual harassment shall be handled in a confidential manner and shall be disclosed only to persons having a legitimate need to know. Grievances and documents will be maintained separately from other student files.

Non-Retaliation

Complaints made in good faith under this policy shall not result in any adverse action against the complainant, nor shall any person who participates in good faith in an investigation be treated adversely because of such participation.

Nothing in this policy precludes an individual from pursuing any legal remedies available to him/her.

ACM Policy on Personal Abuse

Personal abuse, whether oral, written, or physical, exceeds the bounds of appropriate discourse and civil conduct. Harassment of another because of his/her race, sexual orientation, ethnic background, religion, expression of opinion, or other personal characteristics is prohibited. ACM students who engage in such behavior may be disciplined and/or dismissed from a program.

ACM Policy on Dual Relationships

A dual relationship is one in which the faculty/staff member has both a professional and a romantic or sexual relationship with a student. This includes relationships which appear to be mutually consensual. However, the inherent inequality of power between student and faculty/staff creates an unacceptable conflict of interest in a supervisory, educational or advisory context. For this reason, dual relationships between faculty/staff and students who participate in the same program should be avoided. If a relationship nonetheless develops, the faculty/staff member is expected to remove him/herself from supervisory or advisory responsibility for that student, or face disciplinary action.

ACM Policy on Discrimination

The Associated Colleges of the Midwest does not discriminate in the operation of its educational programs, activities, or employment on the basis of sex, race, creed, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability.

