

Campus Ministry's Alternative Break Immersion Program

Program Overview

The Alternative Break Immersion (ABI) program provides participants opportunities to expand learning beyond the classroom in the context of direct service and action. Through the ABI program, students serve and learn in communities around the United States and abroad during academic breaks. During immersions, participants seek to live simply, keep faith, build community and do justice while sharing work and gaining new awareness from their interactions with diverse communities and one another.

As former superior general of the Society of Jesus, Peter Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. said, "Solidarity is learned through 'contact' rather than through 'concepts,'.... When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change." In this way, the ABI program provides experiences that contribute to the formation of a "well-educated solidarity" (Kolvenbach). Essentially, immersions are experiences that explore the intrinsic links of faith, knowledge and service in an intensive framework. As Dan Hartnett, S.J. states in an essay outlining the Ignatian pedagogy of justice, this integration is "the fundamental proposition underlying Jesuit education." This Ignatian methodology is also the primary framework for Loyola's recent strategic document describing its mission to provide a transformative education in the Jesuit tradition – an education that empowers and transforms. As such, immersion offerings are fertile ground for "promoting the development of the whole person through an integrated curricular and co-curricular program" (Strategy 1, Strategic Plan, Tactic 1.4).

The goals of the ABI program are to:

- immerse participants in a new social or cultural context;
- to raise awareness about social injustices and the structures that perpetuate them;
- to move this awareness to an integrated, active part of participants' everyday lives; and
- to encourage Ignatian reflection and spiritual examination in the context of service

The Numbers

19 different immersion experiences are being offered during the 2011-12 academic year. This includes two local; twelve domestic and five international ABIs. Nearly 200 students, faculty and staff participate in the program each year. The average size of each immersion is 10 people. The total number of student participants each year is 150. Most domestic immersions involve 7 participants (one mini-van). The size of international immersion trips ranges from 8-12. Up to 20 students are involved in each of the two urban immersions offered in early fall and larger groups of 14 are sent on more labor-intensive trips (i.e., New Orleans, South Dakota).

ABI Host Communities/Organizations

September:

Br. David Darst Center: Urban Immersions for First-Year Students

October (Fall break):

Pilsen Plunge: St. Procopius Jesuit Parish, Resurrection Project, immigrant rights groups

Spring Break:

Nazareth Farm: Salem, WV

Appalachia-Science in the Public Interest: Mt. Vernon, KY

Glenmary Farm: Vanceburg, KY

Bethlehem Farm: Pence Springs, WV

BTNEP: Gulf Coast, LA

Jeanie Wylie Community: Detroit, MI
Tantre Organic Farm: Chelsea, MI
Dorothy Day Catholic Worker: Washington, D.C.
Jonah House: Baltimore, MD

Summer:

Project Homecoming: New Orleans
Freedom Ride ABI w/ SDMA
La Parroquia San Lucas Tolimán: Guatemala
International Partners in Mission: El Salvador
Annunciation House: U.S.-Mexico Border/El Paso, TX
Cuernavaca Center for Intercultural Dialogue on Development: Mexico
Lourdes, France [School of Nursing]

Academic Partnerships

SOC 127: Social Analysis and Social Action [taught by Kathleen Maas Weigert]
Continued collaboration with WSGS & Social Work [Women and Migration]
Continued collaboration with SDMA on Freedom Ride Immersion (1 credit UNIV course)
Urban Studies collaboration/academic outreach with Marilyn Krogh, Tara Sullivan, Joe Saucedo, Nicole Chmela [Local/Pilsen ABI]
Engaging Schools/Professional Schools/Departments [Lourdes; School of Nursing]
Advised Anthropology on development of immersion at Pine Ridge Rez to provide field experience for anthropology students
Jim Garbarino [Psychology]: Solidarity project with early childhood education center in El Salvador, involved learning community

Advisory Board Members: Megan Barry [CCSA], Javier Cervantes [Diversity & Multicultural Affairs], Alan Gitelson [Political Science], James Garbarino [Psychology], Kathleen Maas Weigert [Sociology/Social Justice], Marilyn Krogh [Sociology], Annie Morgan [Student Development], Patrick Green [CEL], Justin Daffron, S.J. [FYE, Jesuit Community], Rosemary Max [International Programs], undergraduate student