Office of International Programs  
Faculty International Program Development Grants  

January 2014 Mexicali International Experience

Name: Phoebe Roeder, Liberal Studies Coordinator (oversees program)  
Phoebe Roeder (Trip leader for January Trip)  
Susana Enriques (Co-trip leader)

Faculty/Rank: Lecturers  
Department: Liberal Studies  
College: Division of Undergraduate Studies  
Office phone: 619 594-4812  
E mail address: proeder@mail.sdsu.edu  
Proposal title: Mexicali in January and Country visited: Mexico  
Institution visited: Via International  
Dates of travel: January 16-20, 2014  
Number of student participants: 18

Previous IP proposals submitted and grants awarded  
January and spring break Mexicali International Experiences-Mexico, Jan 11-15 and April 1-5, 2013

Have all required reports been submitted? Yes

Other funding for this activity available/applied for: None

Proposal Abstract  
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. (This report is for the January trip; a separate report is being submitted by Vicki Fielden to the spring break trip.)

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 2014 and spring break 2013 trips provided opportunities to two new groups of students in 2013. This January 2014 trip was the first to the two completed in 2014.

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 (old address), specifically with Gabriel Reed (gabrielwreed@me.com), the trip coordinator.

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 took over after Karey moved to a new job in mid-October. Susana Enrizues and I ran the two pre-meetings in San Diego; Chris Kjonaas joined us once she was hired in late December.

Alonzo, the leader in Mexicali had his team—translator, cook, and bus driver—organized to provide the activities and excellent food. Susana (co-leader) is a professional translator, so she complemented the translation done by the student translator whom Alonzo had hired. 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 oatmeal cookies and carrot cake at the micro-bakery. Later they put on “bee suits” and saw how the bee keepers care for bee hives and collect and sell the honey. They visited the cactus farm where they cut cactus paddles for later planting and removed weeds from the area to be planted.

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 2014, the group got to make concrete as usual on the second day—but also worked really hard to remove bricks, mix concrete, and watch the male
parents spread the concrete at a second school near Algodones. The students in their final survey said one time making concrete was enough! This change was implemented for the spring break trip.

Students again wrote journals but only during two of the evening. The weather was pleasantly mild, unlike the previous two January trips. Thus, the group had fun doing get acquainted activities the first night and playing games the third night. One student created a great ending activity where they threw a ball of yard from one student to the next, each telling something that had especially touched them during the trip. It was a great ending to the trip.

IV. Conclusion, recommendation, and next step?

Two trips per year—one in January and one over spring break—is satisfying the needs of the Liberal Studies Program, although some kind of experience during fall semester would be desirable. Many of our students like the spring break Guatemala trips that are offered by the College of Education and a record 48 are going 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.

This year we required that all students—San Diego and Imperial Valley—participate together in both Pre-meetings. That worked very well for helping them begin to make the connections and friendships needed for a really great trip.

This program continues to have 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. On the survey, students indicated that they would like time observing in Mexican classrooms, not just talking to the school principal. This was implemented for the spring break group. They also wanted to see people who were not the poorest of the poor; during spring break the group went to UABC to talk to university students who were learning English as a second language. Both of these activities were well received.