

## **Required International Experience for Liberal Studies Majors**

Starting in Fall 2011, newly matriculated Liberal Studies students at SDSU will be required to complete some type of international experience. Below, please find:

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### **Outcomes**

National research, especially Kuh's work titled *High Impact Educational Practices* (2008), has shown that international experiences are one of several types of high impact experiences that provide deep learning and personal gains for participants. The Liberal Studies program is designing experiences that focus on two major outcomes: 1) international goodwill/understanding and global citizenship plus 2) personal development, self-confidence, and independence. Try to imagine an intense five days in Mexicali. In Fall 2010, one of SDSU's graduate students could not contain her excitement as she described working with honey bees at the migrant women's honey cooperative, helping parents and children at a school build an irrigation system so that the children would have a small grass area for play, and listening and talking to people who had just been deported and were trying to get their lives back together at a support organization's headquarters near the border gate. That was her description of just one typical day of the experience provided by Via International in fall 2010. Learning how the very poorest women immigrants from central Mexico have made lives for themselves and their families in Mexicali was inspiring. Doing practical things like making honey and building an irrigation system gives students a sense of accomplishment that they rarely have in a world where computers dominate so much of their work and play time. Current SDSU students who have returned from international experiences have perspectives and abilities that are impossible to attain in regular classrooms. The members of the Liberal Studies Committee want all Liberal Studies graduates to have this type of high impact experience.

### **Locations**

While SDSU offers experiences all over the world, we (your Liberal Studies faculty) are focusing on Mexicali for our least expensive/shortest time scale experiences. The CSU currently does not allow students to go to Tijuana due to the violence. We are hopeful that in the future Tijuana will again become a destination, especially for our students with the greatest financial and personal challenges. Via International and other organizations are ready and willing to provide experiences in Tijuana as well as Mexicali.

### **Costs and Financing**

We expect the costs for **shorter** international experiences to range from \$800 for an intensive experience in Mexicali provided by Via International, to \$800 plus airfare for an experience in Costa Rica, to \$400 in India plus a very high airfare. The cost of the Via International Mexicali

experience described above covered transportation from SDSU and back, accommodations, and food—everything except for optional purchases during a short visit to the small town of Algodones seven miles south of Yuma. The **three-week**, summer abroad experience in England that the Liberal Studies Program is planning for June 2011 will be \$3780 plus the cost of airfare and about two-thirds of the meals. In general, we expect costs to range from about \$800 to \$5000, depending upon the type and location of the experience.

Students will be encouraged to work with the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships. Depending upon the situation, their financial aid package may assist with the costs of a **required** international experience. It is our understanding that students can ask for additional support during the semester they take a class that includes extra costs. That option should help a lot of our students.

In addition to financial aid, students frequently cover part of the cost via scholarships. All SDSU students can apply for an *Associated Students Study Abroad Scholarship*, which assists with the cost of airfare. Liberal Studies students can also apply for a *Division of Undergraduate Studies Study Abroad Incentive Scholarship* to defray some of the costs. We encourage students to apply for both of these scholarships plus scholarships from other organizations. We also encourage them to get our input on their applications; a quality application is essential.

SDSU is committed to finding ways to make international experiences affordable.

### **Time Commitment and Family/Job Responsibilities**

To meet the needs of students, many of whom have family responsibilities and most of whom work at least part time, we envision international experiences that take a variety of forms varying from several weekends, to ten days, to three weeks, and even full semesters. The following are options that are being developed or are currently available:

1. Petitioned alternative experience: Students who do not qualify for a passport will petition to do an alternative in the US.

2. Multiple short events: The Liberal Studies Program and the College of Education are actively working together on experiences that will require three or four intensive weekends in Mexicali.

A possible experience might include:

\*two all day Saturday events—with transportation from SDSU and back—at one of the universities with other education students comparing and contrasting Mexican and US education practices, possibly with a visit to a school, and

\*a long weekend (Friday afternoon through Monday) provided by Via International, including transportation from SDSU and back, accommodations, food, and activities like those described above.

The College of Health and Human Services tells us that even students with demanding family and job responsibilities are finding ways to complete a multi-weekend experience.

3. Regular semester course at SDSU with embedded field experiences: The College of Education is embedding short experiences in credential program pre-requisites courses, such as

ED 451, which Liberal Studies students take during fall or spring semesters. The international experiences associated with such courses are likely to be the week that includes Veteran's Day in the fall, the week of spring break in the spring, or a series of weekends as described above under 2.

4. Three week winter or summer break experiences: SDSU's College of Extended Studies offers a variety of faculty-led experiences ranging from \$2000 to \$5000. The Liberal Studies Program encourages native students and incoming transfer students to choose programs during the summer before the junior year, winter break of the junior year, or the summer following the junior year. In June 2011, we have a three-week experience specifically designed for incoming juniors in England at Keele University. This program is being led by Paul Justice, who will teach two linguistics courses needed by Liberal Studies majors, especially those in the new literacy emphasis. In Belize, Galan University provides fascinating biology courses appropriate for students in our science specialization (catalog years 2000-2010) or our science focus (catalog years 2011 and later).

5. Semester abroad exchange programs: SDSU has a number of exchange programs whereby students pay tuition to SDSU and only have to cover their airfare and living expenses; a student from the other institution comes to SDSU. A few students each semester choose to do this type of international experience.

## **Historical Context**

In 2009, we did a survey of our Liberal Studies seniors. We found that a high percentage of students were interested in some type of international experience, but many—including many of our transfer students—could not imagine how they could participate given family responsibilities and/or job commitments plus financial issues.

Since that time and even earlier, SDSU has worked very hard to find ways to make such experiences possible, even for students with these types of challenges.

\*In 2007, the Division of Undergraduate Studies, hired Karey Sabol as the international adviser for the Honors, Liberal Studies, and Compact for Success students.

\*In Fall 2010, the College of Health and Human Services led the way by requiring an international experience for all its students. The strategies their faculty and staff have developed are helping the rest of us implement our experiences.

\*In Fall 2009, the Liberal Studies Committee voted to include a requirement for some kind of international experience starting in Fall 2011.

\*In Spring 2011, faculty in the College of Education are working on a variety of international experiences and anticipate implementing an international experience requirement for credential students within the next two years. The current plan is that Liberal Studies students who have already completed such an experience will have satisfied the College of Education requirement.

Needless to say, with twenty or more programs requiring some form of international experience, SDSU is finding ways to make these experiences not only valuable to students but also feasible for its diverse student population.