

Dear Parents:

Greetings from the Center for Global Education 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 <https://web.augsburg.edu/global/APA/Manuals/MXF15.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 live for much of the term in a large house in Cuernavaca. Much of our programming is also done in this house. We have a competent, well-experienced staff in Cuernavaca who will provide excellent leadership during the program.

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 semester. 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:  
<http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html>

We are aware some websites are referencing an article that was published citing a Mexican nongovernmental organization as reporting that Cuernavaca "tops the list of Mexico's most violent cities." The report, which is used in this article, raised great concern among people who live and work in Cuernavaca as they believe it distorts the security situation there. What is important to know is the report combined a wide range of categories from robbery to homicide, and even though Cuernavaca does not rank in the top cities by homicide rate, the report combines both robbery and homicide to rank violence.

As such, the report distorts the volume of incidents of violence. It is also believed that Cuernavaca, Morelos has less state corruption and therefore less fear in reporting crime which results in higher reporting of crime incidents than some other cities. Most importantly, the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City do not discourage U.S. citizens from visiting or studying in Cuernavaca. Other colleges and universities, such as the University of Minnesota, continue to offer Spanish language and other educational programs in Cuernavaca.

Augsburg's faculty and staff in Cuernavaca closely monitors all reported violence in Cuernavaca, the State of Morelos, and throughout Mexico. There has been no evidence of violence or kidnappings directed at international students, foreign tourists, or foreign residents in any area where CGEE currently does programming.

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 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 in Minneapolis, Minnesota:**

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

Margaret Anderson, Coordinator for Academic Programs Abroad: [anderso4@augsborg.edu](mailto:anderso4@augsborg.edu)

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

**Center for Global Education Faculty/Staff in Cuernavaca, Mexico**

Ann Lutterman-Aguilar, Site Director: [lutterma@augsborg.edu](mailto: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](#)
- 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. For many students, the study abroad experience will 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 manual). Feel free to contact our International Resident Assistant ([cgemexicointern@gmail.com](mailto:cgemexicointern@gmail.com)) 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.

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Sincerely,

*Margaret M Anderson*

Margaret M. Anderson  
Coordinator, Academic Programs Abroad