Welcome to the Mount Holyoke/Goucher Program in Monteverde!

We are delighted that you will be joining the Mount Holyoke/Goucher program in Monteverde this spring! As you look ahead to the semester in Costa Rica, you no doubt have many questions about what to expect and how to prepare. This handbook has been created as a supplement to the Monteverde Institute Program Handbook to help answer questions specific to the program.

Please also see these resources:

Monteverde Student Handbook
The Monteverde Institute Student Handbook is a great resource about the Institute, the local community, what to expect from your classes and your homestays, cultural differences, what to bring with you, etc. (Note that the Handbook is written for all of the student groups that MVI hosts over the course of the year, so some of the references, particularly to MVI forms or short-term programs, will not apply to you.) Be sure to bring the MVI handbook (and this one) with you, and particularly to keep the MVI contact information in your carry-on luggage.

Monteverde Institute Videos
Three videos on the program webpage provide an excellent introduction to the Monteverde Institute, its history and mission, the Monteverde Zone, and what to expect of day to day life in the community and as a member of the Mount Holyoke/Goucher program.

• Globalization, Development, and Environment features interviews with students who participated in the program in spring 2015.
• The Monteverde Institute and the Community introduces the academic programs and courses offered at MVI in the context of the local community.
• Introduction to the Monteverde Institute features Executive Director Debra Hamilton discussing MVI’s history and mission.

McCulloch Center Website
Our website includes various sections and documents to help all students plan ahead for study abroad and for their return to Mount Holyoke. Please see these sections in particular:

• Predeparture & Return
  Academic policies that pertain to study abroad, advice about culture shock, tips for managing your money, etc. Sections include:
  ▪ Student Handbook for Education Abroad
  ▪ Predeparture Checklist
  ▪ Timeline of Important Dates
  ▪ Travel Resources
• Health & Safety
  Here you will find useful resources, information on insurance (including the MHC Student Health Insurance and how it works outside of the US), and AIG/TravelGuard, which provides emergency services to students studying abroad.

LITS
LITS Travel Resources Guide
This section of the LITS website includes links to travel resources, as well as information about how to access LITS resources (journals, reference materials, other libraries, etc.) from off-campus.
You are responsible for reading and understanding the information that applies to you in all of these other materials, as well as for the information contained in this handbook. You should bring this handbook with you to have as a reference while you are in Costa Rica.

Travel and Arrival
Students are responsible for booking their own flights; note that you must have a round-trip ticket to enter Costa Rica. We encourage you to coordinate your travel plans with one another. You should arrive in San Jose (Juan Santamaria International Airport, code SJO) on Monday, January 4. Please plan to arrive in the morning or afternoon. We recommend that you not arrive in the evening, as it is more complicated to arrange airport pick-ups then, as students will be meeting for dinner and an orientation session. MVI will have staff at the airport in San Jose to meet you when you arrive; look for someone holding a sign after you pass through immigration and customs. If there is a significant delay or change in your schedule at the last minute, please contact MVI directly; the phone number is at the end of this handbook, which you should keep with you in your carry-on luggage.

You will enter Costa Rica as a tourist, which is the most appropriate category for you. US citizens may enter for up to 90 days without a visa. You are required to have a return ticket at the time of entry, but will not necessarily be asked to show the ticket; nevertheless, be prepared to do so. If there is any question about your departure being more than 90 days after your entry, you should explain that the program includes a trip to Nicaragua before the end of the 90-day period, and that you'll then return to Costa Rica to complete the program. Because some students had difficulty one year, we will provide you with two letters (one from MVI and one from MHC) confirming plans for the trip to Nicaragua. (If you are not a US citizen, your letter from MHC will refer to the entry limitations that apply to you.) You do not need to show this letter unless you are questioned about your travel plans, and the airline asks for documentation about the trip outside of the country.

You will spend the first week or so traveling in Costa Rica to introduce you to the diversity of the country and the natural environment. This travel is both orientation and the beginning of the academic work of the program, and will provide an important basis for the rest of the semester. It also helps students get to know one another, and some of the instructors and MVI staff. At the end of that time, you will travel to Monteverde, where you will move in with your host family for the next stage of the program.

You should book your departure for Saturday, April 16, unless you plan to stay on longer on your own. The program will arrange transportation to San Jose on April 15, where you will all have a final wrap-up dinner. The hotel you will stay at that night is near the airport, and the program will arrange transportation there the next day according to your departure schedules.

If you have not already sent your itinerary (including your return flight) to the McCulloch Center (global@mtholyoke.edu), please do that as soon as possible (by November 30 at the latest). The McCulloch Center will forward the information to MVI, and also circulate it to all students.

Homestay
MVI expects to send us your homestay assignments in December; we will pass that information along to you by email as soon as we have it. The orientation will include information and advice about living with a family. Many of the families are very experienced hosts, having worked with MVI for several years. Your family is likely to have very limited English, so they will provide lots of opportunities for you to practice your Spanish! You may want to bring a small gift for your family (though this is not required). If you do bring a gift, something that tells them about yourself and where you come from (e.g., photos of your family, community, local landmarks, the environment, etc., or some kind of local product) would be especially appreciated.
Packing List
Students who have previously participated in the program have added this advice to the “what to bring” information provided in the MVI Handbook:

• Bring more than 1 set of nicer clothes if you expect to go out a lot in the evenings
• Bring more shirts/t-shirts but fewer pairs of jeans than what the handbook suggests
• T-shirts are fine for every day wear, but note that locals tend to dress up a bit more than students typically do; and you may just want more variety
• You can buy just about anything you need in Santa Elena, as long as you are not particular about brand names

Computers and Communications
We strongly recommend that you bring your laptop, and that you make sure you have insurance in case it is lost or stolen (it may be covered under your parents’ homeowners insurance policy, but check to make sure).

The Monteverde Institute has wifi on campus, and there are internet cafes in town, but it is likely that you will not have internet access in your homestay.

Skype is a good way to keep in touch with family and friends at home. If your family does not use Skype, set them up with an account before you leave home.

Academic Policies & Resources
Attendance at all classes, including program field trips, is mandatory. It is important as well for students to be punctual.

Due dates for end of the semester projects are deliberately staggered so that not all of your work will be due at the same time. It is not possible to obtain extensions for this work.

Provided that you complete the full program (three required courses, plus one elective), with grades of C- or better, you will earn 16 credits toward your Mount Holyoke degree. If you wish to use any of the courses to fulfill specific requirements, you must obtain approval from the appropriate department chair; it is always wise to do that in advance, if possible.

NOTE THIS EXCEPTION TO GENERAL MHC POLICY:
Mount Holyoke’s usual policy is that grades earned abroad do not appear on the MHC transcript, nor count in the MHC GPA. Because this is a Mount Holyoke program, the grades earned WILL APPEAR ON YOUR MHC TRANSCRIPT. They will not count toward your MHC GPA, however.

Faculty Director
Jamie Mullaney, Chair of the Sociology Department at Goucher College, will serve as Faculty Director for Spring 2016. She will oversee the academic program, joining the group for approximately the first two weeks of the semester, and returning at the end for wrap-up activities. During the remainder of the semester, she will be based at Goucher, and she will communicate regularly with students and program faculty via e-mail and Skype.

Program Courses
All students will enroll in the three core courses for the program:

• Environmental Sustainability
• Development and Social Change in Costa Rica
• Spanish (you will be placed at the appropriate level after your arrival)
More information about the core courses and the tropical ecology elective is available on the program website.

For the fourth course, you may choose either **Field Methods of Tropical Ecology** or **Human Health and Development in the Tropics**. You are not permitted to enroll in both elective courses. We have already asked you to indicate which course you intend to take; if you are considering changing your choice, please notify the McCulloch Center (global@mtholyoke.edu) as soon as possible.

- **Field Methods of Tropical Ecology**. Targeting natural/biological science majors, this course explores topics of tropical ecology (biodiversity, cloud forest ecosystems and others) in greater depth, with emphasis placed on learning research methodologies that can be used in field-based or laboratory research. This course has a prerequisite of one course in biology or ecology with a lab or field studies component.

- **Human Health and Development in the Tropics**. This course will focus on the complex relationship between human health and development in the tropics. Using case studies and a variety of guiding frameworks (biocultural, human rights, and public health), the course will explore ways that humans interact with the tropical environment in the context of development and globalization, and how those interactions influence human health. Students will learn about specific health topics within a local context through a team research project.

**Health & Safety**

If you have any chronic or recurring health conditions or issues, it is critical that you consult with your health care provider in advance to plan ahead for meeting your needs. If you need information about health issues, medical resources, bringing medication with you, etc., AIG/Travel Guard may be able to help (see section below).

If you need medical care while you are in Costa Rica, the MVI staff will connect you with a local physician or clinic, and can accompany you to help with translation, if needed. There are good English-speaking medical resources in the area, but limited English-speaking counselors. If you are working with a counselor here in the US and do not think you will have sufficient Spanish to work with someone in that language, we recommend that you talk with your counselor here before you leave and see if you can make arrangements to keep in touch, if needed, while you are away.

**AIG/Travel Guard**

As a student participating in an MHC program abroad, you are eligible to access travel and security information and emergency services through the Five Colleges Inc. contract with AIG/Travel Guard, a medical and security assistance program. *This program is not a substitute for your present health insurance, but provides assistance for certain medical emergencies and for repatriation.* We strongly encourage all students to register with AIG/Travel Guard (it is fast and easy), and to take advantage of the extensive on-line resources, available at no charge to you.

See the **Health & Safety** section of our website for more information about AIG/Travel Guard. See the **Five College Risk Management** website for more information about AIG/Travel Guard benefits and services, a link to the web portal, and a link to a printable copy of the membership card. The membership card includes the information you will need to access AIG/Travel Guard support, and you should carry it with you at all times (we will provide a hard copy to you along with your travel letter).

**Summer Internship Opportunities**

Each summer the Monteverde Institute offers several research or internship opportunities for students who are
interested in remaining in Monteverde after the completion of the semester. The MVI internship handbook is available for your review in the McCulloch Center lounge (see the red box labeled “Latin America & Caribbean”). Fees start at approximately $1,400 (for a four-week program) and include homestay and homestay coordination, transfer to San Jose at the end of the program, materials for respective programs, and project supervision and instruction from MVI faculty and staff. Students will be responsible for all costs associated with participating in a summer internship or research project.

Useful Contact Information

**Monteverde Institute**
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