

Greetings from the Center for Global Education and Experience (CGEE) 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 information about the program on the [**Pre-Departure website**](https://sites.google.com/augsburg.edu/prepare-for-central-america/home)**.** In particular please note the information about the schedule and communication (telephone numbers, mailing addresses, etc.).

**Accommodations**

Students will be living in a variety of accommodations during the semester:

* Guatemala: students will live with an urban family in the city of Panajachel, after a brief stay at a local hotel.
* Merida, Mexico: students will stay with local families.
* Costa Rica: students spend a few days in a San Jose guest house and then live with families southeast of the city. There will be two other shorter homestays in a community north of San Jose, and one several hours south of the city.

We have competent, well-experienced staff in each country who will provide excellent leadership during the program. (See the Meet the Staff section on the [**Pre-Departure website**](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VVzbpRFd70a1JwqeOTkMN9a5RzjqiY7iTYndZqEVGlE/edit?usp=sharing).)

**Safety and Security**

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. Basic recommendations on personal safety and health are given on the [**Pre-Departure website**,](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VVzbpRFd70a1JwqeOTkMN9a5RzjqiY7iTYndZqEVGlE/edit?usp=sharing) and more detailed information is provided to students during orientation in each country.

We keep a very close watch on the situation Central America. CGEE has permanent staff, 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. We also receive regular safety and security reports from the [**Overseas Security Advisory Council**](https://www.osac.gov) (OSAC) and we regularly check international travel warnings and public safety announcements, provided by the U.S. Department of State.

Additionally, our medical and emergency services provider, [**Educational and Institutional Insurance Administrators, Inc.**](https://www.eiia.org/international-travel/), (EIIA) sends us regular international security reports and provides us with pre-trip resources.

Over the past 43 years CGEE has coordinated more than 1,700 semester and short term programs around the world for over 20,000 participants, and has 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 if we it unsafe to travel there.

**Health Issues**

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 family stays.

Regarding COVID-19, CGEE requires full vaccination for all students, staff and homestay families. Strict health protocols are in place, provisions made for any isolation or quarantine as needed, and regular testing done. See [**CGEE COVID-19 Protocols**](https://docs.google.com/document/d/13O7uRPlCReFHL3LMvTdVLOwJi55RawsGbJtjX-W-jA8/edit?usp=sharing) for more information.

In the case of a more serious illness, there are good doctors and hospitals in Guatemala, Mexico 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 [**Pre-Departure website**](https://sites.google.com/augsburg.edu/prepare-for-central-america/home)).

**Contact Information**

**Center for Global Education and Experience, Augsburg University, Minneapolis, Minnesota:**

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**Center for Global Education and Experience, Augsburg University,** Guatemala:

[**Irma Alicia Velásquez Nimatuj**](mailto:velasqu@augsburg.edu)**, Site Director**

Office Phone:

Cell phone (emergencies only):

**Center for Global Education and Experience, Augsburg University,** Mexico:

[**Lisa Munro,**](mailto:munro@augsburg.edu)Program Coordinator

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**Center for Global Education and Experience, Augsburg University,** Costa Rica:

[**Cesar Acevedo**](mailto:acevedo@augsburg.edu)

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**Educational and Institutional Insurance Administrators, Inc.**

* [EIIA Webpage](https://www.eiia.org/international-travel/)
* [Summary of Benefits](https://www.eiia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/EIIA-International-Program-Summary-06.09-21.pdf)
* [FAQ](https://www.eiia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/EIIA-International-Program-FAQs-5.1.21-1.pdf)
* [Member Card](https://drive.google.com/file/d/10zg6-QDbbBHIadDrkTvftuW0NxULWBdj/view?usp=sharing)
* To receive alerts and access local information, go the [GardaWorld](https://travelsecurity.garda.com/welcome) Travel Risk Intelligence Portal (TRIP) and [follow the instructions](https://members.eiia.org/wp-content/uploads/assets/International-Generali-GardaWorld-Website-and-App-Instructions.pdf) to create an account. \*Please note it may take a few days for your account request to be validated.

**Helpful On-line Resources**

* [**Center for Global Education and Experience**](http://www.augsburg.edu/global/)
* U.S. Department of State: Of particular interest:
  + [**Travel and Living Abroad**](http://www.state.gov/travel/)
  + Official Blogs: **(**[**Guatemala**](https://www.state.gov/countries-areas/guatemala/)**) (**[**Mexico**](https://www.state.gov/countries-areas/mexico/)**) (**[**Costa Rica**](https://www.state.gov/countries-areas/costa-rica/)**)**
* On-line news sources: [**CNN Americas section**](http://www.cnn.com/americas)
* [**Advice for Parents at StudentsAbroad.com**](http://www.studentsabroad.com/handbook/advice-for-parents.php?country=General)

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.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns:

612-330-1159

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