

Dear Parents:

Greetings from the Center for Global Education at Augsburg College. We are pleased that your student will be a participant in "Social Change in Central America: Exploring Peace, Justice and Community Engagement" this coming semester. You can find an electronic version of the program manual that was sent participants at <https://web.augsburg.edu/global/APA/Manuals/CAF15.pdf>. In particular please note the information about communication (telephone, mailing address, etc.) in the General Information section.

Students will be living in a variety of accommodations during the semester. In Guatemala, they spend three weeks with an urban family in the western highland city of Quetzaltenango and one week in a homestay with an Indigenous Mayan family. In Costa Rica, students spend a few days in a San Jose guest house and then live with families southeast of the city. In Nicaragua, they initially live in our study center and then spend four weeks with a local family in Managua. There will also be a three-night rural homestay. We have competent, well-experienced staff in all three countries who will provide excellent leadership during the program. In addition to the resident staff in each country, a Study Abroad Facilitator will be traveling with the group throughout the term. (See the **Faculty** section in the program manual.)

Two concerns that are frequently expressed when it is learned that the students will travel to Central America are health and safety. Please be assured that the safety of our program participants is of the highest priority, and at this crucial time we monitor the situation in Central America even more carefully. Basic recommendations on personal safety and health are given in the program manual, and more detailed information is provided to students during orientation in each country. Additionally, we keep a very close watch on the situation Central America. The Center for Global Education has permanent staff in Guatemala and Nicaragua, consultants and other numerous resource persons in the region with whom we keep in close contact. We monitor security issues through regular contact with our on-site staff who are, in turn, in contact with U.S. Embassies. Through the Association of International Educators we regularly receive and share comparative security information with others in the field of international education. Additionally, our medical and emergency services provider, [FrontierMEDEX](#), sends us weekly and sometimes daily reports on world "hot spots" in real time as they arise. Finally, we register students 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.

In the past 33 years, the Center has led more than 1,200 trips throughout the global south for over 10,000 participants, and have therefore gained a great deal of experience traveling in these regions. We would not hesitate to cancel or to re-route any portion of the program should something occur that made it appear unsafe to travel there. For example, when the U.S. State Department issued a travel warning for El Salvador, we moved our programming to Costa Rica. Please contact me if you have further questions or concerns.

As far as health is concerned, many students will have to endure a bout or two of diarrhea sometime during their stay, but reasonable precautions in eating and food preparation can minimize the occurrence of this "discomfort." Our staff will be instructing the students about preventive measures, as well as what to do during the family stay.

In the case of a more serious illness, there are good doctors and hospitals in Guatemala, Nicaragua and Costa Rica if a situation calls for professional health care. Insurance is also provided through the program (see Insurance Information in the **Health and Safety Matters** section of the manual).

The following contacts/resources may prove helpful:

**Center for Global Education in Minneapolis, Minnesota:**

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

Margaret Anderson, Manager, Global Programs ([anderso4@augsborg.edu](mailto:anderso4@augsborg.edu))

Phone: 612/330-1685 or 800/299-8889

**Center for Global Education Staff in Central America:**

Study Abroad Facilitator (travels with students to all three countries): Ruth Garrido ([garrido@augaburg.edu](mailto:garrido@augaburg.edu))

Cell phone: Guatemala: 011-502-5896-8303

Costa Rica: 011-506-8349-9382

Nicaragua: 011-505-8112-9039

Guatemala: Fidel Xinico ([xinicotu@augsborg.edu](mailto:xinicotu@augsborg.edu))

Office Phone: 011-502-7830-8436

Cell phone (emergencies only): 011-502-4031-7917 or 011-502-5047-3961

Costa Rica: Cesar Acevedo ([acevedo@augsborg.ed](mailto:acevedo@augsborg.ed))

Cell phone: 011-506-8496-4557

Nicaragua: Office Phone: 011-505-2222-4268 or 011-505-2268-2319

Kathleen McBride ([mcbridek@augsborg.edu](mailto:mcbridek@augsborg.edu)) Cell phone (emergencies only): 011-505-8805-9382

Elisa Vanegas ([vanegas@augsborg.edu](mailto:vanegas@augsborg.edu)); Cell phone (emergencies only): 011-505-8402-8989

**Helpful On-line Resources**

- [Center for Global Education](#)
- U.S. Department of State: Of particular interest:
  - [Countries and Regions](#)
  - [Travel and Living Abroad](#)
  - Official Blog: [Guatemala](#), [Costa Rica](#), [Nicaragua](#)
- On-line news sources: [CNN Americas](#) section or [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. For many, the study abroad experience will stimulate a great deal of reflection about personal values and life directions, and you may notice changes upon return home. Your student will likely want to share all 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. I encourage you to refer to some literature on the "return experience," such as *Survival Kit for Overseas Living* by Rober L. Kohls, or any of the other resources available from [Nicholas Brealey Publishing](#).

I look forward to working with both you and your student, and welcome any questions or concerns you might have.

Sincerely,

Margaret M. Anderson  
Manager, Global Programs