Office of International Programs
Faculty International Program Development Grants
Report Template

Please complete this form after you return from travel and email to oip@mail.sdsu.edu.

Name
Phoebe Roeder, Liberal Studies Coordinator (oversees program)
Jeanette Shumaker (January 11-15 trip leader)
Vicki Fielden (April 1-5 trip leader)

Faculty/Rank
Shumaker: Full Professor
Fielden: Lecturer

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Liberal Studies

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Proposal title
Mexicali in January and
Mexicali during Spring Break
(Mexicali/Tecate Spring Semester—Canceled.)

Country/ies visited
Mexico

Institution visited
Via International

Dates of travel
Shumaker: January 11-15, 2013
Fielden: April 1-5, 2013

Number of student participants:
January: 20        April: 19

Previous IP proposals submitted and grants awarded
(list titles, countries and dates):

Have all required reports been submitted? Yes

Other funding for this activity available/applied for: None
Proposal Abstract (75 word maximum):
The proposal was for faculty travel and lodging funds in support of two intensive, five-day study in residence programs for students with Via International in Mexicali, with assigned readings and online assignments/discussions prior to departure and a lesson plan or mini-project due after return. The 1 unit course is experiential and involves students and faculty from the Liberal Studies program, which since 2011 has required an international experience. (A third Mexicali-Tecate Program was proposed and fund. It involved one overnight in Mexicali and four day trips to Tecate; however, no students signed up.)

Travel report:

I. Opening/overview of intentions/activity
The Liberal Studies Program established an International Experience requirement starting in the 2011-2012 catalog year. The program has students who have a limited ability to pay for international experiences and/or family/job responsibilities that limit the time they can be away from San Diego. I led our first trip to Mexicali with Bruce Harley of the Honors Program in January 2012. The experience provided by Via International was everything I had hoped for: varied activities, thought-provoking experiences, excellent food, and dreadfully cold dormitory—which we survived. The January 2013 and spring break 2013 trips provided opportunities to two new groups of students.

II. In preparation for the trip abroad
Karey Sabol, Associate Director, International Engagement for the Division of Undergraduate Studies (ksabol@mail.sdsu.edu), and I worked with Via International ~ Los Ninos, 717 Third Avenue, Chula Vista, CA 91910, specifically with Juan Carlos Rivas (JunaCarlos@viainternational.org), the trip coordinator, until July when he moved to a new job; Elisa Sabatini (elisa@viainternational.org), head of the organization, until Jan; & Gabriel Reed (gabrielwreed@me.com), the new trip coordinator, since January. Raquel Palma at raquel@losninosintl.org was always available in the office for assistance.

Karey took the lead on negotiating with the College of Extended Studies and Via International. She also created the web site, initiated e-mail contact with students concerning the program and scholarships. I worked with Jeanette Shumaker to create the lesson plan assignment and support materials and later with Vicki Fielden to consider ways to achieve greater interaction between the SD and IV students during evenings and slow period. All three of us—Karey, me, and either Jeanette or Vicki—contributed to the two pre-meeting events.

Alonzo, the leader in Mexicali had his team—translator (Jesus), cook, and bus driver—organized to provide the activities and excellent food; however, it was a little challenging to get the final schedule for the January trip because Gabriel only came on board at about the time the group left for Mexicali. Gabriel participated in the whole January trip, so he was able to give valuable feedback later. Some students commented about the quality of Jesus’s translation, especially during the spring trip.
when half of the group were from the Calexico campus and were potentially better translators than Jesus. Being courteous and flexible in such a situation is a part of the learning experience.

III. Upon arrival/specific activity
Alonzo met the groups on the US side of the border and led them to the bus on the Mexicali side. At the UABC Museum, the students learned about the early hunter-gatherers who inhabited Baja California and the later immigrants—Mexican, Chinese, and even Russians—who came when water was first brought to the area in 1900. They had an eye-opening experience when they went to the border to an office that provides immediate help to deportees and to see a dormitory where any immigrants to the area can obtain five nights with a meal, shower, and bed.

The primary activities were again with people who had been working with Los Ninos for many years. (See the Jan 2012 report.) SDSU students got to make empanadas, oatmeal cookies, and carrot cake at the micro-bakery. Later they put on “bee suits” and saw how another group of women care for bee hives and collect and sell the honey. In January, they were not able to visit the cactus farm because the wife of the owner had just died; so Via substituted a trip to an ice cream parlor. I am pleased that they found a quick substitute; however, the students were a bit disappointed. The spring break group visited the cactus farm; however, they didn’t have the wonderful barbeque that we had in 2012.

Service learning is supposed to be a key part of two activities. I had even made a sample science lesson on making concrete for the students to read prior to the second pre-meeting. In January 2012, the group got to make concrete twice, so our January 2013 group was disappointed when they only got to lay turf at a school and didn’t do anything to help the people near Algodones. I asked Gabriel to make sure a concrete project was included in the future, so the spring break group enjoyed going to a school for deaf children where they made a concrete area. This group had the double fun of dealing with deaf and Spanish language issues. Overall, there seemed to be more slow times, especially on the January 2013 trip, perhaps because Juan Carlos had left and Gabriel had just been hired. Students commented that they were ready to leave by 8:15 but nothing happened for a while. In Mexico we wouldn’t normally have expected everything to be on time; however, Via had been very punctual during January 2012. I am just pointing out some minor differences between trips; overall Via does a great job.

Students again wrote journal during the evening; however, both leaders keep the journals shorter so there was more time in the evening to socialize—assuming enough warmth to do anything but huddle in a sleeping bag. Ironically, the five days in January 2013 made the news as the coldest in thirty years. The three students from Calexico spent most evenings with their relatives in Mexicali because it was a special holiday. The spring break group, in contrast, spent most evenings on the back patio where it was cooler. Via bought them extra fans to try to cool off the sleeping and eating areas.
IV. Conclusion, recommendation, and next step?
After last year’s trip, I predicted I might need four or five trips per year. Liberal Studies tried to offer three this year. Interestingly, the two five-day trips to Mexicali filled completely while the Mexicali-Tecate day trip version didn’t get a single student. A couple of students who thought they might try the Mexicali-Tecate day trips ultimately decided the five days in Mexicali was much easier to do! We also discovered that many of our students like the spring break Guatemala trips that are offered by the College of Education and 30 have even gone to England this summer. So, our thinking now is that the January and spring break Mexicali trips will be sufficient. I have begun working on plans for next year.

We are continuing to refine the experience. We noticed that the first group (Jan. 2012) was more varied with 2/3 Liberal Studies and 1/3 Honors students plus a total of four adults, AND 2/3 SD and 1/3 IV. Also, these students were the most highly motivated to participate because it was the first time the trip was offered. We predicted that subsequent groups might be more challenging to lead, which proved to be true. Working with Gabriel, we will do more during the two pre-meetings to get the SD and IV students acquainted with each other; we will have the IV students come to SD for both pre-meetings rather than let them do the second pre-meeting via distance ed. We will also continue to work on ways to help students mix during the evenings.

This program has tremendous potential. The activities provide by Via International are especially appropriate to students who will need to teach all the different subjects and also work well with children and their families. My biggest challenge will be to recruit additional faculty who are willing to lead trips so that no one faculty member feels compelled to be a leader year after year. Ideally, I would like to find a second faculty member or support person to go on each trip so that two leaders can take turns; the trip is a very intense experience.

V. Additional Information