Dedicated to AU’s student trip leaders and their tireless work towards global social justice.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION
1 A Brief History of Alternative Breaks at AU
1 Alternative Breaks—A Philosophy
2 Types of AU Alternative Breaks
2 Criteria for Approving Student-Led Alternative Break Trips
3 Key Terms

5 ORGANIZING AN ALTERNATIVE BREAK
5 Basic Steps of Planning an Alternative Break
5 Steps
6 People and Roles
8 Organizing Your Team
8 Co-Leaders: The Student Trip Leaders
8 Committees
9 Finding a Site
9 Not Sure Where to Head?
10 Working with Your On-Site Host or Partner
11 Creating an Itinerary
11 Consider Your Objectives and the Expectations of Your Participants
11 Timing and Sequencing Play a Big Role as Well
12 Sample On-Site Itineraries
13 Finances
13 Creating a Budget
16 Fund Raising
16 Creating an Account
16 Handling Deposits
17 Refunds
17 Making Payments and Accounting for Expenses
19 Your Participants
19 Recruiting Participants
19 Selecting Participants
20 Developing the Academic Component
20 Orientation Guidelines
21 Alternative Break General Information Session
21 Pre-departure Orientation Sessions—A General Outline
21 Planning the Eight Sessions
23 On-Site Orientation
24 Posttrip

24 Travel Safety and Emergency Procedures
25 Reminders
26 Meeting University Requirements
27 Media and Documentation
27 Media Relations
27 Documentation

29 ON THE TRIP
29 Debriefing and Reflection Sessions
29 Service Projects
29 Group Activities
30 Selecting Roommates
30 Maintaining a Field Journal

35 POSTTRIP
35 Activism and Community Involvement
35 Evaluating the Trip
35 Follow-up and Thank-You letters

37 APPENDIXES
38 A: Training Concepts and Exercises
47 B: Additional Resources
48 C: Sample Timeline for Planning Alternative Breaks
51 D: Sample Suggested Packing List (Ecuador)
52 E: Sample Final Itinerary (U.S.–Mexico Border)
55 F: Staff or Faculty Description
INTRODUCTION

The Brief History of Alternative Breaks at AU

“Ideas into Action, Action into Service”

American University has long prided itself on its role as an academic community promoting public service and social justice. This is exemplified in the mission of the Office of Campus Life, which is to integrate students into a diverse university community; promote their intellectual, social, and spiritual development; and in collaboration with the faculty, prepare students for lifelong learning and global citizenship.

AU focuses on three main priorities:
- academic inquiry
- student experience
- extensive engagement with Washington and global affairs

Alternative Break trips offer unique opportunities to integrate all three of these priorities in intensive, accessible, and relevant ways as participants take part in transformative short-term immersion programs throughout the world.

Alternative Break trips are student run and are coordinated through American University’s Community Service Center with the assistance of the Alternative Break coordinator, who works closely with student leaders to ensure that trips are safe, well organized, and educational and maintain a focus on social justice and community service.

Until the mid-1990s, AU’s alternative spring breaks had been domestic initiatives largely sponsored by clubs, such as the campus chapter of Habitat for Humanity, or through the student Community Action and Social Justice Coalition. In the wake of disastrous hurricanes in Honduras, AU students under the tutelage of Reverend Joseph Eldridge, the university chaplain, started to venture overseas for their spring break community service and social justice efforts. In recent years, students spent part of their winter, spring, or summer vacations on alternative breaks to Cuba, Mexico, Honduras, India, Thailand, Vietnam, Zambia, Guatemala, China, Nicaragua, California, Georgia, and North Carolina.

These trips owe their success to the hard work and commitment of the students who planned and implemented them. This guide is an adaptation of the original workbook developed by Karyn Cassella. It will help to streamline the process of planning an Alternative Break trip and allow trip organizers to spend less time on paperwork and spend more time crafting a meaningful experience.

Alternative Breaks—A Philosophy

AU’s Alternative Break trips are intended to challenge participants to reflect critically upon their role in the global community through service, activism, academic inquiry, and leadership. They provide opportunities to explore social, economic, political, and cultural issues through unique immersion experiences that facilitate critical thinking and the exchange of ideas as well as testing academic concepts in the field with follow-up in the classroom and community.
While alternative breaks nation-wide are traditionally centered on volunteer community service activities, AU holds a more ample definition in practice. AU’s alternative breaks seek to offer opportunities for participants to serve the community they visit and to provide participants with the tools to analyze their role in the world within a framework of economic, social, and political inequality.

**Types of AU Alternative Breaks**

International and domestic Alternative Break trips at AU are of three types.

**Student initiated.** These trips are initiated, planned, and developed by individual students or student clubs. They must be approved by the Community Service Center and comply with university policies and procedures. Student trips must be accompanied by a university employee (faculty or staff). This guide is designed primarily for student-initiated trips sponsored through the Community Service Center.

**Staff or administrative unit initiated.** These trips are initiated by university staff. They must comply with university regulations and are sponsored through the administrative unit.

**Faculty or academic unit initiated.** These trips are initiated by university faculty. They must comply with appropriate departmental, school or college, and university regulations and are sponsored through academic departments.

**Criteria for Approving Student-Led Alternative Break Trips**

Alternative Break trip proposals have three components: student leadership skills, trip design, and faculty or staff advisor qualifications. 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.

Trips are reviewed for approval based on the following criteria:

- The social justice theme is clearly articulated.
- The social justice theme is represented in proposed itinerary and activities.
- The proposal is well planned and well thought out.
- The trip is feasible.
- The trip is safe.
- The students or staff have connections to high-quality local organizations, individuals, or trip service providers.
- The students and staff or faculty are well qualified.
Key Terms

Community service. A volunteer activity or experience that benefits or improves the quality of life for an individual, a group of people, a neighborhood, a community, or an organization.

Service-learning. The practice of integrating community service with academic learning. Students learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that are integrated into their academic curriculum. The service is mutually beneficial: the student practices and develops skills and competencies in a real-world setting and the community or nonprofit group is helped to meet its needs and goals.

Social-justice learning. Learning that addresses structural systems of inequality, injustice, oppression, and marginalization. The basic tenet of social justice is that we can transform the world into a more equal society for all people regardless of ethnicity, religion, economic class, gender, etc., through social movements and political activism.

Debriefing and reflection. The critical debriefing and analytical process that emphasizes self-awareness through students’ examining their thoughts, feelings, and observations—a key element in Alternative Break trips. One goal is for students to recognize their own privilege and their role in the global system.

Break Away’s eight components. American University is a member of Break Away, a national alternative breaks organization, and follows its guidelines:

The Eight Components of a Quality Alternative Break

Break Away . . . is committed to helping schools and organizations implement alternative break programs that far exceed typical volunteer vacations. . . .

Break Away established the following elements an alternative break program should incorporate in order to exceed the typical volunteer vacation experience and move its participants down the path toward lifelong active citizenship. Each of the following components is vital to providing a quality break experience: without one, the impact is lessened; with all of them developed thoroughly, there is no limit to the power of your alternative break experience. . . .

Strong Direct Service:
Programs provide an opportunity for participants to engage in direct or ‘hands-on’ service that addresses critical but unmet social needs.

Orientation:
Participants are oriented to the mission and objectives of both the break program and the host agency or organization with which they will be working.
Education:
Programs establish and achieve educational objectives to give participants a sense of context and understanding of both the region in which they will be working and of the problems they will be addressing during the break.

Training:
Participants are provided with adequate training in skills necessary to carry out tasks and projects during the trip. Ideally this training should take place prior to departure, although in some instances it may occur once participants have reached their site.

Reflection:
During the trip, participants reflect upon the experiences they are having. Applying classroom learning and integrating many academic disciplines should also occur. The site leaders should set aside time for reflection to take place, both individually and in a group setting.

Reorientation:
Upon return to campus, there should be a re-orientation session for all participants where they can share their break experiences with one another and with the greater campus community and are actively encouraged to translate this experience into a life-long commitment to service.

Diversity:
Strong alternative break programs include participants representing the range of students present in the campus community. Coordinators should recruit, design, implement and evaluate their program with this end in mind.

Alcohol and Other Drug Free:
Programs must be aware that issues of legality, liability, personal safety and group cohesion are of concern when alcohol and other drugs are consumed on an alternative break. Programs should provide education and training on alcohol and other drug related issues as well as develop a policy on how these issues will be dealt with on an alternative break.
ORGANIZING AN ALTERNATIVE BREAK

Basic Steps of Planning an Alternative Break Trip

Students may initiate, plan, and lead domestic and international Alternative Break trips. **Note:** No trips may conflict with regular scheduled classes. Approved student trip leaders are not paid but may have a portion of their trip expenses included in the student participants’ trip cost.

**Steps**

The following is a quick overview of the steps to be taken:

- Student trip leaders complete and submit the preliminary approval proposal for Alternative Break trips to the Alternative Break coordinator, Community Service Center, MGC 273. Online forms are available at www.american.edu/altbreak.
- Alternative Break Proposal Review Committee evaluates applications.
- Alternative Break coordinator schedules a preapproval interview with student trip leaders.
- Student trip leaders, once trip proposal has preliminary approval, handle start-up:
  - establish Alternative Break trip-specific club account with Alternative Break coordinator
  - recruit a faculty or staff trip advisor who will plan and travel with group
  - recruit faculty of record for course credit option
  - advertise and promote trip and recruit participants
- Student trip leaders refine and finalize trip itinerary.
  - social justice theme, agenda, activities
  - community service projects, activities
  - on-site logistics: lodging, transportation, meals, activities, facilitators
  - detailed schedule for each on-site day; orientation and debriefing sessions
  - what to bring: clothing, toiletries, medicine, other
  - provide on-site contact numbers
- Student trip leaders refine and finalize trip costs.
  - transportation: to and from site, local (AU and on-site)
  - lodging and meal expenses
  - immunization and visa costs
  - miscellaneous
  - decide on fund-raising targets and methods
  - finalize cost per participant
  - establish payment plan with Alternative Break coordinator
  - determine contracted prepayment options and payment schedule
- Student trip leaders conduct pre-departure information-orientation sessions for participants.
- Student trip leaders go on trip!
- Student trip leaders plan and conduct posttrip evaluation.
  - provide summary report with evaluations to Alternative Break coordinator
  - continue with follow-up activities


People and Roles

All trip participants can benefit by sharing in planning responsibilities through committee work. Procedures may alter slightly for trips originating in other units.

Coordinator for global and community-based learning. Also known as the Alternative Break coordinator, the coordinator for global and community-based learning is responsible for ensuring Alternative Break initiatives are conducted in accordance with university guidelines. The coordinator provides assistance and guidance in promoting Alternative Break initiatives, planning travel, programming orientations, and training student leader and faculty or staff teams.

Student trip leaders. Student trip leaders generally initiate trips, plan most of the itinerary, prepare logistics, and communicate regularly with participants.

Qualifications. The student trip leader:

- was a participant in previous Alternative Break or comparable travel experience
- is in good university standing (grades and discipline)
- commits to and does participate in weekly meetings with Community Service Center (CSC)
- commits to and does participate in leader training workshops
- agrees to and does fulfill such responsibilities as holding pre-departure orientation sessions
- has knowledge of destination
- has skill in language of host country (if applicable)
- has demonstrated commitment to social justice
- has leadership skills

Faculty or staff advisor. The faculty or staff advisor travels with the group to the site and serves as university liaison, ensures compliance with policies, provides general oversight, co-facilitates with student trip leaders the processing of on-site experiences, and possibly supervises academic credit component of the trip. See Appendix F for a fuller description of the faculty or staff advisor’s role.

Qualifications. The faculty or staff advisor:

- is current full-time AU faculty or staff employee with exempt status (salaried)
- has experience in country or region and significant international experience
- has expertise on the issues being addressed
- agrees to and does participate in meetings with CSC to work with student trip leaders
- attends trip meetings and engages in group planning activities
- has skill in the language of the host country (highly desirable)
- has experience with Alternative Break trips and service-learning or social justice

Alternative Break Club. Past participants plan and lead most of AU’s student-initiated Alternative Break trips and are a critical resource in assessing student interest and designing experiences that challenge and transform. The Alternative Break Club promotes trips through various events and photograph displays on campus. Members play a vital role in assuring that activism and follow-up on social justice issues occurs throughout the year.
Community Action and Social Justice Coalition (CASJC). Students who are involved in CASJC activities have historically planned and led many of AU’s student-initiated Alternative Break trips and remain a critical resource in identifying social justice issues of interest to AU students.

Community Service Center (CSC). The Alternative Break coordinator is housed in the CSC. The CSC is a resource center for identifying volunteer opportunities and developing the service-learning component and social justice theme. A training and travel library in the CSC provides resources for orientation, group exercises, and destination information. The CSC is also the liaison with academic units when students wish to register for academic credit options.

International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS). ISSS staff can be valuable resources in identifying community action and service projects as well as nongovernment organizations and host country organizations that may provide on-site assistance and coordination. ISSS staff include former Peace Corps volunteers or alumni of other cross-cultural training experiences who have relevant overseas work experience and knowledge of resources.

University chaplain. The university chaplain initiated the university’s first international Alternative Break during the 1999 spring break and continues to provide leadership and assistance in planning, sponsoring, and evaluating the Alternative Break program.

Vice president of campus life (VPCL). The VPCL must approve all Alternative Break trips prior to advertisement and must approve the final itinerary. Approval for departure is dependent on assessment of iJet Travel Risk Management and State Department travel advisories and on receipt of completed:

- trip itinerary
- participant roster
- consent and release form for each participant and copy of passport for international trips—the VPCL must retain original release forms for a minimum of three years

Office of International Affairs (OIA). The OIA must receive from the VPCL copies of approved trip proposals, itineraries, participant rosters, and posttrip evaluations.

University Center. Reserve space and display cases on campus through University Event Scheduling (UES), ext. 3900.

Audio-Visual Services. Call Audio-Visual for your info sessions and pre-departure orientation audio, visual, and projection needs, ext. 2296.
Organizing Your Team

Co-Leaders: The Student Trip Leaders

The Break Away Site Leader Survival Manual stresses the value of a co-leader. A co-leader can:

- balance your strengths and weaknesses. Perhaps you are miraculously alert, cheerful and inspired both early in the morning and late at night . . . but could use some help with financial record-keeping.
- provide checks on your thorough preparation. For example, before your break begins, it is critical that you confirm your housing plans—and it is good for your effectiveness, and definitely for your sanity, to have a fellow participant double-check your plans during the planning process.
- share the responsibilities. For example, two days before break, when you have a paper due in a class you have been neglecting, you will be ecstatic that your team mate can go to the Community Service Center to pick up your air tickets or to the rental agency and pick up your group’s van.
- address the needs of different participants: Some people respond better to extroverts, or maybe to quiet, approachable personalities; others are most relaxed and willing to participate in the company of women/men or both. For this reason, it is best to try to pair people who balance each other, who are of different genders, and whose strengths combine to form something close to an “Ideal Site Leader.”

Be sure to take time to meet with your co-leader to talk about your strengths and weaknesses—and then divide the work. Consider crafting a “co-leader contract” informally to consider who will take responsibility for different aspects of planning and facilitating according to your strengths and skills.

The student trip leaders are usually responsible for:

- transportation: to and from destination as well as on-site travel
- schedules: arranging service, social activities, speakers, and sight-seeing
- people: managing applications, communication with participants, and organizing orientation and training sessions
- budget and finance: determining an appropriate budget (with a cushion) and managing money on the ground

Committees

Most trip groups will range in size from 6 to 15, so creating committees might seem unimportant at first. However, the more you can delegate, the better you can keep track of the big picture.

You might want to delegate certain tasks to different group members. You can discuss this at group meetings. Some possible committees are:

- food and lodging: handling accommodations and meal planning, even cooking.
- fund raising: collecting donations and handling financial paperwork, researching opportunities, drafting letters and hosting parties to raise money.
- research and education: individuals research a particular issue, topic, or local organization and present the findings to the group at a pre-departure meeting.

Consider working with other Alternative Break trip groups so that your committee members (or individuals) have others to share ideas with.
Finding a Site

Not Sure Where to Head To?

Start by considering these questions:

- What are your objectives? What issues do you want to explore? What kind of service work do you have in mind?
- What social justice issue interests you?
- Where, geographically, would you like to be? Can you get there?
- What is your ideal budget?
- What will your role as an outsider be and how can you best fill that role?
- What is the cost per participant?
- Are the dates compatible with university policy (i.e., do not conflict with class schedules)?
- What organizational connections do you have or can you create in the country selected?

A number of resources are available on campus:

- the Community Service Center (CSC), MGC 273
- the Community Action and Social Justice Coalition (CASJC), Kay Spiritual Life Center
- International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS), Butler 410
- Student Activities, MGC 271
- the university chaplain's office, Kay Spiritual Life Center

Still need ideas?

- For domestic trips, Break Away offers a comprehensive listing through their site bank (www.alternativebreaks.com). AU is a member—ask CSC for log-in access.
- For international trips, try:
  - Global Exchange, www.globalexchange.org
  - International Volunteers for Peace, www.vfp.org
  - Witness for Peace, www.witnessforpeace.org
  - Organizations listed in The International Directory of Volunteer Work
  - Building Bridges Coalition, www.wevolunteer.net

Questions to ask yourself:

- Are you able to set-up the trip on your own or do the realities of the site necessitate partnering with an outside organization?
- Will local groups or community partners trust you as outsiders and be candid or would you need a third party to facilitate this?
- Is it cost effective or prohibitive to have an organization arrange your logistics?
Working with Your On-Site Host or Partner

Your site host plays a critical role in your experience, and you cannot overlook or overestimate the importance of your relationship with your on-site contacts. As you communicate with them, keep the following in mind:

- Alternative Break coordinator: reviews with you what the contract essentials need to be.
- Host contacts: be sure to summarize your expectations in writing and review them in advance to ensure that you have a shared understanding.

Strive for a mutually beneficial relationship. Respect each other’s time, organizational and constituent needs, and the validity of your respective objectives and concerns.

In your early discussions, be sure to talk about these issues:

**Housing.** Will the host organization provide it for you? Can they recommend churches, hostels, campgrounds, or schools that might offer a safe, inexpensive place to stay? Where can you shower? Will you be in private rooms with beds and linens or on a multi-purpose room floor in sleeping bags with one common sleep space? Are there curfews or other rules?

**Cost.** What fees are associated with partnering with this host? Who is the money going to?

**Meals.** What meals can they provide? Can they accommodate vegetarian and other special diets? Can you store groceries and prepare your own meals? Where can you find cheap eats?

**Work time vs. free time.** When will you have free time? What time are you expected to start and end your meetings or service projects? What are the local attractions?

**Service.** Does the trip include service projects? What does the host hope to have your group accomplish? What skills are needed? What alternate arrangements can be made in the event of bad weather? Will the host provide an on-site orientation that covers the context of the work and any safety concerns?

**Community interaction.** To what extent will you have the opportunity to interact with a community? Will you engage in service projects with community members? Will the host provide structured opportunities to interact with local community members? Other social activities?

**Education.** Does the trip include educational meetings with local universities, political or religious leaders, or local community organizations?

**On-site fees.** What is included? What forms of payment are accepted? If there is no set fee, is an honorarium or customary donation expected?

**Transportation.** Who is responsible for on-site transportation? Is the transportation fee all inclusive (gas, parking, driver, insurance, etc.)? Students must be AUTO certified to drive a van.
Safety and liability. What kind of insurance does the organization have? To what extent does it cover your participants? Where are the nearest medical facilities? Will you be under constant supervision? What liability forms need to be completed before you begin?

Communication. Is there a phone number that you can use to receive incoming calls? Fax? Can you send and receive e-mail? What are the costs and restrictions? AU provides all international trips with a cell phone.

Input and flexibility. What are your strategies for accommodating your group’s preferences, desires, and dissatisfactions with on-site activities or conditions?

Reflection. Are on-site leaders willing to conduct reflection-sharing-processing sessions with trip participants? Or will you be responsible?

Relationship posttrip. How will you build consensus and commitment with participants for posttrip processing?

Creating an Itinerary

Consider Your Objectives and the Expectations of Your Participants

As you look to fill your blocks of time during the trip, it is okay to let the schedule evolve throughout your planning process, but it is a good idea to provide updates at each orientation. Be prepared for the fact that everything will not go as planned. Prepare your group to be flexible and shift the schedule as needed.

Timing and Sequencing Play a Big Role

Try to present activities in a logical flow, with appropriate transition activities.

- Move your group from low-risk bonding to high-risk sharing activities.
- How can your speakers build upon each other? How can your participants apply what they are learning?
- When creating your own itinerary, remember to note additional fees, meeting locations, etc., and to schedule daily reviews and reflections. Be sure to schedule some fun activities and leave some unscheduled time for natural group bonding.
- Past experience reveals the importance of developing “intelligent” questions that force participants to question their roles in the communities being studied.
- Be sure that you have a complete itinerary distributed to the group and on record with the vice president of campus life at least two weeks prior to departure.
- In your final itinerary you will need to include a master list of all phone numbers for accommodation and local contacts, as well as detailed directions for getting from one place to the next.
- Always remember that it takes a group of 10 or 15 people significantly longer to do ordinary tasks—such as exchanging money, eating meals, and showering—than it would a single person. Build this extra time into the itinerary.
**Sample On-Site Itineraries**

**Sample #1:**

Date: March 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location or contact</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:00am</td>
<td>Breakfast, preview of the day’s activities</td>
<td>Community Room St. Anthony’s</td>
<td>Cooking &amp; cleaning crews be ON TIME!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00am</td>
<td>Depart for on-site orientation</td>
<td>Meet at the van</td>
<td>Dress for work! Bring cameras, sunscreen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Arrive at our worksite. Sign in &amp; sign waivers. Bob will provide an overview of Habitat for Humanity, our project for the week, and safety on-site.</td>
<td>1234 Main Street (123) 456-7890 (office)</td>
<td>On-site supervisor: Bob the Builder!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noon</td>
<td>Break for lunch</td>
<td>On-site</td>
<td>Prepaid, we’re ordering pizza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45</td>
<td>Back to work until 3:30 Clean up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:00pm</td>
<td>Head back to the church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00pm</td>
<td>Dinner out on the town with the future homeowner &amp; Bob the Builder</td>
<td>Angelo’s 567 Eating Place</td>
<td>Prepaid, family style Italian feast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00pm</td>
<td>Return to church Personal mapping exercise Review of the day … Relax! (use of church piano is OK)</td>
<td>St. Anthony’s</td>
<td>Mandatory activities should be over by 11pm!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample #2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location or contact</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30am</td>
<td>Breakfast, preview of the day’s activities</td>
<td>Hotel café</td>
<td>Prepaid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:30am</td>
<td>Depart for medical clinic</td>
<td>Free Clinic of Mae Sot</td>
<td>Our private bus will pick us up at the hotel. Bring all luggage, secure valuables, bring water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00pm</td>
<td>Arrive just outside of clinic. Lunch at noodle stands.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lunch on your own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:00pm</td>
<td>Meeting with Dr. Linda &amp; Zaw Zaw to tour facility, distribute our donations, &amp; discuss refugee medical needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>No photos please</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:00pm</td>
<td>Check in at Hotel Mae Sot. Traditional Burmese dinner &amp; review of day with Zarni in hotel. Live music nightly!</td>
<td>Hotel Mae Sot Tel. 012-345-6789</td>
<td>Prepaid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Finances

Creating a Budget

Creating a budget for a new Alternative Break destination can be a challenge. The spreadsheet that follows should help you to assess anticipated expenses so that you can set an appropriate fee.

If you are starting from scratch, the following points may be of some help. Start with an ideal, reasonable fee for your program, including travel, food, lodging, and fees. For ballpark ranges, consider:

- a van trip on the East Coast at $150–$300
- a plane trip to Latin America at $900–$1,500
- a trip to Asia at $1,500–$2,000; to Africa, $3,000

Calculate the per-person cost for the smallest possible group size (6) and the largest (15).

Student trip leaders are usually subsidized by the trip participants. Figure out how much the subsidy would have be to cover the cost of your trip. (Faculty and staff trip costs are paid for by the university.)

To determine this, consider the ideal number of participants, including trip leaders, and multiply the per-person cost by the total number of people going on the trip (not including the staff advisor). Subtract two people (for the two student leaders)
and divide the total fee by this number to determine a starting point for the participant fee. This allows you to subsidize the costs of two student trip leaders (e.g., $1,000 x 12 people = $12,000. $12,000 ÷ 10 people = $1,200 participant fee).

Overestimate on the most critical expenses: airfare, lodging, food, and essential fees. From this rough sketch you can start to play with choices.

Call a travel agent and find out how group rates range in price and variations by day. Find out how much a moderate hotel runs vs. a hostel or university housing. Can you prepare your own food, or can you afford dinners out every night? Find out the names of AU preferred-provider travel agents, which should be used first.

Research early for low-fare tickets and available options for ground transportation.

Keep in mind that it will be much harder to raise fees for students who paid a deposit based on a lower-priced trip than it will be to issue refunds when you come in significantly under budget!

Be aware that fund raising is generally not a reliable source of a lot of income, but you should set a goal of how much you realistically think you can raise.

Immunization expenses may be an additional participant expense. While immunizations are the responsibility of each participant, you need to alert participants as to what is required and recommended for the site they will be visiting and the approximate costs for immunizations and medications.

Other additional expenses may include (but are not limited to) visa fees, ground transportation, and airport exit fees.

A sample budget worksheet follows and can be downloaded from the Web site. Go to www.american.edu/altbreak and click on Leader Info. Cut and paste the worksheet to your own file or desktop and edit it to suit your needs.

**Note:** All participants (students, faculty, and staff) are required to be covered under the university’s travel insurance, which costs approximately $10 per person per week. Be sure to include this expense in your budget. You may access policy information and claim forms through the AU portal: www.american.edu/finance/rmo/int_global.html.
### Budget Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenues</th>
<th>charge per group</th>
<th>charge per person</th>
<th>number of persons</th>
<th>total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program Fee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expenses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracting with host</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transportation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Fund Raising

Groups often wish to raise funds. Be sure to check with Student Activities for the most current policies and advice about what fund raisers are permitted to do, as fund raising must be in compliance with government regulations and university policies.

- Fund raising, unfortunately, is not reliable, so don’t count on it as your only funding source.
- Fundraising may consume time better spent on developing your program’s logistics and content, so it may be more efficient to delegate fund raising to a committee of participants.
- Your group may elect, not to organize fund-raising projects together, but to pursue individual efforts to solicit funds from friends and family.

Here are some fund-raising ideas—again, be sure to check with Student Activities for approval first:

- sell goods and handicrafts from the community you are going to visit
- organize a benefit concert—cosponsor with SUB for technical assistance
- organize restaurant nights; e.g., Mongolian BBQ gives a percentage to groups
- bring a vendor to campus and reap a percentage of profit
- create and sell T-shirts related to your trip’s issues
- send letters to friends and family to solicit cash gifts to help defray individual costs—checks should be made out to “American University” and mailed by donor to the Community Service Center, MGC 273, attn: Alternative Breaks

Creating an Account

The Alternative Break coordinator establishes a trip-specific Alternative Break account for approved trips. The student trip leader works closely with the Alternative Break coordinator to monitor and manage the account and the trip budget.

Handling Deposits

The university requires that all funds collected be deposited into an on-campus account. To ensure proper credit of funds, students must complete the Alternative Break Deposit Record form from the Community Service Center (MGC-273) prior to deposit. To reduce risk in handling money, payments made in the form of cash, check, credit card, or money order are to be deposited directly at the Student Accounts office (Asbury 300) using the Alternative Break Deposit Booklet (provided by CSC).

As a guide, set your participants’ deposit for the trip relative to the cost of a nontransferable, nonrefundable plane ticket, or at least 30 percent of your program fee. Consider the per-person vs. shared costs of your trip.

Please meet with the Alternative Break coordinator to set up a payment schedule with the amount and dates that each student on your trip is expected to pay. Note: Payments will need to come in early enough to allow at least two weeks to cut checks.
Refunds

In general, all student deposits are nonrefundable. However, some special cases may warrant a refund.

Be aware that the university reserves the right to make cancellations, changes, and substitutions when the university deems it necessary. In such circumstance, the university will endeavor to refund fees advanced by participants where those fees are uncommitted and recoverable. This notice is included in the Consent and Release Form you will provide participants and should also be included on the payment schedule that participants sign. All refunds, for whatever reason, are made by AU check.

Participants’ refund requests. Participants who cancel and request a refund should do so in writing before your pre-established deadline—a month prior to departure gives you time to adjust your plans accordingly. It may not be possible to provide a refund.

Wait lists. You may create a wait list if you receive more applications than you have spots.

Flexibility. You will have some flexibility in handling refund requests and amounts as long as you have put your standards in writing.

- Always reserve the right to handle each situation on a case-by-case basis.
- Allow yourself enough flexibility to deal with a death in the family, significant illness, or a similar situation.
- Consider the impact of a cancellation on the fees of the other participants.
- Make decisions carefully, since each participant’s fees are helping to subsidize a portion of your leaders’ trips—it will affect the entire trip if you are counting on that in your budget.

Coming in under budget. It will take several months posttrip to reconcile accounts and see if there are extra funds. If your trip comes in significantly under budget, you may want to issue refunds to participants. You may also use extra funds to buy donations for the community you worked with or keep it in the account for future scholarships. Follow the same procedures outlined above and consult with the Alternative Break coordinator.

Making Payments and Accounting for Expenses

Travel cards/One Card. Full-time permanent faculty and staff can request university travel cards with careful advance planning—at least two months is ideal. CSC will work with you and Purchasing to help you meet your needs. Travel cards have fairly tight controls to help guard against abuse and overspending; university travel cards cannot be used for cash advances.

Cash advances. Full-time staff and faculty advisors may request a travel advance of cash. (Go to my.american.edu and click on Finances, then Accounts Payable Forms.) The staff or faculty advisor is then responsible to account for every dollar spent and must provide receipts for major purchases and receipts or an accounting of small purchases where receipts may not be obtained. Use this option carefully—this is a significant responsibility to ask of the staff or faculty advisor. Whatever sums are not accounted for within 30 days will be deducted from the staff or faculty advisor’s salary!
Traveler's checks. Traveler's checks are one option to bring money with you to the destination. Be sure to verify the type of traveler’s check that is accepted in the host country. The advantage of traveler’s checks is that you have a record if they are lost or stolen. The downside is that they are becoming increasingly difficult to cash overseas and cashing them usually entails a fee. While small village vendors will probably not accept traveler’s checks, the vendors in the larger points of transit should. Note: Traveler's checks purchased with university funds will still require tedious record keeping as all funds must be accounted for. Consider requiring all participants to purchase their own traveler's checks so that they are spending their own funds as much as possible.

Prepaying for items and services. You can prepay vendors who will accept purchase orders, wire transfers, or university checks. This is ideal as you do not need to travel with large amounts of cash. You'll need an order form, invoice, or contract to submit 2–3 weeks before you actually need the check for payment. Always consult with the Alternative Break coordinator. Note: Debit cards typically limit how much can be withdrawn on a given day. Be mindful of time differences and daily maximums. If you withdraw money, it will be on the U.S. bank's 24-hour day.

Using ATMs in foreign countries. Debit cards typically limit how much can be withdrawn on a given day. Be mindful of time differences and daily maximums. If you withdraw money, it will be on the U.S. bank's 24-hour day. Remember there is a transaction fee and the bank will decide which exchange rate to use.

Contracting “package” deals. Probably the easiest way to handle expenses is to contract with your host organization. Agree upon a set fee per person or per group that will cover local travel, accommodations, meals, permits and entry fees, and supplies. While you may pay a slight bit more, you will save significant time in trying to collect and organize receipts—especially if you are traveling to developing countries, where it is particularly difficult to get receipts from small vendors. The Alternative Break coordinator, along with the controller's office, will need to approve and process your contract in advance, but they can also help you draft an agreement. Remember—you are not authorized to sign contracts on behalf of your trip.

Fuel costs. If you are traveling domestically by van, gas can be a significant cost. University purchasing cards are not programmed to allow use at gas stations. However, we do have an arrangement with Citgo locally to fuel our vehicles using coded gas cards. The best method for paying domestic fuel costs is the university travel card (see travel cards above).

Carrying money on the ground. Carrying cash on the ground must be done with the utmost care. You should always keep the money in a money belt around your waist and inside your clothes, never in a purse or a pocket that can be snatched or picked. You may want to divide the money between the student trip leaders and the staff advisor, so not one person has all of it, though ultimately the staff advisor is responsible for reconciling the cash advance. If you are staying in a hotel with a safe, keep most of the money locked up. Remember to get receipts for everything. Buy a blank book of receipts to provide to businesses that do not have their own receipts. You will need to keep track of daily expenditures and should sit down with your co-leaders every day to go over everything you have spent and review your balance.
Your Participants

Recruiting Participants

As an institution that values diversity, we must strive to recruit a pool of student participants who represent a range of perspectives, experiences, backgrounds, and beliefs. In order to reach out, consider the following recruitment tools:

- **Today@ AU**: submit copy by noon two workdays before requested publication date via my.american.edu under Activities and Events, http://domino.american.edu/AU/eNews/eNews.nsf/about?OpenPage
- **The Eagle**: post on the calendar and try to get them to write a story
- **American Today**: print and online: post on AU Datebook and try to get an article published on your trip
- **Student Involvement Fair**: stand at the Alternative Break table with materials and photos advertising your trip.
- **Listservs**: consider academic departments, clubs, and other target constituencies (i.e., administrative units, such as GLBTA, ISSS, and MA; academic units, like SIS; student clubs and organizations, like the CASJC)
- **Flyers and ¼ sheets**: UPS Store will shrink your 8½ x11 flyer to ¼ sheets, print the appropriate amount for each residence hall and distribute them for you! If you include the Community Service Center contact info, your flyers do not need approval.
- **Announcements and presentations**: in classes and club meetings
- **Table**: in Mary Graydon Center at your fund raisers and major campus events or at panels and presentations that are covering similar issues. The Alternative Break coordinator can reserve a table for you.
- **Banners**: hung in residence hall windows, Sports Center parking garage
- **Information sessions**: advertise them well!
- **Posters, flyers, and applications**: in various offices across campus, such as the offices of Multicultural Affairs, Disability Support Services, International Student Services, Kay Spiritual Life Center, and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Ally Resource Center.
- **Word of mouth**: excitement is contagious . . . talk about your trip often!

Selecting Participants

Once you have received the copies of your applications from the Community Service Center, you are responsible for reviewing them, conducting interviews, and selecting appropriate participants for your trip. You will need to give the Alternative Break coordinator a list of your final participants. You should notify them in writing, asking them to confirm that they would still like to go. If more than enough people applied, you should consider making a waiting list in case some people drop out.
Some things to consider while reading the applications:

**Diversity.** Groups benefit from diversity in a variety of ways—multiple opinions, view points, and life perspectives can add depth to the shared experience of the group.
- racial and ethnic diversity, including international students
- school and major
- gender
- year: undergrad vs. grad

**Suitability with group.** Participants must work well together, be able to travel well together, and have similar goals of social justice.
- willingness to learn
- dedication to social justice issues
- language ability (if relevant)
- past travel experience
- reasons for wanting to go on trip

You will want to be careful to discern the motivation for students to go on the trip—to have fun? for the location rather than the issues? The reason the trips are “alternative” is they involve meaningful and activist-oriented work. A student who doesn't understand and support the mission will affect the entire group dynamics.

**Developing the Academic Component**

There are several ways participants and leaders can receive academic credit for their Alternative Break trip. You should discuss your ideas with the Alternative Break coordinator and your trip participants.
- Students can design their own independent study and work out a project with a professor in their department. The student trip leader can also identify a professor that several students on the trip can work with.
- Students can also sign up for the SIS-386 class, as long as a professor has been identified to teach the class. Each section (001, 002, etc.) is for a different trip and works very much like an independent study with each student working on their own research and a project. This option needs to be worked out with the Alternative Break coordinator far in advance.
- Students can create an Alternative Break course that meets on a weekly basis with a syllabus and a curriculum that may cross-cut issues in several trips where students can learn together. An example would be a class on global social movements that addresses the history, background, and current events of several different regional conflicts.

**Orientation Guidelines**

All international activities must include a pre-departure orientation (*International Travel Policy, Appendix A*). Persons wishing to participate are required to attend the pre-departure meetings for the Alternative Break trip. Recent experience suggests that eight weekly sessions are necessary in addition to the general Alternative Break information session.

The following suggested template for orientation programs has been developed to meet university travel guidelines and incorporates lessons learned from previous trips.
Alternative Break General Information Session

The “info session” is designed to provide an overview of each trip option for any given season (i.e., spring break, winter break, or summer). The session will cover proposed fees, dates, itineraries, and the application.

You might want to organize a large-group icebreaker designed to foster a discussion about cross-cultural understanding in a broad context in order to challenge potential participants to recognize that Alternative Break trips will place them in generally unfamiliar cultural settings.

Pre-departure Orientation Sessions—A General Outline

Each session should include at least one ice-breaker or group-bonding activity to begin the process of establishing group cohesion. **Note:** When scheduling meetings, trip leaders should make it a priority to hold sessions at a time when every participant is available. For example, Sunday night may be the only time everyone is free.

**Information packets.** At either the first or second meeting, you should give your participants an information packet that contains maps and destination information; news articles about the region, social justice issues, and any organizations you will be working with; health, safety, and immunization information; a packing list; weather information; and the itinerary.

**Learning objectives.** When planning your pre-departure sessions, and your trip in general, it is important to articulate what you hope students will learn from participating in the activity. You should write out the objectives for each session.

Planning the Eight Sessions

Be creative. These sessions should be fun and interactive.

**Session 1: Introductions and expectations.** This first site-specific orientation program will offer participants a chance to meet each other, review more detailed itineraries, and discuss their expectations for the program. A good exercise is to have students write on a flip chart the topics or questions that they would like to or expect to explore during the trip. Type up the list and distribute to the students—they will probably add to the list as they do more pre-departure research, and it is a good document to take along on the trip to assess if their questions got answered.

- Discuss the payment plan, how payments are made, when the deadlines are, and the refund policy. This should also all be given to participants in writing—and have them sign the agreement acknowledging that they understand the payment plan.
- Give students the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommendations for immunizations—they can look it up at: www.cdc.gov. For many countries, students will need to start getting immunizations two months before departure.
- Go over visa requirements. Check with the host country’s embassy here in D.C. and its Web site.
- To meet university travel requirements, cover:
  - appropriate and expected behavior for participants, including university and host-country alcohol and drug policy
  - potential social, political, economic, and legal risks involved in the experience
  - emergency procedures in case of individual or group incidents (*International Travel Policy*, Appendix A)
Session 2: Theme information. This can entail several sessions which address the socio-economic, political, and cultural contexts in which the group will serve on-site, as well as social justice. This is required content for both domestic and international programs.

Session 3: Trip details. Keep participants informed and move forward.
- continue discussing trip itinerary, students’ expectations
- form committees to work on planning trip, e.g., fund raising
- work on group cohesion, bonding, trust activities

Session 4: Cross-cultural training. Move from general concepts to those specific to your trip.
- Cultural—general concepts: concepts of time, personal space, communication, high context vs. low context, etc., can be taught in a fun and interactive manner—please see the Community Service Center for ideas.
- Culture—site-specific concepts: the particular culture of your destination
  - Ask experts on the region—think about returned Peace Corps volunteers, anthropologists, SIS—to outline general cultural traits.
  - Assign readings and show movies about your destination—if you show a movie, for copyright regulations, it must be shown with a professor present and include a discussion afterward.
  - Go to a restaurant that serves food from that region, or better yet have someone from that region come in to teach your group to cook.
  - Play music and maybe have someone teach a traditional dance from that region.

Session 5: Culture shock. Organize a session on culture shock so participants are aware of what to look out for in their own reactions to a new culture. As student trip leader you should be on the lookout for culture shock. It may come on slowly or it may even hit the most in the days that follow your group’s return. Be prepared to play the “safe harbor” and help participants see that culture shock is normal and that talking about it may help. There are different stages leading up to cultural adaptation (adapted from Maximizing Study Abroad, see Appendix B). In the short amount of time of your trip, you may only get to stage one or two.
- Stage One: Cultural Euphoria: Sometimes called the “honeymoon stage,” this is when you first arrive and everything is new and exciting. You are eager to explore. While this may sound like a nice stage to be in, it is often associated with a superficial analysis and focusing only on visible aspects of the culture. Your interpretations aren’t necessarily realistic in this stage.
- Stage Two: Cultural Confrontation: This is typically the most difficult stage, when you may view everything in the host culture in a negative light and be confused and frustrated. This is normal as you develop your own strategies for coping with cultural differences.

Break Away lists these symptoms of cultural shock (Site Leader Survival Manual):
- extreme tiredness
- extreme homesickness
- tendency to stereotype individuals in the host culture
- tendency to want to spend all your time with people of your own culture and speaking your own language
- reading all day
• extreme boredom and lack of energy
• feeling irritable and confused
• tendency to talk negatively about the host culture, or to blame everything that goes wrong on “them”

To these can be added the tendency to talk negatively about our own culture, or to blame everything that is wrong on our own government’s foreign policy.

Make sure participants are aware of these reactions and to communicate well with participants on the trip if any of these responses occur.

**Session 6: Guest speaker.** There are many experts on the regions and themes of Alternative Break trips at AU and in the D.C. community. Consider bringing someone in to talk with your group. This is also a great opportunity to encourage students to have a good list of questions before similar meetings they will have on site during the trip. Invite someone who can teach participants useful phrases of the local language and cultural norms.

**Session 7: State Department.** The State Department or another source of regional information can discuss safety issues and tips and medical issues, such as food and drinking water safety, malaria, and other common diseases in the area. Within the final two weeks prior to departure, this session should:

• address all final administrative tasks
• provide the most current itinerary
• review policies and emergency procedures coupled with additional team-building exercises

**Session 8: Packing list.** Reserve this session to discuss packing and last-minute questions. (The packing list should have been distributed much earlier in the Information Packet handed out in the first or second session.)

**Session x: Other session ideas.** Organize a community service day for your group, related to the topic of your trip; e.g., if you will be learning about HIV/AIDS on your trip, volunteer with or visit a D.C. organization that works with HIV/AIDS here.

**On-Site Orientation**

Each program may actually require several on-site orientations as participants travel or take on new tasks. On-site orientations should address basic needs, history, points of reference, and opportunities to reflect on site-specific cultural concerns. This is the time to review the learning objectives for the trip, going over what you hope participants will learn during the trip.

**On-site debriefing or reflection sessions.** We suggest nightly sessions to review the day’s activities, experiences, and reactions and to preview the plans for the next day.

• Participants need to be encouraged to share openly, and team leaders need to be prepared to conduct one-on-one sessions with individuals who may not want to reflect in an open group setting. It is often helpful to conduct “check-in” sessions during which participants are encouraged to share their current state of mind, knowing that fellow group members will simply listen and not make comments. For useful questions and prompts for reflection and discussions, see Appendix A.
• You will want to assess the learning outcomes and see if the expected learning is taking place.
**Posttrip**

**Returning home (re-entry) orientation.** Returning home can bring reverse culture shock, a real experience that can profoundly affect how participants integrate an Alternative Break into their lives. For most, Alternative Breaks are transformative experiences—we don't realize their full impact until some time later. Each program should schedule at least one structured gathering that is communicated to participants prior to departure. Participants need to be encouraged to share openly, and team leaders need to be prepared to conduct one-on-one sessions with individuals who may not want to reflect in an open group setting. Suggested topics for posttrip debriefing:

- What worked, what didn't?
- What was learned?
- Who should receive “thank-you” follow-ups?
- Were commitments made that require follow-ups?
- Recommendations for future trips?
- How can academic credit and projects be conducted during and after trips to help participants continue to learn about their trip's subjects?
- As an Alternative Break alumnus, would you like to be involved in future trips?
- Would you like to be involved in the Alternative Break Club or the Advisory Board?
- Other questions?

**Travel Safety and Emergency Procedures**

In the event of an emergency during a Campus Life–sponsored activity, the responsible staff advisors should contact the sponsoring office or, if it's after business hours, contact Public Safety at 202-885-3636. Participants on an Alternative Break trip should contact the Community Service Center at 202-885-7378 or the list of staff members handed out before departure.

The American University *International Travel Policy* outlines the following emergency procedures for international travel:

- Contact the nearest U.S. consular service for direct assistance.
- Contact American University's on-site program director or staff advisor.
- If medical attention is necessary, go to the nearest hospital or clinic or to the service provider recommended by the participant's health insurance company. All programs involving international travel require a separate travel insurance which carries its own procedure for medical attention as well as emergency evacuations. For details, review the Global Accident and Health Protection Coverage documents at www.american.edu/finance/rmo/insurance.html. The cost is subject to change; currently it is approximately $10 per week to be paid by participants.
- If participants are covered by private insurance in the United States, participants should know and follow the proper procedures for health and accident claims while overseas.
- If medical attention is needed, the participant should contact the international travel insurance provider, AceUSA:
  - International Travel Policy #GLM NO 0173587
  - Inside the United States or Canada 1-800-766-8206
  - Outside the United States or Canada, call collect 1-202-659-7777
  - www.american.edu/finance/rmo/insurance.html
The Office of Risk Management (ext. 3284) is the key campus resource in assessing risk for your program, domestic or international. In addition to reviewing contracts and providing advisement, the staff can provide the most recent travel advisories and the most accurate in-country emergency contacts for travelers (embassies and consulates). The Office of Campus Life (ext. 3310) will consult with Risk Management in assessing risk for your program.

Your own emergency protocol should be developed with your co-leaders and partners and communicated appropriately to participants. Consider and plan for a range of scenarios, such as:

- a participant requires an overnight hospital stay, but your group is scheduled to depart on another leg of your journey
- who should attend to individuals vs. the remaining group, who should communicate with the university and the appropriate authorities
- a participant loses a passport
- a participant gets word of a sudden family emergency and wants to go home
- political unrest increases the risk of violence
- your site is in the path of a natural disaster in the making
- the envelope containing your emergency money is stolen
- a group of participants violate local laws and are arrested
- one of your vans breaks down in the late evening, hours from your destination

Reminders

You'll be better prepared to prevent or deal with emergencies if you follow these rules:

- Always carry on your person a first aid kit and copies of student health insurance and passports.
- Always strive to keep gas tanks filled to at least ¼ tank, check the oil before major trips, and be sure that you have a spare tire.
- Have students leave copies of credit cards, travelers checks, passports, and, if applicable, visas with the person identified as the emergency contact on the Consent and Release Form or a family member or friend known by the contact person.
- Prepay, whenever possible, such on-site expenses as lodging and transportation.
- If it is necessary to carry large sums of cash, divide the cash among the co-leaders and carry it in money belts or in various pieces of carry-on luggage.
Meeting University Requirements

The following routing sheet outlines the documentation required for approval of Alternative Break trips. Domestic trips will not require as much information.

1. Preliminary Approval
   - The Leader Application/Trip Proposal form is to be completed by the student trip leader and submitted to the Alternative Break coordinator in the Community Service Center.
   - Proposals are reviewed by the Alternative Break Review Committee (composed of the Alternative Break coordinator, past trip leaders, staff, and faculty).
   - Approved requests are forwarded to the assistant vice president of campus life (AVPCL).
   - The AVPCL approves or disapproves the proposal and returns it to the Alternative Break coordinator.
     - For approved trips, the Alternative Break coordinator continues advisement with the student trip leaders.
     - For disapproved trips, the Alternative Break coordinator provides consultation.

   The following information is required for preliminary approval:
   - Provided by student trip leaders:
     - proposed destination, dates, fees, number of participants
     - student trip leaders and faculty or staff advisors
     - purpose of trip
     - proposed itinerary (brief, noting in-country destinations)
     - orientation plan (outline of pre-departure, on-site, and re-entry in final form)
     - academic credit ideas
     - Community Service-Learning project (add-on credit)
   - Provided by the Alternative Break coordinator
     - travel advisories
       - State Department
       - iJet (via AU Risk Management)
     - emergency procedures
     - Travel Insurance Procedures, International Trips only
       - participant names and insurance fees to be submitted to office of Risk Management

2. Final Approval
   - The Final Itinerary Approval form is completed by student trip leaders and faculty or staff advisors and submitted to the Alternative Break coordinator.
   - The Alternative Break coordinator reviews the form for accuracy and completeness and forwards the following to the assistant vice president of campus life (AVPCL):
     - The appropriately completed Final Itinerary Approval form
     - A Consent and Release Agreement for each trip participant
     - For an international trip, a photocopy verifying a valid passport and visa of each participant
     - Register your trip and consult consular information sheets with the U.S. State Department: https://travelregistration.state.gov
3. **Obtaining necessary forms**
   - Make copies of passports and visas—leave one set on campus and travel with another set
   - Community Service Center
   - American University Alternative Break Web site: http://www.american.edu/altbreak

4. **Route copies of completed forms**
   - Originals to vice president of campus life (to be held for three years)
   - Copies to Alternative Break office and to the Office of International Affairs
   - Be sure to include forms for leaders and advisors as well.

5. **Detailed itinerary with on-site contact information**
   - must be provided to all participants and their parents (in a parent letter)
   - must be left with the Office of Vice President of Campus Life
   - The Alternative Break office will always keep copies.

6. **Account for all expenses**
   - Be sure that you have receipts for all expenses and that all vendors have been paid. For small expenditures where receipts may not be obtainable, keep records indicating date, expense, purpose.

**Media and Documentation**

**Media Relations**

In many ways, the Alternative Break program captures the mission and unique capabilities of American University. News of our students volunteering far from home and learning by doing shapes the public image of AU and its graduates. The program can benefit by building a strong reputation in the larger community and by spreading the word on campus.

To take full advantage of the university’s media resources, contact Media Relations (aumedia@american.edu) early in your planning. They can help in writing and circulating media releases in Washington, D.C., the communities you visit, and the hometown media outlets of your participants. You might want to delegate the task of writing a press release to the group.

**Documentation**

Similarly, documenting your trip and experiences can provide you with useful tools in recruiting for and building future Alternative Break trips. Creating your mementos can also offer your group exciting opportunities for reflection, group bonding, and closure. Consider creating materials that can be displayed in Mary Graydon Center or the library, organizing a panel, creating a video to run on A-TV, posting a Web site. The possibilities are endless!
Tips on building in documentation (Arnold 1991):

- Assume your experience is valuable to someone else.
- Raise the issue of documentation in the planning process.
- Decide in advance who will use the information and how.
- Name particular persons and groups who may be interested in the report.
- Take the resources available (financial, material, human) into account.
- Based on the above decisions, decide on the format (print, video, photos, manual, or descriptive), when to produce the document (during or after the break trip), and what its basic structure and content will include.
- Decide who will be responsible for documentation during the session and for pulling the material together following the event.
- Make a realistic estimate of the time needed to turn the raw material into a usable document.
- Identify needed resources (financial, material, human).
- Maintain a group journal that is passed among all participants for entries and sharing—bring a notebook that can be shared.
- Keep a personal journal with notes and reflections (this may useful for academic work).
- Make a scrapbook with photos, artistic creations, and memorabilia from the trip.
- Keep a field journal that documents meetings and interviews (it would be useful to do a workshop for your participants on conducting ethnographic field research).
ON THE TRIP

Debriefing and Reflection Sessions

An essential component of Alternative Break trips is debriefing and reflection time. Students should take this opportunity to process what they have been learning, seeing, feeling, and experiencing during the day. Most trips have regular debriefing times scheduled into their itinerary, every day or every other day. You will have to sense the needs of your group to see how often you will hold these discussions. Please see Appendix A for techniques in how to lead the debriefing sessions.

Service Projects

Community service projects are important in order to gain firsthand experience working with the community with the intention of gaining an appreciation of the realities they face, as well as to demonstrate your willingness to contribute your labor to solutions to the problems. Projects should be planned out well in advance in conjunction with your community partner organizations. Make sure there is a concrete project to work on. Determine what materials or supplies you will need. It is most productive for an equal exchange to work alongside community members on a project together. Past projects include outreach to street children in Zambia, building a fence around a medicinal plant garden with community members in Ecuador, AIDS awareness education tabling in Belize, and arts and crafts projects with Burmese refugee children in Thailand.

Group Activities

It is important to have some structured group time during the evenings on your trip so that alcohol does not become a default activity. Some activities you might want to plan are:

- cultural performances
- sight-seeing
- potluck or community dinner (invite a member of the community to show you how to cook local food)
- group building games
- star gazing
- charades
- paint a quilt or make an art project to leave with the community as a gift (you can paint an old sheet with quotes, your names, etc.)
- movie night—try to see a documentary or local movie
- open forum with community members
Selecting Roommates

This is something you may want to think about before you depart. Do you want people to select their own roommates? Do you want to have gender segregated or mixed rooms? Do you want to avoid cliques or groups forming by randomly selecting roommates by a lottery system? You can switch roommates each time you change cities. Or you can draw names from a hat to mix it up a bit.

Maintaining a Field Journal

Beyond simply recording a list of what was done that day, or writing about your feelings, it is important to keep a thorough field journal that details people you met with, what you learned, thoughts, observations, and analysis. This can serve for future research or can be an academic product in and of itself, if it is done in a rigorous manner. It can combine creative narrative sections, with details of activities, as well as your impressions of what you have seen and experienced. Remember to differentiate between objective observations and subjective analysis. Try to write at least one entry every day.

For example:

- Observation: The women wear black wrap-around skirts with hand-embroidered white blouses and a blue scarf on their heads. On their feet they wear cotton slip-on shoes tied around their ankles.
- Analysis: It appears that the women are the carriers of the traditions because they wear traditional dress, and since the men wear Western clothes they must be acculturated.
POSTTRIP

Activism and Community Involvement

Once you return from your trip, the real work begins. Depending on what issue your trip explored, there are many ways to become involved in activism based on your hopefully transformative experiences during your break. Washington, D.C., has a wealth of organizations and community groups with which to get involved. The Community Service Center has issue-based directory handouts of some of the organizations to work with in D.C. Some examples of ways in which returned Alternative Break trip participants have continued working toward social change follow:

- **Burma Border trip:** Students worked towards a successful divestment campaign of a large company that had been doing business with the Burmese dictatorship. They also brought former political prisoners to speak on the AU campus.

- **U.S.-Mexico Border trip:** Students participated in immigration rights rallies, and several students did summer internships with organizations they worked with on the trip.

- **Guatemala Fair Trade trip:** Before the trip, student leaders had worked to bring a fair trade coffee company to the AU campus instead of Starbucks. Participants then went to work on the coffee plantations that supply the fair trade coffee to AU.

- **Brazil Landless Peasants Movement trip:** Student activists marched to the Brazilian Embassy in Washington, D.C., which was shown on Brazilian television. They also erected a tent city and held a teach-in on AU’s campus.

- **Zambia HIV/AIDS trip:** Students raised money and participated in the DC AIDS walk sponsored by the Whitman/Walker Clinic and did a presentation for World AIDS Day.

Evaluating the Trip

Students will fill out the Alternative Break evaluations, which should then be used to inform your final report to the Community Service Center. In this report you should incorporate thoughts on what went well, what could be improved, suggestions for next year, and any other comments you’d like to share about the trip. You should also include your observations on the student learning that took place on the trip. The evaluations are due one month after return (same as the cash advance reconciliations).

Follow-up and Thank-You letters

There are probably a plethora of people you worked with who helped to make your trip happen—from the staff or faculty advisor and local contacts, to the bus driver and community organizations—who need to be thanked personally. It is a good idea to send them a thank-you letter once you return home, signed by the entire group if you can. Another very nice gesture is to send photographs to people you met along the way. If you promised pictures, make sure to follow through!
APPENDIXES
A: TRAINING CONCEPTS AND EXERCISES

Group Dynamics

**Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, Transforming . . .**

Groups tend to go through these four stages as they interact over time. As a facilitator, you should be able to recognize each and what you can do to get the group to work together. The following observations and suggestions are drawn from *The Break Away Site Leader Survival Manual*.

**Forming:** As a group of people first get together, “usually everyone is quiet, engaging in very simple conversation. There may also be some formality and awkwardness at this stage. It feels like everyone is walking on eggshells trying to sniff each other out.” They will look to you to review the program’s goals and rules. As the group’s facilitator, you also help to break the ice. Icebreakers and other activities will help with introductions and “will start to build a safe space of trust and support within the group.”

**Storming:** It is perfectly natural—indeed, normal—for tensions to arise in a group. This can be further aggravated in a group that has traveled to an unfamiliar place, is tired, and is living without their normal amenities. As individuals vent, the group can become polarized and lose focus on the goals of the program. As the facilitator, your role “should be that of a safe harbor,” listening to concerns and helping to direct energies towards conflict resolution. At this stage, you may need to use role playing to process conflict, reserve time for in-depth and structured group discussions, and hold one-on-one meetings to solicit input from those not willing to share in a group setting.

**Norming:** “After venting the tension of being with new people in unfamiliar circumstances, the participants will begin to find identities within the group.” At this stage, the group may be testing the waters, resulting in power struggles and cliques. Afraid of another storming period, participants may not want to deal with issues directly, creating new conflicts. At this stage, your patience may by tried, but “your role here is that of a teacher that works to help the group empower itself to act.” While the group may want to split, try planning activities that will keep everyone together. Keep mixing up smaller groups.

**Performing:** When participants share vision and purpose and learn how to deal with conflicts and their own identities, they reach the productive performing stage. At this point, you play the role of the “reinforcer,” challenging the group to make their own decisions and to reflect on their experiences. Explore social issues critically, presenting different perspectives and ideas.

**Transforming:** “After the break, participants often are anxious about coming back to campus. They might be nostalgic and afraid of losing the intimacy they had as a group on the trip. This anxiety could lead to withdrawal, detachment, or a denial of the success of the break.” Your role now is to play “coach,” planning group reunion activities and helping participants to continue to stay connected to the service and issues they encountered on the break. Help the group to find ways to document their experiences and channel their energy towards continued action on campus.
Facilitation Exercises

Introductions and Name Games

Alphabetical or birthday lineup: Invite participants to arrange themselves in alphabetical order by their first names. This task forces participants to find out other names in the group. Or do a nonverbal name lineup as a way to review names after participants have introduced themselves in conventional fashion. Ask participants to line up in alphabetical order by their first names without talking to each other. (Silberman, 1999) A popular variation is to have the group assemble by birth date without speaking.

About my name: It’s hard for most people to remember names but fairly easy to make names more memorable. Our names carry importance for us on different levels and for different reasons. Have participants, in turn, tell the group about their name. Participants may share how their name was chosen, how their marital or family status affected their name, a nickname, or funny stories about how their name has been understood (or misunderstood). This exercise helps participants to listen attentively to a person’s name in a way that values using the name correctly. Set time limits if necessary.

Silly (or serious) superlatives: Ask participants to introduce themselves with a superlative that starts with the same letter as the first letter of their name. Joyous Jane or Ridiculous Ron can reveal a lot about their personalities, and other participants will have one other trigger to help them remember names.

Getting to Know You

Two truths and a lie: Give participants a few minutes to think of two true statements about themselves and one false statement. The idea is that you chose true statements that reveal details that others would never believe to be true—I have a twin brother, I was a child actor, I’ve never traveled outside of my home state, etc. Participants then guess which of the three statements is a lie.

Scar (or tattoo) stories: This one tends to happen in most newly formed groups anyway—and doesn’t require any structure at all! Almost everyone has a scar and a silly (or scary) story to go with it. Share as you will . . . .

Skittles: Pass a bag of Skittles (or M&M’s) and invite participants to help themselves. Then announce that for each piece of candy, they need to share information about themselves! Use the colors to categorize the information. For example, “for every green candy, tell us about a time you were embarrassed; for every red candy, tell us one of your pet peeves,” etc. This can also be done with a roll of toilet paper, with each square representing one thing about themselves.

Personal maps or timelines: Use this exercise on-site. You’ll need paper and some crafty supplies. Give each participant 20–30 minutes to create a representation of how they arrived at this place. Allow each participant to share (set time limits as needed). This is a great exercise to reveal a person’s family life, major influences and decisions, and philosophies—many participants find that they have surprising similarities with each other.
Energizers

**Jedi Knight.** The group sits in chairs with one member in the middle. Whenever two people make eye contact, they **must** switch chairs. The person in the middle tries to get a chair—there should always be one fewer chairs than participants.

**Three-person machine.** Form groups of three. Each group designs and acts out a machine, such as a sewing machine, washing machine, or pencil sharpener, for the whole group to guess. (Coover, 1985)

**A strong wind blows.** The group sits in a circle with one person standing in the middle. There should be exactly one chair fewer than participants. The person in the middle says “A strong wind blows for everyone with . . .” something that people may have in common—glasses, a brother, short hair, etc. All the people for whom this is true must get up and switch places, leaving one person standing in the middle. They start over again.

Affirmations

**Warm fuzzies.** Each person in the group has a paper bag with his or her name on it. Everyone writes one positive thing on a slip of paper about each person and drops it in their bag. This is a good activity for those who may not be as comfortable speaking in public—it makes everyone feel they have something positive to contribute to the group.

**Cheyenne initiation rite.** (From *The Break Away Site Leader Survival Manual.*) Have your group sit in a circle. Starting with a volunteer (not a facilitator if you can help it), a person listens while group members speak honestly on what they think of the person. In the actual Cheyenne rite, the member picks three people to speak on his or her behalf. Try writing the affirmations down (silently or from spoken word). This activity is worth the extra time it may take. It really cements the personal interaction side of an experience.

**Thank you.** Bring to the meeting enough index cards for each participant to collect one card from each other participant. Give each person an envelope (large enough for the cards) and enough index cards to pass one to everyone else in the group—if the group is six people, each person should get five cards. Ask each participant to write his or her name on the address side of the envelope and pass the envelope to the person on his or her right. Tell the group to read the name on the envelope and complete the following sentence on one of the cards in reference to the person whose name is on the envelope: “Thank you for . . .” Each person puts the card in the envelope and passes it to the right without reading the other cards in it. Continue until each person receives his or her envelope. (Silberman, 1999)

Content and Conflict Exercise

**Group sit.** Have all participants form a tight circle, standing shoulder to shoulder and facing the center. At your word, everyone should turn to the right so that they are facing front to back. Instruct the group to take a step toward the center to make the circle tighter still. At your signal, everyone will sit and the entire group will be sitting literally in each other's laps. Once you master this motion, try getting the circle to move—instruct participants to move their right leg, left leg, etc.
Talking about Conflicts and Issues

If you’re not a practiced facilitator, take on discussions of race and power carefully. For information about social justice concerns, you may want to explore additional training resources. (See Arnold and Coover in Appendix B.)

Continuum/four corners. Also known as “forced choice,” this exercise helps to prompt lively discussions as you ask participants to physically align themselves according to their opinions. In the four corners version, you mark four corners for “strongly agree,” “agree,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree.” Put forth a statement and direct participants to move to the corner that represents their opinion. Facilitate a discussion with participants in place and allow for individuals to move to different corners as they are influenced by the arguments presented. Your statements need to be created to invite debate. It’s ok to be deliberately vague and to refuse to offer clear definitions. Let those subtleties in understanding fuel the discussion as they show how we vary in our assumptions. Statement examples:

- Women should be able to have any job that men can have.
- The Civil Rights movement achieved its dream.
- Community service is just a band-aid and doesn’t address the root causes of social problems.
- I participate in community service because it makes me feel good.
- Alcohol abuse is not a major problem on our campus.
- HIV/AIDS prevention should be abstinence only.
- The United States has not played a role in the economic situation in Central America.

You get the idea—tailor it to the theme of your trip.

For the Continuum variation, create only a line with ends marked “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” (use a rope, two trees, a curb, etc.). In the line version, you are asking participants to listen to each other carefully as they respond and to move themselves along the line. (Silberman, 1999)

Koo Stick. In Native American tribal councils, when controversial issues or serious conflicts needed resolution, the Talking Stick was employed. The stick, made by the council leader, or by the entire tribe, was a symbol of oneness, not only signifying the importance of the meeting and the commitment of the people, but also allowing equal time for all and regulating each speaker’s behavior. Have your participants collaborate in making a stick, or use a simple twig, a ball, or some other object that your group responds to. The rules for using the stick are:

- Only the person holding the stick may speak.
- He or she must speak briefly and to the point.
- A participant may pass the stick along if he or she has nothing to say.
- The speaker may conclude by saying “ho,” and the participants may indicate that they have listened by responding “ho” (this part is often left out without defeating the purpose!).

Variation: the Conch Shell was similarly used by Golding in his book Lord of the Flies (Break Away; Silberman, 1999).
**Vision gallery.** When working for social change, goals may seem abstract. To help a group to craft measurable goals, the vision gallery challenges participants to actually draw what their community would look like if they were successful. For instance, where crime is a problem, participants may draw what their neighborhood would look like if crime were no longer a threat. The pictures might show houses without bars on windows, children playing happily on the playground, neighbors making eye contact and talking in the street, etc. The resulting picture can be used to offer signals that the group is making progress. In the time span of an Alternative Break, such pictures (developed by individuals or groups) can help participants to think of complex, related issues and can frame the discussion in the positive realm of possibilities rather than falling to discouraging and overwhelming social criticisms. Consider creating one group vision gallery and hanging it for the duration of the trip so that participants can continue to add to it and reflect on it throughout. (adapted from Coover, 1985)

**Reflection exercises and closing activities**


- **“The What?”** . . . pertains to the substance of the group interaction and what has happened to each individual,” as well as major observations. “It deals with facts, occurrences and leads naturally into interpretation. The What? is used to start the reflection process by asking, ‘What happened today?’ or ‘What did each of you do?’”

- **“The So What?”** . . . pertains to the difference the experience made to individuals. It looks at the consequences of the day’s actions and gives meaning to them. Members of the group . . . generalize what they are learning and [start to] shift from the descriptive into the interpretive. At this point, questions asked usually are, ‘What did your experience mean to you?’ ‘How do you feel about what happened today?’ ‘What did you learn from today?’”

- **“The Now What?”** . . . involves the process of taking lessons learned from the experience and reapplying them to other situations and the larger picture. It is a time for goal setting and long range planning. The Now What? can range from discussions of ‘What will we do the rest of the week?’ to ‘What will we do when we get back to campus?’”

Or even to “What is our role as U.S. Americans in the issues or problems we have encountered on the trip?”

**Ask the group leading questions.**

- What will you take away from this experience? What are you leaving behind?
- What was the best part of the trip? The worst?
- What should we do differently next time? What should we continue doing?
- What was the most challenging part of the trip so far? The day?
- What was the most beautiful thing you witnessed today?
- If you had been born there, what would your life look like today?
- What is one thing you wish you had known before you arrived here?

**Bumper stickers.** Invite participants to create “bumper stickers” or short statements that express the following:

- one thing learned at the meeting
- a key thought or piece of advice to keep in mind for guidance in the future
- an action step to commit to taking in the future
- a question to ponder

These statements should be kept concise and shared with the group. (Silberman, 1999)
Connections or web of yarn. This is a dramatic and memorable activity that symbolically draws a long series of meetings to a close. It is especially appropriate when participants have formed close connections with one another and offers a visual picture of their accomplishments by using a skein of yarn to literally and symbolically connect participants.

- Bring a skein of yarn to the meeting. Ask everyone to stand or sit and form a circle. Start the process by stating briefly what you have experienced by facilitating the meeting process. You might say, for example, that you started out with a roomful of strangers and that you and they, working together, have formed a cohesive and productive organization that has tackled a problem and solved it by connecting with one another.

- Holding one end of the yarn, toss the skein to a participant on the other side of the circle. Ask that person to state briefly what he or she has experienced as a result of participating in the meetings. After he or she has spoken, ask that person to hold onto the yarn and toss the skein to another participant.

- Have each participant take a turn at receiving the skein, sharing reflections, and tossing the yarn again while continuing to hold onto a segment of the yarn. The resulting visual is a web of yarn connecting every member of the group.

- Complete the activity by stating that the program began with a collection of individuals willing to connect and work with one another.

- Cut the yarn with scissors so that each person, though departing as an individual, takes a piece of the other participants with him or her. Thank participants for their interest, ideas, time, and effort.

(Silberman, 1999)

Banners and T-shirts. Transform a bed sheet into a group banner to leave with your host or carry home. Decorate with markers, paint, and fabric paints (be sure to lay newsprint underneath so your materials don’t bleed through!). Similarly, buy plain white t-shirts (check the men’s department) and invite participants to decorate each other’s shirts with affirmations, parting messages, inspirational quotes and silly remembrances of the trip.

Photographs. Take a group photograph at the beginning of your trip. Bring along construction paper, markers, glue, and other art supplies. Have a copy of the photo made for each organization with whom you meet and work. Give them a handmade framed photo as a personalized thank-you. Years later, other AU groups can see photos of their predecessors when they return.

Ten Tips When Facilitating Discussion

During an active meeting, you want lots of group discussion. Your role is to facilitate the flow of comments from participants. Although it is not necessary to interject your comments after each participant speaks, periodically assisting the group with their contributions can be helpful. Here is a ten-point facilitation menu to use as you lead group discussions.

**Paraphrase.** Paraphrase what a participant has said so that he or she feels understood and so that the other participants can hear a concise summary of what has been said. Say something like, “So, what you’re saying is that we need to be careful what we say to other people in the group.”

**Check for meaning.** Check your understanding of a participant’s statement or ask the participant to clarify what he or she is saying. Say something like, “Are you saying that this plan is not realistic? I’m not sure that I understand exactly what you mean.”
Give positive feedback. Compliment an interesting or insightful comment. Say, “That’s a good point. I’m glad that you brought that to our attention.”

Expand. Elaborate on a participant’s contribution to the discussion with examples, or suggest a new way to view the problem. Try “Your comments provide an interesting point from the community’s perspective. It could also be useful to consider how the government would view the same situation.”

Increase the pace. Energize a discussion by quickening the pace, using humor, or, if necessary, prodding the group for more contributions by saying something like, “Oh my, we have lots of tired people at this meeting! Here’s a challenge for you. For the next two minutes, let’s see how many activities we can think of to do back on campus.”

Devil’s advocate. Disagree (gently) with a participant’s comments to stimulate further discussion. For example, “I can see where you are coming from, but I’m not sure that what you are describing is always the case. Has anyone else had an experience that is different from Jim’s?”

Relieve tension. Mediate differences of opinion between participants and relieve any tensions that may be brewing. For instance, “I think that Susan and Mary are not really disagreeing with each other but are bringing out two different sides of this issue.”

Consolidate. Pull together ideas, showing their relationship to each other, for example, “As you can see from Dan’s and Jean’s comments, we see how water resources affect the overall level of poverty.”

Change the process. Alter the method for obtaining participation or by having the group evaluate ideas that have been presented. Say something like, “Let’s break into smaller groups to discuss each theory that has been presented.”

Summarize. Summarize (and record, if desired) the major views of the group, for example. “I have noted four main points that have been brought up . . .” (Silberman, 1999)

Ten Methods to Deal with Difficult Participants

Signal nonverbally. Make eye contact with participants who hold private conversations, start to fall asleep, or hide from participation.

Listen actively. When participants monopolize discussion, go off on a tangent, or argue with you, interject with a summary of their views and then ask others to speak. Or acknowledge the value of the person’s viewpoints and invite him or her to discuss them with you during a break.

Encourage new volunteers. When a few participants repeatedly speak up in meetings while others hold back, pose a question or issue and then ask how many people have a response to it. You should see new hands go up. Call on someone who hasn’t spoken previously.
**Invoke participation rules.** From time to time, tell participants that you would like to use rules such as the following:

- Only participants who have not yet spoken can participate.
- Each new comment must build upon a previous idea.
- Speak for yourself, not for others.

**Use good-natured humor.** One way to deflect difficult behavior is to use humor. Be careful, however, not to be sarcastic or patronizing. Gently rib the participant about inappropriate behavior (“You certainly have a lot to say!”) or humorously put yourself down instead of the participant (“I guess I lost my concentration for a while.”).

**Connect on a personal level.** Even if a problem participant is hostile or withdrawn, make a point of getting to know the person during a break in the meeting. It is unlikely that people will continue to give you a hard time or remain distant if you have taken an interest in them.

**Change the method of participation.** Sometimes, you can control the damage done by difficult participants by inserting new formats, such as using pairs or small groups rather than full-group discussion.

**Ignore mildly negative behavior.** Try to pay little or no attention to behavior that you find detrimental to the meeting. These types of behavior may disappear if you simply continue the meeting.

**Discuss very negative behavior privately.** You must call a stop to behavior that you find detrimental to the meeting. Arrange a break and firmly request, in private, a change in behavior of those participants who are disruptive. Or create small-group activities and call aside the problem participants. If the entire group is involved, stop the meeting and explain clearly what you need from participants to conduct the meeting effectively.

**Don’t take it personally.** Remember that many problem behaviors have nothing to do with you. Instead, they are due to personal fears and needs or displaced anger. Try to determine whether this is the case, and ask whether participants can put aside whatever is affecting their positive involvement in the meeting. (Silberman, 1999)

**Common Conflicts**

Break Away facilitators have developed the following list of typical group conflicts and tips to address them effectively.

**Drinkers vs. nondrinkers.** Review the alcohol policy during pre-departure orientation. Open a discussion about how people define “responsible” alcohol use and behavior. Discuss norms and potential problems beforehand. Plan evening activities in your itinerary to distract from options that include alcohol. Ask group members to rotate planning evening activities.

**Greeks vs. independents.** Structure a discussion about the stereotypes of Greek life.

**Cookers vs. cleaners.** A chore plan with rotating responsibilities can help avoid boredom and bitterness. Keep meals simple to prepare and mix more confident cooks with the noncooks.
Construction workers vs. “people” people. Try to head this one off in the application process by meeting with applicants individually to be sure that their expectations about work will be reasonably met. If your group has been split into teams to work on different projects, rotate to prevent boredom.

Group processors vs. individual reflectors. Structure time for group and individual reflection. Make time to meet with each participant one-on-one during the week to check in. Process exercises in small and large groups. With your co-leader or partner, talk about other potential conflicts, such as:

- cultural sensitivity battles
- have vs. have-nots
- activists vs. philanthropists
- liberal vs. conservative
- language proficient vs. deficient
- your role in the visited community
B: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Break Away: The Alternative Break Connection

Break Away at www.alternativebreaks.com offers publications and resources, an on-line site bank, and training support for planning break trips. A copy of the publication and resource order form is available at http://alternativebreaks.org/orderform06.pdf with descriptions.

Campus Programming: Policies and Procedures

International Travel www.american.edu/rmo/insurance.html
Code of Conduct www.american.edu/handbook/policies_guidelines.html
Alcohol and Drug Policy www.american.edu/handbook/AlcoholPolicy.html
The Source www.american.edu/ocl/activities/policies_procedures/Student_Services_Manual/The_Source.html

Training and Group Dynamics


Volunteer Directories

Break Away’s site bank, www.alternativebreaks.com
International Volunteers for Peace, www.ivp.org
Youth Service America’s Servenet (U.S. site bank), www.servenet.org
**C: SAMPLE TIMELINE FOR PLANNING ALTERNATIVE BREAKS**

Cut and paste a copy of this table to your own disk or desktop to add your own entries, sort by due date or by delegation list and print copies as needed. Use this as a tool to navigate the workbook in a more chronological format. (Created in Microsoft Excel 2000)

**Pre-trip Planning Timeline for Alternative Break Trips** (may vary for domestic trips)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Done</th>
<th>Date Due</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Delegated To</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summer</td>
<td></td>
<td>Student applications for trip leaders submitted to Alternative Break coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Applicants interviewed by Alternative Break Review Committee and decisions communicated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Student trip leaders begin to work with AB coordinator regarding budget, itinerary, pre-departure orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June to August</td>
<td></td>
<td>Continue to research costs, develop budget, itinerary, strategies for student recruitment – info meetings; recruit faculty/staff advisor</td>
<td>Approved student trip leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August-September</td>
<td></td>
<td>Attend trainings for trip leaders and advisors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meet with co-leader (if applicable) and agree upon roles</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Decide on a minimum/maximum number of participants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Advertise trips and recruit students</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Schedule space for information sessions</td>
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<td>Complete budget preparation for info sessions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prepare info handouts or slide show regarding trip (breakdown of participant expenses, immunization requirements, university policies)</td>
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<tr>
<td>September-October</td>
<td></td>
<td>Recruit participants</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meet with co-leader (if applicable) and agree upon roles</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Recruit staff and/or faculty advisors</td>
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<td>Plan and conduct information sessions</td>
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<td>If academic credit is to be offered – consult with director of Community Service Center</td>
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<td>Submit proposal for academic unit approval (if applicable)</td>
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<td>Identify a travel agent, establish transportation expenses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Establish housing arrangement options</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Set-up service project (if applicable)</td>
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<td>Collect readings, materials for pre-departure orientation (work with faculty/staff advisor)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Establish payment plan and communicate procedures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Continue recruiting participants (if necessary)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Establish pre-departure orientation schedule</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Agree on fund-raising initiatives and responsibilities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Establish with the Alternative Break coordinator a trip account and payment installment plan for participants – keep in mind that air tickets and tour providers will require deposits and final payment by certain dates and two weeks is required to process a university check</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finalize trip itinerary</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Complete detailed proposal for AU approval</td>
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<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Collect participant applications</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Review applications for complete information</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview and select applicants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Continue fund raising</td>
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<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Hold first orientation session (8 total)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Resolve outstanding planning issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>Reserve AUTO vans for airport departure/return</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Finalize budget/adjust fees as necessary</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create database of all trip participants</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continue fund raising</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Continue pre-departure orientation-</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Inform/remind participants of immunization requirements &amp; recommendations</td>
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<td>Have participants verify that their passports are valid</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Audit/assure participants are making required installment payments</td>
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<td>Review meal plans, adjust to meet dietary needs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Review itinerary, adjust to meet group expectations and site conditions as necessary</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>Continue pre-departure orientation sessions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Set date for re-entry debriefing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Review travel advisories and on-site emergency contact information</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Distribute final itinerary and on-site contact information to all participants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Submit purchase requisitions, disbursement requests and contracts to Community Service Center</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Purchase supplies needed in advance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pack essentials: first-aid kit, copy of travel insurance, emergency procedures and emergency contacts, on-site contacts, maps, contract copies, student database printout, checks.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Last 2 weeks of February</td>
<td>All participants</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trip leaders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Trip leaders &amp; advisors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>All participants</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trip leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trip leaders &amp; all participants</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| March | Week before departure  
|       | confirm departure plans with participants  
|       | Confirm details with on-site hosts  
|       | Submit to assistant vice president of campus life  
|       | Original copies of participants completed  
|       | Consent & Release forms  
|       | Finalize trip itinerary  
|       | Participant roster  
|       | Submit to Community Service Center a duplicate set of what is provided the AVPCL  
|       | Create evaluation  

| 2 Days before departure | Confirm AUTO van readiness (driver's, gas, departure and return pick up times  
|                         | Confirm airline flight and departure time  
|                         | Meet w/co-leader and partner for last review  
| Trip leader |  

| On-site | Contact AVPCL to confirm arrival on-site  
|         | Daily participant check-in meetings  
|         | Documentation of daily experiences (group/personal journals, video, etc)  
|         | Send postcards to major donors and supporters  
|         | Distribute evaluation  
| Trip leader/advisor |  

| Post-trip | Conduct debriefing session  
|          | Collect and tabulate evaluation  
|          | Reconcile receipts, complete trip accounting  
|          | Submit report to Alternative Break coordinator, AVPCL  
| Trip leader/s |  

| Deadline: One month after trip |  


D: SAMPLE SUGGESTED PACKING LIST (ECUADOR)

One thing to keep in mind when packing is that dress in Quito needs to be layered because of the climate. It is said that there can be four seasons in one day: cool in the morning, hot at noon, raining in the afternoon, and very cold at night. Quiteños dress neatly and stylishly. You should bring the clothes you feel most comfortable in, keeping weather and culture in mind. People never wear shorts in Quito and most young people wear jeans and long-sleeve t-shirts, with a button-down sweater or jacket.

For traveling, you will want to have comfortable clothes, warm clothes for the Andes, and lightweight clothes for the Amazon. You should pack as lightly as possible.

Jeans, slacks
T-shirts
Long-sleeve shirts
Light jacket
Rain gear
Sweaters or sweatshirts, 1–2
(Nice, handmade wool sweaters can be bought in Ecuador.)
Shorts, 1–2
Bathing suit
Warm pajamas
Socks and underwear
Comfortable city walking shoes
Sandals
Toiletries and cosmetics
Tampons
Prescription medicines
Vitamins
Sunglasses
Camera and film
Sunscreen (high SPF 30–50)
Hat
Music
Books (novels, Ecuador guide book)
Journal

For traveling:
Hiking boots
Water bottle
Swiss army knife
Daypack
Binoculars
A few Ziploc bags
Antibacterial gel hand cleanser
## E: SAMPLE FINAL ITINERARY (U.S.–MEXICO BORDER)

### Alternative Break Final Itinerary Approval

(To be completed by trip student leader and acknowledged by trip advisor.)

COMPLETED AND SIGNED FORM must be submitted to Alternative Break coordinator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALTERNATIVE BREAK to: Mexico Border</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEPARTURE &amp; RETURN DATES: {trips may not occur during scheduled class days}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 10–March 17 We have confirmed that participants are not missing a scheduled class or have made other arrangements with their professors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS (Departure): be specific from gathering point to destination |
| Gathering point @ Kay, AUTO van to BWI Friday afternoon (driver: Shoshanna Sumka), from BWI fly to TUS, Tucson, AZ. Flight Confirmation #: Delta 1499, 0627 |

| TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS (Return): be specific |
| Leave TUS and fly to BWI, take Taxi/Super Shuttle back to Metro and/or back to AU. Individual transportation back to residence halls/homes. Flight #: Delta 1668, 0600 |

| AU EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION: (any one of the following) |
| 202-885-2501 Public Safety |
| Assistant Vice President, Campus Life, Butler Pavilion 401 |
| w. 202-885-3359 |
| h. 000-000-0000 |
| c. 000-000-0000 |
| alt. c. 000-000-0000 |
| Shoshanna Sumka, Alternative Break coordinator; cell 000-000-0000, home 000-000-0000, w.202-885-2684 |

| EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS in Mexico (country code is 52) |
| 1-646-244-7880 Cell phone of AU Staff Advisor (GSM Emergency phone) |
| Student Trip Leaders: Laura Taylor (000) 000-0000 or Esteban Quinones: (000) 000-0000 |
| 000000 Cell phone number of trip Advisor: Mr. Tom Brenneman |
| 000000 Mr. and Mrs. Stucky’s home in Tucson, AZ |
| 000000 Host Organization: Cooperative by Design, LLC |
| 011-52-555-080-2000 U.S. Embassy in Mexico City |
PARTICIPANTS: {indicate participant status: S=student, SL=student trip leader, FS=faculty, FST=staff}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AU ID#</th>
<th>Participant’s Full Name-(alphabetical)</th>
<th>Participant Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>123456</td>
<td>Michael Haack</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123456</td>
<td>Travis MacArthur</td>
<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>123456</td>
<td>Casey McNeill</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123456</td>
<td>Emily Noll</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123456</td>
<td>Esteban Quinones</td>
<td>SL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123456</td>
<td>Amanda Seibel</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123456</td>
<td>Emily Skeels</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123456</td>
<td>Jenifer Smyers</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123456</td>
<td>Laura Taylor</td>
<td>SL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123456</td>
<td>Jordan Weiner</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123456</td>
<td>Emily White</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123456</td>
<td>Paul Winters</td>
<td>FS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123456</td>
<td>Andrew Wolf</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ITINERARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location/Contact</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/10/06</td>
<td>Late Night Arrival in Tucson</td>
<td>Tucson, AZ&lt;br&gt;Lodging(3/10-14/03):&lt;br&gt;Luzdy and Tim Stucky&lt;br&gt;3661 South Liberty Avenue&lt;br&gt;Tucson, Arizona 85713&lt;br&gt;Tel: 520. 770. 7048&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:lstucky@theriver.com">lstucky@theriver.com</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>3/11/06</td>
<td>Hiking, Walking, Touring</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tucson, with Borderlinks and Cooperative by Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/12/06</td>
<td>Discussion/Reflection on Social Justice in the Borderlands</td>
<td></td>
<td>Meetings: Ms. Kat Rodriguez (13/03)&lt;br&gt;Mr. Jose Matus Derechos Humanos&lt;br&gt;Allianza Indigena Sin Fronteras&lt;br&gt;631 South Sixth Avenue&lt;br&gt;Tucson, Arizona 85702-1286&lt;br&gt;Tel: 520. 770. 1373&lt;br&gt;<a href="mailto:kat@derechoshumanosaz.net">kat@derechoshumanosaz.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13/06</td>
<td>Encountering History &amp; Contemporary Life</td>
<td>Indigenous Communities and Response&lt;br&gt;South Tucson, Border Action Network and Derechos Humanos</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Contact Information</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/14/06</td>
<td>The Land Between: Encountering Ambos Nogales Maquila / Workers Tour Ecological Impact/ Border Patrol</td>
<td>Day trip to Ambos Nogales, MX Maquila Organizing Project and Borderlinks</td>
<td>Ms. Cecilia Guzman (14/03) BorderLinks Tucson, Arizona 520.628.8263 <a href="mailto:Cecilia@borderlinks.org">Cecilia@borderlinks.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/15/06</td>
<td>Complex Change: Policing, Ecology &amp; Theology</td>
<td>Agua Prieta, MX, Lodging with Frontera de Cristo Homestays Rev. Mark Adams (3/15-17/03) Frontera De Cristo <a href="mailto:Adams4clover9@aol.com">Adams4clover9@aol.com</a> 520. 364. 9257 Tel in Mx. 011.52. 633. 121. 6042</td>
<td>Visit to US Border Patrol: Public Affairs Officer Ulysses Duronslet United States Border Patrol 1608 North Kings Highway Douglas, Arizona 85607 Tel: 520. 805. 6900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16/06</td>
<td>Border Economics</td>
<td>Meet with: Just Coffee AM, Mo More Deaths PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/17/06</td>
<td>Debrief, Fly Home</td>
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F: STAFF OR FACULTY ADVISOR DESCRIPTION

General Description:
Alternative Breaks are service-learning experiences designed to heighten participants’ awareness of critical social issues, enhance their individual growth, and prepare them for lifelong social action. Each trip (1 to 3 weeks duration) integrates service, reflection and education and focuses on topics as varied as poverty, indigenous rights, fair trade, gender equality, and the environment. Trips are offered during the winter, spring, and summer breaks to domestic and international destinations and may not occur during regular, scheduled class periods.

The Trip Advisor ensures compliance with policies, provides general oversight, manages emergencies & conflicts, co-facilitates the processing of on-site experiences, and may supervise the academic credit component of the trip.

This is a unique way for faculty and professional exempt staff to volunteer their time and service participating in an alternative break experience. Trip Advisors are “situational facilitators”; their role is to support and enhance students’ experiences by collaborating with student leaders to co-facilitating aspects of the program. The Trip Advisor is not expected to plan or organize the logistics of the experience, but is expected to support the student trip coordinator(s). The following guidelines further define this role, but are not meant to limit or restrict the possibilities of the experience.

Responsibilities of a Trip Advisor:
- Secure release from immediate supervisor
- Provide guidance and support to the student coordinator/s and participants, when necessary
- Fully participate in all service, reflection and group activities (before, during and after the trip)
- Adhere to all ground rules agreed upon by the group (in a pre-trip meeting)
- Assist with transportation if and when needed
- Create a positive learning environment by ensuring the group is respectful and inclusive
- Facilitate individual and group discussions
- Communicate with Community Service Center staff
- Complete trip evaluations and paperwork
- Assume responsibility for financial reserves carried during trip & for reconciling the financial report within 30 days of trip completion subject to AU current Travel Expense policies and procedures

Qualifications:
- Strong group facilitation experience and skills
- Proven commitment to social justice and community service
- Willingness to support student leadership
- Willingness to lead by example
- Knowledge of trip/issue focus preferred
- Experience in country or region preferred
- Language skills (if applicable)
Benefits and Compensation:

- Transportation, food & lodging expenses for the trip are covered by the Community Service Center
- Opportunity to work hand-in-hand with high caliber student leaders and participants
- On-site, “hands-on” community service & social justice experience
- Learning/professional development opportunity
- International or domestic travel experience

The Community Service Center at American University would like to thank the following individuals and organizations for their hard work and contributions to the completion of this manual:

Karyn Cassella, former Community Service Center director, for the first version of the manual.

Shoshanna Sumka, current Alternative Break coordinator, for revising and updating it.

Jacquelyn Pilch for editing it for student usefulness.

Gary Wright, assistant vice president for Campus Life, for his commitment to the Alternative Breaks program and for reviving this manual.

Marcy Fink Campos, Joe Eldridge, Karen Gerlach, Michael Haack, Maggie Holden, Christine Nichols, Kat Shiffler, and Kristina Thompson for their advice, input, and contributions.

Marjorie Neuman and Keegan Houser from AU’s University Publications office for editing and design work.

Jill Piacitelli and Break Away’s national office for inspiring a national student movement for social change.

Students and staff who took photographs on trips to Ecuador, China, the Thai-Burma border, Venezuela, Brazil, the U.S.-Mexico border, Nicaragua, India, Zambia, and Greece displayed on cover and inserts.
ALTERNATIVE BREAKS

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American University
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Washington, DC 20016
www.american.edu/altbreak