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Welcome

Dear GESI Student,

Welcome to the ninth annual Global Engagement Studies Institute (GESI)! GESI began with the idea and perseverance of an undergraduate like you. It has since grown from a small experiential-learning program in Uganda exclusively for Northwestern students, into a nationally recognized model that has trained and sent over 400 students, from almost 100 colleges and universities, to seven countries for community development work.

GESI offers students the unique opportunity to apply their classroom learning toward addressing global challenges. Students will spend their summer working with, and learning from, our community partners across the world. Northwestern University provides students with comprehensive preparatory coursework and training, ensures a structured and supported in-country field experience, and facilitates critical post-program reflection.

This program will challenge you to think and act differently. To create change you will need to listen, ask questions, and build relationships, not merely provide solutions. We trust you’ll approach GESI with the respect, curiosity, and humility requisite to understanding people, their talents and challenges, and the role you can play to support positive social change.

GESI is one step on a path toward your personal, professional, and leadership development as well as your understanding of complex issues of consequence to the planet and its people. Throughout the summer, our professors and student instructors will be in contact with feedback and encouragement; in August they will help debrief what you’ve learned. Even after GESI, our staff will be a strong support system as you use your own unique skills and passions to live lives of global social change.

We have seen this program make a tremendous impact on students’ academic pursuits, career paths, and worldview, as well as their skills in cross-cultural communication, project management, and collaboration. We are excited to join you on this journey and to see where it leads. Get excited!

Best of luck,

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Program History

Global Engagement at the Buffett Institute:

The Buffett Institute for Global Studies mission is to prepare undergraduates with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to address shared global challenges and to lead lives of responsible global engagement. Global Engagement at the Buffett Institute is a comprehensive student support center dedicated entirely to improving undergraduates’ abilities to address global poverty and inequality. We help students attain tangible skills and critique academic theory through experiential learning. Through a unique set of multidisciplinary opportunities, ranging from study abroad programs to fellowships, the Institute builds the capacity of young global leaders to cross borders and partner with communities to produce responsible, sustainable solutions to global challenges. We connect students to a network of individuals and organizations at Northwestern and around the world and are actively shaping a new generation of experienced, effective, and compassionate global leaders in a variety of fields. The Buffett Institute runs the Global Engagement Studies Institute (GESI) program. To learn about other programs and activities, visit: www.buffett.northwestern.edu

GESI History:

GESI was first conceived in 2005 by a group of undergraduate students led by Nathaniel Whittemore, then a Northwestern University junior who had recently returned from volunteering at refugee camps outside Cairo. Talking with dozens of other students volunteering and researching abroad, Whittemore realized that he was not alone in feeling a gap between the desire and ability to make a difference in the world: “The story among my peers was pretty common... tons and tons of passion and energy, a deep belief and desire to connect across cultural, religious, and national borders to make a better world, and frustration at the lack of support, infrastructure, resources, and education necessary to really move beyond our good intentions. Young people knew they didn't have the skills or resources needed to impact the problems they were trying to solve; they didn't even know where to get those things.”

Whittemore and a fellow Northwestern student, Jon Marino, went in search of academic training that could be combined with off-campus experiential learning to help students gain the tools they needed to be agents of change. Rather than founding another program to raise awareness of global issues, they sought to create a new type of study abroad experience that would provide the educational tools and experiences that could help students in the field, and then help students reflect on what they had learned by working at the grassroots. The program, they hoped, would provide the training and capacity-building young people would need to run, start, or participate in international development, service, and social entrepreneurship.

From these student-initiated roots, and together with support from across campus—including the Northwestern Office of the Provost, Buffett Institute for Global Studies, School of Education and Social Policy, and School of Communications—the Global Engagement Studies Institute, developed.
Program Information

Who does what in GESI?

The Global Engagement Studies Institute (GESI) is a program, not a physical institute (despite what the name might suggest!). Whether or not you are a Northwestern student, the “acronym soup” that surrounds GESI is often confusing. It is important for you to understand the difference between each organization that helps make GESI happen so that you can communicate it effectively to your friends and family and so you know where to turn for support (now and in the future). There are numerous partners who make important contributions to your academic, cultural, and personal experience in the GESI program.

Global Engagement at the Buffett Institute: The Buffett Institute is the Northwestern University office that runs GESI. We include people you’ve met or spoken with (Patrick Eccles, Meghan Ozaroski, Emory Erker-Lynch, and Corey Portell) when applying to the GESI program. GESI is part of the Buffett Institute for Global Studies, which is run by Bruce Caruthers. Brian Hanson and Paul Arntson will be your main professors during the GESI coursework. The GESI team supports you before, during, and after your trip, in the following ways:

• Program Arrangement and Logistics: GESI works with the on-site teams to make arrangements for your trip. We also provide you with lots of information and supports you during the program application phase.

• Pre-Departure Orientation and Materials: GESI provides you with important information about your program to help you prepare for your experience. This includes resources, such as this packet, and in-person meetings related to health, safety, budgeting, travel, and academics.

• Academic Coursework and Credit: GESI is responsible for organizing all Northwestern coursework.

• In-Country Support: Your on-site team will provide support for you while abroad and should be your primary resource, but if you need additional assistant or would feel more comfortable approaching GESI staff with any matters experienced in-country, please do not hesitate to contact Meghan Ozaroski, Program Manager or Patrick Eccles, Assistant Director (contact information on page 6).

• Reintegration Support: Upon your return, we will provide you with resources to help you transition back into campus life, as well as connect you with other returnees and opportunities.
Program Staff

Patrick Eccles | Assistant Director
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Patrick Eccles joined the Buffett Institute staff as Assistant Director during the fall quarter of 2012. Prior to joining the Institute, Patrick spent seven years working to expand and deepen experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate students while coordinating local, domestic and international immersion experiences at Loyola University Chicago. Patrick earned his bachelor’s degree from Northwestern, majoring in political science with minors in international and environmental studies. During his college years, Patrick spent a year volunteering on a reforestation project and assisting with various community development efforts in the western highlands of Guatemala. He earned his Master’s degree in Latin American and Caribbean Studies from the University of Chicago. In his Master’s thesis and fieldwork, Patrick pursued research interests in trade, human rights and the environment through a critique and comparison of fair trade arrangements in coffee production as a sustainable development approach in Guatemala and Mexico. He speaks fluent Spanish and limited Portuguese.

Meghan Ozaroski | Program Manager
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Office: +1 847-491-5932
Meghan is program manager of Global Engagement at the Buffett Institute where she works with the GESI program and the Institute’s co-curricular student groups. She created the Northwestern University Global Opportunities (NUGO) website, global.northwestern.edu. She also founded AHEAD@NU: the Association for Higher Education Administrators’ Development, a professional development group for employees of the University which has grown to over 700 members. Before coming to Northwestern, Meghan worked at the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM), coordinating study abroad programs in Tanzania, Botswana, India, Japan, and Chicago. Meghan has a master’s degree in Higher Education Administration and Policy from Northwestern. As an undergraduate at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, she majored in Psychology and Music.

Corey Portell | Program Coordinator
corey.portell@northwestern.edu
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Corey joined the Buffett Institute in October 2013 as Program Coordinator. She came to the Institute from Stephens College, a women’s college in Missouri, where she worked in admissions with domestic and international recruitment. She received a BA in international studies, political science, and religious studies from Loyola University Chicago, where she focused much of her co-curricular efforts on harm prevention, women’s rights, and social justice issues both in the United States and during her time studying abroad at the University of Ghana.

Emory Erker-Lynch | Graduate Intern
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Emory joined the Buffett Institute in 2014 as an intern while working towards her master’s degree in Higher Education Administration and Policy from Northwestern. Before coming to Northwestern, she worked in Boston as a housing resource manager and advocate for persons experiencing homelessness. Emory has a master’s degree in Theological Ethics from Boston College, where she also worked as a graduate assistant with the Arrupe international immersion education program. She received a BA in Religious Studies and History from Santa Clara University before living and working in El Salvador for two years with the Casa de la Solidaridad study abroad program. When not working, you will often find her with her nose stuck in a novel, her hands covered with dirt in the garden, or out exploring new parks.
Emergency Contacts

Students will receive detailed in-country emergency contact information at the pre-departure summit in Chicago. In case of emergency, parents should call (in this order):


*Parents should not call the site teams.*

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Office: +1 847-467-0844  
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HTH Health Insurance:  
001-610 254-8771

University Police:  
001-847-491-3456
Program Partners

The Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD):
FSD is GESI's on-the-ground partner for sites in Bolivia, India, Nicaragua, and Uganda. FSD is a non-profit, non-governmental organization created in 1995 to offer capacity building and funding to grassroots community based organizations throughout Africa, Latin American, and Asia. A professional field staff and trained volunteers provide on-site technical training and project support, while enabling information sharing to more than 300 partner organizations around the world. FSD is GESI's oldest partner. FSD has a played a key role in supporting the development of the GESI model over the past seven years.

Social Entrepreneur Corps (SEC):
SEC is GESI's on-the-ground partner at the Dominican Republic site. SEC is a social enterprise that leads innovative and dynamic international internship programs. GESI students will work with SEC's sister organization, Community Enterprise Solutions, to support the creation, development, growth and impact of social innovations focused on intelligently and sustainably alleviating poverty. Participants create sustainable impact in the field while gaining the perspectives, skills, and knowledge to become the social entrepreneurs of the future.

ThinkImpact:
Our on-the-ground partner in South Africa is ThinkImpact. Headquartered in Denver, Colorado, ThinkImpact is a global social enterprise that trains the next generation of social entrepreneurs to think differently about poverty alleviation. ThinkImpact sites are located in rural Africa. GESI students will learn about new cultures while exploring market based solutions to poverty. ThinkImpact’s approach utilizes an asset-based community development philosophy to fuel social innovation in developing economies. Students work with local community members promoting a mindset of innovation and self-sufficiency rather than dependency and aid.

Each GESI partner has unique offerings based on their networks and development model. All partners have a commitment to asset-based community development, provide exemplary health, safety and logistical support to our students, and are well respected locally and internationally, including by our peer universities. It is important for you to understand that each year we adapt our programming to fit the feedback of our alumni and in-country partners and to align with the learning goals of our program. Given the different cultural contexts and models employed by our in-country partners, your experience will differ from what you've heard from alumni. To succeed in this program (and in any international engagement), you must be flexible and open-minded. You must also listen to be surprised—something you'll hear us say a lot during your courses. It is important that you take time to get to know students who are traveling to other GESI country sites. The experiences of your peers in different cultural contexts, working with different types of organizations, can enrich your own learning and reflections on community development, cultural exchange, and global issues.
Academic Information

What is experiential-learning?
The following are definitions of various types of experiential-learning. GESI fits most closely into the “service-learning" category, though the program incorporates elements of all of the below:

- **Volunteerism** – Students engage in activities where the emphasis is on service for the sake of the beneficiary or recipient (client, partner)
- **Internship** – Students engage in activities to enhance their own vocational or career development
- **Practicum** – Students work in a discipline-based venue in place of an in-class course experience
- **Community Service** – Students engage in activities addressing mutually defined community needs (as a collaboration between community partners, faculty an students) as a vehicle for achieving academic goals and course objectives
- **Service-Learning** – Students engage in community service activities with intentional academic and learning goals and opportunities for reflection that connect to their academic disciplines


What to expect at GESI Pre-Departure Coursework (June 15 - 21):
The GESI pre-departure coursework at Northwestern University is an intense seven days of class. You are expected to arrive by 11 am on June 15th; we will spend the rest of that day getting to know each other, getting to know representatives from FSD, SEC and ThinkImpact, and establishing expectations for the week ahead. From June 15 through June 21, you will be in class from 9 am to 9 pm, with breaks for meals. GESI alumni will serve as student instructors, facilitating class activities and discussions. We will have many guest speakers supplementing class lectures as well; it is important that you complete all course readings before arrival. Some nights, we will assign additional (short) readings. You will need to discipline yourself so that you are able to complete these assignments and be alert and engaged for long days of class. If your group flight departs on June 22nd, you will have free time that day until your flight departs for your host country. We will provide CTA cards for you to get to the airport.

Below is a sample day of class. A detailed schedule will be provided upon arrival in Chicago.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00 - 10:55 am</td>
<td>Lecture by Brian Hanson on International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00 - 11:55 am</td>
<td>Language lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00 - 12:55 pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00 - 4:45 pm</td>
<td>Lecture and group activities with Paul Arntson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00 - 5:55 pm</td>
<td>Guest speaker on your host country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00 - 7:30 pm</td>
<td>Dinner with group or on your own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 pm</td>
<td>Back to hostel for evening reading and sleep</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Academic Information**

**In-Country Assignments:**
We feel strongly that in a foreign context you should look to your local hosts for “expert” advice. Your interaction with GESI staff and faculty while abroad will be limited. Occasionally, GESI staff, faculty or student instructors will reply to your weekly updates (and/or other deliverables, as outlined below) with comments, questions, cautions or feedback. However, given that they are not in-country with you, their written feedback will be limited. Only you, your site team, and community colleagues can truly understand your situation and challenges in country. Please note that GESI staff are always available to discuss any program, health, safety or other concerns you have.

You will be evaluated based on satisfactory submission of the following (through Canvas):

1. **Project Proposal.** This should be a maximum of 2 pages; initial proposals are due within the first few weeks abroad.

2. **External work plan.** These are due at the same time you submit your project proposal. These should be a maximum of two pages and conform to the template provided. FSD students will also be required to submit a budget along with their proposal and work plan.

3. **Weekly group reports.** These are due on each of the seven Fridays while in the field. Submit these online on your group’s Blackboard blog. Entries should be a maximum of 1 page, and should answer the following questions:
   - What you accomplished the previous week
   - What you plan to accomplish in the week ahead and who is responsible for these goals
   - What are the barriers/challenges that you are dealing with in terms of accomplishing the work plan, and interacting with your organization, community and your group

4. **Reflection Journal.** You will be given a spiral-bound reflection journal upon arrival in Chicago. It is your responsibility to complete at least two of the reflection activities outlined in the journal each week. You will choose from a variety of reflection topics outlined in the journal. While we will collect these journals from you at the Final Summit, you can choose to fold any page you do not want us to read and we will honor your request. We will mail the journals back to you after we are done reviewing them.

5. **Final Reflection Summit Summary.** In order to share your work with your fellow GESI colleagues, you will complete a summary of your work, including your rationale, process, and assessment. This will be shared with all students at the Final Summit to guide discussions.

6. **Evaluations.** Before you return to the US, the country site teams will complete a 2 to 3 page evaluation with you. You will also be required to submit a comprehensive GESI program evaluation electronically by August 25th. Failure to complete the electronic evaluation will result in an “incomplete” grade appearing on your transcript until we receive your completed evaluation.

**Note:** There may be times when you do not have access to internet or communications for some time. If you are unable to submit any of the aforementioned assignments due to communications issue, do not worry. GESI staff and faculty are accustomed to technological delays and this will not be held against you as long as you submit any missing deliverables once your internet access allows for it.
Academic Information

What to expect at the Final Reflection Summit (August 17 - 19):

Upon returning from their host-countries, students meet back in Chicago for a three-day Final Reflection Summit where we will reflect on some of the program’s learning outcomes, including but not limited to the following:

- Understanding ethical, historical, political, economic, and/or social issues in relation to community development
- Analyzing multiple perspectives of the social issue at hand
- Taking responsibility for your own actions as they have an effect on society
- Contributing to the society through the application of new field knowledge
- Appreciating ends as well as means
- Appreciating cultural pluralism and global connectedness – as well as the challenges and opportunities of each

In addition, GESI participants from all six sites share and compare geographical experiences while processing their immersion and what it has taught them about global development challenges, culture, and themselves. Students will also consider how to respond to the GESI experience by networking with professionals who are creating social change in a range of fields.

What Happens After GESI?

As the program closes, GESI transitions into the role of alumni support. GESI aspires to help students lead lives committed to international social justice. For us, this means helping our alumni find internships, jobs, or project support opportunities that allow them to continue engaging with the issues they care about most. You may always contact the GESI team for guidance and support.

Changing our worldview is an implicit goal of most service-learning programs. Unless we understand how political, economic, and judicial systems tend to favor one group over another, we will be unable to truly assist those in need.

Safety

Crisis and Emergency Procedures & Contacts:

In the event of any unanticipated crisis or emergency, it is important that you understand the action plans that your on-site staff will follow to ensure your health and safety, as well as your roles, responsibilities, and appropriate prevention and response steps.

General Policies and Preventive Measures:

• Site teams will arrange to ensure students have cell phones. You must provide your cell phone number to your on-site staff, so that you can be contacted in case of emergency. You should also program your cell phone with your country Program Director’s, GESI’s, other students’ and local emergency contact numbers.
• All students must carry the list of emergency contacts and the Emergency Card--both provided in Chicago during the pre-departure coursework--with them at all times. If an emergency arises and you cannot access the contact numbers in your cell phone, you should have a backup, so that you can call the emergency phone numbers.
• Contact your country Program Director first if an incident arises. They will lead you through next steps and make any necessary arrangements. If your Program Director is not available, contact another on-site contact to help you. If the incident involves your on-site administrators or if, for some reason, you cannot reach anyone on-site, contact GESI staff.
• Do not participate in any kind of rally, protest, or political manifestation.
• Report any independent travel, including a written itinerary and contact information, to your on-site administrators. Also enter your travel information into the Personal Travel Locator in International SOS.

Scenario I: Physical or Mental Health Emergency
If you are not feeling well or are experiencing emotional distress, contact your country Program Director or other on-site administrator, and they will help you get the care that you need. You will be given more specific information at your in-country orientation.

Scenario II: Crime Committed Against a Student
If you are the victim of a crime (e.g., a robbery or assault), contact your country Program Director or on-site administrator, and they will notify you of the proper procedure for reporting the crime and if applicable, the steps for replacing stolen items. If your passport is lost or stolen, you will need to contact local police and the US Embassy.

Scenario III: Hostility Toward United States Citizens & Terrorist Acts
We monitor International SOS and the State Department for announcements regarding the safety of our students abroad. In case of emergency, we will work with the US Embassy, the State Department, and International SOS to analyze the severity of the situation. We will keep you informed of any situations that have occurred and any relevant warnings and update you about any potential risks or areas to avoid. If necessary, we will make arrangements to evacuate students to a secure and calm location far from Anti-American or terrorist activity to prevent attack.

Note: You will be provided with comprehensive safety sheets and emergency contact information prior to your departure!
Cultural Adjustment

Cultural Norms & Adjustment:

Students will experience cultural differences and react to these differences (commonly referred to as "culture shock") in a variety of ways. There is a lot of helpful literature related to the cultural adjustment process, including common themes and experiences, representing phases of highs (comfort and excitement) and lows (discomfort and anxiety).

Your on-site teams will be the most important resources for helping you to navigate cultural differences and adjustment, but just keep in mind a few things:

- Culture shock is normal and however you experience it is normal.
- Intercultural adjustment not only varies by individual, but also by program. You may find that some of the traditional “low” phases may correspond with program excursions and produce a “high.”
- Culture shock can exacerbate other mental health challenges or conditions. If you have seen a therapist or psychiatrist for any mental health conditions within the past three years, be sure to indicate this on the required NU Health Assessment Form and meet with your doctor to discuss your condition in light of study abroad. If you require any special accommodations, be sure to discuss your situation with GESI prior to departure, so that we can work with on-site staff to determine what—if any—provisions can be made.
- Be aware of what you are experiencing. If you encounter any difficulties or discomfort, which prevent you from being successful, discuss this with your on-site administrators or GESI staff ASAP.

Encountering Culture:

For many GESI students, witnessing extreme poverty first-hand causes a great deal of culture shock. Encounters with beggars, for example, can be a deeply unsettling experience. Richard Slimbach offers the following advice,

“Begging may be a deeply flawed method of redistributing wealth, but letting ourselves lapse into callous indifference only injures our moral sensibilities. Whether to give or not to give ultimately must be decided case by case, because much depends on our knowledge of the particular beggar and the larger social context. We simply cannot give to all beggars but neither must we refuse all. Over time, our giving probably will be selective, biased in favor of those who provide some service. Instead of our “gift” reinforcing the notion that poor folk are simply welfare wards of wealthy westerners, it can become a legitimate and dignifying form of payment for services rendered” (Slimbach, p. 188).

Bargaining is another cultural experience that can sometimes overwhelm students. Yet bargaining can be the most enjoyable of experiences abroad and we hope you’ll learn to have fun with it! Remember that if you really want something, you should plan to pay fair price, not the lowest possible price. Bargaining can be a fun way to form relationships with locals. Just be careful not to pay high prices for basic goods because it may harm locals. If local merchants can get premium prices for their goods and services from foreigners, they may be less likely to sell to their neighbors at lower, fairer rates.
Homework

By doing some research before you go abroad, you will begin to grasp important historical events, as well as social, economic and political systems that shape the cultural realities in your host country. Knowledge will make you better equipped to interact with residents in a substantive way, throwing aside stereotypes of the “Ugly American”. Without doing research and grappling with multiple perspectives about your host country, you are likely to have many misconceptions about the place and people, carrying counterproductive stereotypes with you that taint your ability to fully comprehend what you experience on the ground. “Carrying knowledge conveys a curious and concerned self, one who cares enough about the peoples and places in one's destination country to invest the time learning about them. This, in itself, may not be enough to distinguish us from the camera-toting and culturally clueless tourists piling in and out of tour buses, but it's a good start” (Slimbach, p. 128).

Therefore, don't leave home without “packing” place-specific knowledge into your head. You should develop at least a basic understanding of the cultural, social, political, historical, and environmental dynamics of the place where you will be living. Knowledge of the local language spoken is also critical. GESI predeparture coursework will provide you with some of this information, but you will take more out of the classroom and field experience if you discover new knowledge about your host country on your own as well.

Please complete the following activity before coming to Chicago on June 15th:

This activity is taken and amended from Richard Slimbach's Becoming World Wise. Divide up the following sections among your teammates. See what you can learn about your assigned topics, make sure you read from multiple sources with conflicting viewpoints, and be prepared to informally present your findings with your teammates, faculty, and GESI staff. Once abroad, you will have the opportunity to reflect as a team on what you read versus what you encountered. The following are examples of questions you can consider for each category—but you are encouraged to dig deeper!

a. Geography: In what region of the world does your host country lie? What are the neighboring countries? What is the climate in each of the host country's main regions? What are its major natural resources (e.g., forestry, fishing, mineral)? What are the names and locations of the country's major states/provinces? What are the names of the major urban centers in each? What is the national capital?

b. Political History: What are the major periods and watershed events in your country's history? Was there a classical era or “golden age”? Describe the experience of colonialism or foreign domination: How was the colonial rule imposed? How was independence won? What historical events are annually commemorated? Who are the nation's heroes and heroines? For what are they best known?

c. Economy: What percentage of the labor force is involved, respectively, in agriculture, industry, services, and the military? What is the country's annual per-capita income and gross national product? What are its primary agricultural and industrial products? Where are they produced? What are the leading exports and imports?
d. Groups/Ethnicities: What are the various groups in the country called, and where are they concentrated? What groups occupy the service sector and which make up the elite? Is there an indigenous population? Are there any intergroup tensions based on race, religion, territory or language? Among what group(s) will you be living and serving?

e. Current politics: What is the form of the national government? What are the majority and minority parties, and what issues and perspectives do they represent? Who are their leaders? Does any one group or family dominate local politics? What is the political relationship between your host country and your homeland? What countries are important to them and why?

f. Religion: What religions are practiced? What proportion of the people are followers of each faith tradition? Is there one national religion? What are the most important religious ceremonies? Have you read any of their sacred writings?

g. Arts and sports: What are some of the most popular music and dance styles? What traditional or popular sports are regularly played? What cultural festivals will be held during the time of your residence in country?

h. Environment: What factors affect the productivity of the land and the quality of life of those who farm it? (Consider climate, overpopulation, pests, land ownership, farming methods, indebtedness, seed varieties, deforestation, and desertification.) What environmental factors—like climate, rainfall, calamity, and land productively—negatively affect the country?

i. Education: What indigenous, pre-modern institutions and practices have historically served educational functions? Currently, what are the major divisions in the public and private education system? How many grades are there in each division? Is the school system modeled after that of another country? What are the most pressing issues facing modern education?

j. Current events: Judging from current newspaper articles, what are some of the most important issues and problems engaging the minds of the people?

k. Languages: What languages are spoken in your host country? Are these official or unofficial? Do these languages represent any ethnic, geographically, or socioeconomic divisions? List and learn five essential phrases in the local language.
Food for Thought

You are passionate about making a positive impact this summer, yet short-term study abroad can have long-term negative impacts if the traveler and program provider are not thoughtful and reflective about their engagements abroad. The following are a list of questions taken from First, Do No Harm: Ideas for Mitigating Negative Community Impacts of Short-term Study Abroad (Schroeder, Wood, Galiardi, and Koen, 2009). These questions are meant to help you think about the unintended consequences of study abroad and foreign travel. Many GESI sites are located in areas frequented by general tourists throughout the year. We encourage you to reflect on these types of questions with your GESI groups, in your personal writing reflections, and whenever you travel abroad again. These questions can help us continue to develop programming that does not harm local communities.

• Upon arrival, figure out where your food/water/housing comes from. Do foreigners/tourists impose any hardship on local people, such as water shortages? What about garbage disposal and pollution? Is land being used for visitors rather than local needs?
• Does the economic impact of study abroad or tourism create economic inequality in the community? Do foreigners or local elites own or manage the hotels that students/tourists frequent? Are guides and drivers outsiders or wealthier members of the community? Do local prices go up as a result of the student visit? The giving of gifts can contribute to similar questions, however well intentioned—can nonmaterial gifts be given instead, or gifts to the community as a whole?
• Do student/tourist visits contribute to economies of dependency on outsiders, orienting those economies to pleasing or providing pleasure for wealthy foreigners rather than to local needs?
• Is there a season for foreign visitors to come to the area, such that student visits contribute to a boom and bust cycle in the local economy? Is there any way to mitigate this effect?
• Do outsiders’ patterns of consumption contribute to problems in the community? The “demonstration effect” of students bringing high-end travel gear, lots of clothes, spending money easily on restaurants, giving gifts, etc. may create resentment, the perception of American students as wealthy consumers with no responsibilities at home (McLaren 2006), or the desire in local people (especially youth) to leave the community so they can make money to buy similar goods and services. Even traveling on an airplane or traveling away from home can create these problems among people who do not have that option.
• Are local people excluded from any of the areas where foreigners are encouraged or allowed to go?
• Are foreign visitors well-behaved and respectful in terms of the local culture? Do they dress appropriately, or otherwise commit cultural offenses that will anger, distress, or shock people in the local community? Do outsiders see culture and the “authenticity” of local people as commodities to be consumed? What other cultural impacts result from outsiders’ visits? Cultural differences in themselves are likely sources of confusion and conflict in unanticipated ways.
• Do foreigners smoke, drink, or do drugs during their visit? The effect of these behaviors can range from being poor role models for local youth to bringing new addictions to the community.
• Do students/tourists demonstrate other expressions of privilege during their visit, such as doing things “our” way, eating “our” food, playing “our” music, requiring things to be done on “our” schedule?
• How well are students prepared to understand the community they are visiting? Do they bring damaging stereotypes that can be countered throughout the program? These might be as narrow as “Bolivians” but for most students are more likely to be broader such as “poor people”, “indigenous people”, or “people in developing countries”, as well as racist and exoticizing images of people in out-of-the-way places.
• Are there human rights issues already present that are exacerbated by the presence of foreigners?
• Does anything about the students’ presence or activities reinforce a negative self-image for local people, for example that Americans are smarter, more competent, more attractive? Is there any way their presence could promote a positive self-image instead?
Food for Thought

To mitigate potentially negative impacts, we encourage you to honor the host community’s independence and encourage self-reliance; to never impose your personal agenda when working with the community; to respect local people’s visions and opinions above your own; and to be vigilant of any cultural impacts you might be having and adjust your behaviors and actions as necessary. Here are some additional tips to make the most of your time abroad and to leave a positive impact:

• Take advantage of opportunities to interact with people who are different from you.
• Engage in every activity fully, remaining mentally and emotionally present. Consider going unplugged, leaving technology like laptops and iPods aside or even at home. While technology can be helpful to keep us connected to our world and people at home, many times it ends up restricting our ability to immerse ourselves in the local community or interferes with our ability to make ourselves available to the people right in front of us. Think about ways you will travel abroad with technology and still remember to look up.
• Do not try to replicate the U.S. in your host community; avoid demanding the services you would expect at home. Observe the way things are done locally, refrain from judgment, and when you feel yourself getting irritated or judgmental, take a step back and try to understand why the locals do things differently from the way you are accustomed to. Speak with locals to understand their viewpoints, listen to be surprised so that your own assumptions are challenged.
• Question your and your peers’ use of words like “authentic”, “real”, “rural”, “indigenous”, and “traditional”. (“To suggest the life of a rural citizen is any more or less “real” than that of an urban citizen of the same culture is condescending and can indicate a disturbingly colonial nostalgia for a cultural experience laden with pre-development realities”) (Johnson, 184).
• Avoid the “theme park” experience, the places that were clearly designed for foreigners’ amusement.
• As you meet people and form strong relationships with your hosts, remain curious about the larger global, national and local structures that exist, that recreate the poverty and inequality you are trying to grasp. Global learning must reach in both directions—toward persons and structures.
• Recognize the value of play and lightheartedness in cultivating friendships.
• Practice culturally sensitive photography: Always ask first. Be especially mindful of children, who are often readily photogenic. Photos of children are sometimes easily taken as we seek to document memorable experiences in the community, but be careful and considerate when taking kids’ photos. Keep an open mind and heart but avoid romanticizing your experiences in host communities. Remember that below the surface of a seemingly homogenous social structure are power hierarchies, conflicting interests, and patterns of discrimination and exclusion.
• Be a listener, more than talker; a learner more than teacher; a facilitator more than leader.
• Observe, listen, and inquire rather than criticize, rationalize, or withdraw.
• When confronted with a language barrier, speak English as little as possible. Expand your vocabulary, if necessary, actively engaging community members with nonverbal communication.
• Risk making mistakes.
• “Go slow. Respect People. Practice humility, and don’t condescend with your good intentions. Make friends. Ask questions. Know that you are visitor. Keep promises even if that means mailing a photograph a few weeks later. Be a personal ambassador of your home culture, and take your new perspectives home so that you can share them with your neighbor” (Potts, 2008).
**Stop complaining and start reflecting!**

When you catch yourself complaining, ask yourself: Can we—both hosts and guests—learn to adapt to each other? Can our differences be a source of mutual enrichment rather than separation? When we discover that things abroad are profoundly different from things at home, our natural tendency is to flee away from them. Instead of seeking to understand why certain practices irritate us, our immediate impulse is to simply spurn them as primitive and uncivilized, even immoral... “Doing so justifies our escape from the culturally disagreeable environment into behaviors where we can feel protected and affirmed: calling home frequently, sleeping either too much or too little, reading romance novels, blogging or listening to music for hours, movies... We may not “return home” in a physical sense, but psychologically we’re a world away” (Slimbach, 158-160).

**Get out your journal.**

Writing in an analytic mode helps us to calm down, gain some objectivity, and ask the critical questions: What provoked this reaction from me? How do locals interpret this act or event? And what does my reaction tell me about myself? Especially as we learn to put personal experiences and reactions into a larger social and theoretical context, our writing takes on a distinctive character—one that joins personal expression with cultural analysis—and encourages a more rigorous cognitive process than is common in conversation.

**Think About the Six Skills of Intercultural Communication:**

1. Cultivating curiosity about another culture and empathy towards its members;
2. Realizing that effective communication requires discovering the culturally conditioned images that are evoked in the minds of the people when they think, act and react to the world around them;
3. Recognizing that role expectations and other social variables such as age, sex, social and economic class, religion, ethnicity and place of residence affect the way a people act and behave;
4. Recognizing that situational variables and convention shape behavior in important ways;
5. Understanding that people generally act the way they do because they are using options that their society allows for satisfying basic physical and psychological needs; and
6. Developing the ability to evaluate the strength of a generalization about the target culture (from the evidence substantiating the statements) and to locate and organize information about the target culture from the library, internet, mass media, people, and personal observation and reflection.
Works Cited


International Program Development Study Abroad Handbook, Northwestern University, 2011.

PART II

COCHABAMBA, BOLIVIA
Letter from FSD

Congratulations again on your choice to work abroad on sustainable development projects in conjunction with Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD) and Northwestern University!

For many of you this experience will spark a lifelong interest in development. For others, it will be a chance to gain insights into other cultures that can only be obtained through direct experience. For all of you it will be a chance to make a lasting impact on people and communities in your host country, and an opportunity that will make a lasting impression on your life.

Many challenges await you. It is likely that the most difficult obstacles you face will not be the ones that test your technical skills or knowledge. More often it will be the difficulty of gaining the cultural competencies necessary to do successful work in a community. It will be learning to see the problems facing a region from the eyes of a community member rather than through the eyes of an outsider. Remember that culture, community, and language should guide your work as much as your own knowledge.

During your program you will represent both yourself and FSD in your community. Many people in the region that you will work in have had very little experience with people from outside their country. As such they will develop opinions of you and the work of FSD through their interactions with you or what they hear about you. We ask that you take your visibility into consideration when you make decisions about your actions in your host country.

It is the intention of FSD to provide you with a broad support network to best position you for success, but at the end of the day, it is your effort that will most influence the success of your experience with FSD. You will need to take initiative and put yourself in situations that stretch your comfort levels. You will have to work within cultural contexts that can cause extreme frustration. Many other challenges await, but at the same time you face these challenges you also have an incredible set of opportunities. Go into the experience with the willingness to listen and learn. You will find that through this willingness you will increase your ability to give to your community.

This guide has been developed to help make clear what FSD expects of our interns and volunteers and what you can expect of us. We look at your internship or volunteer program as a partnership. It is our hope and belief that clear expectations are the foundation for a solid working relationship. Please read this guide thoroughly; it contains information that is crucial to the success of your experience and our partnership.

Above all, you should feel comfortable contacting us in the San Francisco office if you need any additional support or have any questions.

Good luck!
About FSD

At the center of the internship experience are the core values, vision, and mission that make FSD the organization that it is. We ask that as an FSD participant, you understand and remember these tenets throughout your time abroad, in order to make your program a meaningful experience for both you and the communities in which you serve.

Vision:
FSD envisions a world where all people have the opportunity and capacity to direct economic, social, and environmental resources toward sustainable outcomes that improve their lives and communities.

Mission:
FSD achieves community-driven goals through asset-based development and international exchange in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Core Values:

- **Start with Assets, Not Problems:** We take an asset-based approach to development work. We begin by listening to the priorities set by our community-based partners at our international program sites. We then identify and utilize existing assets and capacity to address those priorities.

- **Motivate Community Ownership:** We partner with leaders, organizations, and stakeholders committed to change, action, and social justice. We stress community ownership and participation before launching initiatives, especially in our volunteer and student programs.

- **Generate Enduring Results and Impact:** We ensure the outcomes of our support have long-lasting benefits for our partners. We think hard about how to participate appropriately and effectively in development, and on how to become redundant so that our initiatives outlast our involvement.

- **Focus On The Site Teams:** We are headquartered in San Francisco, but our 10 Site Teams direct our programs across Africa, Asia, and Latin America on the ground, 365 days a year. These teams build partnerships based on trust, respect, efficacy, and alignment with an asset-based approach.

- **Build Capacity:** We strengthen the skills, competencies, and abilities of the leaders of our community-based partners and of our students and professional volunteers. We educate and train, facilitating the sharing of best practices across all of our stakeholders to support our partners’ priorities.

- **Be A Bridge:** We relentlessly build a network of students, professionals, and passionate advocates for our community-based partners to access. We connect this network of assets and volunteers with the work of our partners through our international exchange and grantmaking programs.

- **Change Perspectives:** We share our experiences and learning about the complexities of development with friends, family, and colleagues. We promote cultural exchange and sensitivity, encouraging a reflective approach to navigating cross-cultural issues, confusions, and tensions.

- **Promote Reciprocity:** We operate on our founding principle that producing strong community outcomes must be the priority. We base all partnerships, strategies, and decisions on the Fair Trade Learning concept that we must be ethical and reciprocal in our planning, implementation, and outcomes.
About FSD

Web of support:
FSD is a key partner in your experience. Below are the two main players on FSD’s team, with a description of exactly how they will support you.

Site Team Roles:
- Program Director: FSD’s program directors are local experts in the field of community development. Their experience and strong community ties make them a great resource to support you in your in-country project work. The program director develops and maintains FSD’s relationships with our host organizations and is heavily involved in the process from the time you apply to FSD to the end of your term of service.
- Program Coordinators: Your program coordinator(s) provides ongoing support to you, FSD’s host families and our partner organizations. During the application process, they advise the program director and San Francisco staff about your placement. Once you’re in the field, they serve as a bridge to the local culture and language and as lifeline when culture shock inevitably sets in. They are also available to advise you as you develop your program workplan.

San Francisco Office (SFO) Roles:
SFO works closely with the Northwestern staff to ensure safety and productivity of your in-country experience. Northwestern is in direct contact with the SFO office.
- Emergency Contact: SFO is available at all times in the case of an emergency.
- Additional Support: If the support offered in your host country is not satisfactory.
- Re-Integration Support: Upon your return, SFO will connect you with other veteran and offer opportunities for you to share your experience.

International Programs Team (San Francisco Office):

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About FSD

Cochabamba Site Team:

Mauricio Ramírez Parra  |  fsdmaricio@gmail.com
Program Director
A native Bolivian with extensive experience with the international community, Mauricio Ramírez has been the Director of FSD in Bolivia since it was initiated in 2000. He is also involved with various projects in agriculture and the environment. He has been the coordinator for Farmer to Farmer, financed by USAID in Cochabamba since 1996, developing projects to assist agricultural producers with technical assistance in the areas of beekeeping, livestock, and the production of fruits and vegetables. He is the former president of Partners of the Americas in Bolivia, an organization that works with volunteers from North Carolina and Bolivia in the areas of health, agriculture, art and culture, search and rescue, women’s issues, rehabilitation, and justice. He has over ten years of experience with volunteers.

Cassandra Sutherland  |  fsdcassandra@gmail.com
International Program Coordinator
Cassandra Sutherland first moved to South America in 2007. Unable to decide on what country she wanted to visit she closed her eyes and pointed at a map; she lived in Paraguay for eleven months, and her love affair with the region began. Cassandra grew up in Bellingham, Washington before moving to San Francisco to earn her B.A in International Studies and Latin American Studies. In the summer of 2009 Cassandra completed her internship with FSD in Ciudad Sandino, Nicaragua. Collaborating with survivors of domestic violence for an income-generating silk-screening project. Cassandra's junior year she spent five months in Kigali, Rwanda learning about post-genocide transformation, and doing research on same-sex behavior and sexuality in East Africa. Cassandra is thrilled to be working with FSD in Bolivia. In her free time she enjoys cooking, reading books, swimming and exercising, traveling, and being around people.
Safety & Security

The safety and security of our program participants and staff is our first priority. Our safety and security protocols meet international standards and have been developed over our 15 years of operation, and from the practical experience of our staff. We have rigorous and conservative safety and security procedures, including triaged security measures for students (such as restricted travel, curfews, and buddy systems) should any emergent or potentially emergent event occur. Every site has an emergency evacuation plan (supported by our travel insurance partner) that identifies safe houses, identifies on-call transportation, and provides a variety of options for moving participants out of unsafe area via land and air routes.

For each site, we have identified physicians, health centers and hospitals for routine and emergency care that meet standards of care for foreigners, and we know the locations of and how to contact the relevant embassies and consulates. These procedures are supported by duty officer training of our support staff in San Francisco who monitor an emergency call line 24/7. But the most critical components of our safety and security system are our local staff, who are also on call 24/7, and our network of community partners at each of our program sites. Our local staff have the best knowledge as to the potential of local events to become critical, and have a network of community members to turn to for safety information, such as best routes to safer locations. Every program participant undergoes safety and security training during orientation.

It is an unfortunate but usual part of development work that emergencies occur, and we have had experience dealing with a variety of issues, from localized civil unrest and natural disasters to total evacuation of programs. The US office is in constant communication with our program sites through a variety of communications channels, including biweekly phone calls and reporting on each participant, and we also monitor international media for emerging events.

All of our sites are in safe areas. However, similar to any semi-urban or rural area in the US, certain common-sense safety measures must be taken. These will be reviewed extensively during orientation, when every participant receives a safety briefing. We emphasize that the most important ways to stay safe are to exercise good judgment, to have a strong network of local contacts, and to have a strong awareness of the potential for harm.

FSD will do its utmost to provide a safe environment and a responsive support system to you throughout your experience. To ensure a safe and successful experience for everyone involved, we depend upon our staff to serve as a barometer of the local political, social and economic climates, and to use that knowledge to maintain a safe and secure environment for FSD participants. We depend on our participants to act prudently and be receptive to instructions and suggestions regarding safety and security.

**FSD’s responsibilities:**
- Ensure a safe and secure host community. Our host organizations and programs are run by FSD staff and trusted colleagues who live locally and often have years of experience with FSD. While the political climate varies by location and timing, we feel that our extensive local networks of host families and partner organizations provide us with a good barometer of the climate in relation to the safety of foreign volunteers.
- Inform you about safety and security in your host community through materials like this pre-departure guide. We equip you with the information and tools to be aware of the realities of your host community, to avoid situations that would put you at risk, and to manage these situations should they arise.
- Send you an electronic proof of insurance card.
- Direct you to a preferred medical facility in the case of an emergency.
- Support you logistically and emotionally through any medical or emergency situation.
- Contact your emergency contacts in the case of a major emergency.

**Your responsibilities:**
- Learn about the history and current events of your host country and community.
- Secure all recommended vaccinations.

Continued on next page
Health Preparations

- Follow the directions of your site team and host family.
- Register with the US State Department or your country’s equivalent.
- Avoid volatile or risky situations. Travel with someone you know, and avoid being out alone after dark.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Walk purposefully and act as though you know where you are going.
- Notify your site team of any incidents of harassment, illness, accident, or any other serious event as soon as possible.
- Review your insurance coverage to determine whether you want to purchase an enhanced package. FSD program insurance ensures that adequate support is available to you in the case of a major emergency. There is a US $250 deductible for which you are responsible. The illnesses and medical issues you are more likely to encounter may require medical consultations and prescriptions that will generally incur a cost between $25 and $100.

Beyond taking all necessary precautions to prevent illness and accidents, please plan financially for these types of expenses. Hospitals and clinics may require payment up-front for services; please bring cash and/or a credit card (Visa or Mastercard) for emergency medical expenses and seek reimbursement directly from the insurance provider. FSD is not responsible for up-front costs or cash-related medical fees.

As a GESI student, it is your full responsibility to identify and take all necessary health precautions prior to, during, and following the Program. Please start your health preparations early, as some vaccinations must be taken as far as eight weeks or more before departure. Providing detailed medical advice is beyond the expertise of FSD so it is very important to consult the resources below as well as medical professionals such as your doctor or local travel health clinic.

Resources:
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): Recorded information about health risks and precautions for international travelers: 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747)
- Malaria Hotline: 404-332-4555

Topics to talk to your doctor or local health clinic about:
- Any pre-existing conditions. Please note that pre-existing conditions—even those that don’t impact you on a regular basis in the United States—can flare up while in a new environment due to altitude, allergens, new food, etc.
- Symptoms of the most common illnesses contracted by travelers and appropriate treatment
- Medicines and supplies for preventing and treating common illnesses and maladies (diarrhea, dehydration, sunburn, food poisoning)
- Yellow fever and typhoid fever
- Malaria (if participants plan to travel to at-risk areas)
- Rabies
- Food and water-borne diseases

What happens if I get sick?
For serious illness that may occur during your program, there are public and private clinics and hospitals available in most areas. If you should become sick, please alert the FSD Site and your host family immediately and they will ensure that you receive appropriate medical care. Cochabamba is home to several very good hospital facilities and well-trained, sensitive doctors are easily found.
Visa Information

The recommendations provided here are subject to change at any time. As an FSD participant, it is your full responsibility to secure the appropriate visa and ensure the full legality of your stay in the host country during the program. To do so requires consultation of resources above and beyond the information provided by FSD. Please check with a Bolivian consulate or embassy for the most current information.

Guidance: (subject to change at any time)
It is required that you obtain a tourist visa for travel in Bolivia (including participation in the FSD program). The Site Team strongly suggests that you purchase this visa upon arrival at the airport Bolivia rather than before you leave the US. Previous FSD participants recommend that purchasing the visa at the airport is much more efficient and simpler than purchasing it ahead of time.

• Visit the State Department and Bolivian Embassy websites (listed below) to review the information you will be required to provide upon arrival, as well as any new information regarding travel in Bolivia.
• The fee for the tourist visa is $135 USD and must be paid in cash to the immigration authorities upon your arrival. The money should be in crisp, new bills and exact change.
• Besides the fee, you must also provide your passport and an address for where you will be staying.
• Compile all the requirements and have them readily available in your carry-on baggage.

U.S. State Department: Information for U.S. travelers to Bolivia:

Bolivian Embassy in the United States: 3014 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20008 T: 202.483.4410

Bolivian Main Consulate in the United States: 2120 L Street NW Suite 335
Washington, DC 20037
T: 202.232.4827
F: 202.232.8017
Packing List

Clothes:
- Several pairs cotton underwear and socks
- Light waterproof jacket & umbrella
- Warm jacket and 2 sweater(s)
- 2-3 Long-sleeved warmer shirts/tops
- 3-4 Short-sleeved tops/t-shirts
- Long pants/capris (1/3)
- Shorts (1/2)
- Skirts, knee-length or longer for women (1/3)
- Light sports attire if you are interested in sports, running, hiking, etc
- Shorts or sweats for around the house
- Multiple shirts appropriate for work, leisure, travel
- At least one nice outfit for special occasions
- Sneakers and sandals (“nice” footwear optional)
- Close-toed comfortable shoes for work and/or special occasions
- Bathing suit, sarong and other beach gear
- Modest sleepwear
- Hat for sun protection/warm hat, gloves and scarves (season appropriate)

Health and Hygiene:
- A supply of handwipes and/or anti-bacterial hand lotion (some places will not have restrooms with running water)
- Any medications you use in their original containers and a copy of your prescriptions, eyeglasses, contacts, saline solution
- Personal hygiene products—soap, shampoo, toothpaste, tampons, floss, etc. (these can be purchased locally to save room in your luggage, but you should pack travel sizes to use until you can go to the store the first week)
- Strong insect repellent and Calamine lotion or other itch-relief cream (you will get bitten by insects at some point during your stay)
- Vitamins
- Antibiotics for travelers’ diarrhea
- Sunglasses and sunscreen
- Contact lens solution (is prohibitively expensive in-country)
- Feminine hygiene products (sanitary pads are widely available, tampons are not)

Practical supplies:
- Steel or plastic water bottle
- Travel alarm clock
- Towel (families may not have them, and they are useful for beach days. Hostels in Nicaragua almost always offer towels).
- Medium-sized pack for day and weekend trips
- Flashlight/headlight (remember that power outages are relatively common)
- Earplugs (notably if you have trouble sleeping with noise)
- Lock for luggage (can also be used at lockers in hostels if traveling)
- Money belt (around the waist is more secure than around the neck)
- Utility knife

Documents and money:
- Airline ticket
- Passport
- Vaccination booklet
- Insurance Card
- Visa or Mastercard
- Photocopies of all documents
- Cash—be sure to bring new bills, as even slightly ripped bills will not be accepted (US dollars are accepted in large stores in Bolivia)

Other:
- Pictures of your family, friends, school, neighborhood, work, etc.
- Small gifts for your host family
- Books and other reading materials

“What I wish I brought to Bolivia”
Packing tips from 2012 students:
- More warm clothes
- Jar of peanut butter
- Other American snacks
- Tampons
Packing FAQs

• What kind of luggage should I bring?
Don’t overdo it — pack lightly so you can travel easily and store your bag in small places. Think in terms of a backpack, duffel bag, or moderate-sized suitcase and a daypack. Bags with shoulder straps are preferable to suitcases because they’re easier to carry. Backpacks are a plus to have for easy traveling and weekend excursions once you’re in Bolivia.

• What should I bring in my carry-on luggage?
We recommend that you carry all valuables (money, credit card, passport, identification, immunization booklet, insurance card, etc.) and a complete set of clothes (change of shirt, pants/skirt, underwear) in your carry-on luggage in case your checked bag is temporarily lost or delayed. Sleeping bags and flashlights may also come in handy in these cases, as well as the site team contact information.

• What documents should I bring?
You should bring your passport, vaccination booklet, insurance card, and list of FSD contacts in Bolivia and two copies of each. During the program, keep the originals and one copy safe in your suitcase and keep the other copy on your person at all times.

• What items are difficult to get in Bolivia?
Although most things can be purchased in Bolivia (with limited selection), books in English, some comfort foods that you are used to and feminine hygiene products (like Tampex) are also hard to find.

• What kinds of weather should I expect?
Cochabamba is located in the central valley region of Bolivia and is known for its pleasant year-round climate, reaching few extremes throughout the year. The seasons are the opposite of those in the Northern hemisphere, with winter being from June to August and summer being in September. The average winter temperature is about 61 degrees Fahrenheit, with warm days and cool nights. Surrounding rural areas such as Punata and Anzaldo tend to be cooler than Cochabamba. As for other regions of Bolivia, La Paz and the altiplano regions of Bolivia are significantly cooler and require warm clothes year round. As you head east of Cochabamba into the tropical region of Chapare, and beyond to Santa Cruz, the climate becomes warmer and more humid.

• Should I bring donations?
Donations are not required. If you choose to bring donations, please think about the practicality, sustainability, and durability of those items. Email your Site Team to find out the best types of donations to bring with you.

• How are clothes washed?
While some families have washing machines, it is most common that your host family will hand-wash your clothing. In both cases, clothing is line-dried. Please keep in mind that since your clothes will be hand-washed and line-dried they will definitely endure some wear and tear. Please also note that there is some social stigma surrounding thong underwear, and so it may be more comfortable with some families to bring non-thong underwear, or to dry thong underwear out of public view.

• What should I wear?
To avoid uncomfortable stereotypes and feel safe (this is especially important for women), dress conservatively. For women, it is typical for clothes to fit snugly but not show much skin.
At work: Bolivian men and women generally wear business casual attire to work, making nice jeans or khakis appropriate. Knee-length or longer skirts are also appropriate for women, and short-sleeved dress shirts are fine for men. For both genders, comfortable, sturdy, closed-toe shoes or nicer sandals are appropriate for work. For both genders shorts and rubber flip-flops are inappropriate.
At home: Comfortable clothing and sandals are commonly worn for lounging and informal activities. Bring a pair of modest pajamas to sleep in.

• What type of clothes should I pack?
Bring cool clothes for hot summer temperatures, a lightweight waterproof jacket for showers, and warm layers for the winter and cooler nights. Keep in mind that darker colors are easier to keep clean, and that your clothes could endure a lot of wear and tear from being washed by hand. Also consider clothes that will breathe in the heat and dry quickly. You may also want to bring a nice, formal outfit, as participants are often invited to celebrations such as weddings or baptisms by their host family and friends. Bathing suits are optional but may come in handy during the Midterm Trip.
Electronics FAQs:

• Should I bring my laptop?
Personal computers and especially laptops are not particularly common in Bolivia. The majority of participants find having a laptop to be extremely helpful during their internship. Many participants say that they wish they had brought their laptops to Cochabamba. Access to computers at your host organization is likely to be limited, and only a handful of families have a computer in their home. The FSD office in Cochabamba has an extra laptop with internet connection for participants to use.

The advantage of bringing a laptop is the ability to work on documents at home without paying for internet/computer time. You can then save your work to a USB drive and email/print it at a ciber. If you do decide to bring your laptop, please take the necessary precautions! It should be in your carry-on bag to take on the plane and you should keep it at your host family’s home. Bringing a laptop entails the risk that it could be lost, stolen or damaged. FSD is not responsible for your possessions.

Instead (or in addition to) of a laptop it may be a good idea to invest in a cheap USB drive. You can get low volume USB drives for $20 or up to several GBs for more money. These are an excellent way to cart around your documents and email, print or fax them from a ciber.

• Should I bring my smart phone?

iPods/iPhones are very rare here – you should generally not walk around listening to your iPod; they automatically advertise your wealth and set you apart. Keeping it at home and listening to it with your family is perfectly fine. MP3 players are also great for long bus rides, but you should exercise the utmost caution when traveling with items of value. An FSD cellphone may be borrowed from the site team.

• Voltage Converters:

If you do decide to bring your laptop or other American electronic devises you will need voltage converters which convert to 220V with a “C” plug. Converters can be bought in Bolivia, however to be safe you may consider purchasing one before departure.

Food & Water FAQs:

• Can I drink the tap water?

NO. Do not drink the tap water. You are only to drink bottled water or water that has been boiled.

• Where can I get safe water?

Cochabamba is at 9000 ft in altitude, so please pay close attention to your hydration at all times and be sure that you're getting plenty of (safe) water. Your host family will make purified water available to you. Bring your own bottled water with you at all times; when visiting other families or communities, and when in doubt, drink a bottled beverage. The most sustainable way to ensure that you always have a supply of purified water available is to bring a reusable water bottle and re-fill it each morning from your host family’s supply (most families will buy a large jug that is refilled each week). You may also consider bringing water treatment tablets for backup. Bottled water is available in any “tienda” or grocery store. However, when spending time in rural areas it isn’t odd to find tiendas that don’t have bottled water, since drinking water isn’t a big priority to most Bolivians. It is always recommended to bring large bottles of water with you before traveling to rural areas.

• Can I eat fresh fruit from street stands and trees?

In Bolivia you are likely to encounter an abundance of fresh fruit. As a rule, if you can peel it, you can eat it. Avoid peeled fruit served on the street unless you watch the vendor peel it.

• Are there any US-style restaurants?

In Cochabamba, the only US chain is Burger King, however, there are many restaurants that serve US style food. There are restaurants called Dumbo’s and Globos that are very similar to a Denny’s or IHOP and there are hamburger and pizza joints everywhere.
Food & Water

• What is typical food?
The main staples of the Bolivian diet are potatoes and rice, usually accompanied by meat and llajwa, a spicy locoto (Bolivian chili pepper) salsa. Meat soups are also very popular. It is likely that you will have rice, potatoes and bread at least once a day. Other principal foods include plantains, fava beans, salty fresh cheese, eggs, meat, corn, fruit, pastries and mates (tea). Bolivian food tends to be very greasy with very little use of vegetables and even less use of raw vegetables. Breakfast is normally a small meal that consists of tea or coffee and fresh juice, accompanied by bread with butter and jam. Lunch is the most important meal of the day and is eaten together with the entire family at around 1 p.m. It is usually a very heavy meal, eaten at a very slow pace and accompanied by much conversation. Dinner depends on the family; some Bolivians eat big meals similar to lunch while others typically have a mate and a pastry such as an empanada.

• What do most people drink?
Many host families will make juice from fresh fruit – these are delicious. Soda, or “gaseosa” is very popular, usually the substitute for water in most homes, and is drunk much more than foreigners are accustomed to. Milk is safe to drink in Bolivia, as it is almost always pasteurized. Likewise, when coffee is available it is usually Nescafé, although fresh coffee may be purchased from local producers. Beer, Singani and Chicha are the popular alcoholic drinks in the Cochabamba region. Singani is an alcohol fermented from grapes and usually mixed with juice as a trago (cocktail), while Chicha is a drink made from fermented corn, consumed in its pure state and an absolute core of Cochabamba social events and culture.

• How vegetarian-friendly is the local cuisine?
Meat is a big part of Bolivian culture and celebrations. However, families can always accommodate to a vegetarian diet. Please be specific as to your preferences (i.e. whether you eat chicken but no red meat, or no animals, no dairy whatsoever) and let the FSD staff know beforehand so they can alert the family. There are also various vegetarian restaurants where the raw vegetables are safe to eat and taste delicious. The FSD site team will advise you where to find these restaurants. Fresh fruit, such as papaya, mango, pineapple, oranges, avocados, peaches, and bananas are common in Bolivia, as well as delicious and cheap!

• What foods should I avoid?
• Avoid uncooked food, street vendors, and restaurants that have not been recommended by FSD.
• Do not eat fruits or vegetables that have been washed with water unless they are peeled or the water was treated beforehand.
• Other foods likely to be offered that you should avoid, unless your host family prepares them properly, are juices, quesillo (fresh salty cheese), salad, milk drinks, and anything raw.
• To prevent parasites and diarrhea, you will want to eat lightly upon arrival and stay away from raw vegetables and street food.

• How should I express my preferences, or turn down unsafe food that is offered to me?
In many places food is an important form of hospitality and it is cultural practice to offer food and drink as a welcoming, friendly gesture. Never put yourself at risk, but please be diplomatic in expressing your needs. Take care not to offend your hosts with negative comments or facial expressions. Your host family will be notified of what you can and cannot eat or drink, but you should also be sure to tell your family what you do and do not like to eat. You should feel comfortable politely asking your family for food to be less greasy or salty, to put salt on the side, to mention that you like fruits and vegetables, or to be given more or less food. Families understand that your body is simply used to a different diet, so the best thing to do if there is a food bothering you is to say that, although it is delicious you are not used to eating like that in your country and it is making you ill. Most Bolivians know that foreigners are generally more susceptible to getting sick from the change in diet and are accustomed to being more cautious with the food they serve them.
Communication

• What is the best way for friends and family at home to reach me?
Email, whatsapp or skype are the most reliable ways to be in touch with your friends and family at home. We also suggest that you call your friends and family from an internet café or a phone company office. If your host family has a phone, you can ask them if it is all right for your family to call you on that line.

Phone communication is often interrupted by bad weather, local technicalities or overloaded circuits, and sometimes lines are cut in the middle of a call. Please ensure that your friends and families are aware of this and understand that it is best not to schedule international calls at exact times.

In case of emergency, your friends or family can call the FSD emergency phone line, at 415-828-8414.

• Is there access to internet and email?
You can find an internet café (ciber) anywhere in Cochabamba. Many are open late, and most all have the capacity to call home to the US for much cheaper than other methods. Internet access costs about US $0.50 per hour. Additionally FSD’s Cochabamba office has free internet access and an extra laptop for students.

Can I make and receive phone calls at my host family’s home?
All host families have a telephone. Never make any long distance calls from the phone of your host family or that of your employer, and ask permission from your host family before making any local calls on their phone. It is also best to check with your host family before receiving long-distance calls on their phone.

• Are cell phones available?
FSD provides participants with an inexpensive cell phone during their program. The phone will have minutes at the beginning of your program, and then you are responsible for purchasing any additional minutes. Friends and family can call you on your phone with no cost at your expense. Calls to cell phones can be relatively expensive (2-4 bolivianos/minute, US $0.25-0.50).

• Where can I make and receive phone calls?
Local phone calls to fixed lines can usually be made from your host family’s telephone. Phone calls to cell phones are more expensive and should be made from telecommunications offices (such as Entel, Viva, etc.) for about US $0.06 per minute. For long distance calls there are several options:
  • Call from a telecommunications office. These can be as expensive as 4 bolivianos (US $0.50) per minute, but are usually a reliable connection
  • Call from a booth at a call center or internet café using an internet phone connection. This is a fairly reliable and quite cheap option, at as low as US $0.06 a minute
  • Buy a prepaid phone card in the U.S. or in Cochabamba to use with landlines (check with your host family to make sure they won’t be charge for the call)
  • Use internet services such as Skype for $0.02 per minute or for free with other Skype users

• How do I make a call within Bolivia?
From one landline to another in Cochabamba, you can simply dial the 7-digit number. To call a cell phone, all you have to do is dial the 8-digit number anywhere in the country. From a cell phone or a landline outside of Cochabamba to another landline, you must dial Cochabamba’s city code (4 or 04).

• How do I call the U.S.?
To call the U.S. from a call center, dial 001, the area code, then the 7-digit number. From other phones or using a calling card, there are several different possible prefixes, some of which are cheaper than others depending on promotions – if you plan to call this way, you should research your options. There are direct numbers to call AT&T and Sprint to make calling card or collect calls to the US, which you should verify before your arrival. Some call centers in Cochabamba will give you the office’s number so that whoever you are calling can call you back.
Money & Flight

• How much cash should I bring with me?
You should plan on bringing about US $200 in cash when you arrive, an ATM card and a credit card for emergencies (however there are very few places to use credit cards). You can exchange money at the airport or upon arrival in Bolivia. Note: All cash that you bring to exchange should be in near mint condition because most banks will not change imperfect bills.

• How much money should I plan on spending in country?
GESI covers all of your necessary expenses, including room and board, in-country transportation, trip expenses (if applicable), orientation and debriefing sessions, etc. You may want additional money, however, for entertainment, snacks, books, gifts, newspapers, weekend excursions, additional transportation and health emergencies. You should budget for about US $3/day and about $50 for a weekend trip. Bring more if you plan to go out often or buy gifts. Never carry a large sum of cash or your passport on public transportation; if you must, please do so with caution. Bring only what you need for the day and use a nondescript bag to carry books or papers.

• How can I get cash?
ATM machines are recommended because they are available, secure, and get a good rate of exchange. Traveler's checks are not recommended: they do not get a good exchange rate (cash is much better) and are not widely accepted. Do not exchange money with street dealers; banks or exchange bureaus are much more secure.

• Are credit cards accepted?
It is very difficult to find places that accept credit cards, as they are only accepted in the more expensive shops and restaurants. Do not plan to rely on your credit card for the majority of your transactions in the country; if you choose to bring a credit card, we advise bringing no more than one for emergency purposes, and bringing a Visa or MasterCard since they are the most commonly accepted.

• What is the local attitude towards bargaining?
Bargaining is part of the culture and expected at local markets.

Monetary unit: Boliviano/Peso
Exchange Rate: Rates fluctuate, be sure to check them online before you leave, at websites like: www.xe.com

Flight Info

• Flying through La Paz El Alto Airport (LPB) en route to Cochabamba
  Upon your arrival at LPB: You will have to collect your checked luggage, get your visa, and go through customs before returning to the domestic departures check in.

• Your Arrival to Cochabamba
  The Site Team or a trusted FSD transportation service with an FSD logo sign will meet participants at the Cochabamba Airport.

• Your Departure from Cochabamba
  The Site Team will work with you to arrange for your departure. They will accompany you to the airport as well.
Arrival & Transportation

Arrival:
• How should I contact my site team if my flight is delayed, canceled, etc?
Prior to your departure you should print a copy the site team contact information sheet sent to you by the San Francisco office. In the event that you need to contact your site team while in transit, we recommend text message or calling from your US cell phone, emailing from a kiosk in the airport, or using a pay phone to call the site team on their cell phones. Please also keep Northwestern informed of any flight delays or cancellations. GESI staff phone numbers are provided to you in an emergency wallet card before departure.
• How far is the orientation site from the airport?
The average travel time from Cochabamba airport to the orientation site by taxi is approximately 15 minutes but can vary greatly with traffic. During all your travels, please be vigilant with your personal belongings, especially in El Alto airport, the bus stop in El Alto and the bus Terminal in Cochabamba. And lastly, once you have arrived and settled in, be sure to make contact with your families back home - they will want to know that your arrived safely!

Transportation:
• What are the most common modes of transport and are they expensive?
Buses: In Bolivian cities the most common form of public transportation are trufis. There are three types of trufis: Micro-trufi, trufi, or a trufi taxi. All work the same, having a fixed rate of 1.9 bolivianos and a specific route depending on their number. However, the difference between the trufis lie in their size — Micros are comparable to a bus, regular trufis are much like a mini-bus, and trufi-taxis look like a taxi (a compact car).
Payment: With some public transport you pay when you get on and with others as you get off; the best is to ask and you will learn as you go. For longer bus trips, it is advised to go to the bus station and buy your ticket early.
Safety: It is easy to get robbed on a bus so be vigilant about your possessions. However, appearing nervous about your possessions makes you a target so try to be calm and composed. Don't travel with more money than you'll need and don't carry important documents like your passport unless you have to. It is preferable to choose a seat next to a female or child.

Know where you are going: Always know where you are going and the name of the stop before you get on the bus. If you are going to an unfamiliar location always ask the driver (chofer) before getting on the bus. Transport choferes are very friendly and are always willing to help you find the right bus or trufi.

Taxis: Taxis are ubiquitous and cheap in Bolivia, and are thus good for transportation to area buses do not travel or when you are traveling with luggage or with a group. Most taxi rides are about a dollar unless you are going long distances or traveling at night.
Payment: Most taxi rides are under a dollar unless you are going long distances. Ask how much the fare will be before you get in the taxi. To ensure not being overcharged, always ask someone who is familiar with the city how much a taxi ride should be to your destination point before traveling somewhere for the first time, and negotiate the price with the driver at the beginning.
Safety: You should always use radio taxis. These are taxis that are run by a company and they will have this company logo on the door of the car, accompanied by the company phone number. You can always ask your host family to recommend a taxi company to use.

• Is it safe to go out at night?
Make sure to not walk after 9 PM, or in unknown and/or dark areas, especially if you are alone. Consult with your host family about safety information specific to your neighborhood. Plan ahead and be cautious. If traveling within Cochabamba, it is always best to use a taxi service at night. If you plan to go out at night, never go alone. Hanging out in the plazas is very unsafe after dark and it is always best to avoid crossing plazas at night. However, Cochabamba’s city center, where most of the restaurants and bars are located, is generally safe at all hours. But even while hanging out in the city center, you want to make sure you are with a friend or someone from your host family when it is dark out. Consult with your host family as to safety information specific to where you plan on going during nighttime hours. Plan ahead and be cautious!
Family Homestay

A typical Bolivian host family includes one or two host parents, children, and extended family members of various ages and relations. It is very common for movement in and out of the household of relatives, either as they come for a brief or extended visit, or if they need a place to live. All of the Bolivian host families that FSD works with are enthusiastic about receiving interns in their homes and will treat you like a member of the family. They like to include you in many activities such as cooking, birthday parties, weddings, and occasionally travel. They are concerned with your health and safety and will provide you with lots of advice and recommendations for what to/not to eat and where to/not to go. Be prepared for a fun, yet challenging, experience full of Bolivian cariño!

One of the most rewarding, challenging, and meaningful experiences during your time in Bolivia is likely to be the time you spend living with your host family. Host families offer the rare opportunity to truly integrate yourself into the local culture and build meaningful relationships that will last long past your stay. The families who host GESI participants are carefully selected and offer their homes out of a genuine sense of generosity and the wish to learn about another culture. Your host family will view you as a member of the family and treat you as such. We hope that you will feel equally at home with your family but we ask that you never forget you are a guest in their home. Please always be respectful of their rules and help out the best you can.

• What will my host family provide?
Your family is required to provide you with a private room, three meals a day, purified water and weekly hand or machine-washing of your clothes. Toiletries and a towel are not provided; you must bring your own.

• What are the living accommodations like?
Living accommodations range depending on each host family’s specific situation and the area where they live, but most are comfortable by U.S. standards. Families tend to be middle class, and family members are usually professionals or stay-at-home mothers. Most neighborhoods are fairly quiet at night, although those concerned about barking dogs and occasional amplified house parties may want to bring earplugs.

Water is most often heated electrically in Bolivia as it passes through the showerhead. This results in variable water pressure and temperature – usually, water becomes hotter as it is let out of the showerhead. Never touch the showerhead or wires attached to the showerhead while in the shower, and be very cautious if you have to touch the lever to turn on the electricity in order to avoid being shocked.

• How are families structures in Bolivia?
Bolivian households may consist of a nuclear family, a single-mother household, a retired couple, or multiple generations. It is common for children to live with their parents until they are married, and sometimes afterwards, so parents, grown children and grandchildren may live in the same home. Children in Bolivia, like children anywhere, can be both adorable and annoying, but try to maintain your patience with them in order to integrate into the household. Sometimes young children will be afraid of you for the first few weeks because you are a stranger. Please don’t take this personally – be patient and they’ll warm up to you with time. Some families also employ a housekeeper (empleada). Common duties include cooking, laundry and cleaning. An empleada’s hours and relationship to the family vary - some empleadas may simply maintain a business relationship with the family, while others become more like adopted family members.

• Do I need to help out with chores?
We ask families to treat you as another member of their family and we ask that you behave correspondingly. This means you will pick up after yourself, keep your area neat, and help out where appropriate. Some families may initially treat you as a guest, but offering to partake in activities like cooking and cleaning will help you to further integrate.

• Will I receive my own set of keys?
You should receive your own set of keys to the house so that you are free to come and go as needed.
Family Homestay

• Can I bring/store valuables at my host family’s house?
There is no need to bring many valuables. We require that you keep items of value locked in your luggage at all times. This is extremely important because friends and relatives are often in and out of the house. In the past, there have been incidents when a student thought something was stolen only to find that s/he had misplaced it. This kind of “scandal” is hard on the host family who take great care to protect you and your things. If something unusual of this nature does happen, please speak with your host mother and/or the FSD Site Team immediately.

• What are standard meal times?
Meal times are a morning breakfast, lunch usually at 1 p.m., and a dinner sometime between 6-9 p.m. Breakfast usually consists of bread with fresh cheese, butter or jam and coffee or tea. Lunch is the biggest meal of the day for which everyone returns home, and usually consists of a soup, a meat dish with rice and potatoes and fresh juice. Some families cook a smaller dinner in the evening, while others simply have a snack or bread with coffee or tea.

• How should I tell my family that I’d like less food, or different kinds of food?
Don’t be shy about asking your family for particular foods or for the amount of food you want to eat. You should tell your family what you do and do not like to eat – ideally in your first week, when it’s easiest to broach the subject. Vegetarian food is always available, but in order to avoid getting lots of eggs, it’s important to explain your concept of vegetarianism to your family.

• How much time should I spend with my host family?
One of the most meaningful experiences during your time in Bolivia is likely to be the time you spend living with your host family. You will learn a great deal about Bolivia through the people, so cultivate a habit of listening and observing, rather than merely hearing and seeing. Ask questions and share your perspective. Be sensitive to the feelings of others and embrace the different viewpoints, lifestyles, experiences and company your family provides. Host families are eager to get to know you and learn about your American life so be ready to talk about your interests, culture, family and plans. We encourage you to share pictures and stories from your life at home.

• How often should I check in with my family?
You are entrusted in your host family’s care, and just like your own family, they will worry about you if you don’t check in. Please advise your family in advance if you do not plan to be home for a meal. Likewise, be sure to notify your family in advance of any weekend excursions you take other than those in the scheduled program.

• Can I have visitors come over to the house?
Please advise your family before you invite anyone to the house, especially someone of the opposite sex. Overnight guests are NOT appropriate and are unacceptable during the program. Protect your family’s safety and privacy. Do not give out their home number. Remember: Even though you will be treated as part of the family, you are still a guest in their home and must be respectful of their rules.

• How do people spend their free time?
Families in Cochabamba enjoy chatting with family and friends at the dining room table and other common areas for long hours. Extended family birthday parties and celebrations may be frequent, and some families may attend church or have religious traditions. Watching television, especially telenovelas, is another popular pastime. Bolivian youth have a nightlife similar to American youth – they often go to friends’ houses, restaurants, bars, parties, movies or spend the evening at home with their family.

• Can I travel after dark?
You should plan ahead, be cautious, and always know the areas you are traveling in at night. It is not advised to walk alone at night, especially in the dangerous areas of the city.
Family Homestay

• Can I go out at night?
Yes. If you do make plans to go out at night, please advise your family of your transportation, who will be accompanying you, your return time, and arrangements for getting home and into the house. Exercise good judgment: As anywhere, it is best to go out with family members, co-workers or friends that you meet. Simply being a foreigner makes you more of a target for theft, harassment, etc.

• How should I handle requests for money?
GESI program fees subsidize all of your room and board expenses so there is no need for you to discuss money with your family. They should not ask you to borrow money and if this happens, tell them it is against your program rules to lend money. If children ask for money, gently remind them that it is against the rules, and let your Site Team know about the incident.

• What types of gifts are appropriate to bring for my host family?
We suggest that you bring small and modest gifts for your host family as a token of goodwill and gratitude for their hospitality. Ideas: souvenirs of your hometown or state (photo calendars/books, university apparel, etc.), chocolates/candies, inexpensive jewelry, or school supplies for the children, etc. It is possible to purchase small gifts in Bolivia too, but regional gifts are special. Use your imagination!

A GESI 2011 student’s reflections on her experience in Bolivia
by Danielle Moehrke

It’s amazing how you can enter an organization as an obvious outsider, wide-eyed with culture shock, and depart the organization with heart-felt goodbyes, teary-eyed to leave a place that has become a second home.

Although spending 10 weeks gallivanting across Europe and periodically throwing in class attendance seemed mildly appealing when I was searching for a study abroad program, I realized I wanted to gain a global perspective rather than an appreciation of French wine. I was drawn to GESI for the complete cultural immersion, that chance to step so incredibly far out of my comfort zone through the homestays and direct community development work. GESI was a way to learn more about myself and a new culture and to hopefully do a little good in the process.

Centro Integral Warmi, the NGO at which I worked in Bolivia, was founded as a soap factory with the intent of providing jobs to women in the community during the severe economic recession of 1982. Soon after that, they added a childcare center for the women’s children, which eventually expanded. This organization is an incredible asset; now it operates primarily as a low-cost daycare, and continues to employ five women that produce and sell soap.

Through interviews and observations, we decided that there was much potential for growth in the soap factory, particularly in the marketing and selling of the soap. Thus, our project consisted of designing an effective marketing strategy to increase the organization’s soap-selling brand. By creating a promotional video to put on Youtube, developing a new logo that better demonstrated the connection between the kids and the women, designing the packaging for the new detergent soap, contacting potential funders, working with the women in the factory through a workshop, and helping the staff develop a soap press conference at the mayor’s hall, we increased the visibility of the organization. More importantly, we instilled the community with confidence in the value of their work.

I learned the importance of humility when you are an outsider coming into a community. GESI shattered my idealistic view of single-handedly “saving the world.” I realized that in the grand-scale of things, we did little to help the developing nation of Bolivia; however, I still believe our actions made an impact on individuals. Warmi staff members now recognize the good they are doing and the incredibly positive effects they have on the children who see the organization as a second home. No one GESI group drastically derailed the world and set it on an upward path toward complete equality, but together the combination of all the little things we did this summer and the little things these organizations do on a daily basis, has a great impact and shapes the world’s trajectory toward a positive future.
Cultural Practices & Beliefs

For the most part, you will gain insight into Bolivian culture through your own experiences, but here are a few common questions that are likely to arise:

• How do people in Bolivia view time and/or punctuality?
The concept of time is relatively flexible in Bolivia, and somewhat unpredictable. For example, everyone at your workplace might show up a half-hour late one day, or your bus to Sucre might be delayed 45 minutes. But don't count on this as a rule, because the next time you travel the bus will probably leave right when it's supposed to. Your best bet is to be on time and be prepared to be as patient as possible when your surroundings aren't working on the same schedule.

• Do people in Bolivia have different beliefs about privacy?
While your physical privacy will be respected, you might be asked personal questions or find others more comfortable getting involved in your "personal" business than what you're used to. Likewise, be prepared for lots of advice on the right and wrong way to do things!

• What are some common greeting gestures in Bolivia?
Formalities are important in Bolivia, and it is customary to greet each and every person in a room when you enter. Between women as well as between women and men, this may be a kiss on the cheek, sometimes in combination with a handshake. On special occasions or in close relationships, a greeting might be a kiss on the cheek, followed by a hug, and finished with another kiss on the cheek. Greetings between men consist of a handshake, or in closer relationships, a handshake combined with a firm pat on the upper arm. Don't be surprised if people greet you or refer to you with characteristics like gringo, gordito, etc. – these terms, while possibly offensive in English, are meant to be affectionate in Spanish. When asking someone for information, or entering in rooms in formal situations, it is important to use the appropriate greeting – buenos días in the morning, buenas tardes in the afternoon, and buenas noches in the evening.

• How are children treated in Bolivia? Is it common for children to be reprimanded physically at home or school?
Children are expected to unquestioningly respect their elders and authority in Bolivia. Expect parents to be strict with children when they disobey and to hear lots of threats about the chicote (whip). Usually this is just talk, but it is not taboo to physically reprimand children and may occur in certain households. It is neither common nor acceptable for children to be physically reprimanded at schools.

• How are animals treated in Bolivia? Do people keep pets?
Many families keep pets, especially dogs, in Bolivia – in almost all cases, they are kept outside and don't receive overwhelming care and attention. Many are considered a sort of house guard.

• How do people in Bolivia socialize and how important is it?
The most important element of socializing in Bolivia is simply talking, telling stories and listening to others, usually over food or drink. Games like loba (cards) and cacho (similar to Yahtzee) are also common. In bigger celebrations, be prepared for an amplified sound system, dancing to national music, and alcohol. There may be extreme pressure to eat and especially drink in these social settings, and you will find it hard to say no. Respect your limits and be firm when you don't want to consume anymore, but prepared for lots of protest on the part of the person treating you to food or drink!

• What place does religion have in Bolivia?
Approximately 95% of Bolivians will claim Catholic faith, but there are varying degrees of practice. Religious holidays play an important role in the country, and some families may attend church or special masses on the birthdays or anniversaries of the death of relatives who have passed away. You will probably be asked about your religious affiliation.

• How should I approach photography?
You should always ask permission before you take someone's photo. People may ask you to send copies or to give them a tip ("propina") for taking their photo. Please oblige them.
Workplace

• What is a typical work day in Bolivia?
A typical work day (subject to variation depending on the field of work) is 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and 2:30-6:00 p.m., with a long lunch break. A common alternative is called horario continuo in which one works with a short break straight through 4 p.m. This is most common in public institutions such as government offices and banks, so that people can conduct business during their lunch hour.

• How is personal initiative viewed? Is it appropriate to voice my opinions?
Personal initiative is valuable in NGO work and is viewed positively in the organizations with which GESI students work in Bolivia. However, at times you may have difficulties finding an audience for your unique ideas and will have to be persistent and well planned in order to effectively communicate them. It is important to above all observe and learn in your first weeks with your organization, before voicing strong opinions.

• What is the appropriate way to address colleagues and supervisors in Bolivia?
How you address colleagues and supervisors is highly dependent on the workplace and the individual. For example, some professionals prefer to be addressed with their title, such as ingeniero (used with engineers and technicians) or licenciado (referring to someone who has a college degree), while others might prefer to put these formalities aside. The best bet is to start out being very observant of your office dynamic and the relationships between coworkers, erring on the side of "usted" and feeling out the situation as you go along.

• What are common practices for socializing with colleagues?
The best way to socialize with colleagues is to talk with them (and learn from them) in relaxed moments in the workplace, take breaks with them over coffee or go out for drinks after work. Participate in as many meetings, workplace activities and outside get-togethers as possible to establish rapport with your coworkers.
Race, Sexuality, Gender

How you interact with others will initially have a lot to do with preconceptions. You’ll feel more comfortable once the inevitable “getting to know you” period is over, but keep some of these cultural norms in mind.

Race and Ethnicity:
In Bolivia, you may not encounter the same level and/or kind of awareness and sensitivity surrounding race relations and conceptualizations of heritage as you may be accustomed to finding in the U.S. If you have features associated with an Asian heritage, kids and adults may shout out, call, or greet you as “Chino/a” or “Japones/a.” If you have dark skin or features associated with an African heritage, people may refer to you as “Negro/a,” or “Moreno/a.” If you have fair skin, people may refer to you as “Gringo/a” or “Yankí”. If you have features associated with a Middle Eastern heritage, you may be referred to as “Arabe”. If you have features associated with an Indian or South Asian heritage, you may be referred to as “Hindu.” In most cases, these names are not necessarily derogatory terms; many people use them simply because your skin color or features are unusual or intriguing within that context. Besides using generalizations to refer to the appearance of foreign looking persons, Bolivians also refer to their brothers and sisters with these racial “nicknames” if they look Asian, Middle Eastern, North American, etc.

In addition to “nicknames” for foreign looking people, there is also a strong language used for referring to Bolivians from different regions, from different classes and with different color skin. They refer to indigenous Bolivian women that still wear their traditional clothes as “cholitas” and indigenous looking men “campesinos.” People from the Bolivian oriente or tropical regions who have fairer skin are called “cambas” and anyone else with darker skin is called “olla.” Unfortunately, because of the class/racial tension in Bolivia, these last two terms are used derogatorily more often than not. However, all of these terms are used in regular conversation and you shouldn’t be offended when hearing them, but should always be aware of the context in which they are used.

Sexuality:
Sexual orientation or preference is not a topic that is openly discussed in Bolivia. Please realize that any affiliation or experiences you have at home (especially in the LGBTQ community) may not be regarded with the same understanding or sensitivity in Bolivia. Please do your best to take this into consideration when discussing such issues with your host family or other members of the community. For more information and resources you can contact the GESI office, visit Northwestern’s Study Abroad website, LGBTQ Students and Study Abroad: http://www.northwestern.edu/studyabroad/resources/online-guide/identity-and-diversity/lgbtq-students-studyabroad.html, Gender Abroad: http://www.northwestern.edu/studyabroad/resources/online-guide/identityand-diversity/gender-abroad.html, or get in touch with NU’s LGBT Resource Center.

Gender:
If you are a woman, expect to get a lot of unwanted attention. Men will whistle and talk to you in the street. Do not be surprised if men often try to start conversations with you on the street, on the bus, waiting in line, or shopping. Use your common sense. The best thing to do is to ignore them. Do not give out your phone number to people you don’t know. You can explain that you are living in someone else’s house and are not allowed to receive calls or visitors.
Language Guide

Language Resources:

- **Practice:** Speaking a language is the best way to learn, so don't be afraid to practice your Spanish with as many people as possible. Your best resource in learning the local language will be your host family and co-workers at your host organization. Depending on your language ability, this may be extremely frustrating at times. Relax and remember that the key to learning (or improving your skills in) a language is the ability to laugh at yourself.

- **Dictionaries and Phrase Books:** These can be expensive and difficult to find once you are in-country, so you might want to purchase one before you leave. Oxford and Collins produce good pocket dictionaries.

- **On-line:** www.google.com.bo is the Bolivia edition of Google. The following websites also have good language assistance resources:
  - Spanish: [http://babel.uoregon.edu/yamada/guides/spanish.html](http://babel.uoregon.edu/yamada/guides/spanish.html) and [http://wordreference.com](http://wordreference.com)
  - Quechua: [http://babel.uoregon.edu/yamada/guides/quechua.html](http://babel.uoregon.edu/yamada/guides/quechua.html)
  - Duolingo: [https://www.duolingo.com/](https://www.duolingo.com/)

- **Tutoring:** If you are interested in tutoring upon arrival, let your Site Team know. They will help you set up sessions with a tutor, at your own expense. Sessions usually cost US $7/hour.

Local Language Variations:

Bolivians generally speak Spanish slowly and clearly when compared to other South American Spanish-speaking countries. However, their vocabulary may be different from other countries. Upon arrival, the FSD site team will provide you with common slang, important phrases, and the most drastic vocabulary changes that a student might encounter.

Some Bolivians, especially in rural regions, tend to pronounce the sound ‘rr’ as ‘ja’. For example Roberto would be pronounced ‘jo-berto’ or perro would be pronounced ‘pejo’. In addition, the word vos is used in place of tu; however in Bolivia they don’t conjugate the verb into the vos form as they do in most South American countries. An example is the following, “¿Cómo estás vos?” or “¿Y vos, qué tienes?” Quechua is also a dominant language in the Cochabamba region. In the city, Spanish or castellano is the overriding language, but most people understand and/or can communicate in Quechua as well. When walking in the streets it is normal to hear as much Quechua spoken as Spanish. However, when in the rural areas, Quechua is the principal language; most native Quechua speakers either speak fluently or have a basic understanding of Spanish, so it usually isn’t that big of a problem. Quechua sounds nothing like Spanish, nor does it have a similar grammatical structure, so those interested in taking Quechua courses are encouraged to do so. The FSD site team can assist you in finding a class.

Language at Work:

Familiarize yourself with the vocabulary you’ll need at work. Bringing a dictionary with you is vital, but a specific list that addresses terms specific to your organization (health, microfinance, education, etc.) can help a lot. To review vocabulary, you can Google the relevant words in Spanish (salud, microfinanzas, educación, desarrollo sostenible, etc.). To address adults in general, use the prefix Don or Doña (Sr. and Sra. are not used as prefixes here).
**Film Guide**

Filmmaking is not a significant industry in Bolivia and most of the movies in theaters come from Hollywood – major Bolivian films make appearances a few times a year, at best. Because of this, it's hard to come across Bolivian cinema internationally, although this may change with the recent success of ¿Quién mató a la llamita blanca? and American Visa.

**¿Quien mato a la llamita blanca? (2006)** – The llamita blanca “destroys the stereotypical image of the abused, victimized, desolate Latin American, irreverently presenting the first ever story with black humor and indigenous superheroes.” So states the official website's synopsis of this utterly unique and highly entertaining movie, which is invaluable for learning about Bolivia's internal dynamic as well as its relationship with the United States. The movie is Bolivia laughing at itself, mocking public figures and stereotypes, and a satire of the U.S. role in the drug war. Since the story is based on a road trip, you'll also see shots from many of Bolivia's important regions and cities, including Cochabamba.

**Bolivia (2001)** – In fact, this movie doesn’t take place in Bolivia, but rather follows Bolivian illegal immigrants in Argentina. The story tracks the loneliness of living apart from one’s family and the difficulties of dealing with immigration officials. In this film, a Bolivian immigrant working illegally as a cook in a small restaurant in Buenos Aires suffers abuse and discrimination from its customers.

**Los Hermanos Cartagena (1984)** – The film portrays the 1952 revolution and the 1980 coup in Bolivia through the lives of two brothers, Juan Jose and Martin. Juan Jose, the legitimate son of Luis, is transformed, by his experiences as a youth in the 1950s, to become a boss of one of the groups of paramilitaries during the 1980 coup. Martin, the illegitimate son of Luis and an indigenous peasant, becomes a trade union leader during that period. The film details the process by which the brothers’ divergent childhood situation drives them towards the definitive clash.

**El día que murió el silencio (1998)** – Handsome entrepreneur Abelardo Rios Clarios arrives in the sleepy little town of Villaserena, rigs up speakers throughout the village, and begins broadcasting “Radio Nobleza”. For a small sum of money, they can now buy the opportunity to express publicly what they couldn’t say before. Villaserena’s closets are quickly emptied of their skeletons, old quarrels are revived and secrets are no longer. Abelardo soon discovers the beautiful Celeste, a beautiful young woman virtually imprisoned behind the walls of her father’s house, and romance ensues.

**Zona Sur (2009)** – In La Paz – as opposed to many other cities – the rich live below, which is the Southern District. Life goes on without major mishaps in a large house surrounded by a beautiful garden. It is a wonderful world, a great bubble of comfort, where different personal spheres coexist: the mother, along with her three children and the Aymara inhabitants of the house. The drama surfaces slowly, without narrative ploys, observing day-to-day activities until internal and external forces make the bubble burst. The film relates the story of the final days of an upper-class family, at a time when the country is undergoing social changes.

**American Visa (2005)** – An award-winning movie about a Bolivian professor’s unsuccessful quest for an American visa and the chain of events this provokes. After being denied an American visa, a Bolivian professor becomes involved in a web of criminal activities, holds-up the American consulate and falls for a beautiful prostitute from the Bolivian lowlands.

**También La Lluvia (2011)** – This film, shot on the streets of Cochabamba throughout 2009-2010 and starring Gael Garcia Bernal, helps to provide context to Cochabamba’s Water War in 2000, in which a local citizen’s movement served to demand the expulsion of a foreign and US owned water company, Betchel Enterprises. Although the film is not historically accurate, it was filmed on the streets of Cochabamba, and does provide a picture of the atmosphere during this historic moment in the city’s recent history.

**En Busca del Paraíso (2010)** – This film tracks the lives of Feliciana, an illegal immigrant working in Spain, and her brother who moves to Santa Cruz with the plan to reunite with her sister in Spain. After many mishaps and setbacks, while navigating through the shift from the pueblo to the big city, he falls in love. Meanwhile in Spain, Felicida shares a house with a group of Bolivian girls, each searching for success in their lives in a foreign country.

**La nación clandestina (1989)** – In this Bolivian story, a man remembers his life while on a journey which will help him expiate his sins and which will result in his death. The focus is on a man who has betrayed everyone he knows. He is planning to perform an ancient ritual dance, which will end with his life being taken. He journeys from where he was living back to the village where most of the people he wronged still live. As he journeys, carrying his dance costume, his story is told in flashbacks. Once he gets there, he gets involved in the affairs of the villagers once more.
My Mother’s Bolivian Kitchen: Recipes and Recollections
Jose Sanchez-H

Written by a Cochabambino living in the United States, this cookbook-cum-memoir will help to prepare you for the culinary delights you can expect to find on your plate at your host family’s home. Recipes are provided in English and in Spanish, and can be a fun and helpful way to jump start conversation and interaction with your host family.

The Price of Fire:
Resource Wars & Social Movements in Bolivia
Benjamin Dangl

This book gives a blow-by-blow account of recent social movements and their battles to fight neo-liberal economic policies; it analyzes what has caused these battles, while also contextualizing them regionally and historically. From the first moments of Spanish colonization to today’s headlines, it traces the story of a small nation whose natural resources helped fund the rise of capitalism and that has spent the subsequent four centuries suffering the consequences.

Impasse in Bolivia: Neoliberal Hegemony and Popular Resistance
Benjamin Farthing and Linda C. Kohl

This book explores the tensions between markets, democracy, neo-liberalism, state restructuring and citizenship. In this regard, the balance of citizen rights has been shifted away from providing citizens with social rights to privileging the property rights of private, mostly transnational, firms. Impasse Bolivia throws light on the reasons and processes behind the rising opposition in country after country in Latin America to the currently fashionable, internationally prescribed economic development strategy of neo-liberalism.

Dignity and Defiance: Stories from Bolivia’s Challenge to Globalization
Edited by Jim Shultz and Melissa Crane Draper

Published in 2009 by the Democracy Center in Cochabamba, this book provides a good summary of recent social and political movements in Bolivia.

Marching Powder
Rusty Young

A fictional account of the author’s experience in a Bolivian Prison. This book gives the reader a better idea of the penitentiary and judicial system in Bolivia, one very different from that of the United States.

Coca, Cocaine, and the Bolivian Reality,
Madeline Barbara Leons (Editor), Harry Sanabria (Editor)

This series of essays explores coca trade, and its effect on agriculture and society. Coca takes its place within the historical context of a country that has relied on products for export for economic survival, and the exploitation that has accompanied this economic status.

Bolivia: The Evolution of a Multi-Ethnic Society
Herbert Klein

This detailed history of Bolivia spans the centuries from conquest and colonization to the modern day. This historical resource seeks to shed light on the economic, social, political, and cultural evolution of Bolivia, and is key to understanding current events such as the illegal economy that sparked the U.S.’s coca eradication program, and other issues of modern significance.

Fire from the Andes: Short Fiction, by Women from Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru
Edited by Susan E. Benner, Kathy S. Leonard

This anthology provides an opportunity for English-speaking audiences to read previously untranslated fiction by women from Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru. Much of this work is inspired by an awareness of social injustice — particularly for women, indigenous groups, and other marginalized members of society and by a desire to transcend that injustice through personal revelation. Most of the stories focus on women’s inner lives and their struggles to make sense of experience.

Llamas, Weavings, and Organic Chocolate: Multicultural Grassroots Development in the Andes and the Amazon of Bolivia
Kevin Healy

An excellent introduction to the world of grassroots development projects in Bolivia. Each chapter describes a different development project in various fields and various parts of Bolivia.

The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara
Ernesto Che Guevara, Mary-Alice Waters (editor), Michael Taber (translator)

This book holds the journal entries of the beloved leftist guerilla Che Guevara. When killed in Bolivia, his journal was found and entries were later compiled into this edition.
Andean Information Network
www.ain-bolivia.org
The Andean Information Network is an NGO that currently focuses on examining the effects of the U.S. and international War on Drugs. AIN’s overarching goals are to change the U.S. anti-drug policy in the Andean region by seeking to replace them with policies that address the underlying economic, social, political, and cultural needs of the region. Their website offers articles that do in-depth analyses of current Bolivian social and political issues.

Los Tiempos
www.lostiempos.com
Local Cochabamba online newspaper

Opinion
www.opinion.com.bo
National Bolivian newspaper

bolpress
www.bolpress.com
Bolivian current events and news analysis

Upside Down World
www.upsidedownworld.com
An English written alternative news and a more leftist resource that offers articles on Latin American current events and News Analysis

The Democracy Center
www.democracyctr.org
The Democracy Center is an NGO who’s mission is “to work globally to advance human rights through a unique combination of investigation and reporting, training citizens in the art of public advocacy, and organizing international citizen campaigns.” The Democracy Center has an office in Cochabamba and their director, Jim Shultz, offers a blog that intelligently critiques the current ongoing events in Cochabamba, as well as in Bolivia.