

Report on the Spanish Language Immersion Program in Madrid, Spain, July 1-28, 2001
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As in Costa Rica and Mexico in the past, this time in Spain also, for me it was a joy to provide academic support and counsel 22 students from San Diego State University.

At San Diego State University, Ms. Ginny Foster, Coordinator of the Travel Study Programs, is a very dedicated person. The pre-trip meetings were well organized, informative, interesting and friendly.

In Spain, the Basque terrorists were very active during July 2001: three car bombs that resulted in three assassinations, one car bomb (deactivated on time) at the airport of Málaga, and one premature bomb explosion that killed a 20-year old female terrorist.

At the Universidad Antonio de Nebrija, Madrid, Spain, some faculty and staff members were very dedicated to the success of the students. However, there were others that were unprofessional and uncooperative (for more details please consult the students). As a matter of fact, during the four weeks of classes, several students came to my office crying concerning their frustration and dissatisfaction with the teaching and attitude at Universidad Antonio de Nebrija. It should be noted that at the end of the program, the students were invited to receive their certificate of "graduation" from the President of Universidad Antonio de Nebrija at Campus de La Berzosa (the main campus about one hour by bus from the site where the students had all their classes) with special invited guests. However, the students voted to have an exclusive "graduation" ceremony only for San Diego State University (there were students from New York, Brazil, Italy . . .) On the day of the ceremony, Friday 27 of August 2001, only two students participated in the exclusive ceremony. It should also be noted that all the teachers had to meet with the students from 11:00A.M. to 1:00P.M. on the day of the exclusive ceremony to discuss the final exam and grades with the students, however, besides the two administrators that had to be present, only two teachers were present to congratulate and honor the students from SDSU: Ana Blanco and Carmen Hernández.

The question that must be asked is: **Was the selection of Universidad Antonio de Nebrija made in the best interest of the students from San Diego State University?**

There were many complaints of poor teaching (“free for all classroom environment and what do you want to do today?”) and unprofessional behavior by teachers. During the first week of class, as the Program Director and on-site representative of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and San Diego State University with the responsibility to assure **quality education** for the students, I requested from Prof. Pilar Alcover, coordinator at Universidad Antonio de Nebrija, the opportunity to visit all classes (a total of 6). However, I was not invited until the two final days of classes during the fourth week of the program to “selected” classes. Professor Amparo Ángel was the only instructor who frequently gave me reports on the progress and problems of the students in her class. (I am a native Spanish speaker and professor of Spanish for 30 years with a Ph.D. in Hispanic Languages, UCLA).

My request to Prof. Pilar Alcover, coordinator, to have all teachers with students from San Diego State University make a roll call and daily report on tardiness and absenteeism beginning July 5, 2001, was ignored during the four weeks of the program. I needed this report to have a record (for my final evaluation on attendance and participation in class for the final grade of each student). And also, I needed this report to counsel students (there were some potential problems of a few students that on the second day knew about the places in Madrid where for *mil pesetas* -- about five dollars-- they could “drink all the alcohol” every day from 10:00P.M. until 6:00A.M.).

The Lodging Office under the direction of Ms. María José Cacho was also uncooperative (delays and even a form of “resistance”) on request for information or to have changes of host families for students that were unhappy or with problems.

Recommendations:

1. San Diego State University students should be sent to Travel Study Programs in Spanish that are equal, as much as possible, to the high standard of teaching and respect that they receive in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese.
2. Students should not be placed in “unsafe” neighborhoods and with host families that have not been visited for quality control in housing (Danielle Murray, Allison Neumann and others).
3. Students should not have to travel for one hour and fifteen minutes to and from school for class at 8:30 A.M. (Murray, Neumann and others).
4. Students should not be placed in overcrowded and/or with hostile host families (Barrie Sachs).
5. Host families should be informed by the Lodging Office of the host university on the needs and preferences requested by students: vegetarian and kosher meals, no smoking, allergies to dogs, cats, etc. (Barrie Sachs, Silvia Wilkerson and others).

6. In the year 2002, the Summer Program and the Semester Program should move to Universidad Alcalá. The teaching, cultural events, living accommodations (with host families or college dorm facilities at only ten minutes by bus or 20 minutes walking in a very nice college town), professionalism and friendly ambiance there are excellent (**there is an academic agreement of SDSU with Universidad Alcalá, and also, San Diego is the Sister City of Alcalá de Henares**).

7. At the suggestion of Ms. Ginny Foster who personally visited ENFOREX in July 2001, I also visited that Spanish Language School in Madrid, Spain, and I concur with her on the fact that it is an impressive possible site for the students. Therefore, in the year 2002, if not to Universidad Alcalá, the Summer Program should move to ENFOREX Spanish Language School. The teaching, living accommodations, professionalism, flexibility (a very attractive program that will give the students the opportunity to study in Madrid, and also, later during the four weeks of the program in Marbella or Salamanca or Barcelona) and friendly ambiance there are impressive.

8. Professors should be paid at least no later than at the end of a Travel Study Program. In my case, I should have been paid on July 28, 2001. To date, August 15, 2001, I have not been paid.

9. Professors should be reimbursed for transportation (I signed the "Request for Travel Advance" in the office of Ms. Ginny Foster, Coordinator of Travel Programs, more than "five working days" before my departure) at least at the end of a Travel Study Program. In my case, I should have received it no later than July 28, 2001 (the College of Extended Studies, Extension Programs Travel Study, received a copy of my itinerary/invoice NO. 0012454 from Council Travel on 12 April 2001). To date, August 15, 2001, I have not been reimbursed for transportation from San Diego, California, to Madrid, Spain.

10. Professors should receive the *Per Diem* at least 24 hours before departure. In my case, at my age --60 years old--, I do not need to suffer **avoidable stressful situations and inconveniences**: I did not receive the standard California State University *Per Diem* (\$41 for each day of travel) before or during the time (July 1-28, 2001) I represented officially SDSU as the on-site Program Director of the Spanish Language Immersion Program at Universidad Antonio de Nebrija, Madrid, Spain.