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Mexico Study Abroad
Dr. Jim Nelson
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The Benefit and Value of My Mexico Study Abroad Experience

The opportunity I had this semester to participate in a Mexico study abroad program in which I was involved in water engineering problem solving and design for a town called Trancoso in Zacatecas, Mexico has been by far the best engineering experience I have had in my life and while attending BYU. The town is experiencing flooding in their area and asked for help from BYU students in finding the source of the problem and coming up with solutions. Eighteen of my fellow students and I were able to work directly with some students from two universities in Mexico, ITESO and UAZ, on various projects such as this to help the people living in areas near the Mexico Universities. We had the opportunity to actually go to Mexico to visit the project sites from March 16, 2007 through March 24, 2007. This experience changed my life and my views of civil engineering. It allowed me to significantly increase my learning and experience as an engineer before I enter the work force.

I am a senior in the Civil Engineering Program at BYU. I will be graduating this April (April 2007) and I feel very strongly that no other class offered in the Civil Engineering Program has made me want to be an engineer more than this class (CEEn 594R). This class taught me what being an engineer is truly about—helping to better the lives of our fellow men.

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we understand that we are our brother's keeper and that it is our responsibility to render service to all of our Father's children who are in need whenever and wherever possible. This class offers the opportunity to reach out to our brothers and sisters in a country that is much less fortunate than ours. Working with the people and students in Mexico, and visiting the project sites was truly a humbling and exalting experience. I saw the extremely poor living conditions of many and the tremendous need of the people, and I feel very blessed to have received an education that allowed me to contribute and help solve their very serious problems.

I very much appreciate the exceptional experience I had both while in Mexico and throughout the entire semester while working on this project. I was able to apply the

principles I learned in previous classes about hydrology, hydraulics, and hydrologic modeling. We used programs such as WMS (Watershed Modeling System), HEC-1, HEC-RAS, and AutoCAD to solve the flooding problem. We were even able to propose a solution to the problem. We (as a group) designed a storm runoff channel that would run through the town of Trancoso, Mexico. The channel would contain the 25 year storm and, therefore, significantly reduce the flooding in the area to virtually none (see the Project Report for more details). I thank Dr. Jim Nelson and all who helped and supported him in establishing this class. Again, no other class I have ever taken while attending BYU has made me want to be an engineer more than this class, or has prepared me more for the work experiences I will have when I graduate. Through this class, I gained experience working on real problems that affect real people, and solving problems in a group environment. I feel this experience is exceptionally valuable to my future employers and has put me one step ahead for my career as a civil engineer.

This class, for me, has completed the aims of my BYU education. It has increased my learning, understanding, and appreciation of this secular subject in a very spiritual way. While working on the project for this class, I experienced spiritual strengthening as I helped others in need. I was intellectually enlarged as I applied the things I have been taught so far in my BYU education, and as I analyzed and solved the problems facing the people in Mexico. This class strengthened my character and my resolve to help those who are in need, and has committed me to fulfill lifelong learning and service so I may continue to build these great qualities throughout my life.

I enthusiastically look forward to graduating in April (April 2007) with my bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering so that I may start my own career as an engineer and continue to fulfill my responsibility of helping others. I feel honored and privileged to have had this experience and I feel it has prepared me for the projects I will face in my future career. To any and all who read this, I hope I have been able to convey my deep appreciation and gratitude for this wonderful opportunity that has been afforded me. I hope all will support and participate in this exceptional class in the future.