



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

STUDY ABROAD OFFICE

FedEx GLOBAL EDUCATION CENTER
CAMPUS BOX 3130
CHAPEL HILL, NC 27599-3130

T 919.962-7002
F 919.962-2262
studyabroad.unc.edu

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Administrative Board of the College of Arts & Sciences
Office of General Education
CB #3510
300 Steele Building
UNC-CH

University of Costa Rica, San José, Costa Rica- Student Exchange Program

Dear Colleagues:

The Department of Romance Studies and the Study Abroad Office submit for your approval a proposal to establish a student exchange program with the University of Costa Rica (UCR), located in San José, Costa Rica, to begin in Fall 2017.

Rationale and Support

UNC-CH's study abroad portfolio in Latin America includes student exchange partnerships with universities in Mexico and South America, but none in Central America. Across the entire portfolio, UNC-CH sends more students to these Latin American universities than our partners send to UNC-CH, thus creating an imbalance in the exchanges and demonstrating the demand and need for expansion in Latin America. Some students also seek an alternative to Spain, one that is "off the beaten path," perhaps geographically closer or more relevant to their lives in the U.S., and also potentially more economical than Europe.

UCR currently has general or specific agreements with several U.S. universities (see list here: <http://www.oaice.ucr.ac.cr/es/convenios/listado-de-convenios.html>) and seeks to enter into a bilateral exchange partnership with UNC-CH, especially given the rapport that we have created with our summer programs and the success of those programs and relationships. UCR is eager to offer its students other opportunities in the U.S. as well and sees UNC-CH as a very attractive option.

The UNC-CH Department of Romance Studies supports the establishment of this new bilateral exchange partnership, yet the program will be open to all students in the College of Arts and

Sciences. UCR offers an extensive course catalog that will be attractive and open to students from many disciplines. This program would benefit students majoring or minoring in Spanish, Latin American Studies, Global Studies, Environmental Studies, and the Physical Sciences, to name a few. UCR also has excellent professional schools, especially in the health and social sciences, some of which would be accessible to UNC-CH students.

Thanks to the successful UNC-CH faculty-led summer programs run there in the past four years, the UNC-CH Study Abroad Office has a very strong relationship with the UCR Office of International Affairs and External Cooperation (OAICE in Spanish), as well as with some of the departments such as the UCR School of Public Health, the Foreign Language Department, and the Biology Department.

The University of Costa Rica

UCR, a public university, is the oldest, largest and most prestigious university in Costa Rica, as well as the top research university in Central America. It has a rich and accomplished history since it was established in 1843. Its vision aims to teach and find ways to benefit the Costa Rican people and the Central American Region through research and critical thinking. Its main guiding principles included academic freedom, respect for cultural and ethnic diversity, respect for people and for freedom of speech, academic excellence and a commitment to the environment.

UCR is a leading international university. It is the top-ranked university in Central America and, this year, UCR was again ranked by the Quacquarelli Symonds Limited Rankings as the #1 university in Costa Rica and #18 in all of Latin America. The University carries out joint activities with faculty members and researchers from many universities, agencies and international cooperation institutions around the world. The OAICE has fully endorsed and agreed to work with UNC-CH in this and other study abroad programs.

The university is divided into several Colleges (*facultades*), each one divided further into the different schools or departments. Please see <https://www.ucr.ac.cr/estudiantes/carreras/> for more detail:

- Arts and Letters
- Social Sciences
- Public Health
- Agricultural Sciences
- Physical Sciences
- Engineering

Student population is about 40,000 and is distributed among its different campuses. The main campus is located in San Pedro de Montes de Oca, in the province of San José and adjacent to the capital city. The main campus is divided into three sectors. The first houses many of the schools (*facultades*), research units and university administration. The second sector is the Research Campus and the third sector is the sports facilities. All sectors of this main campus are serviced by a free university bus, and UCR is accessible by many local bus routes. The campus also has bike lanes.

Corina Dueñas, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East Programs Director in the UNC-CH Study Abroad Office, conducted a site visit to UCR in May 2016. She met with colleagues in the International Office and various academic departments, toured the campus, and surveyed the area surrounding the campus. She was also present for the orientation session for a UNC-CH summer program. While UCR can provide home stays, this program can also continue to work with the Costa Rican Language Academy (CRLA), who provides home stays for the summer program participants. Corina visited CRLA and three host families during this site visit, and was also present during the CRLA orientation for the group of UNC-CH students.

Further information about UCR can be found at www.ucr.ac.cr. Further information about CRLA can be found at <http://www.spanishandmore.com/>.

The Program

The program will be a two-way exchange, with semester and year-long options. Additionally, the agreement with UCR includes a non-exchange option that allows UNC-CH students to enroll for a semester or full academic year paying the UCR study abroad student tuition and fee. Such students would not be counted in the exchange balance but would have the same academic program and access to services as exchange students. This arrangement allows the UNC-CH Study Abroad Office to make the exchange slots available to our 'in-state' students while making non-exchange at UCR available to our 'out-of-state' students for whom UCR tuition is approximately the same as or less than their UNC-CH tuition.

UCR will nominate students to study in UNC-CH's College of Arts and Sciences. UNC-CH will nominate students from the College of Arts and Sciences to take courses in most of UCR's schools, except the Schools of Medicine and Dentistry.

Student Services and Housing

Exchange and non-exchange students have access to student support services, facilities, an on-campus clinic and student life at UCR just as the degree-seeking students do.

Exchange and non-exchange students at UCR will receive support from the Office of International Affairs and External Cooperation, including a comprehensive orientation session at the beginning of each term. UCR also has a student group called "Amigos Ticos" whose members serve as peer mentors to international students.

Students have the opportunity to experience Spanish language and culture through daily interaction with Costa Rican families through home stays, a key component of the program. These homestays are located in the neighborhoods near the UCR campus in San Pedro, within walking distance or a short bus ride (no more than 25 minutes, mostly due to city traffic). The host families will provide breakfast, dinner and laundry services. UCR's OAICE can arrange the home stays, as can CRLA, who arranges the home stays for UNC-CH's faculty-led summer programs and offers 24-hour support. According to Dr. Kelly Hogan, "Student housing was

good. CRLA was amazingly accommodating. They will change homestays for any reason. They will take students to clinic. They will help bail them out if student loses belongings including money and passport. CRLA is and should be recognized for all it does.” CRLA also offers free classes (dance, cooking, yoga) in the afternoons, and good, free wifi. The students enjoy spending time there after classes.

Eligibility

The minimum GPA requirement for admission to this exchange program will be 3.2, although the Director of the OAICE has expressed that they can be flexible on this point. Students must have completed at least one year of university study at the time of application, and must demonstrate at least a high intermediate proficiency in Spanish (approximately five semesters by the time that they arrive at UCR). Students must enroll in a minimum of the equivalent of 12 credit hours and will receive transfer credit for courses taken at UCR. The equivalent of a “C” or above is required for credits to transfer.

San José, Costa Rica

San José, Costa Rica is the nation’s capital and largest city. It is served by an international airport and all forms of public transportation. It is also one of Latin America’s safest cities. As in many cities, there is a wealth of cultural/historic sites, museums and activities. Temperatures are quite pleasant year-round, although there is a rainy season in the summer that can last into early fall.

Since Costa Rica is a relatively small country, students can go on weekend getaways and experience the beauty and biodiversity of the country, including rainforests, beaches and volcanos.

Health and Safety

Students will be enrolled in international accident and health insurance through HTH Worldwide (www.hthstudents.com) for the duration of the program.

There are no immediate health or safety concerns in San José. Modern medical facilities and highly skilled medical practitioners are available in Costa Rica. According to the State Department website’s country description for Costa Rica, the country has a low rate of violent crime. The most common issue tourists, students and volunteers face in Costa Rica, if any, is that of pickpockets around areas frequented by tourists.

The water is safe to drink all over the country and definitely in San José. Still, the most common health incident is stomach-related. If needed, students have access to a private clinic with good service and English-speaking doctors.

Occasionally, volcanic ash reaches the city, but this has not been problematic. The university

cleans off the ash and advises students to cover up and, if needed, stay indoors until it passes.

There are few mosquitos in San Jose because of elevation and temperatures. This can be an issue if they travel on their own to the coast, but students should follow CDC advice for protection against mosquitos.

We are happy to provide any further information that you may need to evaluate this proposal.

Yours sincerely:



Federico Luisetti
Department Chair, Department of Romance Studies



Robert Miles
Associate Dean, Study Abroad and
International Exchanges