MEXICO
National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)
Fall and Year

2012-2013 Program Guide
The University of California, in accordance with applicable Federal and State law and University policy, does not discriminate on the basis of race, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, pregnancy,* disability, age, medical condition (cancer-related), ancestry, marital status, citizenship, sexual orientation, or status as a Vietnam-era veteran or special disabled veteran. The University also prohibits sexual harassment. This nondiscrimination policy covers admission, access, and treatment in University programs and activities. Inquiries regarding the University’s student-related nondiscrimination policies may be directed to the campus Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action office.

*Pregnancy includes pregnancy, childbirth, and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth.
YOUR UCEAP NETWORK

Local UCEAP Support

Campus EAP Office
The Campus EAP Office coordinates recruitment, student selection, orientations, and academic advising; and serves as your primary contact during the application process.

UCEAP Systemwide Office
The UCEAP Systemwide Office establishes and operates programs and coordinates UCEAP administration for all UC campuses from its headquarters in Goleta, California. You will work closely with the following Systemwide Office staff:

- **Program Advisors** provide academic and operational program information to you and your campus as well as administrative support for all aspects of your participation.
- **Operations Specialists** manage the logistics of the program. They coordinate document requirements, visa application instructions, health and safety precautions, acceptance and placement by host institutions, arrival and on-site orientation, and housing arrangements.
- **Academic Specialists** advise on academic policies, review courses taken abroad for UC credit, and document your registration, grades, petitions and academic records.
- **Student Finance Accountants** assist primarily with UCEAP statements, program fee collection, and financial aid disbursements (in conjunction with your campus Financial Aid Office).

Contact Information

- **Program Advisor**
  - Monica Reynolds
  - Phone: (805) 893-4138; E-mail: mreynolds@eap.ucop.edu

- **Operations Specialist**
  - Kristen Galbreath
  - Phone: (805) 893-4138; E-mail: kgalbreath@eap.ucop.edu

- **Academic Specialist**
  - Monica Rocha
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- **Student Finance Accountant**
  - Antonette Escarsega
  - Phone: (805) 893-4023; E-mail: studentfinance@eap.ucop.edu

- **UCEAP Systemwide Office**
  - 6950 Hollister Avenue, Suite 200
  - Goleta, CA 93117-5823
  - Phone: (805) 893-4762; Fax: (805) 893-2583
UCEAP Online

Bookmark your Participants program page. This resource lists requirements and policies you need to know before you go abroad, including your Predeparture Checklist, UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad, Program Calendar, UCEAP Student Budgets, and payment instructions.

Connect with us! Join our Facebook network via the UCEAP Mexico page.

Study Center Abroad

UCEAP options with the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and the Field Research Program (FRP) are administered from Mexico City by Veronica Tellez, Program Coordinator and a UC faculty member, and Casey Walsh (UCSB, Department of Anthropology) who serves as Visiting Professor. The Program Coordinator and Visiting Professor will provide you with advice on academic matters, housing, safety, and cultural activities.

Mexico City Study Center

Universidad de California  
Casa de California  
Calle Carmen # 1  
Col. Chimalistac  
C.P. 01070 México, D.F.  
Del. Alvaro Obregon

Phone (calling from Mexico): (55) 5662-9511  
Fax: (011-52-55) 5622-9510

Study Center Staff

Professor Casey Walsh, Visiting Professor  
E-mail: walsh@anth.ucsb.edu

Verónica Tellez, Program Coordinator  
Cell: 04455-1684-3703  
E-mail: vte@servidor.unam.mx

Phone Number Codes

U.S. international code .......... 011  
(dial this to call from the U.S.)  
Mexico country code .......... 52  
Mexico City code .......... 55

Approximate Time Difference

Add two hours
UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

"The students here are smart! It's fantastic. They're politically and socially aware and it pays to come to class up-to-date on all the current events. They're very interested in you, your opinion, and your country, so be informed!

Overall, UCEAP was a great experience. I gained a mastery of Spanish and another perspective of the global level of economy, trade, and history. I also gained vital field experience for future reference.

Most important to me was learning the language. I gained most in this area by spending time with people who spoke no English and by reading a lot of Spanish. Don't be scared to do the program if you think your Spanish will be worse than everyone else's. Everyone was pretty bad when we first started, but learned quickly."

ACADEMIC INFORMATION

The National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) is the number one-ranked university in Latin America and is one of the world’s largest public universities, with over 300,000 students enrolled and 35,000 professors and researchers on staff. An internationally recognized university, recently awarded the Prince of Asturias Award in Communication and Humanities, UNAM offers the opportunity to make progress toward your major in a wide variety of fields in a world-class academic environment.

Intensive Language Program

This program begins with a four-week intensive language program (ILP), which consists of a Spanish language course worth 4 upper-division UC quarter units and a Contemporary Mexico course worth 4.5 units. Both courses are designed specifically to help you prepare for UNAM. In the language course, provisions are made for different language levels.

The Contemporary Mexico course provides the academic background that will be vital to your success once you enter regular university classes. The course instructor is familiar with UC students and presents contemporary Mexican culture, society, and diversity in addition to a historical perspective. Excursions in and around Mexico City complement lectures. Assignments include the sorts of reading, discussion, and composition that are expected in UNAM classes.

Academic Culture

The UNAM campus is a hub of Mexican educational and cultural activity. The central campus (ciudad universitaria) is expansive yet accessible and is served by good public transportation, including a free university bus service that traverses the campus. The university hosts countless concerts, lectures, and sporting events. The campus is also home to the National Library, which students and scholars may access.

As in many other countries, students in Mexico choose their major field of study before entering the university and primarily take courses solely related to their major. Therefore, Mexican students at UNAM are often more advanced in their field than UC students when they arrive. The university curriculum is well established for each major in any given facultad, with limited flexibility or course choice for Mexican students. You should understand that course content is based on this cumulative knowledge. Given that each course builds on the previous courses, coursework may be much more theoretically advanced than it is at UC. You may need to do extra background reading to bring yourself to the level of your Mexican counterparts.

Mexican students, particularly in the social sciences and humanities, tend to assume their social responsibilities by being knowledgeable about and vocal in their concern for issues and problems facing society. At times, UNAM can seem highly politicized. UCEAP participants generally have found their Mexican classmates to be stimulating and accessible, and although often critical of the U.S., they are usually interested in and open to various viewpoints, especially well-argued, thoughtful opinions. It is important that you demonstrate a similar respect for alternative viewpoints.
Class Format & Grading

Although you are free to apply to and take courses from more than one facultad, remember that you will be circulating among students who are already familiar with the reputations and expectations of their professors. Many teaching styles exist in such an enormous university, and it is essential that you check with the Study Center Director and staff as you make your course choices so they can guide you into academic situations that will work for you. Classes are normally smaller than those at UC, so there is more teacher-student interaction. There are many top-quality professors at UNAM, and you can take advantage of the opportunities presented in a small class. Mexican faculty members are not expected to maintain regular office hours. Thus, most UC students find it easier to meet with professors before or after class.

Generally, professors are more likely to require oral presentations than is usually the case in UC classes. Outside of science courses, objective tests are rarely given, and in many classes professors tend to assign brief written reports on required readings. The workload is much heavier toward the end of the semester since a majority of the final grade is based on a final paper and/or presentation. The amount of required reading can be heavy for certain courses, but overall it is equivalent to UC classes. Most exams involve extensive writing. You would do well to learn how to answer essay questions.

Course Information

The UNAM website offers course listings and many course descriptions that indicate the depth and breadth of this prestigious university. Visit the UNAM Oferta Académica web page for information on how courses are distributed among the facultades (Facultades, Escuelas y Centros). You can also search by area of study (Índice Alfabético). Courses taken by previous UCEAP students are listed in the MyEAP Course Catalog, which also includes detailed descriptions and the number of UC quarter units assigned to these courses.

Although you must indicate the faculty from which you will choose your classes during the initial application process, you can always apply to and take courses from more than one facultad. Students typically take classes in the faculties of Economics, Philosophy and Letters, Political and Social Science, and Psychology. Classes in the faculty of Law as well as the National School of Arts (ENAP), one of the most prestigious art schools in Latin America, are also open to UC students. All courses are taught in Spanish.

For fall semester 2012, you also have the option of taking a course, Agua y Sociedad en México, taught by the Visiting Professor, Dr. Casey Walsh of UCSB. See the tentative syllabus for the course online.
Registration & Requirements
You must register with both UNAM and UC; Study Center staff will assist you in this dual process. In order to ensure that courses and grades are recorded on your UC transcript, you must complete your MyEAP registration by the deadline specified by the Program Director or staff at the UCEAP Systemwide Office. Pay close attention to the way courses are listed on your MyEAP registration; this information is what will appear on your UC transcript.

You will enroll in regular classes with Mexican students at UNAM and be fully immersed in your academic subject and the intellectual culture of the country. UCEAP requires you take a full-time course of study and enroll in a minimum of 18 quarter units each semester; if you are a Berkeley or Merced student, consider keeping your Study List between 19.5 and 22.5 UC quarter units (equivalent to 13 to 15 UC semester units). In most cases, this means four or five regular university courses, depending on the number of units in each. Courses in the social sciences often have more class hours and therefore more units than many classes in the humanities.

Graduate Coursework
If you are a graduate student, you are welcome and encouraged to participate in the immersion program. You must submit all the same application materials as undergraduates. If you want to enroll in graduate-level courses, you must submit a copy of your transcript or other documentation describing where and when you finished the undergraduate degree. You must also translate this document into Spanish.

Independent Study & Internships
UNAM is an important center for all varieties of scholarly research and offers many courses that could lead to additional research opportunities. Independent study is possible in most disciplines. Consult with the Study Center Director early in the program to determine opportunities in your selected field of study. Internships are possible, but more difficult to arrange. If you are determined to have an internship, you may need to be flexible.

Grades
UNAM professors may maintain your academic records, but the grades you receive from UNAM professors are not final UC grades. Grading scales used or published by UNAM are not automatically applied in awarding UCEAP grades.

Be aware that grades for UNAM may be delayed by the host university and are often posted later than grades at a UC campus.

Fall grades are usually available by mid-February or early March. Spring grades are usually available in mid- to late-August.

You will receive an automatic e-mail notification when your grades are transmitted to the UC Registrar, at which time you will be able to view your grades through MyEAP. You will need to wait a while longer after this notification for grades to be posted to your official UC transcript.
**Extending UCEAP Participation**

**Planning for Extension**

At UNAM, you can extend UCEAP participation from the fall program to the full year in Mexico.

**Process**

- Before you depart for Mexico, indicate your intent to extend your studies on a completed Departmental and College Preliminary Approval to Extend (DPA) form.
- Submit the DPA form with your UCEAP application. It is often possible to submit a late DPA during the predeparture phase, so check directly with the Operations Specialist.
- Once abroad, meet with the Study Center Director and submit a Request for Final Approval to Extend (RFA) form. The deadline to submit an RFA is November 1.
- Requests for extensions are considered when there is space at the host university and the request is supported by the Study Center Director, UCEAP, your UC campus department head, and your UC dean or provost.
- Once your extension has been approved, UCEAP will notify your UC campus registrar, Financial Aid Office, and Campus EAP Office. For information about the steps you need to take in regards to finances, see the Extension of Participation chapter of the UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad.

If you are admitted for a full year program, you will be expected to complete the academic year in Mexico. Any request to shorten the stay will be treated as a withdrawal from the program and UC, with possible financial penalties.

**Consecutive Programs: Continuing on UCEAP**

In addition to the extension option, it is occasionally possible to participate in two different UCEAP programs consecutively. For example, you might choose to attend a fall semester option at UNAM and then join the UCEAP Chile program in January.

If you would like to participate in two programs:

- Decide which programs you would like to attend and submit an application for each by the campus deadline before you leave the U.S.
- Go through the regular UCEAP selection process for each program. You must meet all selection criteria for both programs and your UC campus must select you to participate. The Campus EAP Office may have additional requirements.
- Before paying international airfare, contact the Operations Specialist to check in about visa requirements and any other logistics.
- Designate a trusted friend or relative who will be able to retrieve documents from the campus office and mail them to you abroad.

As with most rewarding experiences, participating in back-to-back programs or extending to year programs requires an exceptional level of organization and maturity. You must be able to plan in advance and prepare for the second or extended program while completing the first.
CULTURAL AWARENESS

Educate Yourself

Get acquainted with your new host city, country, and culture before you leave California. The Inside México website provides information regarding current events, arts and culture, and other practical information for English speakers traveling or living in Mexico. Travel guides and travel-related websites such as Lonely Planet are also helpful resources.

As you prepare to study at UNAM, think about the subject areas most interesting to you, and select a few texts to read. Any amount of preparation you do now will help you once you are in Mexico.

Keep up with current events by reading articles in newspapers, magazines, and journals. You will also need to understand the local culture and history. These sources will help you prepare before departure.

Recommended News Sources

- La Opinión
- La Jornada
- Excelsior

UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

“Read as much as possible about Mexican culture and society before you go. The more prepared you are, the more you'll get out of the program.

See if your campus offers a course (or non-credit meetings) on preparation for a cross-cultural experience. This will greatly help.

Come with an open mind. Look at the things that are shocking or unnerving through the eyes of the culture and accept things as they are. Appreciate, learn, observe, shape, but don't plan on changing anything other than yourself.

Leave people with a good impression of Americans. Quite sadly, tourists often do not.

Keep in mind that the country is very conservative, especially outside the capital.”
UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

“Mexican men tend to be generous with American women—but don’t think that when a guy buys you all those drinks, that all he wants is one night of fun dancing! They stick like flies and don’t understand subtle hints.

Women in clubs need to learn to say “no” firmly because guys in clubs have preconceived ideas about women from the U.S. that aren’t good.

The best way to prepare was to read Spanish books aloud, taking care to pronounce everything correctly. This way my tongue got used to the phonetics and I didn’t have the awful thick American accent that other students had.

Keep a journal in Spanish about your ideas, study abroad experiences, goals, concerns, etc. Continue writing in the journal while you’re in Mexico and read it over from time to time. It’s encouraging to see how well your Spanish improves.

"Recommended Books"

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Publisher/Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agustín, José</td>
<td>La Tragicomédia Mexicana</td>
<td>Planeta, 1998</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benítez, Fernando</td>
<td>Los Índios de México</td>
<td>Biblioteca Era, 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>Esquivel, Laura</td>
<td>Como Água para Chocolate</td>
<td>Vintage, 2001</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>by Marina G. Castañeda</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mastretta, Angeles</td>
<td>Arráncame La Vida (fiction)</td>
<td>Vintage, 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacheco, José Emilio</td>
<td>Las Batallas en el Desierto (fiction)</td>
<td>DF: Ediciones Era, 2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorge Castañeda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Poniatowska, Elena</td>
<td>Todo México, México: Editorial Diana</td>
<td>1990</td>
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<td>ed.</td>
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<td>Orenzo Meyer</td>
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<tr>
<td>trans. by Marjory Urquidi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zapata, Luis</td>
<td>El Vampiro de la Colonia Roma (fiction), Debolsillo, 2004</td>
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UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

Most important to me was learning the language. I gained most in this area by spending time with people who spoke no English and by reading a lot of Spanish. The best way to prepare was to read Spanish books aloud, taking care to pronounce everything correctly. This way my tongue got used to the phonetics and I didn’t have the awful thick American accent that other students had.

Keep a journal in Spanish about your ideas, study abroad experiences, goals, concerns, etc. Continue writing in the journal while you’re in Mexico and read it over from time to time. It’s encouraging to see how much your Spanish improves.

Improve Your Language Skills

The more Spanish you know before leaving for Mexico, the more productive your time abroad will be. Better language preparation increases your ability to be competitive in host university courses and to properly conduct independent research. Prior to departure, spend one hour a day working to improve your Spanish. The following may be helpful:

- Read aloud (anything in Spanish) for 20 minutes at a time. Strive for correct pronunciation; read progressively faster, maintaining correct pronunciation.
- Seek out native speakers for regular conversation. The teacher of almost any ESL class can arrange conversation exchanges in English/Spanish.
- Read Spanish language newspapers like La Jornada and La Opinión often.
- Read at least one book in Spanish in your major or a related field.
- Read magazines, cover to cover, using an all-Spanish dictionary. This may be difficult at first and may require a certain amount of discipline, but it will help your overall comprehension and increase your active vocabulary.
- Read at least two difficult books, one fiction, and one nonfiction. Give your Spanish comprehension a workout.
- Watch Spanish language movies and television programs. If you have access to it, use the “second-language” option on your television or DVD player so you can watch popular movies in Spanish with English subtitles.
- Listen to Spanish language music and seek out Spanish-speaking people. Even if you do not understand all that is being said, you will hear the rhythm of the language.
- Download Spanish language podcasts.
- Keep a journal of Spanish phrases, expressions, whole sentences, and structures that you would like to add to your vocabulary.
UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

"Don't take too much stuff. I was a 'better safe than sorry' person. Wrong move! You'll regret it, won't need it, and won't want to lug excess baggage around.

Take clothes you can wash by hand and that travel well. Don't take white clothes; the water you're going to wash your clothes in makes them come out off-white!"

ARRIVAL & ORIENTATION

Packing Tips

- Find out the luggage and weight restrictions imposed by your airline before you pack and select the luggage you will use.
- Clearly identify each item of luggage on the outside and inside with your name, home address, and Study Center address abroad.
- Never leave luggage unattended.
- UCEAP strongly recommends you insure personal property before departure.
- Do not pack too much. You will have to carry your own luggage, so make sure you can handle it. You will be glad that you decided to pack lightly, especially if you plan to travel while abroad. If you have excess luggage, you must find your own storage space. You cannot store luggage with a homestay host, apartment landlord, or the Study Center.

When selecting clothing to pack, keep Mexican cultural norms in mind. Shorts are rare and should be avoided. Avoid extremes in dress, such as miniskirts and halter tops. Women who wear skimpy clothing may attract crude and annoying comments and attention. In general, Mexican students dress similarly to UC students. Conservative and casual clothing (e.g., jeans and slacks) is common and acceptable for campus wear. The UCEAP Student Budget does not include funds for the purchase of clothing abroad, and large- or tall-sized clothing and shoes may be difficult to find in Mexico.

Essential

- Comfortable clothing for classes
- Sturdy walking shoes
- Warm clothes, including a sweater and jacket
- Raincoat or poncho
- Umbrella
- Electrical adapter
- Film
- Spanish and Spanish-English dictionaries
- Spanish grammar book
- Sunglasses and sunscreen
- Toiletries
- Towels
- Flashlight
- Extra contact lenses and contact lens solution
- Adhesive bandages
- Antidiarrhea pills
- 12-hour cold capsules
- Preferred pain relief medication
- Enough prescription medication to last the length of your stay (see the Health chapter of this guide for information on taking prescription medication abroad)
UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

“Take Tums, an iPod and charger (I thought I wouldn’t miss it, but I did), alarm clock, umbrella, bath towel, presents for friends (chocolate), a bag for weekend trips, and a concise book on Mexican history.

Make sure you take Pepto-Bismol, Imodium, and Tylenol.

Women: be conscious of how you dress. Nobody wears shorts in Mexico City. However, no matter what you wear, you will get comments from men. Don’t let them offend you; it’s best to ignore them.

Take an extra bag or suitcase to fill with the gifts that you buy.”

Additional information about passports, visas, and other required documents is provided in the UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad and in the UCEAP online Predeparture Checklist.

Optional

• Dressier outfits (for parties, nightclubs, dinner events, etc.)
• Lightweight clothing that is suitable for tropical weather (if planning a trip to Puerto Vallarta, Veracruz, or the Yucatán)
• Bathrobe and slippers
• Beach towel
• Equipment, shoes, and clothing for sports or recreational activities
• Small gifts for hosts and new friends (e.g., CDs; T-shirts; decals or mugs with city, state, or campus logos; Major League Baseball caps; California pistachios, almonds, or chocolates; California postcards; or scenic calendars)
• Pictures of family and friends
• Musical instruments
• Electric appliances (hair dryer, shaver, radio, etc.); if expensive, document with U.S. customs upon departure
• Travel-size sleeping bag
• Battery-operated alarm clock
• Corkscrew and can/bottle opener (pack only in checked luggage)
• Combination lock
• Safety pins
• Laptop

Do Not Pack

• Illegal narcotics or medications that are illegal in Mexico

Travel Documents

Non-U.S. Citizens

If you are not a citizen of the U.S., contact the appropriate Mexican consulate immediately upon your acceptance into UCEAP to determine your specific visa/entry requirements. Depending on your country of citizenship, requirements may differ and the process may take longer than it does for U.S. citizens.

Mexican Citizens & Dual Citizens

If you are a citizen of Mexico, or a dual citizen of Mexico and the U.S., you will not need to apply for a student visa. Make sure that your Mexican documents are updated prior to arriving in Mexico City.

Student Visa for U.S. Citizens

Obtain a passport immediately (if you do not have one already) or ensure that your current passport will be valid for one year past the duration of your stay.

You will need a student visa or tourist card to study in Mexico. You can either obtain a student visa in the U.S. (recommended) or enter Mexico on a tourist card and then switch to a student visa.

• Obtain a student visa prior to departure from the Mexican consulate. You must apply in person with a valid U.S. passport. Details of other required documents are included in the UCEAP Predeparture Checklist and on consulate websites. You should confirm requirements with the Mexican
In order to receive a tourist card, you must have a U.S. passport valid for the entire length of stay in Mexico.

- To receive a tourist card, you must have a U.S. passport valid for the entire length of your stay in Mexico.
- Occasionally, the consulate staff may instruct you to enter Mexico with a tourist card and obtain your visa from within Mexico instead. If this happens, follow their instructions or locate another consulate that will help you. If you are eligible for dual citizenship, do not be surprised if consulate officials urge you to apply for dual citizenship instead of a student visa.
- When you arrive at the airport in Mexico City, make sure that both your visa and your passport are properly stamped.
- You must register your visa with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs office (migración) within 30 days after arrival in Mexico City. The registration will cost approximately U.S. $80-100. The Study Center will provide further details about the registration process, but you will have to register with migración on your own (fill out all necessary registration forms, purchase the required photos, make payment, etc.).

If for some exceptional reason you are unable to obtain your student visa while in the U.S., you can enter Mexico with a tourist card (see information below) and then convert the tourist card to an FM3 Fracción VII after arrival. You must convert the 180-day tourist visa into an FM3 student visa within 30 days of arrival. You will have to pay a Mexican immigration fee of approximately $200 to convert your card after arrival. This fee is not included in UCEAP fees, and this process can be much more complicated than obtaining your visa in the U.S.

**Tourist Card**

Tourist cards (FMTs) are issued at the port of entry (usually at the airport or on the flight to Mexico) or can be obtained in advance at the Mexican consulate nearest your present address.

Tourist cards are granted for 60, 90, or 180 days. Request a 180-day card. Be aware that if your port of entry is other than Mexico City, you may not be able to obtain the full 180-day card.
UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

"Chicanos: don’t expect to be welcomed with open arms by all people. You may find yourself both enchanted and perplexed by the differences in attitude and behavior between Mexican people and yourself. Discovering the many cultural differences that exist and savoring and learning to live comfortably with them is one of the main opportunities for you in Mexico.

Enjoy every second—the food, customs, and cultural festivities."

– Even if on full financial aid, you are responsible for reserving and purchasing your airline ticket. Your Financial Aid Office will not do this for you, and UCEAP does not arrange group flights to Mexico City.

Travel to Mexico City

When traveling, always carry your passport and visa, ticket, prescription medications, and money. Never put valuables in checked luggage. In addition, do not ask others to carry any items abroad for you (laptop, camera, extra bags, etc.) and do not volunteer to do so for others. Airlines will not allow you to take them and customs abroad may charge you a high duty. This is a concern particularly with electronic goods.

You must arrive in Mexico City by the Official UCEAP Start Date. The official date/time and meeting place is provided on the Arrival Instructions Sheet in the UCEAP online Predeparture Checklist—print this and take it with you. The program calendar is also frequently updated on the UCEAP website. You are strongly urged to purchase a changeable airline ticket. Standby tickets are not appropriate. Flights are routinely changed or canceled. Confirm your flight schedule before your departure date.

If you fail to appear on the Official UCEAP Start Date, you may be subject to dismissal from the program (see the Student Agreement in MyEAP). If you arrive early, you are responsible for finding your own lodging until the program starts.

Although late arrivals are generally unacceptable, certain unusual cases can warrant an exception. Late arrivals must obtain advance approval from UCEAP. Contact the Operations Specialist at UCEAP well in advance of the Official UCEAP Start Date.

➢ Update MyEAP with any changes to your address, phone number, and e-mail in order to be kept informed of program changes. Predeparture updates will most likely be sent via e-mail.

Financial Aid Students

Your financial aid package is based partly on the UCEAP student budget for the program. The estimated round-trip airfare is based on the cost of a changeable student fare to Mexico. If your independent travel costs are greater than the airfare estimate in the UCEAP student budget worksheet, notify your financial aid counselors. Neither UCEAP nor the Financial Aid Office can guarantee that the additional cost will be funded by financial aid.

Orientation

You will attend a required orientation administered through the UCEAP Study Center. During orientation, you will participate in lectures and activities designed to help you acclimate to Mexico City and the country as a whole, and become familiar with the Study Center. The Study Center organizes a number of excursions and activities for you. A typical semester may include weekend day trips to such locations as Cacaxtla, Palacio de Bellas Artes, Teotihuacán, Puebla-Tonantzintla, or Xochicalco.

You will meet the Study Center staff on arrival day. During a group dinner that evening, the staff will provide you with a welcome package that includes metro, city, and campus maps; a schedule for the semester; phone cards; and emergency phone numbers. In addition, the Study Center staff will review all practical components of the program, including the program calendar, academics, housing, student services, computer access, money and banking, telephones, mail, public transportation, and health, safety, and emergencies.
Local Transportation

UCEAP Students Say...

Mexico City is a huge city with a dense population, and folks do not have a clear concept of personal space, especially on public transportation.

Study Center staff will provide more information on local transportation during the initial orientation period.

Public Transportation within Mexico City

Public transportation generally is adequate to meet student needs, both within Mexico City and in the country at large. Mexico City has an excellent subway system (metro) with eight or nine lines traversing the city, including one line running to the UNAM campus. It costs about 2 pesos to travel throughout the city on the subway system. The municipal transit system also includes an extensive bus and streetcar service, which connects to the subway. There is also a widespread system of inexpensive colectivos and peseros, which are taxi-vans that run along fixed routes. Fares are low by U.S. standards. Bus and subway service is suspended just after midnight. Students are advised to call sitio taxis for transportation at night.

Taxis

The U.S. embassy in Mexico strongly urges U.S. citizens arriving at the international airport in Mexico City to take only “airport” taxis, which are white with a yellow band, after purchasing a ticket in the airport arrival hall. You should always call for a sitio taxi in Mexico City rather than taking a free-ranging green Volkswagen taxi. Sitio taxis are operated centrally and connected via radio by Servi-Taxis. Tourist taxis are available from larger hotels, but these are expensive.

Cars

Do not take a car to Mexico. Permits to operate cars are difficult to obtain, insurance is expensive, and parking and security are serious problems. Renting automobiles in Mexico is also expensive, and you may do so only if you are over 25 and have an internationally recognized credit card. Again, security is a concern. With all the other means of transportation available, driving in Mexico is not advised.

Buses

Buses are the most common form of intercity transportation and service is excellent throughout Mexico. Most major lines offer a new first-class service (Plus Service) that is comfortable and reliable. ETN is a reliable service provider with low rates for first-class routes. Routes extend to some of the smallest communities in the most remote places, and fares are relatively low. Purchase tickets online at the Ticket Bus website. See the Safety chapter of this guide for further safety precautions related to bus transport.

Planes

Air travel is reliable within Mexico, with modern equipment on most routes. Fares are cheaper than in California, but considerably higher than either bus or train fare.

Trains

Train travel is not recommended. Fares are low, but equipment is out of date and sometimes in poor repair. When traveling by train, allow for delays since schedules are seldom met.
## Return Travel

Most airline tickets are good for one year only. When buying a round-trip ticket, purchase a ticket that allows changes to the return date for a relatively low fee, such as those available from student travel agencies. If you plan to travel and remain abroad for more than 12 months, consider purchasing a one-way ticket.

If you do not make round-trip arrangements, be sure to book a return flight with plenty of lead time once abroad. Study Center staff can refer you to a local travel agency for information on return travel. Flights to the U.S. fill up fast and economy-fare seats are booked early.
FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Understanding Your Finances

Understanding your finances before, during, and after your program is crucial to having a successful time abroad. The following list outlines just a few of the many things you will need to know before departure.

Detailed information on the following topics can be found in the Money Matters chapter of the UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad:

- Contact information for finance questions
- How to estimate the cost of your program
- Budget instructions and information
- How to and who can make payments to UCEAP
- UCEAP student account information
- Banking before and after arrival
- Fees and penalties
- Loan information
- How financial aid works while abroad (how do I get my financial aid from my home campus and how are my fees paid?)
- Various forms (e.g., direct deposit, etc.)

MyEAP Student Account

Your MyEAP Student Account is similar to your UC campus financial account. It will be available as soon as you are selected for your program in MyEAP. You can make payments through this account using e-checks or credit cards (MasterCard, American Express, or Discover). The fees that you owe UCEAP will be applied to your account after your program predeparture withdrawal date, which is listed in MyEAP. For the amount due to UCEAP prior to fees being posted on your account, refer to the UCEAP Student Budget Payment Vouchers. Program fees are subject to change.

UCEAP Student Budget

Carefully review your UCEAP Student Budget.

Your UCEAP Student Budget lists the fees you will pay to UCEAP and an estimate of the personal expenses you will need to plan for. It does not include the cost of recreational travel or personal entertainment. Review your UCEAP Student Budget frequently. The Payment Vouchers are on the second page of the UCEAP Student Budget.

Instructions

- Download and print your UCEAP Student Budget and Payment Vouchers.
- Note the deadlines on the Payment Vouchers.
- Give the UCEAP Student Budget and Payment Vouchers to the person responsible for paying your UCEAP bills. Sign this person up for Third Party Authorization so they can make payments online.

For further information see the Money Matters chapter of the UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad and the Money Matters tab of your Participants Portal. If you will be receiving financial aid, see also the UCEAP Financial Assistance web page.
Handling Money Abroad

- The official currency unit in Mexico is the peso (abbreviated MEX$ or MXN).

Contact Your Bank before Departure

Many banks and credit cards offer online services that will allow you to check account balances and pay bills quickly while abroad. Check with your bank and credit card providers before departure to make any necessary arrangements. Also, find out how to contact your bank and credit card companies from abroad.

Some U.S. banks issuing credit cards or ATM cards do not have agreements with Mexican banks. Inquire with your U.S. bank before departure. Before you use your ATM or credit card in a Mexican ATM, ask the cashier if the bank will accept it. If the bank does not accept that type of card, the ATM will keep the card.

While in Mexico City

Mexico City is a major international center and, as such, costs are high even by U.S. standards. Many past UCEAP participants found that their living costs in Mexico City were greater than expected. Plan on using a combination of methods to handle money in case one does not work (e.g., a local ATM is temporarily out of service). Do not rely solely on one method of accessing money. You cannot open a bank account in Mexico.

Arrive in Mexico with access to a minimum of $700 to cover room, board, and incidental expenses for the first month. Access does not mean carrying $700 in cash with you to Mexico—this is discouraged for security reasons. Having access to this amount of money means having the ability to withdraw funds once you are in Mexico, since you will need to pay your rent in cash within the first few days. You will have to pay rent directly to the landlord in your home or apartment arrangement. Credit cards, travelers checks, and debit cards cannot be used for rent payments. Additional expenses include daily transportation, laundry, books and school supplies, computer usage, and personal items.

Recommendations:

- Have more than one way to access money while abroad.
- Use a money belt.
- Arrive in Mexico City with at least $50 or $100 exchanged into Mexican pesos. You can obtain pesos from a U.S. bank. Some banks require at least two weeks to obtain foreign currency.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash.
- Take at least two international credit cards (in your name) and two ATM cards (if possible). The ATM card must have an international (four-digit) PIN in order to work in Mexico.
- Do not plan to have checks (financial aid, money from family, etc.) sent to Mexico; you will be unable to cash them. Have checks deposited into your U.S. account via Electronic Funds Transfer (when possible) or have them sent to a trusted friend or relative who can deposit the funds into your U.S. bank account.
- Assign your Power of Attorney to someone you absolutely trust.
ATM Cards
Using an ATM card is by far the easiest way to access your money abroad, and the exchange rate is the most favorable. You can withdraw funds directly from your U.S. account from an ATM in Mexico. ATMs are widely available in Mexico (although they do not always function) and you will receive cash in local currency (pesos).

If you do not have one already, obtain an international ATM card from your U.S. bank for use in Mexico. Take two ATM cards with you in case one gets lost or stolen. The ATM card must be international and it must have a four-digit PIN in order to work in Mexico.

Cirrus, Star, or Plus systems can be used in Mexico. There may be a transaction fee involved (inquire with your home bank before departure). ATMs in Mexico frequently require persistence. Having a backup source of funds is strongly advised (e.g., credit card) in case a functioning ATM cannot be located.

Avoid carrying large amounts of cash and withdrawing money from an ATM at night, as robberies near ATMs are common.

Cash
UCEAP participants note that having some cash in U.S. currency is convenient for exchanging smaller amounts, and it comes in handy for tips, airport purchases, and airport transfers. Take caution, however, as cash is not a secure way to transport funds.

Credit Cards
Credit cards are useful for emergencies, medical or travel expenses, and everyday purchases. Most large stores and restaurants in Mexico honor major credit cards. Visa is the most widely accepted credit card followed by MasterCard. American Express is not widely accepted, but can be used to purchase travelers checks abroad. The Discover card is not widely accepted outside the U.S. and is not worth taking to Mexico.

Some U.S. banks that issue Visa, MasterCard, or American Express cards do not have agreements with Mexican banks. Before you use your Visa or MasterCard as a debit card in an ATM, ask the cashier at the bank if the bank will accept it (non-compatible credit cards can get jammed in ATMs).

Take at least two international credit cards (always leave one at home while in Mexico; if one is lost or stolen, you will have an immediate backup). These credit cards must be in your name, not a parent’s.

Before departure, write down contact numbers you can call while abroad to report a lost or stolen credit card and obtain a replacement. If you lose a credit card or need a card mailed to Mexico, it is best if the credit card company mails the card to your family in the U.S. who can then send it via FedEx or DHL to the Study Center. This way you can track the shipment. In addition, you may want to notify your bank and credit card companies that you will be traveling abroad. This will prevent them from questioning unusual activity.

You may obtain a cash advance with your Visa or MasterCard from a bank offering this service, though this can be an expensive way to access cash. Before departure, find out what fees apply for cash advances. Obtain an international PIN for your credit card in case you need a cash advance after hours. Your PIN is not usually required if the transaction is conducted inside the bank, but you must show your passport.
Travelers Checks
Although travelers checks are a safe way to handle money and are easily exchangeable in most banks in Mexico City, UCEAP does not recommend using travelers checks for everyday expenses. They are a good source of backup funds, but for regular purchases it is more convenient to rely on ATM cards and credit cards.

Sending Money
Parents, friends, or relatives can send you money in Mexico in several ways. The most convenient and inexpensive way is to deposit money in your U.S. bank account so you can withdraw the funds via an ATM. Online banking also makes transfers from one account to another very convenient. Another option is to cable money through a service such as Western Union, but this is more expensive. Western Union sends money orders but they can be cashed only in a few places (you cannot cash them at an American Express office). In an emergency, money can be wired bank-to-bank or via American Express. Another alternative is to send travelers checks. Past students recommend sending travelers checks via FedEx.

The most easily accessible American Express offices in Mexico City are:

Av. Patriotismo 635  
Col. Cd. de los Deportes  
Phone: (55) 5598-79-66

Cent. Comerc. Perisur (close to the UNAM campus)  
Perif. sur 4690, Local 231  
Phone: (55) 5606-1073 or 5606-9621
COMMUNICATIONS ABROAD

Postcards should be sent in envelopes. Regular mail can be unreliable. It is best to send dated or important materials to the Study Center via FedEx.

Mail

Regardless of your accommodations, your mail and packages will be received at the Study Center. You will have a mailbox at the Study Center, and the UCEAP staff will forward your mail. (Send all international mail by FedEx only.)

[Your name]
Mexico City Study Center
Universidad de California
Casa de California
Calle Carmen #1
Col. Chimalistac
C.P. 01070 México, D.F.
Del. Alvaro Obregon

Phone: (011-52-55) 5662-9511

Send regular mail within Mexico to:

University of California, México
Aptdo. Postal 70-586
04510 México, DF, MEXICO
(Your name should be written at the bottom of the envelope)

For more information, refer to the following Shipping section.

Shipping

Do not have clothing, food shipments, or toiletries sent to you in Mexico. It is often much less expensive to purchase the items in Mexico than it is to pay mailing and customs fees. Advise relatives and friends against sending packages; they are heavily taxed, take a long time to arrive, and may get lost in the mail. Keep in mind that anything you send abroad must later be brought or sent back home.

If shipping luggage, you must be present when it arrives abroad. The Study Center is not responsible for collecting luggage shipped in advance, and staff will not pick up luggage that must be claimed at a customs office or dock. Do not send luggage to in-transit locations. Packages sent by FedEx, DHL, UPS, etc., should be clearly marked “No Commercial Value—Gift” on the package. If the sender declares a value, you will have to pay customs.

Never send medication or have medication sent to you in Mexico. Customs will not accept it. See the Health chapter in this guide for more information on prescription medication.
Phone Use

Approximate time difference: add 2 hours

Cell Phones
UCEAP recommends that you buy a cell phone in Mexico. Costs vary according to the model, but decent phones range from about 400 to 1,500 pesos. Prepaid phone cards are available at the airport, local markets, and corner stores. Local calls cost about five pesos per minute but incoming calls from within Mexico are free. Incoming calls from the U.S. cost about six pesos per minute. You can usually place long-distance calls on cell phones; however, there are fees involved. Most students use Skype from their apartments to call home.

When used moderately, cell phones can be less expensive than regular phones. It is expensive and complicated to switch a U.S. cell phone over for use in Mexico. UCEAP does not recommend this.

Public Phones
Pay phones in Mexico City are accessible, although calling costs may be higher than if you use a cell phone. Almost all public phones in Mexico City no longer accept coins. To make local or long-distance calls, it is best to buy a phone card once in Mexico City. Tarjetas Ladatel phone cards are sold at lottery ticket booths, newsstands, and small shops at the airport for 30, 50, or 100 pesos. Upon arrival, the Study Center will provide you with a phone card loaded with minutes.

Calling Cards
Many U.S.-based long-distance phone companies provide special services that make it easy to make international calls. Some companies provide a toll-free access number that connects with an operator in the U.S., and others provide the means to charge long-distance calls either to a credit card or to a third party. Investigate the possibilities before departure and shop around for the best services and rates.

Be sure to confirm the card you purchase will work for calls originating outside of the U.S. Many students find that some prepaid phone cards purchased in the U.S. do not work abroad. Long-distance phone cards are sold in Mexico City at lottery ticket booths and newsstands.

Home or Apartment Phone Use
It is important that you discuss the use of the telephone with your landlord immediately upon arrival and before you try to make any calls.

Do not expect to use the phone in your private home or apartment housing arrangement. Some landlords may not have a telephone. Others have phones, but restrict the service so long-distance or international numbers will not work.

Landlords who permit phone use may do so in a restricted way (e.g., only allowing incoming calls, local calls, long-distance calls with a prepaid calling card, or collect calls). If a landlord allows you to receive international calls, be sure to preset a day and time to receive them.
Computer & Internet Access

The Study Center in Mexico City has four computers with Internet access, which are available for exclusive use by UCEAP students. There is also a printer available for academic papers. In addition, the UNAM campus has numerous computers that can be used for a fee.

If you take a laptop, you may access the UNAM wireless network, which is available on campus. In order to use it, you must first register your laptop at the DGSCA building. For more information, visit the RIU UNAM website. Most of the housing arrangements include the cost of wireless network access in the monthly rent.

Many students also utilize Internet cafés (which are common in Mexico City) to access the Internet, check e-mail, and write and print papers. The cost is about 10 to 25 pesos an hour.

Laptops

You are encouraged to take a laptop to Mexico to prepare academic papers, analyze research data, and use the Internet frequently.

If you plan to take a laptop:

- Be certain your laptop is fully insured in case of damage, loss, or theft.
- Carry your proof of purchase with you.
- Do not ship your laptop abroad. The laptop may be held for inspection by customs officials and customs fees are quite costly, even for older laptops.
- Be sure to keep your laptop within reach at all times. Laptops are among the most frequently stolen items from travelers.
- Make sure your computer is equipped for wireless network access.
- Ensure that your laptop is equipped with a built-in voltage transformer that enables it to operate on the voltage used in Mexico (this is a fairly common feature), take adapter plugs, and install the latest antivirus software to minimize hassle.
- You can choose to take your laptop to an Internet café to print papers and download e-mail (then read and compose messages offline).
Housing & Meals

Where Will I Live?

UCEAP-arranged housing options include private homes or apartments located throughout Mexico City. There are no housing facilities on the UNAM campus. The UCEAP Systemwide Office will ask you to complete a housing questionnaire indicating your preference. Every effort will be made to provide you with your first housing choice, but this is not always possible. In general, the accommodations are about a 5–10 minute walk or a 20–25 minute bus ride from campus. Most students take the microbus for 2.50 pesos, and some take the metro for 2 pesos.

If the Study Center arranges your housing, you can expect to be provided with all bed linens and pillows, but not towels (these are considered personal items). You can bring towels and all other personal items from home or purchase them once you are in Mexico.

You can also choose to make your own housing arrangements. However, finding housing in Mexico City for only six months can be difficult. UCEAP recommends that you secure a place to stay before you go abroad. If you make your own arrangements, you must note this in the UCEAP housing questionnaire and include your address abroad. If you plan on living with a relative or friend in Mexico City, make sure you know which part of the city they live in, as commutes from the city center to campus average one hour or more.

How to Prepare

Rent & Payments

All students, including those on financial aid, must make their housing payments in cash directly to the landlord. The costs to rent an apartment or private room are approximately US$300 to $450 per person per month for a single room in an apartment and $300 to $400 for an individual room in a homestay. Costs will vary with regard to room size, furnishings, location, family unit, house rules, cooking privileges, available services, etc. The cost of food and personal items is not included in the rent (unless you live in a homestay and work out some arrangements regarding your meals with the host). Internet is available in all apartments.

IMPORTANT: You should arrive in Mexico with access to at least 7,000 pesos to pay your rent plus housing deposit. Financial aid students should be sure to complete the Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) form early on to ensure access to aid disbursements.

Housing Address & Information

You will not receive apartment or homestay information prior to departure. You will meet your host or receive your apartment assignment once you arrive in Mexico City.

Apartments

Renting an apartment usually means renting a single room in a three- or four-bedroom furnished apartment that is shared with other international students. A landlord administers the apartment and collects monthly rent. In Mexico City, landlords rent only rooms, not the whole apartment (as is common in the U.S.). Landlords usually have strict rules about parties, overnight guests, noise, etc.
You must ask landlords for permission to have any visitors, especially those of the opposite sex.

Landlords can (and often do) enter apartments without notice. Past students have commented about their nosy and meddling landlords. Landlords are strict in terms of cleanliness; you will be expected to clean up after yourself on a daily basis, especially in the common areas.

**Private Home/Homestay**

It is common for university students, both Mexican and American, to live in rooms in the homes of others (casa de familia). For UC students, such living arrangements are known as “homestays.” Although every situation is different, most homestays are not with typical Mexican families, but rather with a host who rents out an extra room to earn additional income. The host may be an elderly couple with grown children and an extra room, a widow with financial need, or perhaps a single parent.

Whatever the case, the homestay will help you with language acquisition, as English usually isn’t spoken in the homes, and provide insight into the Mexican lifestyle. There is possibly no better way for you to be immersed in Mexican culture than to share everyday life with someone from that culture. However, conforming to someone else’s rules, especially if they appear strict, may be a strain if you have lived on your own for a few years, and differing cultural norms may make some rules seem arbitrary.

Prepare yourself for the fact that homes and rooms in Mexico tend to be small with limited storage space, and amenities may not be what you are accustomed to in the U.S. (many rooms are without heaters). Conveniences are defined differently in Mexico than in the U.S.; for example, you may encounter restrictions on the use of hot water and electricity and charges for the use of the telephone. You will also need to be aware of certain expectations and customs the host may have. Ask permission before bringing guests home and inform them when you will miss a meal, arrive home late, or go away for the weekend. Both parties are asked to be flexible, but special responsibility is expected of you as a guest in someone else’s home. Dialogue and consideration are usually the best vehicles for good results.

The Study Center will inform you of any pre-negotiated homestay terms. Your host will also receive a written copy of these terms so that all are equally informed. Communicate any problem or misunderstanding that may arise between you and the host family immediately to the Study Center.

**Important Questions to Ask Your Host**

To avoid any confusion, communicate with your host family about the following when you arrive:

- **Keys:** Will you be issued keys to the house? Does the host expect you to be home at a certain time?
- **Bathroom:** What are your rights and responsibilities concerning the bathroom facilities?
- **Meals:** How many meals per day will you receive? What should you do if you know you will miss a meal? What should you do if you miss a meal unintentionally? Do you have access to the kitchen or to any household food? Discuss your special dietary needs and scheduled meal times. If you are a vegetarian, plan to be flexible.
**UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...**

“The people here like to eat! It’s easy to assimilate into the local culture. Eat a lot and take each day at a slow pace. Be prepared to sit around and talk with the family during meals.

The food was amazing! I'm a vegetarian and I had no trouble whatsoever with Mexican food!”

**Bedroom:** Who is to clean the room? Make the bed? Change the linens?

**Laundry:** Who is responsible for doing the laundry and what laundry will be done? In some situations the host will do all laundry except underwear. Ask where and how they would like you to give them your laundry.

**Guests:** Are you allowed to have guests? Are you allowed to have overnight guests? What about parties and social gatherings at your home?

**Telephone:** Are you allowed to use the phone? How will you pay for any phone bills?

**Meals**

The cost of food is not included in the rent (unless you live in a homestay and work out some arrangements regarding your meals with the host). You are responsible for buying food and preparing your own meals.

Supermarkets in Mexico are clean and orderly. Some markets are small, while others are large like those in the U.S. Food and prices are comparable to those in the U.S.

Always follow safe food preparation procedures as described in international health guides, such as the **CDC Yellow Book**. You are advised against eating prepared foods or fruits from street vendors. Food from street vendors often sits out for long periods of time at extreme temperatures. When eating out, drink only bottled water and beverages (without ice) or tea and coffee. Do not drink tap water unless it has been boiled for 15 to 20 minutes. Bottled water is readily available and your host family will supply you with bottled or filtered drinking water at home.

If you live in a homestay where you have a meal arrangement included, you will be expected to eat your meals with your host family. If you are going to miss a meal, discuss this as soon as possible with your host family. The midday meal (from about 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.) is the main meal of the day in Mexico. After this meal, the family generally has what is referred to as la sobre mesa, which is a time for talking and sharing.

**Vegetarians**

Past vegetarians report that their hosts were extremely accommodating to their needs as long as the family knew their preferences before they arrived. It is more complicated to find suitable food if you are a vegan. Cheese, eggs, cream, etc., are in the majority of foods.

If you are a vegetarian, clearly note this on your UCEAP housing questionnaire. Be specific. You may want to take supplements along, as the Mexican diet is different.
UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

“Be open with people and willing to try new things. Mexico is a wonderful blend of culture and tradition. Don’t be afraid to try, taste, touch, and observe.

It can be easy to hang out with only other Americans. It takes effort to make the initial contacts, but Mexicans are very friendly and generally love that Americans have made the effort to go there.

Take advantage of weekends and holidays to travel. It’s good to get away from the city and see other parts of Mexico. See Mayan ruins and small towns and avoid tourist traps. Take advantage of the rich culture in the city (National Palace, Templo Mayor, Plaza Garibaldi, Palace of Fine Arts, bull fights, etc.).

Rather than studying alone at home, I’d go to the cafés in the center of town with one or two classmates. I didn’t feel as isolated and I made quite a few friends there.”

**Extracurricular Activities**

**Get Involved**

Participating in extracurricular cultural and social activities while abroad is an excellent way to meet people, improve your language skills, and integrate more fully into the Mexican community.

Join sports teams (soccer, football, basketball); dance (salsa, flamenco, etc.), musical, theater, or arts groups; volunteer at local organizations; attend lectures and receptions held in academic and community circles; and get the most out of your time abroad. There are many gyms or private clubs that you can join. Prices vary depending on the club and can range from relatively cheap to expensive.

Mexico City provides a wealth of cultural activity with its many museums, theaters, parks, monuments, and frequent special events. It is also a center for international and national cinematography.

Popular websites listing cultural and current events:
- www.unam.mx: UNAM’s website, browse the Cultura section
- www.avisos.unam.mx: Popular UNAM site
- www.conaculta.gob.mx: Mexico’s National Council for Culture and Arts
- www.mexicocity.com: General information on Mexico City
- www.tiempolibre.com.mx: Weekly magazine listing events and activities in Mexico City

Information about travel, including youth hostels, can be obtained from travel guides and from the websites of some of the more popular guides.

➤ The UCEAP Student Budget does not include funds for recreational travel abroad.
UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

"Take Pepto-Bismol tablets. Take two when you start to feel sick rather than waiting until you’re really sick.
I’d recommend taking all your medical shots (that are not just required but suggested) before leaving."

In addition to the following sections, read the Health and Safety chapters of the UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad.

Access the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website for travel health information.

**HEALTH**

**Local Medical Services**

Medical facilities in Mexico City can handle most medical problems. Upon arrival, the Study Center will provide you with a list of hospitals and clinics, doctors, psychologists, and psychiatric services in the area.

You can visit UNAM’s medical clinic for minor issues. In an emergency, you should go to the nearest hospital or clinic.

Private medical service is administered on a cash or credit card basis, payable when services are rendered. Doctors (in a private office) are usually available in the afternoons by appointment only. They will only accept cash payments. Clinics and hospitals must be paid with a credit card. Even though costs are generally lower than in the U.S., have funds (at least $250 in reserve) to make medical payments, if necessary. Submit a claim for a refund with the UCEAP Insurance Plan.

If you feel sick or have a medical emergency, seek medical attention and contact the Study Center immediately. The Study Center can recommend a clinic to visit, guide you through the UCEAP insurance claim process, and help make arrangements with your professors if extended absence from class is expected.

**Prescription Medication**

- Carry a letter from your attending physician listing your diagnosis, treatment, and prescription medications, including the generic names of the prescribed drugs.
- Transport any medications carried from the U.S. in their original containers and **make sure that they are labeled clearly**.
- **Do not** have medications shipped to Mexico; Mexican customs authorities will not accept them. Plan to take enough prescription medication to last the length of your stay.
- Make an appointment with a physician if you cannot take enough medicine to last throughout the program. Use the letter from your U.S. physician (describing your treatment and indicating the generic name of the medications) so the local physician can consider prescribing the same or similar medication.
- Call Europ Assistance, UCEAP assistance provider, before departure to get information about the availability and legality of a specific prescription medication in Mexico. Europ Assistance contact information: 1+ 866-451-7606 or e-mail ops@europassistance-usa.com
- Take over-the-counter diarrhea medication, such as Pepto-Bismol, etc., to Mexico. It is likely that you will get diarrhea at some point. Take food and water precautions: Do not purchase food—even fruits—from street vendors and drink only bottled water. The host family will supply you with bottled or filtered drinking water.
Psychological Health

While the transition to your studies in Mexico through UCEAP can be an exciting opportunity, some students may be coping with personal, financial, health, and other stressors. The Study Center and UCEAP Systemwide staff are here to support your development and success. We can help you with information about local services, UCEAP insurance coverage, and other considerations to help you restore balance, build strength, gain emotional resiliency, and increase your personal well-being. UCEAP insurance will cover your visits to any licensed physician. There is no copay or deductible. Ask the UCEAP Study Center staff and/or read the Insurance chapter in your UCEAP Guide to Study Abroad.

Living and studying in another country can compound or exacerbate pre-existing and stable conditions. There are many emotional effects of facing a different culture. If you are experiencing serious emotional or substance-abuse issues, it is important to talk to your treating doctor in the U.S. about the program and the location so your doctor can recommend a treatment plan that you can follow while in Mexico.

UNAM offers psychological services in Spanish for a small fee (an appointment is required) and the Study Center staff can help you locate a private mental health facility if needed. Private mental health treatment is available in both Spanish and English. Call international collect the UCEAP assistance provider, Europ Assistance, to get bilingual referrals and arrange for direct payment of counseling services: 1+ 202-828-5896 or e-mail ops@europassistance-usa.com

Insurance

The required UCEAP Insurance Plan is a benefit provided to you by the University of California when you enroll in UCEAP. Details about the plan are available in the UCEAP Insurance Plan brochure. There is no copay or deductible and you can get treated for a medical condition as covered by the plan through any licensed medical practitioner.
UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

To avoid being a victim of a pickpocket, be aware of your surroundings. Always wear a purse that goes over your shoulder and lays on your stomach, holding down the zipper/button. If you're a guy, keep your wallet in the front, not back, pocket, no matter how dorky it looks.

Take a money belt to wear under your clothes. Put copies of important documents and travelers checks in the belt. Be aware. Also, don't wear a backpack; it can be slit open without you knowing it.

It's always better to get a sitio taxi than to catch just any taxi on the street. You'll pay a little more, but they're safer. If a taxi doesn't have any plates, don't get in.

SAFETY

Your Role in Safety Preparedness

UCEAP takes the safety and security of participants very seriously and provides credible and timely advice during predeparture and while in Mexico. However, as in the U.S., you are ultimately responsible for your own personal safety. Before traveling, ensure that you are fully prepared, that you are aware of any risks, and that you have mitigated them. International travel is a great opportunity, and you should know how to optimize the experience for yourself. While UCEAP provides resources aimed at facilitating a safe travel experience, the program cannot ensure that your travels and stay in Mexico will be problem-free or account for all the potential health and safety risks that you might experience.

Mexico City is the largest metropolitan area in the western hemisphere and the second largest in the world by population. You will encounter the challenges associated with dense urban living: increased crime, severe air pollution, and standards of living that are different from those in the U.S. Crime levels in Mexico City are high. When in Mexico City, take personal safety precautions. Planning for your safety now will help you respond to an emergency if the need arises.

Travel Warnings & Registration

You are required to register online through the U.S. Department of State. You will need your passport information to register. The UCEAP Travel Warning prohibits traveling to specific regions in Mexico. Students found in violation of this prohibition will be dismissed.

UCEAP Travel Warning

UCEAP has issued a Travel Warning restricting student travel. Until further notice, students are prohibited from visiting or conducting research in many locations, due to the rise in drug-related violent crime. You must get authorization from a UCEAP official to travel within Mexico.

In addition to the cities mentioned in the UCEAP Travel Warning that students are prohibited from visiting, it is important to note that Ciudad Juárez is one of the most violent cities in the world. Ciudad Juárez is located just across the border from El Paso, Texas.

The driving distance between Mexico City and the U.S.-Mexico border is 1,365 miles.

For your own protection, comply with this heightened state of alert, observe all safety measures implemented by the Study Center, and register all trips with the U.S. Embassy.

The U.S. Embassy in Mexico City posts additional information about local safety and health issues for U.S. citizens on its website. All UCEAP Study Center Directors are members of the U.S. embassy’s Warden’s Network.

Risks

Many students and their families have concerns about safety and security abroad. Study abroad, like most other things in life, does involve risk. When thinking about risks, it is important to keep in mind the ideas of risk.
UCEAP STUDENTS SAY...

“Always ask a taxi driver how much it will cost before you get in. If a taxi driver seems really weird, have him drop you off down the street from your house. Women should not take taxis alone.

Mexican men tend to be generous with American women—but don’t think that when a guy buys you all those drinks, that all he wants is one night of fun dancing! They stick like flies and don’t understand subtle hints.

Women in clubs need to learn to say “no” firmly because guys in clubs have preconceived ideas about women from the U.S. that aren’t good.”

identification, probability (what are the chances of a risk), consequence (what will happen if exposed to the risk), and risk mitigation (how to prevent the risk).

UCEAP:

• cannot assume responsibility for actions or events that are beyond its control or for situations that may arise due to the failure of a participant to disclose pertinent information.

• makes reasonable efforts to promote a safe environment for students and to offer reliable information to UCEAP students and their parents regarding relevant precautions and potential risks.

• is in continual contact with local staff abroad and has 24/7 dedicated staff to monitor local and international conditions and threats that may affect the health and safety of students, staff, and faculty around the world.

Student safety and welfare are priorities in all UCEAP locations and safety issues are a key component of on-site orientation.

You and your family have a role to play in minimizing potential dangers and UCEAP expects you to participate actively in minimizing your risks while abroad. Therefore, in addition to keeping all of the above in mind, it is your responsibility to:

• Read all available materials and talk to your Campus EAP Advisor and UCEAP staff about questions and concerns.

• Participate in the required predeparture orientation.

• Pay attention to on-site orientation safety presentations and ask questions.

• Stay informed about local developments.

• Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily choices and decisions.

• Promptly express any health or safety concerns to Study Center faculty and/or staff.

• Behave responsibly: Accept responsibility for your own decisions and actions. Obey host-country laws. Respect the rights and well-being of others, and encourage others to behave in a similar manner. Follow UCEAP policies for keeping Study Center staff informed of your whereabouts and well-being.

• Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining emergency services.

Safety Precautions

• Avoid putting yourself in high-risk situations.

• Keep valuables in a safe place or choose to leave them in the U.S.

• Avoid carrying a purse or wallet. You will often be in crowded areas that are prime hunting grounds for pickpockets and purse-snatchers. If you must carry a wallet, wrap it in a rubber band - this creates friction, making it harder to pickpocket - or use a chain to attach your wallet to a belt loop. If you must carry a purse, keep it closed, place the strap over one shoulder (not around your neck), keep the purse to your front and keep your hand on it.

• Use a travel security wallet or pouch, instead, for your passport, money, credit cards and other valuables.
• Metro robberies are frequent; be especially careful with valuables when riding the metro or bus; leave them at home, if possible.
• Always be aware of your surroundings and of the people around you throughout the day, and exercise caution. Be alert to dangers and risks and protect personal boundaries.
• Avoid walking alone at all times, especially at night or in unfamiliar areas. Go out in groups. Use the buddy system at all times.
• Avoid carrying large amounts of cash, and avoid exchanging money at Benito Juarez International Airport (Mexico City).
• The U.S. Embassy in Mexico recommends that all intercity bus travel be done during daylight hours and on first-class buses, which use the toll road system. Second- and third-class buses use the “free” highways, which have a higher rate of accidents and robberies (especially at night).
• Within Mexico City, avoid taking night buses if at all possible; they are subject to robberies.
• When taking taxis in Mexico City, follow all recommendations listed in the Taxi Safety in Mexico City section below.
• Do not travel by bike, hitchhike, or go camping. These activities are extremely dangerous in Mexico.
• Do not wear headphones or read while walking or standing on the street.
• If confronted by an assailant, surrender valuables without hesitation to avoid harm.
• At the start of the semester, you will attend a safety orientation on campus. There are emergency phones located throughout the UNAM campus; know how to use them. Security cars patrol the area regularly. In addition, free buses called pumitas are available to transport you across campus.

Road & Transportation Safety
While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States.

Driving styles and road standards and conditions are very different from the United States. Some roads can be poor in some areas of the country. Dangerous curves, reckless driving (ignoring speed limits, lane changes, and/ or not stopping at red lights), poorly marked signs, slow-moving or abandoned vehicles, and other obstacles pose road hazards. All road travel should be limited to daylight hours throughout the country.

Never wear expensive jewelry or use electronic devices while using public transportation.

Sitio taxis in Mexico City are most often metered and registered by the government. Sitio taxis from Benito Juarez International Airport are paid in advance in the terminal (at the sitio stands) and are well regulated. See below for more information.

City buses are somewhat crowded and can pose problems because pickpockets typically work the crowded, busiest routes.

Areas of greatest concern with regard to crime in Mexico City include the following: Colonia del Valle within delegación Benito Juarez, Colonia Centro within delegación Cuauhtemoc, and areas within delegación Iztapalapa. No
neighborhood in Mexico City, upscale or otherwise, is free from violent or petty crime.

Sexual harassment is a significant problem on public transportation in Mexico City. Because of this, women and men are separated into different Metrobus and subway cars during rush hour. Once people are inside the bus/metro car, however, this separation is not strictly enforced. To avoid being victims of sexual harassment, women should not travel alone during rush hour or at night.

Street harassment is an unfortunate reality in Mexico City as it is in many major cities around the world. While verbal harassment disguised as a compliment is not considered by many as sexual, there is a city law specifying that forms of sexual abuse in public places range from leering, comments, suggestive gestures, and touching. Even with this law in place, you may encounter street harassment. Talk to the Study Center staff if you find that you cannot cope with this.

**Pedestrian Safety**

Be careful at all times. Watch carefully when crossing a busy street as drivers do not yield to pedestrians.

**IMPORTANT!**

**Taxi Safety in Mexico City**

The best crime defense for any visitor is to avoid the use of *libre* taxi cabs, which commonly pick up fares on the street after being hailed by customers. *Libre* taxis are poorly regulated and often linked to criminal enterprises. *Sitio*, or radio-dispatched base station taxis, are safer, more reliable, and worth the added expense.

Currently all taxis in Mexico City are issued registration numbers beginning with the letter “A,” so *sitio* and *libre* taxis are virtually indistinguishable. Passengers who use *libre* taxis are often robbed by two or three armed individuals who enter the taxi a few minutes into the trip, having been called or signaled by the driver.

Also, *libre* taxis are often connected to express kidnappings, abductions where the victim is turned around in a matter of hours for a small ransom or shuttled to a series of ATMs and forced to withdraw funds. Because 24-hour withdrawal limits are now the industry standard on ATM cards, express kidnapping victims are typically held for 24 to 48 hours to maximize withdrawal amounts.

- Due to the danger involved in utilizing *libre* taxis and the increased difficulty in determining the difference between the different types of taxis, the best practice is to avoid hailing taxis on the street entirely. Instead, always telephone a radio-dispatched *sitio* taxi rather than hailing a free-ranging green Volkswagen *libre* taxi.
- Ask the sitio dispatcher for the driver’s name and the cab’s license plate number.
- Before entering a cab, verify that the driver matches the photo ID posted on the taxi window and verify the name and license plate.
- Once in a taxi, remain alert, keeping all possessions close by and in sight. Taxi drivers have been known to take things from passengers’ bags if they are left unattended.
Express Kidnapping

Express kidnapping differs from conventional kidnapping in that the criminals do not intend to hold the victim until a large ransom can be paid; rather, they coerce victims into giving up personal identification numbers (PINs) or pass-codes to their debit and credit card accounts in order to extract as much money from the victims’ accounts as they can in a short amount of time. While conventional kidnapping victims can remain hostage for weeks, express kidnappings typically last only hours or days. This type of kidnapping is becoming especially common in major cities of Mexico, Brazil, and Venezuela.

Criminals are less discriminate in targeting victims for express kidnappings than they are for conventional kidnappings. There is no need to target an individual of great personal wealth; anyone with a decent-sized checking or savings account will do. Victims are generally targeted at random, and abductions can occur almost anywhere. Express kidnappings are less complicated than conventional kidnappings, which require safe houses, someone to stand guard, food supplies to last weeks, and a methodical negotiation strategy. Similarly, express kidnappers may be less sophisticated and more prone to panic and mistakes.

Vulnerable Situations for Express Kidnapping:
- Withdrawing cash from a street ATM (as opposed to an ATM in the lobby of a hotel, or inside of a bank).
- Hailing an unofficial or illegitimate taxi from the street.

To Reduce the Likelihood of Becoming A Victim:
- Withdraw cash from ATMs located in a hotel, bank, mall, or otherwise secure location.
- Only withdraw cash during the day and when there are other people in the area.
- Do not withdraw cash after consuming alcohol; inebriation tends to lower one’s ability to accurately assess the security of a situation.
- Only use taxis affiliated with, or arranged by, reputable companies or hotels.
- Travel with a debit card that is linked to an account with limited funds; this is likely to reduce the time a victim is held hostage, since the account will more rapidly reach a zero balance.
- Do not travel with multiple exclusive credit cards. If feasible, leave all such cards at home.
- If confronted, relinquish valuables at once; hesitation could cause the attacker to panic and lash out violently.
Phone Extortion (or Virtual Kidnapping)

Similar to express kidnapping, and also increasingly common, is a crime referred to as “phone extortion.” In these crimes, criminals call a victim and claim to have kidnapped a family member. Then they attempt to secure a quick, and generally small, ransom payment. In a typical scenario, criminals know in advance that a certain family member is away and out of immediate contact, perhaps in a movie theater or on a flight. This way, the person they call cannot quickly verify if the person in question has actually been kidnapped. Callers may also try to obtain information about a person’s relatives or associates in order to extort them as well.

In phone extortion, the caller is likely to press the victim to give over financial data such as bank account numbers, credit card numbers, or the caller may order the individual to wire funds into a stated account. Professional kidnappers, if they have a victim, typically understand that they will have to negotiate with a lawyer, law enforcement official, or professional K&R (kidnap & ransom) specialist. They will typically ask for exorbitant amounts, knowing that they will have to settle for a smaller negotiated amount. Phone extortionists will typically ask for $1,500 to $10,000 dollars.

Handling Phone Extortion

• Designate a secret code ahead of time; a code that you and your family would be the only ones to know. If you get a call, ask to speak to the family member who has been kidnapped—this can establish the reality of the claim. If the caller will not allow this, ask the caller for the code. If this is a real kidnapping case, the criminal will be able to produce the code.

• Immediately call the security hotline to seek advice.

• Do not give financial information to the caller.

• Do not transfer funds to an account given to you by the caller.

Drugs & Alcohol

The use of drugs is strictly forbidden by law. While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country’s laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law.

Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating Mexican laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested, or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking illegal drugs in Mexico are severe, and convicted offenders can expect heavy fines and long jail sentences of up to 25 years.

Never feel pressured to drink. Alcohol impairs judgment and reduces safety. It is recommended that you go out in groups and never walk home alone at night, especially if you are impaired by alcohol.

If you choose to drink alcoholic beverages, do so responsibly. Your judgment and healthy decision-making will be impaired. Criminals are known to target vulnerable individuals whose judgment is impaired by intoxication. Always watch your beverage. Instances of drink spiking have been reported. Do not leave drinks unattended in bars and nightclubs. Drugs can easily be mixed into drinks when unattended. These drugs can disorient you, dramatically impair your judgment, or cause you to lose consciousness. Once you lose sight of your drink, do not continue drinking.
Be aware of how much you are drinking and how much alcohol is poured into your glass, and know the alcohol percentage in your drink (in some countries, drinks have a higher alcohol content and may be served in larger portions). If you are on medication, make sure to find out if it will become ineffective or if it could intensify the effect of alcohol.

Narco-Trafficking
Mexico is well-known for its illegal drug trade and the violence and corruption the industry fosters. Mexico is the primary conduit for the transport of illegal drugs into the United States. Drug-related violence in Mexico City is, for the most part, confined to those involved in the drug trade. Along Mexico’s northern border cities with the U.S., the violence is far greater and has injured and killed innocent bystanders. Mexican security forces and police have not been effective in maintaining security in these cities along the U.S. Mexican border.

Demonstrations
Demonstrations, strikes and protests over elections, labor disputes and government practices are common in Mexico. There are dozens of demonstrations and gatherings daily throughout the country. Many protests and demonstrations are peaceful, but some gatherings, particularly in urban areas, turn violent.

Earthquakes
If you live in the San Francisco Bay Area or Los Angeles, you live in earthquake country. Much of Mexico’s volcanic and seismic activity is caused by the movement of the North American plate against the Cocos and Pacific plates and it is one of the most active trenches in the world. In 1985, Mexico City was hit by one of the most devastating earthquakes in the history of the Americas. The earthquake measured 8.1 on the Richter scale. Authorities have implemented an early warning system, but it is unlikely that such a system could prevent serious loss of life and property.

Earthquakes strike suddenly and without warning. Surviving an earthquake and reducing its impact requires preparation, planning, and practice. Read the informational Emergency Survival Guide prepared by the Los Angeles County, which has valuable information that applies to any natural disaster around the world. You can also access the U.S. CDC Earthquake Preparedness information.
Emergency Contacts

What Is an Emergency?
An emergency is a serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action. The following are considered emergencies:

- Any life/death situation
- A traumatic event requiring immediate assistance
- An arrest
- Civil unrest or natural disaster in the host country

In an Emergency
Contact local emergency services first and then contact the following:

If you are in the U.S.
- During office hours (8 a.m.–5 p.m. Pacific Time): Contact your Operations Specialist at the UCEAP Systemwide Office
- After office hours: Call the 24-hour emergency phone number at (805) 893-4762

If you are abroad and need immediate local emergency assistance:
- Ambulance .......... 065
- Police ............ 066, 060, or 080

If necessary, call the after-hours emergency number of the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City: 01-52-55-5080-2000, then press “0” and ask the switchboard operator to connect you to the duty officer.

American Embassy in Mexico City
Paseo de la Reforma 305
Colonia Cuauhtemoc
06500 Mexico, D.F.
E-mail: acsmxicocity@state.gov
Phone: (01-55 ) 5080-2000
Fax: (01-55 ) 5525-5040
Web: mexico.usembassy.gov/eng

Carry the local emergency contact information at all times. If you have a health or safety emergency and do not have access to local or Study Center emergency contact information, call the UCEAP travel assistance provider, Europ Assistance, available 24/7:

- Call international collect: 1+202-828-5896
- Call within the U.S.: 1+866-451-7606
- E-mail: ops@europassistance-usa.com