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Congratulations on your acceptance to the ACM’s program on Language, Society, & the Environment in Costa Rica. You will be participating in a program that has been in existence over forty years and has graduated many distinguished Latin Americanists.

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 information on 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 pre-departure orientation session and raise any questions you may have either in that orientation session, or individually with the ACM Program Associate, Heather Herriges, or the ACM Director of Off-Campus Study. 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 is 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 like to 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 Fall ACM Costa Rica Language, Society, & the Environment program has three broad goals:
- To develop Spanish language proficiency to the advanced level;
- To develop broad understanding of Latin American society and intercultural literacy through cultural immersion;
- To deepen knowledge of Latin American development, environmental, and cultural issues through coursework, first-hand experience, and field inquiry.

Course offerings build on the framework of a liberal arts education and focus on analyzing Costa Rican culture, politics, and environment, as well as Spanish language acquisition. Courses are discussion-centered, enrollments are small, and faculty work closely with students. A three-week rural stay gives
students first-hand experience participating in and studying the work of local communities, while service learning opportunities in San Jose provides students with, among other things, a comparative perspective between the rural and urban contexts. The housing arrangements, with host families both in San José and in the countryside during the rural stay, enhance the immersive aspect of the program, as do excursions to sites in and around San José.

When students return to campus after the fall Costa Rica program, they should have the skills in language, intercultural literacy, and field inquiry to arrive in or study a new country – especially in Latin America – and to engage with the major issues of the day with cultural understanding and experiential sophistication.
II. Calendar

**FALL 2012 SEMESTER**

**ACM Program Center option**

**August 18 - December 1, 2012**

Sat, Aug. 18, 2012: Students arrive in San José

Mon, Aug. 20, 2012: First day of classes

Sat, Sept. 22, 2012: Students depart for rural stay

Sat, Oct. 13, 2012: Students return to San José

Fri, Nov. 30, 2012: Last day of classes

Sat, Dec. 1, 2012: Students depart
III. Academics

Program Courses

Introduction to Costa Rica
Instructor: Dr. Mario Morera, Spanish Language Coordinator
Required course, 5 credits
This course will provide a broad introduction to the culture and history of Costa Rica, spanning a range of topics from the arts and literature; to Costa Rican politics, economy, and public policy; to its diverse ecology and conservation efforts. Taught entirely in Spanish, the course will combine classroom discussion with weekly excursions to sites in and around San José. Students will also be involved in service learning and/or local civic engagement projects, to become further connected with the local community. To provide a comparative focus with urban life in San José, students will spend three weeks of the semester living with a different host family in a rural community, where they will participate in volunteer projects in areas of special interest to them.

Spanish Grammar, Conversation, and Culture
Instructors: ACM Spanish language faculty
Required course, 4 credits
Instruction at the ACM center is provided by experienced Costa Rican teachers working under the direction of the ACM language coordinator. Instructors rotate among the small classes to expose students to several native speakers. Classes meet 17 ½ hours/week during the first five weeks of the semester and focus on comprehension and conversation, Costa Rican idioms, and grammar review.

Students choose one of following two elective courses:

Cinema in Latin America
Instructor: Jurgen Ureña Arroyo
Elective course, 4 credits
This class provides an overview of Latin American cinema, focusing on its historical roots and examining common elements and themes. Students will view and discuss a variety of Latin American films from recent decades, which will encourage discussion and reflection upon the political, social, and cultural situations in the countries of the region. The course utilizes a series of readings related to these topics, which will be analyzed and discussed in class. Students will also be engaged in the creative process of developing their own individual short films. Each student will write, film, and edit their work, and these student films will be the subject of in-class viewings and discussions. Note: All students taking this class must have their own device with which to shoot digital video (i.e. digital camera, video camera, smart phone).

Neotropical Biodiversity and Conservation
Instructor: Dr. Chris Vaughan, Program Director
Elective course, 4 credits
This course will examine environmental issues and solutions within the socio-economic-political framework of each Central America country, with special emphasis on Costa Rica, where conservation efforts have received international acclaim. Themes developed include: a) evaluating natural resource status and understanding the reasons behind their decline, b) improving land capability and land use information, c) ecosystem restoration, d) environmental education and outreach programs, and e) promoting “sustainable development”. The subject matter of this course is inherently multidisciplinary with interconnected webs of causality. In this course, students will focus on understanding roots of problems before concentrating on the most viable solutions. We will also relate what is occurring in Costa
Rica with Latin America and worldwide trends in environmental destruction and conservation. Course evaluation will consist of: participation in class discussions, written book reviews and a literature review research project (oral presentation and final paper). Taught in English and Spanish at the beginning of the semester and then in Spanish, the course meets for 1.5 hours twice each week and includes several fieldtrips to areas discussed in this and other courses. It continues throughout the semester (except during the three-week rural stay).

When students return from the rural areas, they will choose from one of three language electives: **Fantasy, Horror and Terror: Latin-American Fears in Literature.**
Elective course, 3 credits
This course introduces students to the contemporary fantasy, horror and terror works of literature of the region. Class work includes analysis of short novels, short stories, films and academic articles related such gender. Readings and conversations are all in Spanish. Costa Rican authors meet with the class to discuss their work.

**Advanced Grammar and Composition in Spanish**
Elective course, 3 credits
This course focuses on improving students’ writing skills through emphasizing good exposition, grammar review of more complex and diverse structures, and the development of an effective writing style. There will be writing practice on a daily basis in which students will utilize the new grammar structures studied in class. Students will learn different styles of writing ranging from academic to professional purposes.

**Latin American Rock in Spanish: Voices of Social Criticism**
Elective course, 3 credits
Designed to enhance students’ pronunciation, vocabulary development, and conversational skills, the emphasis of this course is on attaining greater oral fluency through listening to and discussing Latin American rock music in class. Students will analyze lyrics and video clips, read articles on music in the region, and consider the role of rock music in social criticism and social justice. There will be a wide variety of bands and styles representing all Latin American countries.

**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 program credits will appear on your transcript. You should also discuss your plans with your advisor and academic department, particularly if you want your work in Costa Rica to fulfill a requirement or serve as the basis for an honors or senior project.

**Expected Participation**

ACM students are not permitted to leave Costa Rica during the program. 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 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 courses.
IV. Preparing to Go and Arrival

Passport and Visa

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.

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 Coordinator of Academic Services, 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. 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.

As a precaution against a lost or stolen passport, ACM recommends that you make a photocopy of the photo page of your passport. Carry this information separately; 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

The ACM staff will obtain the necessary extension of your student 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 traveling 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, August 18, between the hours of 8am and 5pm. You can choose to make your reservations through the internet or through a travel agent in your home town or near your campus. Students also recommend
STA travel (800-708-9758). You may also wish to see what arrangements other students in your program are making—the Facebook group is the best way to share this information.

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 100 meters (a block) to the south of the Outlet Mall, 100 meters north of the ACM. The mailing address for the program 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—and expensive—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 (street address) of the program center, listed at the back of this handbook.

Computers
If you have a laptop, we recommend that you bring it with you. The ACM office provides a locker where you can store your computer overnight and during your field stay. You will need to be sure that your computer is insured, as ACM does not provide insurance coverage for students’ personal property. Keep in mind that it is best not to travel about with your laptop in Costa Rica with the same confidence you would at home, and it is strongly recommended not to take it with you during your rural stay assignment in the fall or during field research outside of San José in the spring. Household security (door locks, etc.) is often less strict in rural areas, and fluctuating electrical current, dust, damp conditions, etc. are more frequently encountered outside of San José.

Telephones
You may want to bring your US cell phone with you to Costa Rica and pay $6 for a prepaid service phone chip sold by the national telecommunications institution, the Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad (ICE). If your phone is not compatible with the chip sold by the ICE, you can purchase a phone in Costa Rica starting at about $40-50. Although a US cell phone will work in San José with an international service plan, calls are expensive. Skype is a good option for keeping in touch with friends and family at home. You can also purchase an international calling card, which you can use from public phones.

Money
Students on the program in the past several years have relied 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 on the ACM website.) ATM machines (known as cajeros automáticos in Costa Rica) are readily available throughout San José and other towns, 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 in smaller denominations ($100 bills are not accepted by many businesses)—and a credit card. Visa is more widely used than other credit cards, but you should not plan to use it 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 following checklists 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 limitations are regarding the number of pieces of luggage you can take, the charge for additional bags, and restrictions on the weight and dimensions of your luggage. Remember that when you travel to rural areas by bus you will want to use a backpack or duffel bag.

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, usually in the afternoon 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.

The advice for travelers is to travel lightly. 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. Bring a raincoat or an umbrella. A couple of sweaters and/or jackets are important for evenings and during rain sessions or if you visit higher elevations. 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.

**Gifts**

It is a wonderful gesture to take a gift to your host family. All fall students will also have a rural family, so plan on gifts for two families. 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:

- Boxes of chocolates or candies
- T-shirts or pennants from your college or sports teams
- Calendars with scenes of your home state or town
- Picture books about the U.S. or your home region
- Mugs
- Artwork from your hometown (small pottery, weaving, watercolors)
**Suggested Packing List**

**Documents**
- Passport + copy
- Copy of certified birth certificate (in case of lost passport)
- ATM card, credit card, cash (approx. $100 in smaller denominations)
- Copy of round trip flight ticket
- Copy of HTH card
- This handbook

**Clothing**
- T-shirts, and a few light, long-sleeve shirts
- Pants
- For women, Capri or knee length shorts, skirts, dresses
- Bathing suit
- Shorts for trips to the beach. Shorts and especially short shorts are normally not worn in the cities
- One dressy outfit
- A few heavy sweaters and/or a light jacket since the temperature in San José drops in November and December.
- Clothes for group field trips and the rural stay portion
- Comfortable walking shoes and a pair of field boots for hikes and camping (sandals are not safe for hiking in the tropics)
- Shoes you won't mind getting wet (for the fall rainy season) such as Chaco, Teva, Merrell, or Crocs.
- Rain jacket
- Slippers or sandals to wear around the house (it is not acceptable to be barefooted)

**Personal and Miscellaneous Items**
- Toiletry articles in travel and traditional size (You can buy these in CR but US brands will be more expensive than in the US but less expensive local brands are available.)
- Portable toilet paper
- Hand sanitizer
- Glasses or contact lenses and a 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
- Tampons
- A bath towel and a beach towel (do not expect to use your host family's towels but you can buy these on-site)
- Sunscreen
- Bug spray
- Camera with memory card, AC adapter and cable
- Backpack for routine daily use in San José (some students bring larger backpacks to use for weekend travel)
- Money belt
- Guidebook
- Laptop computer and AC adapter
- Umbrella
- 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.
- Host family gifts
Arrival in San José

Your host family will meet you when you arrive at the Juan Santamaría airport (SJO) near San José, provided that you arrive between the hours of 8am and 5pm. The Program Director will be on call with the host families to confirm individual arrivals. Upon meeting your host family at the airport, you will go directly to your new home, and will meet the ACM staff on Monday morning.

You are responsible for your own transportation to and from Costa Rica. If you come before the scheduled arrival date, you will have to make your own arrangements until the program begins. You should keep in mind that early arrival will limit the number of days you might be able to travel within Costa Rica after the program ends, since the visa extensions we request at the end of your 90-day tourist permit must be for the same amount of time for all our students, regardless of when you arrived.
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 2006, the former President Oscar Arias of the National Liberation Party (PLN) assumed office, defeating principal rival Ottón Solis of the Civil Action Party by roughly 2% of the vote. Arias listed passage of the CAFTA-DR, along with fiscal reform, infrastructure improvements, improving education, and improving security as primary goals for his presidency. The 57-member unicameral Legislative Assembly has four principal party factions, with the governing party, PLN, having a 25-seat plurality.

In 2010, Laura Chinchilla became Costa Rica’s first woman President. She is the sixth woman to be elected as President of a Latin American country.

**Economy**
After experiencing 8.8% growth in 2006, the Costa Rican economy settled down to an estimated 7.3% in 2007. Compared with its Central American neighbors, Costa Rica has achieved a high standard of living, with a per capita income of about U.S. $5,800 and an unemployment rate of 4.6%. 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.

Between 30,000-50,000 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 the USA and you about Costa Ricans. Adjustment requires time, patience, and persistence. Here are some points to remember during your initial adjustment.

- **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.

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. You will also find that Latin Americans 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.

Latin 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 many 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 “immersion.” 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, hepatitis or cholera.

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.

While your family will be concerned about filling your dietary needs, we ask that you be as flexible as possible in adapting to their diet as it would be culturally insensitive to expect them to modify their traditional foods in order to adapt to your diet. 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. If you are a vegetarian, we will try to place you with a family that is familiar with different vegetarian diets. However, we will ask you to be flexible, to help your family to understand your specific needs and to share recipes with them. 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. On some occasions, as when you travel with the ACM group, we will be eating food ordered for the 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. 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 participate in different kinds of volunteer work for a few hours each week. The staff will be available to help you get involved in extra-curricular 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.
- Not all restaurants and public places will have non-smoking areas.
- What we would perceive as name-calling is often used as an affectionate greeting (for example: gordito, machito, negrito, chinita). These terms are often 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.
- It is customary for family members to greet each other in the morning with “Buenos días” often followed by “¿Cómo amaneció?” It is important to return this daily courtesy to your family.
- 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.

**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. In 1970, women constituted 18.4% of the economically active population, whereas in recent years this percentage has doubled. Women are now present on all levels of the national labor force. 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 created more opportunities for women. 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. You may 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.

North American women (known as gringas) have three main stereotypes applied to them 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**

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.

Re-entry
When they return from studying off-campus, students are anxious to share their experiences with family and friends. Their experiences, even for a relatively short program, have been intense and exhilarating. They are often eager to convey the flavor and detail of this experience with those closest to them. For some students, off-campus study has been a transformative experience, both intellectually and personally, and they want those around them to be aware of the importance of their time off-campus. As one returned student recently remarked, “I can’t begin to tell you how different I am from who I was when I left campus.”

Readjustment to home can be a difficult process—as unsettling as adapting to the host culture when they first arrived abroad. Reverse culture shock may be expressed as criticalness of their own culture, a certain distantness from family and friends, or simple “homesickness” for what they have left behind. All of this may continue for a number of months. The single most important contribution you can make to this readjustment process is to listen. Students who experience culture shock in its strongest form report that they find it hard to describe their time abroad to family and friends, who are seldom willing to take the time to listen to what they have to say.
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 you 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, and HTH Worldwide insurance, provided by ACM for all program participants, has identified practitioners with which it works directly. Health services are also available outside the urban area and treatment for most minor problems can be obtained without returning to the capital. The cost of medical treatment (but not dental needs) is covered through your HTH insurance policy. You can buy most medicines over the counter, but they are as expensive as in the United States, if not more so. 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 cold showers since warm 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 U.S. Americans traveling to Central America. The website is: http://wwwn.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 prescriptions 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 in your carry-on luggage with a copy of the prescription.) 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.

**Health Insurance**
ACM will provide 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. Here are several key features of the coverage:

- Coverage for both routine office visits and hospitalization;
- No exclusion for mental disorders or alcohol-related accidents or illnesses;
- Coverage for prescription drugs (excluding preventative medications such as Malaria prophylaxis);
- No exclusion for pre-existing conditions (except in the case of pregnancies beginning before the start of the program);
- Medical evacuation coverage (but not taxi fares); and
- No deductible.

The policy will cover students from the day before the start of the program through the day after the program ends, and thus be in effect for the time students will travel to and from their programs. It covers you not only while you are in the host country, but also during any time you may travel away from the program site—e.g., during program vacation periods.

To arrange for HTH payment for medical expenses, you (or the program staff) should contact HTH in advance of treatment, and HTH in turn will contact the treatment provider. In the event that this is not possible, or if the provider wishes payment in advance of treatment, the student is responsible for these costs and should then file for reimbursement by HTH. ACM will bill the student and/or the student's family for any medical expenses or related costs (e.g., for transportation to the medical facility). ACM is not able to file medical claims on behalf of program students.

The HTH policy 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 provides 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. The cost of this additional coverage is approximately $10/week. HTH will email students a welcome letter and an ID card a few weeks prior to departure; the welcome letter will describe how to log on to www.hthstudents.com to view the tools available to policyholders 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.)

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. In practice, 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.
- Carry your backpack or purse in front of you with your arm over it and be aware of what is happening around you.
- Make photocopies of the pages of your passport with personal information and your stamp of entry. You will leave one copy with the ACM office in case your passport is lost. You should 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**

If you decide to travel on a weekend, please do so whenever possible with other students.

- **You must tell the ACM Coordinator of Academic Services and your host mother if you plan to travel on the weekend and provide the name and telephone number of the hotel/hostel where you will be staying.** You do not need permission but we need to be able to reach you in the event of an emergency call from the U.S. or a national emergency in Costa Rica, such as an earthquake.

- If you do not know the telephone number of the hostel or hotel, please call your host family and the ACM Coordinator of Academic Services once you reach your destination.

- 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 at all times.

- Take a taxi to 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*. A common practice of thieves is to pretend to be workers of the bus line, taking bags from passengers and putting them below. But after they put a few below, they take your bag from you and run away.

- 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.

- Once seated on the bus, you should never give your luggage to anyone even if they look official. There is no reason why anyone would need to take possession of your luggage.

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 and how they prepare participants for the experience, and about considerations of weather and water levels. The same advice holds for aerial gliding. Demand clear answers. Hang gliding and bungee jumping are prohibited. **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 now 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. Embassy. 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 on the spring field research programs 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.
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, you can use the patio and lower patio areas. 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 UCR weekly newspaper, Seminario Universidad also carries lots of cultural announcements. 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, as we have a pest problem that we would like to keep away from our books, computers (and offices!).

Visitors are to be in the ACM building only between 7:30 am and 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Do not bring friends and acquaintances to the building outside of these hours. As you come in with someone, introduce that person to the Financial Assistant. Visitors are to be hosted in the lounge and not elsewhere in the building. These restrictions are necessary in order to reduce security problems.

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. Under no circumstances will students be allowed to stay overnight in the ACM building. Always keep the gate of the ACM building closed. 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.

If someone comes to the portón who is unknown to you, **do not open it.** Have a staff member deal with that person.

**Building Rules for Evenings, Weekends, and Holidays**
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;
- should make sure that all computer materials are printed and computers are turned off before the building’s closing time;
- may not stay overnight in the building and may not return after hours to pick up items they may have forgotten;
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 that you may use upon request.
may not entertain visitors in any other area than the building's lounge;
must always wear shoes in the building.
to avoid disturbing other students and detracting from the Spanish-only environment in the building, Skype may only be used in authorized areas of the building. Headphones must be used with all media.

Computer Facilities
The ACM computing facilities include six personal computers, two black and white laser printers, one color inkjet printer, and a full-page scanner. ACM is able to provide you with wireless internet access during our limited building hours. Bringing a laptop can also be useful during the busy time at the end of the semester when time on the ACM personal computers is limited. Consider your personal work/study habits. If you prefer not to work within a “sign-up” system for computer time, then bringing a laptop is probably a good idea. The ACM has made a safe place in the building where you can store your laptop overnight and during extended stays outside of San José, 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.

Library Facilities
Keep in mind that the library is not large. Please reserve it for taking out books and for actual studying and working on projects. It is not the place for involved conversations. The same applies to the computer room. The space is limited and often the noise level is high. Lengthy conversations can be a real distraction for others. If you like to listen to music while you work, please bring headphones and use them while you are here.

The ACM library contains the following sections:
- Reference Section
- Open shelf collection
- Paperback/beach reading section
- Past student projects
- Audiovisual facilities

Reference materials may not be removed from the library without express permission from the library staff. Items from the general open shelf collection and easy 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 Coordinator of Academic Services. Your ID card will allow you to utilize all of the libraries of the U.C.R., both on the main campus and on the regional campuses. You will receive orientation on how to use the U.C.R. library system during the first weeks 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. There will be times when you might want to speak to a staff member in English because you may be concerned about misunderstanding an important issue. If so, explain that to the staff member. In general, if you wish to use English, please do so outside the building. Contribute by maintaining a Spanish-speaking atmosphere in the building and encourage others to do so. One of the major reasons for coming to Costa Rica is to improve your Spanish, so please practice it with us! In addition, since you are in a Spanish-speaking country, it is polite to use the host country’s language in communicating with others.

Phone Calls
We ask you to use only the portable phone located near the front door of the ACM building 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 ACM staff 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 at the ICE offices in San Pedro, Más X Menos supermarkets, and bookstores. 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 specifically to companies in Costa Rica.

Skype and other internet-based calling services work well through our network, although “Skyping” is strictly limited to certain sections of the ACM center, since it tends to lead to distracting and lengthy conversations in English.

Students have been able to purchase a new cell phone for about $40-50. Students can then purchase a SIM card for $6+ and get a cell phone plan for $5+/month. Some students have been able use their US phone with the Costa Rican SIM card.

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. 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 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 such differences through persistence and patience. The amount of time you spend with your family will influence the growth of this ability.

Socializing 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 feeling 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. Most Costa Rican families often cannot afford to travel in Costa Rica and very 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.

In San Jose your host family will provide you with a room, laundry service, breakfast and dinner during the week, and all meals on weekends. During the rural stay your host family will provide you with all meals. 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 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 might want to bring a pair of flip-flops designated 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 house of the host family. If you make such calls, you should always use a phone card. 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. During office hours, the Financial Assistant can assist you with AT&T or MCI calling card calls and collect calls as well.

- If you plan to stay out late or not to arrive for dinner, you should notify the mother of your family well ahead of time, so that she can plan accordingly.
- Host families will wash all clothing once a week and possibly twice. Some families consider women’s underwear personal and prefer that the student wash it herself. Women should ask the mother of the household 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 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.”
- ACM cannot guarantee that your host family can host you before or after the program. If you stay with your San José host family before or after the program, you will need to pay them. 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 will then request that the student make the appropriate payment. If the payment is not made, then ACM will pay the family and invoice the student. We have a good relationship with our host families, and it is important to maintain it.
- Should you receive a visitor from the United States, your host family may offer to host him or her for a short period. But please do not pressure the host family to do so, and do expect to pay for the stay of that person. Avoid any arrangement beyond a couple of days as an extra visitor—even a welcome one—can become an inconvenience to your family. Please be considerate 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 if we perceive your behavior is a serious threat to your security, or to the security and tranquility of your host family. It is crucial to remember that for these four months, you have chosen to live in an environment very different from a college dormitory, and for good reason. Your Spanish will improve exponentially simply due to living with a family, and we hope you will form friendships there that will last a lifetime. Keeping this choice and its implications firmly in mind will avoid most problems that might emerge living with your host family.

Sadly, however, it is not infrequent for the ACM Director to be notified of students who are unwilling to curtail their social life, and particularly their use of alcohol to reflect their new situation as a member of a Costa Rican family. If your use 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 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.
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 village 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 urban host family's home to the ACM office for your classes from Monday to Friday. You will be responsible for covering these transportation expenses in San José during the week as well as any expenses that may arise if you travel on weekends, so it is important for you to budget accordingly. 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. In fact, because the end of the semester is filled with academic activities, this is a good way to rest and explore parts of Costa Rica you were unable to see during the semester. 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 before returning to the U.S. Students will do such travel at their own risk. You may not travel outside of Costa Rica before the program has ended, and you must complete all exams and papers before your departure. 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 an 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, even if planning to leave the country by bus after arriving by plane, 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.**

**Departure and Airport Tax**
You must pay the airport departure tax of $26 before leaving the 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.
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. Please remember that these are academic programs: it is not appropriate to miss classes for because you are traveling or hosting visitors; students are expected to participate in all program activities unless otherwise excused. Nor is it possible to make special arrangements to accommodate students who wish to leave the program before the last day.

**Tuition, Program Fees and Refunds**

**Program Costs**
The total amount students must pay to participate in an off-campus study program varies from college to college, as does the availability of financial aid for off-campus study. These campus policies are often based on the specific curricular goals established at each college. Depending on the policies of a student’s home college, charges for off-campus study may be based upon the program’s tuition, or may be based upon the college’s own tuition. Additionally, some colleges may assess special fees for off-campus study. ACM students should therefore check with the Off-Campus Study and Financial Aid offices to confirm how their college charges students for off-campus study programs, what additional campus fees may apply, and what financial aid may be used toward the cost of their program.

**Confirmation Deposit**
Once accepted into an ACM Off-Campus Study Program, a $400 deposit is required. This deposit reserves your spot on the program and must be received by ACM within 15 days of your receipt of acceptance materials. It is credited toward the program fee and is non-refundable. Students who do not submit the deposit within the time frame risk losing their spot on the off-campus study program.

For the Chicago and Newberry programs, an additional sum of $200 for the housing deposit is required. This deposit is refundable upon completion of the program provided that no additional cleaning or special repairs are required.

**Costs Not Included**
For a breakdown of costs covered by the program fee and those costs which are additional, please see the cost worksheet for your program. Typically the program costs (educational costs plus program fee) cover tuition, program-sponsored excursions and site visits, housing, and some group activities. Unless specified, it usually does not include the costs of transportation to and from the program site, meals, passport and visa fees, and personal expenses; these costs are the student’s responsibility.

**Financial and Scholarship Aid**
You are responsible for making sure that any financial or scholarship aid is appropriately applied to the off-campus study program. Please check with your college’s Financial Aid office to confirm your financial aid package for your term of off-campus study.

**Refunds and Withdrawal Policy**
ACM makes significant financial commitments on your behalf well before the start of the program. You are required to send a deposit of $400 within 15 days of acceptance and the $400 is non-refundable; it cannot be returned if you cancel. If you cancel after depositing, you will be billed for all
unrecoverable expenses we have incurred on your behalf. Depending on the program and timing of your cancellation, these unrecoverable expenses could amount to several thousand dollars. If you are considering cancelling your participation, we urge you to contact the ACM Program Associate to inquire about the unrecoverable expenses to date for your program. Your cancellation will be effective the date that you notify ACM, in writing, of your withdrawal. The following schedule is in effect:

For students who apply in the spring for a fall program: Students are expected to deposit by April 15. If, having paid the program deposit, you cancel on or before May 15, you will forfeit your deposit and be charged for any unrecoverable expenses. If you cancel after May 15, ACM will bill your college any unrecoverable expenses and an administrative fee; your deposit will not be refunded.

For students who apply in the spring for a spring program: Students are expected to deposit by April 15. If you cancel on or before September 1, you will forfeit your deposit and be charged for any unrecoverable expenses. If you cancel after September 1, ACM will bill your college any unrecoverable expenses and an administrative fee; your deposit will not be refunded.

For students who apply in the fall for a spring program: Students are expected to deposit by November 15. Because of the short time between application and the start of the program, we begin making arrangements as soon as you have deposited. If you cancel after November 15, ACM will bill your college any unrecoverable expenses and an administrative fee; your deposit will not be refunded.

If you withdraw from a program on or after the day students are expected to arrive on site or are asked to leave a program for cause, the program fee cannot be refunded. ACM will work with your home college to determine what portion, if any, of the tuition money may be refunded. Please be aware as well that your college may apply other financial penalties for such a withdrawal.

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.

- Prior to the start of the program, 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 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 before you return home, you'll be asked to complete a follow-up survey, thus providing a "pre" and "post" 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.

• At the conclusion of the program (in some cases before you leave the program), all students will be asked to complete the “post-program” survey that complements the “pre-program” survey about your experience, attitudes, and 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!

**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** Students are permitted a maximum of one course to be electively graded S/U. Students have until the middle of the term to make the decision. In addition, a student may nullify S/U grading at any time if they desire to have the grade. However, they may not elect to have an S/U recorded after the midterm of the course.

**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 or as “incompletes” on off-campus study regardless of the individual program policy. Courses in which incompletes are taken will not be recorded on the Grinnell Transcript even if completed at a later date. Grades received for off campus programs will not be calculated into the cumulative GPA.

**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**  Students may elect to take one course on an S/U basis within the first two weeks of the program. All of the regular rules regarding electing the S/U option will apply (not in major or minor; must have earned 54 or more units; maximum of four on academic record at any one time). Please refer to the Lawrence course catalog.

**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. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Registrar’s Office.

**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**  When students choose the *graded option* for off-campus study programs, letter grades from off-campus programs are included on the transcript but not calculated in the GPA. St. Olaf has two non-graded options – S/U (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) and P/N (pass/no pass). Some courses are graded P/N per the instructor’s decision for anyone taking the course. Internships are offered P/N. Students may take a total of 6 courses as S/U. A student may choose to take any graded course as S/U; however, in order for St. Olaf to apply any general education requirements, the course must be taken graded: only one course taken S/U is allowed in the major.
ACM Policy on Academics: International Programs

All academic pursuit depends on trust. All of us, teachers and students alike, should be able to trust that we will be treated with honesty and respect—respect for our ideas and for us as persons. Many things can corrode that trust, including incivility and rudeness to fellow students, instructors, and on-site staff. As participants in an ACM program, you will be expected to conduct yourself with the same level of honesty and openness as you do on your home campuses.

The following academic policies apply to all students participating in an ACM international program:

1. **Arrival and departure dates.** Students should make travel reservations to arrive at the program site on the date specified in the program handbook. Similarly, students should plan their itineraries to remain at the program site through the last day of the program. ACM is unable to accommodate students who request to arrive early, later or depart earlier.

2. **Course load.** All students are required to carry the full load of courses and credits as determined for the ACM program in which they are enrolled.

3. **Class attendance and participation.** Students are expected to attend and participate fully in all classroom sessions, site visits, and field trips. Instructors typically take into account attendance and class participation when assigning final grades.

4. **Pass/fail deadlines.** Students may elect to take a class or classes on a pass/fail basis. This decision must be made in the first week of class; the program director will provide each student with a form on which to record the choice. It is not possible to elect pass/fail or to reverse the decision after the first week of class. (In making the choice to take a class pass/fail, students should inform themselves of their home school's policy regarding pass/fail classes taken off-campus.)

5. **Completion of course work.** All class assignments (including final papers, projects, and exams) should be completed and submitted before the end of the program. Any assignments or work not submitted before the final day of the program will receive a “0” and this will be factored into the final grade for the course. ACM does not record/report an “Incomplete” grade for courses.

6. **Academic honesty.** Actions of dishonesty are destructive of the well-being of the academic community, and ACM responds to them vigorously. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic theft will result in a failing grade for that assignment and may result in failure for the course. Extremely serious incidents of cheating or other actions destructive to the classroom community may result in expulsion from the program. Instructors who encounter plagiarism or other forms on cheating in an ACM program will report such episodes to the Program Officer, who will share that information with the home campus. The home campus may, in turn, wish to respond with its own disciplinary procedures.

7. **Final exams and presentations.** ACM cannot make special arrangements for a student or students to take a final exam or make a final presentation at a time different from that set by the instructor for the course.

8. **Graduating seniors.** Students who expect to graduate at the end of the term of the ACM program should discuss graduation requirements with an advisor at their home school prior to the start of the program. If there are special arrangements to be made (e.g., if grades need to
be reported by a specific date), students should share this information with the ACM program director at the beginning of the program.

9. **Retention of syllabi, course work, and other course-related materials.** Because home campus advisors may wish to review course work to determine how to assign credit for a particular course or courses taken abroad (and because, occasionally, course grades can be misreported), it is important that students bring back to their home campuses all materials from courses taken abroad. This is particularly important for courses taught by an on-site (i.e., non-ACM) faculty member, where it may be difficult to contact the faculty member after the semester or program has ended.

**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 Office Campus Study
- Director of Chicago Programs
- Vice-President of ACM

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.
Personal Information “Opt-Out” Form

In accordance with the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended, a student’s education records are maintained as confidential by the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) and, except for a limited number of special circumstances listed in that law, will not be released to a third party without the student’s prior written consent. FERPA regulations do allow the ACM to release limited “directory information” at any time, without obtaining the prior consent of the student. The ACM does not provide directory information to third parties for commercial purposes. Provisions of FERPA allow the institution to define certain classes of information as “directory information,” and the ACM has determined that the following student information is considered directory information:

- Name
- College/university
- E-mail address
- Off-campus study program
- Semester/term of off-campus study
- Awards, honors

Additionally, throughout the duration of ACM off-campus study programs, ACM representatives may take photographs, make video or audio recordings, or write articles about program participants and/or activities that involve program participants. Many student participants and associated faculty and staff may also take photos and videos, write articles, or maintain blogs for their own personal use, which they frequently share with the ACM. The ACM also shares short excerpts of student work, such as titles and overviews of projects and brief research abstracts. These images, recordings, excerpts, and accounts are regularly collected for the primary purpose of highlighting and showcasing the ACM via our website, posters, brochures, and other educational marketing materials. (Note: The ACM will never publish full accounts of student projects or research or use student photographs, video, or audio recordings without specific permission from the student in question.)

If you do not want the ACM to release your directory information, use your likeness in photos or recordings, or share excerpts of your work without your prior consent, you may choose to “opt-out” by making a copy and signing the form below. Requests can only be made via this form, which must be completed and returned to the ACM prior to participation in the program, to be applicable to that semester/term and for subsequent periods of time. Students wishing to reverse this decision may complete and submit the revocation section of the form below.

I request the withholding of the following personally identifiable information, associated with my participation in an off-campus study program through the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM). I understand that upon submission of this form, the information checked will not be released or used for ACM promotional purposes without my written consent or unless the ACM is required by law or permitted under FERPA to release such information without my prior written consent; and that the checked information will not otherwise be released or used from the time the ACM receives my form until my opt-out request is rescinded. I further understand that if any of the information checked below is released or used prior to the ACM receiving my opt-out request, the ACM may not be able to stop the disclosure of this information.

CHECK ALL BOXES THAT APPLY:
- Name
- College/university
- E-mail address
- Off-campus study program
- Semester/term of off-campus study
- Awards, honors
- Use of likeness in ACM recordings (photos, video, audio, written articles)
- Use of short excerpts of student work (titles, overviews, and abstracts)
- All items listed above

Name (please print) __________________________ Signature __________________________ Date __________

RESCISSION OF OPT-OUT REQUEST
I, the above named student, hereby rescind my request to opt-out from the release of the information indicated above.

Signature __________________________ Date __________