

Mexico Solidarity Network Guide to Financial aid for Study Abroad

Paying for a study abroad program can be challenging, and is often a deterring factor in a student's decision to participate in an overseas program. Fortunately, there are a number of ways to get funding for study abroad programs. This guide is designed to get you started on finding the assistance you need.

A successful search for financial aid will require a commitment on your part to do the necessary work. There are a lot of programs available, but none of them will award you financial aid unless you apply in a coherent and timely manner.

Sources of financial aid

There are three main sources: federal and state government aid, institutional aid, and private programs. Financial aid comes in various forms: grants and scholarships, loans, and work-study.

- Federal and state aid is most often need-based (though sometimes specific groups are targeted), and is most often provided in the form of grants, scholarships, loans, and/or work-study.
- Institutional aid is provided by your school and can be based on need or merit. It is sometimes targeted to specific groups or areas of study.
- Private aid is from a source that is neither governmental nor institutional and is usually given in the form of scholarships or grants.

In addition, the Mexico Solidarity Network manages a modest scholarship program, but we are never able to respond positively to all of the requests we receive and we seldom are able to award more than \$2,000 (and often less) per student. Our program is a combination of need and merit, with preference shown to students with a demonstrable need for financial aid and who also have extensive experience in grassroots/community organizing. An application is available at www.mexicosolidarity.org. The deadline for MSN scholarship applications is:

- Fall semester: May 15
- Spring semester: October 15
- Summer semester: March 20

The best sources for financial aid are the study abroad and financial aid offices at your home institution.

Financial aid strategies

A successful search for financial aid begins with a well-conceived strategy:

- First, talk to your academic advisor and convince him/her of the importance of this particular study abroad program for your academic development. Take along

a copy of the syllabus and class schedule (available on request from the Mexico Solidarity Network) and be prepared to explain why you want to participate in this study abroad program.

- Second, talk to your study abroad office. The Higher Education Act of 1992 mandates that students can receive financial aid for study abroad from federally administered financial aid programs if the student is enrolled in a program approved by the home institution for academic credit. Most colleges and universities will recognize the Mexico Solidarity Network program for credit, but a few institutions will not (many times this is because they don't want to see "their" students spending money on "other" programs). If your institution recognizes our program and you are currently receiving financial aid in the form of grants or loans from a federal program, that federal aid should be applicable to the study abroad program. Be prepared to explain why you want to participate in this study abroad program, and take copies of the syllabus, course schedule and a list of universities and colleges that currently accredit the program (available from the Mexico Solidarity Network). If the study abroad office hesitates, sometimes your advisor can intercede on your behalf. Every institution has its own particular requirements for recognizing study abroad programs. You should be prepared to provide any information they request. Make sure to get the process started early, since some offices can take weeks or even months to recognize a study abroad program. Sometimes your institution will recognize a program contingent upon your completion of all the requirements of the program. This is sufficient to transfer your federal financial aid to the study abroad program.
- Third, talk to your financial aid office. Your campus financial aid office is the first and best place to find out what aid programs are available to you. Be sure to have the necessary documents to show that your institution recognizes this study abroad program. While federal financial aid programs are transferable, state programs and programs offered by your institution may or may not be applicable. Each institution has its own criteria. Discuss the options with your financial aid officer.
- Fourth, research, research, research. Here are a handful of places to start:

Online sources:

www.finaid.org - The Financial Aid Page links to scholarship searches and a comprehensive listing of financial aid information.

<http://www.studyabroadfunding.org> - Sponsored by the Institute of International Education-An independent nonprofit this valuable funding resource allows you to search by country or subject to find the study abroad funding information that you need.

http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html - The

Student Guide: Department of Education publishes a guide each year on the eligibility requirements for various federal aid programs.

www.fastWeb.com: This service provides a free customized list of financial aid sources, including private sector scholarships, fellowships, grants, and loans.

<http://www.istc.umn.edu/study/scholarships.html> and <http://www.lib.msu.edu/harris23/grants/> have information on scholarships and grants for study abroad.

<http://nsep.aed.org> for David L. Boren Scholarships

http://www.studyabroad.com/forum/financial_aid.html

<http://www.iie.org//programs/gilman/index.html>

<http://www.internationalstudent.com/scholarships/>

Truman Scholarship <http://www.Truman.gov>

Rotary Scholarships <http://www.rotary.org>

Mellon Fellowship <http://www.Woodrow.org/mellon>

Gilman Scholarship www.iie.org/*gilman*/

Publications that should be available in your school's library:

FINANCIAL AID FOR STUDY ABROAD: A MANUAL FOR ADVISORS AND ADMINISTRATORS, NAFSA: Association for International Educators , Washington, D.C. A basic reference work for administrators, but it has comprehensive information on financial aid that is helpful for students.

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS, AND FUNDING PUBLICATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AND OTHER DISCIPLINES , Michigan State University, Rm.209, Office of International Studies and Programs, East Lansing, Michigan (April 1997) Contains 79 pages of annotated bibliographical information on references and websites.

SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS & GRANTS FOR PROGRAMS ABROAD, American Collegiate Service.

DIRECTORY OF FINANCIAL AID FOR WOMEN by Gail Ann Schlachter.

FINANCIAL AID FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS, San Carlos, California Reference Service Press

FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDY, Institute of International Education, New York, Ed. Marie O'Sullivan.

PRIVATE AID: In addition to governmental and institutional aid, many corporations and businesses offer aid to students for study abroad. Check with your study abroad office for a complete listing, especially those corporations that have a particular interest in funding students from your university and/or area of study.

Ethnic and service organizations like the League of United Latin American Citizens, Alliance Francaise, Dante Alighieri, Goethe groups, etc. are another source of funding. Check large local businesses in your city.

International Alumni Donors can be another source of donations. Search your school's alumni database to get in touch with graduates from Mexico. Your interest in studying important issues and the language of their country will motivate them to help you get there.

Don't hesitate to contact us for documents or information you might need during your search for financial aid.

GOOD LUCK!!