

# **The Global Next Door**

**A Report by the Mexico Academic Mobility Assessment Committee  
November 13, 2016**

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## Preface

Mexico, with its rich history and pre-history, diverse culture, strong higher education system, and large share of total U.S. trade, is ideally situated to be a leading destination for U.S. and Canadian academic mobility. Add to these factors the ever-increasing cost of higher education in the U.S. and the need to assure access for Canadian and U.S. students and faculty to relevant international experiences, Mexico is truly the global next door.

The strategic importance of relationships between Mexico, Canada and the U.S. is highlighted by the continued tradition of North American Leaders' Summits. Most recently, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, President Enrique Peña Nieto, and President Barack Obama met in Ottawa in June 2016.<sup>1</sup> These three leaders agreed on several points at this summit, among them efforts to encourage further trilateral trade and to streamline border crossings.

However, in recent years, financial crises, perceptions regarding crime and violence, and related U.S. Department of State (DOS) Travel Warnings and Global Affairs Canada Advisories have combined to dampen academic mobility to Mexico. Indeed, a 2014 survey conducted by David Vassar and Beverly Barrett at Rice University indicated that the two most important factors preventing stronger academic collaboration between the U.S. and Mexico are funding availability and perceptions of insecurity in Mexico.<sup>2</sup>

Despite obvious economic and educational advantages to studying in Mexico, along with increasing leisure and business visits to Mexico, these events and perceptions create a challenge for U.S. and Canadian higher education institutions (HEIs), which must strike a balance between encouraging mobility and protecting traveler safety. Universities in the U.S. and Canada must address inaccurate or incomplete information, wide-spread perceptions of risks and ever-changing circumstances, and in some cases lacking expertise on assessing risk for academic mobility to Mexico. Accordingly, the Mexico Academic Mobility Assessment Committee (MAMAC) was established to evaluate trends in existing information regarding travel in Mexico (including security), best practices, and the state of bi-national collaboration on travel issues. MAMAC's ultimate purpose will be to develop mechanisms for educating U.S. and Canadian universities regarding the ability to work or study in Mexico and to assure the most open and effective travel practices.

This first MAMAC report includes a brief background on academic mobility between the U.S., Canada and Mexico, describes governmental travel advice systems, the DOS Travel Warning, Consular Information Program, and how these affect academic mobility to Mexico, and discusses challenges HEIs face with regards to risk assessment, insurance, and travel policies for Mexico. This report presents results for a survey on HEI policies for Mexico travel and also proposes best practices for HEIs via a series of case studies. Finally, the report provides recommendations for enhancing communication and improving comprehension of travel warnings and their corresponding application in making travel decisions. In the future, MAMAC will produce additional reports addressing particular

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<sup>1</sup> McGregor, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Vassar and Barrett, 2014.

topics or sound practices mentioned in this first report, as well as address new or emerging opportunities or challenges.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Proctor', with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

Mike Proctor  
Vice President for Global Initiatives, University of Arizona  
Chair, Mexico Academic Mobility Assessment Committee

## Executive Summary

Study abroad programs have a profoundly positive impact on students' academic success, and students' experiences abroad shape their lives forever. Yet for all the benefits of study abroad, only 1.5% of students at U.S. universities participate. Too often cost and distance from home prevent students from studying abroad. Expanded study abroad opportunities in Mexico would help address those two issues. The purpose of MAMAC is to dramatically expand safe and affordable study abroad opportunities in Mexico for U.S. and Canadian students. Mexico and its array of distinguished universities present critical opportunities for U.S. and Canadian institutions seeking to send their students abroad.

To this end, and to facilitate broader awareness of the opportunities Mexico presents, this initial MAMAC report seeks to clarify perceptions related to security and infrastructure, two frequently stated reasons U.S. and Canadian institutions look elsewhere for study abroad programs (or more accurately, fail to look seriously at Mexico). This report summarizes the existing U.S. State Department Travel Warning and the Global Affairs Canada Advisory, and finds that both countries break down their warnings by region (or state) in Mexico based on risk levels. By looking at the risk in Mexico on a regional basis, rather than relying on blanket perceptions promulgated by news media or in social media, clearly an overwhelming majority of Mexico is safe. Further, the infrastructure available in many destinations exceeds that of many common study abroad locations.

In order to encourage U.S. and Canadian institutions to capitalize on the full potential of work in Mexico, this report draws on experiences of multiple HEIs working extensively in Mexico. The report identifies many sound practices regarding risk assessment and institutional travel policies, examples of which include:

- As basic as it may seem, actually reading and understanding applicable travel warnings and advisories, as both U.S. and Canadian risk evaluation systems clearly accommodate extensive travel in Mexico, a majority of which is not restricted in any way.
- Working closely with counterparts at Mexican institutions to determine the necessary level of on-the-ground infrastructure and support for students traveling to Mexico.
- Ensuring students complete country-specific health and safety training prior to departure that specifically addresses student vulnerabilities as well as location-specific risks prior to departure.
- Offering 24/7 international emergency support.

The report also includes survey results from 69 members of the University Risk Management and Insurance Association, Inc. The survey results reveal a wide range of procedures for handling travel to Mexico, but universities surveyed allow travel to Mexico with varying levels of university approval. Respondents were also asked what advice they would give regarding managing the risk inherent in travel to Mexico. Responses included:

- Read the Travel Warning carefully; it is very specific to certain regions.

- Risk varies greatly throughout the country, as it does in many countries, from negligible to extreme.
- Prepare and educate travelers with region-specific information, links to useful websites, explanation of insurance coverage and behavioral expectations.

This MAMAC report recommends the development of a sound practices inventory, familiarization visits, improved communication mechanisms, the development of mobility consortia, knowledge-sharing and implementation of best practices to ensure that Mexico's vast and unique potential as a study destination is reached. The committee will develop a continuing assessment and communication process based on the findings of this report, and will create a website to publicize findings, recommendations and sound practices. Future iterations of the report will explore capacity development practices such as familiarization visits and mobility consortia.

Given Mexico's proximity and strengths, U.S. and Canadian higher education institutions must deliberately and strategically include Mexico in the realization of their internationalization goals. Student mobility is a key aspect of this work, and time, cost, risk and the expected experience are all critical elements in expanding mobility of U.S. and Canadian students abroad. This report sheds light on misconceptions and realities regarding study in Mexico, and suggests that perhaps the key barrier to travel in Mexico lies within our own institutions. Failure to consider and expand upon travel to Mexico would be a disservice to our students who may not otherwise travel, or to those who select more costly or in fact "less international" locations as a result of unjustified fears or misconceptions.

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## 1. Introduction

Knowledge creation and educational empowerment know no boundaries. Moreover, the solution to the world's most pressing problems lies not in the segregation of people or ideas, but in the confluence of knowledge and creativity enhanced by varied cultural perspectives. In addition, the implementation of these solutions requires a cultural sensitivity not gained solely in laboratories of glass and steel, but in the inter-relation between individuals of different cultural backgrounds in new and sometimes challenging cultural contexts. Few social institutions have the capacity or mission to significantly advance opportunities for profound and transformative intercultural interface, and none offer the potential of higher educational institutions working across international boundaries.

Mexico is more than an ideal location for transformative intercultural experiences. Mexico's rich history and diverse cultural heritage have shaped its people, art, cuisine, languages, and social institutions. Its cosmopolitan cities and diverse archaeological sites offer a glimpse into the complex past of the Americas as a whole, and the challenges and opportunities of cities worldwide. Mexico's terrain is as diverse as its culture, and the relationships between land, resources and people provide key insights into local and global environmental and economic complexity. Particularly in light of U.S. and global politics, Mexico is not only a favorable but indeed an essential academic partner.

Despite this overwhelming mandate for academic collaboration between our nations and extensive engagement in multi-national research initiatives, academic mobility to Mexico from the U.S. and Canada remain anemic. This is particularly puzzling in light of dramatically increased business and tourism travel to Mexico in recent years outside of the education sector. Why is southbound academic mobility so limited, despite extensive and organic relationships between academics of all three nations? This report endeavors to address that question, and to recommend solutions to significantly increase southbound student mobility.

Mexico's proximity to the U.S. and Canada has made it both an affordable destination and an ideal business partner. Indeed, in business terms the availability of a highly-educated workforce, abundant natural resources, a rapidly increasing middle class, and strong research and logistics infrastructures make Mexico an *essential* business partner, a key player in the economic future of the Americas. For example, Mexico is consistently one of the U.S.' top trading partners, both for imports and exports. From January through May 2016, Mexico was the U.S.' third largest trading partner, accounting for 14.7% of total trade, just behind China at 14.8% and Canada at 15.3%.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, for calendar year 2015, Mexico was Canada's third largest trading partner following the U.S. and China, accounting for more total trade than either the United Kingdom or Germany.<sup>4</sup>

Clearly, business opportunity and tourism in Mexico provide Canadian and U.S. citizens myriad reasons for Mexico travel. The strength of growth in these areas and the role of Mexico in the world economy suggest a much stronger academic engagement as well. But

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<sup>3</sup> United States Census Bureau, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Statistics Canada, 2016.

despite these trends toward deeper engagement, academic travel to Mexico has been stymied by several factors, including financial concerns and both real and perceived safety issues. For example, the number of U.S. students studying abroad in Mexico dropped from nearly 10,000 in 2007/08 to a low of just 3,730 in 2012/13.<sup>5</sup> Study abroad to Mexico made up just 1.5% of total U.S. HEI study abroad in 2013/14.<sup>6</sup> In Canada, national data for student mobility to Mexico is not available; however, the Embassy of Mexico in Canada estimates that 300-500 Canadian students go to Mexico annually for short-term language and cultural studies.

Much of the reduction in U.S. study abroad to Mexico may be attributed to the global financial crisis of 2007/2008, which also affected total U.S. study abroad numbers worldwide, and perceptions regarding escalating violence (and corresponding U.S. DOS Travel Warning) in Mexico culminating in approximately the same time period. Figure 1 illustrates this decline from 2007/08 when 9,963 students studied abroad in Mexico, to 2011/12 when only 3,815 students participated. Still, during the same time period, total U.S. travel to Mexico remained roughly constant, and in the last two years it has increased dramatically.<sup>7,8</sup> Figure 1 illustrates the differing trends for total U.S. travel to Mexico and U.S. study abroad to Mexico.

This obvious increase in non-academic travel may be related to additional detail provided in U.S. State Department travel advisories, essentially recognizing and facilitating open travel to a majority of Mexico. Higher education institutions, however, have been puzzlingly slow to respond. The decline in U.S. study abroad to Mexico has however seen a slight reversal with the number of students studying in Mexico growing in 2013/14 for the first time in six years (Figure 1). Further, it rose at a high rate; increasing 19.2% in 2013/14 compared to the previous year while the overall increase in U.S. students studying abroad worldwide was only 5.2% for that academic year. However, this high percentage of growth occurred against an extraordinarily low baseline, and still represents a small number of students studying abroad in Mexico. In 2013/14 only 4,445 U.S. students studied abroad in Mexico as compared to roughly 300,000 U.S. students studying worldwide, and 38,250 students who studied in the United Kingdom alone.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Institute of International Education, 2016.

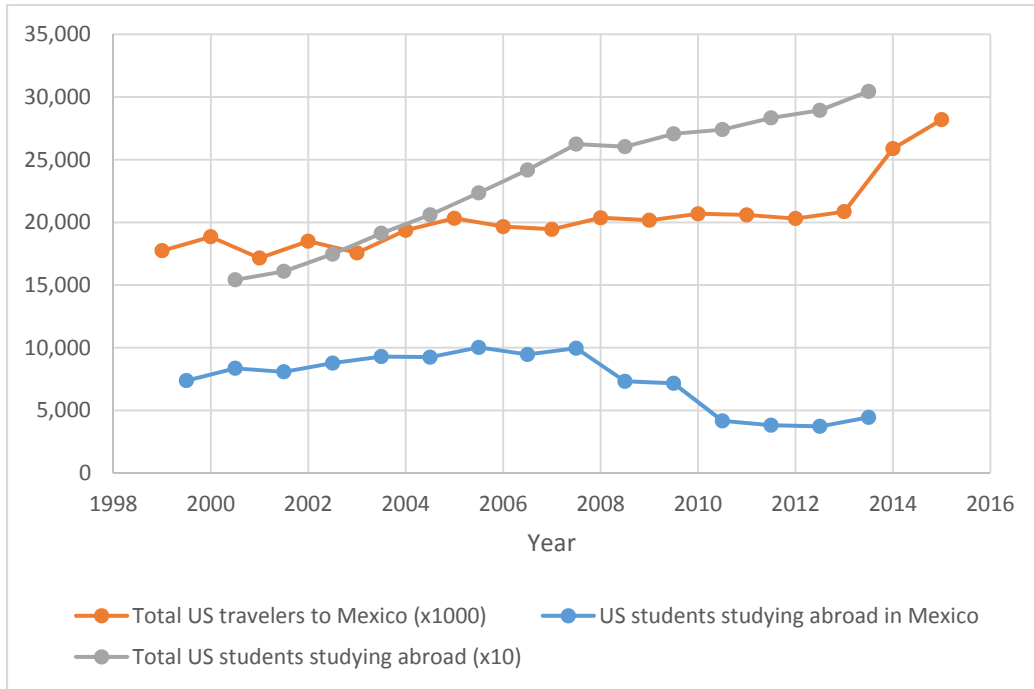
<sup>6</sup> Institute of International Education, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> National Travel & Tourism Office, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> National Travel & Tourism Office, 2015.

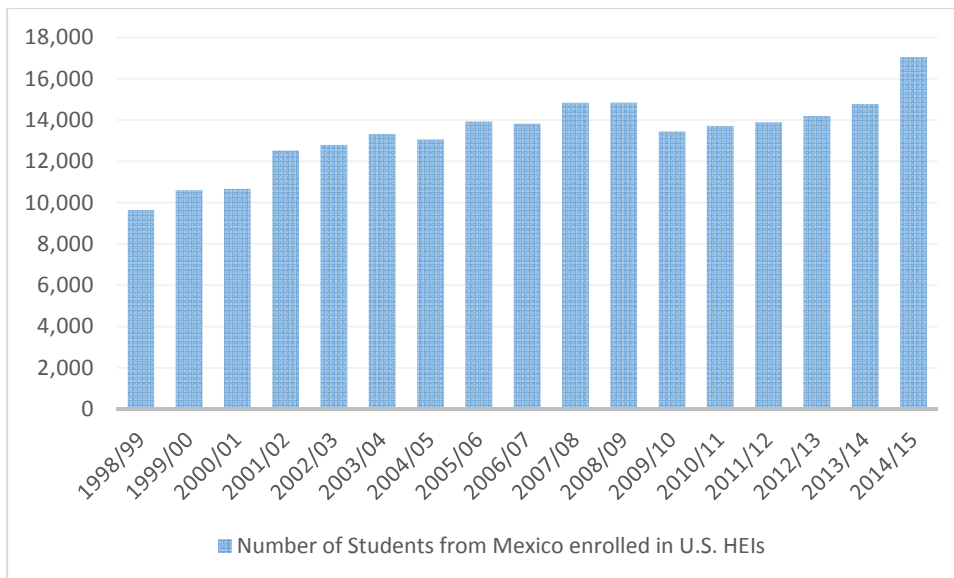
<sup>9</sup> Institute of International Education, 2016.





**Figure 1.** Total U.S. travelers to Mexico (x1000), total number of U.S. students studying abroad (x10), and total number of U.S. students studying abroad in Mexico. Sources: IIE 2016, NTTO 2016, NTTO 2015, NTTO n.d.

Interestingly, while the number of students from Mexico enrolled at U.S. HEIs has generally increased over the last six years (see Figure 2), the number of students from Canada has not. This reflects opportunities for linkages between Mexico communities and Canadian and U.S. HEIs.



**Figure 2.** Number of students from Mexico enrolled in U.S. HEIs. Source: IIE 2016.

The economic crisis has also had a dramatic impact on tuition levels across the U.S., aggravating an already complicated issue regarding access to study abroad. U.S. universities legitimately wanting to increase access must consider Mexico due to reduced travel costs alone. Considering travel and other cost issues, Mexico provides programs that are less expensive than comparable programs in other countries. For example, an extensive University of Arizona summer faculty-led internship program to Spain for four weeks costs \$9,480, while a comparable program in Mexico for eight weeks costs \$6,430.

Numerous highly successful study abroad programs in Mexico serve as examples for how to create sustainable, safe and affordable programs that appeal to U.S. and Canadian students. While future MAMAC reports will focus extensively on these sound practice opportunities, two examples at the University of Arizona (UA) include:

- The Vivir in Mexico Program: This is a five-week, six-credit program that familiarizes undergraduate students with the history, culture and heritage of Mexico City, Puebla and Guanajuato. The program diversifies the demographic make-up of UA students sent abroad, with 92% of participants classified as minorities. The majority of students in the program have never studied or been abroad, and the majority are low-income (qualifying for the Pell Grant). The UA Department of Mexican American Studies provides grant support, making the program extremely affordable at \$2,800. Over the last four years, the program recruited an average of 16 students per summer.
- The Cultures, Land and Politics in Oaxaca Program: This is an intensive and individualized eight-week, 12-credit program that offers students the opportunity to conduct research in social or environmental science under local researchers. The program provides an in-depth exploration of Southern Mexico's diverse environment, with coursework that stresses the historical and contemporary context regarding land and resource use in a global political economy. The program costs \$5,380, and sends on average three students per summer.

As academic mobility to Mexico begins to increase, sound practice information must be made readily available to institutions considering expanded programming to Mexico. In addition, institutions concerned with startup costs should also consider working with other institutions with existing programs that might be willing to support additional students, acting in essence as a third-party provider or institution of record for the institution new to Mexico. This might take the form of individual institutional relationships such as that being developed between the University of New Mexico and Western New Mexico University, or exchange consortia such as that facilitated by the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC).<sup>10</sup> Up-to-date risk information should also be available to HEIs, as well as the necessary tools and capacity to decipher this information and implement sound travel policies.

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.conahecstudentexchange.org/english/StudentExchange/ExchangeProgram.asp>

### *a. Overview*

Several high-level commitments to building relationships between Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. exist, and educational institutions must continue to advance relationships in the face of changing political currents. For instance, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, President Enrique Peña Nieto, and President Barack Obama have continued the tradition of holding North American Leaders' Summits, with the most recent occurring in Ottawa in June 2016.<sup>11</sup> These three leaders agreed on several points at this summit, among them efforts to encourage further trilateral trade and to streamline border crossings.

Also, Presidents Obama and Peña Nieto announced the U.S.-Mexico Bilateral Forum on Higher Education, Innovation, and Research (FOBESII) in May 2013. The initiative, which launched in May 2014 as part of both nations' joint Higher Economic Dialogue, was developed with the intention of building mutual economic prosperity through educational exchanges and research partnerships. A key aspect of this collaboration is Mexico's *Proyecto Cien Mil*, with the objective of increasing academic mobility of Mexican students to the U.S. from 14,000 students annually in 2014 to 100,000 by 2020. The corollary if not equivalently ambitious initiative of the U.S. is known as *100,000 Strong in the Americas*, which aims to facilitate the southbound mobility of 100,000 U.S. students to Latin America as a whole, and in the FOBESII context nearly 50,000 students to Mexico. This work must however occur at the institutional level, and hence while support has existed within government, the future of these programs is unclear and the key to both success and sustainability is the direct engagement of higher education institutions.

The efforts of these North American leaders underscores the importance of improving mobility, particularly academic mobility, between the respective countries. Improved academic mobility will not only further the missions of individual HEIs but will also aid the countries in reaching national-level economic and educational goals.

### *b. Report Objectives*

In this report, MAMAC shares existing information available to HEIs regarding travel to Mexico and presents mechanisms for gathering information on current travel risk. The committee also examines travel risk assessment and insurance issues for a range of U.S. and Canadian HEIs with regard to work or travel in Mexico, and identifies corresponding sound practices. Finally, the committee draws on this information to develop 1) a set of recommendations regarding these and other mobility issues as appropriate, 2) a continuing assessment and communication process, and 3) lays the groundwork for future reports from the committee.

An explicit long-term objective of the committee is to dramatically increase student mobility from Canada and the U.S. to Mexico. The current level of student mobility to Mexico is simply not consistent with the value offered by an international experience in Mexico, either academically or in terms of cost to students already strained by the escalating cost of higher education. Nor do these numbers reflect the importance of the broader

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<sup>11</sup> McGregor, 2016.

relationship between these three North American partner countries, the importance of collaboration between these nations for securing prosperity and social and political stability in the region, or the unique role and obligation of higher education institutions in advancing these objectives.

## **2. U.S. and Canada Government Travel Guidance**

### *a. Introduction to Governmental Travel Advisory Systems*

Travel advisory systems are used by many governments to provide travel information to their citizens. The information provided by the British Foreign Office<sup>12</sup>, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development<sup>13</sup>, and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade<sup>14</sup> are also consulted by other countries for additional perspectives on travel advice. Each of these governments regularly updates their travel advice and advisories. These sites also provide travelers with an overall recommendation concerning travel to a country, and additional information or advisories. Each government engages its own language, but there are commonalities when considering risk levels. For example, “Avoid non-essential travel” and “Reconsider your need to travel” are comparable levels of advice, indicating higher risk levels than advice to “Exercise a high degree of caution,” which indicates greater risk than “Exercise normal safety precautions,” all of which fall below the greatest risk “Do not travel” or “Avoid all travel.”

### *b. The U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory System*

The U.S. Department of State (DOS) relays security information to U.S. citizens through the Consular Information Program established in 1992-1993. The program addresses the “No Double Standard” policy, which mandates that the U.S. government share information on any potential health or security threats with U.S. citizens/nationals that it shares with federal employees. This policy was established following an investigation of the Pan American flight 103 bombing in 1988, which revealed that U.S. Embassy personnel in Helsinki and Moscow had prior information regarding a potential threat to a flight between Germany and the U.S. (information the public was not privy to). For more information about the Travel Information Program’s evolution, refer to Julie Friend’s article, “Travel Warnings: Developing Effective Response Procedures.”<sup>15</sup>

Under the current policy, when official U.S. personnel are informed of a security threat, the information must also be shared with the public if the threat may also affect private U.S. citizens or nationals. For example, if U.S. embassy employees are told to avoid an area, this information must also be shared with U.S. citizens/nationals living or traveling in the respective country. This is accomplished through the Consular Information Program – a tiered system which includes Fact Sheets, Country Specific Information, and four methods of alerts: Messages for U.S. Citizens, Worldwide Cautions, Travel Alerts, and Travel

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

<sup>13</sup> <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>

<sup>14</sup> <http://smartraveller.gov.au/Countries/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> Friend, 2011.

Warnings. Additionally, the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) is a free service that allows U.S. citizens and nationals traveling abroad to enroll their trip with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.<sup>16</sup> STEP provides travelers with information from the Embassy about safety conditions in destination countries, and helps the U.S. Embassy contact travelers in case of emergency.

A Travel Alert is issued in response to security concerns related to a short-term event. Such events include natural disasters such as hurricanes, politically tense situations such as elections, health concerns relating to the outbreak of disease, or elevated risks of terrorist attacks. The alert has an expiration date that is either replaced by extending the alert or canceled when the security concern ends. A Travel Warning is the highest level of DOS messaging and indicates longer-term and ongoing risks in a country. A Travel Warning does not have a date of expiration and often remains in place for long periods of time. The Travel Warning is updated and replaced twice a year. A Travel Warning may be in place for multiple years. While other countries' travel advice programs rapidly update their posted country information with security messages or following a security incident, the U.S. DOS relies upon the separate Security or Emergency Messages published by American Citizen Services and made available to U.S. Citizens to provide these updates. Hence, the Travel Warning provides general guidance, but is not detailed. Multiple messages are likely to prompt an update to the Travel Warning.

The information provided through the Consular Information Program, including the Travel Warning, is based on information gathered from multiple sources including the media, foreign governments, and a variety of official U.S. government sources (most of which remain classified). In many cases, not all information is disclosed due to security classifications. Information about the Consular Information Program can be found at the Research and Information Support Center.<sup>17</sup>

### *c. Global Affairs Canada Advisories*

Global Affairs Canada has four tiers of advisories that it provides for Canadian travelers (from lowest to highest levels)<sup>18</sup>:

- Exercise normal security cautions: There are no significant safety and security concerns. The overall safety and security situation is similar to that of Canada. You should take normal security precautions.
- Exercise a high degree of caution: There are identifiable safety and security concerns or the safety and security situation could change with little notice. You should exercise a high degree of caution at all times, monitor local media and follow the instructions of local authorities.
- Avoid non-essential travel: There are specific safety and security concerns that could put you at risk. You should reconsider your need to travel to the country, territory or region. If you are already in the country, territory or region, you

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<sup>16</sup> <https://step.state.gov/STEP/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.osac.gov/pages/ContentReportDetails.aspx?cid=17254>

<sup>18</sup> <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories/risk-levels-and-travel-advisories>

should reconsider whether or not you really need to be there. If not, you should consider leaving while it is still safe to do so. It is up to you to decide what “non-essential travel” means, based on family or business requirements, knowledge of or familiarity with a country, territory or region, and other factors.

- Avoid all travel: There is an extreme risk to your personal safety and security. You should not travel to this country, territory or region. If you are already in the country, territory or region, you should consider leaving if it is safe to do so.

Advisories for specific regions within a country may also be in place. For example, the current Canadian risk level for Mexico is at “exercise a high degree of caution” for the country, but at “avoid non-essential travel” for specifically identified states in Mexico. The U.S. travel advisory also differentiates by region. The net result of these differentiations is that a majority of the country remains accessible for travel.

#### *d. The U.S. DOS Mexico Travel Warning: Historical Context*

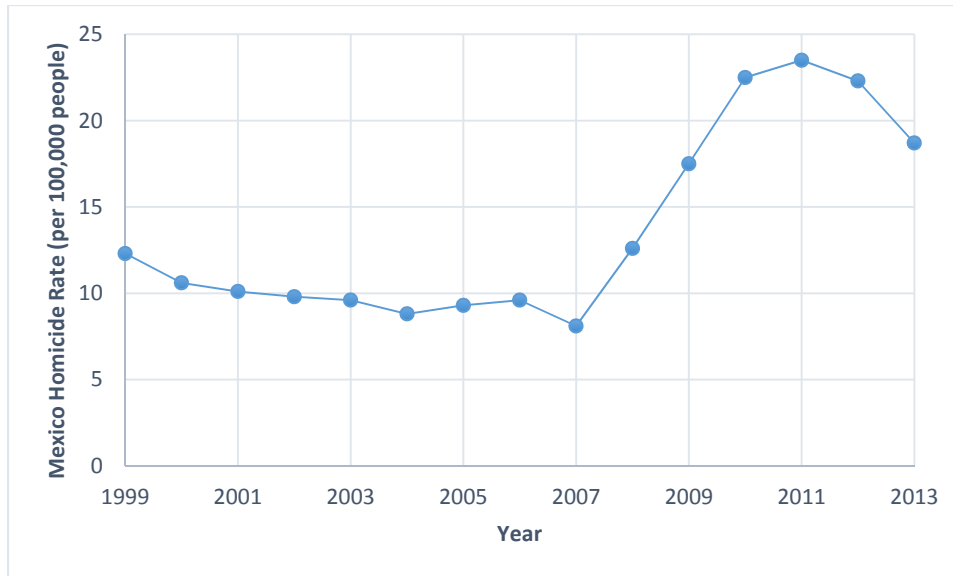
The U.S. DOS Travel Warning for Mexico was first issued in March 2010, following several previous Warden Messages (now referred to as “Security or Emergency Messages”). Since that time, the Mexico Travel Warning has been updated twice annually with some revisions in format and content. Since February 8, 2012, the format specifically identifies states with no advisory in effect (see Appendix 1 for DOS Travel Warning key events timeline).<sup>19</sup>

Although stabilized in most of the country, a historic sharp increase in violence in Mexico was reflected in the Warden Messages and renewal of the Travel Alert over multiple years leading to the Travel Warning. Figure 3 shows how the country’s homicide rate nearly tripled from 2007 to 2011. In addition to a general increased homicide rate, the Travel Warning also indicates that “U.S. citizens have been the victims of violent crimes, including homicides, kidnapping, carjacking, and robbery by organized criminal groups in various Mexican states.”<sup>20</sup> The Warning does not, however, attempt to differentiate the rates of these incidents as related to particular risk activities for travelers, such as involvement in illicit activities versus academic travel.

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<sup>19</sup> Montemayor, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> United States Department of State, 2016.



**Figure 3.** Mexico homicide rate; 1999-2013. Source: Heinle et al. 2015, via Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO) and Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, e Informática (INEGI).

Within weeks of the initial DOS Travel Warning for Mexico, international higher education organizations such as NAFSA: Association of International Educators began sharing advice on how to develop response procedures to help decide whether or not to send students to countries with Travel Warnings. As Bowles, et al., noted in an article posted on the NAFSA website, “While the text of the warning applies to specific geographic areas of Mexico, we know university officials will interpret this in multiple ways,”<sup>21</sup> which could have a significant impact on mobility to Mexico. The article goes on to provide suggested guidelines to understand or determine an institution’s tolerance for risk.

i. Effects on academic mobility

HEIs reacted swiftly to the Travel Warning in 2010. A June 2010 New York Times piece exploring how Mexican violence deterred U.S. colleges noted that “A direct result of this attention-getting bloodshed has been the mass cancellation of study-abroad programs throughout the country, including those hundreds of miles from the most dangerous areas. Some educators on both sides of the border consider the reaction to be an exaggerated response.”<sup>22</sup>

As Stephen Montemayor noted for Huffington Post, the New York Times article “sparks the debate over erring on the side of caution versus taking a more nuanced review of the risks associated with studying in Mexico.”<sup>23</sup>

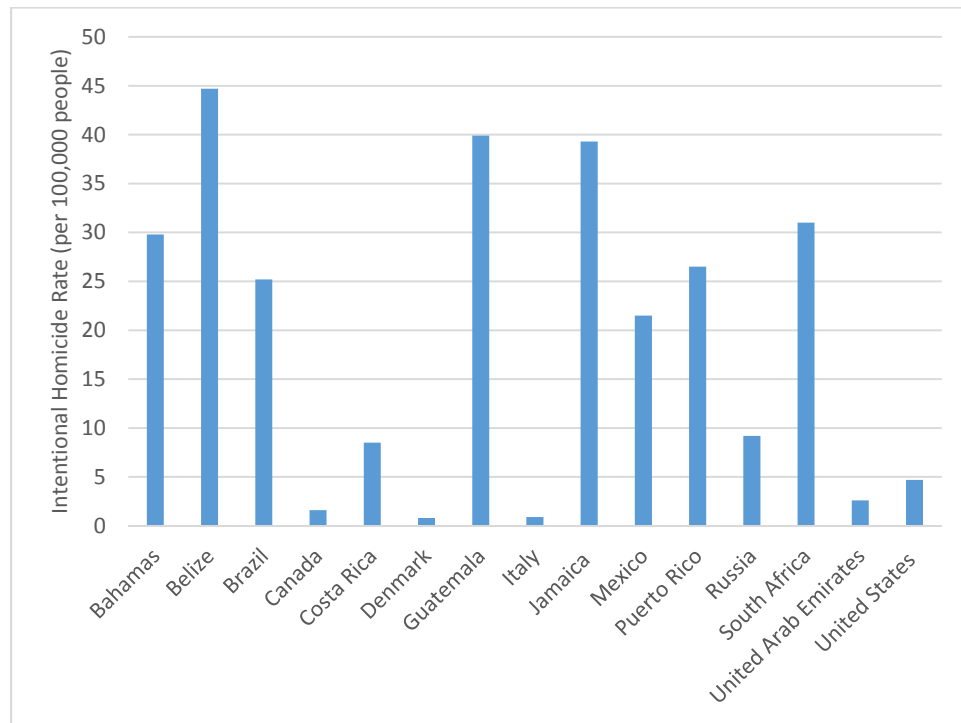
<sup>21</sup> Bowles, Friend and Deromana, 2010.

<sup>22</sup> Lacey, 2010.

<sup>23</sup> Montemayor, 2010.

Many HEIs were simply following their institution’s preexisting policies; a number of HEIs have blanket policies banning all travel to countries with DOS Travel Warnings. Further, not all HEIs have the resources or experience for an expedited but nuanced policy review, leading to a default position of no travel.

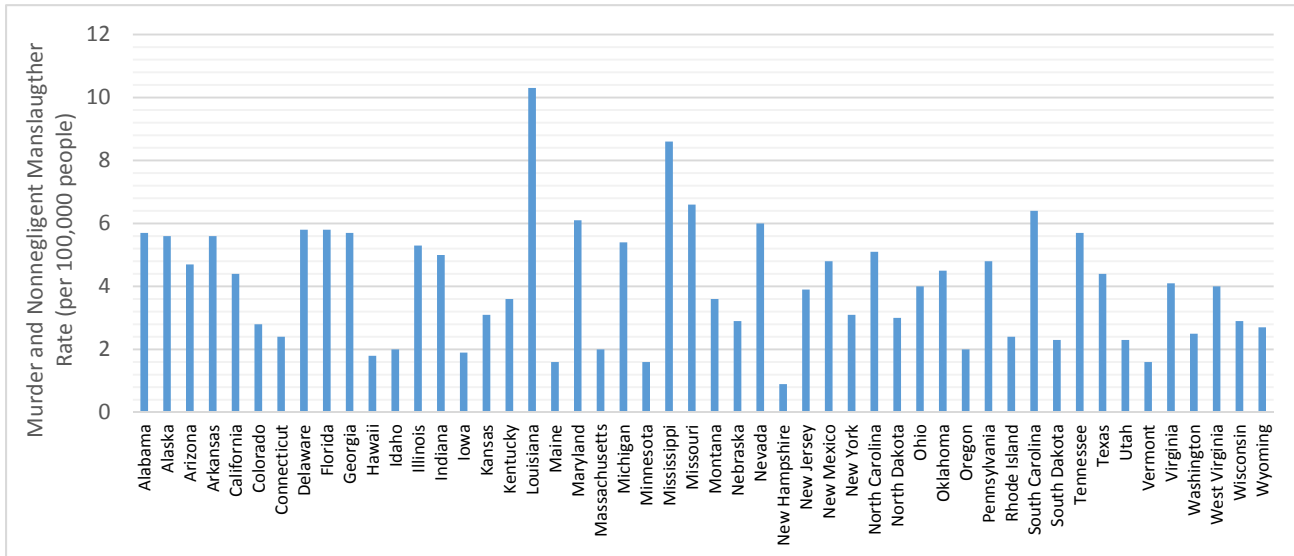
Using Travel Warnings as the sole measure to determine travel policies, can at times be counterproductive, since a number of other countries and territories that are also common academic mobility destinations, but don’t have a Travel Warning, see significant crime and violence. To illustrate this, Figure 4 shows 2012 homicide rates for selected countries and territories. Aside from Mexico, none of the locations represented in Figure 4 are under current DOS travel alerts or warnings.



**Figure 4:** Intentional homicide rate for selected countries (2012). Source: UNODC 2014.



For comparison, the 2014 murder and nonnegligent homicide rates for the 50 U.S. states are shown in Figure 5.



**Figure 5:** Murder and nonnegligent homicide rate for the U.S. states (2014). Source: FBI UCR.

*e. Current Status*

The U.S. DOS Mexico Travel Warning was most recently updated on April 15, 2016. The message continues to indicate that, “U.S. citizens have been the victims of violent crimes, such as homicide, kidnapping, carjacking, and robbery by organized criminal groups in various Mexican states.”<sup>24</sup> It is important to consider a few items when considering this statement:

1. The Travel Warning does not indicate that U.S. citizens, (or any foreign visitors) are directly targeted due to their actual or perceived citizenship.
2. While not specified in the Travel Warning, U.S. citizens who were victims of homicide were generally either killed due to their actual or perceived association with organized criminal groups, or (historically) killed inadvertently due to close proximity to large-scale shootings that were indiscriminant and occurred in public areas at unpredictable times, including daylight hours and other times of high tourist activities. It is important to note that the occurrence of these types of indiscriminate incidents have diminished in most of Mexico.
3. Of the 31 Mexican states and the City of Mexico:
  - a. Ten states are indicated as “No advisory in effect.”

<sup>24</sup> United States Department of State, 2016.

- b. Thirteen states have an advisory to “Exercise caution” in areas. One of these is also listed as “No advisory in effect,” and five also have higher-level advisories to “Defer non-essential travel” but only to specific areas.
  - c. One state is not indicated as “Do not travel,” and U.S. officials are not permitted to travel to the state at this time.
  - d. Only four states are indicated as “Defer non-essential travel.”
4. The Travel Warning informs the public of restrictions placed on U.S. government personnel, stating “While the general public is not forbidden from visiting places categorized under ‘defer non-essential travel,’ U.S. government personnel will not be able to respond quickly to an emergency situation in those areas...” The Travel Warning advises that government personnel and their families are prohibited from personal travel to those areas and must travel to those areas with extensive security precautions and only for official purposes.

At the time of this report, the Global Affairs Canada advisory for Mexico<sup>25</sup> is listed as “exercise a high degree of caution.” This is due to the violence in those parts of the country experiencing a deteriorating security situation (see the regional advisories below). High levels of criminal activity, as well as demonstrations, protests and occasional illegal roadblocks also remain a concern throughout the country. There is also a travel health notice in place regarding the Zika virus.

Global Affairs Canada advises to “avoid non-essential travel” for the northern states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, Nuevo León (except the city of Monterrey), Sinaloa (with the exception of Mazatlán), Sonora (except the cities of Hermosillo and Guaymas/San Carlos), and Tamaulipas due to high levels of violence linked to organized crime.

Note, however, that many universities carry on at least research activities in many of these northern states in particular, although quite often that activity occurs after internal university-level education or approval processes to be discussed below. Generally these processes are designed to educate travelers regarding risks rather than to eliminate travel. The University of Arizona, for example (while clearly not subject to the Canadian advisory it does serve as a good demonstration of travel which would be permitted under the Canadian advisory), currently has institutionally-sanctioned activity in six of these seven northern states. In addition, the “tourist areas” of Sinaloa and Sonora with differentially “light” warnings in the Canadian context not only bear large volumes of tourist and business travel, but also provide extraordinary opportunities for substantive academic experiences.

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<sup>25</sup> <https://travel.gc.ca/destinations/mexico>

### 3. Mexico Travel Policies, Risk Assessment, and Insurance in the Higher Educational Context

#### a. *Common Challenges*

HEIs, and more surprisingly the international affairs officers of those institutions, often interpret a DOS Travel Warning as a recommendation that U.S. citizens should avoid travel to respective countries, when in fact very few Travel Warnings recommend avoiding all travel to a country. The incorrect interpretation and application of the Consular Information provided in media reports greatly contribute to this limited understanding of the information provided and actual risks. Quite frequently, the authors of this report have discovered that many institutional representatives simply assume travel is not permitted based on media coverage, and have failed even to read the advisory or to explore successful mobility models.

Vassar and Barrett (2014) carried out a survey (the U.S.-Mexico Academic Mobility Survey 2014) to help determine academic mobility trends and to delve into best practices among HEIs. Unlike the Institute of International Education's (IIE) well-established Open Doors survey, this survey was qualitative rather than quantitative in nature. It was distributed to roughly 200 U.S. HEIs and had a response rate of 10.1%, with the responding institutions representing about 8% of U.S. study abroad to Mexico for 2012/13. The survey was also distributed to Mexican HEIs through the Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Estudios Superiores (ANUIES) to its 175 member institutions, with a response rate of 20%.

U.S. HEIs cited lack of funding and perceptions of insecurity as the two greatest impediments to collaboration with Mexican institutions. Notably, the Mexican respondents "almost exclusively blame the perceptions of insecurity on the U.S. Department of State travel warnings."<sup>26</sup> These respondents suggest that the Warning, which focuses on areas of heightened risk, is not successful at communicating the safety in many parts of Mexico. Vassar and Barrett also noted the role of U.S. media in influencing the perceptions of Mexico's violence.

In this global age, many HEIs recognize that preventing travel to countries due to a Travel Warning limits their ability to further their academic missions. As a result, universities are addressing the need to better understand international security so that they are able to successfully break through this barrier in an informed and strategic manner. But in the case of Mexico, there appears at least anecdotally to be a failure to engage in this process.

#### b. *International Risk Tolerance Considerations*

Even within countries with significantly higher risk than Mexico, many institutions recognize that it is not in their best interest to unilaterally cut off mobility to a

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<sup>26</sup> Vassar and Barrett, 2014.

specific country and continue to operate in such locations. In addition to evaluating advisories promulgated for specific countries, these HEIs must examine and determine their institutional tolerance for international risk, which involves assessing insurance coverage (for both travelers and institutional liability), institutional vulnerabilities, and the available mechanisms for risk reduction and mitigation. Specific items to be considered in assessing international risk tolerance are addressed below:

### 1. Traveler types

In order to determine an institutional risk tolerance, it is crucial to consider the potential mobility audience, the travelers. Considering the nuances of each traveler category promotes a better understanding of potential risks and flexibility in determining travel policies. For example, most institutions would classify risk levels very differently for “traditional” undergraduate students (who tend to be younger and generally less experienced) versus “non-traditional” undergraduate students (generally an older and more experienced population, increasingly with prior international experience). Vulnerabilities differ significantly for each traveler type (traditional/non-traditional undergraduate or graduate student, staff, faculty, or community member). Some institutions may quickly determine that steps can be taken for each traveler type in order to promote mobility to Mexico, whereas other institutions may determine the need to begin promoting mobility for only certain traveler types, with continual consideration of expanding mobility to additional travelers.

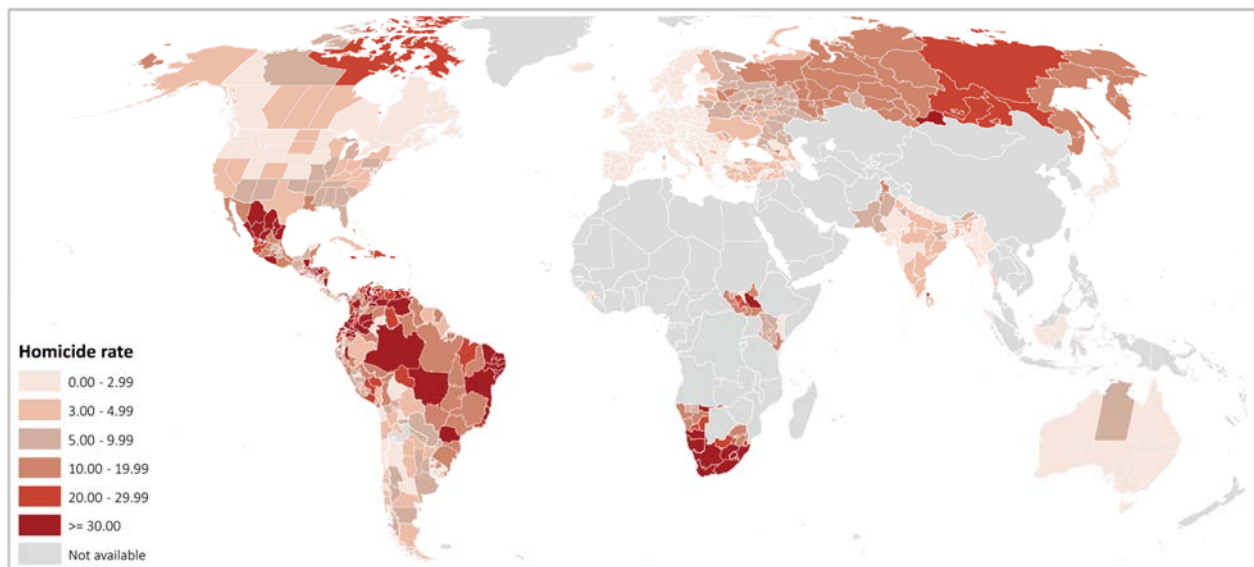
### 2. Traveler activities

The types of activities associated with the institutional travel must also be specifically considered. Sending a student to Mexico through a study abroad program with support of either an employee from your institution or that of a partner institution is very different than encouraging a student to go alone to Mexico to conduct field work in a rural location.

In addition to considering the official traveler activities, considering the traveler types also promotes insight to additional official activities that may emerge or potential unofficial activities that the traveler may engage in during their travel.

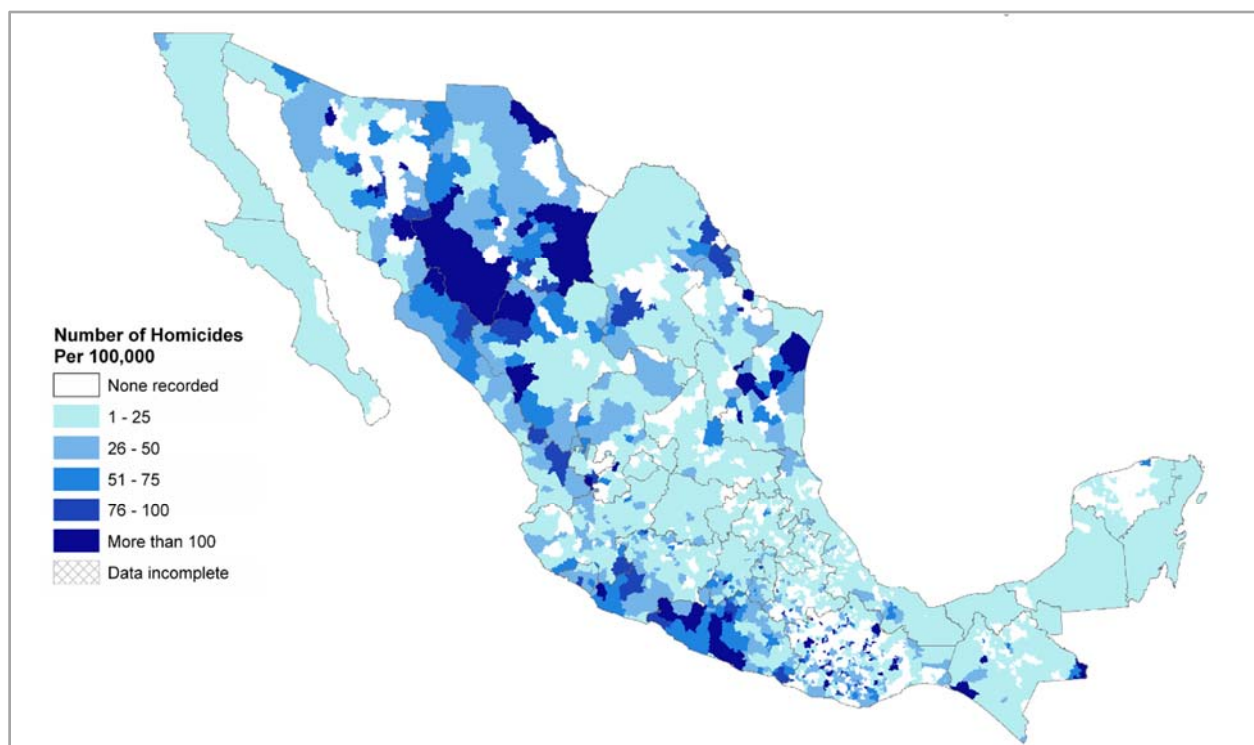
### 3. Locations

Many HEIs recognize the need to not look at travel to a country as a whole, but in their detailed analysis instead consider the nuances of risk in specific destinations within those countries. Figure 6, for example, shows the sub-national variation in homicides for 2012.



**Figure 6.** 2012 sub-national homicide rates. From: UNODC 2014.

Careful review of the Mexico Travel Warning aligns with the homicide rates shown on Figure 7, which depicts varying homicide rates at the municipality level in Mexico. The state-by-state assessment in the Travel Warning reflects the variation of the rates of homicide and violent crimes throughout Mexico.



**Figure 7.** 2014 homicide rates per municipality (second-level administrative divisions in Mexico). From: Heinle et al. 2015.

#### 4. Insurance coverage

Some insurance companies require that universities petition for pre-authorization to travel to destinations with a Travel Warning. Generally, universities are asked to provide information regarding the traveler's profile (including traveler type – undergraduate student/graduate student/faculty/staff – and travel experience) and travel activities. Few insurance companies require pre-authorization for travel to Mexico. This is more common for destinations that have required recent large-scale evacuations or have federal U.S. sanctions.

Institutions with no or limited coverage for international liability should carefully consider this in determining travel policies.

#### 5. Institutional travel policies and procedures

An institution's travel policy should be developed after considering the above points and determining the institutional risk tolerance. Many institutions recognize the importance of addressing the nuances of travel to a location with a Travel Alert or Warning and respond with a review process in order to maintain both flexibility and oversight of the policy.

A number of universities have created a petition process for review of specific travel plans. A traveler provides information regarding the specific destination(s), activities, transportation, lodging and other logistics often along with information regarding traveler experience and language competency. Additionally, a best practice is to consult a variety of sources (not only the Travel Warning) to more closely determine the on-the-ground security situation. Other governments' travel advice (including Australian Smartraveller, British Foreign Office, and Canadian Travel Advice) as well as information from insurance security providers, media, and other security professionals (including the Overseas Security Advisory Council, OSAC, and Regional Security Officers at embassies and consulates) are considered. A risk assessment is conducted to determine the traveler and institutional vulnerabilities, threats (source of harm), potential for loss (risk), probability, and impact. Finally, the risk assessment is considered through the perspective of the institutional tolerance for risk.

#### 6. International travel review committees

Cross-campus perspectives are important to include in the determination of risk tolerance, international travel policies, procedures, and travel review. Often these committees include participants representing Risk Management, General Counsel, the Provost, Campus Health, Education Abroad, Dean of Students, and Campus Police. Facilitating this work often requires a specific expertise in international security to facilitate the assessment of international risk and facilitate the committee consideration of international travel. Universities are increasingly dedicating full-time positions to fulfill this need.

## 7. Flexibility

As institutional comfort with travel to destinations with a DOS Travel Warning increases with successful, well-considered and supported mobility, the institutional tolerance for risk may increase.

## 8. U.S. Government support

U.S. Embassies and Consulates offer consular services for American citizens. If a U.S. citizen or national has an emergency while in Mexico, a consular officer would assist. While the consular officers are responsible for the messaging, outreach, and assistance to U.S. citizens, it is the U.S. DOS Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS) Regional Security Officer (RSO) who is responsible for maintaining the security of the duty post and its personnel, and the content of the message. These officers create the security guidance for official U.S. personnel which prompts security and emergency messaging and revisions to the Travel Warning.

In 1985 OSAC was created as a Federal Advisory Committee in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security of the U.S. DOS. OSAC serves to coordinate government and private sector cooperation in mitigating risks to American private sector interests worldwide. OSAC is comprised of constituents from U.S. businesses, academia, faith-based groups, and non-governmental organizations. OSAC has several resources, including:

- The Country Council Program, in which the U.S. Embassies and consulates partner with private sector security representatives to collaboratively share unclassified security information. There are currently nine Country Councils with two sub chapters in Mexico.
- The Research and Information Support Center (RISC), which consists of analysts, program officers, and coordinators dedicated to private sector needs.
- The OSAC website ([www.osac.gov](http://www.osac.gov)), which facilitates exchange of unclassified information on incidents and threats abroad.

All U.S. HEIs are able to join OSAC and the Academic Working Group (AWG).

### *c. University of Arizona Case Study: A Tiered Approach*

At the University of Arizona (UA), a full time International Risk Analyst (IRA) is dedicated to assessing the institution's international travel risk and facilitating the review of travel to countries with a Travel Warning. All UA travelers register their international travel in the University International Travel Registry. Official travel to destinations with a Travel Alert or Warning is then assessed by the IRA, and reviewed by the UA

International Travel Safety Oversight Committee (ITSOC), with final determination of authorization by the Provost.

With its close proximity to the border, UA sees daily travel to Mexico for meetings, conferences, and research as well as for field trips and study abroad programs. In 2015 there were over 1,000 official trips to Mexico in addition to study abroad programming. It is impossible to review each trip of each traveler. Close relationships with RSOs at the U.S. Consulates throughout Mexico are valuable resources for obtaining timely and more detailed security information.

Of all the Travel Warnings issued by the DOS, the format of the Mexico Travel Warning is the clearest in providing a state-by-state assessment. As mentioned, careful review of the Travel Warning further yields location-specific advisories within the states. This, coupled with consideration of traveler type and experience and travel activities, facilitated the expedition of cross-border travel determined to be lower risk travel which does not require in-depth ITSOC review.

The first UA implementation of procedures for travel to Mexico did not require review of travel to states without advisories in the Travel Warning. Additionally, certain departments with regular and frequent cross-border travel and expertise were permitted to travel without review to any locations.

This process became further streamlined when the specific risk levels of the destination in Mexico were considered. For example, if an advisory is specified within the Travel Warning for a state within Mexico, but not for the destination within the state, review would not be required for travelers considered lower risk, but might for higher risk travel types or activities.

*d. Mexico Travel Policy Survey and Results*

In preparation for this report, Steve Holland, Chief Risk Officer for Risk Management and Safety at the University of Arizona, and the University Risk Management and Insurance Association, Inc. (URMIA) surveyed HEIs on current and past policies for institutionally-sponsored Mexico travel. The survey, which was distributed to HEIs via the URMIA listserv, received 69 responses between June 23 and July 8, 2016. Of the survey responses, 51.6% were from public institutions and 48.4% were from private institutions, indicating good balance in the responses. Institutions of varying size were similarly well-represented, with 31.3% of responses from institutions with less than 5,000 students, 28.1% from institutions with between 5,000 and 15,000 students, and the final 40.6% from institutions with more than 15,000 students.

The survey included questions relating to study abroad programming in Mexico, ease of arranging insurance coverage for travel in Mexico, and institutions' travel policies regarding both student and employee travel to Mexico.



The survey's main findings are:

- Most institutions exercise greater control over student travel than faculty/staff travel.
- Thirty-nine percent of responding institutions indicated that they do not currently offer programming in Mexico. Still, students at 90% of institutions have study abroad options in Mexico, whether through a contracted program provider(s), faculty-led programs, or other institutions' programs. Forty-one percent of responding institutions offer their own faculty-led programming.
- Ninety-four percent of institutions allow student travel to Mexico, either without restriction or on a case-by-case basis.
- Institutions have not had great difficulty with placement of international insurance for Mexico travel (89% had no problems whatsoever).
- When advance review/approval for Mexico travel is required, this is most often performed by an international risk assessment committee.

As seen in Figure 8, the majority of respondents prohibit travel to at least some parts of Mexico or, in 6% of cases, to the entire country (although many respondents permit case-by-case approval). On the other side of the spectrum, there are no restrictions to student travel to Mexico at 20% of responding institutions.



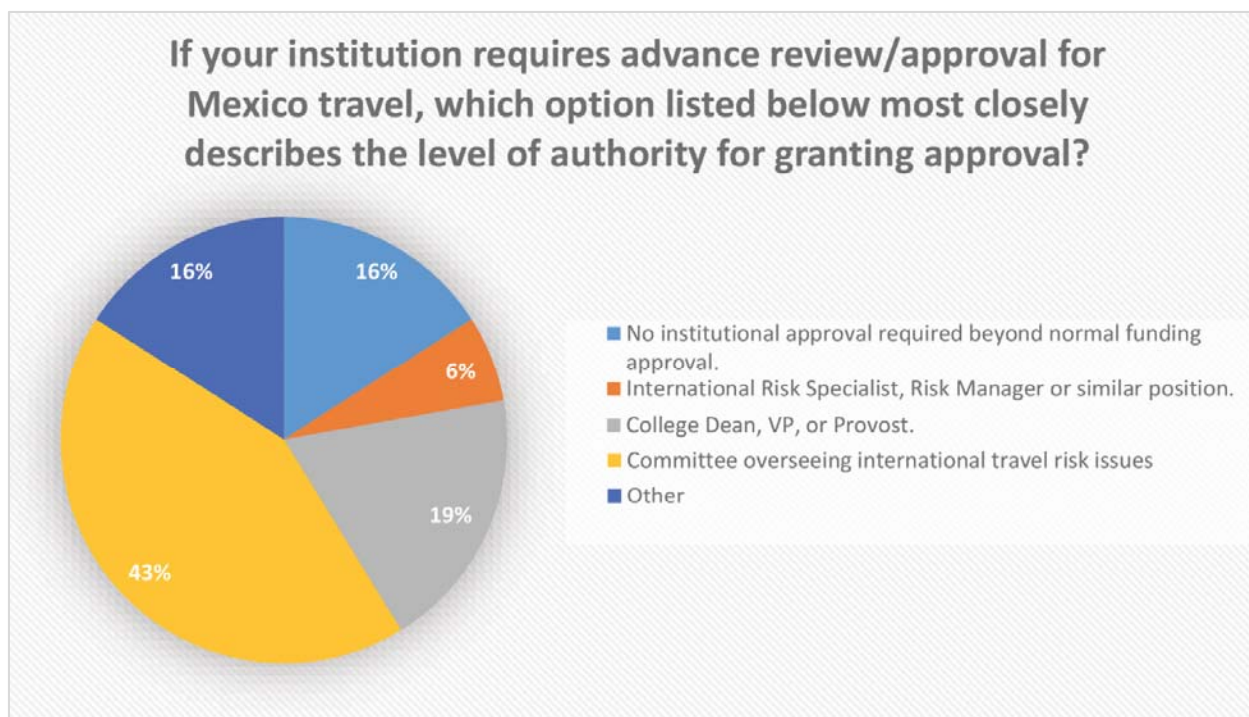
**Figure 8.** URMIA survey results – student travel.

Institutions wield less influence over employee travel to Mexico; at 51% of responding institutions, there are no restrictions at all (see Figure 9). For another 30% of respondents, employee travel is reviewed on a case-by-case basis depending on specific circumstances for the proposed travel.



**Figure 9.** URMIA survey results – employee travel.

Institutions that require case-by-case review/approval for travel to Mexico employ several methods. Forty-three percent of respondents utilize a committee that provides guidance regarding international travel risk issues. A further 19% rely on College Deans, Vice Presidents, or Provosts for travel approval. Full results are shown in Figure 10.



**Figure 10.** URMIA survey results – travel review/approval.

Finally, respondents gave the following general advice regarding managing risk inherent to Mexico travel (summarized from 36 responses):

- Read the Travel Warning carefully; it is very specific to certain regions.
- Risk varies greatly throughout the country from negligible to extreme.
- Multiple recommendations for STEP registration, awareness of U.S. Consulate location, and coordination with academic partners and local officials.
- Do not underestimate travel-related risks. Road conditions vary widely.
- Prepare and educate travelers with region-specific information, links to useful websites, explanation of insurance coverage, and behavioral expectations.

The complete Mexico travel policy survey and full results are provided in Appendix 2.

#### **4. Summary and Recommendations**

Higher education is not the only sector assessing the ability to operate in Mexico. The business community has also been impacted by changes in the security situation and, through organizations such as the OSAC, can be partners with academia, along with the embassy and consulates, in determining nuanced and area-specific understandings of and responses to the security situation.

Many HEIs enjoy a long history of collaboration with their counterparts in Mexico. Still, there remains a tremendous opportunity to expand on collaboration with and associated

academic mobility to and from Mexico. Mexico is more than an ideal location for transformative intercultural experiences. Mexico's rich history and diverse cultural heritage have shaped its people, art, cuisine, languages, and social institutions. Its cosmopolitan cities and diverse archaeological sites offer a glimpse into complex past of the Americas as a whole, and the challenges and opportunities of cities worldwide. Mexico's terrain is as diverse as its culture, and the relationships between land, resources and people provide key insights into local and global environmental and economic complexity. Particularly in light of U.S. and global politics, Mexico is not only a favorable but indeed an essential academic partner. Its strong higher education and research infrastructure present an ideal setting for substantive academic collaboration.

In light of the above, and considering the information and concerns discussed in the previous sections of this report, MAMAC recommends the following:

- HEIs should utilize the vast wealth of knowledge that exists across the sector, for instance establishing a clearinghouse for information related to academic mobility to Mexico.
- HEIs should consider working with others, such as the Consortium for North American Higher Education Collaboration (CONAHEC) or both domestic or international partner institutions, to conduct familiarity visits and security assessments in Mexico. CONAHEC has for example sponsored multi-institutional visits to Guadalajara and Puebla in close collaboration with local partners.<sup>27</sup> Commercial providers also provide similar or related services.
- HEIs with a history of successful study abroad programs in Mexico and solid risk assessment management/mitigation policies and procedures should consider acting as a third-party provider for students from other HEIs.
- Institutions should develop a pilot program and work with an experienced institution in understanding insurance issues and options.
- Efforts should continue in gathering and closely examining sound practices for facilitating informed and safe travel to Mexico.
- Create opportunities to engage with the business sector and Regional Security Officers in Mexico through OSAC.
- Create opportunities to better interpret the U.S. and Canadian travel warnings or advisories on a broader scale, and to refute broader and incorrect perceptions that travel is not permitted.
- HEIs should engage and consult with individuals or groups with international security expertise within HEIs and externally.
- HEIs should work with relevant government agencies to assure that while alerts and warnings objectively reflect known and potential risk, they should also accommodate clear understanding and more nuanced interpretation that reflects variations in risk levels throughout various parts of a country.
  
- International and national organizations, such as NAFSA and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), should host conferences/workshops in

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<sup>27</sup> <https://conahec.org/past-mobility-incubators>

which HEIs with experience in academic mobility to Mexico could share their knowledge of best practices, logistics, assessment, etc., with other HEIs.

Given Mexico's proximity and strengths, U.S. and Canadian higher education institutions must deliberately and strategically include Mexico in the realization of their internationalization goals. Student mobility is a key aspect of this work, and time, cost, risk and the expected experience are all critical elements in expanding mobility of U.S. and Canadian students abroad. Given the misconceptions and realities regarding study in Mexico, perhaps the key barrier to travel in Mexico lies within our own institutions. Failure to consider and expand upon travel to Mexico would be a disservice to our students who may not otherwise travel, or to those who select more costly or in fact "less international" locations as a result of unjustified fears or misconceptions. The current political environment in fact suggests that higher education institutions may have a unique role in advancing the economic and political future of the Americas, and we must recognize that Mexico is indeed the global next door.

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## **Appendix 1 – Timeline of Key Events for U.S. State Department Mexico Travel Warning**

- 8/20/09 – Warden’s Message.
- 2/2010 – Renewed Warden’s Message (advice to delay unnecessary travel to parts of Michoacan, Durango, Coahuila, and Chihuahua).
- 3/14/10 – Travel Warning issued.
- 4/12/10 – Travel Warning replaced.
- 5/6/10 – Travel Warning replaced. Border cities Tijuana, Nogales, Ciudad Juarez, Nuevo Laredo, Monterrey, and Matamoros included.
- 7/15/10 – Non-official U.S. government travel between border and Interior of Mexico or Central America prohibited.
- 9/10/10 – Travel Warning.
- 4/22/11 – Travel Warning (defer non-essential travel to state of Tamaulipas, Michoacan, and eight other states).
- 2/8/12 – Travel Warning (avoid travel to 14 states; exercise caution or extreme caution to four more; added detail to April 2011 warning).
- 6/12/12 – Travel Warning (continue to defer non-essential travel to Tamaulipas).
- 11/2012 – Travel Warning (a few changes and much added specificity).
- 1/9/14 – Travel Warning.
- 5/2014 – Travel Warning (urges U.S. citizens to take the highest precautions regarding personal safety in and around Nogales).
- 8/15/14 – Updated Travel Warning (toned down advisory for Rocky Point).
- 12/24/14 – Travel Warning.
- 4/13/15 – Travel Warning.
- 5/5/15 – Travel Warning.
- 1/19/16 – Travel Warning.
- 4/15/16 – Previous Travel Warning renewed; updated to increase Acapulco travel restrictions for U.S. government personnel.



## Appendix 2 – Mexico Travel Policy Survey Questions and Full Results

The University Risk Management and Insurance Association, Inc. (URMIA) surveyed its members in July 2016 to ascertain institutions’ current restrictions and procedures for Mexico travel and to determine if restrictions have been eased or changed as the U.S. DOS Travel Warnings have evolved. Sixty-four URMIA members completed the survey. Survey results are provided below, with thanks to Steve Holland of the University of Arizona.

1. What is your institution’s current policy regarding student travel in Mexico? “Student travel” includes participation in any study abroad program, any travel associated with academic or research activities run by the institution, or any travel associated with a recognized student organization or athletic program. Student travel does not include personal travel by the student.

*Responses:*

All student travel in Mexico is currently prohibited.	5.8%
Student travel was fully prohibited at one time but is now prohibited only to certain areas and permitted to others.	5.8%
Student travel was fully prohibited at one time but is now permitted anywhere in Mexico.	1.4%
Student travel is prohibited to at least some parts of Mexico but can be permitted on a case-by-case basis subject to approval after a review depending on location, duration, etc.	66.7%
There have been and currently are no restrictions on student travel in Mexico.	20.3%

2. What is your institution’s current policy regarding employee travel in Mexico? Employee travel includes individual travel in the course and scope of employment with a group or individually for research, teaching or administrative purposes. Employee travel excludes personal travel.

*Responses:*

All employee travel to Mexico is currently prohibited.	2.9%
Employee travel is permitted to certain locations and prohibited for others based on our institution’s assessment of the travel risks considering the State Department guidance.	15.9%
Employee travel can be approved on a case-by-case basis subject to review depending on location, duration, etc.	30.4%
There are no restrictions on employee travel to Mexico.	50.7%

3. Does your institution currently have Study Abroad programming in Mexico? (Please check all that apply.)

*Responses:*

No programming is offered in Mexico at this time.	39.1%
Yes – through a contracted program provider.	21.9%
Yes – we offer our own programming conducted by our own faculty.	40.6%
Yes – students may participate through other institutions, but we may award academic credit.	28.1%

4. Have you had any difficulty arranging insurance coverage for travel in Mexico? For purposes of this question, insurance means coverage for liability incurred abroad, medical treatment for injuries, emergency services such as evacuation and repatriation, and/or kidnap/ransom.

*Responses:*

No problems – all standard international coverage is available.	89.2%
Coverage restriction/exclusion applicable to specified states or regions.	6.2%
We have had some difficulty placing coverage for Mexico travel.	4.6%

5. If your institution requires advance review/approval for Mexico travel, which option listed below most closely describes the level of authority for granting approval?

*Responses:*

No institutional approval required beyond normal funding approval.	15.9%
International Risk Specialist, Risk Manager or similar position.	6.3%
Department Head.	0.0%
College Dean, VP, or Provost.	19.0%
Committee overseeing international travel risk issues.	42.9%
Other (please specify).	15.9%

6. What advice would you give regarding managing the risk inherent in travel to Mexico?

*Responses (summarized from 36 responses):*

- Read the Travel Warning carefully; it is very specific to certain regions.
- Risk varies greatly throughout the country from negligible to extreme.
- Multiple recommendations for STEP registration, awareness of Consulate location, and coordination with academic partners and local officials.
- Do not underestimate travel-related risks. Road conditions vary widely.
- Prepare and educate travelers with region-specific information, links to useful websites, explanation of insurance coverage, and behavioral expectations.

7. Type of institution

*Responses:*

Public	51.6%
Private	48.4%

8. Student FTE enrollment

*Responses:*

Under 5,000 students	31.3%
5,001-15,000 students	28.1%
More than 15,000 students	40.6%

## Appendix 3 – Best Practices

Given the survey results and anecdotal evidence from past successful collaborations involving academic mobility to Mexico, it is evident that HEIs are not only interested in, but capable of, meaningful partnerships with their Mexican counterparts. In order to help U.S. and Canadian institutions fully capitalize on the potential with Mexican institutions, MAMAC has drawn from the experiences of HEIs that have already been highly successful in this sphere to compile the following list of best practices for HEIs to help ensure safe travel. Examples of how the University of Arizona has effectively implemented these practices are also included in some cases. Additional examples will be included in future reports.

1. Work closely with counterparts at Mexican institutions to determine the necessary level of on-the-ground support for university members traveling to Mexico.
2. Select partners, which are responsive and timely in communication, directly address questions and concerns, recognize the potential risks to university employees and students, have sufficient security measures in place, and demonstrate 24-hour support for emergencies.
3. All university members should register their international travel for official university activities. Knowing traveler destinations helps to determine the risk profile of each traveler and enables preparation and support. The risk profile will depend on experience in the given location, language fluency, and other details.

*Example: At the University of Arizona all official travelers register their trips. This information is used to assess travel risks as well as identify traveler locations.*

4. Complete site evaluations (on-the-ground is preferable, particularly for student mobility) and risk reviews. Use the results to adjust program logistics and plan risk mitigation strategies and emergency response procedures.
5. All faculty traveling with students should complete relevant health and safety preparation, planning, and mitigation training annually.

*Example: At the University of Arizona all employees traveling with students are expected to complete an annual interactive workshop to review best practices for travel preparation and incident response.*

6. Students should complete country-specific health and safety training (online and/or in person) that specifically addresses student vulnerabilities as well as location-specific risks prior to departure.
7. Offer 24/7 international emergency support. This requires the establishment of duties to maintain situational awareness to potential changes in security concerns and availability to respond to traveler emergencies.

*Example: At the University of Arizona travelers are provided a phone number for emergency assistance that is monitored 24/7.*

8. Create a university-wide committee to assess risks for international travel and new program proposals, and to make recommendations for enhancing safety measures. For programs in countries with DOS Travel Warnings, the committee should regularly reassess the programs' vulnerabilities and risk level.

*Example: At the University of Arizona, the International Travel Safety Oversight Committee (ITSOC) consists of representatives from ten university offices. Regional experts from across the university are included when appropriate.*

9. If funding permits, employ a dedicated position to provide the international security expertise, maintain situational awareness, train staff on emergency response and mitigation, and to develop health and safety policies and procedures in conjunction with the aforementioned committee. At the time of this report, 82 of these types positions at 55 HEIs are in existence.
10. Consider arrangements and logistics for travel outside the official itinerary. In some cases, potential restrictions on such travel may be warranted.
11. Be aware that some program activities may have higher inherent risks and determine if such activities are covered by insurance.
12. Healthcare availability – compile a list of healthcare facilities that accept student insurance within 25 miles of the program site. If none are identified, negotiate payment with local facilities.
13. Tap into additional resources available to universities, such as OSAC.