

Global Engagement Grant Proposal
Mexican Reintegration Project

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1. Summary describing the project's objectives and anticipated impact (250 words max)

The phenomenon of deportees returning to Mexico is significant for humanitarian, legal, economic, and social reasons. In 2017, the number of interior removals from the United States increased by 30% from 2016. Media reports of individuals detained by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in front of schools, homes, and job sites have become commonplace in Texas.

This project's objective is to help TAMU students better understand the complexity of the deportation phenomenon through experiential learning, research inquiries, and service projects. We want our students to see firsthand the difficulties that deportees face, by visiting reintegration centers in Mexico, interviewing deportees, and doing internships with the centers that are assisting deportees. Our activities will address the following research questions:

- What challenges do Mexican deportees face?
- As they try to re-integrate, how do deportees fare economically, socially, and psychologically?
- What is the impact of deportation on family members left in the U.S.?

We plan to share our research by convening services providers and attorneys who work with Mexican deportees (and those at risk of being deported) at Hacienda Santa Clara at the end of our three year study. Engaging students in this work that has binational impact is critical to training global leaders. Also, in keeping with core Aggie values, our students will work on service projects, include compiling legal information to help deportees wrap up their financial and other affairs in the U.S. and sharing this information through community presentations, both in the U.S. and Mexico.

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2. Project narrative (up to 5 pages), including the following:

a. Profile of target students and anticipated number of students who will participate

Whether they pursue careers in law, teaching, social work, or other fields, this project will provide students with valuable experiences that will advance their professional insights and their development as world citizens. We plan to engage fifteen students (drawn from the Law School, as well as undergraduate and other graduate programs) who are studying immigration, workforce development, and community economic development as it relates to U.S.-Mexico relations. Students will be identified by professors who teach courses that will serve as a pipeline for this project and are identified below.

b. Degrees and courses affected, if relevant

The project will draw students from the following courses to participate:

- HIST 305: Mexican American History
- LAW (Special Topics): Community Development Clinic
- LAW (Special Topics): Immigrant Rights Clinic
- LAW (Special Topics): Crimmigration (Criminal Law and Immigration)
- LAW 7418: Legislation & Regulation
- LAW 7332: Immigration Law
- SOCI 337: International Migration
- SOCI 338: Latinx Immigration
- SOCI 423 Globalization and Social Change
- SOCI 607: Seminar in Social Organization- Latinx Migration and Intersectionality
- HIST 625 Research Seminar in Race, Ethnicity, and Migration
- SOCI 667 – US-Mexico Border

c. Description of the activity in detail

Our projects seeks to educate TAMU students about the complexities of the deportation phenomenon, through experiential learning, research inquiries, and service projects. Our students have some knowledge about deportation issues, either through classroom studies, public debates in the media, or perhaps even through the experiences of family and friends. We seek to deepen that knowledge, to teach the students about deportation through the lens of the deportees themselves, from the perspective of academics seeking to understand the larger issues and patterns, and then to understand the students' own roles and how they can help. We propose to accomplish these goals through experiential learning, research inquiries, and service projects.

Building upon their classroom studies, we want to bring the students to Mexico to meet deportees and to talk to them about their re-integration experiences. Possible hubs for meeting deportees are migrant resource centers that offer services to the deportee population, including

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men, women, and children from Mexico and Central America. Regional centers located throughout Mexico and particularly in the northern sector (given the close proximity to the United States) have taken up the task of offering job referral services, job retraining, housing support, and other key resources. Specifically, we can bring students to two migrant centers in the urban capital city of Monterrey, located about 250 miles from the Texas border.

Given the relative secure nature of Monterrey (it is not on any State Department Advisory list) and the short distance (one hour via air) from Houston to Monterrey, students and faculty can visit these sites easily and safely. These include one 24-hour migrant center specifically for women, “Albergue y Comedor Publico para Mujeres Migrantes” and one open to all migrants, “Comedor y Centro de Atención al Migrante Nuevo Corazón.” The two sites are crucial source of support for migrants, providing basic food, shelter, and orientation to the local social and economic environment. As described further in this proposal, the centers will also be the focus of a research project. We will also explore the possibility of student internships at these centers.

With faculty supervision and support, our students will participate in studies focusing on (1) the effect that forced returns have on family structure and well-being on both sides of the border; (2) social reintegration of migrants who had been seen as national heroes and now are perceived as a burden on families and the polity; and (3) economic reintegration of deportees who transfer know-how and put their cultural capital to use in emerging service-oriented firms in Mexico, such as call-centers.

1. The Effect of Deportation on Families on Both Sides of the Border

The portion of this project that focuses on families will examine how deportations affect mixed-status families, that is, a family with at least one unauthorized immigrant parent and at least one U.S. citizen child, on both sides of the US-Mexico border. According to the Pew Hispanic Research Center, there were slightly over 11 million unauthorized adult immigrants and 5.1 million children of unauthorized immigrants residing in the U.S. in 2009. Nearly 80% of those children (4 million) are U.S. citizens. What happens when unauthorized parents are deported? Do children stay in the US or return to Mexico? Research on Mexican immigrant parents in the Bryan/College Station area finds that unauthorized parents favor taking young children with them to Mexico if deported, while leaving older children in the care of friends or relatives in the U.S.

Given the context of increased deportability and deportations, how do immigrant families separated by deportation function transnationally? How does a parent left behind cope with economic and other uncertainties? How does family separation affect family members’ future economic mobility? What is the effect on parents' and children’s well-being? And significantly, how is the integration process of U.S. citizen children and unauthorized children affected on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border? Are children developing the sense of belonging vital for future participation in civic institutions in Mexico and the U.S.? Interviews with deported parents will shed light on these important, yet little studied questions.

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2. The Role of Regional Migrant Centers in Social Reintegration

Another aspect of the proposed project includes guiding students to conduct research on the role of migrant resource centers located in Mexico. In addition to the two Monterrey migrant centers previously discussed, another valuable resource is the National Institute for the Study of Migration. Students and faculty will draw from the research conducted by the Institute on the migrant population for additional historical context. Furthermore, the Institute can be a launching point to create additional research relationships with other migration research centers in Mexico. These research relationships will help sustain the project's impact beyond the 3 year funding timeframe.

Successful immigrant re-integration depends heavily on the existence of social networks. Historic socio-political connections between Houston and Monterrey (dating back to the 19th century), suffused with familial and kinship ties, continue to exist between community members in both urban centers. This project pays particular attention to the creation and persistence of such networks that provide some continuity for migrants on both sides of the border, enabling them to hold on to cultural beliefs and lifestyles. College Station and Fort Worth are within driving distance of Houston, and as part of the project, faculty researchers will set up visits to migrant communities in Houston and migrant centers in Monterrey.

Students will also be able to conduct community based research by developing and conducting surveys that will lead to better provision of services at migrant centers, while at the same time working with such centers to improve the lives of recent deportees. Migrant centers, for example, might benefit from knowing the migration trajectories, past labor market experiences, and family make-up of deportees they are serving in order to better connect them with governmental and non-governmental services. In addition, students will conduct in-depth interviews with service providers and surveys with deportees to ascertain gaps in services and best practices. The goal is to give back to the community by developing materials to address those gaps and improve services.

Economic Reintegration of Deported Workers

The workplace component of this project will consider how workers' experience in the United States affect their integration into the Mexican workplace. Workers who are deported do not lose their earned benefits or right to pursue legal remedy for workplace violations that occurred in the United States. And workers leave the United States with skills that may advantage them in the Mexican workplace. Programs to integrate deported workers into the Mexican workforce are developing but remain under-researched and underdeveloped. For example, Mexico City's Department of Labor has started a workplace training program for deported workers, and the regional migration center (described above) in Monterrey has assisted deported workers who speak English with finding jobs that earn better-than-average wages.

The project will research, collect, and serve as a source for information about deported workers' barriers and entry points to the Mexican workforce. It will develop relationships with non-governmental and governmental organizations that provide services to deported workers.

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Working with those partners, the project will engage in community outreach and education to improve deported workers' access to earned benefits and legal remedies resulting from their pre-deportation participation in the United States workforce. It will also examine best practices for integrating deported workers into the Mexican workforce. Finally, the project will provide an entry point for students who desire to conduct further research into cross-border workforce issues.

Among the research questions for students are: do workers deported from the United States to Mexico experience advantages or disadvantages in the labor market due to their work experience in the United States? Is there a difference in skills between deported workers and workers who never lived in the United States? How successful are programs that train or place deported workers? Are there employers who look for deported workers, or who look for skills the deported workers are more likely to have than other workers? Are there employers who avoid deported workers? What are the barriers to deported workers' accessing workplace benefits or awards that they were entitled to in the United States, e.g., worker's compensation, social security, pensions/retirement funds, or awards from legal actions related to the workplace?

For all three research projects, the students will have the opportunity to work with an interdisciplinary faculty team to focus innovative areas of inquiry. They will examine historical processes of migration, social networks, and labor relations to better understand the circumstances deportees face today. Moreover, students will approach this topic of global importance from cultural, historical, economic, social and legal angles. The PIs are well-poised to carry out this research and pedagogical project. Professors Herrera, Morrison and Pham bring legal expertise that will guide students' research into rights and legal remedies of deportees; specifically, these professors have academic and practice expertise in immigration law, employment law (including employment discrimination), and community development law. Professors Hernandez and Plankey-Videla have been conducting research in Mexico for many years. In addition, Professors Herrera, Hernandez and Plankey-Videla have contacts with local groups in Mexico that work with deportees.

Courses taught in College Station and Fort Worth will prepare students to go to Mexico as part of a study abroad course and/or internship with non-governmental organizations that serve deportees. Dr. Plankey-Videla teaches an undergraduate course on Latinx immigration, providing a socio-legal examination of Latin American migration to the U.S., processes of integration of Latinx in the U.S., and expansion of deportation back to Latin American countries. She will also teach a graduate sociology course deepening on the above topics and delving into the ways that race, class, gender, sexuality and age intersect with migration processes. Course offerings will also serve as the foundation for a forthcoming proposal for a study abroad summer experience offering a History of Mexican Americans from a transnational perspective. Dr. Hernandez will propose a study abroad course Hist 305 Mexican American History since 1848 to be offered in Mexico City. This research on migrant networks and centers will form a key component of the history of this growing population in the state and in our country.

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d. Describe the impact on students beyond the traditional classroom or study abroad experience.

This program will provide students with an experience that will lead to lifelong learning and engagement with the world around them. Interviewing Mexican deportees and working with social service organizations that assist deportees restart their lives in their country of origin after long periods of absence extends and deepens classroom knowledge that students will obtain in the courses we will provide. For law students in particular, this exposure will help them to be better advocates for their U.S. client facing deportation, to argue for statutory relief based on hardship, For all the students, this experience is important to develop the social, cultural, and global competence that is required for Aggies who work in Texas. Since our project includes trips to Mexico, the project will require students to work on developing skills to effectively communicate and collaborate with Mexican citizens.

e. Explain the anticipated impact of the program on other faculty or programs.

Students from all over the university can participate in these courses. However, undergraduate and graduate students from Law, History, Sociology, Hispanic Studies and International Studies will be especially interested in the course offerings related to this project. Some of the impacts this project will have include:

- Development of a Global Studies Program Offering at the Law School;
- Development of a Summer Abroad Course;
- Scholarship collaboration between Law School and College of Liberal Arts faculty with synergistic research interests;
- Build on existing relationships with TAMU former students in Mexico;
- Develop new relationships with community social service agencies in Mexico; and
- Provide an experiential opportunity for students enrolled in existing courses that relate to Latin American migration, U.S. immigration law, Mexican American History, and community development.

3. Length and timeline of the project

Year One, First Six Months: Students will research and identify governmental and non-governmental programs that provide assistance to deported workers. Students participating in the project will compile a description and guide to the resources currently available to deported workers. Law students will research and develop a guide to legal rights and remedies for deported workers.

Year One, Month 7 to 12: Students will develop two survey instruments. The first will gather information about the programs that the migrant centers and governmental organizations provide to deported workers. The second will be used to interview deportees about the effect of deportation on their families and their labor market trajectories. Deportees will be sought through the

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organizations where they receive services and through snowball sampling. The students will also help administer the survey. Fifteen students will travel to Mexico to collect the data.

Year Two, First Six Months: Students will administer the survey and assess its results to identify best practices. They will contact organizations that engage in best practices and help develop internships or research projects with those organizations. Students will also identify gaps in services and develop training or materials to address those gaps. Students will work with faculty to find patterns in the data that help explain the effect of deportation on family processes and labor market options.

Year Two, Second Six Months: Fifteen students will travel to Mexico to work with social service agencies and possibly governmental organizations to provide training and information to deported individuals. These students will communicate with students in the study abroad History course (via Skype) to discuss their research plan and preliminary findings. The study abroad course students will then integrate this student-led research to learn about migrant reintegration challenges and as a class team, develop a series of possible solutions in a written project. In this way, the project emphasizes peer-student learning (and from different disciplines and colleges), collaborative research and writing, and an opportunity to earn credit towards their final grade for a project based on real-life world challenges.

Year Three: Convene conference at Hacienda Santa Clara that includes research findings, and presentations from U.S. and Mexican non-governmental organizations that provide services to detainees. Conference will also feature students who will have the opportunity to present their research findings. Faculty develop new study abroad courses for both undergraduate and law students.

4. Learning outcomes, objectives, and assessment

A key Texas A&M learning objective is to form engaged leaders and global citizens. This project will develop in students a sense of social engagement, coupled with critical thinking skills that serve the community and larger social justice goals. Further, this project prioritizes interdisciplinary research among faculty and students to address real-life world challenges. These research collaborations have the potential to shape public policy, produce real change in some of the world's most impoverished communities, and offer our students the opportunity to build their academic skills while simultaneously learning about new cultures.

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