



**2007-2008 Alternative Break Trips (Domestic & International)
Leader Application/Proposal for Preliminary Approval**

Proposed trip destination: Colombia
Proposed theme: Civil Society: Plight and Power
Estimated budget: \$1905 per person

Name (leader):

AU ID #:

Level of study and major:

Email:

Phone:

Are you in good academic standing? G.P.A.:

Are you in good disciplinary standing?

Name (Co-leader, if applicable:)

AU ID #:

Level of study and major:

Email:

Phone:

Are you in good academic standing? G.P.A.:

Are you in good disciplinary standing?

(Note: The university does not allow Alternative Breaks to take place that conflict with any participant's classes. All participants must be currently enrolled AU students or full time faculty/staff.)

Proposed trip and application due dates:

Alt Break Options	Time frame possible	Proposed trip dates:	Application due by:
Winter Break	12/20/07 – 1/13/08	1/3/08 – 1/13/08	June 1, 2007
Spring Break	3/9/08 – 3/17/08		September 14, 2007
Summer Break	Between May 10 and before start of classes in late August 2008		November 15, 2007

Alternative Break Trips are guided by an Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from Student Activities, the Community Service Center, International Student Services, Kay Spiritual Life Center, CASJC, the Office of the Vice President of Campus Life, students and faculty. This committee screens applications and interviews prospective trip leaders. While you may and should talk about the trip informally, do not proceed to advertise your trip until you have obtained initial approval.

***Please read here about how trips are approved:**

Alternative Break Trip proposals have three components.

Proposals are examined by the Alternative Break Review Committee, (made up of students and staff), and all three components must meet the required criteria in order to be approved as an Alternative Break trip. Sometimes the proposals are given tentative approval and students are requested to change or revise some aspect of the proposal. Students are also given the opportunity to meet with members of the Committee.

I. Essential conditions for Student Coordinators:

- Leadership skills
- Prior participation on an Alternative Break program or comparable travel experience
- Knowledge of destination
- Language ability (if applicable)
- Demonstrated dedication to social justice (please see definition of Alternative Breaks on homepage for discussion of social justice)

II. The trips are reviewed for approval based on the following criteria:

- Social justice theme clearly articulated
- Social justice theme represented in proposed itinerary and activities
- Proposal well-planned and well-thought out
- Trip is feasible
- Trip is safe
- Students/staff have connections to high quality local organizations, individuals or trip service providers

III. Staff/faculty Sponsor (students choose appropriate staff or faculty to accompany trip):

- Experience in country or region
- Expertise on the issues being addressed
- Experience with Alternative Breaks and service-learning/social justice a plus

Trip Coordinator Responsibilities & Benefits:

Organizing an Alternative Break trip is a rewarding, but complicated task that will require you (and your co-coordinator, if applicable) to:

- Research your destination and relevant program providers
- Enumerate a detailed budget for your trip
- Recruit participants (usually a major task)
- Work on a consistent, consulting basis with the coordinating Alternative Break Advisory Committee

- Liaise with our partnering AU departments
- Plan and conduct pre-departure information sessions and group orientation initiatives throughout the semester prior to the trip, at a minimum
- Recruit a faculty/staff sponsor
- Attend Alternative Break trip coordinator and group development trainings
- Help develop fundraising and outreach initiatives for Alternative Break as a whole
- In the three to six months prior to your trip, you should anticipate spending at least 10-20 hours per week organizing your trip.

Organizing a trip is largely a self-motivated venture that will require hours of work throughout the year. As Trip Coordinator, you are encouraged to develop a budget that allows your personal program costs to be fully or partially subsidized by the participants, but please note that you will put in far more time organizing the trip than the subsidy is worth. We have developed a program base of support that will ensure that you are adequately mentored by former Trip Coordinators who are passionate about international experiential and service-learning, and are completely prepared for each step of the trip planning process. In addition, the University will pay for a staff or faculty member's travel expenses, though not the Trip Coordinators. Overall, you will get an unparalleled opportunity to develop a social justice-themed trip for a group of eager students, and facilitate a for-credit experience that they could never get in the classroom.

You are encouraged to explore different options for credit, be it independent study, an on-campus internship, or Community Service Learn Program (CSLP) credit. You can inquire at the CSC about this.

I verify that information provided on this form is accurate and true.

Please sign and date here to indicate that you have read and fully understand these responsibilities and that you understand that by applying to lead an Alternative Break trip, the Community Service Center reserves the right to review an applicant's academic and disciplinary records at American University.

Signature

Date

Signature

Date

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS (Give us as much information as you currently have; we realize that not all details will be known at this time)

YOUR PROFILE: (each co-leader should write an answer in each question)

1. Why do you want to lead an Alternative Break trip?

Trip Leader #1: From an early age, I have been passionate about social justice issues. Domestically, I participated in service work in my local community, in addition to youth group trips to inner-city Philadelphia, Mississippi, and New Orleans. As I became more exposed to the international realm in college, I became extremely passionate about Latin America and human rights advocacy. This led me to fulfill a life-long dream of serving as a volunteer in Peace Corps-Honduras. I worked on the grassroots level on variety of projects, dealing with themes of gender equity, domestic violence, economic empowerment, environmental preservation, citizenship and political participation, land rights, and infrastructure construction. This experience certainly changed my life, introduced me to my global friends and colleagues, and pushed me to learn more about the political and social issues that shape their lives. Most significant, seeing the transformative power of such experiences, whether through short-term or long-term trips, has inspired me not only to commit my own life to awareness, advocacy, and service for social justice goals, but also to encourage others to do the same. I feel that the Alternative Break trip is a tremendous opportunity to spark this flame in others, and I would feel honored to both share and assist in facilitating this milestone in the lives of my fellow students.

Trip Leader #2: Being involved in the AltBreak community has been one of my favorite commitments and proudest achievements at AU. The program has given me the opportunity to experience things I never thought I would when I entered college, such as seeing the Mayan Ruins or being blessed by an Aymaran Shaman. Because of Alternative Break I was able to learn from individuals, governments and organizations fighting for their contrasting views on what would be socially just and progressive for their nation. After experiencing two Alternative Break trips, once as a participant and one as a leader, I can confidently say that it is a truly unique program because it both exposes and inspires them. More than anything, I see leading an Alternative Break trip as a chance to pay it forward and give back to a project that has given me and so many other students some of the most unique, unforgettable and life-changing opportunities of our lives.

2. Organizing an Alternative Break trip is a major time commitment for up to 9 months preceding the trip. How much time per week are you prepared to dedicate to planning this alternative break?

Trip Leader #1: Having been part of a variety of service trips, I am conscious that being an Alternative Break leader requires an intense time commitment. I am fully prepared to dedicate myself to this initiative and do whatever it takes to ensure its success. Fortunately, I have a flexible schedule that consists primarily of evening classes and an accommodating part-time job on the American University campus. I do not have other major extracurricular commitments that would prevent me from devoting full attention to Alternative Break planning during the summer and fall. Moreover, my passion for Latin America in general and Colombia in particular already

encourages me to spend much of my spare time attending lectures, meeting with advocates, and reading books about this issue - time which I am enthusiastic to devote to Alternative Break preparation. Most importantly, I am an individual with adeptness at time management and who never commits to a task without giving it over 100% of my attention and time. Alternative Break planning will be no exception to this rule.

Trip Leader #2: From my past experience leading an Alternative Break trip, I am aware of what a time commitment is required to ensure a smooth and successful experience. I also know that when planning a trip like this, procrastination is not an option, and that there are certain things that have to be done immediately. I am very confident that I have the time in my schedule and also the personal dedication to commit to this trip. I have plenty of time this summer to start the first steps of the trip process. In the fall, most of my classes will be at night, giving me time during working hours to be in touch with the contacts helping us establish the trip. In addition, having night classes will put Trip Leader #1 and I on similar schedules, making frequent leader meetings very convenient. Like Trip Leader #1, I only commit to projects that I can confidently devote my attention to. I am aware of the responsibilities that come with taking on an Alternative Break trip, and I am certain that I have the time and drive necessary to commit.

3. Describe your previous Alternative Break trip experience (or comparable travel experience) and what you learned from it.

Trip Leader #1: As mentioned briefly above, in high school I participated in many “Alternative Break-like” trips. Specifically, I assisted with neighborhood clean-up in Philadelphia, housing reparation in New Orleans, and youth development programs in Mississippi. From these initiatives I learned to feel intense compassion for others, gain awareness of social injustice domestically, and collaborate with a team of individuals toward a common goal. Subsequently, meeting my diverse peers in college encouraged me to broaden my awareness of the international realm through study abroad in France, Spain, and Australia. All of these experiences revealed to me the potpourri of cultures and people that exist in the world, lighting a desire to learn more about my global neighbors. Moreover, despite the intriguing differences across nations, I also realized that human beings share more similarities, cultivating in me a sense of duty to understand the hardships of others. In Australia, in particular, I had the fortunate opportunity to intern at the New South Wales Ombudsman's Office, where I assisted aboriginal persons in processing their complaints against the discriminatory police and criminal justice system. In a country stereotypically seen as “problem-free,” hearing first-hand the struggles faced by an oft-forgotten portion of the population opened my eyes to the necessity to fight against injustice in all contexts.

Most recently, I fulfilled a life-long dream of serving in the Peace Corps, an invaluable journey that truly has defined my future trajectory. While in Peace Corps-Honduras, I learned about both myself and others, finding what “makes me tick” and what it means to completely turn one's self over to a greater cause - that of social justice. I learned to adapt to a variety of different living situations - not having running water or continuous electricity - and work situations - whether it be picking coffee with farmers, attending meetings with government officials, building a structure brick-by-brick, or sharing meals with gender-based violence victims. In these living and work environments, I also saw first-hand the devastating implications of national and local

politics, U.S. foreign policy, and multinational corporations in enabling an inequitable society. I also saw the difficulty yet necessity of producing sustainable results, which requires that the local population is empowered to carry out their own change as opposed to reliance on mere foreign interventionists who leave after a short period. Fortunately, however, I was shown that unity toward a common goal can truly chip away at such injustice. Sharing day-to-day life with my friends in the rural town of Marcala was truly a humbling experience in which I learned much more from the locals than any “technical skills” that I could ever transfer to them. Most significant, as I became more integrated into the community and referred to as a “Marcalina” myself, I felt the satisfaction of deeply connecting with my global colleagues, whereby I eventually came to see their “problems” as my own problems and their “joys” as my personal joys. Being fortunate enough to experience such varied perspectives and make these sincere connections across countries and cultures has taught me that I have a lifelong responsibility to contribute to my global community by making efforts to leave the world a little better than I found it. Nevertheless, I also realize, as mentioned before, that trips of this nature will teach the fellow participants and I much more than we could ever offer to the host-country nationals - but it is thus our responsibility to give back by advocating for change upon our return.

Trip Leader #2: My first Alternative Break was as a participant in the 2006 Spring Break Honduras Trip. While in Honduras, we met with government officials, NGO leaders and community leaders to learn about the issues that plague this struggling nation, which include international free trade policy and effectively rectifying poverty today, as well as combating it in the future. The group witnessed Honduras' struggles firsthand while spending time in Coprome, a Honduran orphanage, as well as at a church in the slums of the capital city working to educate the children of its impoverished neighborhood. From this experience, I learned that Honduras is a nation of contrasts, home to rich natural beauty, but also the ugliest of poverty. As the only nation in Central America that has not experienced internal revolutionary uprising, learning about its history was extremely interesting, and left me with more questions than answers about Honduras and Latin America. In addition, my positive experience in Honduras made me want to help other students to formulate their own questions about the world and spark their desire to answer them. This led me and (Trip Leader #2) to propose a trip to Bolivia for winter break 2006-2007. The trip centered around the Presidency of Evo Morales, the first indigenous leader of the nation and one of the most socially progressive leaders in the nation's history. The trip would mark the one year anniversary of his inauguration, and we went to Bolivia to learn how the nation had changed (or not changed) in that time. During our twelve days in Bolivia, we spent time in an indigenous Aymaran community, met with two former Presidents, human rights advocates, missionaries and numerous NGO leaders. We spent time in an orphanage for physically and sexually abused children, as well as in a medical clinic. On this trip, I learned about the strong and unique culture of protest and social activism in Bolivia and how, even with a society actively participating in moving the country forward, instilling real and permanent change is extremely challenging. It was fascinating to see a nation at the crossroads of change and sense the excitement of the people over the possibility of a different kind of future.

For the past four months, I have been studying abroad in Havana, Cuba, learning about the culture, history and foreign policy of the small island nation. In Cuba, I saw a culture formed around education and historical awareness, something I had never experienced before, and thus

found fascinating and inspiring. I also learned how significantly US foreign policy has affected the nation in a negative way, and witnessed Cuba's unique methods of combating this to ensure the survival of their nation.

While each of these experiences taught me something completely new and different, all three demonstrated to me that there's more than one way to view the world and the ideas of individual, social and state progression. Part of influencing change in the world is understanding the different perspectives on issues such as social justice, recognizing the flaws and strengths in each definition, and using this knowledge to make yourself, your community and your nation move in a positive direction. The perspective I have received from these rare experiences hold extreme value to me, and I hope over time and with new travels that it will grow further. The experiences have only intensified my desire to help others have their own experiences, in hopes of bettering their own lives and, undoubtedly and consequentially, better the lives of others.

Person from that trip (ideally the trip leader) who could serve as a reference:

Trip Leader #1:

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Trip Leader #2:

Name:

Email:

Phone:

4. How did your past Alternative Break (or other travel) experience prepare you to lead the trip you are proposing?

Trip Leader #1: In the travel experiences mentioned above, I participated in a variety of ways: participant, leader, follower, organizer, and facilitator. Occupying all of these roles has given me a well-rounded view of what such service trips require of and mean for all types of participants. In particular, I now understand how important it is for each individual to have a hands-on experience and process it for themselves. Similarly, consistently working in groups has shown me the importance of unity and prepared me to strive for such a goal in all tasks that I encounter. Also, being a Peace Corps volunteer has prepared me to be a self-starter in every situation, able to organize, account for all logistical details, and carry out large projects with little supervision. Moreover, the aforementioned experiences prepared me on a practical note by enabling me to develop proficiency in the Spanish language and exposing me to the nature of travel and safety in Latin America and “developing” countries. It is important to mention that I extended my Peace Corps service for a short time to assist with site development in the country headquarters. In this capacity, I worked with my project manager and the Peace Corps security specialist to assess future sites on the basis of work and housing availability, and most importantly, safety of each site. This experience provided me with a keen sense of the multi-faceted security dimensions that are essential to any sort of travel and/or work - skills that will transfer to travel in Colombia. Finally, my past trips have also prepared me emotionally to lead a trip of this nature, whereby I

am able to empathize with my fellow global peers and also respect them as empowered individuals who can realize change - a view that is often lacking from paternalistic projects.

Trip Leader #2: Both Alternative Break trips that I participated in were such unique educational experiences, furthering my desire to increase my understanding and involvement in Latin America. This desire has not faded upon return to the United States; through coursework and independent research, I have learned about the issues that plague other nations of Latin America. From my experiences in Honduras, Bolivia and Cuba, I know one of the most important, yet hardest to obtain, facets of education is hands-on exposure. Seeing firsthand successful and unsuccessful attempts at economic development, social justice and societal progression are experiences that I see as invaluable. As a leader for this trip, this strong belief that has resulted from my own Alt Break experiences will drive my goal of creating an environment conducive to realization and motivation for all participants.

In addition, as a leader of the 2007 Alt Break Bolivia trip, I was able to experience firsthand the dedication required to ensure a successful trip. In this experience, I learned how important every step of organizing a trip like this is. Everything from group unity and involvement, to organizing pre-departure guest speakers, to remaining updated on security issues in the nation, to securing a place to stay in the country must be considered and addressed. From these tasks, I learned how to be a leader both physically and mentally. While Colombia will certainly be a very different trip to plan than Bolivia, I will go into the experience with a sense of confidence because of my knowledge of the technicalities of an AltBreak trip and my desire to ensure a worthwhile journey for the participants.

5. What other relevant leadership experience should we know about? What are the skills or personal qualities that you will bring to leading this trip?

Trip Leader #1: In addition to the experiences described above, I believe that my work as a Faculty Adviser for the National Young Leaders Conference prepared me for the intense multi-tasking and responsibility required of an Alternative Break leader. As Faculty Adviser for groups of about 20 high schools students during 6-day D.C. conferences, I played countless roles and was “on” at all hours of the day and night. I facilitated discussions, carried out lesson plans, acted as tour guide, held debriefing sessions, and conducted nightly “bed checks.” I believe that experience fulfilling such responsibilities will assist me during the Alternative Break trip, in which I will also need to be “on” at all times. In addition, in Peace Corps-Honduras, I co-spearheaded the *Gender and Development Working Group*, ENLACE, designed to promote awareness of gender equity issues within the Peace Corps volunteer community and encourage volunteers to incorporate this perspective in their projects. Developing this group, which received no funding from the Peace Corps administration, required much perseverance, organization, dedication, patience, and unity - skills that I can employ as an Alternative Break student leader. In addition, with ENLACE, my colleagues and I organized and implemented two three-day gender and development conferences with about 20 host-country nationals and Peace Corps volunteers. This developed my ability to coordinate both the logistical and content components of such an event, which are skills necessary for planning an Alternative Break.

Upon my return to the United States, I have been given the opportunity to practice these skills even more as Academic Coordinator and Teaching Assistant for the *Women & Politics Institute*. I have coordinated one year-long class and six weekend classes, preparing syllabi and schedules, inviting speakers, ordering refreshments, reserving rooms and equipment, communicating with students, and assisting professors. This job has necessitated that I be extremely organized, attentive to details, flexible, and adept at problem-solving; again, qualities that will assist in Alternative Break planning. On a different note, as a volunteer for Spanish-speaking clients at the *D.C. Employment Justice Center*, I continually learn about the personal difficulties of the Latino population residing in D.C., while I also practice my Spanish language. Also, my recent coursework and attendance at extracurricular lectures and events have extensively exposed me to many facets of peace and conflict resolution generally and Colombia's situation specifically. In particular, I have delved deep into the gender-based implications of Colombia's struggle, which cross-cuts all issues and must be seriously addressed in any attempt to build a just society. This study and personal exploration have thus have also prepared me for this trip by providing me with both an understanding of the crisis and a critical eye. Finally, perhaps the most valuable quality that I can bring to leading this trip is my consistent enthusiasm for all initiatives to which I commit. Particularly excited about the prospect of an Alternative Break to Colombia, I am dedicated to remaining an energetic force that is driven to facilitate a positive experience for all the participants.

Trip Leader #2: Aside from my involvement in Alternative Breaks, I am a co-founder and co-editor-in-chief of the undergraduate American University policy journal, *Clocks&Clouds*. My responsibilities for the journal have included creating an ongoing advertising and recruiting campaign for both submissions and editorial board members. In addition, I spent much of last summer working with Dean Weekes of the School of Public Affairs to organize and fundraise a release party for the first issue of *Clocks and Clouds*. Aside from my commitment to *Clocks&Clouds*, I interned at the Peacebuilding and Development Institute from January to October of 2006. At PDI, I participated in many worthwhile projects, including helping to organize for 48 Georgian and Abkhazi students and young professionals to come to D.C. and partake in conflict management training. Organization and time management skills have been crucial in allowing me to participate in the projects I am passionate about while still taking full advantage of my academic opportunities at AU. Creativity has also been so important in helping to develop unique approaches to schoolwork and extracurricular commitments. Above all, I have a real love for learning that continues to motivate me to take on new projects.

TRIP PROPOSAL:

1. What social justice theme will your trip focus on? What community engagement and/or service will the trip include?

Throughout Colombia's decades of internal armed conflict, the civilian population has been caught in the crossfire. While the armed actors - military forces, guerrillas, and paramilitaries - bolster their strength and well-being through foreign aid, drug money, and corruption, civilians involuntarily bear the brunt of the violence. Therefore, this trip will primarily focus on: (1) the devastation experienced by the civilian population; and (2) the creative responses of civil society to such oppression.

The armed conflict directly affects civilians by invading their territories, destroying their land and livelihood, and killing their loved ones. Moreover, civil society leaders who speak out against the injustice have been threatened or disappeared in the past by armed actors. As a result, civilians suffer from a lack of security, minimal political space for dissent, undermining of basic human rights, and failure to meet basic human needs. Nevertheless, civil society persists in fighting against the tyranny. Civilians have united to meet the basic needs of the population, facilitating creative peace and development initiatives and positively impacting the direction of the conflict. Civil society members are, for example, maintaining peace communities, facilitating economic development, protecting natural resources, organizing nonviolent demonstrations, creating human rights groups, pioneering education initiatives, designing anti-delinquency programs, and pushing for fundamental societal and political changes that address the root causes of the conflict.

This trip will intimately explore the aforementioned civilian situation through community engagement structured around the following themes:

- **Politics and Human Rights:** What is the Uribe administration's approach to the conflict? What is being done within the national political system? What is the U.S. stance on Colombia's conflict? How has the War on Drugs and Terrorism helped or hurt the conflict? What is the human rights situation? What have been the approaches of international organizations?
 - *Community Engagement:* Meetings with Colombian parliamentarians, U.S. government officials, and human rights organizations.
- **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs):** Out of a total population of over forty-three million, in the last twenty years more than three million are designated as internally displaced persons (IDPs). As rural territory gains strategic importance for armed actors, the state, and drug traffickers alike, Colombia's IDP community is ever-increasing. What are the effects of displacement on these individuals? Which populations are disproportionately affected? Where do IDPs find refuge? What are their daily lives like? What programs can assist them? What are the possibilities of returning to their land? What is the reaction of government agencies and NGOs?
 - *Community Engagement:* Meeting with organization that works with IDPs and visit to IDP community.
- **Gender and Ethnicity:** How does the conflict similarly and differently affect women, Afro-Colombians, and indigenous persons? What laws and policies protect such identity-based groups? What is indigenous autonomy granted in the 1991 Constitution and is it implemented? What initiatives have such groups created in response to the conflict?
 - *Community Engagement:* Meeting with representatives of organizations advocating for women, Afro-Colombians, and indigenous persons. Visit programs offered to assist such persons.
- **Children and Youth:** How does the conflict similarly and differently affect children and youth? What are their options? How have children themselves opposed violence and destruction? How are children involved in/recruited for the war as armed actors? What

is the situation of youth gangs/delinquency? What programs are assisting in youth development and empowerment?

- *Community Engagement:* Meet with members of the Children's Movement for Peace. Visit center for orphans of war and youth empowerment workshop.
- **Peace Communities, Nonviolent Opposition, and Autonomy:** What is “active neutrality” and what strategies do peace communities employ? How have they fared in the internal armed conflict? How do they police their communities without practicing violence? How do peace communities establish autonomy? How are indigenous peace communities different? What is the human rights situation of such communities?
 - *Community Engagement:* Travel to peace community of indigenous tribe. Meet with local and traditional authorities.
- **Peace Communities and “Life Plans:”** How do peace communities (and in many cases indigenous peace communities) plan for their own autonomous development? Who are the traditional and local authorities and how are the plans created? What has been the success of life plans and the provision of basic services? How do armed actors disrupt such development plans? How do international NGOs and the Colombian government treat such plans?
 - *Community Engagement:* Review life plan of community/region with local leaders. Visit school, health center, water board, etc.
- **Free Trade, Natural Resources, and Coca:** How does the cultivation of coca and exploitation of other natural resources interact with the conflict? What are the effects of the War on Drugs and aerial fumigation? What are the uses of coca? How does Free Trade help or hurt Colombians? How have international development projects and corporations exacerbated the situation (i.e. Coca-Cola, OxyChem)?
 - *Community Engagement:* Visit a coca plantation and/or mining site. Meet with local labor leaders and indigenous protectors of land. Visit land ruined by aerial fumigation.

2. What do you hope students will gain from participating in this trip?

We hope that participants will gain a heightened awareness about Colombia, themselves, and their role in the world. Though they will likely feel frustrated over the plight of Colombians, we hope that participants will be inspired by the unity and promising initiatives of Colombia's civil society. On an informal level, we hope that this inspiration encourages the participants to share with family and friends, increasing awareness. On a broader, more formal level, we hope that they transfer this inspiration into advocacy on the AU campus and the DC metropolitan area. In particular, we envision students connecting with the several organizations in Washington, D.C. that are working on such issues, such the Washington Office on Latin America, Latin American Working Group, U.S. Office on Colombia, and the Colombian Human Rights Committee. While such organizations have thriving research and advocacy projects, it is clear that they do not experience active involvement from young persons such as college students and young professionals. Thus, we hope that this Alternative Break group will collaborate with a coalition of Colombian NGOs to implement student outreach across D.C. and design student-focused

events and projects. Regardless of what the participants choose to do with the experience, we hope that this trip “lights a fuse” for Colombian advocacy that only grows stronger as the participants go about the rest of their lives.

Witness for Peace (WFP), the organization with which we plan to partner (*more info below*), also provides the following information on their website (<http://www.witnessforpeace.org>):

On your delegation, you will gain invaluable experience that will serve you personally, academically, and professionally for years to come. By going on a delegation, you will learn about grassroots organizing, policy advocacy, international peacemaking, conflict mediation and group process, cross-cultural sensitivity, diplomacy and much more.

3. What itinerary or proposed activities during the trip are you considering?

Day 1: Arrival and Orientation

Arrive in Bogota. Meet with Witness for Peace's International Team. Hold in-country training/orientation workshop on the following themes: security and health; leadership roles of delegation members; expectations and realities; nonviolence and Witness for Peace's policies; national and regional politics; the impact of globalization, neoliberal development, and the U.S. War on Drugs and Terrorism.

(Refer to page 15 of WFP “Delegation Coordinator's Handbook” for a Sample Training Schedule.)

Day 2: Politics and Human Rights

Meet with U.S. ambassador. Meet with Colombian parliamentarian. Meet with human rights leader, president of CODHES, and attend lecture. Tour Bogota.

Day 3: Internally Displaced Communities

Meet with UNICEF, Refugees International, and Caritas representatives. Visit IDP community on the outskirts of Bogota working with Caritas.

Day 4: Gender and Ethnicity

Meet with women from Ruta Pacifica de la Mujer and visit one of their projects. Meet with representative of Afro-Colombian organization of IDPs, Afrodes. Meet with leader of indigenous displaced community regarding land connections.

Day 5: Children and Youth

Meet with members of the Children's Movement for Peace. Visit center for orphans of war and youth empowerment workshop.

Day 6: Peace Communities, Nonviolent Opposition, and Autonomy

Travel to a peace community of Nasa indigenous persons in the region of Cauca. Meet with local authorities and members of the unarmed Indigenous Guard.

(Please note: A visit to Cauca is merely a tentative suggestion offered by Witness for Peace. This location is subject to change as the trip gets closer due to the continually changing regional security situations throughout Colombia.)

Day 7: Peace Communities and “Life Plans”

Review life plan of community/region with local leaders. Visit school, health center, water board, etc.

Day 8: Free Trade, Natural Resources, and Coca

Visit a coca plantation and/or mining site. Meet with local labor leaders and indigenous protectors of land. Visit land ruined by aerial fumigation.

Day 9: Wrap-Up

Hold a session on culminating reflections. Return to Bogota.

Day 10: Departure

Return to the U.S.

(Please note: The above is a sample itinerary based on conversations with Witness for Peace representatives. Refer to the attached sample flyer of a WFP delegation for another example of their delegations.)

*4. Will you organize this trip through an organization such as Global Exchange, Breakaway or local NGOs, or through your own personal contacts on site? **If an organization:** What organization (or organizations) do you plan to work with? Please attach any materials, proposed itineraries, web addresses, etc. **If through your own contacts:** Please explain who will be helping set up the trip, what type of support they can offer, etc. How will payment be arranged for all the expenses on the trip?*

We plan to organize this trip through Witness for Peace (<http://www.witnessforpeace.org>), an organization founded in 1983 that has sent over 10,000 individuals to Latin American countries, including Colombia, in short-term transformative delegations. WFP's mission statement is as follows:

Witness for Peace (WFP) is a politically independent, nationwide grassroots organization of people committed to nonviolence and led by faith and conscience. WFP's mission is to support peace, justice and sustainable economies in the Americas by changing U.S. policies and corporate practices which contribute to poverty and oppression in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Moreover, their covenant lists the following principles:

- We commit ourselves to nonviolence in word and in deed as the essential operating principle of Witness for Peace
- We commit ourselves to honesty and openness in our relationships with one another
- We commit ourselves to a prayerful (reflective), spiritual approach and to unity with one another as the foundations for this project

- We commit ourselves to be responsible and accountable in our actions to the community of which we are a part and to the principles of leadership which have been established
- We commit ourselves to maintaining the political independence of Witness for Peace
- We commit ourselves to act in solidarity and community with the Latin American and Caribbean people, respecting their lives, their culture, and their decisions. We will respect the suggestions of our hosts with regard to our presence and mobility in another land
- We commit ourselves to record our witness and, upon return, to share our experience with the North American people through the media, public education, and political action.

(Refer to attached website pages for more information on Witness for Peace delegations).

(Refer to attached letter of support from Cristina Espinel regarding WFP).

We have already spoken extensively with Ken Crowley, WFP National Delegations Coordinator, to create a tentative trip proposal and itinerary for January 3-13, 2008. In conjunction with the Andean Regional Coordinator, Ken and the student leaders created the previously presented itinerary tailored to our social justice themes. Ken has also made available several documents to assist with trip planning, including the exhaustive Delegation Coordinator's Handbook. *(Refer to attached WFP "Delegation Coordinator's Handbook")*.

In addition to our partnership with Witness for Peace, the student leaders and faculty sponsor have made several contacts that are enthusiastic to assist with the trip. In fact, many of the individuals with whom we spoke have encouraged us to visit their organizations during the Alternative Break. We have already incorporated many of these organizations into the itinerary, while we will be depending on others for general advice, planning, and support. Contacts include:

- Cristina Espinel, Colombia Human Rights Committee
- Charlie Roberts, Colombia Human Rights Committee
- Marco A. Romero Silva, CODHES (Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement)
- P. Maurizio Pontin, Caritas Colombia
- Lisa Haugaard, Latin America Working Group
- Washington Office on Latin America
- U.S. Office on Colombia
- Shaina, Jesuit Refugee Service

Special Note Regarding SAFETY

The trip coordinators and Witness for Peace representative are acutely aware of the heightened security concerns particular to Colombia and the U.S. State Department's Travel Warning *(Refer to attached Travel Warning from http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_941.html).*

Fortunately, Witness for Peace shares these concerns and boasts an impeccable safety record. According to their website (<http://www.witnessforpeace.org>):

The safety of our delegates is of the utmost concern to WFP. We have been hosting delegations to Latin America since 1983 and have extensive networks in the countries in which we operate. This experience has allowed us to responsibly and safely coordinate

delegations. Before beginning any delegation, participants receive an extensive security and health briefing, and go over common sense precautions. By following such measures, delegations are generally very safe. In Colombia, the level of political violence requires a much more extensive training and these delegations are not for everyone. Contact the National Office for more information on our Colombia program.

Guided by Witness for Peace's experience, we have consulted with numerous Colombians and U.S. persons with experience in Colombia to devise the following safety precautions, at a minimum:

Responsible Participants: Along with our faculty sponsor, we will diligently review all applications and meet with each applicant to ensure that they are mature, responsible, and understand the security concerns and related safety precautions for travel in Colombia.

Safety Training: Our group will go through intensive training both prior to departure and upon arrival in Colombia, facilitated by experienced Witness for Peace volunteers.

Experience Travel Guides: We will only travel with our designated Witness for Peace guide. As the WFP website states (<http://www.witnessforpeace.org>):

All delegations are set up and facilitated by Witness for Peace International Team volunteers, who are based in our program sites for 2-4 years. These volunteers accompany the groups, providing translation and facilitation; International Team volunteers are extremely experienced leading delegations and can serve as a valuable resource in answering questions regarding U.S. foreign policy in the country you are visiting.

We will ensure that all participants completely respect this authority and are flexible with any last-minute changes that may be required due to security concerns.

Restrict Travel to Bogota and One Other Canvassed Locality: While Bogota poses the risks inherent in any large city, most individuals and reports agree that it is virtually free of political violence and safe for international travelers. Thus, most of our trip will focus on this city, still with precautions and never “letting our guard down.” In addition, we plan to visit one rural peace community in a region outside of Bogota. This peace community, the surrounding region, and the travel route will be canvassed extensively by the Witness for Peace International Team, and will be constantly checked upon for potential security risks prior to and during our entire visit. While Witness for Peace has suggested that we visit the Nasa indigenous peace community in Cauca, it is important to note that this is merely a preliminary suggestion, subject to change at any time prior to or during the trip.

In-Country Travel by Air: Historically, much of the travel concerns focus on road blockages by armed actors. Fortunately, such roads have recently become much more secure. Nevertheless, when traveling to the peace community, our group will take a plane since it is the most trusted mode of transport.

Frequent and Easy Communication: Witness for Peace volunteers have a cellular phone with international access on their person. While parents and other individuals can call directly at all times, the WFP Washington, D.C. office has ensured us that they can make this connection as well if individuals call during business hours. We also plan to make a phone chain and/or blog so that families of the participants can be notified frequently of the status of their loved ones.

Flexibility: While we will have a tentative itinerary, it is important that all participants understand that flexibility is required in order to ensure their safety. If there exists any potential security risks, planned meetings or visits can be canceled at a moment's notice.

(Refer to pages 36-39 and 42-43 of the WFP “Delegation Coordinator's Handbook” for more information on expectation, safety, and risk liability.)

5. How many participants do you hope to have (minimum-5 and maximum-15)? What are you looking for in your participants?

We hope to have about 13 participants, including the two student leaders and one faculty member. It is important that the participants express a sincere interest in Latin America and the delegation goals, and preferably have some basic Spanish (though we understand that the latter may not be possible). We would also like a cross-section of campus that represents many different perspectives. It is also essential that the participants express a commitment to the Alternative Break team and to fundraising, and a commitment to the nonviolence principles of Witness for Peace. Finally, participants must have an understanding of the security issues inherent in travel in Colombia and maturity to withstand this responsibility.

6. What pre-departure orientation and educational activities do you have in mind? (Note: You will be expected to organize and conduct weekly meetings with the students for at least 2 months before departure.) Please develop a sample 8 session syllabus incorporating learning objectives.

We (the student leaders) will meet extensively prior to the start of orientation meetings to prepare the sessions and fundraising schedule. Once the meetings with participants start, however, we hope to facilitate the involvement of the participants as much as possible. This will include brief 5-minute presentations/discussions each week on a particular issue area, prepared ahead of time by two students with guidance from the student leaders. In addition, we will send out weekly e-mails with articles regarding the following week's topic or just general current events or security news from Colombia. Each session will also include ice breakers and open discussions. We also hope to organize bi-weekly film and documentary screenings to serve as yet another source of pre-departure exposure and education. While we do not intend to make such pre-departure sessions overly burdensome, we would like to students to show an interest, responsibility, and commitment to learning about each topic, with some fun along the way!

Session 1: Introduction and Orientation

Objective: To introduce group participants to one another, distribute trip materials, devise fundraising plan, and delegate assignments.

Activities: Introduce participants to each other and start team-building. Hand out and review trip logistics and materials, including health, safety, and visa information. Create

fundraising plan. Hand out journals and assign participant teams for weekly presentations.

Session 2: Overview of Colombia's Conflict and Internally Displaced Persons

Objective: To gain a general understanding of the root causes of Colombia's conflict and its effect on the civilian population.

Activities: Ice-breaker. Student presentation. Short BBC documentary screening. Group discussion. Logistical/fundraising tasks.

Session 3: U.S. War on Drugs and Colombian Politics

Objective: To learn about and critically evaluate the effects of the U.S. War on Drugs and Terrorism and the Colombian government's policies.

Activities: Ice-breaker. Student presentation. Site visit to Washington Office on Latin America. Logistical/fundraising tasks.

Session 4: Peace Communities and Nonviolence

Objective: To learn about peace communities and civil society's non-violent resistance.

Activities: Ice-breaker. Student presentation. Visit from Witness for Peace representative to introduce the peace community we will be visiting. Discussion of tenets of nonviolence and creative resistance. Logistical/fundraising tasks.

Session 5: Gender, Ethnicity, Youth

Objective: To gain an understanding of the impact of the conflict on disadvantaged groups.

Activities: Ice-breaker. Student presentation. Group discussion. Logistical/fundraising tasks.

Session 6: Free Trade, Natural Resources, and Coca

Objective: To gain an understanding of the problems created by uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources, the free trade policy, and coca cultivation in a war-torn society.

Activities: Ice-breaker. Student Presentation. Group discussion. Logistical/fundraising tasks.

Session 7: Team-Building Workshop

Objective: To solidify team solidarity and cultivate trust.

Activities: Workshop filled with several hands-on activities. Logistical/fundraising tasks.

Session 8: Traveling and Packing Logistics & Intensive Safety Training

Objective: To fully explore any remaining packing and/or other logistical issues. To be well-versed in the safety precautions and security scenarios.

Activities: Open group discussion logistical questions. Visit from Witness for Peace representative who will facilitate intensive safety training.

Session 9: Pre-Departure Wrap-Up

Objective: To ensure that all participants feel prepared and comfortable for all aspects of the trip.

Activities: Open group discussion on remaining issues.

(Please note: Witness for Peace also requires an in-country safety training session upon arrival to Colombia. This session will complement the pre-departure training sessions.)

7. What recruitment and advertising are you planning?

As noted above, it is important that the participants express a sincere interest in Latin America and the delegation goals, and preferably have some basic Spanish. We would also like a cross-section of campus that represents many different perspectives. Therefore, we plan to recruit in the following ways:

- Posting flyers on bulletin boards, tables, offices on Main Campus, Tenley Campus and at the Washington College of Law
- Sending e-mails to relevant listserves
- Posting trip “blurbs” on campus internet groups such as *Facebook*
- Visiting relevant classes and speaking to the class for a few minutes (arranged with professors beforehand)
- Advertising at campus lectures and events
- Holding information sessions

We also plan to diligently follow-up with all information requests about the trip, personally corresponding or meeting with interested students. To interested students, we will provide an application, and later meet with all applicants one-on-one prior to acceptance. Due to the large time commitment expected of the applicants, it is important to directly assess this issue in the screening process. Moreover, the heightened security concerns presented by Colombia require that students are particularly mature and aware of the safety issues inherent in travel to Colombia.

(Please note: While the WFP materials state that the minimum age for Colombian delegations is 20, this requirement has recently been reduced to 18 years old.)

(Refer to page 8 in the WFP “Delegation Coordinator’s Handbook” for more ideas)

8. What fundraising ideas will help generate funds for the trip?

Fundraising will be a large component of the pre-departure process. We have a variety of creative ideas for fundraising, including:

- sell products (i.e. coffee) and photos from the towns that we will be visiting;
- offer Spanish tutoring for a donation;

- organize an event (i.e. networking, food tasting) at a DC restaurant and charge an entrance fee;
- screen documentaries on campus for a donation;
- seek sponsorship from churches, NGOs, businesses, etc.

In addition, we hope that the participants will offer more ideas. We may create a fundraising committee, or delegate the responsibility for fundraising to the participants, encouraging them to take ownership of the trip.

(Refer to page 27 in the WFP “Delegation Coordinator's Handbook” for more ideas.)

9a. Do you have a staff or faculty sponsor in mind to travel with your group? If so, who is it? If not, we can help you identify someone

9b. What faculty member might supervise the academic credit option of the trip? (This can be the same person as above and if needed, we can help you identify someone). Have you approached this individual yet for confirmation?

Faculty Member will also supervise the academic credit option of the trip. We have spoken with him already and he has agreed.

10. Draft budget:

	Cost Per Person	Comments
<i>Airfare</i>	\$540.00	Cost may be less with group rate.
<i>WFP Delegation Fee</i> <i>(Includes In-Country Travel)</i>	\$1080.00	\$120 per day; \$60 for arrival and departure days, includes food and lodging and in-country flights and travel
<i>Student Leader Subsidy*</i>	\$165.00	
<i>Travel Insurance</i>	\$20.00	Based on two weeks
<i>Miscellaneous Expenses</i> <i>(Including Pocket Money)</i>	\$100.00	Immunizations, Incidentals (No Visa Required)
<i>TOTAL</i>	<u>\$1905.00**</u>	

*Subsidy cost for two student leaders based on ten student participants. WFP policy provides a fee waiver for one participant when there are ten fully-paid participants. Thus, both student leaders will be able to assist for the cost of one participant. In the case that there are 15 fully-paid participants, WFP provides two fee waivers, which would decrease the individual cost even more. *(Refer to page 6 in the WFP “Delegation Coordinator's Handbook” for information.)*

**We hope to substantially reduce this cost through fundraising. Also, WFP may have available a limited number of scholarships through their organization. *(Refer to pages 6 and 32-33 in the WFP "Delegation Coordinator's Handbook" for more information.)*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

Attachments:

- 1: WFP Coordinator's Manual
- 2: WFP Sample Flyer
- 3: WFP Website Compilation
- 4: WFP Letter of Support
- 5: Travel Warning

Two versions are requested:

- 1.) Return paper applications to the Community Service Center, attention: Shoshanna Sumka, Mary Graydon 273, Phone: (202) 885-2684, Fax: (202)885-1554,*
 - 2.) Electronic versions should be emailed to: sumka@american.edu*
- (Please note that it is advisable to contact the Alternative Break Coordinator to discuss your ideas prior to turning applications in.)*