

Statements from previous students in the Biology in Mexico Program:

I don't know that just a few sentences can adequately describe how truly wonderful the experience was. This program was an immensely rewarding experience for me, both intellectually and emotionally. The cultural immersion was spectacular and living with the host families was so much fun. First, the time in Morelia taking classes and just absorbing everything about that place, then, the work at the Chamela field station to complete the package. The whole experience taught me a great deal about myself, who I wanted to be personally and helped me solidify my educational and career paths. The work in this program was exciting, rewarding and adventurous; and confirmed for me that I wanted to always have that kind of experience in my work. Since graduating from CWU, I have continued in field research and to this day, in all of my different research trips, nothing has yet compared.

– C. Tribuzio, Ph.D. candidate, University of Alaska/Fairbanks

The Mexico program completely changed the course of my life. I am still working in Michoacan on projects relating to interdisciplinary studies specifically pertaining to bridging the gap between community development and natural resource conservation. I love what I am doing and feel that the Mexico program is one of the best opportunities I received to date. I highly recommend it- and maintaining an open mind. It is an experience that can change a person for the better if allowed.

– M. Mishkin, Ph.D. candidate, University of Florida

That was such a wonderful, eye opening experience and it permanently changed the course of my education and life for that matter! As a matter of fact my current graduate research is working with migrant Latino groups here in Washington. It is so important that students be immersed in another culture as a learning experience, especially Mexico because we have such a large population of Hispanics in this country and it is so important to gain a knowledge and understanding into their culture and language for the benefit of future partnerships between our countries. Mexico is such a beautiful place and there are so many wonderful people to meet there. Participating in a learning experience in Mexico it is a great way to bring down barriers of misconceptions that many here have about our neighbors to the south.

– A. Snively, M.S. candidate, Washington State University

To prospective students:

The experience I gained in the Ecology and Conservation of the Mexican sub-tropics program at Central has had a lasting effect on both my personal and professional lives. It was my first introduction to tropical biology, and in studying the ecology of the Mexican dry-tropics, I quickly learned how this unique system fits into a global picture of conservation biology and ecology as a whole.

After working with Kris and Dan in the Mexico program, I have since continued to conduct research in Mexico and have spent portions of the last four years studying beaded lizards in Sonora, Mexico as part of my Ph.D. dissertation. Without the exposure I gained in the program, I would have never known what an interesting and exciting experience conducting research in Mexico can be. As you will learn, the Mexican dry-tropics are truly a ‘hotspot’ of biological diversity and the interesting organisms that inhabit that landscape are remarkable and uniquely adapted to life in a seasonally dry environment.

I have no doubt the program will change your lives as well. You will learn think about science at both regional and global scales, and how the interaction of culture, politics, and history all influence conservation priorities as well as individual research efforts. Good luck to you in this exceptional and life-changing endeavor; you will likely come away from the experience as equal parts highly trained ecologist, student of natural history, and globally aware conservation biologist.

– C.M. Gienger, Ph.D. candidate, University of Nevada/Reno

The trip to Mexico is one of my most memorable experiences from life in general and from an academic perspective is one of the best experiences one could hope for. In terms of general life, it was amazing to experience another culture and really be immersed in it by living with a Mexican family. For me, that is likely a once in a lifetime opportunity and really helped to shape my perspective on other cultures and certainly influenced my priorities in life. From an academic standpoint, the opportunity to explore ecosystems completely foreign to my experiences up to that point was invaluable. Topics I learned about down there and things I saw in terms of dry forests and conservation issues literally come up probably once a week in various discussions even now. The field experience was great as well. That was the only chance I had during my undergrad to do some real fieldwork and was key for taking the next step into my master's work. I highly recommend the trip to anyone looking for more than the standard undergrad education provides.

– J. Stegan, Ph.D. candidate, University of Arizona

The Mexico Experience.....

I have yet to meet anyone in this field who has taken part in anything similar the Mexico research experience. The knowledge I gained about the biology and conservation in the tropics alone made the trip worthwhile, yet the additional social, cultural, and regional interaction made the benefit incalculable and unforgettable. I strongly recommend this experience to anyone who wishes to and create opportunities distinguish themselves from the overwhelming majority of university students. This program is as unique as the people who designed it and will enrich anyone who wants to learn the beauty and diversity of Latin America. My experiences during this program completely changed the way I viewed science, management of natural resources, and sacrifices made to sustain industrial societies.

– S. Sebring, M.S., Texas Tech University and
project leader for juvenile salmonid predation in the Columbia estuary