Mexico
Field Research Program, UC Center Mexico City
2011 Fall Program Guide
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The University of California, in accordance with applicable Federal and State law and University policy, does not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, pregnancy, *disability, age, medical condition (cancer-related), ancestry, marital status, citizenship, sexual orientation, or status as a Vietnam-era veteran or special disabled veteran. The University also prohibits sexual harassment. This nondiscrimination policy covers admission, access, and treatment in University programs and activities. Inquiries regarding the University’s student-related nondiscrimination policies may be directed to the campus Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action office.

*Pregnancy includes pregnancy, childbirth, and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth.
YOUR UCEAP NETWORK

EAP Online
Bookmark your Participants program page; it contains vital resources and requirements you need to know before you go abroad, including the Predeparture Checklist, UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad, Program Calendar, EAP Student Budgets and Payment Vouchers, and policies.

Local EAP Support
Campus EAP Office
The Campus EAP Office coordinates recruitment, student selection, orientation, and academic advising, and serves as your primary contact during the application process.

UCEAP Systemwide Office
The UCEAP Systemwide Office establishes and operates programs and coordinates EAP administration for all UC campuses from its headquarters in Goleta, California. You will work closely with the following Systemwide Office staff:

- **Program Advisors** communicate program information, both academic and operational, to students and campuses, and coordinate and provide academic and administrative support in all aspects of your participation.
- **Operations Specialists** coordinate the logistics of the program. Document requirements, visa application instructions, health and safety precautions, placement and acceptance by the host institution, arrival and on-site orientation, and housing arrangements are examples of program details the Operations Specialists coordinate.
- **Academic Specialists** advise on academic policies; review and record courses taken abroad for UC credit; process student registrations, petitions, and grades; and document and maintain students’ academic records.
- **Student Finance Accountants** assist primarily with EAP statements, program fee collection, and financial aid disbursements (in conjunction with your campus Financial Aid Office).

Contact Information
Program Advisor
Mauricio Cobian
Phone: (805) 893-4138; E-mail: mcobian@eap.ucop.edu

Operations Specialist
Kristen Galbreath
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UCEAP Systemwide Office
6950 Hollister Avenue, Suite 200
Goleta, CA 93117-5823
Phone: (805) 893-4762; Fax: (805) 893-2583
Study Center Abroad
EAP options with the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and the Field Research Program (FRP), are administered from Mexico City by Veronica Tellez, Program Coordinator and a UC faculty member, and Toby Miller (UCR, Department of Media and Cultural Studies) who serves as Study Center Director. The Study Center Director and Program Coordinator will provide you with advice on academic matters, housing, safety, and cultural activities.

Mexico City Study Center
Universidad de California
Casa de California
Calle Carmen # 1
Col. Chimalistac
C.P. 01070 México, D.F.
Del. Alvaro Obregon

Phone (calling from Mexico): (55) 5662-9511
Fax: (011-52-55) 5622-9510

Study Center Staff
Professor Toby Miller, Study Center Director
E-mail: tobym@ucr.edu

Verónica Tellez, Program Coordinator
Cell: 04455-1684-3703
E-mail: vte@servidor.unam.mx

Phone Number Codes
U.S. international code ............011
(dial this to call from the U.S.)
Mexico country code ...............52
Mexico city code ..................55

Approximate Time Difference
Add two hours
EAP STUDENTS SAY...

I would strongly advise students to have a research question prepared before coming to the UC Study Center in Mexico City. Talk with a faculty member at your UC campus who is familiar with the field site that you want to go to.

This program gave me the opportunity to take my intellectual abilities and apply them to the real world.

I got the chance to think for myself and apply it to an independent project beyond the boundaries of the city of my host campus.

Don’t be scared to do the program if you think your Spanish will be worse than everyone else’s. Everyone was pretty bad when we first started, but learned quickly.

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

Program Description

On the Field Research Program, you devote the semester to a research experience that will distinguish you from most other undergraduate students, whether you list it on your résumé, show the final paper to professors at UC, or use it as a head start on graduate work.

During the first five weeks in Mexico City, you will spend a lot of time with the other students, writing and revising the proposal for your project, learning advanced techniques of field research, and becoming familiar with local libraries, archives, and other research centers. These activities are part of the Field Research Methodology class. In addition, the Contemporary Mexico class provides familiarity with major themes in Mexican history and scholarship, and you will also have an intense review of Spanish language. The Contemporary Mexico and Spanish language classes will also include other UC students who will continue their studies at the National Autonomous University of Mexico during the regular term.

The intensity of this period is punctuated by roundtable discussions that are held with Mexican scholars, one of whom will be the mentor who will supervise your research. The participating mentors will meet with you as a group to offer advance guidance on your proposal and help you decide which research site is appropriate for the project under discussion. By the end of this intense introductory section, you will be prepared to carry out a successful investigation.

The remainder of the semester is spent in individual field research at one of a number of sites throughout the country (listed in the Research Sites and Mentors section of this chapter). You are required to meet with your mentor at least once a week. The mentors are available to provide any academic advice you may need and help monitor your progress during the period you conduct your research.

At the end of the program, you present the results of your research in a substantial written paper that is the basis for your grade. You also conduct a presentation for your fellow program participants, instructors, and the Study Center Director in Mexico City.

Field research may be conducted only at the established sites or the surrounding countryside under the supervision of the site mentor. Each mentor has specific areas of expertise; however, some flexibility exists if you wish to work in a subject other than what is noted in this guide; contact the UCEAP Systemwide Office to determine whether the proposed area can be accommodated.
Academic Culture

The academic culture of field research is exciting but demanding. The more thought you give to your topic before you leave California, the more productive and exciting these first weeks of the program will be. UCEAP recommends that you discuss your topic with a faculty member in your major department to help narrow your research focus and consider the ways in which your project will fit into your overall academic career.

Your research topic will only be finalized after you have had a chance to meet with the mentors.

- See examples of past research projects by FRP students on the UCEAP website.

Once you arrive at your research site, you enter into the academic culture of professional scholars. Although you meet weekly with the mentor at your site, you are largely responsible for organizing your own time. Good fieldwork requires self-discipline and an organized, systematic approach. Do not expect to travel away from the research site for periods of more than a few days during this fieldwork period. Extended or frequent absence from the research site will inevitably have a negative impact on your work and ability to engage thoroughly with information, materials, and your mentor.

Research Sites and Mentors

UCEAP closely monitors the security situation in Mexico. Due to recent safety concerns, certain field sites have been suspended. Be aware of the UCEAP Travel Warning. Be mature and flexible when considering your research site. Also remember to avoid travel in any of the areas listed by the Travel Warning. Students found traveling in any of these areas are subject to immediate dismissal from the program.

Mexico City (Distrito Federal)
Marina Alonso Bolaños, Universidad Autónoma de Mexico (UNAM)
The nation’s capital provides innumerable opportunities to conduct research in fields as diverse as art restoration, elementary and secondary education, contemporary music, or public policy.

Mérida (Yucatán)
Juan José Jiménez, Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán
Mérida is the largest city in the Yucatán peninsula and provides opportunities to examine Mayan culture and history along with the cultural changes brought on by the region’s economic development. Mérida is also a good site for research in the environmental sciences and ecology. Professor Jiménez, representing anthropology and archaeology, works in the areas of natural resource conservation and advises for such fields as sustainable development, public health, and maquiladoras.

Oaxaca (Oaxaca)
Patricia Mena, Universidad Pedagógica de Oaxaca
As the capital of this southern state with large concentrations of indigenous peoples, Oaxaca offers opportunities to study native cultural traditions and history from an anthropological perspective. Professor Mena, an expert in sociolinguistics and bilingual education, also supervises research on questions of gender, education, migration, and ethnicity.
EAP STUDENTS SAY...

I think the FRP program is a great program for anyone who wishes to take on an independent research project. I really enjoyed the freedom the program offers to be able to respectively learn about communities in Mexico and different aspects of the culture. If you need constant instructions and guidance throughout academic work, this program is probably not for you. But if you are fearless and willing to step out of your comfort zone, this is the perfect program for you and you can really take what you want out of it and learn life lessons that you would’ve never expected.

Querétaro (Querétaro)

José Enrique Brito, Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro

Located 2.5 hours from Mexico City in the famous Bajío region, Querétaro is close to the historic cities of San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato. This is an excellent site to study colonial architecture, community studies, and Spanish-language literature.

San Cristóbal de las Casas (Chiapas)

Gracia Imberton, Universidad Autónoma de Chiapas

Located in the mountains in the heart of Chiapas, San Cristóbal de las Casas is the gateway to the state’s Indian communities. A beautiful city rich in history, San Cristóbal is an ideal research location for students interested in traditional medicine and public health among indigenous women. Professor Imberton is an anthropologist at the Instituto de Estudios Indígenas whose research has focused on public health issues among the Ch’ol Maya of northern Chiapas. She has also coordinated the mentoring of research projects on regional politics and political identities, environmental issues, and migration.

Xalapa (Veracruz)

Adriana Naveda Chavez, Universidad Veracruzana

Referred to as the “Athens of Veracruz,” Xalapa is known for its strong cultural scene. The city and region provide a rich environment to conduct further study in history, archaeology, anthropology, and ethnomusicology. Dr. Chavez is a researcher at the Instituto de Investigaciones Historico-Sociales, whose past work has focused on the roots of slavery in Veracruz and Afromexican culture and populations in the region.
Course Information & Requirements

You are required to take a full-time course of study while abroad. All students take four courses to meet the required 22.5 UC upper-division quarter units for the semester:

1) Spanish language course (4 units)
2) Contemporary Mexico course, cross listed under History and Political Science (4.5 units)
3) Field Research Methods course in the subject area of your research (5 units)
4) Special Studies Research course in the subject area of your research (9 units)

Part of the final grade for the 9-unit research portion of this program is the evaluation your mentor forwards to the Study Center Director. The evaluation includes the mentor’s assessment of your commitment and approach to research work, as well as the mentor-student academic relationship. Too much travel away from the research site will have a negative impact on this part of your grade.

You are responsible for giving your mentor a copy of the final paper before leaving the field site so that he or she can prepare a narrative evaluation for submission to the Study Center Director, who is the UC instructor of record. You also submit a copy of the written project directly to the Study Center Director when you return to Mexico City at the end of the program and share your research results with the other FRP participants.

Internships

In rare cases, it is possible to do an unpaid internship in lieu of fieldwork to conduct your independent research. If interested, you must petition to apply for an internship at the beginning of the program; the Study Center Director and staff will determine whether it is possible. As with fieldwork, participation in an internship requires that you present a substantial paper at the conclusion of the program to earn 9 UC quarter units for the internship course.

Graduate Course Work

Graduate students are welcome in the Field Research Program; the program is particularly well suited to MA candidates. If you have very specific research plans, state them clearly in the Graduate Preliminary Inquiry Form to ensure that your needs can be accommodated. In general, the extensive intellectual resources of the program are valuable to any graduate student with serious research interests in Mexico. Previous graduate participants have reported excellent results.

Grades

For general information about grades, see the Academic Information chapter of the UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad.
**Extending EAP Participation**

**Planning for Extension**

UCEAP programs in Mexico offer unusually rich opportunities for combining different program experiences. In this program, you can extend participation to the spring term at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM).

As with most rewarding experiences, participating in back-to-back programs or extending to year programs requires an exceptional level of organization and maturity. You must be able to plan in advance and prepare for the second or extended program while completing the first.

**Extension Process**

You must meet UNAM selection requirements, including 3.0 cumulative and language GPAs, prior to departure and adhere to the extension process as follows:

- Indicate your intent to extend your studies in Mexico on a completed Departmental and College Pre-Approval to Extend (DPA) form before you depart for Mexico.
- Submit the DPA form with your UCEAP application.
- Once abroad, you must meet with the Study Center Director and submit a Request for Final Approval to Extend (RFA) form. The deadline to submit an RFA is November 1.
- Requests for extensions are considered when there is space at the host university and the request is supported by the Study Center Director, UCEAP, your UC campus department head, and your UC dean or provost.
- Once your extension has been approved, notification will be sent to your home campus registrar, Financial Aid Office, and Campus EAP Office. For information about the steps you need to take in regards to finances, see the Extension of Participation chapter of the UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad.

If your extension is approved, you will be expected to complete the academic year in Mexico. A request to shorten the stay will be treated as a withdrawal from UCEAP, with possible financial penalties.

**Consecutive Programs: Continuing On UCEAP**

In addition to the above options, it is occasionally possible to participate in two different UCEAP programs consecutively. For example, a student might choose to join the UCEAP Chile program after studying in Mexico.

If you would like to participate in two programs:

- Decide what programs you would like to attend and submit an application for each by the campus deadline before you leave the U.S.
- Go through the regular UCEAP selection process for each program, including a possible personal interview. You must meet all selection criteria for both programs and your UC campus must select you to participate. The Campus EAP Office may impose additional restrictions.
- Before buying international airfare, contact the Operations Specialist to check in about visa requirements and any other logistics.
- Designate a trusted friend or relative who will be able to retrieve documents from the campus office and mail them to you abroad.
“EAP STUDENTS SAY...”

Read as much as possible about Mexican culture and society before you go. The more prepared you are, the more you’ll get out of the program.

The students here are smart! It’s fantastic. They’re politically and socially aware and it pays to come to class up-to-date on all the current events. They’re very interested in you, your opinion, and your country, so be informed!

See if your campus offers a course (or non-credit meetings) on preparation for a cross-cultural experience. This will greatly help.

CULTURAL AWARENESS

Educate Yourself

Get acquainted with your new host city, country, and culture before you leave California. The Inside Mexico website provides information regarding current events, arts and culture, and other practical information for English-speakers traveling or living in Mexico. Travel guides and travel-related websites, such as Lonely Planet, are also helpful resources.

In preparing for FRP, do some background reading in the field in which you will be doing your research. Get suggestions from faculty or TAs in your major department about widely recognized sources for the research questions you are planning to investigate.

Keep up with current events by reading articles in newspapers, magazines, and journals. Before departure, review these sources to prepare for the program and gain insight on the local culture and history.

Recommended Periodicals

- La Opinión
- La Jornada
- Excelsior

Recommended Books

Agustín, José


Fuentes, Carlos, trans. by Marina G. Castañeda


Mastrettas, Angeles


Monsiváis, Carlos


Pacheco, José Emilio


Pastor, Robert A. and Jorge Castañeda


Poniatowska, Elena


Randall, Laura, ed.


Schumacher, María Esther, ed.


Vázquez, Josefina Z. and Orenzo Meyer


Villegas, Daniel Cosío, trans. by Marjory Urquidi


Zapata, Luis

“EAP STUDENTS SAY...”

Mexican men tend to be generous with American women—but don’t think that when a guy buys you all those drinks, that all he wants is one night of fun dancing! They stick like flies and don’t understand subtle hints.

Women in clubs need to learn to say “no” firmly because guys in clubs have preconceived ideas about women from the U.S. that aren’t good.

Most important to me was learning the language. I gained most in this area by spending time with people who spoke no English and by reading a lot of Spanish.

The best way to prepare was to read Spanish books aloud, taking care to pronounce everything correctly. This way my tongue got used to the phonetics and I didn't have the awful thick American accent that other students had.

Keep a journal in Spanish about your ideas, study abroad experiences, goals, concerns, etc. Continue writing in the journal while you’re in Mexico and read it over from time to time. It’s encouraging to see how well your Spanish improves.

Relationships

Gender roles in society vary greatly from culture to culture, so you should be more cautious than you would in the U.S. Many past students have commented on the machismo in Mexico City. In addition, there are a number of cultural differences between social relationships in the U.S. and in Mexico. In examining the Mexican culture, researchers have found that, in general, very traditional sex roles and stereotypes have been ingrained within the society.

Gay, lesbian, and bisexual students should be aware that they may not encounter the level of openness and acceptance that they may be accustomed to in the United States. You may need to be circumspect about your sexual orientation.

Improve Your Language Skills

The more Spanish you know before leaving for Mexico, the more productive your time abroad will be. Better language preparation increases your ability to be competitive in host university courses and to properly conduct independent research. Prior to departure, spend one hour a day working to improve your Spanish. The following may be helpful:

- Read aloud (anything in Spanish) for 20 minutes at a time. Strive for correct pronunciation; read progressively faster, maintaining correct pronunciation.
- Seek out native speakers for regular conversation. The teacher of almost any ESL class can arrange conversation exchanges in English/Spanish.
- Read Spanish language newspapers like La Jornada and La Opinión often.
- Read at least one book in Spanish in your major or a related field.
- Read magazines, cover to cover, using an all-Spanish dictionary. This may be difficult at first and may require a certain amount of discipline, but it will help your overall comprehension and increase your active vocabulary.
- Read at least two difficult books, one fiction, and one nonfiction. Give your Spanish comprehension a workout.
- Watch Spanish movies and television programs. If you have access to it, use the “second-language” option on your television or DVD player so you can watch popular movies in Spanish with English subtitles.
- Listen to Spanish music and seek out Spanish-speaking people. Even if you do not understand all that is being said, you will hear the rhythm of the language.
- Download Spanish language podcasts.
- Keep a journal of Spanish phrases, expressions, whole sentences, and structures that you would like to add to your vocabulary.
ARRIVAL & ORIENTATION

Packing Tips

- Find out the luggage and weight restrictions imposed by your airline before you pack and select the luggage you will use.
- Clearly identify each item of luggage on the outside and inside with your name, home address, and Study Center address abroad.
- **Never leave luggage unattended.**
- Review the Personal Property Benefit in the UCEAP Insurance Plan and determine whether or not the coverage will suit your needs. If necessary, you may decide to purchase additional insurance for your personal property before departure.
- Do not pack too much. You will have to carry your own luggage, so make sure you can handle it. You will be glad that you decided to pack lightly, especially if you plan to travel while abroad. If you have excess luggage, you must find your own storage space. You cannot store luggage with a homestay host, apartment landlord, or the Study Center.

When selecting clothing to pack, keep Mexican cultural norms in mind. Shorts are rare and should be avoided. Avoid extremes in dress, such as miniskirts and halter tops. Women who wear skimpy clothing will attract crude and annoying comments and attention. In general, Mexican students dress similarly to UC students. Conservative and casual clothing (e.g., jeans and slacks) is common and acceptable for campus wear. The UCEAP Student Budget does not include funds for the purchase of clothing abroad, and large- or tall-sized clothing and shoes may be difficult to find in Mexico.

- The climate at your research site may vary drastically from that of Mexico City. Mérida, for instance, is hot and humid most of the year. Consider your preferred research site as you decide what to take to Mexico.

Essential

- Comfortable clothing for classes
- Sturdy walking shoes
- Warm clothes, including a sweater and jacket
- Raincoat or poncho
- Umbrella
- Electrical adapter
- Film
- Spanish and Spanish-English dictionaries
- Spanish grammar book
- Sunglasses and sunscreen
- Toiletries
- Towels
- Flashlight
- Extra contact lenses and contact lens solution
- Adhesive bandages
- Antidiarrhea pills
- 12-hour cold capsules
- Preferred pain relief medication
- Laptop and an audio recorder are highly recommended
- Enough prescription medication to last the length of your stay (see the Health chapter of this guide for information on taking prescription medication abroad)
EAP STUDENTS SAY...  

Women: be conscious of how you dress. Nobody wears shorts in Mexico City. However, no matter what you wear, you will get comments from men. Don’t let them offend you; it’s best to ignore them.

Take an extra bag or suitcase to fill with the gifts that you buy.

Make sure you take Pepto-Bismol, Imodium, and Tylenol.

Optional

- Dressier outfits (for parties, nightclubs, dinner events, etc.)
- Lightweight clothing that is suitable for tropical weather (if planning a trip to Puerto Vallarta, Veracruz, or the Yucatán)
- Bathrobe and slippers
- Beach towel
- Equipment, shoes, and clothing for sports or recreational activities
- Small gifts for hosts and new friends (e.g., CDs; T-shirts; decals or mugs with city, state, or campus logos; Major League Baseball caps; California pistachios, almonds, or chocolates; California postcards; or scenic calendars)
- Pictures of family and friends
- Musical instruments
- Electric gadgets (hair dryer, shaver, radio, etc.); if expensive, document with U.S. customs upon departure
- Travel-size sleeping bag
- Battery-operated alarm clock
- Corkscrew and can/bottle opener (pack only in checked luggage)
- Combination lock
- Safety pins
- Laptop

Do Not Pack

- Illegal narcotics or medications that are illegal in Mexico
Travel Documents

Non-U.S. Citizens

If you are not a citizen of the U.S., contact the appropriate Mexican consulate immediately upon your acceptance into UCEAP to determine your specific visa/entry requirements. Depending on your country of citizenship, requirements may differ and the process may take longer than it does for U.S. citizens.

Mexican Citizens and Dual Citizens

If you are a citizen of Mexico, or a dual citizen of Mexico and the U.S., you will not need to apply for a student visa. Make sure that your Mexican documents are updated prior to arriving in Mexico City.

U.S. Citizens

Obtain a passport immediately (if you do not have one already) or ensure that your current passport will be valid for one year past the duration of your stay.

U.S. citizens only need a Tourist Card (FMT) when engaging in language study in Mexico for less than six months.

If you think you will extend from one semester to the year, you will switch to a student visa once you are in Mexico. You will need to pay a Mexican immigration fee of approximately $200 to convert your card after arrival. This fee is not included in UCEAP fees, and this process can be quite complicated. Study Center staff will assist you.

Tourist Card

IMPORTANT: If you enter Mexico on a tourist card, you may be asked the purpose of your visit. If that happens, say you are visiting Mexico to study Spanish and travel. It is important that you say you are doing language study, as other types of study require a student visa.

Tourist cards (also known as FMTs in Mexico) are issued at the port of entry (usually at the airport or on the flight to Mexico) or can be obtained in advance at the Mexican consulate nearest your present address.

Tourist cards are granted for 60, 90, or 180 days. Request a 180-day card. Be aware that if your port of entry is other than Mexico City, you may not be able to obtain the full 180-day card.

Do not lose your Tourist card. You will be asked to present it at Immigration (INM) upon leaving Mexico. If you have lost it, you may be subject to replacement fees, and you may need to file a report with INM in order to document that it has been lost/stolen.

Refer to your UCEAP Predeparture Checklist for more information about Tourist Cards and Mexico Entry Requirement.
Travel to Mexico City

Even if on full financial aid, you are responsible for reserving and purchasing your airline ticket. Your Financial Aid Office will not do this for you, and UCEAP does not arrange group flights to Mexico City.

When traveling, always carry your passport, ticket, prescription medications, and money. Never put valuables in checked luggage. In addition, do not ask others to carry any items abroad for you (laptop, camera, extra bags, etc.) and do not volunteer to do so for others. Airlines will not allow you to take them and customs abroad may charge you a high duty. This is a concern particularly with electronic goods.

You must arrive in Mexico City by the Official UCEAP Start Date. The official date/time and meeting place is provided on the Arrival Instructions Sheet in the Predeparture Checklist—print this and take it with you. The program calendar is also frequently updated on the UCEAP website. You are strongly urged to purchase a changeable airline ticket. Standby tickets are not appropriate. Flights are routinely changed or canceled. Confirm your flight schedule before your departure date.

If you fail to appear on the Official UCEAP Start Date, you may be subject to dismissal from the program (see Student Agreement). If you arrive early, you are responsible for finding your own lodging until the program starts.

Although late arrivals are generally unacceptable, certain unusual cases may warrant an exception. Late arrivals must obtain advance approval from UCEAP. Contact the Operations Specialist at UCEAP well in advance of the Official UCEAP Start Date.

Update MyEAP with any changes to your address, phone number, and e-mail in order to be kept informed of program changes. Predeparture updates will most likely be sent via e-mail.

Financial Aid Students

Your financial aid package is based partly on the UCEAP Student Budget for the program. The estimated round-trip airfare is based on the cost of a changeable student fare to Mexico. If your independent travel costs are greater than the airfare estimate in the UCEAP Student Budget, notify your financial aid counselor. Neither UCEAP nor the Financial Aid Office can guarantee that the additional cost will be funded by financial aid.
EAP STUDENTS SAY...

Come with an open mind. Look at the things that are shocking or unnerving through the eyes of the culture and accept things as they are. Appreciate, learn, observe, shape, but don’t plan on changing anything other than yourself.

You may find yourself both enchanted and perplexed by the differences in attitude and behavior between Mexican people and yourself. Discovering the many cultural differences that exist and savoring and learning to live comfortably with them is one of the main opportunities for you in Mexico.

Orientation

You will attend a required orientation administered through the UCEAP Study Center. During orientation, you will participate in lectures and activities designed to help you acclimate to Mexico City and the country as a whole, and become familiar with the Study Center. The Study Center organizes a number of excursions and activities for you during your time in Mexico City, including weekend day trips to such locations as Cacaxtla, Palacio de Bellas Artes, Teotihuacán, Puebla-Tonantzintla, or Xochicalco.

You will meet the Study Center staff on arrival day. During a group dinner that evening, the staff will provide you with a welcome package that includes metro, city, and campus maps; a schedule for the semester; phone cards; and emergency phone numbers.

In addition, the Study Center staff will review all practical components of the program, including the program calendar, academics, housing, student services, computer access, money and banking, phones, mail, public transportation, health, safety, emergencies, information on selecting a site mentor, research topics and papers, and final presentations.
EAP STUDENTS SAY...

Mexico City is a huge city with a dense population, and folks do not have a clear concept of personal space, especially on public transportation. Enjoy every second—the food, customs, and cultural festivities.

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION

Travel within Mexico

- Study Center staff will provide more information on local transportation during the initial orientation period.

If you plan to travel to a research site other than Mexico City, consider the transportation costs to the location.

Public Transportation

Public transportation generally is adequate to meet student needs, both within Mexico City and in the country at large. Mexico City has an excellent subway system (metro) with eight or nine lines traversing the city. It costs about 2 pesos to travel throughout the city on the subway system. The municipal transit system also includes an extensive bus and streetcar service, which connects to the subway. There is also a widespread system of inexpensive colectivos and peseros, which are taxi-vans that run along fixed routes. Fares are low by U.S. standards. Bus and subway service is suspended just after midnight. You are advised to call sitio taxis for transportation at night.

Taxis

- See the Safety chapter of this guide for further safety precautions related to taxi transport.

The U.S. embassy in Mexico strongly urges U.S. citizens arriving at the international airport in Mexico City to take only “airport” taxis, which are white with a yellow band, after purchasing a ticket in the airport arrival hall. You should always call for a sitio taxi in Mexico City rather than taking a free-ranging green Volkswagen taxi. Sitio taxis are operated centrally and connected via radio by Servi-Taxis. Tourist taxis are available from larger hotels, but these are expensive.

Cars

Do not take a car to Mexico. Permits to operate cars are difficult to obtain, insurance is expensive, and parking and security are serious problems. Renting automobiles in Mexico is also expensive, and you may do so only if you are over 25 and have an internationally recognized credit card. Again, security is a concern. With all the other means of transportation available, driving in Mexico is not advised.

Buses

Buses are the most common form of intercity transportation and service is excellent throughout Mexico. Most major lines offer a new first-class service (Plus Service) that is comfortable and reliable. ETN is a reliable service provider with low rates for first-class routes. Routes extend to some of the smallest communities in the most remote places, and fares are relatively low. Purchase tickets online at the Ticket Bus website. See the Safety chapter of this guide for further safety precautions related to bus transport.

Planes

Air travel is reliable within Mexico, with modern equipment on most routes. Fares are cheaper than in California, but considerably higher than either bus or train fare.
Trains
Train travel is not recommended. Fares are low, but equipment is out of date and sometimes in poor repair. When traveling by train, allow for delays since schedules are seldom met.

Travel to Your Research Site
You are responsible for travel expenses associated with arriving at your selected field site. Many students travel by bus (see Buses section above) from Mexico City to other cities in Mexico. In some cases, bus trips may be so long that flying is a more secure and preferable option. Do not purchase your tickets to the research site until you have arrived in Mexico City and your project has been approved. The Study Center will provide you with more information about travel within Mexico.

Return Travel
Most airline tickets are good for one year only. When buying a round-trip ticket, purchase a ticket that allows changes to the return date for a relatively low fee, such as those available from student travel agencies. If you plan to travel and remain abroad for more than 12 months, consider purchasing a one-way ticket.

If you do not make round-trip arrangements, be sure to book a return flight with plenty of lead time once abroad. Study Center staff can refer you to a local travel agency for information on return travel. Flights to the U.S. fill up fast and economy-fare seats are booked early.
FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Understanding Your Finances

Understanding your finances before, during, and after EAP is crucial to having a successful time abroad. The following list outlines just a few of the many things you will need to know before departure.

Detailed information on the following topics can be found in the Money Matters chapter of the UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad:

- Contact information for finance questions
- How to estimate the cost of your program
- Budget instructions and information
- How to and who can make payments to EAP
- EAP student account information
- Banking before and after arrival
- Fees and penalties
- Loan information
- How financial aid works while on EAP (how do I get my financial aid from my home campus and how are my fees paid)
- Various forms (e.g., direct deposit, etc.)

MyEAP Student Account

Your MyEAP Student Account is similar to your home campus Financial account. It will be available as soon as you are selected for your program in MyEAP. The fees that you owe UCEAP are posted to your account, and you can make payments through this account using e-checks or credit cards (MasterCard or Discover). Fees will be applied after your program predeparture withdrawal date, which is listed in MyEAP.

EAP Student Budget

Carefully review your UCEAP Student Budget.

Your UCEAP Student Budget lists the fees you will pay to UCEAP and an estimate of the personal expenses you need to plan for. It does not include the cost of recreational travel or personal entertainment. The fees due to UCEAP will be posted to your MyEAP Student Account after your program predeparture withdrawal date. Program fees are subject to change. View your EAP Student Budget frequently.

Instructions

- Download and print your EAP Student Budget and Payment Vouchers.
- Note the deadlines on the Payment Vouchers.
- Give the EAP Student Budget and Payment Vouchers to the person responsible for paying your EAP bills. Sign them up for Third Party Authorization so they can make payments online.

For further information see the Money Matters chapter of the UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad and the Money Matters tab of your Participants Portal. If you are on financial aid, see also the EAP Financial Information web page.
The official currency unit in Mexico is the peso (abbreviated MEX$ or MXN).

Due to heightened security concerns, you are strongly cautioned against exchanging currency at the Mexico City International Airport (also known as Benito Juarez International Airport).

Handling Money Abroad

Contact Your Bank before Departure

Many banks and credit cards offer online services that will allow you to check account balances and pay bills quickly while abroad. Check with your bank and credit card providers before departure to make any necessary arrangements. Also, find out how to contact your bank and credit card companies from abroad.

Some U.S. banks issuing credit cards or ATM cards do not have agreements with Mexican banks. Inquire with your U.S. bank before departure. Before you use your ATM or credit card in a Mexican ATM, ask the cashier if the bank will accept it. If the bank does not accept that type of card, the ATM will keep the card.

Expenses Upon Arrival

Arrive in Mexico with access to a minimum of $700 to cover room, board, and incidental expenses for the first month. Access does not mean carrying $700 in cash with you to Mexico—this is discouraged for security reasons. Having access to this amount of money means having the ability to withdraw funds once you are in Mexico, since you will need to pay your rent in cash within the first few days. You will have to pay rent directly to the landlord in your home or apartment arrangement. Credit cards, travelers checks, and debit cards cannot be used for rent payments. Additional expenses include daily transportation, laundry, books and school supplies, computer usage, and personal items.

While in Mexico City

Mexico City is a major international center and, as such, costs are high even by U.S. standards. Many past UCEAP participants found that their living costs in Mexico City were greater than expected. Plan on using a combination of methods to handle money in case one does not work (e.g., a local ATM is temporarily out of service). Do not rely solely on one form of money. You cannot open a bank account in Mexico.

Recommendations:

- Have more than one way to access money while abroad.
- Use a money belt.
- Arrive in Mexico City with at least $50 or $100 exchanged into Mexican pesos. You can obtain pesos from a U.S. bank. Some banks require at least two weeks to obtain foreign currency.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Take at least two international credit cards (in your name) and two ATM cards (if possible). The ATM card must have an international (four-digit) PIN in order to work in Mexico.
- Do not plan to have checks (financial aid, money from family, etc.) sent to Mexico; you will be unable to cash them. Have checks deposited into your U.S. account via Electronic Funds Transfer (when possible) or have them sent to a trusted friend or relative who can deposit the funds into your U.S. bank account.
- Assign your Power of Attorney to someone you absolutely trust.
EAP STUDENTS SAY...

Take more money than you think you'll need. Weekend trips cost more than you expect, especially going to the beach.

If you have a credit card, take it with you for emergency use.

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ATMs and Debit Cards

- Avoid withdrawing money from an ATM at night. Robberies near ATMs are common.

Using an ATM card is by far the easiest way to access your money abroad, and the exchange rate is the most favorable. You can withdraw funds directly from your U.S. account from an ATM in Mexico. ATMs are widely available in Mexico (although they do not always function) and you will receive cash in local currency (pesos).

Obtain an international ATM card from your U.S. bank for use in Mexico. Take two ATM cards with you in case one gets lost or stolen. The ATM card must be international and it must have a four-digit PIN in order to work in Mexico. An advantage of having an ATM card with international privileges is your parents or friends can deposit money into the account in the U.S. and you can use the ATM card to withdraw the money in Mexico.

Cirrus, Star, or Plus systems can be used in Mexico. There may be a transaction fee involved (inquire with your home bank before departure). ATMs in Mexico frequently require persistence. Having a backup source of funds is strongly advised (e.g., credit card) in case a functioning ATM cannot be located.

Avoid carrying large amounts of cash and withdrawing money from an ATM at night, as robberies near ATMs are common.

Cash

- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.

UCEAP participants note that having some cash in U.S. currency is convenient for exchanging smaller amounts, and it comes in handy for tips, airport purchases, and airport transfers. Take caution, however, as cash is not a secure way to transport funds.

Credit Cards

- Landlords do not accept credit card payments.

Credit cards are useful for emergencies, medical or travel expenses, and everyday purchases. Most large stores and restaurants in Mexico honor major credit cards. Visa is the most widely accepted credit card followed by MasterCard. American Express is not widely accepted, but can be used to purchase travelers checks abroad. The Discover card is not widely accepted outside the U.S. and is not worth taking to Mexico.

Some U.S. banks that issue Visa, MasterCard, or American Express cards do not have agreements with Mexican banks. Before you use your Visa or MasterCard as a debit card in an ATM, ask the cashier at the bank if the bank will accept it (credit cards have been swallowed by ATMs in the past).

Take at least two international credit cards (always leave one at home while in Mexico; if one is lost or stolen, you will have an immediate backup). These credit cards must be in your name, not a parent’s.
Before departure, write down contact numbers you can call while abroad to report a lost or stolen credit card and obtain a replacement. If you lose a credit card or need a card mailed to Mexico, it is best if the credit card company mails the card to your family in the U.S. who can then send it via FedEx or DHL to the Study Center. This way you can track the shipment. In addition, you may want to notify your bank and credit card companies that you will be traveling abroad. This will prevent them from questioning unusual activity.

You may obtain a cash advance with your Visa or MasterCard from a bank offering this service, though this can be an expensive way to access cash. Before departure, find out what fees apply for cash advances. Obtain an international PIN for your credit card in case you need a cash advance after hours. Your PIN is not usually required if the transaction is conducted inside the bank, but you must show your passport.

**Travelers Checks**

Although travelers checks are a safe way to handle money and are easily exchangeable in most banks in Mexico City, UCEAP does not recommend using travelers checks for everyday expenses. They are a good source of backup funds, but for regular purchases it is more convenient to use ATM cards and credit cards.

**Sending Money**

Parents, friends, or relatives can send you money in Mexico in several ways. The most convenient and inexpensive way is to deposit money in your U.S. bank account so you can withdraw the funds via an ATM. Online banking also makes transfers from one account to another very convenient. Another option is to cable money through a service such as **Western Union**, but this is more expensive. Western Union sends money orders but they can be cashed only in a few places (you cannot cash them at an American Express office). In an emergency, money can be wired bank-to-bank or via American Express. Another alternative is to send travelers checks. Past students recommend sending travelers checks via FedEx.

The most easily accessible American Express offices in Mexico City are:

- **Av. Patriotismo 635**  
  **Col. Cd. de los Deportes**  
  **Phone:** (55) 5598-79-66

- **Cent. Comerc. Perisur**  
  **Perif. sur 4690, Local 231**  
  **Phone:** (55) 5606-1073 or 5606-9621
COMMUNICATIONS ABROAD

Mail

Postcards should be sent in envelopes. Regular mail can be unreliable. If sending dated or important materials, it is best to send them to the Study Center via FedEx.

Regardless of your accommodations, your mail and packages will be received at the Study Center. You will have a mailbox at the Study Center, and the UCEAP staff will forward your mail. (Send all international mail by FedEx only.)

[Your name]
Mexico City Study Center
Universidad de California
Casa de California
Calle Carmen # 1
Col. Chimalistac
C.P. 01070 México, D.F.
Del. Alvaro Obregon

Phone: (011-52-55) 5662-9511

Send regular mail within Mexico to:
University of California, México
Aptdo. Postal 70-586
04510 México, DF, MEXICO
(Your name should be written at the bottom of the envelope)

For more information, refer to the Shipping section below.

Shipping

Do not have clothing, food shipments, or toiletries sent to you in Mexico. It is often much less expensive to purchase the items in Mexico than it is to pay mailing and customs fees. Advise relatives and friends against sending packages; they are heavily taxed, take a long time to arrive, and may get lost in the mail. Keep in mind that anything you send abroad must later be brought or sent back home.

If shipping luggage, you must be present when it arrives abroad. The Study Center is not responsible for collecting luggage shipped in advance, and staff will not pick up any luggage that must be claimed at a customs office or dock. Do not send luggage to in-transit locations. Packages sent by FedEx, DHL, UPS, etc., should be clearly marked “No Commercial Value—Gift” on the package. If the sender declares a value, you will have to pay customs.

Never send medication or have medication sent to you in Mexico. Customs will not accept it. See the Health chapter in this guide for more information on prescription medication.
Phone Use

Cell Phones
UCEAP recommends that you buy a cell phone in Mexico. Costs vary according to the models, but decent phones range from about 300 to 1,000 pesos. Prepaid phone cards are available at the airport, local markets, and corner stores. Local calls cost about five pesos per minute but incoming calls from within Mexico are free. Incoming calls from the U.S. cost about six pesos per minute. You can usually place long-distance calls on cell phones; however, there are fees involved. Most students use Skype from their apartments to call home.

When used moderately, cell phones can be less expensive than regular phones. It is expensive and complicated to switch a U.S. cell phone over for use in Mexico. UCEAP does not recommend this.

Public Phones
Pay phones in Mexico City are accessible, although calling costs may be higher than if you use a cell phone. Almost all public phones in Mexico City no longer accept coins. To make local or long-distance calls, it is best to buy a phone card once in Mexico City. Tarjetas Ladatel phone cards are sold at lottery ticket booths, newsstands, and small shops at the airport for $30, $50, or $100 pesos. Upon arrival, the Study Center will provide you with a phone card loaded with minutes.

Calling Cards
Many U.S.-based long-distance phone companies provide special services that make it easy to phone home from abroad. Some companies provide a toll-free access number that connects with an operator in the U.S., and others provide the means to charge long-distance calls either to a credit card or to a third party. Investigate the possibilities before departure and shop around for the best services and rates.

Be sure to confirm the card you purchase will work for calls originating outside of the U.S. Many students find that some prepaid phone cards purchased in the U.S. do not work abroad. Long-distance phone cards are sold in Mexico City at lottery ticket booths and newsstands.

Home or Apartment Phone Use
It is important that you discuss the use of the telephone with your landlord immediately upon arrival and before you try to make any calls.

Do not expect to use the phone in your private home or apartment housing arrangement. Some landlords may not have a telephone. Others have phones, but restrict the service so long-distance or international numbers will not work.

Landlords who permit phone use may do so in a restricted way (e.g., only allowing incoming calls, local calls, long-distance calls with a prepaid calling card, or collect calls). If a landlord allows you to receive international calls, be sure to preset a day and time to receive them.
Computer and Internet Access

The Study Center in Mexico City has four computers with Internet access, which are available for exclusive use by UCEAP students. There is also a printer available for academic papers.

Many students also utilize Internet cafés (which are common in Mexico City) to access the Internet, check e-mail, and write and print papers. The cost is about 10 to 25 pesos an hour. Expect Internet cafés to be your only computer access while at your research site. Service at Internet cafés in remote sites will likely be slow.

Laptops

You are encouraged to take a laptop to Mexico to prepare academic papers, analyze research data, and use the Internet frequently.

If you plan to take a laptop:

- Review the insurance coverage in the UCEAP Insurance Plan and verify that your laptop will be fully covered in case of damage, loss, or theft.
- Carry your proof of purchase with you.
- **Do not ship your laptop abroad.** The laptop may be held for inspection by customs officials and customs fees are quite costly, even for older laptops.
- Be sure to keep your laptop within reach at all times. Laptops are among the most frequently stolen items from travelers.
- Make sure you have a wireless card installed in your computer if you plan to access available wireless networks.
- Ensure that your laptop is equipped with a built-in voltage transformer that enables it to operate on the voltage used in Mexico (this is a fairly common feature), take adapter plugs, and install the latest antivirus software to minimize hassle.
- You can choose to take your laptop to an Internet café to print papers and download e-mail (then read and compose messages offline).
Housing & Meals

Where Will I Live?

Mexico City Housing

During the initial portion of the program, housing is arranged by UCEAP in private homes or apartments located throughout Mexico City. The UCEAP Systemwide Office will ask you to complete a housing questionnaire indicating your preference. Every effort will be made to provide you with your first housing choice, but this is not always possible. In general, the accommodations are about a five to ten minute walk or a twenty to twenty five minute bus ride from campus. Most students take the microbus for 2.50 pesos, and some take the metro for 2 pesos.

If the Study Center arranges your housing, you can expect to be provided with all bed linens and pillows, but not towels (these are considered personal items). You can bring towels and all other personal items from home or purchase them once you are in Mexico.

You can also choose to make your own housing arrangements. However, finding housing in Mexico City for only a short period of time can be difficult. UCEAP recommends that you go abroad having already secured a place to stay. If you make your own arrangements, you must note this in the UCEAP housing questionnaire and include your address abroad. If you plan on living with a relative or friend in Mexico City, make sure you know which part of the city they live in, as commutes from some parts of the city to campus can take several hours.

Housing in the Field

Following the Mexico City portion of the program, you will travel to your chosen research site and arrange your own housing. Study Center staff will give you tips on how to do this and site mentors provide assistance; mentors often provide apartment suggestions. Prices for housing at most research sites will be similar to or less expensive than those in Mexico City. You will pay rent directly to the landlord during both portions of the program. In the past some students have worked out very affordable arrangements with the host families; for instance, purchasing food for the family in exchange for rent. In these cases, the families have been chosen and recommended by the site mentor.

How to Prepare

Rent and Payments

All students, including those on financial aid, must make their housing payments in cash directly to the landlord. The costs to rent an apartment or private room are approximately $300 to $450 per person per month for a single room in an apartment and $300 to $400 for an individual room in a homestay. Costs will vary with regard to room size, furnishings, location, family unit, house rules, cooking privileges, available services, etc. The cost of food and personal items is not included in the rent (unless you live in a homestay and work out some arrangements regarding your meals with the host). Internet access is available in all apartments.

IMPORTANT: Arrive in Mexico with access to at least 7,000 pesos to pay your rent plus housing deposit. Financial Aid students should be sure to complete the Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) form early on so that you have access to your aid.
EAP STUDENTS SAY...

Compare costs and do not rush into any housing choice. Explore your options and talk to housing hosts about any conditions that may exist.

Learn about the cultural differences in the landlord-tenant relationship—they're different than in the U.S.

Housing Address and Information

You will not receive apartment or homestay information prior to departure. You will meet your host or receive your apartment assignment once you arrive in Mexico City.

Apartments

Renting an apartment usually means renting a single room in a three- or four-bedroom furnished apartment that is shared with other foreign students. A landlord administers the apartment and collects monthly rent. In Mexico City, landlords rent only rooms, not the whole apartment (as is common in the U.S.). Landlords usually have strict rules about parties, overnight guests, noise, etc. You must ask landlords for permission to have any visitors, especially those of the opposite sex.

Landlords can (and often do) enter apartments without notice. Past students have commented about their nosy and meddling landlords. Landlords are strict in terms of cleanliness; you will be expected to clean up after yourself on a daily basis, especially in the common areas.

Private Home/Homestay

It is common for university students, both Mexican and American, to live in rooms in the homes of others (casa de familia). For UC students, such living arrangements are known as “homestays.” Although every situation is different, most homestays are not with typical Mexican families, but rather with a host who rents out an extra room to earn additional income. The host may be an elderly couple with grown children and an extra room, a widow with financial need, or perhaps a single parent.

Whatever the case, the homestay will help you with language acquisition, as English usually isn’t spoken in the homes, and provide insight into the Mexican lifestyle. There is possibly no better way for you to be immersed in Mexican culture than to share everyday life with someone from that culture. However, conforming to someone else’s rules, especially if they appear strict, may be a strain if you have lived on your own for a few years, and differing cultural norms may make some rules seem arbitrary.

Prepare yourself for the fact that homes and rooms in Mexico tend to be small with limited storage space, and amenities may not be what you are accustomed to in the U.S. (many rooms are without heaters). Conveniences are defined differently in Mexico than in the U.S.; for example, you may encounter restrictions on the use of hot water and electricity and charges for the use of the telephone. You will also need to be aware of certain expectations and customs the host may have. Ask permission before bringing guests home and inform them when you will miss a meal, arrive home late, or go away for the weekend. Both parties are asked to be flexible, but special responsibility is expected of you as a guest in someone else’s home. Dialogue and consideration are usually the best vehicles for good results.

The Study Center will inform you of any pre-negotiated homestay terms. Your host will also receive a written copy of these terms so that all are equally informed. Communicate any problem or misunderstanding that may arise between you and the host family immediately to the Study Center.
Important Questions to Ask Your Host
To avoid any confusion, communicate with your host family about the following when you arrive:

• **Keys:** Will you be issued keys to the house? Does the host expect you to be home at a certain time?

• **Bathroom:** What are your rights and responsibilities concerning the bathroom facilities?

• **Meals:** How many meals per day will you receive? What should you do if you know you will miss a meal? What should you do if you miss a meal unintentionally? Do you have access to the kitchen or to any household food? Discuss your special dietary needs and scheduled meal times. If you are a vegetarian, plan to be flexible.

• **Bedroom:** Who is to clean the room? Make the bed? Change the linens?

• **Laundry:** Who is responsible for doing the laundry and what laundry will be done? In some situations the host will do all laundry except underwear. Ask where and how they would like you to give them your laundry.

• **Guests:** Are you allowed to have guests? Are you allowed to have overnight guests? What about parties and social gatherings at your home?

• **Telephone:** Are you allowed to use the phone? How will you pay for any phone bills?
Meals

The cost of food is not included in the rent (unless you live in a homestay and work out some arrangements regarding your meals with the host). You are responsible for buying food and preparing your own meals.

Supermarkets in Mexico are generally clean and orderly. Some markets are small, while others are large like those in the U.S. Food and prices are comparable to those in the U.S.

Always follow safe food preparation procedures as described in international health guides, such as the CDC Yellow Book. You are advised against eating prepared foods or fruits from street vendors. Food from street vendors often sits out for long periods of time at extreme temperatures. When eating out, drink only bottled water and beverages (without ice) or tea and coffee. Do not drink tap water unless it has been boiled for 15 to 20 minutes. Bottled water is readily available and your host family will supply you with bottled or filtered drinking water at home.

If you live in a homestay where you have a meal arrangement included, you will be expected to eat your meals with your host family. If you are going to miss a meal, discuss this as soon as possible with your host family. The midday meal (from about 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.) is the main meal of the day in Mexico. After this meal, the family generally has what is referred to as la sobre mesa, which is a time for talking and sharing.

Vegetarians

Past vegetarians report that their hosts were extremely accommodating to their needs as long as the family knew their preferences before they arrived. It is more complicated to find suitable food if you are a vegan. Cheese, eggs, cream, etc., are in the majority of foods.

If you are a vegetarian, clearly note this on your UCEAP housing questionnaire. Be specific. You may want to take supplements along, as the Mexican diet will be different.

“EAP STUDENTS SAY…

The people here like to eat! It’s easy to assimilate into the local culture.

Eat a lot and take each day at a slow pace. Be prepared to sit around and talk with the family during meals.

The food was amazing! I’m a vegetarian and I had no trouble whatsoever with Mexican food!”
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Get Involved

Participating in extracurricular cultural and social activities while on UCEAP is an excellent way to meet people, improve your language skills, and integrate more fully into the Mexican community.

In Mexico City:

During the time that you are in Mexico City (D.F.), you will discover a wealth of cultural activity with its many museums, theaters, parks, monuments, and frequent special events. As one of the largest cosmopolitan cities in the world, D.F. will offer you a variety of modern experiences typical of any large urban center, in contrast with elements that are distinctly traditional. Many students find the blend of old and new worlds to be particularly interesting. Among other things, Mexico City is a center for international and national cinematography.

The following websites inform about many cultural and current events in the Mexico City area:

- www.unam.mx: UNAM’s website, browse the Cultura section
- www.cnca.gob.mx: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y Las Artes
- www.mexicocity.com.mx/mexcITY.html: General information on Mexico City
- www.tiempolibre.com.mx: Weekly magazine listing events and activities in Mexico City (a copy is available in the Study Center)

In the Field:

At your research site, which will likely be less urban, there will be even more ways to immerse yourself in the culture. Spending time in rural areas and smaller towns will offer you a glimpse of a different Mexico. Many of your research projects will bring you into close relations with the community in which you will be living and working, and your involvement in volunteer activities may well expand. You may enjoy some of the many cultural festivals and events such as El Día de Los Muertos, the Feast Day of Guadalupe, or others more specific to the region. Your mentor/professor and others will be able to guide you toward the sorts of music- or sports-related activities that may interest you.

Information about travel, including youth hostels, can be obtained from travel guides and from the websites of some of the more popular guides.

➤ The UCEAP Student Budget does not include funds for recreational travel abroad.
In addition to the following sections, read the Health and Safety chapters of the UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad.

Access the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for travel health information.

Take customary over-the-counter diarrhea medication, such as Pepto-Bismol, etc., to Mexico. It is likely that you will get diarrhea at some point.

Take food and water precautions; do not purchase food, even fruits, from street vendors and drink only bottled water. The host family will supply you with bottled or filtered drinking water.

Health

Local Medical Services

Medical facilities in Mexico City can handle most medical problems. Upon arrival, the Study Center will provide you with a list of hospitals and clinics, doctors, psychologists, and psychiatric services in the area.

Private medical service is administered on a cash or credit card basis in Mexico, payable when services are rendered. Doctors (in a private office) are usually available in the afternoons by appointment only. They will only accept cash payments. Clinics and hospitals must be paid with a credit card. Even though costs are generally lower than in the U.S., have funds (at least $250 in reserve) for medical payments, if necessary. Submit a claim for a refund with the UCEAP Insurance Plan.

If you feel sick or have a medical emergency, seek medical attention and contact the Study Center immediately. The Study Center can recommend a clinic to visit, provide the necessary UCEAP insurance claim forms, and help make arrangements with your professors if extended absence from class is expected.

If you have any preexisting health issues, carry a signed, dated letter from the primary physician describing all medical conditions, treatment, and prescribed medications, including generic names.

If you are placed outside of Mexico City during your research portion of the program, contact your FRP mentor for advice regarding medical services. The mentors can refer you to local doctors and hospitals. Depending on the situation, the Study Center Director will travel to the research site to assist. Cash is especially important to have on hand for medical emergencies outside of Mexico City, as medical facilities in smaller communities do not always accept credit cards.

Prescription Medication

• Carry a letter from your attending physician listing your diagnosis, treatment, and prescription medications, including the generic names of the prescribed drugs.
• Transport any medications carried from the U.S. in their original containers and make sure that they are labeled clearly.
• Do not have medications shipped to Mexico; Mexican customs authorities will not accept them. Plan to take enough prescription medication to last the length of your stay.
• Make an appointment with a physician if you cannot take enough medicine to last throughout the program. Use the letter from your U.S. physician (describing your treatment and indicating the generic name of the medications) so the local physician can consider prescribing the same or similar medication.
• Call Europ Assistance before departure, UCEAP’s assistance provider, to get information about the availability and legality of a specific prescription medication in Mexico. Europ Assistance contact information: 1+ 866-451-7606 or e-mail ops@europassistance-usa.com
Mental Health
Students who are experiencing difficulties in the U.S. (relationship, emotional, substance abuse, etc.) sometimes feel that a change of environment will help them to move past the current problem. However, living and studying in another country can be stressful activities that often compound or exacerbate preexisting and stable conditions. There are many emotional effects of facing a different culture. If you are experiencing serious emotional or substance abuse issues, it is important to talk to your treating doctor in the U.S. about the program and the location so he/she can recommend a treatment plan that you can follow while in Mexico.

Study Center staff can help you locate a private mental health facility if needed. Options are available in both Spanish and English.

Insurance
The required UCEAP Insurance Plan is a benefit provided to you by the University of California when you enroll in UCEAP. Details about the plan are available in the UCEAP Insurance Plan brochure.
SAFETY

Your Role in Safety Preparedness

UCEAP takes your safety and security very seriously and provides credible and timely advice both before departure and while you are in Mexico. However, as in the U.S., you are ultimately responsible for your own personal safety.

Mexico City is the largest metropolitan area in the western hemisphere and the second largest in the world by population. Be ready to experience the challenges associated with dense urban living: increased crime, severe air pollution, and standards of living that are different from those in the U.S. Crime levels in Mexico City are high. In urban centers, such as Mexico City, Guadalajara, etc., foreigners are prime targets for pickpockets and purse-snatchers during the day and armed robbers at night.

Take precautions. Plan now to respond to an emergency if the need arises. Criminals select victims based on an appearance of vulnerability, perceived wealth, and/or a lack of awareness.

TRAVEL WARNINGS AND REGISTRATION

You are required to register online through the U.S. Department of State. In general, families and some students may feel that it is safer in the U.S. than abroad—though this is not usually because the U.S. is more secure but rather because students are more aware of their surroundings, more competent in quickly identifying risks and mitigating threats, and more knowledgeable about local resources, and steps to take if there is a problem. Take time to prepare thoroughly for the new program environment and listen to all information issued by UCEAP and the U.S. Department of State.

There is a UCEAP Travel Warning in place that restricts travel to specific regions in Mexico. Students found in violation of this prohibition will be dismissed.

UCEAP Travel Warning

UCEAP has issued a Travel Warning restricting student travel. This year, and until further notice, students are prohibited from visiting or conducting research in Morelia, Michoacán, due to the rise in drug-related violent crime.

In addition to the cities mentioned in the UCEAP Travel Warning that students are prohibited from visiting, it is important to note that Ciudad Juárez is one of the most violent cities in the world. Ciudad Juárez borders El Paso, Texas.

Note that the driving distance between Mexico City and the U.S.-Mexico border is 1,365 miles.

For your own protection, comply with this heightened state of alert, observe all safety measures implemented by the Study Center, and register all trips with the U.S. Department of State and with the University of California.

The U.S. Embassy in Mexico City posts additional information about local safety and health issues for U.S. citizens on its website. All UCEAP Study Center Directors are members of the U.S. embassy’s Warden’s Network.
Risks

Many students and their families have concerns about safety and security abroad. Study abroad, like most other things in life, does involve risk. When thinking about risks, it is important to keep in mind the ideas of risk identification, probability (what are the chances of a risk), consequence (what will happen if exposed to the risk), and risk mitigation (how to prevent the risk).

UCEAP:

- cannot assume responsibility for actions or events that are beyond its control or for situations that may arise due to the failure of a participant to disclose pertinent information.
- makes reasonable efforts to promote a safe environment for students and to offer reliable information to UCEAP students and their parents regarding relevant health precautions and potential risks.
- is in continual contact with local staff abroad and has 24/7 dedicated staff to monitor local and international conditions and threats that may affect the health and safety of students, staff, and faculty around the world.

Student safety and welfare are priorities in all UCEAP locations and safety issues are a key component of on-site orientation.

You and your family have a role to play in minimizing potential dangers and UCEAP expects you to participate actively in minimizing your risks while abroad. Therefore, in addition to keeping all of the above in mind, it is your responsibility to:

- Read all available materials and talk to your Campus EAP Advisor and UCEAP staff about questions and concerns.
- Participate in the required predeparture orientation.
- Pay attention to on-site orientation safety presentations and ask questions.
- Stay informed about local developments.
- Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily choices and decisions.
- Promptly express any health or safety concerns to Study Center faculty and/or staff.
- Behave responsibly and accept responsibility for your decisions and actions. Obey host country laws. Respect the rights and well-being of others, and encourage others to behave in a similar manner. Follow UCEAP communication policies and protocol and keep Study Center staff informed of your whereabouts and well-being.
- Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining emergency services.
“**EAP Students Say...**

Always ask a taxi driver how much it will cost before you get in. If a taxi driver seems really weird, have him drop you off down the street from your house.”

**Safety Precautions**

- Avoid putting yourself in high-risk situations.
- Keep valuables in a safe place or choose to leave them in the U.S.
- Avoid carrying a purse or wallet. You will often be in crowded areas that are prime hunting grounds for pickpockets and purse-snatchers. If you must carry a wallet, wrap it in a rubber band—this creates friction, making it harder to pickpocket—or use a chain to attach your wallet to a belt loop. If you must carry a purse, keep it closed, place the strap over one shoulder (not around your neck), keep the purse to your front and keep your hand on it.
- Use a travel security wallet or pouch for your passport, money, credit cards, and other valuables.
- Metro robberies are frequent; be especially careful with valuables when riding the metro or bus; leave them at home if possible.
- Always be aware of your surroundings and of those around you throughout the day, and exercise caution. Be alert to dangers and risks and protect personal boundaries.
- Avoid walking alone at all times, especially at night or in unfamiliar areas. Go out in groups. Use the buddy system at all times.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash, and avoid exchanging money at Benito Juarez International Airport (Mexico City).
- The U.S. Embassy in Mexico recommends that all intercity bus travel be done during daylight hours and on first-class buses, which use the toll road system. Second- and third-class buses use the “free” highways, which have a higher rate of accidents and robberies (especially at night).
- Within Mexico City, avoid taking night buses if at all possible; they are subject to robberies.
- When taking taxis in Mexico City, follow all recommendations listed in the *Taxi Safety in Mexico City* section below.
- Do not travel by bike, hitchhike, or go camping. These activities are extremely dangerous in Mexico.
- Do not wear headphones or read while walking or standing on the street.
- If confronted by an assailant, surrender valuables without hesitation to avoid harm.

At the start of the semester, you will attend a safety orientation. Educate yourself on any specific safety issues that affect your chosen research site. Your FRP mentor is available to consult regarding local safety advice. In case of crime or harassment, contact the Study Center in Mexico City for advice and help.
“EAP STUDENTS SAY...
Women should not take taxis alone.”

Road and Transportation Safety
While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States.

According to the WHO, around 17 000 people die every year in Mexico due to road traffic crashes. As a pedestrian, you should be careful at all times. Driving styles and road standards and conditions are very different from the United States. Some roads can be poor in some areas of the country. Dangerous curves, driving records (ignoring speed limits, lane changes, and/or not stopping at red lights), poorly marked signs, slow-moving or abandoned vehicles, and other obstacles pose road hazards. Limit all road travel to daylight hours throughout the country.

Never wear expensive jewelry or use electronic devices while using public transportation.

Sitio taxis in Mexico City are most often metered and registered by the government. Sitio taxis from Benito Juarez International Airport are paid in advance in the terminal (at the Sitio stands) and are well regulated. See below for more information.

City buses are somewhat crowded and can pose problems because pickpockets typically work the crowded, busiest routes.

Areas of greatest concern with regard to crime in Mexico City include the following: Colonia del Valle within delegación Benito Juarez, Colonia Centro within delegación Cuauhtemoc, and areas within delegación Iztapalapa. No neighborhood in Mexico City, upscale or otherwise, is free from violent or petty crime.

Sexual harassment is a significant problem on the cheaper buses in Mexico City. Because of this, women and men are separated into different Metrobus and subway cars during rush hour. Once people are inside the bus/metro car, however, this separation is not strictly enforced. To avoid being victims of sexual harassment, women should not travel alone during rush hour or at night.

Taxi Safety in Mexico City
The best crime defense for any visitor is to avoid the use of libre taxi cabs, which commonly pick up fares on the street after being hailed by customers. Libre taxis are poorly regulated and often criminally-linked. Sitio, or radio dispatched base station taxis, are safer, reliable, and worth the added expense.

Currently all taxis in Mexico City are issued registration numbers beginning with the letter “A,” so sitio and libre taxis are virtually indistinguishable. Passengers who use libre taxis are often robbed by two or three armed individuals who enter the taxi a few minutes into the trip, having been called or signaled by the driver. Also, libre taxis are often connected to express kidnappings, abductions where the victim is turned around in a matter of hours for a small ransom or shuttled to a series of ATMs and forced to withdraw funds. Because 24-hour withdrawal limits are now the industry standard on ATM cards, express kidnapping victims are typically held for 24 to 48 hours to maximize withdrawal amounts.

- Due to the danger involved in utilizing libre taxis and the increased difficulty in determining the difference between the different types of taxis, the best practice is to avoid hailing taxis on the street entirely. Instead, always call for a sitio taxi (radio-dispatched taxis) rather than taking a free-ranging green Volkswagen libre taxi.
• Ask the sitio dispatcher for the driver’s name and the cab’s license plate number.
• Before entering a cab, verify that the driver matches the photo ID posted on the taxi window and verify the name and license plate.
• Once in a taxi, remain alert, keeping all possessions close by and in sight. Taxi drivers have been known to take things from passengers’ bags if they are left unattended.

Express Kidnapping
Express kidnapping differs from conventional kidnapping in that the criminals do not intend to hold the victim until a large ransom can be paid; rather, they coerce victims into giving up personal identification numbers (PINs) or pass-codes to their debit and credit card accounts in order to extract as much money from the victims’ accounts as they can in a short amount of time. While conventional kidnapping victims can remain hostage for weeks, express kidnappings typically last only hours or days. This type of kidnapping is becoming especially common in major cities of Mexico, Brazil and Venezuela.

Criminals are less discriminate in targeting victims for express kidnappings than they are for conventional kidnappings. There is no need to target an individual of great personal wealth; anyone with a decent-sized checking or savings account will do. Victims are generally targeted at random, and abductions can occur almost anywhere. Express kidnappings are less complicated than conventional kidnappings, which require safe houses, someone to stand guard, food supplies to last weeks, and a methodical negotiation strategy. Similarly, express kidnappers may be less sophisticated and more prone to panic and mistakes.

Vulnerable Situations for Express Kidnapping:
• Withdrawing cash from a street ATM (as opposed to an ATM in the lobby of a hotel, or inside of a bank).
• Hailing an unofficial or illegitimate taxi from the street.

To Reduce the Likelihood of Becoming A Victim:
• Withdraw cash from ATMs located in a hotel, bank, mall or otherwise secure location.
• Only withdraw cash during the day and when there are other people in the area.
• Do not withdraw cash after consuming alcohol; inebriation tends to lower one’s ability to accurately assess the security of a situation.
• Only use taxis affiliated with, or arranged by, reputable companies or hotels.
• Travel with a debit card that is linked to an account with limited funds; this is likely to reduce the time a victim is held hostage, since the account will more rapidly reach a zero balance.
• Do not travel with multiple exclusive credit cards. If feasible, leave all such cards at home.
• If confronted, relinquish valuables at once; hesitation could cause the attacker to panic and lash out violently.
Phone Extortion (or Virtual Kidnapping)

Similar to express kidnapping, and also increasingly common, is a crime referred to as “phone extortion.” In these crimes, criminals call a victim and claim to have kidnapped a family member. Then they attempt to secure a quick, and generally small, ransom payment. In a typical scenario, criminals know in advance that a certain family member is away and out of immediate contact, perhaps in a movie theater or on a flight. This way, the person they call cannot quickly verify if the person in question has actually been kidnapped. Callers may also try to obtain information about a person’s relatives or associates in order to extort them as well.

In phone extortion, the caller is likely to press the victim to give over financial data such as bank account numbers, credit card numbers, or the caller may order the individual to wire funds into a stated account. Professional kidnappers, if they have a victim, typically understand that they will have to negotiate with a lawyer, law enforcement official, or professional K&R specialist. They will typically ask for exorbitant amounts, knowing that they will have to settle for a smaller negotiated amount. Phone extortionists will typically ask for $1,500 to $10,000 dollars.

Handling Phone Extortion

- Designate a secret code ahead of time; a code that you and your family would be the only ones to know. If you get a call, ask to speak to the family member who has been kidnapped—this can establish the reality of the claim. If the caller will not allow this, ask the caller for the code. If this is a real kidnapping case, the criminal will be able to produce the code.
- Immediately call the security hotline to seek advice.
- Do not give financial information to the caller.
- Do not transfer funds to an account given to you by the caller.

Drugs and Alcohol

While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country’s laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law.

The trial process in Mexico is different from that in the United States, and procedures may vary from state to state. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Mexican laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned.

The use of drugs is strictly forbidden by law. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Mexico are strict and severe, and convicted offenders can expect large fines and jail sentences of up to 25 years.

UCEAP will start disciplinary action for alcohol abuse and misuse. Never feel pressured to drink. Make responsible decisions. There is often a danger to public safety or unruly behavior when people drink. If you are of legal age and choose to drink, do so in moderation. Use your own judgment; do not display any intoxicated behavior in public places. Be aware of how much you are drinking and how much alcohol is poured into your glass, and know the alcohol percentage in your drink (in some countries, drinks have a higher alcohol content and may be served in larger portions).
If you are on medication, make sure whether it will become ineffective or that it could intensify the effect of alcohol.

Alcohol and drugs can impair judgment and increase safety risks. You should never walk home alone at night, especially if you are impaired by alcohol. It is recommended that you go out in groups.

**Narco-Trafficking**

Mexico is well-known for its illegal drug trade and the violence and corruption the industry fosters. Mexico is the primary conduit for the transport of illegal drugs into the United States. Drug-related violence in Mexico City is, for the most part, confined to those involved in the drug trade. Along Mexico's northern border cities with the U.S., the violence is far greater and has injured and killed innocent bystanders. Mexican security forces and police have not been effective in maintaining security in these cities along the U.S. Mexican border.

**Demonstrations**

Demonstrations, strikes and protests over elections, labor disputes and government practices are common in Mexico. There are dozens of demonstrations and gatherings daily throughout the country. Many protests and demonstrations are peaceful, but some gatherings, particularly in urban areas, turn violent.

**Earthquakes**

If you live in the Bay Area or Los Angeles, you live in earthquake country. Much of Mexico's volcanic and seismic activity is caused by the movement of the North American plate against the Cocos and Pacific plates and it is one of the most active trenches in the world. In 1985, Mexico City was hit by one of the most devastating earthquakes in the history of the Americas. The earthquake measured 8.1 on the Richter scale. Authorities have implemented an early warning system, but it is unlikely that such a system could prevent serious loss of life and property.

Earthquakes present an uncontrollable and unpredictable risk hazard to life and property. Earthquakes may seem a little frightening, but you can do a lot to prepare yourself. Start by knowing what to expect: a major earthquake will have a huge impact. The power will go out as power stations are damaged, water may stop flowing as pipes break, some roads and bridges may be unusable, and phones may not function in your neighborhood.
Emergency Contacts

What Constitutes an Emergency?
Emergencies are circumstances out of the ordinary, unplanned, or unexpected, which threaten the health, safety, and well-being of you and/or your fellow students. The following are considered true emergencies:

- Any situation that places a student or students at risk, including illness or harm, or other traumatic incidents that require immediate response
- A student who has been arrested
- Civil unrest or a natural disaster in the host country

In an Emergency
Contact local emergency services first and then contact the following:

If you are in the U.S.
- During office hours (8 a.m.–5 p.m. Pacific Time): Contact the Operations Specialist at the EAP Systemwide Office
- After office hours: Call the 24-hour emergency phone number at (805) 893-4762

If you are abroad and need immediate local emergency assistance:
- Ambulance ........... 065
- Police ................. 066, 060, or 080

If necessary, call the after-hours emergency number of the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City: 01-52-55-5080-2000, then press “0” and ask the switchboard operator to connect you to the duty officer.

- American Embassy in Mexico City
  Paseo de la Reforma 305
  Colonia Cuauhtemoc
  06500 Mexico, D.F.

- E-mail: acsmexicocity@state.gov
- Phone: (01-55 ) 5080-2000
- Fax: (01-55 ) 5525-5040
- Web: mexico.usembassy.gov/eng

Carry the local emergency contact information at all times. If you have a health or safety emergency and do not have access to local or Study Center emergency contact information, call the UCEAP 24-hour emergency phone number at +1 (805) 893-4762.