

Spring 2009



The Center's staff, faculty, and travel seminar sponsors are continually made aware of the strong impact our programs can have when we hear the stories and witness the journeys of our participants as they grow from their experience at our sites. Many of them return with a new or renewed sense of social justice, activism, or vocation. While we may be aware of such growth, and believe that it is the participants who play the largest role in their own development, we are always pleased to see research and evidence that explores the impact of the Center's programs. This issue of "Global News and Notes" features two sets of research that address the concrete influence of our programs.

## **Participants' Perceptions Regarding Impact of Study Abroad on Their Vocations**

By Ann Lutterman-Aguilar, Site Director and Instructor, Mexico

I would like to extend a thank-you to all who participated in my doctoral research study regarding the ways in which intercultural encounters shape people's vocations. Your assistance translated into a 59% return rate, which is very high for survey research.

Implicit in the definition of vocation is the belief that someone or something is calling someone to do something for someone else or for some larger purpose. There are three components of any call that need to be addressed by any comprehensive study of vocational discernment: the caller or that which calls us; the one(s) called; and the purpose of the call or those to be served by the call. I designed broad questions that allowed me to examine people's perceptions of the ways in which these cross-cultural encounters have affirmed, challenged, and/or changed their views of all three of these components.

I focused my study on graduates of Mexico programs and Mexican partners. I first sent a survey to all graduates of the Center's semester-long programs in Mexico between 1979 and 2005 and then asked similar questions of Mexican community partners. That data

PHOTO ABOVE: Ann Lutterman-Aguilar is the site director and a faculty member in Mexico.



Ninety-six percent of semester students in Mexico state that guest speakers have a transformative impact on their lives.

helped shape the follow-up questions for interviews with members of each group. For the purposes of this article, I focus on the surveys conducted with former students.

Students said:

- 73.5% of the respondents indicated that their semester in Mexico had a large impact on their lives
- 55.1% said it “provided a new sense of direction”
- 21.9% stated it “changed [their] live[s] completely”
- 92.7% of respondents felt it had a moderate to large impact on their vocations.

One student stated, “Overall, I look at my experience in Mexico (and Central America) ... as a ‘defining moment’ in my own personal development ... it provided an initial foundation upon which much of my work since then has been possible ... I can say with certainty that the semester provided me with a crucial base of both experience and knowledge.”

Among the most significant impacts, former students reported increased understanding of global issues and a new or deepened commitment to responsible global citizenship. Nearly 83% of the survey respondents stated that the Mexico semester program had a large impact on their understanding of global issues, and 73.9% reported a large impact on their commitment to responsible global citizenship. One alumna stated, “The semester completely opened my eyes about issues of poverty and social justice, and the role played in the US government and corporations. This has impacted my life in so many ways—in terms of where I live, what I do, how I vote, how I eat, what I buy, etc.”

Other large impacts reported by students included their understanding of poverty (71.9%), views of economic justice (72.5%), and understanding of differences among cultures (64%). Forty-four percent reported a large impact on their understanding of issues related to race and ethnicity, and another 35.9% reported a moderate impact.

One of the most reported results of the program was becoming an advocate for immigrants. One former student stated, "When the father of the family told me how much he earned working for a big farmer nearby and I realized how much he could earn if he crossed into the U.S., I had a whole different understanding and compassion for those who do."

The Mexico semester had a moderate to large impact on the identity of 90.1% students. They indicated that their experiences in Mexico helped them develop new values, develop cultural self-awareness, and come to terms with their own social locations with regard to power, race, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, religion, etc. One student stated, "Even more significant than the directions I've taken in life as a result of my semester with CGE has been the change in my perspective in the world, my increased sense of a global community, my place of privilege and responsibility to make our world a better place."

More than 83% of respondents reported a moderate to large impact on their interaction with people from backgrounds different from their own. Many perceived significant impacts on their volunteer work, community involvements, friendships, political participation and/or activism, consumer behavior, and environmental behavior.

One student said, "Every piece of my experience in Mexico had an impact on me. It affirmed my choice to be a social worker. It made me want to work even more with immigrants and the Spanish-speaking population. It made me more of an activist and more aware of things going on around me and in the lives of people in other countries. It gave me a new sense of awareness of myself, my goals, and my dreams."

The aspects of the program that students identified as having the largest impact on their vocations were: the guest speakers (96% moderate to large impact); academic courses (89%); faculty and staff (91%); experience of living with a host family (85%); their student cohort (81%). One of the most transformative components of the program was the opportunity to engage directly with people who have suffered from oppression but who continue to work to improve their own lives communities.

One student wrote about a guest speaker from a visit in El Salvador: "I remember as if it were yesterday how she recounted her experiences during the civil war, which included hiding her infant baby under the water. I still feel my chest tighten today when I think of the untold horrors of war, of my country's responsibilities in those wars, and of how strong a mother's love and sense of survival is in the midst of all that. I still believe that if more people in the United States had the opportunity to look at a mother like this in her eyes and hear her first-hand experiences, there would be less rationalizing, less excuse-making, less apathy ..."

In conclusion, the survey results support the Center's premise that cross-cultural encounters can help students discover their vocations within a global context and lead lives of commitment to the global common good. For more detailed results of my research findings, contact me at [lutterma@augsborg.edu](mailto:lutterma@augsborg.edu).

# The Nicaragua Immersion Experience: Impact on Faculty and Staff Development for Jesuit University Mission

Synopsis of Joe Orlando's Dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Education

Joe Orlando, director of Seattle University's Office of Jesuit Mission and Identity and a frequent International Travel Seminar sponsor, wrote Impact of a Brief International Experience on Faculty and Staff Development for Jesuit University Mission as his doctoral research for a Doctorate of Education (Seattle University, 2007). The research explored the effects of the Nicaragua Immersion Experience (NIE), a Center for Global Education International Travel Seminar, which Orlando designed in 1999 for faculty and staff at Seattle University. The NIE is offered yearly and, by the spring of 2007, more than 100 people had participated, including administrators and trustees of the university.

Orlando's dissertation was a qualitative case study exploring how the behaviors of participants changed as a result of the NIE. Although he investigated several interesting research questions, perhaps the most poignant for the Center in understanding our impact is:

*How has the influence of NIE been expressed in the attitudes and behaviors of faculty and staff participants?*

Through interviews with 10 faculty and five staff members, Orlando found that behaviors of participants were changed in three significant ways—the experience was an additional resource to participants, it led to new initiatives, and it emphasized the Jesuit mission.

For a number of faculty participants, the NIE was an additional resource in the classroom and therefore influenced course content, the selection of guest speakers, and the type of student projects that were assigned. Dr. Orlando tells the story of a



Dr. Orlando's research examined changes in faculty behavior as a result of the Center's travel seminars.

student who was encouraged by an NIE participant to undertake a leadership project in Nicaragua; the NIE participant also helped the student make connections in the country. Another faculty participant stated that she shared the experience she had at a coffee cooperative with her classes, focusing on the farmers' *"willingness to work together for the good of the whole ... I actually use it as an example of what we mean by this connectivity to the other."*

In addition to their experience being a resource in the classroom, faculty members expressed that they undertook new initiatives as a result of the NIE. One faculty member decided to develop a study abroad program within his department. Another said that his experience not only influenced him but also his students. He said, *"I really started putting together ways of involving the graduate students in Latin America ... so I started moving more in the direction of internationalizing the curriculum."*

Finally, Orlando found that many of his interviewees placed a greater emphasis on the Jesuit mission, particularly around social justice. One faculty member developed a stronger commitment to advocating for social justice in curricula. The faculty member said, *"I have tried to push harder for social justice to be incorporated in a variety of classes, and in part that has been inspired by the program in Nicaragua."* The same faculty member said he will change the way he teaches so that he can prepare students to be voices for positive change. He sees himself encouraging student to *"pick issues that really matter...if they are working on the issue of poverty, they need to go research poverty. They need to go find the statistics, they need to talk to people, they need to understand what the laws are, they need to understand what the institutional structures are that perpetuate poverty...they need to understand what it is like for people who are poor."*

Although this short review of Orlando's findings does no justice to his impressive work, which covers more research questions and substantive data, we appreciate the depth to which he explored the impact of international programs on faculty behavior. Just as important, we are pleased that he found his work with the Center also led to faculty encouraging students to experience the same transformation.

## **Education for Global Citizenship is NSEE Academy Elective**

The National Society of Experiential Education (NSEE), a leader in advancing experiential education, has created the Experiential Education Academy (EEA) to assist with the enhancement of the professional development of its members. The EEA supports and contributes to both the day-to-day work effectiveness and the long-term development of NSEE members through a series of professional workshops. The Center is pleased to announce that Education for Global Citizenship travel seminar (Nicaragua June 20-28, 2009) satisfies an elective requirement for the EEA. NSEE members should consider participation both in the EEA and the Education for Global Citizenship seminar.



## Travel Seminar Opportunities

The following International Travel Seminars are open to the public. We would be happy to work with interested parties after the application deadline if spaces are available and there is enough time to complete necessary arrangements.

**Please note:** The price for all International Travel Seminars includes meals and lodging, ground transportation, programming, language translation and interpretation, pre- and post-trip resources, honoraria for local resource people, fees for planned activities, and airfare as indicated. If airfare is included, other departure cities may be available, and the prices from those cities may vary.

### NICARAGUA

#### Education for Global Citizenship (Professional Development)

June 20-28, 2009

This seminar is designed for faculty from a variety of disciplines to explore theories and best practices of experiential education. The seminar will focus on ways to promote responsible global citizenship through civic engagement. Participants will have the opportunity to network with faculty across disciplines and discuss strategies to empower students for active learning. Finally, faculty will have the opportunity discuss way to internationalize curriculum and rethink course design in light of global citizenship. *Price \$1715, not including international airfare. Application deadline is March 31, 2009.*

### EL SALVADOR AND GUATEMALA

#### Journey of Love and Understanding

July 23-August 3, 2009

This 11-day experience in El Salvador and Guatemala will bring young people and adults face-to-face with people who have formed community and worked together to survive the hardships of poverty, war, and natural disasters. You will have an opportunity to meet with Guatemalans and Salvadorans and learn about the church heroes and martyrs that have lived and died there in the past 30 years—spiritual giants like Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador whom the army assassinated while he said Mass. Sponsored by Mother of God Monastery in Watertown, SD. *Price: \$2580, including airfare to/from Minneapolis/St. Paul. Application deadline is April 8, 2009.*

## EL SALVADOR

### Romero: Thirty Years a Martyr

March 19-28, 2010

Archbishop Oscar Romero courageously used his position to further the cause of human rights and peace in El Salvador. Thirty years after his March 24, 1980 assassination, his vision for a peaceful and just El Salvador lives on. This travel seminar takes an in-depth look at the life, martyrdom, and continuing influence of Monsignor Romero as well as the current realities of El Salvador. You will join thousands of others in commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of Romero's martyrdom. You will meet with various leaders and Salvadoran organizations to discuss the continuing impact of Romero's life and work on the social fabric of El Salvador. *Price: contact the Center for Global Education. Application deadline is December 14, 2009.*

## GUATEMALA

### Decolonizing the Mind

July 10-18, 2010

Designed for faculty from a variety of disciplines, this faculty development travel seminar will probe the enduring legacy of colonialism. You will examine your responsibility as educators to understand the colonial dynamics and the strategies being employed in indigenous communities to decolonize and to reconstruct more just communities. Special emphasis will be placed on learning about Mayan history, culture, human rights, and resistance to assimilation. In addition, you will focus on the challenges to building peace, democracy, and autonomy for the Mayan majority in Guatemala. This seminar will also explore the role that educators, international organizations, and committed individuals have played in addressing systems of domination and defending the rights of indigenous peoples in Guatemala. *Price: \$1480, not including international airfare. Application deadline is March 22, 2010. Apply by February 22 for an early bird discount of \$100.*

## Staff News

[Christina Olson](#), new intern for the Social Work in a Latin American Context program in Mexico, graduated from Bemidji State University with a bachelor's degree in Social Work. Christina has rich experiences to offer, including time spent in El Salvador as a volunteer and a former internship in faith-based community organization. Christina was a Spring 2008 participant in the Social Work program and is excited to work with students who have taken this step with the Center!



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