Associated Colleges of the Midwest
Costa Rica: Community Engagement in Public Health, Education, & the Environment

Student Handbook ♦ Fall 2014
# Table of Contents

I. **Welcome and Program Overview** .................................................................................................................... 2  
II. **Calendar** ........................................................................................................................................................ 4  
III. **Academics**  
    - Program Courses .................................................................................................................................................. 5  
    - Credits and Grades ............................................................................................................................................... 7  
    - Expected Participation ........................................................................................................................................... 7  
IV. **Preparing to Go and Arrival**  
    - Passport and Visa ................................................................................................................................................ 8  
    - Communication ................................................................................................................................................. 9  
    - Money ................................................................................................................................................................. 10  
    - Packing Considerations .................................................................................................................................... 10  
    - Suggested Packing List ....................................................................................................................................... 12  
    - Arrival in San José ............................................................................................................................................. 13  
V. **Host Country Information** .................................................................................................................................. 14  
VI. **Cultural Norms and Expectations**  
    - Local Adaption .................................................................................................................................................. 17  
    - Culture Shock ..................................................................................................................................................... 22  
VII. **Program Arrangements** .................................................................................................................................. 23  
VIII. **Housing Arrangements** .................................................................................................................................. 28  
    - Social Life While Living with Your Costa Rican Host Family ............................................................................. 30  
IX. **Independent Travel**  
    - Travel during the Program ................................................................................................................................. 31  
    - Travel before and after the Program .................................................................................................................. 32  
X. **Health and Safety**  
    - Health ............................................................................................................................................................... 33  
    - Personal Safety ................................................................................................................................................... 35  
    - Legal and Ethical Issues ....................................................................................................................................... 37  
XI. **ACM Program Rules and Policies**  
    - ACM Code of Student Responsibility .................................................................................................................. 38  
    - ACM Policy on Academics ............................................................................................................................... 40  
    - ACM Housing Policy .......................................................................................................................................... 41  
    - ACM Policy on Alcohol and Drugs ................................................................................................................... 42  
    - ACM Policy on Sexual Harassment .................................................................................................................... 42  
    - ACM Policy on Dual Relationships ................................................................................................................... 42  
    - ACM Policy on Sexual Assault .......................................................................................................................... 42  
    - ACM Policy on Non-Discrimination .................................................................................................................. 44  
    - ACM Student Conduct Procedures .................................................................................................................... 44  
    - ACM Tuition, Program Fees, and Refunds ........................................................................................................ 47  
    - ACM Policy on Health and Safety Notification ............................................................................................... 49  
    - ACM Evaluations and Surveys ............................................................................................................................. 49  
    - ACM Opt-Out Form ............................................................................................................................................ 51
I. Welcome and Program Overview

Congratulations on your acceptance to the ACM’s program on Community Engagement in Public Health, Education, & the Environment in Costa Rica. You will be participating in a program that has been in existence for almost fifty years and has graduated many distinguished Latin Americanists.

This ACM Costa Rica program handbook is intended to help prepare you for your semester in Costa Rica and to give you an initial sense of what to expect academically and personally while you are there. It is revised each year based on comments from the previous program participants to include more current information and contains details on various logistical arrangements for your trip. It is, in effect, a reference tool that provides you with the information you need as you make arrangements to participate in the program. It is important that you read it carefully and raise any questions you may have with the ACM Program Associate. You should also take it with you when you travel to Costa Rica, as it contains important contact and schedule information, as well as information about academics and other arrangements for the program.

The ACM Costa Rica staff is ready to help you in any way they can. You should feel free to come to them with your questions and problems. They are always willing to provide assistance or advice, particularly on cross-cultural matters. We hope you will learn a tremendous amount about Latin America, that you will form lasting friendships, and that you will come to love Costa Rica and its people. May your experiences in Costa Rica be rich and memorable: ¡Que la aprovechen!

Program Overview

Central America is a region of great historical, cultural, and biological diversity, with the approximately 40 million people who inhabit Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua sharing much in common. Governed in Spanish colonial times as a single unit, today they are separate countries sharing similar economic pursuits. While in the past they may have been characterized as “coffee” or “banana republics,” today their economies continue to grow more diverse as the region takes on the twenty-first century challenges of building justice and prosperity in the context of globalization. As Costa Rica continues to grapple with issues such as poverty, public health, and environmental conservation, “Ticos” (as Costa Ricans like to call themselves) are committed to universal health care, social programs, and democratic government. Over the years Costa Rica has always stood somewhat apart from the historical dramas of Central America, making it a fascinating comparative case and a safe observatory on progress in nation-building and sustainable development in this region so closely tied, both politically and economically, to the United States.

The Fall ACM Costa Rica: Community Engagement in Public Health, Education, & the Environment program has three broad goals:

- To develop Spanish language proficiency to the advanced level;
- To develop broad understanding of Latin American society and intercultural literacy through cultural immersion;
To deepen knowledge of Latin American development, environmental, and cultural issues through coursework, first-hand experience, and field inquiry.

Course offerings build on the framework of a liberal arts education and focus on analyzing Costa Rican culture, politics, and environment, as well as Spanish language acquisition. Courses are discussion-centered, enrollments are small, and faculty work closely with students. A four-week rural stay gives students first-hand experience participating in and studying the work of local communities. The experience in San José provides students with, among other things, a comparative perspective between the rural and urban contexts. The housing arrangements, with host families both in San José and in the countryside during the rural stay, enhance the immersive aspect of the program, as do excursions to sites in and around San José.

When students return to campus after the fall Costa Rica program, they should have the skills in language, intercultural literacy, and field inquiry to arrive in or study a new country – especially in Latin America – and to engage with the major issues of the day with cultural understanding and experiential sophistication.
**II. Calendar**

**Fall 2014 Semester**

**ACM Program Center option**

**August 16 – November 29, 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sat, Aug. 16, 2014</td>
<td>Students arrive in San José</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon, Aug. 18, 2014</td>
<td>First day of classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat, Sept. 20, 2014</td>
<td>Students depart for rural stay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat, Oct. 18, 2014</td>
<td>Students return to San José</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fri, Nov. 28, 2014</td>
<td>Last day of classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sat, Nov. 29, 2014</td>
<td>Students depart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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III. Academics

Program Courses

Introduction to Costa Rica
Instructor: Mario Morera, Spanish Language Coordinator
Required course, 5 credits

This course will provide a broad introduction to the culture and history of Costa Rica, spanning a range of topics from the arts and literature; to Costa Rican politics, economy, and public policy; to its diverse ecology and conservation efforts. Taught entirely in Spanish, the course will combine classroom discussion with weekly excursions to sites in and around San José. To provide a comparative focus with urban life in San José, students will spend one month of the semester living with a different host family in a rural community, where they will participate in a rural practicum in areas of special interest to them.

Spanish and Culture
Instructors: ACM Spanish language faculty
Required course, 4 credits

Instruction at the ACM center is provided by experienced Costa Rican teachers working under the direction of the ACM language coordinator. Instructors rotate among the small classes to expose students to several native speakers. Classes meet 17.5 hours/week during the first five weeks of the semester and focus on comprehension and conversation, Costa Rican idioms, and grammar review. Grade reports will also indicate the level at which a student has studied so that credit can be assigned for the appropriate level of work.

Students choose one of the following three elective courses:

Health Care in Costa Rica and the Emerging Diseases Faced by the Public Health System
Instructor: TBD
Elective course, 4 credits

This course offers an overview of the Costa Rican health care system and the challenges it faces in providing health care to both urban and rural populations. During the month-long rural practicum, students will collaborate with public health efforts in their community. Language of instruction is Spanish.

Neotropical Biodiversity and Conservation
Instructor: Dr. Bonnie Furman
Elective course, 4 credits

This course will examine environmental issues and solutions within the socio-economic-political framework of each Central American country, with special emphasis on Costa Rica, where conservation
efforts have received international acclaim. The subject matter of this course is inherently multidisciplinary with interconnected webs of causality. During the month-long rural practicum, students will collaborate with conservation efforts in their community.

**Impact of Education in Costa Rica**
Instructor: Andrea Anfossi Gómez  
Elective course, 4 credits

This course focuses on the development of the Costa Rican education system as a promoter of human development and the analysis of the system’s current situation. It explores the factors that influenced its historical development and the present education policy of the Ministry of Public Education. It contextualizes education and the challenges it faces in the 21st century Costa Rica. During the month-long rural practicum, students will collaborate with public education efforts in their rural community. Language of instruction is Spanish.

*When students return from the rural areas, they will choose from one of two language electives:*

**Latin American Rock ‘n Roll: Voices of Social Criticism (Advanced Conversation Course)**
Instructor: Mario Morera  
Elective course, 3 credits

Designed to enhance students’ pronunciation, vocabulary development, and conversational skills, the emphasis of this course is on attaining greater oral fluency through listening to and discussing Latin American rock music in class. Students will analyze lyrics and video clips, read articles on music in the region, and consider the role of rock music in social criticism and social justice. There will be a wide variety of bands and styles representing all Latin American countries.

**Horror, Terror and Fantasy in Latin America: Literature of Fear**
Instructor: Mario Morera  
Elective course, 3 credits

This course aims to provide the student, through the analysis of works by renowned Latin American writers, an updated vision of historical, social, political, cultural and gender contexts that shape and influence the unconscious fear inhabited by the Latin American individual. This area is still a melting pot where the borders between reality and fantasy are lost amidst places and situations that still in the 21st century maintain features of pre-Columbian America.
Credits and Grades

ACM recommends a total of 16 semester credits, as shown in the course descriptions, for your academic work in Costa Rica. Before you leave your home campus you should find out from your registrar exactly how many credits you will earn and what graduation requirements they will meet. Different colleges have different policies about credit, and it is your responsibility to inform yourself about pass/fail options and how your program credits will appear on your transcript. You should also discuss your plans with your advisor and academic department, particularly if you want your work in Costa Rica to fulfill a requirement or serve as the basis for an honors or senior project.

Expected Participation

You are expected, unless excused, to attend all ACM classes and events and to participate in the field trips. As a general rule, students will not be excused from ACM activities to attend to visitors from the United States, whether friends or family. As a courtesy to your fellow students and to your host family, be sure to attend all ACM social activities. Those who participate fully in the program will benefit culturally and socially. Keep in mind that visitors may not take precedence over your academic responsibilities; a prolonged visit by family or friends causes an inevitable regression in your Spanish learning and may cause you to fall behind in your courses. Parents and guests should not expect to participate in orientation or other ACM activities or excursions.
IV. Preparing to Go and Arrival

Passport and Visa

You will need a valid passport. Make sure that your passport is valid at least six months from the day you board the plane to return home. If it expires during that time, you should renew it immediately. Passport information is available at http://travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html.

As a precaution against a lost or stolen passport, ACM recommends that you make a photocopy of the photo page of your passport. Carry this information separately; having this information easily available can make the replacement process both quicker and simpler. (In Costa Rica it is possible to travel throughout most of the country carrying a certified copy of your passport, which will be provided for you during the first days of the program. The exceptions are regions near the country’s borders where it is recommended that you travel with the actual passport. In that case, keep your passport separate from your wallet in a money belt or other concealed carrier—if you lose your wallet, you won’t have lost your passport as well.)

Visa

Costa Rica automatically gives tourist visas of up to 90 days to incoming visitors from the United States and you will be no exception. Once students arrive in San José, the ACM program legal advisor, in coordination with the Coordinator of Academic Services, will arrange for the extension of student permits up until the end of the program. **Under no circumstances should students arrive in Costa Rica more than one week before the program begins.** Please consult with the ACM office in Chicago—before making definite plans—to be sure that an early arrival does not create immigration problems for you. If you plan to travel in Costa Rica after the end of the program, you will need to cross the border with Nicaragua or Panama and spend 72 hours outside the country. On your return to Costa Rica, you will be granted another tourist visa of up to 90 days.

You must arrive in Costa Rica with a round-trip ticket or an on-going ticket out of the country. Students without a return or on-going ticket can have trouble entering the country, and the ACM legal advisor will not be able to request an extension from the migration authorities without evidence of a return or on-going ticket out of the country. The ACM Chicago Office will send you a letter explaining the program’s visa procedures which you can give airline personnel if you are questioned at the check-in counter.

The ACM staff will obtain the necessary extension of your student visa after your arrival. During that time, you will carry a notarized copy of your passport. You will be notified when your extension is requested and then granted, and we will make a copy of the permit. You will then carry with you at all times a copy of your passport and the permit (it’s best to leave your actual passport in a safe place unless you are traveling near an international border).

If you are not a U.S. citizen or not flying to Costa Rica from the United States, please inform the Chicago office as soon as possible. Visitors from certain countries must undergo a special process to secure a tourist visa, and this process can take a long time and should be started as soon as possible.

Travel Arrangements

You should make your travel arrangements as soon as possible after you accept the offer to participate in the program: keep in mind that earlier reservations are likely cheaper. You will need to arrange to fly from your home to the **Juan Santamaría International airport (SJO) arriving on Saturday, August**
16th, between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. as a courtesy to your host family. If you do not arrive within this time frame, plan on taking a taxi at your own expense. You can choose to make your reservations through the Internet or through a travel agent in your home town or near your campus. Students also recommend STA travel (800-708-9758). You may also wish to see what arrangements other students in your program are making—the Facebook group is the best way to share this information.

Communication

Mail
Your mail should be addressed to you in care of the ACM office, because delivery to your host family’s street address is not always reliable. The ACM will distribute student mail. In San Pedro, the post office is located 100 meters (a block) to the south of the Outlet Mall, 100 meters north of the ACM. The mailing address for the program can be found at the back of this handbook.

Shipping
ACM does not recommend that you receive any packages in Costa Rica. Customs charges a flat fee on all incoming packages containing books, used items, or things for which no value is declared in the shipping documents. If a value is declared on the package, however, you (the receiver) will be charged 20% of the declared value for customs fees, plus an additional 20% for value-added tax. One recent participant received a box of books from home with a declared value of $200 and was forced to pay $60 to get the package out of customs. It is a huge hassle—and expensive—to get items out of customs and for those reasons we ask that packages not be sent.

Despite the hassle and cost, if you still plan on mailing a package through a shipping service such as DHL, you must use the physical location (street address) of the program center, listed at the back of this handbook.

Computers
If you have a laptop, we recommend that you bring it with you. The ACM office provides a locker where you can store your computer overnight and during your field stay. You will need to be sure that your computer is insured, as ACM does not provide insurance coverage for students’ personal property. Keep in mind that it is best not to travel about with your laptop in Costa Rica with the same confidence you would at home. Household security (door locks, etc.) is often less strict in rural areas, and fluctuating electrical current, dust, damp conditions, etc. are more frequently encountered outside of San José.

Telephones
You will be required to have a cell phone while on the program. You may want to bring your U.S. cell phone with you to Costa Rica and pay $2 for a prepaid service phone chip in addition to air time sold by the national telecommunications institution, the Instituto Costarricense de Electricidad (ICE). If your phone is not compatible with the chip sold by the ICE, you can purchase a phone in Costa Rica starting at about $40-50, a prepaid service SIM card for $2 and air time according to need. We do not recommend bringing an expensive phone to Costa Rica due to climatic and other conditions.

Although a U.S. cell phone will work in San José with an international service plan, calls are expensive. Skype is a good option for keeping in touch with friends and family at home. You can also purchase an international calling card, which you can use from public phones.
Money

Students on the program in the past several years have relied on debit and ATM cards almost exclusively to obtain colones for daily expenses. (For information on what expenses you can expect to have, please see the Cost Information sheet for the Costa Rica program on the ACM website.) ATM machines (known as cajeros automáticos in Costa Rica) are readily available throughout San José and other large towns, and you should have no problem withdrawing funds in colones from your U.S. bank account. Before you leave for the program, however, you should notify your bank that you will be abroad. (If you neglect to do so, you may find that your bank, fearing that your card has been stolen, will freeze your account after several withdrawals.) You will also want to check on the transaction charges your bank may levy. You’ll also want to keep careful track of your debit card; there have been incidents of students leaving their debit cards in the machines. Have the information you need on hand to cancel your debit card immediately should it be lost or stolen.

While the exchange rate is typically good when using an ATM or debit card, you may find that such transaction fees discourage multiple withdrawals of small amounts. As of June 2014, the exchange rate is $1 = ₡546 and frequently fluctuates by a few colones.

While ATM and debit cards work well, this should not be your only means of getting money—ATM and debit cards can get lost, stolen, or eaten by cash machines. You should also bring along some hard currency in dollars—perhaps $100 or $200 in smaller denominations ($50 and $100 bills are not accepted by many businesses)—and a credit card. Visa is more widely used than other credit cards, but you should not plan to use it with the frequency that you likely do in the U.S., as many small businesses in Costa Rica will not accept credit cards. Be sure to carry some colones in case of emergencies or when you travel outside of San José.

Packing Considerations

What to Bring
Packing can seem like an overwhelming task, but using common sense and the following checklists can make it much less daunting. If you see something on the list you can do without or would never use in the U.S., don’t bring it! Use your own judgment. If you have any questions, please call the ACM office for clarification. Remember when packing certain items that most Costa Rican houses use 110 voltage so U.S. electrical appliances also work there.
Don’t forget to leave some extra space for things you’ll buy when you’re abroad. Airline luggage restrictions can be strict and you are likely to be charged for excess luggage. Check with your airline to find out what the exact limitations are regarding the number of pieces of luggage you can take, the charge for additional bags, and restrictions on the weight and dimensions of your luggage. Remember that when you travel to rural areas by bus you may want to use a large backpack or duffel bag, rather than a suitcase.

**We strongly recommend that you carry your money, passport, and any valuables in a money belt or pouch beneath your clothes while you’re traveling.** You can buy one for about $20 at specialty travel shops and discount stores like Target or Wal-Mart.

Put anything you’ll need immediately upon arrival into your carry-on bag. *Never put prescription drugs or valuables in your checked luggage.* Bring copies of the prescription using the generic name since brand names may vary from country to country. If you wear glasses or contacts, bring an extra pair.

**Clothing**
Costa Rica has two seasons: the wet season, usually from late May through November; and the dry season, usually from December to May. During the wet season in San José, it will rain almost daily, usually in the afternoon for brief periods of time and, during October and November, the rains can last all afternoon, and occasionally all day long. The weather in San José and its environs is generally mild year-round. The daytime temperature rarely exceeds 80°F in San José, but evenings are brisk and Costa Rican homes do not have heat. Temperatures can drop to the 30s and 40s high in the mountains and rise to the 80s and 90s in the tropical lowlands, accompanied by high humidity.

The advice for travelers is to travel lightly. Take enough clothing to provide for your basic needs, but pack sparingly. Clothes in good condition are appropriate, and your appearance should always be neat. Excessively informal, revealing, or sloppy attire can attract unwanted comments or attention, particularly from men.

Try to select clothing that will adapt to different seasons and situations. Bring a raincoat or an umbrella. A couple of sweaters and/or jackets are important for evenings and during the wet season or if you visit higher elevations. Avoid a piece of clothing you’ll wear only once or twice during the semester. You may require one or two slightly more formal outfits for attending a family wedding, the National Theater or for your rural practicum, if you will be working with an educational or health institution. Wash-and-wear clothing is recommended, since dry cleaning is expensive and clothes tend to get dirty quickly from air pollution and dust, especially in the dry season. Laundry is included in your housing costs.

**Gifts**
It is a wonderful gesture to take a gift to your host family. All fall students will also have a rural family, so plan on gifts for two families. Choose something representative of your college, town, or culture, but keep it within a moderate price range. When choosing presents for your San José family you may wish to make use of the description of your family sent to you by the ACM office in Costa Rica. Here are some general recommendations:

- Boxes of chocolates or candies
- T-shirts or pennants from your college or sports teams
- Calendars with scenes of your home state or town
- Picture books about the U.S. or your home region
- College mugs
- Artwork from your hometown (small pottery, weaving, watercolors)
Suggested Packing List

Documents
- Passport + copy
- Copy of certified birth certificate (in case of lost passport)
- Debit or ATM card, credit card, cash (approx. $100-$200 in smaller denominations)
- Copy of round trip flight ticket
- Copy of student insurance card

Clothing
- T-shirts, and a few light, long-sleeve shirts
- Pants
- For women, Capri or knee length shorts, skirts, dresses
- Bathing suit
- Shorts for trips to the beach (short shorts are normally not worn in the cities)
- One dressy outfit
- A few heavy sweaters and/or a light jacket since the temperature in San José drops in Nov. and Dec.
- Clothes for group field trips and the rural stay and practicum portion
- Comfortable walking shoes and a pair of field boots for hikes and camping (sandals are not safe for hiking in the tropics)
- Shoes you won’t mind getting wet (for the fall rainy season) such as Chaco, Teva, Merrell, or Crocs
- Rain jacket
- Slippers or sandals to wear around the house (it is not culturally acceptable to be barefoot)

Personal and Miscellaneous Items
- Toiletry articles in travel and traditional size (It is cheaper to purchase personal hygiene items in the U.S. and bring them with you, but less expensive, local brands are available in Costa Rica)
- Portable toilet paper
- Hand sanitizer
- Glasses or contact lenses and a copy of your prescription. Contact lens solution is expensive, so you might want to bring a semester's supply.
- Enough prescription medicine to last your stay and copies of prescriptions (with generic names)
- Medicine for an upset stomach
- Tampons
- A bath towel and a beach towel (do not expect to use your host family's towels but you can buy these on-site)
- Sunscreen
- Bug spray
- Camera with memory card, AC adapter and cable
- Backpack for routine daily use in San José (some students bring larger backpacks to use for weekend travel)
- Money belt
- Guidebook
- Laptop computer and AC adapter
- Umbrella
- Pictures of your family, home, and college to show to your host family and friends in Costa Rica. These items provide an excellent way for your family to get to know you better and make for good conversation.
- Host family gifts
Arrival in San José

Your host family will meet you when you arrive at the Juan Santamaría airport (SJO) near San José, provided that you arrive between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. The Program Director will be on call with the host families to confirm individual arrivals. Upon meeting your host family at the airport, you will go directly to your new home, and will meet the ACM staff on Monday morning.

You are responsible for your own transportation to and from Costa Rica. If you come before the scheduled arrival date, you will have to make your own arrangements until the program begins.
V. Host Country Information

People
Costa Ricans are progressively moving away from a national identity based on dubious notions about European origins and “whiteness,” and towards more awareness of the diversity of the population. For example, an estimated 10% to 15% of the population is made up of recently-arrived Nicaraguan immigrants. Descendants of 19th-century Jamaican immigrant workers are an important (and frequently English-speaking) presence in the Atlantic province of Limón—at 3% of the population—and are probably the most significant historical minority in Costa Rica. Few of the native Indians survived the first 100 years of European contact; the indigenous population today numbers about 29,000 or less than 1% of the population. However, indigenous communities are a visible and sometimes vocal presence in several parts of the country. A small population of Chinese immigrants, some with origins dating back to the 19th century, and others of more recent arrivals, add to the country’s diversity.

History
In 1502, on his fourth and last voyage to the New World, Christopher Columbus made the first European landfall in the area. Settlement of Costa Rica began in 1522. For nearly three centuries, Spain administered the region as part of the Captaincy General of Guatemala under a military governor. The Spanish optimistically called the country "Rich Coast." Finding little gold or other valuable minerals in Costa Rica, however, the Spanish turned to agriculture, at first based on coerced indigenous labor. Indigenous communities quickly declined under this arrangement (through both disease and flight to several remote zones of refuge), leaving Costa Rica’s small landowners the challenge of surviving without coerced labor. The small landowners’ relative poverty, the population’s ethnic and linguistic homogeneity, and Costa Rica’s isolation from the Spanish colonial centers in Mexico and the Andes all contributed to the development of a relatively autonomous and individualistic agrarian society. An egalitarian tradition also arose. This tradition survived the widened class distinctions brought on by the 19th-century introduction of banana and coffee cultivation and consequent accumulations of local wealth, and has served as a constant spur to social reform whenever the tradition and the reality have grown too far apart.

Costa Rica joined other Central American provinces in 1821 in a joint declaration of independence from Spain. Although the newly independent provinces formed a Federation, border disputes broke out among them, adding to the region’s turbulent history and conditions. Costa Rica’s northern Guanacaste Province was annexed from Nicaragua in one such regional dispute. In 1838, long after the Central American Federation ceased to function in practice, Costa Rica formally withdrew and proclaimed itself sovereign.

An era of relatively peaceful democracy in Costa Rica began in 1889 with elections considered the first truly free and honest ones in the country’s history. This began a trend that continues today with only two lapses: in 1917-19, Federico Tinoco ruled as a dictator, and, in 1948, José Figueres led an armed uprising in the wake of a disputed presidential election. With more than 2,000 dead, the 44-day civil war resulting from this uprising was the bloodiest event in 20th-century Costa Rican history, but the victorious junta drafted a constitution guaranteeing free and independently-supervised elections with universal suffrage and the abolition of the military. Figueres became a national hero, winning the first election under the new constitution in 1953. Since then, Costa Rica has held 15 presidential elections, the latest in 2014.

The years since 1948 have been peaceful in Costa Rica. The government has continued to promote its democracy and to publicize its national health and educational programs. Ticos are often heard to say
that there is an army of teachers but no soldiers in Costa Rica, and they are proud that they have the highest literacy rate in Central America.

**Government**
Costa Rica is a democratic republic with a very strong system of constitutional checks and balances. Executive responsibilities are vested in a president, who is relatively weak by Latin American standards. There also are two vice presidents and a 20-plus member cabinet. The president and 57 Legislative Assembly deputies are elected for 4-year terms. In April 2003, the Costa Rican Constitutional Court annulled a 1969 constitutional reform which had barred presidents from running for reelection. As a result, the law reverted back to the 1949 Constitution, which permits ex-presidents to run for reelection after they have been out of office for two presidential terms, or eight years. Deputies may run for reelection after sitting out one term, or four years. In October 2007, the country ratified the U.S.-Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) by a slender margin in its first national referendum, and the treaty went into effect in January of 2009.

**Political Conditions**
Costa Rica has long emphasized the development of democracy and respect for human rights. The country's political system has steadily developed, maintaining democratic institutions and an orderly, constitutional scheme for government succession. Several factors have contributed to this trend, including enlightened leadership, comparative prosperity, flexible class lines, educational opportunities that have created a stable middle class, and high social indicators. Also, because Costa Rica has no armed forces, it has avoided military involvement in political affairs, unlike other countries in the region.

In May 2006, the former President Oscar Arias of the National Liberation Party (PLN) assumed office. Arias listed passage of the CAFTA-DR, along with fiscal reform, infrastructure improvements, improving education, and improving security as primary goals for his presidency. In 2010, Laura Chinchilla became Costa Rica’s first woman President. She was the sixth woman to be elected as President of a Latin American country. In 2014, Luis Guillermo Solís was the first member of the center-left Citizens’ Action Party (PAC) to be elected President. Solís is a graduate of the University of Costa Rica.

The 57-member unicameral Legislative Assembly has five principal party factions, with the governing party, PLN, having an 18-seat plurality.

**Economy**
Compared with its Central American neighbors, Costa Rica has achieved a high standard of living, with a GDP per capita of about U.S. $12,942 and an unemployment rate of about 9%. Consumer price inflation is high but relatively constant at about a 10% annual rate in the last decade. Both the central government and the overall public sector ran fiscal surpluses in 2007 before the recent recession, and have run moderate deficits in the years since.
U.S. – Costa Rica Relations
The United States and Costa Rica have a history of close and friendly relations based on respect for
democratic government, human freedoms, free trade, and other shared values. The country generally
supports the U.S. in international fora, especially in the areas of democracy and human rights.

The United States is Costa Rica’s most important trading partner. The U.S. accounts for almost half of
Costa Rica’s exports, imports, and tourism, and more than two-thirds of its foreign investment. The two
countries share growing concerns for the environment and want to preserve Costa Rica’s important
tropical resources and prevent environmental degradation. In 2007, the United States reduced Costa
Rica’s debt in exchange for protection and conservation of Costa Rican forests through a debt for nature
swap under the auspices of the Tropical Forest Conservation Act. This is the largest such agreement of its
kind to date.

The United States responded to Costa Rica’s economic needs in the 1980s with significant economic and
development assistance programs. Through provision of more than $1.1 billion in assistance, the U.S.
Agency for International Development (USAID) supported Costa Rican efforts to stabilize its economy
and broaden and accelerate economic growth through policy reforms and trade liberalization. Assistance initiatives in the
1990s concentrated on democratic policies, modernizing the administration of justice, and
sustainable development. Once the country
had graduated from most forms of U.S.
assistance, the USAID Mission in Costa Rica
closed in 1996. However, USAID completed a
$9 million project in 2000-01 to support
refugees of Hurricane Mitch residing in Costa Rica.

Between 30,000-50,000 private US/North American citizens, including many retirees, reside in the
country and more than 700,000 US American citizens visit Costa Rica annually. A few vexing
expropriation and US citizen investment disputes have hurt Costa Rica’s investment climate and have
occasionally produced bilateral friction.
VI. Cultural Norms and Expectations

Enrollment in an ACM program obligates you to conduct yourself as a responsible member of that program. While on an ACM off-campus program, any behavior by a student that discredits the student or the program, as determined by the program rules and the Program Director, may result in disciplinary action. The Program Director reserves the right to discipline or dismiss a student whose conduct is seen as being in conflict with the best interests of the program and in violation of its rules, either academic or social. The Program Director also has the authority, in consultation with the ACM Chicago office, to remove a student from the program because of a medical or psychological crisis or any other serious situation that might arise. Life-threatening events, serious involvement with the police, unscheduled loss of contact with a student, and incidents having the potential for serious public relations consequences may also warrant dismissal.

Local Adaptation

The cultural experience is rich and unique and calls for a series of adjustments by the student. It is a two-way process in which your family and community will learn about the US and you about Costa Ricans. Adjustment requires time, patience, and persistence. Here are some points to remember during your initial adjustment:

- **Family life/sex roles** may be different from the North American lifestyle you know. For example, the television may be always blaring; lots of kids may follow you around; men may not do dishes; and you may not have space to work at home. You will have to figure out where you can work effectively. Kids can be great for learning the language, helping you find a place, and telling you about the area. Adult attention is focused on children; so take an interest in them as well. Especially in the rural areas, a good way of learning about life is to help the men or women with their chores—it is also a nice gesture as a family member.

- **Machismo.** If you are a young single female you must prepare yourself for catcalls and comments by some males. You will find it helpful to remember that some Costa Rican men do this to older women as well. Such behavior is usually harmless. Your best tactic may be to ignore it, although you may find this difficult. If you have a friend or a child who likes to accompany you, you may not feel so conspicuous or alone. Machismo can be a problem for males as well. They may feel pressured into behavior with which they are not comfortable.

- **Ticos** are interested in the US way of life. They will ask you questions about yourself, your family, holidays, and customs.

Cultural Considerations

When you first arrive in Costa Rica the greenery and lushness of the Central Valley and the superficial similarities with the United States may mislead you. San José has a modern façade, many US businesses, traffic problems, and smog, all of which you may find familiar. However, beneath the surface, you will discover much that is unfamiliar—the language, politics, interpersonal relationships, thought patterns, and attitudes. You will feel rather than see most of these differences. Though intangible, they are both real and pervasive, and you will have to come to terms with them in order to be reasonably comfortable.

Some of the differences you will understand easily. For example, people in Spanish-speaking countries often eat a big meal at noon and dine later in the evening. You will also find that Costa Ricans express positive emotions more openly than most US citizens do and may tend to be more reserved in expressing
their negative feelings. Hand-shaking, kissing, and hugging are common forms of greeting and leave-taking among friends, relatives, and in some cases even among people meeting for the first time. Female friends usually greet each other with a light kiss on the cheek or by grasping forearms. Men and women normally greet each other with handshakes and kisses on the cheek or by grasping forearms, depending on their familiarity. Other differences are subtler yet profound, and they can become aggravating if you are not open to new ways of doing things.

Cultural sensitivity and open-mindedness will help to make your experience a valuable one. Such sensitivity is needed in terms of language and is also relevant to your relationships with your family as well as to your appearance and behavior. For example, most Latin Americans consider themselves to be Americans in that they reside on the continent America. It may be discourteous for a US student to refer to him/herself as an americano/a when referring to his/her status as a citizen of the United States since, in that context, the term excludes Costa Ricans as Americans. In Spanish you should refer to yourself as estadounidense or norteamericano/a when questioned about your nationality.

Another difference is that the conversational distance between two people in Latin America is typically smaller than in the United States. You may find yourself talking to someone and occasionally taking a step backward, only to have your acquaintance take a step towards you. This occurs almost unconsciously as you and the other person attempt to adjust to your respective comfortable speaking distances.

Latin Americans generally place much less importance on punctuality than North Americans do, particularly on social occasions. If you arrive at a Costa Rican family’s home for a party at the designated time, you will probably be the first guest there and may find your hosts unprepared. The first guests usually show up about a half hour after the designated time. For office appointments, however, it is unwise to show up late. Being familiar with such details will make a difference in how you are treated in Costa Rica as well as in your comfort in adjusting to a different culture.

As is true for foreign students coming to live and study in the United States, you may encounter prejudices either in your home or on the streets. Just as in the States, you may find both racial bigotry and homophobia. Since Costa Rica is a predominantly Catholic country, Costa Ricans tend to be more traditional and less accepting of gay and lesbian lifestyles than many in the US; however, no one who behaves in a discreet way should have problems. Women will also notice more overt sexism in Costa Rica than in the United States. Men frequently make comments to women on the streets, especially when they are unaccompanied or are wearing short skirts or shorts. The majority of Ticos are warm, friendly people who will accord you as much respect as you show them.

You will not find it easy to shed the feeling that your own way of thinking and doing things is the right way; yet one of your principal goals should be to develop a cultural humility and openness to Costa Rican culture which will allow you to learn from your hosts. It is also important to be patient with yourself as you go through the process of cultural adjustment. Acceptance by and friendship with Costa Ricans will result from your willingness to adapt to and become an active participant in their way of life. This includes speaking Spanish even when the people you are with speak English. It may also mean adhering to more conservative customs of etiquette, dress, and speech in order to be accepted by the older generation.

This does not mean you should try to transform yourself to conform to the Costa Rican way of life. It does mean that you will need to be considerate and sensitive. For example, it means being responsive to your Costa Rican family’s concern about the hours you keep, even though at college no one has given your
personal schedule a second thought. It means attention to the tone and level of your voice and your language in public places. It means openness to hearing a wide array of political opinions, some of which may be contrary to your own views. It also means conforming to Costa Rican standards in clothing and general appearance, an area in which US students have a reputation for slovenliness. Extremes in long hair and beards and ragged denim jeans are generally not acceptable to many Costa Ricans. During your rural practicum, it may be especially important for you to dress more formally if you are going to work with Costa Rican institutions.

The language and customs of Costa Rica may be different from those with which you have grown up. You have come here to learn about them, rather than to read about them from afar. Experiencing the language means to hear it and use it daily in numerous situations in which you are a real participant, and in which your behavior has real consequences. This is what we mean when we talk about language “immersion.” By the same token, when we speak of cultural “immersion” we refer to the full participation of a student in different social and cultural situations, in which the values, beliefs, and attitudes of both student and the target culture meet and must be taken into account in order to get along in the target culture.

**Food**

Part of the cultural experience involves the daily act of eating. Since cultures do not mold themselves immediately or perfectly to fit one individual who comes to study, live and travel within them, you should understand that when it comes to eating, you will probably have to make some adjustments to your typical diet.

While your family will be concerned about filling your dietary needs, we ask that you be as flexible as possible in adapting to their diet as it would be culturally insensitive to expect them to modify their traditional foods in order to adapt to your diet. Some Costa Rican families are deliberately trying to eat less meat; however, the majority still consider meat, in some form, to be an important part of most meals. If you are a vegetarian, we will try to place you with a family that is familiar with different vegetarian diets. However, we will ask you to be flexible, to help your family to understand your specific needs and to share recipes with them. Although your host family receives a monthly stipend for your room and board, the essence of the family stay is to nurture your cultural growth. On some occasions, as when you travel with the ACM group, we will be eating food ordered for the entire group, and it is very likely that even a vegetable dish will be prepared with meat broth. It is understandable that cooks have learned and been trained to cook in ways that are appropriate and appreciated in their culture. We ask that you keep an open mind when faced with these situations and remember that they are a part of the culture you have come to experience firsthand.

A 10% tip is automatically figured into the bill at restaurants (as well as a 13% sales tax). It is therefore unnecessary to leave a tip unless you really want to do so. The typical dish of rice, beans, fried plantain, meat, fish, cheese or egg, and a salad is called a *casado* and is generally a good buy. A hint for vegetarians: *carne* often implies beef; so if you ask for a dish without *carne* be sure to specify whether or not that also means pork, fish and chicken. When you are ready to leave, ask for *la cuenta*.
We do not recommend that students eat food sold on the street, especially slices of fruit. The possibility of contamination is high and not worth the risk of dysentery or hepatitis.

Extra-curricular Activities
Studying in a cross-cultural setting is an absorbing experience which requires a total commitment. The ACM staff will attempt to make the experience valuable for you, but one of the purposes of these programs is to give you responsibility for your own learning. Although the ACM provides a high quality academic program with classroom work, assigned readings, papers, and exams, the program staff is also committed to experiential education and encourages students to become involved in social activities, sports, and in university and community events. The ACM has an agreement with the University of Costa Rica which allows students to participate in aerobics, yoga, mountaineering, karate, drama, dance, and other classes. A small number of students have also participated in choirs, bands, and activities sponsored by student organizations at the university. In San José, some students also participate in different kinds of volunteer work for a few hours each week. The staff will try to help you get involved in extra-curricular activities and to answer any questions you may have.

Courtesy in Costa Rica
A person’s understanding of courtesy is culturally-based. A US citizen’s understanding of what it means to be courteous is not necessarily the same as a Costa Rican’s. The following list highlights some differences:

- Drivers in Costa Rica normally do not stop for pedestrians. Stepping off a curb without looking may result in serious injury. Drivers make turns at high speeds, frequently without signaling. Do not assume drivers will respect your rights. **WALK DEFENSIVELY!** The ACM staff worries more about traffic accidents than about any other hazard.
- The notion of keeping to the right when walking in supermarkets or on the streets is not well established in Costa Rica. People will approach you on the sidewalk three or four abreast and only make way for you at the last moment.
- Time is not as precious a commodity in Costa Rica as in the United States. Banks and governmental agencies often allow customers to wait longer than is usual in the US.
- What we would perceive as name-calling is often used as an affectionate greeting (for example: *gordito*, *machito*, *negrita*, *chinita*). These terms are often based on physical appearance only and are not intended to offend.
- Titles are more commonly used than in the US. Honorifics like *don*, *dona*, *Dr.*, *profesor*, reflect the sense that being polite includes using appropriate titles of respect. It is important to be sensitive to the social hierarchy these titles reflect. You may address your host parents as *dona* Flor and *don* Pedro.
- It is customary for family members to greet each other in the morning with “*Buenos días*” often followed by “¿Cómo amaneció?” It is important to return this daily courtesy to your family.
- When someone is eating, the custom is to convey the hope that the person is enjoying the meal. The standard expressions are: ¡*Que le aproveche!*; ¡*Buen provecho!* These expressions communicate an interest in the other person.
- Greetings tend to be much more effusive: for example, female friends kiss each other on the cheek,
as do male and female friends; acquaintances shake hands frequently, etc. Certain expressions, used with regularity, convey enthusiasm for the other person: ¡Gusto en verlo!, ¿Cómo amaneció?, etc.

- When a person enters someone else’s home, he or she usually says con permiso (with permission); the expected response is adelante or an equivalent expression. Con permiso is also used when ending a conversation and moving on to speak to someone else in an office or a social setting or when leaving the room or the table.

- Fellow bus passengers are often more helpful than their counterparts in the US. If you are trying to get a bus driver to stop and cannot get his attention, others will whistle or call out for you.

**Men and Women in Costa Rican Society**

North American men and women traveling abroad for the first time may be surprised at the rigidity of gender roles in other societies. Expectations for behavior based on gender extend not only to the people of the country in question, but to visitors as well. This section of the handbook attempts to prepare ACM students for some of the differences between US and Costa Rican societies and to give you a brief overview of the customs and attitudes of many Ticos. We will return to this subject in depth during program orientations; however, some preliminary information may be useful. Please bear in mind that the following are generalizations and that you will encounter exceptions as you form relationships with Costa Ricans.

The structure of the Costa Rican family has been undergoing a constant process of change during recent decades. Several factors have come to play in the modification of the more traditional family structure in which the father played the role of bread-winner and decision-maker, while the mother filled the role of a financially dependent housewife. A significant increase in financial stress due to inflation has led many women to find a way of contributing to the family income. In 1970, women constituted 18.4% of the economically active population, whereas in recent years this percentage has doubled. Women are now present on all levels of the national labor force. However, they are still somewhat behind men at the administrative and managerial levels. The greater economic independence of women combined with the creation of the “Law to Promote the Social Equality of Women” in 1990 have created more opportunities for women. A significant increase in the incidence of divorce attests to this process of change in the traditional family structure.

In your host family’s home, you are likely to encounter a mixture of more “traditional” roles and very “modern” ones. Whether or not your host mother has a job outside the home, she will often continue to carry the main responsibility for housekeeping and child rearing. You may find that host siblings of your own age are less independent than you are, and they may require parental approval of their friendships and activities. Marcar, a courting tradition in which the man must ask the woman’s parents for permission to date, is still customary among some Costa Ricans.

North American women (known as gringas) have three main stereotypes applied to them in Costa Rica:

- **The easy gringa**: A gringa is often stereotyped as an “easy catch”; in other words, she is easy to seduce.

- **The approachable gringa**: Costa Rican men usually see a woman from the States as more approachable than a Tica, who may tend to be reserved and cautious when approached by a man she does not know.

- **The wealthy gringa**: North Americans, both male and female, are seen as being wealthy. The possession of US dollars is seen as a sign of wealth.
These stereotypes are the result of many factors, including the influence of television, radio, movies, and magazines, all of which convey images of US culture. Occasionally, the behavior of a visitor from the United States seems to confirm these stereotypes.

**Culture Shock**

In the first weeks when you arrive on site it is not uncommon to experience culture shock, surprise, dismay, and even anxiety at the cultural differences in a new location and the unfamiliar situations in which you find yourself. The on-site orientation program is intended to help ease this adjustment, and you will in all likelihood find yourself adapting to the new culture and situations in a surprisingly short time. You'll also likely discover that being able to settle in and “learn the ropes” can give you an enormous sense of self-confidence.

Research has shown that many students go through a three-step adjustment process in acclimating to their host country. In the first stage (once they have gotten over any jet lag), they are likely to be excited and entranced by the novelty of being in a new location and delighted with most things around them. In the second stage once the initial euphoria has worn off, they may focus on the ways in which everything is different or “foreign.” The tendency is to highlight the differences and compare them unfavorably to things at home—the food is bad, the computer facilities are inferior, services are badly organized, etc. During the third stage, their view of home and their program location is more nuanced—they are likely to take a more analytic approach to both locations and to find good and bad things in each.

As a student studying abroad, you will undoubtedly feel uncomfortable at times, especially in the beginning, and likely hear your fellow students expressing similar responses. This is not unusual, and we anticipate that after a time these feelings of discomfort and insecurity will dissipate. We encourage you to speak with the Program Director and other on-site staff about your concerns and to raise any questions about the host country and the new culture to which you are learning to adapt.
VII. Program Arrangements

**Bonnie Furman**, Director
Supervises all administrative and educational program matters and coordinates the work of professors and staff. Bonnie also serves as contact in case of emergencies and for general information about the program.

**Mario Morera**, Spanish Language Coordinator
Coordinates all aspects of the Spanish language curriculum for the ACM Costa Rica programs. Teaches one or more Spanish language classes.

**Alejandra Loaiza Ch.**, Administrative Coordinator
Coordinates all financial matters for the ACM Costa Rica program, including payroll, family payments, service providers, and building maintenance. She also supervises the ACM computer facilities.

**Iveth Duarte**, Building Attendant
Iveth is responsible for taking care of and maintaining the ACM building. She prepares food for all ACM events and supervises kitchen use.
ACM Building

While the ACM building is a comfortable space, there are some living adjustments that need to be made when a large group is present. Please be courteous towards others and pick up after yourself in the various rooms of the building. Students must wear shoes at all times in the ACM center. We urge you to adopt an “early morning schedule,” that is to say, get to the ACM early to use the computers, to consult with the staff, and so on. Please do not leave backpacks and other personal items lying around. Use your locker to store your things as there are often people not associated with ACM in the building.

The main classroom is for your use when classes are not in session. You can use it to study, use your laptop, meet with other students, and to eat lunch, but again please keep it neat. Especially toward the end of the semester when papers are being written, please remember that studying always takes precedence in the ACM building, and be considerate of those trying to work in the various rooms of the building by taking conversations outside and listening to music with headphones.

Not surprisingly, the lounge is a favorite place for students to be, but it is best to spread out a bit. For example, if it is not raining, you can use the patio and lower patio areas. The two major daily newspapers are available in the lounge, but can be read elsewhere as long as they are returned. Every Friday the “Viva” section of the daily newspaper La Nación lists music, movies, and other events for the weekend. The UCR weekly newspaper, Seminario Universidad also carries lots of cultural announcements. Please do not take or cut out parts of the newspapers.

As for the kitchen, coffee and tea will be available for you on a daily basis. You are expected to wash, dry, and put away any dishes and utensils you use. The ACM recycles and composts organic materials, so please cooperate with those efforts. Please do not assume that you can take food to class with you. Professors may request that you not eat in class, and eating during the presentations of speakers invited to the ACM is not permitted. Eating is not permitted on the second floor of the building where the library and computers are located, as we have a pest problem that we would like to keep away from our books, computers (and offices!).

Visitors are to be in the ACM building only between 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Do not bring friends and acquaintances to the building outside of these hours. As you come in with someone, introduce that person to the Administrative Coordinator. Visitors are to be hosted in the lounge and not elsewhere in the building. These restrictions are necessary in order to avoid security problems.

The ACM building opens at 7:00 a.m. and closes at 5:00 p.m. from Monday through Friday. The closing time is strictly observed, for security reasons. Under no circumstances will students be allowed to stay overnight in the ACM building. Always keep the gate of the ACM building closed. The ACM staff will be available to help you from Monday through Friday, from 7:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. If you work best in the evening, then it is strongly recommended that for academic and cultural reasons you take advantage of the UCR and the San Pedro student neighborhood that are only blocks...
away. The UCR comes alive in the early evening, as many students take night classes. Studying in the UCR libraries will give you the opportunity to mingle with Tico students.

If someone comes to the portón who is unknown to you, do not open it. Have a staff member deal with that person.

**Building Rules for Evenings, Weekends, and Holidays**
The security of the ACM building, contents, and grounds requires certain rules. The ACM has arrived at the following rules as a result of long experience. We appreciate your cooperation and ask for your understanding. Students:

- must leave the building by 5:00 p.m.;
- should make sure that all computer materials are printed and computers are turned off before the building’s closing time;
- may not stay overnight in the building and may not return after hours to pick up items they may have forgotten;
- may not bring alcoholic beverages into the building and may not smoke in the building (smoking is permitted in the patio area but please be sensitive to others’ wishes to avoid cigarette smoke);
- may not sleep on the lounge furniture; if you are feeling ill, inform the Coordinator of Academic Services so she can coordinate access to a medical facility;
- may not entertain visitors in any other area than the building’s lounge;
- must always wear shoes in the building.
- to avoid disturbing other students and detracting from the Spanish-only environment in the building, Skype may only be used in authorized areas of the building. Headphones must be used with all media.

**Computer Facilities**
The ACM student computing facilities include four personal computers, two black and white laser printers, one color inkjet printer, and a full-page scanner. ACM is able to provide you with wireless internet access during our limited building hours. Bringing a laptop can also be useful during the busy time at the end of the semester when time on the ACM personal computers is limited. Consider your personal work/study habits. If you prefer not to work within a “sign-up” system for computer time, then bringing a laptop is probably a good idea. The ACM has made a safe place in the building where you can store your laptop overnight and during extended stays outside of San José, and have access to it whenever our building is open. Although we cannot assume liability for it in case of loss or theft, students have found this to be a good way to have the freedom to use their laptops throughout the ACM building, without worrying about the risks of carrying it on the street.

**Library Facilities**
Keep in mind that the library is not large. Please reserve it for taking out books and for actual studying and working on projects. It is not the place for involved conversations. The same applies to the computer room. The space is limited and often the noise level is high. Lengthy conversations can be a real distraction for others. If you like to listen to music while you work, please bring headphones and use them while you are here.

The ACM library contains the following sections:

- Reference Section
- Open shelf collection
- Paperback/beach reading section
- Audiovisual facilities
Reference materials may not be removed from the library without express permission from the library staff. Items from the general open shelf collection and easy reading materials can be checked out for two weeks. Library check-out slips are located beside the main library door. Please be sure to fill out a slip for each item that you take out of the library, even if you intend to use it only in the ACM building. The ACM cannot issue your grades until all library materials on loan have been returned.

The ACM will request an ID card for you from the University of Costa Rica that entitles you to use the University’s library and sports facilities. However, the ACM cannot apply for your ID card until all students have edited the application form and returned the third page of the form signed and scanned to the Coordinator of Academic Services. Your ID card will allow you to utilize all of the libraries of the UCR, both on the main campus and on the regional campuses. You will receive orientation on how to use the UCR library system during the first weeks of the program.

Use of Spanish

In the building we (ACM staff and students) speak Spanish as much as possible, although we understand that on several occasions English will be necessary to communicate essential information. There will be times when you might want to speak to a staff member in English because you may be concerned about misunderstanding an important issue. If so, explain that to the staff member. In general, if you wish to use English, please do so outside the building. Contribute by maintaining a Spanish-speaking atmosphere in the building and encourage others to do so. One of the major reasons for coming to Costa Rica is to improve your Spanish, so please practice it with us! In addition, since you are in a Spanish-speaking country, it is polite to use the host country’s language in communicating with others.

Phone Calls

We ask you to use only the portable phone located near the front door of the ACM building for your local personal calls. As discussed in the information about families, all local telephone calls incur a separate charge. Please keep the number of calls to a minimum and limit each call to five minutes. Do not arrange for someone to call you and talk for an extended period; limit those conversations to five minutes as well. Remember: our phone is for business use and we receive important calls during office hours. Public telephones are always available and inexpensive for local calls. In case of emergency, you can make a collect call to the ACM from any local phone using the number 1110. This may be necessary if you have no coins available or cannot use a public phone. In Spanish, a collect call is una llamada a cobrar.

If you want to make a long distance call from the ACM office, the portable phone can be used to make collect calls and calls with calling cards; ask the ACM staff for help. It is much cheaper to be called from the U.S. than to make a call to the U.S. Prepaid phone cards (Viajera, Colibrí) for local and international calls can be purchased at the ICE offices in San Pedro, Más X Menos supermarkets, and bookstores. Prepaid values range from C/1,000 to C/10,000, and can also be purchased in dollar amounts. It is important to be aware that U.S. “1-800” numbers do not work the same in Costa Rica as in the U.S. These numbers are charged and are not “toll free” unless they are specifically to companies in Costa Rica.

Skype and other internet-based calling services work well through our network, although “Skyping” is strictly limited to certain sections of the ACM center, since it tends to lead to distracting and lengthy conversations in English.
Photocopying
Students should not operate the photocopying machine. There are many convenient and inexpensive photocopying shops in the San Pedro area near the UCR campus. Students should use these shops for all photocopying needs.

Toilets and Personal Hygiene
In many Costa Rican homes, the custom is still to place used toilet paper in a wastepaper basket because the plumbing is not very good. Please follow that custom in the ACM building. Never put a sanitary napkin or tampon in the toilet. It is important that you wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the bathroom.
VIII. Housing Arrangements

Living with a local family provides an excellent opportunity not only to learn about the culture, but to learn about yourself as well. It will allow you to observe and reflect on a way of life. Your family can be a wonderful source of cultural information. The most interesting insights often involve subtle differences, and you must develop your ability to recognize such differences through persistence and patience. The amount of time you spend with your family will influence the growth of this ability.

Socializing with your host family and asking questions is the best way to learn about local customs. Asking about the culture and listening to explanations is an ongoing process, and occasionally a frustrating one. Explaining your lifestyle, preferences, and customs is the other side of this coin.

Be patient with yourself and your Costa Rican family as your relationship develops. It takes time and work to overcome the feeling of being a guest or an outsider and to begin feeling like a member of the family. Before the semester begins, think about what you expect from the family situation and how much you are willing to give. Being able to laugh at the many mistakes you will make in trying to understand the culture speeds the adjustment process as does the ability to be open about things you do not understand.

The ACM emphasizes that students should not be given special treatment during their home stay. Students are expected to adapt to the family setting and to rules applying to all of its members, not vice versa. Most Costa Rican families often cannot afford to travel in Costa Rica and very rarely go out to the movies or for dinner. Typically, they spend leisure time visiting relatives, engaging in community activities, or being at home. Thus you should not expect the host family to entertain you with trips to exotic parts of the country. The family is, however, responsible for creating a positive environment that will encourage you to participate in the culture, and you should feel welcome to take part in daily activities.

In San José your host family will provide you with a room, laundry service, breakfast and dinner during the week, and all meals on weekends and public holidays when the ACM office is closed. During the rural stay your host family will provide you with all meals. With regard to the food, the family will serve the typical Costa Rican dishes they customarily eat. Some Costa Rican families consume a lot of fruit and vegetables. For those that do not, fresh produce is available at any of the local farmers’ markets (ferias del agricultor) and supermarkets in the metropolitan area.

The following list contains advice which may help you to avoid unnecessary problems with your Costa Rican host family:

- Personal hygiene is important in Costa Rica and Costa Ricans bathe daily. They expect you to follow this custom.
It is unacceptable to walk barefoot in the house. You might want to bring a pair of flip-flops designated for indoor use.

Telephone use: Your host family will help you to get a SIM card, air time and phone on the first day of classes. Local telephone service is expensive in Costa Rica with every local call incurring a separate charge. Therefore, ACM policy does not encourage the student to make calls from the house of the host family. If you make such calls, you should always use a phone card. Public telephones are always available and inexpensive, and one can call anywhere in the country for less than ten cents.

Please do not ask to make collect calls to the US from your Tico family’s home. Calls are sometimes charged to the residence by mistake (even when a calling card is used), and needless hassles and unpleasantness can result. During office hours, the Administrative Coordinator can assist you with AT&T or MCI calling card calls and collect calls as well.

If you plan to stay out late or not to arrive for dinner, you should notify the mother of your family well ahead of time, so that she can plan accordingly.

Host families will wash all clothing at least once a week. Some families consider women’s underwear personal and prefer that the student wash it herself. Women should ask the mother of the household to show them the sink, or pila, for washing, and to provide them with soap so that they can wash their personal laundry by hand.

Controversial topics relating to politics, religion, and alternative lifestyles should be avoided at the dinner table. As you will learn, many Costa Ricans still maintain traditional values which may contradict some beliefs held by the average US college student. There are Costa Ricans with whom you can discuss such topics, but it makes sense not to bring up potentially divisive issues with your host family.

Please be sensitive and careful in your relationship with the host family’s children. In this society, children are disciplined only by their parents. In rural areas in particular, parental discipline can be louder and more abrupt than you may be used to.

Learn to listen carefully for “dos and don’ts” that are not explicit. Costa Ricans generally use non-confrontational language and always try to stay on good terms (ser amables) with others. One example of this is the indirect language used to indicate social/cultural norms. If your host mother says, “On nice sunny days, we like to hang our towels out,” she probably expects you to understand, “Please hang your towel outside so it can dry.”

ACM cannot guarantee that your host family can host you before or after the program. If you stay with your San José host family outside the program dates, you will need to pay them. Also, if you leave your luggage with the family for a period of time after the termination of the program, expect to pay them for storage. Similarly, if you return from your rural site during the four-week rural stay in the fall for personal reasons (not related to your project or to your health), you will be expected to pay your host family. We encourage the host families to contact us if a student spends extra time with the family without offering to pay. We will then request that the student make the appropriate payment. If the payment is not made, then ACM will pay the family and invoice the student. We have a good relationship with our host families, and it is important to maintain it.

Should you receive a visitor from the United States, your host family may offer to host him or her for a short period. But please do not pressure the host family to do so, and do expect to pay for the stay of that person. Avoid any arrangement beyond a couple of days as an extra visitor—even a welcome one—can become an inconvenience to your family. Please be considerate at all times.
Social Life While Living with Your Costa Rican Host Family

Neither the ACM Program Director nor your host family is interested in micro-managing your social life during your stay in Costa Rica. We will only become involved if we perceive your behavior is a serious threat to your security, or to the security and tranquility of your host family. It is crucial to remember that for these four months, you have chosen to live in an environment very different from a college dormitory, and for good reason. Your Spanish will improve exponentially simply due to living with a family, and we hope you will form friendships there that will last a lifetime. Keeping this choice and its implications firmly in mind will avoid most problems that might emerge from living with your host family.

Sadly, however, it is not infrequent for the Program Director to be notified of students who are unwilling to curtail their social life, and particularly their use of alcohol to reflect their new situation as a member of a Costa Rican family. If your use of alcohol becomes a problem for your family (loud late night returns home, vomiting, etc.), they are under no obligation to keep you in their home, and the Program Director will not attempt to persuade them to do so. Unfortunately, it is also difficult for us to place you with another family if you have already demonstrated your inability to live within the rules of a Tico household. The homestay is a crucial part of our program. If a student’s behavior indicates that he or she cannot be placed with a family, the Program Director may consider dismissing that student from the program.

In any host family situation, questions and misunderstandings are normal. They should be treated as such and discussed openly whenever possible. The ACM staff is always willing to help and counsel you with any family issue.
IX. Independent Travel

Travel during the Program

One of the advantages of studying in Costa Rica is the relative ease with which you can travel throughout the country. The quality of the main roads ranges from poor to good, and buses serve almost every village that can be reached by a passable road.

In the capital you will travel by foot, taxi, or bus. Bus service in San José is good, although buses are frequently crowded. Fares range from about 50 to 75 cents per ride; there are no transfers. Taxis are plentiful and reasonably priced; a trip from the center of San José to the ACM office is 2.5 km and costs about $6. Most registered cabs use taximeters, so be sure to ride in a red taxi that has “SJP” (San José Público) painted on the doors and on the license plate. Walking alone, (or in pairs in lonely places), is not recommended after dark. It is better to take a taxi to the door of your house after a night out, and to travel together in the taxi as far as possible (for women especially). A woman should never sit in the front seat next to the taxi driver as this may lead to unwanted attention from the driver.

You will be traveling by public transportation from your urban host family's home to the ACM office for your classes from Monday to Friday. You will be responsible for covering these transportation expenses in San José during the week as well as any expenses that may arise if you travel on weekends, so it is important for you to budget accordingly. As mentioned above, the bus system in San José is considered safe and fairly reliable. A member of your family will accompany you to and from the ACM office until you are familiar with the route.

You may wish to use weekends to visit beaches, national parks, and other features of Costa Rica. Additionally, many students have had friends or family plan to visit you while you’re in Costa Rica. Please remember that it is not appropriate to miss classes in order to travel independently or guide visitors from home. Students in the past have reported that it’s often more beneficial and effective to wait until you’re in Costa Rica to plan weekend excursions so that you will have met other program participants and can plan to travel with others on the program.

It is not appropriate for you to miss any planned program events, activities, excursions, or class meetings due to independent travel. You must complete all exams and papers before your departure. ACM staff will provide you access to the ACM Independent Travel Form, which you will be expected to complete anytime you are leaving your program location to travel independently. We require this form not to track your whereabouts but to ensure a channel of communication in the case of any emergencies.

NOTE: Addresses in Costa Rica are not usually given by street and avenue number; instead, familiar buildings, churches or landmarks are used as points of reference. Distances are measured in meters. One block equals about 100 meters. Most blocks are not actually 100 meters in length, even though that is the way distances are described.
Travel before and after the Program

Students sometimes want to remain in Costa Rica beyond the end of the program. In fact, because the end of the semester is filled with academic activities, this is a good way to rest and explore parts of Costa Rica you were unable to see during the semester. Any travel before or after the program dates is the sole responsibility of the student. If your host family is willing to host you, you will be responsible for paying them for the extra days. Please consider that your family may have plans that make it impossible for them to host you outside program dates.

In the past, interested students have traveled in small groups to other parts of Costa Rica before returning to the US. Students will do such travel at their own risk. If you plan to travel within Costa Rica after the end of the program, you will need to renew your Costa Rican tourist visa by traveling to Panama or Nicaragua for 72 hours. After you return your tourist visa should be renewed for up to another 90 days. (Students who are not US citizens should consult their home country’s visa requirements for additional travel.)

Remember, even if planning to leave the country by bus after arriving by plane, all foreigners are required by the Costa Rican Department of Immigration to have a valid round-trip airline ticket in order to enter the country.

Departure and Airport Tax
You must pay the airport departure tax of $29 before leaving Costa Rica. The tax may be paid at the airport, or prior to departure at the Banco Crédito Agrícola de Cartago (BCAC) bank in the San Pedro area. This amount may go up by the time you are ready to leave, so please save enough cash to pay this expense. Also keep in mind that you may need to take a taxi to the airport, which will cost you approximately $30. The ACM Costa Rica staff can help you as you prepare for departure.
X. Health and Safety

While studying off-campus offers new educational opportunities, it can also present challenges and risks that are different from those on your home campus. Just as you prepare for a new mode of learning on the program, you should also think about living in a new environment that may contain new kinds of risks. You will not have the same support systems or forms of assistance that you have turned to on your home campus or in your home town. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind as you prepare for your semester in Costa Rica.

Health

While you are in Costa Rica, you need to be aware of your health and your responsibility for dealing with medical concerns. Pay particular attention to sanitation, food and water, especially in rural areas. Costa Rica has a good system of water and sanitation, with potable tap water in about 95% of the country. However, check with the staff and your host family in rural areas.

The challenges of adjusting to a new culture are an important part of what you will be experiencing in Costa Rica. Adjusting to this new environment can be especially difficult when you are away from friends, family, and college faculty or staff who know you well. You will have days that are exciting and rewarding and also days when much seems strange and exhausting. Program staff, host families, and new friends can help you recognize and talk through these pressures and staff can also recommend counselors if you feel they might help.

The medical and dental facilities in San José are good. ACM has a variety of practitioners with whom we have worked in the past and to whom we are able to refer students for any necessary condition. Health services are also available outside the urban area and treatment for most minor problems can be obtained without returning to the capital. The cost of medical treatment (but not dental needs) is covered through your insurance policy. You can buy most medicines over the counter, but they are as expensive as in the United States, if not more so. If you have special medicinal needs, you may want to write our San José office to check on the availability of certain drugs. On the plane, be sure to carry any needed medicine in a carry-on bag rather than in checked luggage, in case your luggage is lost.

Although most students are concerned about intestinal parasites and resulting diarrhea, far more serious problems are sexually transmitted diseases and various skin disorders. If you are thinking of being sexually active, take precautions, such as using latex condoms, to protect yourself. Skin problems usually occur when people do not take showers regularly or when they expose themselves to too much sun. Be prepared for cold showers since warm water is not always available. Frequent hand washing is one of the best ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. By washing your hands, you wash away germs that you have picked up from other people, from contaminated surfaces, and from animals and animal waste. For mild stomach disorders, we advise you to bring some over-the-counter medication because these are quite expensive in Costa Rica.

Medications and Other Medical Preparation

As part of your preparation to go abroad, please carefully read the information from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) about medical conditions in Costa Rica and the recommended precautions for U.S. Americans traveling to Central America. The website is: http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/destinationCostaRica.aspx. You should share this information with your doctor or the physician who signs your Medical History form and your parents. You will want to make
sure that you have the recommended vaccinations and are aware of and take precautions against the various health risks, as recommended by the CDC.

If you take one or more prescription drugs regularly, you will want to be sure you can continue this medication while abroad. Speak with your physician about the possibility of obtaining a supply to take with you. (And please make sure to keep it in its original container in your carry-on luggage with a copy of the prescription.) If you cannot get a supply to take with you, you will want to see if this medication can be obtained in Costa Rica and to have the generic name. **You should not plan to have drugs (of any kind) sent to you while abroad.**

**Psychological Counseling**
If you require regular sessions with a counselor, we recommend that you make the ACM staff in Costa Rica aware of your needs and discuss with them the availability of appropriate counseling services in the San José area well ahead of your travel to Costa Rica.

**Health Insurance**
ACM will provide health insurance coverage for all students participating in its programs. This coverage is through a reputable company with long experience and excellent service in providing health coverage for students abroad. The cost of this coverage is included in your program fee, and ACM will handle your registration for the insurance.

The health insurance policy provides a broad range of coverage for students’ medical treatment while abroad. Here are several key features of the coverage:

- Coverage for both medically-necessary office visits and hospitalization;
- No exclusion for mental disorders or alcohol-related accidents or illnesses;
- Coverage for prescription drugs (excluding preventative medications such as Malaria prophylaxis);
- No exclusion for pre-existing conditions (except in the case of pregnancies beginning before the start of the program);
- Medical evacuation coverage (but not taxi fares); and
- No deductible.

The policy will cover students from the day before the start of the program through the day after the program ends, and thus be in effect for the time students will travel to and from their program site. It covers you not only while you are in the host country, but also during any time you may travel away from the program site—e.g., during program vacation periods.

In some cases, the insurance provider can provide payment for medical expenses in advance of treatment. However, students should expect to make payment at the time of treatment and then submit their full costs with receipts for a quick and convenient reimbursement by the insurance provider. ACM will bill the student and/or the student’s family for any incurred medical expenses or related costs (e.g., for transportation to the medical facility).

The student insurance policy should **not** replace any coverage you have in the US, nor should you discontinue your US health insurance coverage. The international student insurance provides only limited amounts of coverage for follow-up treatment of illnesses or injuries which begin while you are abroad.
It is also possible for you to independently purchase additional coverage to extend the days that you will be covered by the ACM policy. The cost of this additional coverage is approximately $40/month. You will receive a welcome letter and an ID card a few weeks prior to departure; the welcome letter will describe how to log on to their website to view the tools available to policy holders and to purchase any additional coverage. (You will need the ID number provided in the card and also a credit card to which the cost of the additional coverage can be billed. It is also possible to purchase the additional coverage by phone.)

**Personal Safety**

In San José you will be living and studying in a larger city than most of you do on your home campus. In the city, you will travel by foot, bus, or taxi. Public transportation is inexpensive and available to most parts of the city and country but may be crowded.

San José is well-known for its high rate of car accidents. Students should exercise extreme caution as pedestrians. In practice, **pedestrians do NOT have the right of way**. Even when crosswalk signs show the walk signal, look out for cars. Driving with Costa Rican friends in private cars is not encouraged. Students are not permitted to have or drive motor vehicles. This rule is strictly enforced and any violation of it may result in suspension from the program. Your host family and program staff can advise you about how to ensure your safety as you travel around San José and more generally in Costa Rica.

**Crime and Random Violence**

Crime has become a problem in San José, as it has in most large cities in the world. Crimes against property are, however, much more common than crimes of violence. Theft is common; assault is not. Just as you would be careful with your backpack or wallet on subways and buses in New York City or Chicago, you should do the same in San José. Thieves are notorious for opening or cutting off purses (while they are being worn), slitting open backpacks, ripping gold chains off a person’s neck, and taking wallets from pockets. North Americans are often easy targets in San José, especially on crowded buses, since they are usually unfamiliar with the city. Always remember to take proper safety precautions, including the following:

- Always carry your wallet in your front pocket and keep your hand on it in crowded areas. It is wise not to carry large amounts of cash in your wallet. Also, do not carry a driver’s license or other important items that you do not need.
- Carry your backpack or purse in front of you with your arm over it and be aware of what is happening around you.
- Make photocopies of the pages of your passport with personal information and your stamp of entry. You will leave one copy with the ACM office in case your passport is lost. You should also keep copies in your wallet, backpack, and other luggage.
- It is wise to have at least one locked suitcase at your Costa Rican household for keeping valuables or things of personal significance.
- Avoid walking around in the dark and/or solitary areas at any time of the day or night.
- As in most U.S. cities, women should try not to be out alone late at night, and all students are advised to take taxis home in pairs or groups at night.
- Try to look self-assured; never look lost.
- Check your map before going to a new place, so you won’t have to consult it on the street (since this makes you look like a tourist). **If you are confronted with a thief or assailant, under no circumstances should you resist or attempt to flee.** It is best to simply cooperate, and then to report the incident as soon as possible to the ACM Program Director or other available ACM staff member.
**Weekend Travel Safety Tips**
If you decide to travel on a weekend, please do so whenever possible with other students.

- **You must tell the ACM Coordinator of Academic Services and your host mother if you plan to travel on the weekend and provide the name and telephone number of the hotel/hostel where you will be staying.** You do not need permission but we need to be able to reach you in the event of an emergency call from the U.S. or a national emergency in Costa Rica, such as an earthquake. You will be given access to ACM’s Independent Travel Form for this purpose.
- If you do not know the telephone number of the hostel or hotel ahead of time, please call your host family and the ACM Coordinator of Academic Services once you reach your destination.
- Do not travel alone. It is always best to be with at least one other person should problems arise.
- Make your travel plan so that you get to your destination before it gets dark and do not have to travel at night.
- Carry a notarized photocopy of your passport with you, and your list of ACM emergency phone numbers at all times.
- Take a taxi to downtown San José bus stops rather than walk downtown with luggage, as that makes you a target for theft.
- **Never leave any possessions unattended.** This goes for the bus stop in San José as well as in the countryside. It is common for Ticos to place their belongings in a line alongside the bus to mark their place; however thieves frequently steal belongings left on the curbside. Keep your hands on your things!
- Take your possessions on the bus with you. If it is absolutely necessary to stow your gear under the bus, be sure that you personally see your luggage put in the compartment below. A common practice of thieves is to pretend to be workers of the bus line, taking bags from passengers and putting them below. But after they put a few below, they take your bag from you and run away.
- On a similar note, when the bus stops along the way to let people off before reaching your destination and the compartment below is opened, watch to see that your bags are not taken out.
- Once seated on the bus, you should never give your luggage to anyone even if they look official. There is no reason why anyone would need to take possession of your luggage.

Whitewater river rafting is increasingly popular in Costa Rica, and there are a number of excellent whitewater rivers. However, you are advised to check into the policies and security measures of several rafting tour agencies before choosing one. Inquire about the skill and professional training of the river guides, about the quality and maintenance of the equipment (rafts, oars, life vests, helmets), about precautions they take to avoid accidents and how they prepare participants for the experience, and about considerations of weather and water levels. Demand clear answers. Please take this advice very seriously.

The student health insurance that ACM provides does not provide coverage for certain activities, and as a result ACM prohibits students from engaging in those activities. This is for your protection as well as to prevent the potential for extremely expensive medical bills that may result from an accident resulting from these activities. Prohibited activities include: hang gliding, parachuting, bungee jumping, racing (by horse, motor vehicle, or motorcycle), parasailing, and mountaineering that involves ropes or guides.

**Consult with Staff**
You will face risks in Costa Rica, just as anywhere else. Part of what you will learn on this program is how to recognize dangers and danger signs that are different from those you know at home. In most cases you can learn how to recognize and avoid these risks. In any case, let people know if you are feeling concerned or unsafe. Program staff, host families, and others can help you learn to deal with the risks in Costa Rica, just as they can help you learn to understand the history and culture of the country.
Legal and Ethical Issues

Drugs
Costa Rica is not a haven for drug users. Costa Rican authorities now make raids, stop people on the street, take unkempt-looking people into custody without explanation, and generally let people know that they mean to put an end to illegal drug use in Costa Rica. Anyone caught using illegal drugs can expect a long jail term, with little chance of early release. To date no ACM students have been questioned about drug-related activities and we hope to maintain this record. *You are on your own if you violate Costa Rican law. The ACM cannot and will not intercede on your behalf, nor will the U.S. Embassy.* All drugs that are illegal in the United States are also illegal in Costa Rica, and even some that are becoming legal in some parts of the U.S. (i.e. marijuana) remain illegal in Costa Rica.

Pre-Columbian Antiquities
It is illegal to take or send any pre-Columbian antiquities out of Costa Rica. This includes all artifacts, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant (pottery shards, stone tools, gold, jade, etc.). Many foreigners and Costa Ricans disregard this law, but the law serves a vital function in protecting Costa Rica’s cultural heritage, and the ACM expects full compliance from its students.

While it is legal to buy and sell antiquities within Costa Rica, provided they do not leave the country, archaeologists affiliated with our programs strongly urge you to refrain, for ethical reasons, from trafficking in artifacts in any way. Since pre-Columbian artifacts are the only surviving physical vestiges of the prehistoric, indigenous cultures of Costa Rica, they have enormous historical, cultural, and scientific value which is lost forever if artifacts are removed from their original context and treated as commodities.

Any excavation of archaeological sites without official permission from the National Museum is strictly prohibited.

ACM’s Presence in Costa Rica
In this environment, foreign students are received with great friendliness in both rural and urban areas. Because the quality of ACM students has been excellent in the past, the ACM enjoys a high level of cooperation from both private and government organizations with which the students work. We take all reasonable precautions but firmly believe that Costa Rica provides valuable educational resources and a peaceful, receptive environment for our academic programs.
XI. ACM Program Rules and Policies

The Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) is a consortium of 14 residential liberal arts colleges in Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and Colorado. ACM programs reflect the academic standards and policies of its member colleges, and the standards and policies in the paragraphs which follow are applicable for all ACM off-campus study programs.

The ACM Off-Campus Study Program mission begins:

Our programs’ academic standards and curricula are rooted in the liberal arts. They emphasize the interdisciplinary educational approach, intimacy of small classes, focus on independent research, and discussion-based learning that characterize liberal arts education at ACM colleges. The programs accelerate and deepen students’ scholarly and personal growth through structured interactions between selected topics and distinctive locations. They offer educational experiences unlike those found in conventional classrooms.

You and all ACM students play an essential role in ensuring that the scholarly and personal growth sought as an outcome of this mission is accomplished in a dignified and respectful manner in conjunction with the people and customs of the host culture. As guests in the cities and countries of our various programs, all students are subject to the same laws and regulations as their host citizens and are responsible for knowing both ACM policies and local laws.

The ACM Code of Student Responsibility and its subsidiary policies exist to facilitate the educational process for you and the other students and to ensure a safe, fair, and successful experience for all students, staff, and faculty. While enrolled in an ACM program, your home campus may also choose to hold you accountable to their code of conduct. If enrolled in a host institution during their off-campus study experience, students will also be subject to the policies of that host institution.

ACM Code of Student Responsibility

The ACM Code of Student Responsibility reads as follows:

I understand that I am required to comply with all policies and procedures of the ACM including policies outlined here as well as program-specific rules introduced during the on-site orientation. My participation in an ACM program represents my college and the ACM consortium at all times. I know that my behavior must respect the values and norms of the host community while promoting the safety and wellbeing of other students and my program’s faculty and staff. I will strive to ensure that my behavior supports the educational nature of the ACM at all times.

Studying off-campus during your college career can be both very exciting and very challenging. Many students return to their home campus feeling dramatically changed, eager to embark on a new academic or career path, or with a clearer understanding of who they are as an individual. Off-campus study is a privilege; an option within higher education that not all students can select as a part of their collegiate experience. It often creates lifetime memories and presents multiple prospects for personal growth. In order to protect this opportunity for all students, however, ACM has instituted some policies and to ensure it remains accessible to the greatest possible number of students.

Please note that these policies and procedures comprise guidelines that can be changed by ACM at any time in its discretion. It is not and should not be construed as a contract, either express or implied.

Expectations of Student Conduct

Any student who engages in inappropriate conduct will be in violation of this Code of Student Responsibility and will be subject to a conduct review and possible sanctions. While it is impossible to outline all forms of inappropriate conduct, what follows is a non-exclusive list of the more common examples:
1. **Violations of any ACM policies or regulations** – policies published in student handbooks, Study Abroad Contract, the website, or other official ACM publications (including but not limited to the Housing Policy, the Policy on Alcohol and Drugs, the Policy on Sexual Harassment, and the Policy on Academics).

2. **Violation of safety practices** – action or inaction that might cause or lead to injury or death to oneself or any other person; threat or cause of harm; self-endangerment. Participation in any activity expressly prohibited by ACM or the terms of the CISI insurance policy (international programs only) including professional sports or competitions, bungee jumping, driving, motorcycling, scuba diving, skin diving, sky diving, hang gliding, glider flying, parasailing, flying in any aircraft except as a passenger on a regularly scheduled airline or charter flight, or any activity normally considered ultra-hazardous or regarded as an “extreme sport.”

3. Any **conduct which threatens ACM’s ability to function** or maintain positive relations in host communities including but not limited to culturally inappropriate behavior or defamatory statements regarding host families, organizations, communities, or countries in blogs, social media, or other public media.

4. **Failure to comply** with reasonable directions of ACM staff (or designees) or failure to promptly and properly identify self to ACM staff or law enforcement authorities if asked. Examples might include use of a fake ID, failure to comply with staff requests in an emergency, or not completing assigned sanctions resulting from a previous policy violation.

5. **Theft** – attempted or actual theft or willful possession of items belonging to another. Unauthorized use of property belonging to another.

6. **Unauthorized entry** – inappropriate use of keys or facilities (ex. housing or program site).

7. **Inappropriate use of ACM technology** including but not limited to computers or wireless Internet provided by ACM or any of ACM’s partners, and including but not limited to actions such as illegal downloading of copyrighted material, computer piracy, or using technology to threaten or cause harm.

8. **Damage** – causing damage to property belonging to ACM or to the property of any of its partner organizations, any person, or the public domain.

9. Possession or use of **any weapon, fireworks, incendiary device or explosive device**.

10. **Participation in political demonstrations, rallies, or protests** is prohibited in international locations regardless of the peaceful intention or nature of the gathering. For students in domestic off-campus study programs, students should be mindful that participation in such activities, affiliated or not with the program, conforms to the other expectations of student conduct listed in this section.

11. **Disorderly conduct** – obstruction or distraction of the educational process, lewd or indecent behavior, breach of peace, physical abuse or threat, intimidation or coercion, etc. Also includes retaliation against any individual who reports any violations of the Code of Student Responsibility or any individual who participates in any investigation of such reports.

12. **Stalking or Hazing** – Behavior that is disturbing or distressing to others including but not limited to stalking or hazing. Stalking is defined as the willful and unsolicited following or harassing of another individual through any means. Hazing is defined as any act which endangers the mental or physical health or safety of another person for the purpose of initiation, admission into, affiliation with, or as a condition of continued membership in a group. Any group of students acting together may be considered a group for the purposes of this section. The express or implied consent of the victim will not be a defense. Apathy or acquiescence in the presence of hazing is not a neutral act and is also a violation of this section. Stalking or hazing can include actions in person, via social media, or through other electronic means.

13. **Bias-related behavior or personal abuse** – use of language, images, signs, symbols, threats, or physical behavior that directly or indirectly demonstrates hostility or contempt toward a person or group on the basis of actual or perceived identity. Behavior that exceeds the bounds of appropriate discourse and civil conduct. Harassment of another because of his/her race, sexual orientation, ethnic background, religion, expression of opinion, or other personal characteristics. Actions that would reasonably tend to cause alarm,
anger, fear, or resentment in others or would endanger the health, safety, and welfare of another member of the ACM community.

14. Any criminal behavior or breach of local, state, host country or domestic or international laws.

15. A willful failure to report a violation of ACM policies or law or reasonably suspect harassment or abuse.

ACM Policy on Academics

All academic pursuit depends on trust. All of us should be able to trust that we will be treated with honesty and respect—respect for our ideas and for us as persons. As a participant in an ACM program, you will be expected to conduct yourself with the same level of honesty and openness as is expected on your home campus.

The following academic policies apply to all students participating in an ACM program:

**Arrival and departure dates.** You should make travel arrangements to arrive at the program site on the date specified in the program handbook. Similarly, you should plan your itinerary to remain at the program site through the last day of the program. ACM staff and instructors are unable to accommodate students who request to arrive later or depart earlier.

**Course load.** You are required to carry the full load of courses and credits as determined for the ACM program in which you are enrolled.

**Class attendance and participation.** You are expected to attend and participate fully in all classroom sessions, site visits, and field trips. Instructors typically take into account attendance and class participation when assigning final grades. Please remember that these are academic programs: it is not appropriate to miss classes because you are traveling or hosting visitors; you are expected to participate in all program activities unless otherwise excused.

**Pass/fail deadlines.** You may elect to take a class or classes on a pass/fail basis. This decision must be made in the first two weeks of class; a program staff member will provide you with a link or a form on which to record the choice. It is not possible to elect pass/fail or to reverse/appeal the decision after the first two weeks of class. (In making the choice to take a class pass/fail, you should consult your home school’s policy regarding pass/fail classes taken off-campus.) Grade choices will not be made known to the program faculty.

**Completion of course work.** All class assignments (including final papers, projects, and exams) should be completed and submitted before the end of the program. Any assignments or work submitted after the final day of the program will receive a “0” and this will be factored into the final grade for the course. ACM does not record/report an “Incomplete” grade for courses.

**Academic honesty.** Actions of dishonesty are destructive to the well-being of the academic community, and ACM staff respond to them vigorously. Cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic theft will result in a failing grade for that assignment and may result in failure for the course. Extremely serious incidents of cheating or other actions destructive to the classroom community may result in expulsion from the program. Instructors who encounter plagiarism or other forms of cheating in an ACM program will report such episodes to the Director of Off-Campus Study, who will investigate and hold a review according to the ACM Student Conduct Procedures. Students who are aware of academic dishonesty on the part of other students are expected to report that information to the Director of Off-Campus Study.
**Final exams and presentations.** ACM instructors cannot make special arrangements for a student or students to take a final exam or make a final presentation at a time different from that set by the instructor for the course (with the exceptions of an unexpected medical situation or a student who has a documented learning disability and with whom ACM staff has made prior arrangements).

**Grading policies related to off-campus study.** You should consult your home campus registrar's office for off-campus grading policies in effect on your own campus.

**Graduating seniors.** Students who expect to graduate at the end of the term of the ACM program should discuss graduation requirements with an advisor at their home school prior to the start of the program. If you need to make special arrangements (e.g., if grades need to be reported by a specific date), you should share this information with the ACM program director at the beginning of the program.

**Retention of syllabi, course work, and other course-related materials.** Because home campus advisors may wish to review course work to determine how to assign credit for a particular course or courses taken abroad (and because, occasionally, course grades can be misreported), it is important that students bring back to their home campuses all materials from courses taken abroad. This is particularly important for courses taught by an on-site (i.e., non-ACM) faculty member, where it may be difficult to contact the faculty member after the semester or program has ended.

**Release of student grades.** ACM staff will only release grades to your home campus once all program, financial, and student conduct obligations are complete.

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**ACM Housing Policy**

Student housing will vary across the ACM programs and may include homestays, apartments, educational institutions, camping, hostels, and other appropriate housing. Your housing situation while abroad is part of the learning environment that ACM programs provide, and you will want to take advantage of the opportunities that different housing situations provide. You are responsible for your behavior and actions in your housing environment and must respect the policies and practices of each establishment or facility in which you are housed, including respectfully following your homestay family’s rules. Any damage to property or environment, disruptive activities, or willful disregard of policies and practices of any housing situation may result in disciplinary action including expulsion from housing and/or dismissal from the program. You should inform your on-site director if problems or concerns arise during the homestay and efforts will be made to either resolve the issue or find an alternative placement.

*International programs:* Although visitors are strongly discouraged during the program, anyone planning to visit you during the period of enrollment must plan independent accommodations. You are prohibited from bringing any visitor to stay at a homestay or other provided place of housing. You should not ask your host families to accommodate your guests.

*Domestic programs:* Visitors should not interfere with the functioning of the program nor any participant’s ability to complete program responsibilities. Any program participants wishing to have a visitor stay overnight in program housing should consult with any roommate(s) for approval. All visitors shall abide by all provisions of the unit’s roommate agreement, and the host participant may be held responsible for the actions and consequences of his or her guest's behavior.
**ACM Policy on Alcohol and Drugs**

Knowing how to engage responsibly with alcohol among peers is a component of living in a new, educational environment. In the same way that positive living environments create positive experiences and learning, appropriate choices around alcohol can create notable memories among a community of students. In the context of off-campus study, this can mean deciding if or when it is culturally appropriate to consume alcohol, in what quantities, and amongst what company.

Alcohol may be consumed responsibly by students who are of legal age in their host country. You should be aware of the limits of local law, cultural norms, and safety considerations when choosing to consume alcohol. You are prohibited from providing alcohol to others who are not of legal age in the host country. Inappropriate behavior resulting from alcohol consumption, including but not limited to behavior which is offensive to others; and/or poses unreasonable risk to you or others; and/or results in damage to property; and/or impacts student performance; and/or causes embarrassment or otherwise interferes with the proper functioning of the program or other students, is not permitted and will result in disciplinary action.

Possession, use, or distribution of any substances that are considered by host country law to be illegal drugs or controlled substances is prohibited. You are hereby cautioned that the possession of drugs is often handled harshly by local law enforcement in host countries. The misuse and abuse of prescription medications is also considered a violation of this policy.

**ACM Policy on Sexual Harassment**

It is the policy of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) that sexual harassment of students and employees is prohibited. Violation of this policy may result in discipline or dismissal of students or discipline and discharge of employees. However, allegations of sexual harassment are serious and may be extremely prejudicial to the alleged offender. Accordingly, allegations not made in good faith may subject the complainant to disciplinary action.

**Sexual Harassment Defined**

Sexual harassment is unwelcome words or conduct based upon the recipient's gender. Sex or gender-based harassment does not have to be sexual in nature. However, such harassment can often take the form of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical behavior of a sexual nature. Harassment can become unlawful when (1) submitting or refusing to submit to such conduct is used as a basis for any decision affecting an individual’s academic status or employment, or (2) such conduct has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment. Be advised that ACM reserves the right to interpret these policies and procedures more stringently than applicable legal definitions. Therefore, harassment or discrimination that does not rise to the level of a legal violation may still be found to violate ACM’s standards of conduct.

**ACM Policy on Dual Relationships**

A dual relationship is one in which the faculty/staff member has both a professional and a romantic or sexual relationship with a student. This includes relationships which appear to be mutually consensual. However, the inherent inequality of power between student and faculty/staff creates an unacceptable conflict of interest in a supervisory, educational or advisory context. For this reason, dual relationships between faculty/staff and students who participate in the same program are prohibited. If a relationship nonetheless develops, the faculty/staff member is expected to remove him/herself from supervisory or advisory responsibility for that student, or face disciplinary action.
ACM Policy on Sexual Assault

Definitions:

Consent: Consent means the mutual understanding of words or actions freely and actively given by two informed people, which a reasonable person would interpret as a willingness to participate in mutually agreed upon sexual activity. Consent is not effective if it results from the use of physical force, there is intimidation or coercion, or the recipient party is incapacitated, or if a person is under the influence of drugs or alcohol such that they lack necessary judgment to give consent to sexual activity. Also remember that consent can be withdrawn and that consent to one activity does not necessarily imply consent to another. Finally, silence or non-communication should never be interpreted as effective consent.

Sexual Contact: Sexual contact includes but is not limited to: sexual intercourse, penetration of an orifice (anal, oral or vaginal) with the penis, finger, or other object in a sexual manner, intentional touching of the genitals, buttocks, or breasts, or coercion to force someone else to touch one’s genitals, buttocks, or breasts. Sexual contact can occur over clothing.

Sexual Contact With An Incapacitated Person: Incapacitation is the physical and/or mental inability to make informed, rational judgments. To have sexual contact with someone whom you know to be, or should know to be incapable of making a rational, reasonable decision due to his or her consumption of substances, in other words, unable to give effective consent, is a violation of policy.

Sexual Exploitation: Acts committed by a person for sexual gratification, financial gain and/or advancement, entertainment, or for any other reason that abuses or exploits the privacy of another person’s sexuality. Examples may include but are not limited to: non-consensual recording of sexual activity or nudity, unauthorized presentation or distribution of said recordings in any form, allowing others to observe a sexual act without the knowledge or consent of the individuals involved, or prostituting another person.

Policy Statement

ACM prohibits sexual assault or sexual violence in any form, including non-stranger rape. The goals of this policy are to create a community free of sexual assault, to provide avenues for those affected by sexual misconduct to obtain assistance, and to provide a clear and fair complaint and investigation procedure.

Sexual assault committed in connection with any ACM program in any location is prohibited. ACM strongly recommends that people who believe they have been victims of sexual assault pursue criminal charges against the person or persons they believe to have committed the sexual assault. Victims are also urged to make a complaint to staff in the ACM Chicago office. A criminal charge and an internal complaint can be pursued at the same time. Retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process or anyone who pursues legal action—including the complainant, the respondent, or anyone participating in the investigation—is prohibited and will not be tolerated.

Definition of Sexual Assault

Sexual assault is intentional sexual contact with another person without that person’s consent (see definitions of sexual contact and consent). Consent exists when a person freely and knowingly agrees at the time to participate in a particular sexual act with a particular person. Consent is not effective, for example, when force, threat, or coercion is used. Consent is not effective when sexual contact is with a person who is unable to say no or otherwise resist because of the use of alcohol or drugs or because he or she is asleep or unconscious (see definition of incapacitated sex).

The initiator of sexual contact will be found in violation of this policy if it is determined that he or she knew or should have known that the other person could not give effective consent as defined by this policy. Being intoxicated or under the influence of any substance at the time of sexual contact is never an excuse for violation of this policy.

Sexual assault can be committed by a man or a woman against a person of the same or opposite sex. Sexual assault can be committed by current or former lovers, friends, or acquaintances.
ACM Policy on Non-Discrimination
The Associated Colleges of the Midwest does not discriminate in the operation of its educational programs, activities, or employment on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, color, religion, national origin, age, veteran status, marital status, or disability.

ACM Student Conduct Procedures
Should an alleged violation of the ACM Code of Student Responsibility occur, ACM faculty and/or staff will investigate the situation and review any responsible student’s status with the program. This review will be conducted by the on-site director or other ACM staff in the model of an educational/administrative process, not a proceeding of a criminal or civil court. These policies and procedures are designed to ensure a productive learning environment for all students.

The following process for an initial conduct review is designed to assure that the student receives appropriate due process:

1. The student will be notified verbally and/or in writing of the incident/alleged violation and the time and place of the review meeting.
2. At the review meeting, the student will have the opportunity to share her/his perspective of the incident and present any witnesses or documentation relevant to the incident/alleged violation.
3. The student may be accompanied at the review by a third party. Since this is not a case before a court of law, however, the third party may not be legal counsel.
4. After discussing the incident/alleged violation and the circumstances, the student will be given an opportunity to admit or deny involvement in the situation.
5. Given the information, the ACM faculty or staff reviewer will make a decision regarding the student’s responsibility for violation of the Code of Student Responsibility based on a preponderance of evidence.
6. Within five working days from the date of the review meeting, the student will be notified in writing of the decision and any relevant sanctions and deadlines for completion of those sanctions. This notification will also include the procedure a student can follow to appeal this decision (see below).
7. Repeat or more serious incidents may involve review by staff in the Off-Campus Study unit of the ACM Chicago office and may include notification of the student’s home school.

Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedure
Due to the often complex nature of sexual harassment or assault investigations, ACM has instituted a more elaborate procedure for review and management of these claims. This section outlines that procedure.

Any individual who believes that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment has recourse to informal and formal grievance procedures designed for the purpose of investigation and resolution of such allegations. Informal grievance resolution is encouraged although not required prior to initiating the formal grievance procedure.

As a preliminary matter, any individual who believes that she or he has been sexually harassed should report the incident promptly to any of the following:
- Director of the program in which the student is enrolled or other appropriate local staff or faculty member
- Associate Director of Off-Campus Study
- Vice-President and Director of Off-Campus Study
Assistance in presenting a grievance may be obtained from another employee or student. However, attorneys or other third persons may not participate in any facet of the grievance procedure unless ACM and all interested parties otherwise agree.

**Informal Procedure**
An informal procedure is designed to resolve sexual harassment allegations without having to invoke the formal grievance procedure. This can be initiated through contact with any of the staff members named above. The goal is to resolve the problem through discussion with the student, the alleged offender, and any other relevant persons. The student and/or staff member grievance officer may elect to terminate the informal procedure if it appears that no progress is being made in resolving the dispute and initiate a formal procedure.

**Formal Procedure**
1. Students who wish to lodge a formal complaint must sign and submit it in writing to any staff members named above within 60 working days of the alleged harassment.
2. Thereafter, the President of ACM (or if the President is the alleged offender, the Chair of the Board of Directors) shall assign a grievance officer to investigate the complaint and report his/her findings to a grievance board comprised of the President, the investigating grievance officer, and one other grievance officer selected by the President. No employee accused of harassment may serve on the grievance board.
3. The investigation shall include interviews with the complainant, the alleged offender, who shall be informed of the allegations against him/her, and other relevant persons. The grievance board may supplement the investigating officer's investigation by itself conducting interviews and reviewing relevant evidence.
4. Within 21 working days after the investigation concludes, the grievance board shall decide by majority vote whether the complaint allegations are supported by substantial credible evidence. It shall then inform the complainant and alleged offender of its decision.
5. Any disciplinary or other corrective action resulting from a violation of this policy shall be determined in accordance with ACM disciplinary procedures.

**Third Party Harassment**
Any student who has been sexually harassed by a third party (i.e., vendor, member of host family, guest speaker, internship setting) should report the incident promptly to any grievance officer who will then investigate and attempt to resolve the problem.

**Confidentiality**
Be advised that ACM is legally obligated to review complaints or investigations of potential abuse or harassment. Therefore, it cannot generally receive a confidential complaint and promise to do nothing. However, ACM will endeavor to handle all complaints and investigations of sexual harassment in a discreet manner; Grievances and documents will be maintained separately from other student files. If you wish to make a truly confidential complaint, you will need to identify a recipient who is subject to professional confidentiality standards, such as clergy or certain medical or counseling professionals.

**Non-Retaliation**
Complaints made in good faith under this policy shall not result in any adverse action against the complainant, nor shall any person who participates in good faith in an investigation be treated adversely because of such participation.
Nothing in this policy precludes an individual from pursuing any legal remedies available to him/her.

**Interim suspension**
If a student’s behavior constitutes an immediate, severe, or direct threat to self or others or if there is evidence of egregious misconduct and violation of ACM policies, the on-site director, in consultation with the Associate Director of Off-Campus Study, may immediately remove a student from the program and/or housing until a review can occur. During that interim suspension, the student will not be allowed to participate in program activities or utilize program resources. Alternate housing arrangements may be necessary and will be the responsibility of the student. Any additional violations of ACM policies while on interim suspension will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

**Sanctions**
In keeping with the nature of the institutions comprising the ACM Consortium, sanctions are designed to be educational in nature whenever possible. Depending on the severity of the policy infringement, however, the ACM reserves the right to impose a sanction beyond a warning for a first violation if deemed appropriate. Multiple sanctions can be issued as appropriate. Failure to complete any assigned sanctions may delay the release of grades from the ACM program to the home campus.

1. **Written warning** – A warning is given and provided in written form to the student outlining the violation of the ACM Code of Student Responsibility and that any additional violations may result in more serious action during the time of warning.
2. **Restitution** – The student may be required to pay for any damages caused or repair or replace any property damaged or stolen.
3. **Loss of privileges** – The student may have privileges for use of a resource or participation in certain activities withdrawn for a certain period of time.
4. **Housing change or termination** – The student may be required to leave their housing and either move to alternative housing or obtain independent housing accommodations.
5. **Disciplinary probation** – A final warning is provided to the student in writing indicating that any further violation within the probationary period may result in dismissal from the program. A student’s home campus will be notified if a student is placed on disciplinary probation.
6. **Dismissal** – The student is permanently removed from the program. Once dismissed, the student will not be permitted any further association with the program and will forgo any of the benefits that the program provides including insurance coverage and visa sponsorship. The student will leave the program site and discontinue contact with the program. The student will be responsible for making his/her own travel arrangements from the site. A student’s home campus will be notified if a student is dismissed from the program.

**Helping Your Peers**
As a part of your off-campus study experience, you will be one member of a particular learning community, a group that you will help to define and foster throughout the program. As a part of a community, you will be thrilled to discover the great benefits that come from the contributions of others, but you should also recognize the obligations that come from being part of a group of people studying together off-campus. ACM students are encouraged to look out for each other, advocate appropriately for each other, and work together toward your community’s educational goals.

This commitment to helping others out can sometimes put you in difficult situations. If you feel hesitant to seek physical or mental medical attention for a friend (out of concern that by asking for help, ACM staff might discover that your friend’s behavior or your own behavior has been in violation of the ACM Code of Student Responsibility), please know that the responsibility and care that you demonstrate by taking the appropriate action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of another member of the community will be considered in determining what action, if any, is taken against you when reviewing the matter with ACM staff.
**Appeals**

Students may request an appeal of a student conduct decision made by the on-site director or other reviewer. The appeal must be received within five (5) working days of the issuance of the decision. The student should direct this appeal request to the Associate Director of Off-Campus Study in the ACM Chicago office.

The appeal request must be received in writing and should include a statement giving relevant facts and the reason for the appeal. In order for any appeal to proceed, the student must demonstrate that at least one of these three reasons for appeal exists:

a. There was a procedural error in the initial review that substantially impacted the rights of the student and had a reasonable possibility of affecting the outcome.

b. New information can be presented that was not previously available, despite reasonable diligence, which has a substantial likelihood of directly impacting the review decision.

c. The sanction(s) imposed are perceived as excessive.

The Associate Director of Off-Campus Study will gather all materials, documents, and previous communications related to the student conduct review and forward that information to the Director of Off-Campus Study. The Director of Off-Campus Study will review the materials and determine within five working days of receipt of the materials whether any of the three above grounds for appeal exist in this case.

If the Director of Off-Campus Study determines that no grounds for an appeal exist, the student will be notified and the decision of the initial review will be final. If the Director determines that grounds for an appeal do exist, the Director of Off-Campus Study will convene an ad hoc committee consisting of the Off-Campus Study Director from the student’s home campus, another ACM Off-Campus Study Director, and the Director of Off-Campus Study. This committee will review and discuss the student’s petition to determine if there are grounds for an adjustment of the student conduct decision.

The Associate Director of Off-Campus Programs will report the decision of this ad hoc committee to the student in writing, ordinarily within 15 working days of receipt of the appeal. The decision of this committee is final.

**ACM Tuition, Program Fees and Refunds**

**Program Costs**

The total amount students must pay to participate in an off-campus study program varies from college to college, as does the availability of financial aid for off-campus study. These campus policies are often based on the specific curricular goals established at each college. Depending on the policies of a student’s home college, charges for off-campus study may be based upon the program’s tuition, or may be based upon the college’s own tuition. Additionally, some colleges may assess special fees for off-campus study. ACM students should therefore check with the Off-Campus Study and Financial Aid offices to confirm how their college charges students for off-campus study programs, what additional campus fees may apply, and what financial aid may be used toward the cost of their program. Please see the cost worksheets for each program at www.acm.edu/pricing for a detailed breakdown of educational costs, the program fee, and out-of-pocket expenses.

**Financial and Scholarship Aid**

Students are responsible for making sure that any financial or scholarship aid is appropriately applied to the off-campus study program. Students should check with their college’s Financial Aid office to confirm their financial aid package for the term of off-campus study.

**Confirmation Deposit**

In order to secure a spot in the program, students are required to pay a deposit of $400 within two weeks of acceptance. This $400 non-refundable deposit is credited toward the program fee and cannot be returned if a student decides to cancel. Students who do not submit the deposit within the time frame risk losing their spot on the off-campus study program.
For the Chicago Program, Newberry Seminar, and Urban Education program, an additional sum of $200 is required for the housing deposit. This deposit is **refundable** upon completion of the program, provided that no additional cleaning or special repairs are required to the student’s apartment.

**Cancellation Policy**

ACM makes significant financial commitments on the behalf of all participants well before the start of their program. If a student is thinking about canceling participation after depositing, the student should contact ACM and inform the ACM Program Associate immediately. All cancellations will only be effective the date that the ACM is notified, in writing, of the student’s decision to cancel. After canceling, the student will be responsible for program expenses incurred on their behalf, according to the schedules below:

**Cancellation schedule for fall, winter, and spring programs**

ACM typically bills the student’s college for the cost of the program after a deposit is made to confirm participation. The college then determines the total amount the student will be billed and this total amount may be equivalent to the amount billed by ACM or it may be different, according to each college’s particular policies on financial aid and off-campus study. If a student decides to cancel:

- **90 or more days before the start of the program:** The $400 deposit will be forfeited and no other charges will be billed.
- **60-89 days before the start of the program:** ACM will bill the student’s college 5% of the total program cost.
- **30-59 days before the start of the program:** ACM will bill the student’s college 10% of the total program cost.
- **15-29 days before the start of the program:** ACM will bill the student’s college 25% of the total program cost.
- **1-14 days before the start of the program:** ACM will bill the student’s college 50% of the total program cost.
- **On the day the program begins or later:** ACM will bill the student's college 100% of the total program cost.

**Cancellation schedule for summer programs**

After the $400 deposit is received, ACM will send the student an invoice for the payment of the full program cost. **Full payment is due 30 days before the start of the program.** If, having paid the program deposit, a student decides to cancel:

- **30 or more days before the start of the program:** The $400 deposit will be forfeited and no other charges will be billed.
- **Less than 30 days before the start of the program:** 100% of the total program cost will be billed to the student.

Students should check with their college about campus-specific cancellation policies, and whether their college may apply additional financial penalties for a cancellation. If unforeseen circumstances force a student to leave a program once it has begun, ACM may work with the student’s college to determine what portion, if any, of the program cost may be refunded. If a student is asked to leave a program for cause, no program costs will be refunded by ACM.

**Outstanding Fees and Grade Release**

ACM will bill students at the end of the program for outstanding program costs and/or any additional program expenses such as: medical costs, damage to program housing or equipment, loss of keys or equipment, etc. ACM is unable to release grades to students or their college until full payment for such expenses has been received.
**ACM Policy on Health and Safety Notification**

ACM staff strives to keep all program stakeholders, including your home campuses and parents, informed of critical incidents and concerns that might arise related to any of our programs. We balance this goal with respect for your individual right to privacy as an adult.

Once you have reached the age of 18, you are considered an adult within the U.S. Higher Education system. ACM’s standard procedures will typically involve communicating primarily with you and informing parents on an as-needed basis. ACM staff will seek to work with you, our students, as primary decision-makers whenever possible.

**Communication with Parents/Guardians**

In situations of medical or program emergency, especially in situations where students are not able to communicate with their parents/guardians or in the case of student hospitalization, ACM staff will endeavor to inform parents of events and developments in as great of detail as possible and as often as possible. These communications will be balanced with ACM’s need to maintain operational management throughout whatever the situation might be.

For international programs, ACM staff sends an initial message to all listed parents/guardians/emergency contacts to notify them that all students have arrived safely at the program site. We do this because students may not always have access to immediate communication tools allowing them to contact individuals at home or may be initially quite consumed with orientation activities, and this initial period of travel to an overseas destination can be a source of worry.

Beyond that initial message for our international programs, ACM staff’s preference is that you are the primary sources of information for parents/guardians. ACM staff will always encourage students to openly and honestly communicate with their parents/guardians and will assist if requested in situations when the student may not have the means to communicate directly.

**Communication with Home Campuses**

ACM staff strives to maintain high levels of communication with all campuses sending students on any of our programs. Because colleges have different requirements for reporting or documenting incidents, ACM staff will communicate any reportable incident to the Off-Campus Study Director at a student’s home campus.

In situations where an incident impacts multiple students on a program (ex. illnesses not limited to a single individual, major program changes, etc.), ACM staff will notify all home campuses represented on that program of the situation in a way that does not identify specific students. Exceptions to components of this policy will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

**ACM Evaluations and Surveys**

Over the course of the program, you will be asked to complete questionnaires at several intervals. These surveys allow us to better understand the impact that off-campus study has on students and to use feedback from you to make improvements in our programs. Additionally, these surveys provide students with an opportunity to reflect upon their experiences and better prepare students to articulate the positives and negatives of the program. Below you will find a brief synopsis of the feedback we will be seeking from you throughout the term. **In all cases, your responses will be confidential.**

After the first month of the program, ACM staff will ask you to complete a mid-program evaluation online, which asks for your feedback on such aspects of the program as ACM’s assistance in preparing you to go abroad, pre-departure and on-site orientation, and the extent to which the program to date is meeting your goals for off-campus study. Your responses enable us to assess the effectiveness of our materials and services in the critical first weeks of the program and to make any necessary changes. Summaries of responses (but not individual responses) for each of our program sites will be shared with program staff
and faculty, and with faculty advisors at ACM campuses. This survey will require approximately 15 minutes to complete.

At the mid-point in your program, you will be given a short survey in each of your courses which asks you four short questions about the course. Your feedback allows the instructor to assess his/her effectiveness and provides an opportunity for changes in the course if appropriate. Instructors are seeking your candid feedback and will attempt to gather your thoughts to ensure anonymity whenever possible. Your responses are for the instructor alone and will not be shared with ACM program site or Chicago office staff.

Shortly before the end of the program, you will be asked to complete a final, online survey about the program. As with the mid-program evaluation, your responses will enable us to review program arrangements and course offerings and make any necessary changes for future programs. A summary of responses is shared with program instructors and staff only after the program is complete and your grades have been submitted. Faculty advisors at ACM campuses will also receive the summary. This survey will require approximately 20 minutes of your time.
Personal Information “Opt-Out” Form

In accordance with the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended, a student’s education records are maintained as confidential by the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM) and, except for a limited number of special circumstances listed in that law, will not be released to a third party without the student’s prior written consent. FERPA regulations do allow the ACM to release limited “directory information” at any time, without obtaining the prior consent of the student. The ACM does not provide directory information to third parties for commercial purposes. Provisions of FERPA allow the institution to define certain classes of information as “directory information,” and the ACM has determined that the following student information is considered directory information:

- Name
- College/university
- E-mail address
- Off-campus study program
- Semester/term of off-campus study
- Awards, honors

Additionally, throughout the duration of ACM off-campus study programs, ACM representatives may take photographs, make video or audio recordings, or write articles about program participants and/or activities that involve program participants. Many student participants and associated faculty and staff may also take photos and videos, write articles, or maintain blogs for their own personal use, which they frequently share with the ACM. The ACM also shares short excerpts of student work, such as titles and overviews of projects and brief research abstracts. These images, recordings, excerpts, and accounts are regularly collected for the primary purpose of highlighting and showcasing the ACM via our website, posters, brochures, and other educational marketing materials. (Note: The ACM will never publish full accounts of student projects or research or use student photographs, video, or audio recordings without specific permission from the student in question.)

If you do not want the ACM to release your directory information, use your likeness in photos or recordings, or share excerpts of your work without your prior consent, you may choose to “opt-out” by making a copy and signing the form below. Requests can only be made via this form, which must be completed and returned to the ACM prior to participation in the program, to be applicable to that semester/term and for subsequent periods of time. Students wishing to reverse this decision may complete and submit the revocation section of the form below.

I request the withholding of the following personally identifiable information, associated with my participation in an off-campus study program through the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM). I understand that upon submission of this form, the information checked will not be released or used for ACM promotional purposes without my written consent or unless the ACM is required by law or permitted under FERPA to release such information without my prior written consent; and that the checked information will not otherwise be released or used from the time the ACM receives my form until my opt-out request is rescinded. I further understand that if any of the information checked below is released or used prior to the ACM receiving my opt-out request, the ACM may not be able to stop the disclosure of this information.

CHECK ALL BOXES THAT APPLY:

☐ Name
☐ College/university
☐ E-mail address
☐ Off-campus study program
☐ Semester/term of off-campus study
☐ Awards, honors
☐ Use of likeness in ACM recordings (photos, video, audio, written articles)
☐ Use of short excerpts of student work (titles, overviews, and abstracts)
☐ All items listed above

________________________________________________________________________
Name (please print)  Signature  Date

RESCISSON OF OPT-OUT REQUEST

I, the above named student, hereby rescind my request to opt-out from the release of the information indicated above.

__________________________  __________________________
Signature  Date