Comunidades en Acción
NICARAGUA
The James Heston Summer Experience
Program Overview

Made possible by a generous gift from James Heston, ‘70, the Heston Summer Program -- Communities in Action / Comunidades en Acción -- aims to further Gettysburg College’s vision for active engagement in local and global contexts by providing a summer experience to ten students. Through immersion in Adams County, PA, and Ciudad Sandino, Nicaragua, students will have an extraordinary opportunity to engage in the work of community action.

Five positions are available at each location and participating students will be able to focus on daily community development, sharpening their understanding of the complexity of social issues. By placing students in local and international contexts, the program offers rich opportunities for learning and action.

Both locations aim to provide a wide variety of opportunities for student participants, implementing projects that aim to assert cooperative solutions that reflect local values and make use of appropriate technologies and ideas.

Whether students are working at a summer program for migrant children in Adams County or training youth to become peer health educators in and around Ciudad Sandino, Communities in Action / Comunidades en Acción will provide students with an opportunity to develop strong friendships and learn what it’s like to tackle some of the world’s most challenging problems.

The program will begin with the entire group of ten participants in Gettysburg. With guidance from professionals at the Center for Public Service, participants will become acquainted with each other and introduced to the experiences that lie ahead. Students who travel to Nicaragua will have additional in-country orientation upon arrival in Nicaragua.

Program Sites

- **CIUDAD SANDINO** is one of the poorest cities in Nicaragua, with refugees settling from various natural disasters. The city is characterized by poor infrastructure, high unemployment, and poverty.

- **ADAMS COUNTY** is located in rural south central Pennsylvania. While infrastructure is good, there is a large economic gap resulting in disparity in healthcare, education, and the accessibility of resources / employment.

Program Components

**ORIENTATION IN GETTYSBURG**

June 3 - 8, 2007

The program will begin with the entire group of ten participants in Gettysburg. With guidance from professionals at the Center for Public Service, participants will become acquainted with each other and introduced to the experiences that lie ahead. Students who travel to Nicaragua will have additional in-country orientation upon arrival in Nicaragua.

**HOST ORGANIZATION INTRODUCTION**

Upon completion of the orientation, students will be introduced to their host organizations and staff to gain a full understanding of the resources, people, and projects currently in progress.

**PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT**

Both program sites feature professional staff to guide students through the experience, assisting in the smooth integration of every student into community and ensuring that each student has the tools to be successful in the program.

**MINI-GRANTS**

Once internships are underway and students have worked with their host organizations to develop a work plan and initiate a needs assessment, each student has the opportunity to develop a mini-grant proposal and receive a $200 grant to support project implementation.

**ACCOMMODATIONS**

The five students selected to work in Adams County will live in a communal apartment in the borough of Gettysburg. Those students interning in Ciudad Sandino will live individually with host families. These accommodations help to insure your full immersion into the local community.

**REFLECTION**

Reflecting upon experiences bi-monthly will enable students to share resources, link the theoretical to the practical, and relax. This will help students deepen their understanding of themselves and the process of community development.
Program Details

PROGRAM DATES
Communities in Action / Comunidades en Acción is a ten-week summer commitment that begins and ends in Gettysburg.
- August 4, 2007. Program wraps up in Gettysburg for two or three days, with the program ending on August 4.

The entire group will continue to meet periodically during the fall semester 2007 to continue reflection on the summer and assist each other in translating experiences into continued understanding and action.

BENEFITS AND COMPENSATION
The Heston Summer Program provides an excellent opportunity for students to have a professional summer intern experience accompanied by excellent benefits. Internship credit is possible, should the individual choose to pursue it with a faculty partner.

Adams County. Benefits include all costs of program fees, orientation, accommodations, meals, communal food, trainings, retreat, professional support, mini-grant funding, transportation, and an approximate income of $2,700 for the summer.

Ciudad Sandino. Benefits include all costs of program fees, airfare, ground transportation, orientation, accommodations, homestays, meals, food to cook communally, trainings, retreat, professional support, mini-grant funding, limited health insurance and medical evacuation. Excluded are pre-departure costs of passport/visa, immunizations, personal incidentals throughout the program, and language lessons (available at a nominal cost). A stipend is not provided for the Nicaragua program, since all airfare and Foundation for Sustainable Development program fees are included.

QUALIFICATIONS
- Rising sophomore, junior, or senior at Gettysburg College.
- Good academic and judicial standing with Gettysburg College.
- Demonstrated interest and experience in community development and social justice issues.
- Demonstrated experience living and working in cross-cultural environments.
- Strong skills in independent program development and implementation.
- Ability to work creatively and independently.
- Ability to adapt to unfamiliar situations, living and working with few resources.
- Conversational level of Spanish is needed for Nicaragua program.

APPLICATION DEADLINE
Monday, March 26
Applications are available online at the CPS website. www.gettysburg.edu/cps. Submit your application and letter of reference to Kim Davidson at kdavidso@gettysburg.edu by Monday, March 26.

SIGN UP FOR AN INTERVIEW
Interviews March 28 - 30
Upon submitting your completed application, please stop by the CPS Office in Plank Gym and sign up for an interview.

TENTATIVE OFFER
Monday, April 2
On Monday, April 2, letters with offers to participate will be sent to campus boxes. Invited participants will be asked to confirm their enrollment by April 6. Participants will be asked to sign a contract, and submit health form and a passport copy.

INTERVIEW FOR ORGANIZATION PLACEMENT
April 9 - 13
For those enrolled in the Nicaragua program, Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD) will conduct a telephone interview. For those enrolled in the Adams County program, participants will engage in a discussion with Center for Public Service staff.

These 30-60 minute interviews are an opportunity to find out more about participant goals and needs for the program, clarify questions or concerns, and assess language skills. This information will be used to formally present your application to the host organization that is best aligned with your interests, language level, experience, and time frame.

APPLICATION PROCESS

SIGN UP FOR AN INTERVIEW
Interviews March 28 - 30
Upon submitting your completed application, please stop by the CPS Office in Plank Gym and sign up for an interview.

TENTATIVE OFFER
Monday, April 2
On Monday, April 2, letters with offers to participate will be sent to campus boxes. Invited participants will be asked to confirm their enrollment by April 6. Participants will be asked to sign a contract, and submit health form and a passport copy.

INTERVIEW FOR ORGANIZATION PLACEMENT
April 9 - 13
For those enrolled in the Nicaragua program, Foundation for Sustainable Development (FSD) will conduct a telephone interview. For those enrolled in the Adams County program, participants will engage in a discussion with Center for Public Service staff.

These 30-60 minute interviews are an opportunity to find out more about participant goals and needs for the program, clarify questions or concerns, and assess language skills. This information will be used to formally present your application to the host organization that is best aligned with your interests, language level, experience, and time frame.

HOST ORGANIZATION INFORMATION
Tuesday, May 1
FSD and CPS will send information to participants with regard to finalized host organization placements. This will include additional details about activities with that organization, and, if applicable, information about past intern and other volunteer projects.

VISA AND VACCINATIONS
Tuesday, May 1
Participants are required to have secured their vaccinations and visas for the Nicaragua program. Reliable resources for information about vaccination and visa requirements are available at www.fsdinternational.org or from the CPS office.

HOST FAMILY & ACCOMMODATIONS INFO
Friday, May 25
Participants will receive information about accommodations for the Adams County program and host family information for the Nicaragua program. Further details about orientation, flight information, etc. will also be forwarded to participants by this date.
As both the largest country in Central America and the least populated, Nicaragua has the opportunity to enforce environmental protection and conserve its natural resources. However, a variety of forces are driving deforestation and quickly increasing pollution. There is no government regulations with regard to commercial logging. Currently, nearly 75% of Nicaraguan forests have been transformed into crop and pasture land.

In addition, Nicaragua has no comprehensive waste management systems. There are no forms of municipal support for waste collection and Nicaragua’s most important water sources are becoming increasingly polluted.

Partner organizations in Nicaragua seek to maximize their influence by combining areas of environmental focus with those of youth education, health, and community development. Interns support environmental initiatives within local nongovernmental organizations that span a vast array of subjects. Interns are trained and guided to make a lasting impact on a community.

**Internship Opportunities in Environment**

- Support the development of sustainable agriculture programs, such as the conservation and recovery of soil and water, use of natural insecticides, and crop diversification.
- Assist farmers who are making the transition from pesticide and synthetic fertilizer use to organic, sustainable agriculture.
- Provide farmers with micro-credit opportunities and training on how to apply funds to the growth of their operations.
- Train youth on organizing, sustainable farming practices. Teach environmental education courses that discuss topics such as water use, pollution, and deforestation.
- Support an organization with activities that include: building micro-credit opportunities in agricultural communities, developing community workshops on topics such as natural medicine, preventative health, agricultural management, organize agriculture, citizenship and community participation, and running a pharmacy with herbal medicines, organize, and medicinal plants.

Other opportunities are available as requested.

---

**Internship Opportunities in Community Development**

- Offer workshops for poor, rural farmers on topics such as micro-credit opportunities, natural medicine, preventative health, domestic violence, and organic agriculture.
- Expand upon a project that is currently building a women’s community market.
- Assist a program that recruits youth from local communities to become peer educators on issues such as healthy living and birth control methods. Youth groups work in their own communities and in rural areas.
- Plan and host community education workshops and discussions that address local leadership, vocational skills, and education.
- Support an organization that provides comprehensive resources to communities for sexual and domestic violence, vocational and technical training, HIV/AIDS Awareness, and legal assistance for rights violations.
- Work toward the preservation of indigenous culture by assisting in the building and maintaining of a local museum to house artifacts found from nearby archaeological digs.

Other opportunities are available as requested.

---

In a country where over half of the residents live below the poverty line, many do not have access to health services, education assistance, micro-enterprise loans, and basic needs such as housing, water, and food. Government funding for such service programs is minimal.

The best resources for community development are Nicaraguans themselves and grassroots movements. Through peer training and education, community promoters are instrumental in development programs: serving on boards and processing funds and policies, conducting surveys and providing outreach, organizing work projects such as health education radio programs and installing solar-powered wells for clean water. Promoters empower communities.

Interns will assist in this type of grassroots community development through implementation of workshops, training programs, and projects that benefit all aspects of the community.

**Other opportunities are available as requested.**
The history of human rights in Nicaragua is mostly one of mass graves stemming from the legacy of conquest and years of civil war. Nicaragua’s guerilla war of the 1980s was and continues to be one of the most pressing human rights issues for the country. In addition to the 50,000 lives that were lost, there are still approximately 76,000 landmines that continue to kill and maim. Current human rights abuses stem from the aftermath of the war.

Internship Opportunities in Human Rights

- Support marginalized women through education of basic human rights, assertion of rights, and combating domestic violence.
- Support the rights of children against abuse, abandonment, drug dependence, and child labor through educational programs.
- Educate local women through a series of workshops about the Nicaragua Constitution and the laws that benefit and protect women and their families. Provide legal and/or psychological support for victims of domestic violence who decide to take legal action.
- Support the lobbying of government and legislative authorities about issues and solutions with regard to violence against women.
- Assist a social promotion program that addresses communication techniques for the prevention of domestic violence and supports the healing of families who have gone through such hardships.

Other opportunities are available as requested.

Health care needs in Nicaragua are the result of poverty and a disorganized health care system. Malaria, parasitic diseases, tuberculosis, gender inequity, large numbers of children, and periodic natural disasters all contribute to a portrait of suffering. Infant and maternal mortality rates remain high in disadvantaged groups. Malnutrition is a pressing problem to nearly a quarter of the children living in rural areas. Communicable diseases continue to increase. HIV/AIDS is also rising, especially among the female population. Only about 6% of the population is insured and government health programs are on the decrease.

Internship Opportunities in Health

- Assist with medical attention at a hospital. Work in such areas as pediatrics, emergency services, epidemiology, gynecology, family planning, nutrition, TB care, immunizations, internal medicine, and physical therapy.
- Expand on a project that provides group and individual counseling to middle and high school students with support from teachers and administrators trained in counseling.
- Work in a women’s health clinic whose services provide counseling, pre and postnatal care, pediatric care and information.
- Offer physical therapy, education, medical, and psychological support to physically and mentally challenged adults and children who have been abandoned by their families.
- Work with parents of children with disabilities to help them better understand how to work with their children’s difficulties.
- Provide psychological help through counseling and intervention to those overcoming addiction and domestic violence.

Other opportunities are available as requested.

The history of human rights in Nicaragua is mostly one of mass graves stemming from the legacy of conquest and years of civil war. Nicaragua’s guerilla war of the 1980s was and continues to be one of the most pressing human rights issues for the country. In addition to the 50,000 lives that were lost, there are still approximately 76,000 landmines that continue to kill and maim. Current human rights abuses stem from the aftermath of the war.

Human rights issues exist again indigenous peoples with regard to land rights. There is severe domestic violence against women and children. Sweatshops and child labor remain prevalent as Nicaragua contains the cheapest labor in the western hemisphere.

Interns support projects that local communities determine to be critical, all the while learning about human rights issues from the perspective of those affected. Solutions are applied that legally address rights violations and educate vulnerable populations toward empowerment.
Nicaragua is the poorest country in Latin America and the second poorest in the Western Hemisphere. In the 1980s, the Nicaraguan government privatized its previously public services in an attempt to combat poverty. Unfortunately, this move had little effect on the extremely high rates of inflation and unemployment. Today, over 5.5 million residents are living below the poverty line. As a whole, Nicaraguans lack access to the work and borrowing ability that is needed to build a strong economy.

Many nongovernmental organizations have begun to utilize microfinance as a way to address Nicaragua’s poverty. Currently, nearly 20% of the country’s population is either a direct or indirect user of microfinance services. Intern partner organizations are rooted in client empowerment, allowing impoverished citizens to create and run their own businesses. The work immerses interns into local culture and exposes you to the challenges and current solutions Nicaragua faces in micro-economic development.

**Internship Opportunities in Micro-Enterprise**

- Offer strategic coaching and other consulting services geared toward the successful management of micro-enterprises run by women. Holistically address accompanying personal and health issues that affect these women and their families.
- Assist in the assembly of borrowing groups that support each other’s micro-enterprises and take financial responsibility for each other’s loans.
- Provide business training programs and workshops geared toward the needs of poor, under-educated women.
- Provide logistical support to micro-credit borrowers so that they understand the arrangement and terms of their loans, are able to maximize the use of these funds, and utilize various savings strategies.
- Conduct research that analyzes the successes and failures of a micro-lending program and other related topics.
- Support the distribution of international grants toward effective projects and trainings in marginalized communities.

Other opportunities are available as requested.

Education in Nicaragua has seen a series of politically-charged improvement campaigns that have done little to better the situation of the country’s youth. Current policymakers pride themselves on free and mandatory schooling for both primary and high school students. Unfortunately, the majority of children complete only primary school, and education is far from being free. A poor family of six spends half of their yearly income to send all their children to school. Only basic subjects are taught, as there are not enough funds to provide money for sports equipment, musical instruments, or creative projects.

**Internship Opportunities in Youth & Education**

- Teach and tutor English, reading, science, painting, math, sports, and other subjects for marginalized preschool, primary, middle, and/or high school students.
- Help young boys suffering from extreme poverty and abusive social networks by teaching recreational activities, farming skills, and tutoring in primary subjects.
- Offer special education workshops to preschool and primary school children who are deaf or have developmental disabilities.
- Support the experiential training of adolescents in subjects such as leadership, drug use prevention, personal growth, sexuality, health, environment, non-violence, civic participation, and rights issues.
- Run an existing project that teaches parents of school-age children about the ill-effects of child abuse and the use of force in discipline.
- Contribute to the rehabilitation of at-risk youth. Children are removed from the streets and given counseling, a structured social environment, proper nutrition, and education.

Interns will partner with parents, teachers, and organizations to push for positive changes. Interns tutor, teach, plan lessons, organize extracurricular activities, and initiate creative projects (mural painting or organic farming for examples). By providing these opportunities, students are able to acquire skills that greatly enhance their chance of avoiding poverty.

Other opportunities are available as requested.
Nicaragua has some of the most pressing gender-related problems in Latin America. Women are largely in charge of maintaining the household -- carrying water, collecting fuel wood, childcare, agriculture production, and market work. These duties receive little cultural respect. Domestic violence is rampant, as 2005 reports 55,000 cases of violence against women. Teen pregnancy rates are so high that one in four female adolescents become pregnant. The maternal mortality rate is one of the highest in the hemisphere, mostly because of the lack of prenatal care.

Interns assist in a broad range of education, awareness, and empowerment campaigns to provide services for families affected by domestic and sexual violence. Services include legal aid, counseling, psychological support, health programs, shelters, job training, micro-enterprise workshops and loans. These initiatives aim to offset cultural habits that are decaying Nicaragua’s culture and its people.

Internship Opportunities in Women’s Empowerment

- Support women running in popular elections. Assist political lobbying for women’s social and economic demands.
- Work in a women’s health clinic focused on reproductive health counseling, pre- and postnatal care. Support Pediatrics who are focusing on hydration, vaccinations, and the prevention of malnutrition in children.
- Provide psychological help through counseling and intervention for those overcoming addiction and domestic violence.
- Conduct workshops and awareness that foster equal rights between genders and encourage women to assume positive roles at home and in the community by learning to value themselves and their decisions.
- Expand upon existing project that is building a women’s community market.
- Offer training modules for women and their families on topics such as nutrition, hygiene, diarrhea prevention, and contraception, all while promoting empowerment.

Other opportunities are available as requested.