



Study Abroad in Mexico: Opportunities and Challenges for International Educators

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NAFSA Region III Conference October 26, 2011

Panelists:

- Diana Arízaga, Director of IFSA-Butler University program in Mérida, Mexico
- Rodolfo Hernandez Guerrero, Director of the Center for U.S.-Mexico Studies and the Office of International Studies at UT Dallas
- Maria Lupita Fabregas, Director of UPAEP Liaison Office at Oklahoma State University
- Wendy Sheets, Assistant Director of the Center for Global Education at the University of Tulsa
- Laura Moix, University of Arkansas Study Abroad and Exchange Coordinator



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- November 2011: Site visit to Mexico
 - Visits to international education partners in Guadalajara, Puebla and Guanajuato
 - Interview with Guadalajara city beat reporter
 - Meeting with the US Consulate in Guadalajara
 - Consular position: The travel warning is nuanced and should be read as such. “Defer non-essential travel” very different than “exercise extreme caution” or simply “exercise caution”



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December 2011 Petition to OU Safety and Security Council:

- Big 12 survey – half continuing Mexico programming
- Geography lesson, comparative crime stats
- Endorsement of faculty Committee on Latin America
- Plan to inform students and mitigate risk



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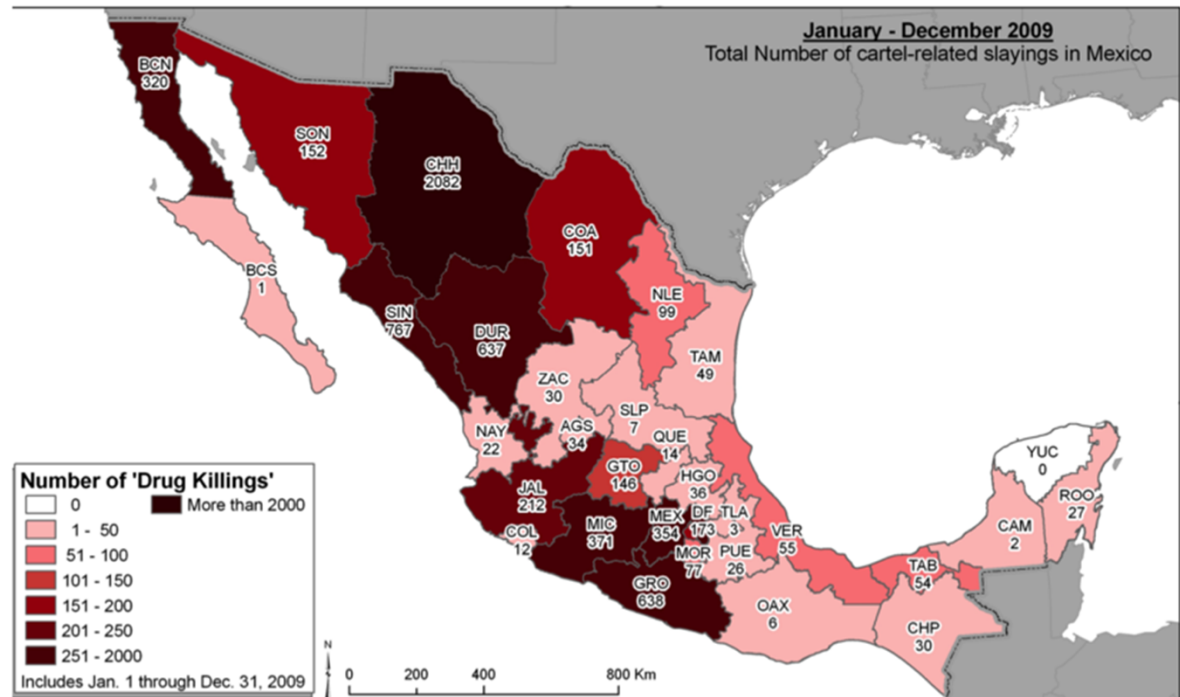


- Petition accepted, OU continues to send students to Mexico in approved location, with additional pre-departure orientation support, mandatory STEP enrollment and evidence that student understands risks
- Students not allowed to travel where US DOS tells them to “defer non-essential travel”
- Educational benefits outweigh the institutional hassle

What is happening in Mexico?

- Statistics show: the number of deaths since Pres. Calderon declared “war against drug cartels” has reached about +40,000.
- Not isolated. Yes localized
- 90% of these deaths are related to narco/drug incidents.
- The States that concentrate the majority of deaths: Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, Michoacan, Baja California Norte, Guerrero, Durango (*all miles away from Yucatán*).
- Geography: Mexico is a big country.

Figure 4. Drug-Related Killings in Mexico in 2009, by State



Source: State and national totals of cartel-related slayings in Mexico ("ejecuciones" and "narcoejecuciones") obtained from data provided by Reforma newspaper.

Maximum and Minimum values:

Maximum value: 2,082 in Chihuahua

Minimum value: No 'ejecuciones' were recorded in the state of Yucatán according to the source for these maps, Reforma newspaper.

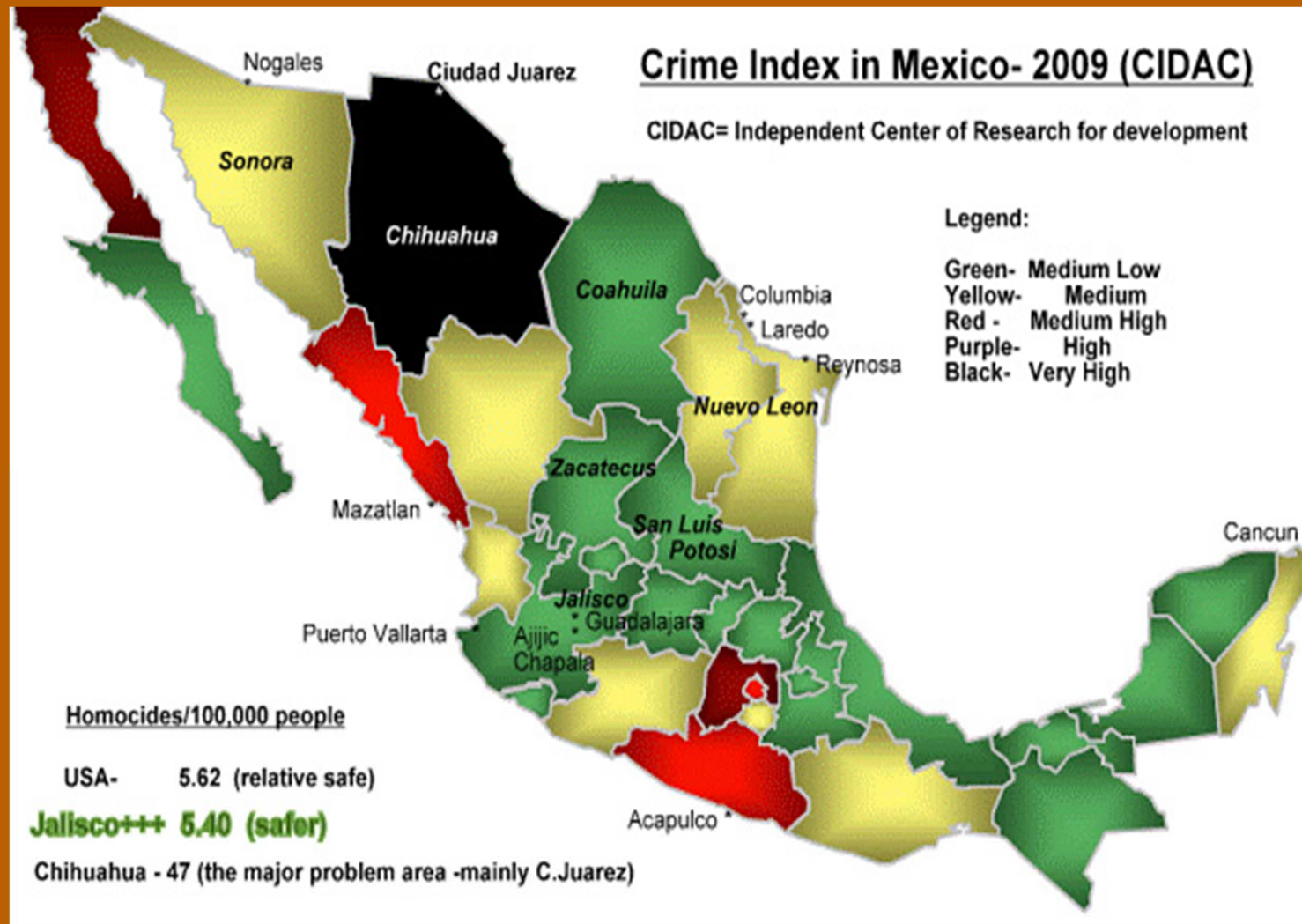
National average: The national total number of 'ejecuciones' (cartel-related slayings) Jan. 1 - Dec. 31, 2009 was 6,587



Maps produced by Theresa Firestone
Copyright 2010 by Trans-Border Institute

“It is believed that his [President Calderon’s] declaration of war against the narco, on December 11, 2006, was purely political: he needed to legitimize his victory supposedly lost in the elections by creating a war on the streets, cities and villages (...).” (El Narco: La Guerra Fallida. Casañeda J. & Aguilar R., Ed. Santillana. 2009).

Press / media shows Mexico as a country at siege. We must be dodging bullets and “normal” life is unconceivable. There is a drastic discrepancy between what is being reported and local reality.



General sense is that the “war” has gotten “out-of-hand” and the government does not know what to do. Wikileaks and the famous cables are not helping palliate this notion.



Dispelling Myths on Mexico's drug war: Brookings Institute

<http://edition.cnn.com/video/data/2.0/video/world/2010/12/09/ctw.romo.mexico.fact.fiction.cnn.html>

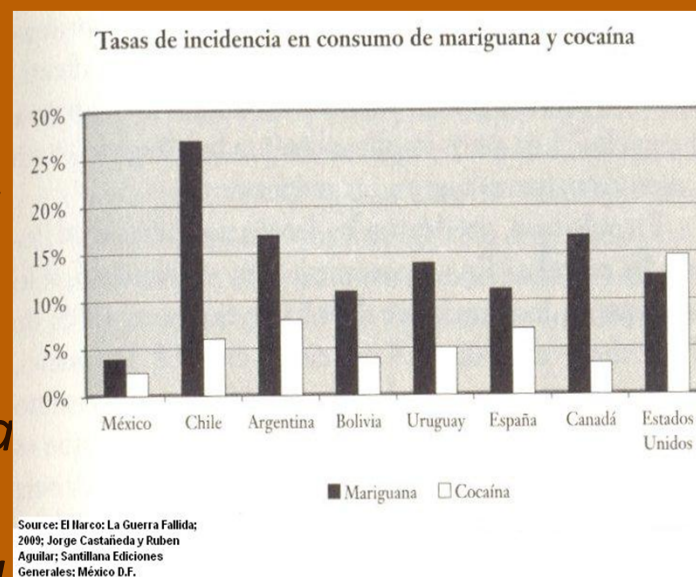
...Mexico's murder rate is not even amongst the top 10 in Latin America:

El Salvador 71/100,000 inhab.; Honduras 67/; Venezuela 49/; above Mexico, which is number 14th even after Brazil.

...It also shows violence in highly concentrated in 5 States, 4 of which share a border with the U.S....[...]

...Although the country has been compared to Colombia 20 years ago, Mexico does not fight insurgency groups, nor has a guerrilla, therefore this notion is mistaken...[...]

...Mexico does not have a consumption problem, rather a transit problem... [...]



“Poor Mexico, so far from God and so close to the United States” – Porfirio Diaz

Local Reality – Mérida, Yucatán

- U.S. Consul refers to city safety
- Tourism rate goes up compared to last year
- President Calderón: Royal Tour documentary
- Mérida and the Yucatan are far removed from all this



What is happening in Mérida, Yucatán: Distinctions



- Mitofsky Press report: Mérida, amongst the ten best cities in the country to live, study and vacation
- Mérida, confirmed as the “safest city” in Mx and one of the safest in Latin America.
- Mérida, officially named one of the 100 cities of peace in the world. (UN 2011)
- Yucatán is “a different country”:
2011
- Real State investments are soaring
- Tourism rate is going up

Question of Security

Perception vs. Reality - Safety vs. Preparedness

- Cannot promise risk-free programs
- Should prepare students well/responsible staff
- Inform what is happening
- US universities: consult our web resources where we post notices, announcements and news from different countries
- Joint orientations for students
- UM: student compromise to follow RD's advise, sign release

What we have developed on-site:

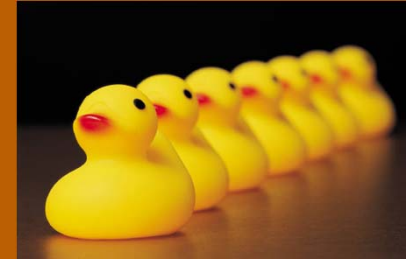
- IFSA-Butler's Critical Response Plan, CRP
- U.S. Merida Consulate: no control over DOS / TW, therefore: registration; RD is a Warden; closely monitor travel announcements and warnings; live chats; US Consulate corresponds with parents through e-mail
(mericons@sprodigy.net.mx)
- OSAC: RD monitors daily
- Available resources: accurate information
- Working closely with the host / home universities
- Special conferences, accurate information

How recent policies are affecting International Education?

- SA experience should: instill personal, cultural, intellectual and cross-cultural change
- Non-traditional is not necessarily less safe
- More integrated = better experiences
- Recent developments: high risk factor coming to Mexico
- Reconfirm stereotypes: dirty, dangerous, corrupt country
- Creating paranoid, overprotected, sheltered students
- Irony: island/tailor –made boosting enrollments, deemed safer.
- Develop programs thinking: safety before outcomes.
- Media doesn't help!

Communication and Recruitment: parents and students

When Advising



U.S. Reality:

- Student Choice
- Managing Stereotypes
- Concerned Parents
- Faculty Influence
- Support from Above
- Ethics
- Responsibility & Liability
- Top-down Policy

Available Resources:

- Yucatan –Living; local U.S. expat; community testimonies; Students' testimonies; Newspapers and articles; YucatanToday.com; yucatan.com.mx; UN distinction: "Mérida City of Peace"; House Hunters International (featured Merida as a peaceful city on Feb. 24 '11 show)
- Accurate account of events: recent developments; Geography; provide perspective before drawing policies; think about safety.

Challenges of a program like IFSA-Butler in Merida:

From the U.S. university perspective a student could just as easily go somewhere else.

From the host country “receiving end” many other concerns arise when a student is diverted elsewhere and we end up with 9 students vs. 22 we used to get each Fall:

- Politically: no leverage capability, e.g.: volunteer sites won't bend over to accommodate one student; no interesting special courses at college...for 3 students?
- Local economy: 13 host families are not receiving an income; local university gets a third of tuition; no negotiating capabilities
- Emotionally: justify our jobs? Local staff, now we are 3; Spanish faculty? Sense of being disposable and feeling impotent is probably the most difficult aspect
At the same time, people here are supportive, generous and treat our students like royalty. I cannot imagine doing anything else.

Study Abroad in Mexico: Opportunities and Challenges for International Educators

The UTD – Mexico Agenda

Rodolfo Hernandez-Guerrero

NAFSA, Region III, October 27, 2011, Oklahoma, OK

Office of International Education / Center for U.S. – Mexico Studies
The University of Texas at Dallas

www.utdallas.edu/oie - www.utdallas.edu/research/cusms

Strategic Importance: Mexico and U.S.

- Geographic proximity:
 - Border's total length is 1,969 mi (3,169 kms).
 - The most frequently crossed international border in the world: approximately 350,000,000 crossings per year.
 - There are 42 U.S. – Mexico border crossings from San Diego, California to Brownsville, Texas.

Strategic Importance: Mexico and U.S.

- Rich history
 - Independence of the Texas territory in 1836
 - United States annexed Texas in 1845
 - Mexican – American War in 1846.
 - Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848
 - California, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada, and parts of Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, and Oklahoma (about 2,500,000 square km / 960,000 square mi.
 - Plus the Gadsden Purchase in 1852 --- “el pilón”

Strategic Importance: Mexico and U.S.

- Rich history (cont.)
 - Mexican Reform War (1858-1861): Liberalism vs Conservatism
 - The United Mexican States: Federation, Republic.
 - U.S. Foreign investment – second half of the XIX C.
 - Railroad, mining.
 - Mexican Revolution – 1910-1917
 - Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) – 1940-1970
 - NAFTA - 1994

Strategic Importance: Mexico and U.S.

- U.S. – Mexico mutually shaping each other
 - Population
 - Individual vs collective values
 - Food
 - Business
 - Labor
 - Communications: technology, airlines, etc.
 - Puerto Vallarta / San Miguel de Allende vs Los Angeles / Dallas

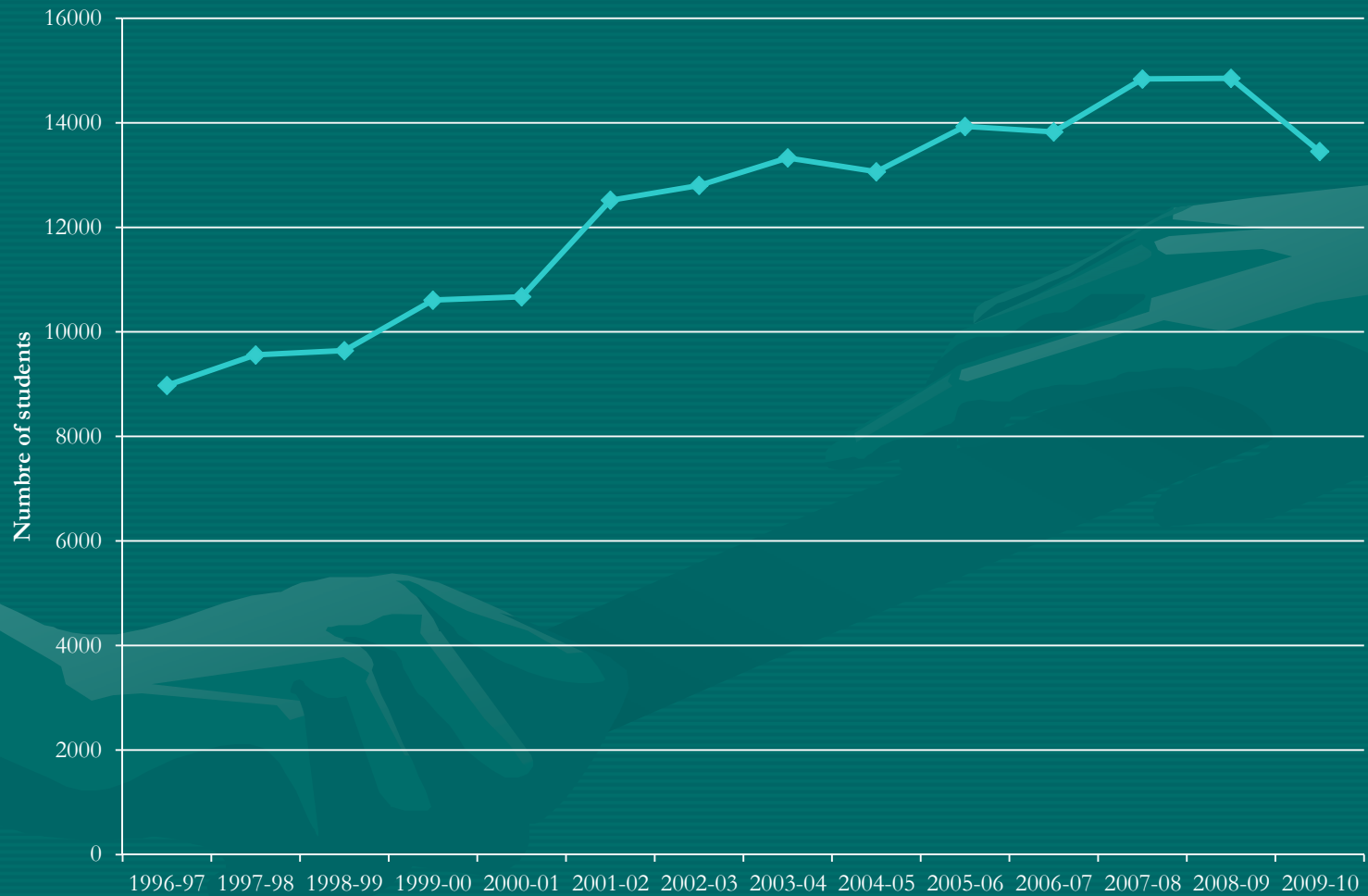
Number of students from Mexico in the US

Year	# of Students from Mexico	% Change from the Previous Year
1996-97	8975	0
1997-98	9559	6.5
1998-99	9641	0.9
1999-00	10607	10.0
2000-01	10670	0.6
2001-02	12518	17.3
2002-03	12801	2.3
2003-04	13329	4.1
2004-05	13063	-2.0
2005-06	13931	6.6
2006-07	13826	-0.8
2007-08	14837	7.3
2008-09	14850	0.1
2009-10	13450	-9.4

Source: Open doors, Institute of International Education, Inc.

Number of students from Mexico in the US

Mexican students in the US



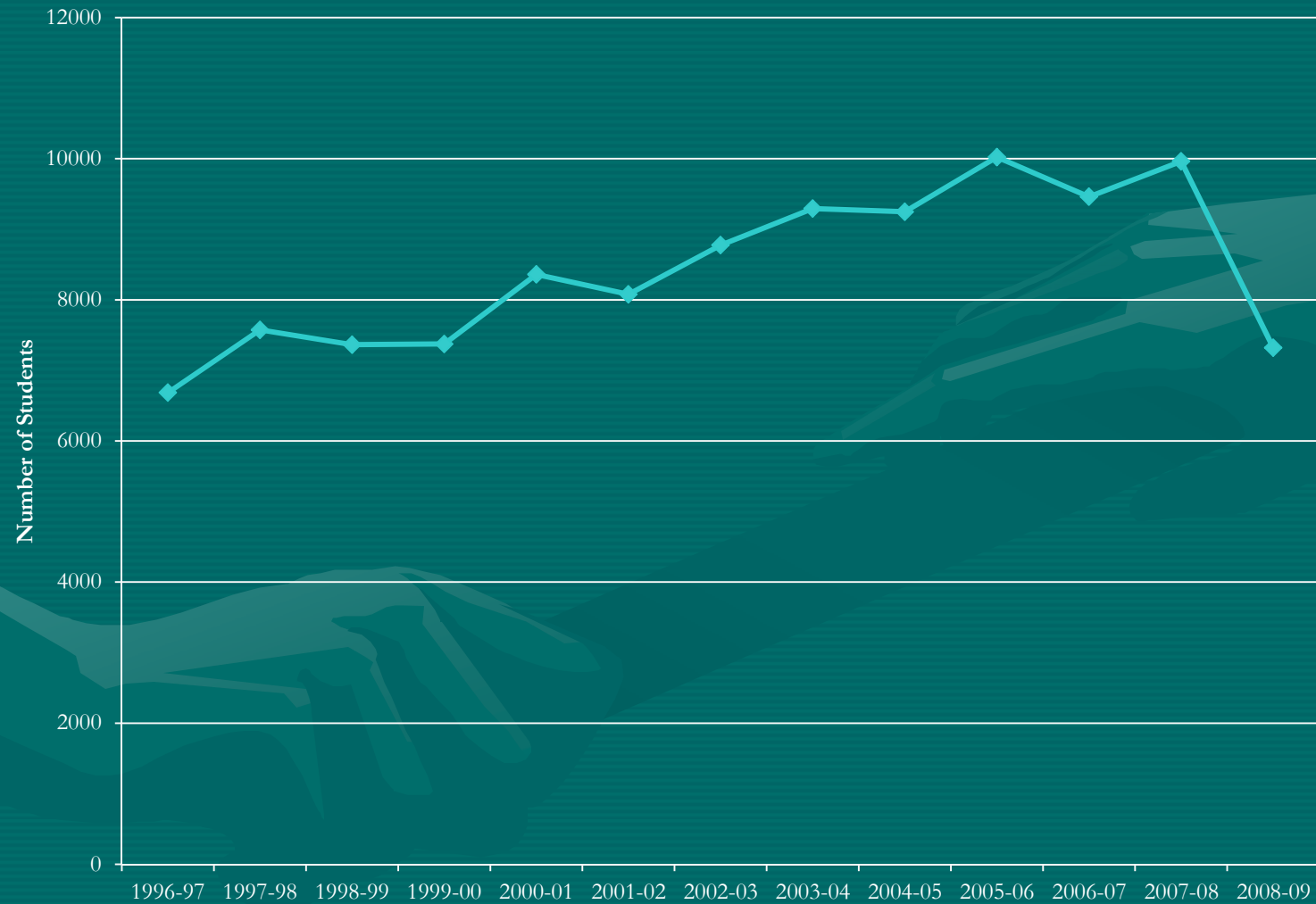
Number of students from US in Mexico

Year	# of Students from Mexico	# of U.S Students going to Mexico
1996-97	8975	6685
1997-98	9559	7574
1998-99	9641	7363
1999-00	10607	7374
2000-01	10670	8360
2001-02	12518	8078
2002-03	12801	8775
2003-04	13329	9293
2004-05	13063	9247
2005-06	13931	10022
2006-07	13826	9461
2007-08	14837	9963
2008-09	14850	7320
2009-10	13450	n/a

Source: Open doors, Institute of International Education, Inc.

Number of students from US in Mexico

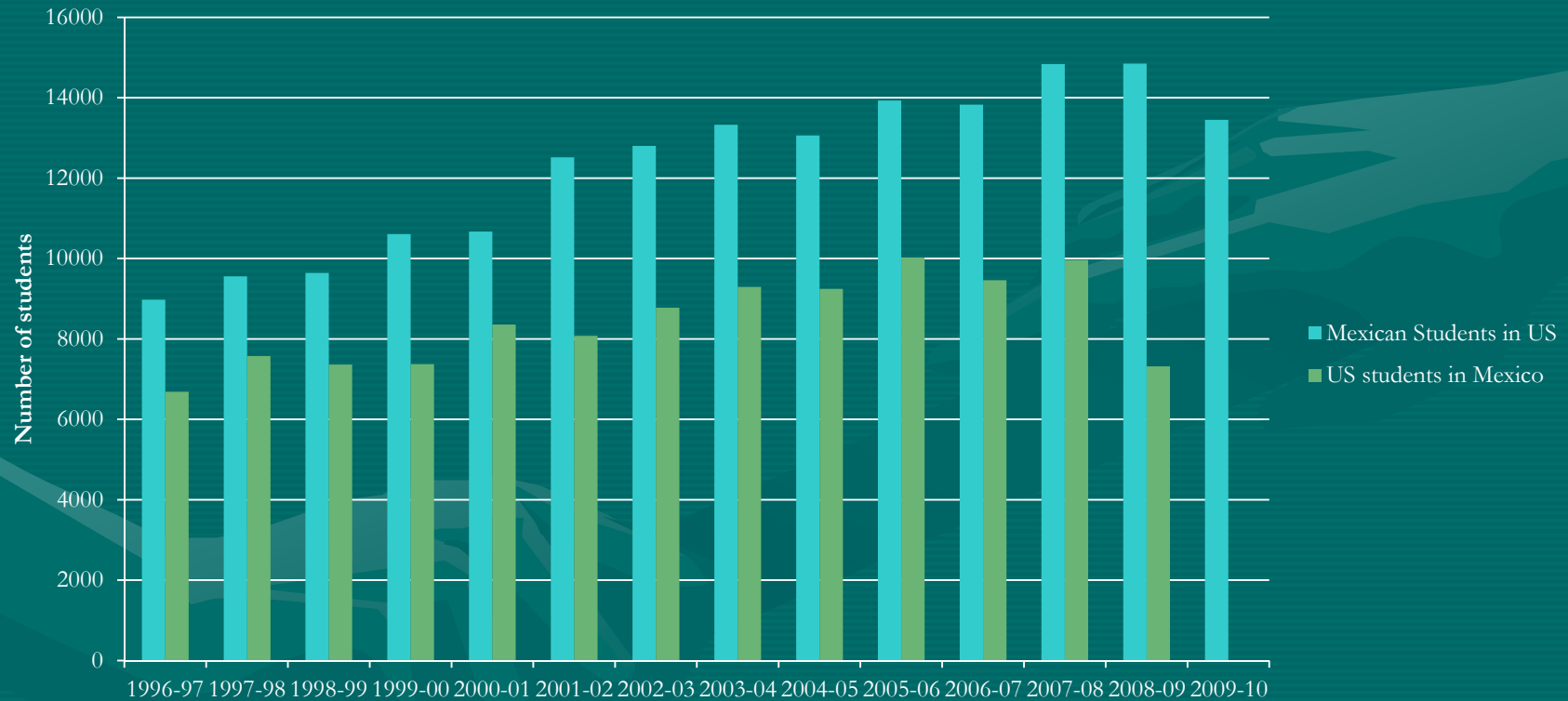
of U.S. Study Abroad Students going to Mexico



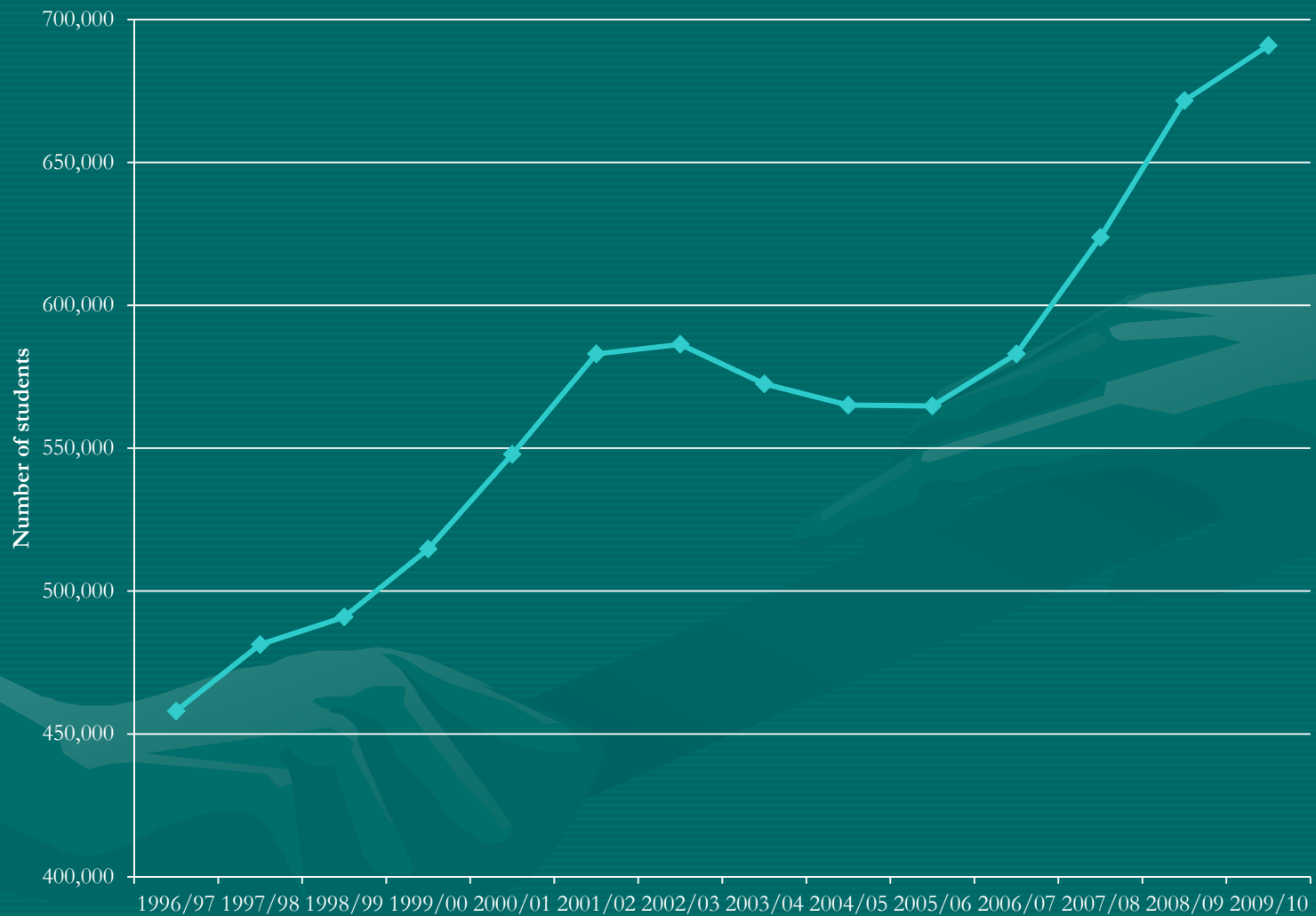
Source: Open doors, Institute of International Education, Inc.

Number of students from US in Mexico

Student mobility between US and Mexico

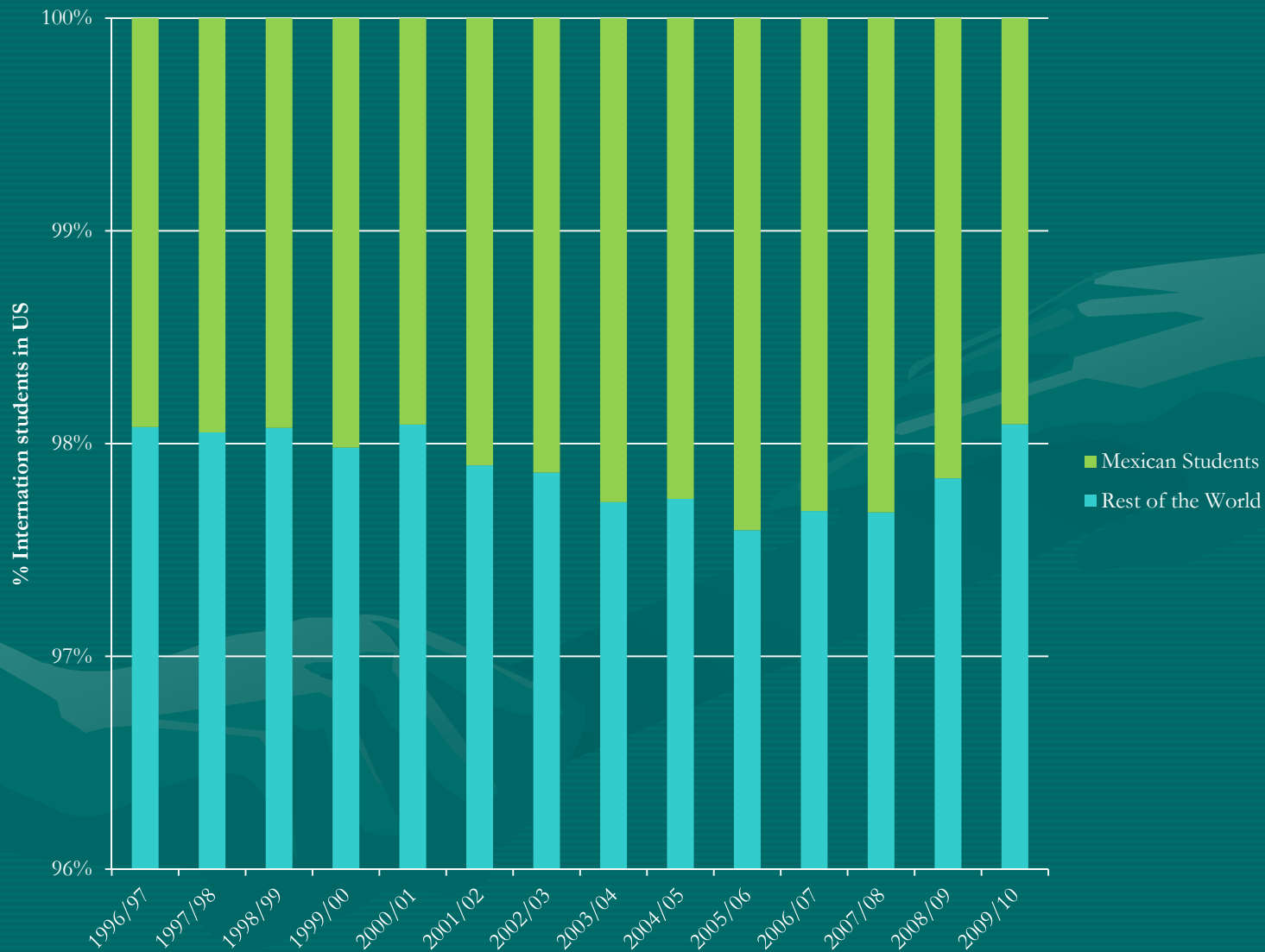


International Students in US



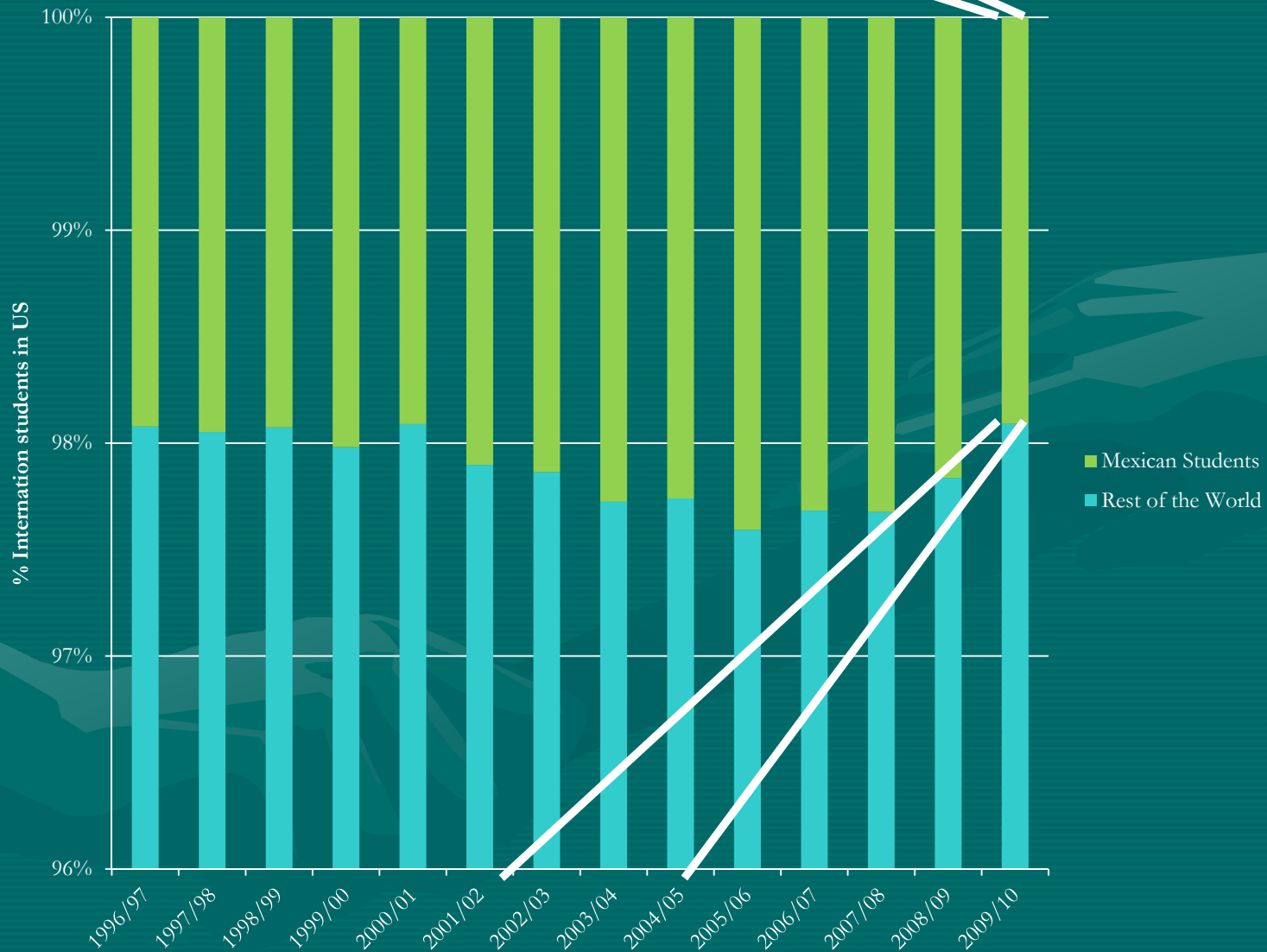
Source: Open doors, Institute of International Education, Inc.

% Mexican Students in US vs Rest of the World

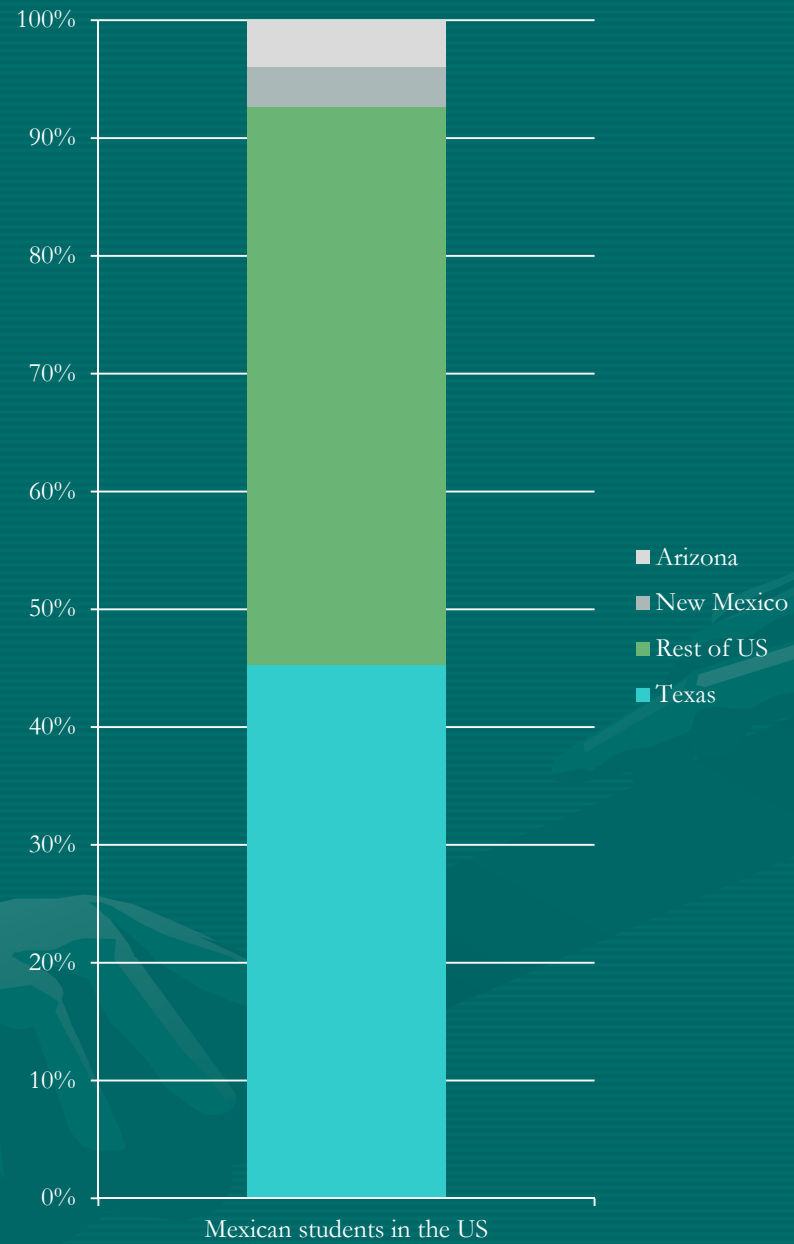


Source: Open doors, Institute of International Education, Inc.

% Mexican Students in US vs Rest of the World



Source: Open doors, Institute of International Education, Inc.



Source: Open doors, Institute of International Education, Inc.

Higher Education and Mobility: Mexico-U.S.

Rank	Place of Origin	2008/09	2009/10	2009/10 % of Total	% Change
	WORLD TOTAL	671,616	690,923	100	2.9
1	China	98,235	127,628	18.50%	29.9
2	India	103,260	104,897	15.20%	1.6
3	South Korea	75,065	72,153	10.40%	-3.9
4	Canada	29,697	28,145	4.10%	-5.2
5	Taiwan	28,065	26,685	3.90%	-4.9
6	Japan	29,264	24,842	3.60%	-15.1
7	Saudi Arabia	12,661	15,810	2.30%	24.9
8	Mexico	14,850	13,450	1.90%	-9.4
12	Germany	9,679	9,548	1.40%	-1.4
14	Brazil	8,767	8,786	1.30%	0.2
19	Colombia	7,013	6,920	1.00%	-1.3
24	Venezuela	4,678	4,958	0.70%	6

UT Dallas and Mexico

- Center for U.S. – Mexico Studies since 1995.
- More than 20 Mexican higher education institutions collaborating with UT Dallas.
 - Sustainable mechanisms of mobility.
 - Mexico \longleftrightarrow UTD
 - CONACYT, PPEMS, OAS, Fulbright, Brockmann, Guanajuato Spanish Program, etc.
 - Program Development
 - U.S.-Mexico Lecture Series

UT System

- April 27, 2009. Non-Essential Travel Limited.
 - UT Dallas, in conjunction with other UT System institutions, acted on a UT System advisory to limit non-essential travel to Mexico in the wake of the H1N1 flu outbreak that has threatened health in that country as well as in limited areas of Texas.
- April 22, 2010. International Travel and Program
 - Creation of the International Oversight Committee (IOC)
 - Automatic suspension of programs and travel to countries (including Mexico) where a travel warning has been issued by the U.S. Department of State, unless a specific exemption is approved by the institutions.
 - Mandatory registration with International SOS.

UT Dallas International Mobility

- The Advisory Council on International Education (ACIE) was approved by the UT System Board of Regents on November 13, 2008. Its creation responds to the growth and scope of the Office of International Education (OIE) Agenda, especially in the last six years, including the collaboration with more than 90 international institutions and an increasing trend of international mobility during this period.
- ACIE Objectives:
 - To review the OIE annual report.
 - To advise in areas of OIE specialization and/or leadership.
 - To evaluate the design and implementation of OIE protocols to ensure the
 - Legitimacy and safety of international education programs.
 - To ensure the safeguards are in place for faculty, staff, and students traveling abroad, especially for destinations with U.S. State Department Travel Warnings



UT Dallas – Mexico Mobility

- Since May 2010 the ACIE has approved 86 travel petitions for destinations with travel warnings from the State Department.
- 53 cases for Mexico – Approved.
 - Current UT Dallas – Mexico agenda
 - Material Sciences
 - Mechanical Engineering
 - Art and Technology
 - Management Studies
 - Exploring long distance education
 - U.S. – Mexico Lecture Series

Strategies for Continuing Engagement

- The institutional consensus
- Use of technology
- Emphasis on the Mexico → U.S. mobility
- Design efficient and simple processes for ACIE to evaluate individual cases – the context.
- Allow faculty's creativity
- Physical presence in Mexico, the cases of the SUNY and Univ of Arizona.



**NAFSA Region III
Annual Conference
Reaching Higher Education:
Elevating Internationalization in
Education**

Maria G. Fabregas-Janeiro, PhD

Director

UPAEP Liaison Office in the United States

October 24 – 27, 2011



UPAEP

Why Study Abroad in Mexico?

- Mexico is one of the U.S. neighbors and the probability that the students have some interaction with Mexico or with Mexicans during their professional career is **VERY HIGH!**
- Hispanics will be the first minority in the U.S. by 2015, it is important for an American to understand the Hispanic culture.

Why Study Abroad in Mexico?

- Mexico is a country rich in culture and traditions.
- Mexico is famous for its hospitality.
- Mexico has thousands of good academic opportunities.
- Mexico could offer the students an enjoyable and affordable experience.

UPAEP

**However,
Mexico is now a Forbidden place to
Travel! Why?**

- **The State Department issued a travel warning only for some states in Mexico, Puebla is not included!**

UPAEP

- **Mexico is a large country, problems happening in the border area are not reflected in other parts of Mexico, for example Puebla is more than 600 miles from the Border.**
- **The media has created a perception about Mexico that is not true in all Mexican territories.**
- **Approximately 200 students and professors from Oklahoma have traveled to and from the United States to Puebla during the past 10 years without any problem.**

A large, stylized grey logo consisting of a thick, double-lined shape that resembles a stylized letter 'S' or a similar abstract form, positioned in the upper half of the slide.

**What should we do as Study
Abroad Advisors?**

A large, stylized red logo for UPA AEP, featuring thick, rounded letters with a white outline, positioned in the lower half of the slide.

Visit Mexico!

- **Mexico study abroad destinations one by one (do not treat Mexico as a whole!).**

- **“Certify cities in Mexico as safe spots” (where our students should go? Where they shouldn’t?)**

- **Advise our students about safety but do not scare them!**

UPAEP

A couple more things!

- Advise (as we always do) our students to be smart and make smart decisions when they are abroad.**
- Stop making them fill special warning forms that only scare them and their parents.**
- Invest extra time talking with your students about safety procedures.**
- Stop rumors and misunderstandings!**

UPRAEP



What do you think?

UPA NEP

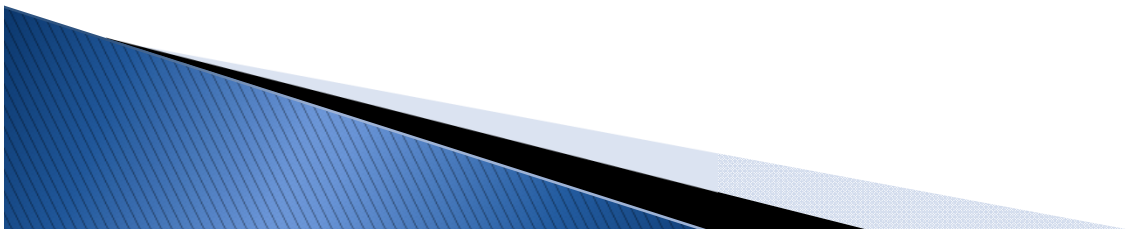
Study Abroad in Mexico: Opportunities and Challenges for International Educators



Wendy Sheets
Assistant Director
Center for Global Education
University of Tulsa

University of Tulsa Perspective

- ▶ TU's study abroad programs to Mexico through providers
- ▶ Participation rate is very low – last 4 years, a total of 5 students studied in Mexico out of 544 students
- ▶ Tulsa's Sister City Partnership (est. 1980) – San Luis Potosi, Mexico – school exchanges & GM internships for TU students
- ▶ University's travel warning policy for study abroad
- ▶ Conservative approach, risk adverse campus with no university legal counsel



University of Tulsa Perspective

- ▶ 2010 Mexico travel warning specific to border states
- ▶ Maintained contact with providers; stayed abreast of developments
- ▶ Prompted a review to re-evaluate our travel warning policy
 - Two students appealed to study in Israel for spring 2011
 - Grad student archeology dig in Egypt summer 2011
- ▶ We were advised to develop a waiver for students to sign prior to summer internship to SLP
- ▶ Warnings broadened to include more Mexican states in April 2011
- ▶ Friday before our PDO orientation, new warning contained specific mention of San Luis Potosi
- ▶ Cancelled SLP summer internship



Challenges



- ▶ General 'terrorism travel alert' for all of Europe issued Oct. 2010 made it impossible to craft something
 - According to our own policies, what would we do if a travel warning had been issued?
- ▶ Difficult to interpret alerts & warnings
 - Often broadly based and/or ambiguous
 - Is there a real threat to students?
 - Regional violence can't be applied to a whole country
- ▶ Communicating policy on campus
 - Enforcing compliance
 - TU student who was funded to do summer research in Mexico



University of Arkansas Perspective

- ▶ UofA uses both faculty led programs and program providers in Mexico
- ▶ Participation rate for Mexico is around 2% in last 4 years, 47 students studied there out of 1718 students
- ▶ School of Architecture Urban Design summer program to Mexico City, Mexico
- ▶ Spanish Language program in Puebla, Mexico (UPAEP)
- ▶ Providers (ISA) in Mexico



University of Arkansas Perspective

▶ U.S. STATE DEPT. TRAVEL ADVISORIES

The University of Arkansas adheres to the recommendations provided by the U.S. Department of State through its Consular Information Sheets, Public Announcements and Travel Warnings.

The University will not approve study abroad programs in countries that are under a U.S. State Department Warning, nor will it pre-approve credit or allow institutional funds to be used by students electing on their own to participate in study or research in these countries. Exceptions to this policy will be considered on a program-by-program basis. Written justification must be submitted by one or more dean to the Chancellor's Executive Committee who will review the appeal in consultation with the offices of Study Abroad, Legal Counsel and Risk Management. (8/26/2011)



University of Arkansas Perspective

- ▶ Every spring for the past 2 years, recommendations have been made to the Chancellor's Executive Comm. with regard to travel warning destinations:
Summer 11: Egypt, Syria, Japan, Mexico
- ▶ Egypt & Syria cancelled due to political instability
- ▶ Japan cancelled due to natural disaster
- ▶ Mexico approved, in large part due to strong backing of School of ARCH & thorough documentation from faculty leader



Challenges/Suggestions

- ▶ Architecture School has a long institutional commitment to Mexico and the program is built into the curriculum, so how to build contingencies with travel warning in place?
- ▶ Administration (CEC, Deans, etc) hesitant to override recommendations from state departments on these kinds of matters, so appeals/decisions fall to staff
- ▶ Honors College (major source of funding) issued new policy on study abroad grants to travel warning countries
- ▶ Hard to be a magic 8 ball!

- ▶ Important to get advice from people on the ground/faculty leaders about real life situations
- ▶ Recommended Overseas Travel Advisory Committee be formed—still no movement on this yet



Resources for Further Research

Travel Warnings: Developing Effective Response Procedures (Julie Friend, 2011)

- http://www.nafsa.org/File/novdec10_supplement.pdf

Mexico's drug war myths dispelled (CNN)

- <http://edition.cnn.com/video/?/video/world/2010/12/09/ctw.romo.mexico.fact.fiction.cnn>

CONAHEC & SAFETI: Balancing Safety Concerns and Academic Engagement in Mexico

- <http://www.conahec.org/conahec/portlets/conahecnews/PortalNews/StatementOnMexicoTravelWarning.pdf>

