

AUGSBURG COLLEGE

Center for GLOBAL EDUCATION *and EXPERIENCE*

Dear Parents:

Greetings from the Center for Global Education and Experience at Augsburg College. We are pleased that your student will be a participant in our study abroad program in Mexico this coming semester. I want to take this opportunity to anticipate some questions you may have and to respond as best I can. You can find an electronic version of the manual that was sent to students, containing detailed information about the semester, at <http://web.augsburg.edu/global/APA/Manuals/MXS17.pdf>.

In particular please note the information about communication (telephone numbers, mailing addresses, etc.) in the General Information section of the manual.

The students will stay in our study center for most of the semester, and will also spend 4-6 weeks with host families in Cuernavaca and the rural community of Amatlan. In an effort to facilitate student contact with people from the Mexican working class, CGEE has relationships with families of modest means. One student will be placed per home. All of the families that receive students have been carefully chosen by CGEE staff and have participated in orientations and activities, including a health and safety orientation.

Two concerns that are frequently expressed when it is learned that the students will travel to Mexico are health and safety. Basic tips on personal safety and health are given in the program manual, and more detailed information is provided to students during orientation in Mexico and repeated throughout the program. In addition to the Center for Global Education staff in Cuernavaca, with whom we monitor security issues, there are also consultants and numerous resource persons in the region with whom we keep in close contact. Through the Association of International Educators we regularly receive and share comparative security information with others in the field of international education. We stay in touch with the U.S. State Department and regularly visit their web page to remain abreast of the most current travel warnings and public announcements throughout the world.

The U.S. State Department continues to have a Travel Warning for Mexico, as it also does for numerous countries. Although the travel warning advises against travel to certain locations within Mexico, it does NOT restrict travel to the locations where Augsburg's Center for Global Education and Experience (CGEE) currently offers educational programs. Rather, it simply encourages people to exercise caution. Moreover, it states:

Millions of U.S. citizens safely visit Mexico each year for study, tourism, and business, including more than 150,000 who cross the border every day. The Mexican government dedicates substantial resources to protect visitors to major tourist destinations, and there is no evidence that organized criminal groups have targeted U.S. visitors or residents based on their nationality. Resort areas and tourist destinations in Mexico generally do not see the levels of drug-related violence and crime that are reported in the border region or in areas along major trafficking routes.

We encourage people to review the full text of the travel warning at:

<https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings/mexico-travel-warning.html>

While students are responsible for planning independent and personal travel, they are urged and advised to read the latest U.S. State Department information to avoid travel to areas of high risk identified in the current Travel Warning. They are also required to inform CGE-Mexico staff of independent travel plans and contact information. The Center for Global Education and Experience also registers participants on all of our programs the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) which provides the latest updates and travel information from the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Augsburg's Center for Global Education and Experience staff will continue to monitor the situation in all areas of our programming and will not hesitate to cancel or reroute programs, if needed, to secure the safety of students and travel seminar participants.

As far as health is concerned, many students will have to endure a bout or two of diarrhea sometime during their stay. To optimize the health of the students while in Mexico, our staff will be instructing the group about safe eating habits and hygiene, as well as what to do during the family stay. In the case of a serious illness, there are good doctors and excellent hospitals in Mexico if a situation calls for professional health care.

The health and well-being of our current and future students and our staff and faculty is our top priority. Moving forward, we will continue to monitor conditions and we will not hesitate to make whatever programming changes are necessary should conditions change.

Some contacts/resources you may find helpful:

Center for Global Education and Experience in Minneapolis, Minnesota:

24-hour Emergency Cell Phone: 612/817-2830

Margaret Anderson, Program Manager: anderso4@augsborg.edu

Phone: 612/330-1159 or 800/299-8889

Center for Global Education and Experience Faculty/Staff in Cuernavaca, Mexico

Dr. Ann Lutterman-Aguilar, Site Director: lutterma@augsborg.edu

Office Phone in Cuernavaca: 612/605-7230

Other program staff and e-mails are available in the "Faculty and Staff" section of the [program manual](#).

Helpful Websites

- [Center for Global Education and Experience](#)
- U.S. Department of State:
 - [Mexico Blog](#)
 - [Mexico Country Information](#)
 - [Travel Information](#)
- [Mexico On-Line](#)
- [CNN Americas section](#)
- [MSNBC Americas section](#)
- [Advice for Parents at StudentsAbroad.com](#)

As you may realize, the experience your student is about to have is a very intense and challenging one. Even short trips abroad can stimulate a great deal of reflection about personal values and life directions, and you may notice changes in your student upon return to the U.S. S/he will likely want to share all of the adventures with you and may, at times, find it difficult to communicate the intensity of the experience. An accepting and open environment will make it easier to share and integrate the experience.

Finally, you may be thinking that this would be a good year to take that trip to Mexico you've always been thinking about. If so, you are most welcome to visit. If space is available, visiting family members and legal guardians may stay for free for up to one week (afterwards, the rent is \$15/person/day) in one of the program houses. If space is unavailable in our program houses, there are nearby hotels that offer inexpensive, comfortable accommodations (see "Visits from Family and Friends" in the General information section of the [program manual](#)). Feel free to contact our International Resident Assistant (cgeemexico@augsborg.edu) if you are interested in visiting and would like information about accommodations.

Again, please contact me if you have any further questions about the program.

Sincerely,

Margaret M. Anderson
Program Manager