

Study Abroad Opportunity Help UNM Students Make a Lasting Difference in Nepal

Introduction

We, a group of University of New Mexico students (YOGDAN –*Giving, a volunteer student group*), have a unique opportunity to study abroad [ECON 395/595] and make a lasting impact for the people of Nepal. During the course, our goal is to extend the reach of successful New Mexican initiatives to develop and implement a citizen science program in Nepal to encourage *Healthy Environment, Healthy Living*. The city of Siddharthanagar, located in southern Nepal, serves as an important trading port with India and is the gateway to the old-world heritage site of Lumbini. The Danda River flows along Siddharthanagar and is an integral part of the city. Recent studies, however, have found the Danda River to contain number contaminants, from household and industrial sources, leading to detrimental health and biological impacts. Local industries have also reduced the air quality raising further concerns.

We plan to work closely with the community of Siddharthanagar and our institutional college campus collaborator, including local schools and authorities to develop the foundation for long-term data collection and environmental monitoring. The information will be used to inform their own sustainable solutions for a cleaner environment and healthier living.

The program fee for the trip is approximately \$2200 plus airfare. A portion of the money will go to providing equipment and training for long-term success, such as water quality testing materials, air quality monitoring equipment, training sessions, and guest speakers. There is a great deal of interest from UNM students to attend. However, the cost of the trip may prohibit many from going. Therefore, we are asking for donations to help defray some of the cost. Donations will be pooled and applied equally to lower total trip cost for each student. We appreciate any and all donations you are able to give as every little bit helps. We assure you that all donations will be used solely for program costs.

We are so grateful for your support. You are directly helping to support the education of eager UNM students as well as the Nepalese people and ecosystems. Please see below for more specific details about the class and the work we will be doing in Nepal. If you have any additional questions, we are happy to answer them. Thank you again for your support.

A STEM Bridge Initiative & Course Details

A unique Sustainable Development Action Lab (SDAL) is being developed by the Nepal Study Center (NSC) at UNM to provide valuable hands-on learning experience for the UNM undergraduate students. Working with the economics and other interdisciplinary faculty and the volunteer graduate student mentors, our interdisciplinary undergraduate student group hopes to travel to Nepal this December (2017) and implement a citizen science program. This long-term scientific data collection mechanism will be modeled after our New Mexico based Rio Grande related conservation and ecological monitoring programs, and will be set up at our

collaborator's international learning center at its college campus (*Lumbini Center for Sustainability*). Our Fall Semester classroom has been rigorously analyzing the problem from the urban town of Siddharthanagar, especially the water contaminants and its impact on human and eco-systems. This SDAL program, once established on the ground level in Nepal, will serve as a long-term living laboratory for our UNM students to gain valuable skill, knowledge, and global experience.