

## Where the Money Goes: Study Abroad Finances

To our knowledge the Autonomous University of Social Movements is the only organization in the US, and possibly the world, to combine community organizing work with a study abroad program.

We do this for several reasons. We are trying to implement a theoretical proposition that radical social change can be more effective by building cross-class, cross-border alliances, in this case including the immigrant community in the US, organized social movements in Mexico, and US university students. Each group has something important to offer to social change. Immigrants and Mexican social movements bring their real life experiences while university students bring cultural knowledge and social connections that can translate into effective organizing in the US context. In addition, university students have access to resources (either actual through social links, or potential because of university education) that immigrant communities and Mexican social movements generally can't access. We are committed to building a community center in Albany Park, Chicago, to building social movements in Mexico, and to developing organizers for social change on campuses and in home towns with the help of lessons learned from Mexico's most important social movements. In this respect there is a natural connection between community work and study abroad.

This innovative model provides important resources for Mexican social movements and community organizing with Latino immigrants in Chicago, and frees us from the political constraints of being beholden to foundation funding. In an effort to fully inform our students and partners regarding finances, we offer the following summary:

*The Autonomous University of Social Movements offers the following study abroad programs in Mexico:*

Spring (\$11,300) – 13 week, 16 credit program in Chiapas, Tlaxcala and Mexico City

Spring (\$11,300) – 13 week, 16 credit research program in Chiapas, Tlaxcala or Mexico City

Summer (\$3,400) – 4 week, 5 credit program in Chiapas

Fall (\$11,300) – 13 week, 16 credit program in Chiapas, Tlaxcala and Mexico City

Fall (\$11,300) – 13 week, 16 credit research program in Chiapas, Tlaxcala or Mexico City

*Our partners in Mexico include:*

Centro de Español y Lenguas Mayas Rebelde Autónomo Zapatista in Chiapas

Consejo Nacional Urbano y Campesino in Tlaxcala

Tlanesi Calli housing cooperative in Mexico City



*The money we receive from study abroad tuition is spent as follows:*

Partners and expenses in Mexico	45%
Travel	3%
Professors	15%
Administration	10%
Albany Park Autonomous Center	27%

About a quarter of our study abroad income supports the Albany Park Autonomous Center, an immigrant community center located on the north side of Chicago. The Center offers a free bilingual adult high school and classes in ESL, music and computers. The study abroad program provides more than 80% of the income for operating the Center. About 45% of our study abroad income supports our social movement partners in Mexico.

The cost of our study abroad programs is comparable to or less than the costs of most public universities in the US, and is substantially less than private institutions.

For an interesting overview of how higher education is charging and spending, see Hacker and Dreifus, "Colleges: Where the money goes," Los Angeles Times, September 12, 2010.