Faculty Travel Report
Urban Planning/Public Policy Study Abroad Program
Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), Brazil
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Background:

Last year, the School of Public Affairs at SDSU targeted for an exchange program with the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), and its School of Architecture and Urbanism (Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo, FAU). The FAU is the leading center for training architects and city planners in Rio de Janeiro, and one of the most prestigious universities in all of Brazil. It is also the largest federal university in the nation. Like SDSU, the UFRJ is a large teaching and research university, with approximately 47,000 students. The FAU offers Bachelors, Masters and Ph.D. degrees in Urban Planning, Architecture and Urban/Environmental Design. Prof. Larry Herzog was a Visiting Scholar at UFRJ in 2008, based in the School of Architecture and Urbanism. Through Dr. Herzog’s connections, the idea of an exchange program between SDSU and UFRJ was formed.

Results of Visit

To further the goals of the proposed exchange, Dr. Herzog visited Rio de Janeiro in August, 2009. While in Rio, Herzog met with the following officials at UFRJ to discuss the details of the exchange:

Jacques Sillas, Coordinator, International Exchange Office, FAU
Gustavo Rocha-Peixoto, Director (Dean), FAU
Vera Tangari, Professor and Director, Program in Urbanism (Pro-Urbe), FAU
Luciana da Silva Andrade, Professor, Program in Architecture (Pro-Arq)
Adauto Cardoso, Professor, Director, Institute for Urban and Regional Research (IPURR)

These meetings were very productive. Gustavo Rocha-Peixoto, Dean of the School of Architecture and Urbanism (FAU), was enthusiastic about having an exchange with the School of Public Affairs at SDSU. Dr. Jacques Sillas, Coordinator of International Exchanges for the FAU, indicated that his office would be prepared to receive students, assist them with placements for housing, and help them get set up to spend one semester in Rio. Dr. Adauto Cardoso expressed interest in being part of the cooperative relationship. We thus agreed to initiate this exchange.
Based on my conversations at the UFRJ, I envision that as many as 5 graduate students in the Master of City Planning (MCP) program could visit UFRJ for one semester over the next two or three years. These students would most likely choose the thesis option for their Masters degree, and carry out the research for their thesis (or part of it) in Rio de Janeiro. Dr. Vera Tangari, who speaks fluent English, agreed to serve as a research advisor to our visiting graduate students. Dr. Adauto Cardoso, who runs a very respected urban and regional research office, offered to collaborate with graduate student research efforts.

UFRJ offers some language programs for foreign students. Those could be made available to SDSU visitors. We would like the exchange to also be available to undergraduate students in our Public Administration major, who concentrate in City Planning. I don’t have a sense of how many might participate, and certainly financial cost would be a huge barrier for many of our undergraduate PA majors. But we will promote this project with them. The International Exchange Office at the UFRJ can receive undergraduate students, and assist them in organizing their experience while in Rio. I believe our students could take classes that would serve as Electives for their degree. Some of those classes might include: History of the City, Evolution of Rio de Janeiro, Urban and Regional Planning in Brazil, Irregular Settlements, or Urban Design.

I will serve as advisor for any SDSU students or faculty who travel to Rio de Janeiro. I will notify contacts in Rio of their expected arrival dates, help set up the initial interventions, and ask students to keep in touch with me while they are in Brazil. For any UFRJ faculty or students who wish to visit SDSU, I will either serve as their hosts, or introduce them to someone they may want to work with. (As long as I am at the university that semester-- barring visiting positions elsewhere, or other intervening circumstances).

We would also like this exchange to be available for Visiting Faculty. The FAU faculty are engaged in diverse research in the fields of urban design, planning policy, social meanings of architecture, housing, the problems of favelas. Many are directly involved in practical projects in the city of Rio de Janeiro, thus they represent a rich pool of contacts for SDSU faculty.

**Conclusion**

As this is written, paperwork is being submitted to set up both a general agreement of cooperation between the two universities; we also intend to prepare specific agreements about student exchange and faculty exchange. I believe this exchange will be valuable for graduate students seeking an international experience as part of their Masters degree in City Planning. It will serve those prior to returning to work as full time city planners, or those continuing on for the Ph.D. Brazil’s mega cities, like Rio de Janeiro or Sao Paulo, encapsulate the problems of urban growth throughout Latin America and the developing world. They are excellent settings for students to learn about the problems of urban growth and sustainability in Latin America. Brazil is seen by many as a cutting
edge nation in areas ranging from technology, innovative design and planning, to environmental challenges. Thus, Brazil has become a nation that students will want to know more about. I believe this cooperative agreement with the UFRJ will have staying power for SDSU. I should further add that Rio de Janeiro is an exciting and engaging city for exchange students or faculty. It has a Parisian sense of urbanity, set against the tropical rain forest, mountains, and beaches. It has many older, cosmopolitan neighborhoods that, relative to other parts of the world, should be affordable to students and visiting faculty.

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