



Orientation Handbook for U.S. Grantees

Fulbright Commission in Colombia



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Colombian Fulbright Commission

Diana Basto Castro
Executive Director

Adriana Prieto
Programs Director

Jhosep Díaz
Financial and Administrative Director

Luisa F. Cossio
Communications Officer

Viviana Álvarez
Valentina Bermúdez
Design and diagramming

Colin Andrews
Text revision

Contents

Adriana Prieto
María Cristina Bermúdez
Andrea Angulo
Sergio Sánchez
Jairo Perilla
Silvia Villamizar
Fulbright Staff

Fulbright English Teaching Assistants

Colombia Diversa
Corporación Manos Visibles
Diversity Committee

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U.S. Embassy in Colombia

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs

Paula Marcela Moreno
Manos Visibles

Jorge Fabián González – Andrew Koch
U.S. Peace Corps-Colombia

Marcéla Sánchez
Colombia Diversa

Viviana Cortés
Former Ministry of Culture

Leonardo Reales
USAID

Beatriz María Peña Dix

Talibah Sun

Dear Fulbrighter,

I would like to extend to you a very warm welcome to Colombia as a Fulbright grantee. On behalf of the Board of Directors and the staff of Fulbright Colombia, I am pleased to congratulate you on this professional and personal achievement, for which you can be justly proud: having been selected to belong to one of the most important exchange programs in the world. Fulbright creates an infrastructure for democracy, mutual understanding and connections in a world that needs them. Fulbright is not about prestigious accomplishments that only contribute to personal success; it is about fostering ideas that can transform realities and opening doors to new opportunities for learning.



In this sense, the Fulbright Program does not benefit individuals; it provides a network that empowers people across cultures and countries to advance their careers, build knowledge and make a difference. Fulbright is not about private interests, but rather about engaging underrepresented institutions and populations as a key element to increasing peace and stability in the world. Fulbright advocates for cross-cultural interactions that break down barriers and generate global leadership. Fulbright is a seventy-four-year-old international network that enables its participants to create change.

You will start your Fulbright experience in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Around the world we are all coping with uncertainty and facing a challenging crossroad for humanity. Now more than ever, the world needs leaders to strengthen cooperation among nations, promote sustainable development, and concentrate efforts around everything that unites us, rather than focusing on what divides us. Periods of crisis in history have resulted in groundbreaking innovations and structural transformations in societies. May this public health crisis be an opportunity for deep questioning about our impact on the world and our approach to creating a more inclusive, diverse and equal society.

In Colombia, 2020 marked the 63rd anniversary of the Fulbright Commission. Throughout its history, the Fulbright Program has played a strong role in supporting the bilateral relationship between the U.S. and Colombia and in making positive contributions to the development of both countries. The Colombian government has recognized the Fulbright Commission's importance by supporting the program via various cost sharing agreements implemented in cooperation with different public institutions including the National Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, the National Ministry of Education, ICETEX, the National Ministry of Culture, the National Apprenticeship Service (SENA); and, private partners such as local Universities, among others. We have also received support and generous contributions from the U.S. Embassy and USAID, which have been key partners for the Fulbright Program in Colombia.

In recent years, a major transformation has taken place in Fulbright Colombia's portfolio as the interest in Colombia among U.S. students and scholars has dramatically increased. In four years, the number of Fulbright grants to U.S. citizens coming to Colombia grew by 182%, passing from 57 in 2015 to 161 in 2019. As a result of this increased interest and Colombia's historic peace agreement signed in 2016, which opened up many areas of the country that were affected by the conflict, the Fulbright Program's presence and impact in various regions of Colombia strengthened in a significant way. Currently, we have presence in 25 of the 33 country's departments including regions such as Huila, Cesar, Sucre, Cauca, Nariño, Norte de Santander and Amazonas. All of these departments were heavily hit by the conflict and had not received a single Fulbright U.S. grantee until recent years. This presence has positively impacted the internationalization of more than 60 Colombian higher education institutions.

This handbook is designed to acquaint you with information about the Fulbright Program in Colombia, to provide you with some practical guidelines as you prepare for your Fulbright experience, to give you a general overview of the country and to share specific recommendations on how to handle unexpected situations during your grant period, which is particularly important, under the current circumstances.

Some content was developed by former grantees and local organizations that kindly shared beneficial knowledge and experience for new U.S. Fulbrighters. We want to thank the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Embassy in Colombia, Fundación Manos Visibles, Colombia Diversa and the former Fulbright English Teaching Assistants for their help and participation in the making of this handbook.

We encourage you to read through the handbook carefully as it will help you to prepare for your experience in Colombia. We are glad to help in any way during your stay to make your experience as meaningful, enriching and productive as possible.

Welcome to Colombia!

Diana Paola Basto Castro
Executive Director

Introduction

The following handbook is an effort from the Fulbright Commission in Colombia to provide its grantees with the necessary tools and strategies to adapt to the new experience of being Fulbright grantees in the country. In the following sections you will find information, tips, data, tools and strategies that will help you in the process of getting to know Colombia and adapting to its traditions, customs, and values.

The information included in this document is aimed at giving answers to some of the most commonly occurring questions that a grantee faces when arriving to the country and is meant to give you the necessary details to deal with any circumstances that you may face during your stay in the country.

This document has been developed by the Fulbright Commission in Colombia and includes information from other Fulbright Commission handbooks from around the world (Brazil, Mexico, Austria, Italy, Spain, France and Bulgaria), as well as information provided by the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and information from academic and local sources.



CONTACTS

ASPE ASSIST HOTLINE

+1 833 963 1269 - Worldwide: +44 20-3859-4463
email: aspesupport@anvilgroup.com

1. U.S. Citizen Services Office – U.S. Embassy in Bogotá

Emergency Phone (8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday – Friday) U.S. Embassy Bogota: (57) 1 2752000. After Hours (after 5:00 p.m., weekends and holidays) Emergency Phone, U.S. Embassy Bogota: (57) 1 2754021 or acsbogota@state.gov.

2. Contact the U.S. Embassy for up-to-date information on travel restrictions

You can also call 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays)

3. Emergency number in Colombia

123 (Ambulance, Fire, Security, Transit)

4. Other specific emergency lines

- Ambulances: 125
- Anti-kidnapping, anti-extortions and Guala Police: 165 or 147
- Disaster attention: 111
- Firefighters: 119
- CAI police (find a CAI close to you): 156
- Colombian Red Cross: 132
- Civil Defense: 144
- DIJIN (Direction for criminal investigation and INTERPOL): 157
- Police: 112

5. Report a crime

- Local police at 123
- Contact your program officer at Fulbright Commission in Colombia
- Contact the U.S. Embassy at (57) (1) 2752000 (8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday), +57 (1) 2754021 (after 5:00 p.m., weekends and holidays) or acsbogota@state.gov.

6. ASPE Health Benefit Plan

Seven Corners – Customer Service:
Toll free: 1-800-461-0430
Collect Outside US: 1-317-818-2867
Customer Service Fax: 1-317-815-5984
Claims Fax: 1-317-575-6467
Email: usdosinfo@sevencorners.com
www.usdos.sevencorners.com

In case of medical problems

The Commission staff can be considered as emergency contacts. If listing staff, contact us at this numbers:

Executive Director - Diana Basto Castro

Cel phone 3007518101

Program Director - Adriana Prieto

Cel phone 310 8517112

Administrative and Financial Director - Jhosep Díaz

Cel phone 315 9275130

Fulbright Commission in Colombia

(1)4324680 in Bogotá

This phone line may be restricted due to stay-at-home orders

7. Report a sexual aggression and asking for help

Colombia

Orientation Line: this line is aimed at providing orientation to any person subject of any violent crime. Phone: 155

Women can call the National Purple Line “Women that help women”

This line is aimed at preventing any kind of violence directed at women, and the emotional, psychological or physical consequences of the event.
Phone: 01-8000-112-137

United States

National Domestic Violence Hotline

Phone: 800-799-SAFE (7233) or 800-787-3224 (TDD)

National Sexual Assault Hotline

Phone: 800-656-HOPE (4673)

8. Program Officer at the Fulbright Commission in Colombia

(1) 4324680 (Monday to Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.)

Andrea Angulo: Ext. 21- aangulo@fulbright.edu.co

Sergio Sánchez: Ext. 18 - ssanchez@fulbright.edu.co

(These phone lines may be restricted due to stay-at-home orders. We recommend contacting the Program Officers via email)

10. Smart Traveler Enrollment Program

www.travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/ea/enroll-in-step.html



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SAFETY & SECURITY

The security situation in Colombia has considerably improved during the last decade. However, it is important to remember that crime does still exist and to following the security recommendations provided by the Fulbright Commission and the Regional Security Office (RSO) of the U.S. Embassy in Colombia. Security remains a concern for Fulbright grantees coming to Colombia, as well as for their families. Our single highest priority is the safety and well-being of all of the grantees.

As soon as you arrive in country, or even before, we strongly encourage that you enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) via <http://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html>. 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. The benefits of enrolling in STEP are that you will receive emails about safety and security, urgent emergency situations, and updates to our Consular Information Program products and it will help your family and friends get in touch with you in the event of an emergency. If you don't have Internet access, you can enroll directly with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

It is very important to provide your contact information to the Fulbright Commission in Colombia. This information should include telephone numbers (home, office, and cell phone), physical addresses (home and office) and personal email addresses. It is also very important that you have a back-up plan in case the standard means of communication such as e-mail messages and cell phone communication are cut off.

The security situation in several regions of Colombia remains highly volatile. For this reason, certain areas of Colombia remain restricted for grantees, or may become restricted during the period of the grant. For these reasons, all grantee travel must be previously approved by Fulbright Colombia. Proposed travel plans,

whether by land or by plane, must be cleared through the Program Officer, who in some cases must verify with the U.S. Embassy if the travel is authorized or not, considering the current security conditions of the city or region of destination.

Long distance road travel is not allowed. It is imperative that the Fulbright Commission and the U.S. Embassy are able to contact the grantees in case of an emergency. The Program Officer needs to be informed of you contact information and must be notified of any change in residence, telephone number, e-mail address or cell phone. The grantee and/or the host institution must report any incidents to the Program Officer at the Fulbright Commission immediately upon occurrence.

Visit the Embassy's website and follow them on Facebook and Twitter. Regularly monitor the State Department's website [travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) (www.travel.state.gov/content/travel.html), where you can find current Travel Warnings, (including the Travel Warning for Colombia), Travel Alerts, and Worldwide Cautions. Read the Country Specific Information for Colombia, and refer to the "Traveler's Checklist" on the State Department's website. Contact the U.S. Embassy for up-to-date information on travel restrictions. You can also call 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada or 1-202-501-4444 from other countries. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays). Follow the State Department on Twitter and Facebook to have travel information at your fingertips.

Safety and security is a priority for the Fulbright Commission in Colombia. In the following sections, we will provide information related to medical emergencies, crime, discrimination, terrorism and other events that could happen.



ASPE ASSIST HOTLINE

+1 833 963 1269 - Worldwide: +44 20-3859-4463

email: aspesupport@anvilgroup.com

ASPE ASSIST is a hotline for all grantees in the Fulbright Program while they are on their grants in their host countries. ASPE ASSIST is designed to augment the health benefits that are concurrently provided through ASPE. ASPE ASSIST is accessible 24 hours a day and is available to provide support to Fulbrighters in urgent and non-urgent situations.

ASPE ASSIST can assist with the following:

- **Urgent Case Services:** mental health crisis support, sexual assault response, violent crime response, assisting grantees who have been caught up in civil unrest, natural disasters, or terrorist incidents, if unable to reach the Fulbright Commission/U.S. Embassy in the host country. Can provide advice to grantees when they feel at risk or vulnerable.
- **Non-Urgent Case Services:** medical advice (provided by licensed intensive care nurses), Travel health information and personal security advice.

In case of medical problems

- Check with your host institution what would be the best clinic/specialist to visit in your town. If you are going to use the ASPE Health Benefit to cover your medical expenses, please have in mind that you should only visit a private hospital or health institution to be eligible for reimbursement.
- The Commission staff can be considered as emergency contacts. If listing staff, contact us at this numbers:

1.1. ASPE

Fulbright grantees receive a limited health care benefit plan designed by the United States Department of State and administered by Seven Corners, Inc. This plan IS NOT an insurance policy. The Accident and Sickness Program for Exchanges (ASPE) is a self-funded, limited, health care benefit plan designed to pay covered medical expenses for U.S. Department of State (DoS)-supported exchange programs. Covered medical expenses are subject to limitations, ASPE provides Fulbrighters with health care coverage during the effective period of their grant. To be aware of the services provided by ASPE, we recommend to keep the following information in mind:

- Check the health benefit plan in advance at www.sevencorners.com/gov/usdos and read the overview and conditions of the ASPE program carefully. Some of the covered expenses listed in the previous link are: Accident or Injuries, Birth Control, Diagnostic Testing, Hospital Room and Board Charges, Laboratory Tests and X-rays.
- Maximum Benefit: Up to US\$100,000 per sickness or injury.
- Repatriation or Mortal Remains: Paid by USDoS at 100%, up to \$25,000.
- Medical Evacuation: Paid by USDoS at 100%, up to the amount approved by USDoS after medical review.

Executive Director - Diana Basto

Cel phone 300 7518101

Program Director - Adriana Prieto

Cel phone 310 8517112

Administrative and Financial Director - Jhosep Díaz

Cel phone 315 9275130

Fulbright Commission in Colombia

4324680 in Bogotá

(This phone line may be restricted due to stay-at-home orders)

- In case the medical issue is urgent, emergency treatment is provided in private hospitals. The grantee has to pay for the services given by external consultation and then send Seven Corners the Claim Form asking for a refund of the expenses. It is important to keep all the payment receipts, support documents and medical prescriptions. For more information check the ASPE Benefit Guide.
- Emergency treatment is provided at both public and private hospitals to patients that have been seriously injured in an accident.
- To call an ambulance or to receive first-aid assistance, dial the emergency number, 123.
- In case you need to see a doctor, you have been recommended hospitalization, or need urgent care, you can refer to the US Embassy Guide on Doctors and Hospitals.

- Travel Insurance insures your financial investment in your trip. Typically, it covers such things as the cost of your lost baggage and cancelled flights, but it may or may not cover costs of medical attention you might need while abroad.
- Travel Medical Insurance covers the cost of various levels of overseas medical treatment.
- Medical Evacuation Services provides air ambulance, medical evacuation or medical escort service coverage for overseas travelers.
- An Injury or Sickness is payable if:
 - o It does not exceed your plan's Maximum Benefit
 - o You have been continuously covered under the ASPE benefit plan
 - o The sickness or injury occurred in your assigned host country
 - o This is a covered service.
- Once you log into www.usdos.sevencorners.com you can select a special service called MyPlan, which is an area where you can access secure information specifically for you including: Claim Information, Eligibility Information, Printable ID cards and Secure Customer Service email.
- You are not covered by ASPE if: you are in your home country or country of regular domicile; you are on personal leave; you travel outside the country of assignment without pre-approval from your program agency officer; you are on extended stopovers on route to or from your country of assignment; or During orientations in your home country.
- All covered expenses incurred as a result of the same or related cause (including complications) shall be considered as resulting from one Injury or Sickness. To be sure medical services are covered, the following procedure must be adhered to: Seven Corners must be contacted to confirm coverage and benefits; as soon as non-emergency hospitalization is recommended; within 48 hours of the first working day following an emergency admission; when your physician recommends any surgery including outpatient; prior to any emergency treatment for dental pain, or; for emergency evacuation, repatriation and assistance services.
- To file a claim, you must always provide the following information: Name, address, professional status of the person or organization providing the service Provider Tax ID number (for providers in the US), name of patient receiving service, date of service, description of each service, diagnosis, charge for each service, and for eligible psychotherapy expenses, include the length of each session and session type (ex. group or individual).

II. Crime prevention & personal safety

Crimes and scams against unsuspecting tourists are common in both urban and rural areas. Firearms are prevalent in Colombia and muggings or robberies can quickly turn violent. The Embassy continues to receive reports of violent and petty crime, including pickpocketing. If you are mugged, you should not resist, even if you do not see a weapon.

General recommendations

- Do not allow yourself to be isolated with a person you do not know or trust. Travel with a friend or in a group. If going on a date with someone you do not know very well, meet in a public place and share your plans with a friend and have them call/check on you. Always have extra money to get home.
- It is advisable to avoid walking around with your cell phone and/or wallet in your hand. Keep your belongings in front of you on public transportation at all times. In taxis, don't use your phone with the window down.
- If you need to use your phone, check your surroundings and try to find a place to use your phone away from the curb and away from others.
- Learn how to use the phone system. Do not wait until an emergency comes along to figure it out. Have important contacts and information memorized or written somewhere safe as a back-up (in an email or in a notebook), in case your mobile phone is stolen.
- If you suspect that someone is following you, do not go straight home. Stop by a coffee shop or a grocery store, or take a taxi instead. If the person is still around and looks suspicious, call someone you trust and ask them to take you home or call the police. Do not confront the stranger if you are alone.
- Be aware of your surroundings, maintain a high level of self-awareness, watch for suspicious activity, vary your routes and times. Do not become predictable.
- Whenever you are in a place that could potentially be held up, such as a bank or a small store, stay alert. If you notice suspicious activity, do not go near it but leave and report it as soon as it is safe to do so.

- Cooperate in the case of robbery: Before anything else, signal your intention to the robbers that you intend to cooperate. Make it obvious to the robbers that you are acquiescing by responding to their requests promptly and not challenging any of their demands. Cooperating will help you to stay calm because your chances of surviving the incident are greatly increased by doing nothing to set off the volatility of the robbers.

- Monitor local media for breaking events and adjust your plans based on new information.

- Enroll in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program – STEP (<https://step.state.gov/>) to receive Alerts and make it easier to locate you in an emergency.

- Review the Crime and Safety Reports (www.travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Colombia.html#ExternalPopup) for Colombia.

U.S. citizens who travel abroad should always have a contingency plan for emergency situations. Review the Traveler’s Checklist (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/travelers-checklist.html>)

- Make sure your coworkers and/or friends or relatives know where you are traveling to, how you are traveling, and your schedule for the trip.

- Never leave your purse, backpack or other personal belongings unattended in a restaurant or public area – even for a moment. A common tactic is to cause a distraction in a restaurant or on the street. Patrons in restaurants who are distracted and have left valuables on the table or the back of a chair have had their belongings stolen, even without leaving their seats.

- Thieves impersonate police officers. If you are stopped by a plainclothes policeman, ask for a uniformed officer or insist on seeing an officer’s identification card. Do not hand over your wallet or ID and immediately report the incident to the actual police at a police station or by dialing 123 from a local phone.

- Travelers have reported incidents in which criminals used drugs to assault or rob them. Thieves on motor scooters regularly snatch purses or bags off pedestrians as they ride by. Resisting these thieves can be dangerous.

- Keep your car doors locked and windows rolled up at all times to avoid carjackings and thefts while you are waiting in traffic.



Contact Information

It is very important to provide your contact information to the Fulbright Commission in Colombia, including telephone numbers (home, office and cell phone) physical addresses (home and office) and personal email addresses, within the first two weeks after your arrival. This information should also be shared with your family or friends in the U.S. In case of any changes in your contact information, please notify your Program Officer at the Fulbright Commission immediately.

2.1. Report a crime

Report crimes to the local police at **123**, contact your program officer at Fulbright Commission in Colombia and also the U.S. Embassy at (57) (1) **2752000** (8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., Monday – Friday), +57 (1) **2754021** (after 5:00 p.m., weekends and holidays) or acsbogota@state.gov. Also, it is important to report the crime to the local authorities, going to the nearest “Comando de Acción Inmediata - CAI”. Remember that local authorities are responsible for investigating and prosecuting the crime. See the webpage on help for U.S. victims of crime overseas:

www.co.usembassy.gov/u-s-citizen-services/victims-of-crime/?_ga=2.228736732.1911672064.1608148840-1649331977.1604432290

Consular Assistance to U.S. Crime Victims

When a U.S. citizen is the victim of a crime overseas, he or she may suffer from physical, emotional or financial injuries. It can be more difficult because the victim may be in unfamiliar surroundings, and may not know the local language or customs. Consular staff at overseas posts know local government agencies and resources in the countries where they work.

ACS can help

- Replace a stolen passport
- Contact family, friends, or employers
- Obtain appropriate medical care
- Address emergency needs that arise as a result of the crime
- Explain the local criminal justice process
- Obtain information about your case
- Connect you to local and U.S.-based resources to assist victims of crime
- Obtain information about any local and U.S. victim compensation programs available
- Provide a list of local lawyers who speak English

ACS cannot:



Investigate crimes
Provide legal advice or represent you in court
Serve as official interpreters or translators
Pay legal, medical, or other fees for you.

2.2. Types of crime

2.2.1. Pickpockets

Pickpocketing is a major problem, mainly in crowded tourist destinations, mass transportation systems and in city centers. A little common sense is enough to stay safe and avoid being a victim of pickpocketing. Below are some useful and practical tips that can help you not to become an easy target:

- Do not have anything more in your wallet than you are willing to lose. Try to keep only what is essential. Make a copy of your passport, and make sure that you have all the numbers and contact information to cancel your cards at any time.
- Leave important documents, such as passport, credit cards and, foreign debit cards kept in a safe place at home. Do not carry more than COP \$100,000 with you.
- Wear a money belt or divide your important documents and cash into several pockets. This way, if you are a victim of pickpocketing, at least you will have extra cash stashed elsewhere.
- Avoid wearing expensive and bulky jewelry. Carry your purse tightly under your arm and slightly in front of you. Be careful and aware of your surroundings. Do not carry valuable items with you. In the event that someone demands your wallet/purse or camera, do not resist. Try to get a good description of the assailant(s). If attacked, flee and call 123 immediately.
- Do not chase down whoever you think stole your wallet. Remember that most pickpockets work in groups, so your wallet was most likely handed off before you realized it was gone.
- On public transportation, the most popular technique is the crush and grab. You will be swarmed by several people all trying to get on or off. While they are pushing you, they are also pick pocketing you. Try to find a seat away from the doors. If you can't sit, back yourself up against one of the sides. Try to minimize access to your pockets and purses.
- Do not become complacent in your routine. Routine allows criminals to target you and catch you by surprise.
- On the street, the distraction tactic is widely used. Two or more people will approach you and ask for directions or try to sell you stuff. While you are occupied with one person, another is pick pocketing you. Another technique is to have something thrown or spilled on you, like water or ice cream. Someone will approach you and offer to help clean you up. Another person then pick pockets you while you are distracted.
- Taxis: U.S. government personnel are prohibited from hailing taxis on the street due to the risk of assault or robbery. Use phone or internet-based dispatch services whenever possible. Many hotels, restaurants, and stores will call a taxi for you. Authorized taxi booths are present in most airports in Colombia.
- Disabling drugs: Criminals may use drugs to temporarily incapacitate unsuspecting victims and then rob or assault them. Avoid leaving food or drinks unattended at a bar or restaurant, and use caution if a stranger offers you something to eat or drink.
- Scams: See the Department of State (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/emergencies/international-financial-scams.html>) and the FBI (<https://www.fbi.gov/scams-and-safety>) pages for information on scams.
- See the webpage on help for U.S. victims of crime overseas and U.S. victim's compensation programs.
- Due to the security environment in Colombia, U.S. government officials and their families are not permitted to travel by road between most major cities. They also cannot use inter-city or intra-city bus transportation or travel by road outside urban areas at night. You are encouraged to follow these same precautions. Please refer to the Travel Warning for Colombia (<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/International-Travel-Country-Information-Pages/Colombia.html#ExternalPopup>) for details.



Loss or theft of important documents: Grantees are advised to keep scanned copies of their passports in their e-mail accounts. If a theft occurs in the country:

- Make sure to go to the nearest police station to report the loss or theft of your important documents.
- Call the U.S. Embassy American Citizens Service to renew your passport.
- Inform your Program Officer about the loss or theft.
- Make the necessary arrangements to re-issue your visitor visa.

2.2.2. ATM Robbery

- Use ATMs located in well-lit public areas or secured inside a bank or business. Cover the keypad with one hand as you enter your PIN. Look for gaps, tampered appearance, or other irregularities between the metal faceplate of the ATM and the card reader. Don't talk to anyone while you are using the ATM.
- If the ATM sucks in your card and does not give it back, go into the bank immediately. This is not normal and most likely the ATM has been tampered with by thieves.
- Closely monitor your account statements for unauthorized transactions.

2.2.3. Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of aggression that consists in unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature ("accidental" touching, suggestive remarks and jokes, etc.).

Sexual harassment and assault are usually the manifestation of asymmetrical power structures and dependencies, and incidents in which one person takes advantages of their power over another individual. It affects all sexes and genders, and it constitutes a form of violence and abuse that is too often glossed over.

Sexual harassment is any action that could violate a person's dignity, is perceived as offensive in this sense by the victim, and that the harasser knows to be unwanted.



Strategies for managing and responding to sexual harassment

- Find a local ally – examples may include a fellow faculty member, fellow student, Neighbor.
- Talk to other Fulbrighters, friends and co-workers that you can trust.
- Talk to your program officer if you need help assessing and/or reporting an incident.
- Do NOT sacrifice your personal safety, security or comfort zone. Set limits for what is acceptable and try to be consistent.
- Exercise caution when meeting new people. Arrange the meeting in a public place or with others.
- Trust your instincts and gut feelings. Do not respond to e-mails, text messages, or phone calls out of politeness if it makes you feel uncomfortable.
- Communicate clearly and with self-confidence. Be assertive and insist on being treated with respect.
- Save documents as evidence and prepare a protocol of the incident. Seek institutional and professional support.
- Sexual harassment is NOT OK. There is a growing consensus on this issue. Do not feel like you have to accept inappropriate behavior to be "culturally sensitive."
- If you witness an incident of (sexual) harassment or discrimination, don't look away. Address the situation or, if your own safety might be compromised, call for help.

a. Sexual aggressions

Sexual assault and abuse is any type of sexual activity that you do not agree to, including:

- Inappropriate touching
- Sexual intercourse that you say no to
- Rape
- Attempted rape
- Child molestation

Sexual assault can be verbal, visual or anything that forces a person to experience unwanted sexual contact or attention. It can happen in different situations: in the home by someone you know, on a date, or by a stranger in an isolated place.

Rape is a common form of sexual assault. It is committed in many situations - on a date, by a friend or an acquaintance, or when you think you are alone. Educate yourself on “date rape” drugs. They can be slipped into a drink when a victim is not looking. Never leave your drink unattended - no matter where you are.

Rape and sexual assault are never the victim’s fault - no matter where or how it happens.

Lower the risk

There are things you can do to reduce your chances of being sexually assaulted. Follow these tips:

- Be aware of your surroundings — who’s out there and what’s going on.
- Walk with confidence. The more confident you look, the stronger you appear.
- Know your limits when it comes to using alcohol.
- Be assertive — don’t let anyone violate your space.
- Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in your surroundings, leave.
- Don’t prop open self-locking doors.
- Lock your door and your windows, even if you leave for just a few minutes.
- Watch your keys. Don’t lend them. Don’t leave them. Don’t lose them. And don’t put your name and address on the key ring.
- Watch out for unwanted visitors. Know who’s on the other side of the door before you open it.
- Be wary of isolated spots, like underground garages, offices after business hours, and apartment laundry rooms.
- Avoid walking or jogging alone, especially at night. Vary your route. Stay in well-traveled, well-lit areas.
- Have your key ready to use before you reach the door — home, car, or work.
- Park in well-lit areas and lock the car, even if you’ll only be gone a few minutes.
- Drive on well-traveled streets, with doors and windows locked.
- Never hitchhike or pick up a hitchhiker.
- Keep your car in good shape with plenty of gas in the tank.

You can effectively reduce the risk of sexual assault by following these tips, however, always remember that failing to follow them does not make you guilty in any way. Sexual assault is never your fault.

In case of an assault

These are important steps to take right away after an assault:

- Get away from the attacker to a safe place as fast as you can. Then, contact your program officer at Fulbright Commission in Colombia, you can also call the U.S. Embassy (Phone no. (1) 275 20 00 or (1) 275 40 21 outside of office hours).
- Call a friend, a family member you trust or even your Fulbright coordinator. Feelings of shame, guilt, fear, and shock are normal. It is important to get counseling from a trusted professional. ASPE ASSIST can be reached any time at +1 833 963 1269, Worldwide: +44 20-3859-4463 and offers confidential counselling and support service.
- Do not wash, comb, or clean any part of your body. Do not change clothes if possible, so the hospital staff can collect evidence. Do not touch or change anything at the scene of the assault.

At the hospital

- Go to your nearest hospital emergency room as soon as possible. You need to be examined, treated for any injuries, and screened for possible sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or pregnancy. The doctor will collect evidence using a rape kit for fibers, hairs, saliva, semen, or clothing that the attacker may have left behind. The following procedures may or will be performed:
 - o Clinical and para-clinical diagnosis according to the type of sexual violence
 - o Prophylaxis and treatment of STIs-HIV / AIDS
 - o Emergency contraception
 - o Counseling for Voluntary Interruption of Pregnancy
 - o Evidence collection
 - o Orientation to the family
 - o Planning of follow-up and referral to other health services required
 - o Referral to protection and report to justice.
- When you are at the hospital, clinic or before three days after sexual contact be sure to ask for Post-Exposure-Prophylaxis- PEP (Profilaxis posterior a la exposición), as this will increase the possibilities of not contracting HIV.

Reporting the event and asking for help

If you decide you want to file a police report, you or the hospital staff can call the police from the emergency room. Ask the hospital staff to connect you with the local rape crisis center. The center staff can help you make choices about reporting the attack and getting help through counseling and support groups.

If you are sexually assaulted, it is not your fault. Don't be afraid to ask for help or support. Help is available. You can also request for additional assistance in terms of emotional and psychological support. In order to access these services, you can contact the following lines:



- Orientation Line
This line is aimed at providing orientation to any person subject of any violent crime. Phone: 155
- Women can call the National Purple Line "Women that help women". This line is aimed at preventing any kind of violence directed at women, and the emotional, psychological or physical consequences of the event. Phone: 01-8000-112-137



- National Domestic Violence Hotline
Phone: 800-799-SAFE (7233) or 800-787-3224 (TDD)
- National Sexual Assault Hotline
Phone: 800-656-HOPE (4673)

2.2.4. Other types of harassment

Harassment is not limited to sexual harassment. Harassment can occur, and one can be victim of it, in varied scenarios of professional and academic life. Harassment is described as any speech or action which is severe or pervasive enough to create a hostile or abusive environment. In this sense, the following are types of harassment that you may be victim of:

- On the basis of Race, Gender, Politics, or Religion
- Work Harassment
- Bullying
- Misogyny
- Machismo
- Ableism
- Retaliation

If you feel that you've been victim of any of these types of harassment, you're encouraged to follow these strategies:

- If you experience or witness an instance of harassment or discrimination and are not sure how and where to file a report, talk to someone you trust or contact your Fulbright program officer in Colombia.
- If you experience or witness an instance of harassment or discrimination on campus, contact the staff councils, the "Decanatura de Bienestar", or Human Resources at your university to report the incident.
- If you are the victim of or witness a crime, call the local police at 123 and report the incident or go to the nearest "Comando de Acción Inmediata - CAI".
- If you are the victim of a crime, the Consular staff can assist you in taking the appropriate steps to report the incident, rebuild your safety, and obtain medical care if necessary.

2.3. Online safety and security

a. Social media, press and blogging guidance

With the growth of blogging and social networking sites in recent years, Fulbrighters have many opportunities to share their experiences. Fulbrighters should take adequate precaution when using social media tools to share personal information.

The following guidance is provided by the U.S. Department of State regarding online safety and security. Although social media tools such as Facebook and Google+ have security settings to limit who is able to see certain information, these tools can still be hacked and misused and certain information can still be seen by people outside of approved circles or lists.

When traveling, it is good to keep some general social media safety and security tips in mind.

• **Do not broadcast movements.** Be aware of applications (apps) and programs that track and/or publish your current location without your consent or knowledge. Consider waiting to share photos and stories until after you have left a location.

• **Do not post everything.** Private information, such as your email address, residency or phone number, may not need to be shared with anyone, much less everyone.

• **Use caution** when new or unknown individuals ask to become connections.

• **Use and check security settings.** Security settings are helpful but not fail-proof.

• **Protect passwords.** Use strong password practices to help prevent people from hacking your accounts and change your passwords regularly.

• **Respect the privacy of others.** Ask other people for permission before using their names or publishing their photos, as they may have their own reasons for not wanting a public profile.

• **Respect local laws and customs.** Freedom of speech and expression is protected in Colombia. However, it is important to have in mind Colombian law and culture as well as the differences between Colombia and the United States.

Sharing your Fulbright experience with the world

While participants in all U.S. Department of State-sponsored academic exchange programs, including the Fulbright Program, have full academic and artistic freedom to write, publish and create, you are also expected to maintain a standard of conduct that is in keeping with the intent of the Fulbright Program – to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of Colombia.

Any grantee who publicly posts inappropriate or offensive material on the Internet in relation to their program may be subject to revocation or termination of their grant. Describing the challenges of living in a foreign country is fine, but please refrain from using disparaging language to describe the country you are in and the people with whom you live and work.

b. Press

During your grant, you may be asked to speak with local press about your experiences and perspectives. You are not required to speak to the press. If you would like to speak to the press, here are some basic guidelines for making use of media and press while you are on your grant:

- You can always say no. If you do not feel comfortable speaking to the media and press for ANY reason, simply say no.
- If you wish to speak to media and press, but you are concerned about certain privacy issues (you don't want to have your face shown or your last name used), we can work with you and the news outlet to try and accommodate your needs.
- Please keep in mind that your remarks could have both positive and negative impact on your school, mentor teacher and the Fulbright Program in Colombia so try to be constructive in all you say and stress that you are speaking not in an official capacity but from your own perspective.
- When in doubt, contact your Program Officer. They will be able to assist you with in-country media and press.

c. To keep in mind about your online safety

We encourage you to have in mind the following recommendations:

• *Caution with links on the internet*

Avoid clicking links of dubious origin in order to prevent access to websites with IT threats. Remember that this kind of link could appear in emails, a chat window or a social network message. Never access a bank platform through links. It is recommended to type the web address of the bank on the navigating bar of your computer.

• *Do not enter dubious websites*

Through scam techniques, many web sites are promoted with striking information that captures the interest of people with discounts, free products, exclusive materials, and more. This is how you can connect with dangerous web pages that can download viruses and other malware.

• *Avoid contact with strangers and accepting invitations from unknown people*

Both in WhatsApp and in social networks, it is recommended to only accept and interact with familiar people. This will allow you to avoid having contact with false profiles that are created by attackers to communicate with their victims and expose them to many threats.

• *Be careful with the information that you post*

Avoid giving details of your routine and personal information out on social media sites. Offenders take advantage of this information to blackmail or steal. When you are traveling, be careful not to post the places you will be or comment about your home being empty. If you want to share your travelling experiences with your friends, we recommend that you post this information after you return.

• *Better to be safe than sorry*

When you are filling a web form that contains fields with sensitive information (for example, username and password), it is recommended to check the legitimacy of the web site. A good strategy is to check the web address and the use of the HTTPS in the platform, in order to be sure of the confidentiality of the information.

• *Avoid easy passwords*

The use of "strong" passwords is recommended, with different types of characters and not less than 8 characters in length. Avoid using your birth date, address, or pet name, as they are easy to identify.

III. Unexpected situations

3.1. Terrorism

Thanks to globalization, the world experiences different dynamics, both positive and negative, that affect society and stability. In Colombia, we not only experience technological advances, but also perceive threats coming from terrorist groups that affect human security. In this sense, different criminal groups have formed in the country, putting social welfare at risk. Therefore, we have tips on how you can react to an act that puts your safety at risk. Additionally, we list locations that should be taken into account in order to avoid witnessing terrorist attacks:

- Due to the presence of armed groups (crime and terrorism), the Embassy recommends that you avoid going to some places in Colombia.
- Terrorists are increasingly assaulting “soft” targets, such as:
 - High-profile public events (sporting contests, political rallies, demonstrations, holiday events, celebratory gatherings, etc.)
 - Hotels, clubs, and restaurants
 - Places of worship
 - Parks
 - Shopping malls and markets
- Be alert to warnings and communications about possible dangers in the country issued by the Embassy of the Government of the United States.
- Notify the authorities or security personnel of the place where you are if you see any suspicious objects by calling 123.

Check it out at Travel State Gov:
<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories/colombia-travel-advisory.html>

If you find yourself in the middle of a terrorist attack, you should:

- Not stop to pick up belongings or objects.
- Alert others about the attack as you move away from it, but do not stop for any reason.
- Not lay down on the ground pretending to have been injured. Keep calm.
- Avoid the use of elevators.
- Follow the instructions of the security personnel.
- If you think you have moved far enough away from the place where the attack occurred, help other people escape.
- Know the location of emergency exits.
- Avoid manipulating suspicious objects.
- Stay away from downed power lines.
- Run away from the scene without being seen by the terrorist and if you cannot get away from the focus of the attack; hide yourself and, if you are in an enclosed area, close the door, reinforce it and move away from it.
- In case you cannot get away from the focus of attack, protect yourself behind a substantial, heavily reinforced wall or some element resistant of firearms, do not make noise and silence your mobile.
- Remember the “run, hide, fight” rule during a terrorist attack or similar accident: whenever possible, immediately depart the area; if retreat is not an option, conceal yourself from would-be assailants; as a last resort, and only if necessary, yell and fight off an attacker.

If a terrorist attack is nearby

- The grantee must confirm via e-mail to the Fulbright’s staff that they are safe
- The grantee has to publish on Facebook, Twitter or any social media that they are fine.
- If necessary, the Commission will also make quick phone calls to all grantees in order to verify their safety.
- The grantee should follow the Commission and the Embassy on Social Media, such as Facebook and Twitter, in order to review important communications in case of extraordinary emergencies.

- The Commission will consult American Citizen Services asking for instructions.
- The Commission will report the results of the safety check to the U.S. Embassy, the Department of State, IIE and CIES.

3.2. Protests / Demonstrations

In Colombia, especially in Public Universities, it is street protests or demonstrations are common and in most cases, they are led by students. However, those are not the only demonstrations that can happen in Colombia, it is not uncommon for union workers (teachers, transporters, taxi drivers etc.) to publicly protest about political or social issues.

Demonstrations and large events intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational. Avoid areas of demonstrations and exercise caution if you are in the vicinity of any large gatherings, protests, or demonstrations. Large public gatherings can affect all major incoming arteries to the city in which they occur. Demonstrations in one city have the potential to lead to additional public rallies or demonstrations in other locations around the city and country.

We strongly encourage U.S. citizens to maintain a high level of vigilance, be aware of local events, and take the appropriate steps to bolster their personal security. Even demonstrations intended to be peaceful can turn confrontational and escalate into violence. U.S. citizens are therefore urged to avoid demonstrations, and to exercise caution if within the vicinity of any demonstrations. Try not to provoke them in any way by taking photos, making gestures or comments.

3.3. Natural disasters

The safety of all US Government educational and cultural exchange participants living in Colombia is a major priority for the U.S. Embassy in Colombia and the Fulbright Commission. In order to prepare for a possible crisis situation or natural disaster it is useful that every grantee visiting Colombia do the following:

Build a first aid kit

In any emergency, you, a family member, friend or colleague may suffer an injury. However, if you have these basic first aid supplies you are better prepared to help your loved ones when they are hurt. Knowing how to treat minor injuries can make a difference in an emergency. You may consider taking a first aid class, but simply having the following things can help you stop bleeding, prevent infection and assist in decontamination:

- Two pairs of latex or other sterile gloves if you are allergic to latex.
- Sterile dressings to stop bleeding.
- Cleansing agent/soap and antibiotic towelettes.
- Antibiotic ointment.
- Burn ointment.
- Adhesive bandages in a variety of sizes.
- Eye wash solution to flush the eyes or as general decontaminant.
- Prescribed medications you take every day such as insulin, heart medicine and asthma inhalers. You should periodically rotate medicines to account for expiration dates.
- Prescribed medical supplies such as glucose and blood pressure monitoring equipment and supplies.

A supplies kit

The first aid kit could be complemented with supplies for natural disasters. A supplies kit is a collection of basic items you and your household may need in the event of an emergency, and is sometimes referred to as a "go bag." You will need to assemble your kit, or "go bag," well in advance of an emergency as you will probably not have time to search or shop for supplies during and immediately after a disaster.

- Water, one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation.
- Food, at least three-day supply of non-perishable food.

- Battery-power or hand crank radio with a horn or siren and extra batteries.
- Flashlight and extra batteries.
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags and toilet paper.
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter-in place.
- Whistle to signal for help.

Colombia experiences various types of natural disasters, with earthquakes, landslides and floods being the most common; in all cases, you must stay calm and alert.

a. Earthquakes

Know the term

- **Aftershock:** An earthquake of similar or lesser intensity that follows the main earthquake.
- **Earthquake:** A sudden slipping or movement of a portion of the earth's crust accompanied and followed by a series of vibrations.
- **Epicenter:** The place on the earth's surface directly above the point on the fault where the earthquake ruptures began.
- **Fault:** The fracture across which displacement has occurred during an earthquake. The slippage may range from less than an inch to more than 10 yards in a severe earthquake.
- **Magnitude:** The amount of energy released during an earthquake, which is computed from the amplitude of the seismic waves. A magnitude of 7.0 on the Richter Scale indicates an extremely strong earthquake. Each whole number on the scale represents an increase of about 30 times more energy released than the previous whole number represents. Therefore, an earthquake measuring 6.0 is about 30 times more powerful than one measuring 5.0.

For Earthquake preparedness please do the following

The last big and devastating earthquake that hit Colombia was in Armenia, Quindío in January 1999. This earthquake measured 6.1 on the Richter scale. According to official government statistics, at least 1,900 people were killed and 4,000 injured. More than 8,000 buildings were destroyed and 13,000 were seriously damaged. Earthquakes continue to be the most threatening natural disaster threat in Colombia.

Colombia is in an area in which different tectonic plates collide with each other, generating dozens of quakes a day that most citizens do not even perceive, making the country very susceptible to earthquakes.

Please follow the following recommendations during an Earthquake:

- Find shelter in a supported doorway or under a desk away from windows.
- Use the stairways, not the elevators, to evacuate the building after it stops moving.
- Follow the instructions of emergency and/or security workers (police, firefighters, *Defensa Civil*, Red Cross).
- Be aware that there will likely be smaller aftershocks and that fire is common post-earthquake threat.
- Be aware of local accountability procedures established by the host institution/ location you are visiting.

Although there are no guarantees of safety during an earthquake, identifying potential hazards ahead of time can save lives and significantly reduce injuries and property damage.

Before

The following are things that you can do to protect yourself in the event of an earthquake:

- Make sure shelves are fastened securely to walls.
- Place large or heavy objects on lower shelves.
- Store breakable items such as bottled foods, glass, and china in low, closed cabinets with latches.
- Fasten heavy items such as pictures and mirrors securely to walls and away from beds, couches and anywhere people sit.
- Locate safe spots in each room under a sturdy table or against an inside wall. Reinforce this information by moving to these places during each drill.

During

Drop, cover and hold on

If indoors:

- DROP to the ground; take COVER by getting under a sturdy table or other piece of furniture; and HOLD ON until the shaking stops.
- Stay away from glass, windows, outside doors and walls, and anything that could fall, such as lighting fixtures or furniture.
- Stay in bed if you are there when the earthquake strikes. Hold on and protect your head with a pillow, unless you are under a heavy light fixture that could fall. In that case, move to the nearest safe place.
- Do not use a doorway except if you know it is a strongly supported, load bearing doorway and it is close to you.
- Stay inside until the shaking stops and it is safe to go outside. Do not exit a building during the shaking. Research has shown that most injuries occur when people inside buildings attempt to move to a different location inside the building or try to leave.
- DO NOT use elevators.

If outdoors:

- Stay there
- Move away from buildings, streetlights and utility wires.
- Once in the open, stay there until the shaking stops. The greatest danger exists directly outside buildings, at exits and alongside exterior walls. Many of the 120 fatalities from the 1933 Long Beach earthquake occurred when people ran outside of buildings only to be killed by falling debris from collapsing walls.

In a moving vehicle:

- Stop as quickly as safety permits and stay in the vehicle. Avoid stopping near or under buildings, trees, overpasses, and utility wires.
- Proceed cautiously once the earthquake has stopped. Avoid roads, bridges, or ramps that might have been damaged by the earthquake.

If trapped under debris:

- Do not light a match
- Do not move about or kick up dust
- Cover your mouth with a handkerchief or clothing
- Tap on a pipe or wall so rescuers can locate you. Use a whistle if one is available. Shout only as a last resort. Shouting can cause you to inhale dangerous amounts of dust.

After

- Expect aftershocks. These are usually less violent than the main quake but can be strong enough to do additional damage and can occur weeks, or even months after.
- Listen to a battery-operated radio or television for the latest emergency information.
- Use the telephone only for emergency calls
- Stay away from damaged areas. Return home only when local authorities or U.S. government officials say it is safe. If there is a conflict between the guidance of local authorities and U.S. government officials, follow the U.S. government guidance.
- Open cabinets cautiously. Beware of objects that can fall off shelves.
- Check for gas leaks: If you smell gas or hear a blowing or hissing noise, open a window and quickly leave the building. Turn off the gas at the outside main valve if you can and call the gas company from a neighbor's home. If you turn off the gas for any reason, it must be turned back on by a professional.
- Look for electrical system damage: If you see sparks or broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If you have to step in water to get to the fuse box or circuit breaker, stop and call a professional.

- Check for sewage and water line damage: If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using the toilets and contact a professional. Avoid using water from the tap if your water pipes are damaged. You can obtain safe water by melting ice cubes.

b. Floods

Floods are one of the most common hazards in the world. Flood effects can be local, impacting a neighborhood or community, or very large, affecting entire river basins and multiple states.

Not all floods are alike. Some floods develop slowly, sometimes over a period of days. But flash floods can develop quickly, sometimes in just a few minutes and without any visible signs of rain. Flash floods often have a dangerous wall of roaring water that carries rocks, mud, and other debris and can sweep away most things in its path. Overland flooding occurs outside a defined river or stream, such as when a levee is breached, but still can be destructive. Flooding can also occur when a dam breaks, producing effects similar to flash floods.

Be aware of flood hazards no matter where you live. Even very small streams, gullies, creeks, culverts, dry streambeds, or low-lying ground that appears harmless in dry weather can flood. Every country is at risk from this hazard.

Before

Be aware of the causes of the flood

- **Storms:** Hurricanes, typhoons, cyclones, and tropical storms pack a triple punch: high winds, soaking rain, and flying debris. They can cause storm surges to coastal areas, as well as create heavy rainfall which in turn causes flooding hundreds of miles inland. When hurricanes weaken into tropical storms, they generate rainfall and flooding that can be especially damaging since the rain collects in one place. In 2001, Tropical Storm Allison produced more than 30 inches of rainfall in Houston in just a few days, flooding over 70,000 houses and destroying 2,744 homes.
- **Heavy Rains:** Many areas of the globe are at heightened risk for flooding due to heavy rains. Excessive amounts of rainfall can happen throughout the year, putting your property at risk.
- **Levees & Dams:** Levees are designed to protect hold back a certain level of water. However, levees can and do fail; and when they fail, they can fail catastrophically. Weakening of levees over time, or as a result of weather events exceeding the levee's level of support, can cause the levee to be overtopped or breached, thus increasing the chance of flooding.
- **Flash Floods:** Flash floods are one of the most dangerous weather-related killers because they can roll boulders, tear out trees, and destroy buildings and bridges. A flash flood is a rapid flooding of low lying areas in less than six hours which is caused by intense rainfall from one or several thunderstorm(s).

During:

- Look for information on the local radio, television, or announcements from your post.
- Be aware that flash flooding can occur. If there is any possibility of a flash flood, move immediately to higher ground. Do not wait for instructions to move.
- Be aware of streams, drainage channels, canyons and other areas known to flood suddenly. Flash floods can occur in these areas with or without typical warnings such as rain clouds or heavy rain.

If you must prepare to evacuate, you should do the following:

- Secure your home
- Turn off utilities at the main switches or valves if instructed to do so. Disconnect electrical appliances. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.

If you have to leave your home, remember these evacuations tips:

- Do not walk through moving water. Six inches of moving water can make you fall. If you have to walk in water, walk where the water is not moving. Use a stick to check the firmness of the ground in front of you.

- Do not drive into flooded areas. If floodwaters rise around your car, abandon the car and move to higher ground if you can do so safely. You and the vehicle can be swept away quickly.
- Do not camp or park your vehicle along streams, rivers or creeks, particularly during threatening conditions.

After

- Use local alerts and warning systems or guidance from your post to get information and expert informed advice as soon as available.
- Avoid moving water.
- Stay away from damaged areas unless your assistance has been specifically requested by local authorities or U.S. government officials.
- Emergency workers will be assisting people in flooded areas. You can help them by staying off the roads and out of the way.
- Play it safe. Additional flooding or flash floods can occur. Listen for local warnings and information. If your car stalls in rapidly rising waters, get out immediately and climb to higher ground.
- Return home only when authorities indicate it's safe to do so.
- Stay out of any building if it is surrounded by floodwaters.
- Use extreme caution when entering buildings; there may be hidden damage, particularly in foundations. Avoid floodwaters; water may be contaminated by oil, gasoline or raw sewage.

c. Landslides

Landslides can occur in nearly any environment and can be caused by a variety of factors including earthquakes, storms, volcanic eruptions, fire and by human modification of land. Landslides can occur quickly, often with little notice and the best way to prepare is to stay informed about changes in and around your home that could signal that a landslide is likely to occur.

Before

The following are things that you can do to protect yourself from the effects of a landslide or debris flow.

- Become familiar with the land around you.
- Learn whether debris flows have occurred in your area by contacting local officers. Slopes where debris flows have occurred in the past are likely to experience them in the future.

Recognize landslide signal warning signs:

- Changes occur in your landscape such as patterns of storm water drainage on slopes (especially in places where runoff water converges), land movement, small slides, flows, or progressively leaning trees. Doors or windows stick or jam for the first time.
- New cracks appear in plaster, tile, bricks or foundations.
- Outside walls, walkways, or stairs begin pulling away from the building.
- Slowly developing, widening cracks appear on the ground or on paved areas such as streets or driveways.
- Underground utilities breaking.
- Water breaks throughout the ground surface in a new location.
- A faint rumbling sound that increases in volume is noticeable as the landslide nears.
- Unusual sounds, such as trees cracking or boulders knocking together might indicate moving debris. Collapsed pavement, mud, fallen rocks, and other indications of possible debris flow can be seen when driving (embankments along roadsides are particularly susceptible to landslides)

During

- During a severe storm, stay alert and awake. Many deaths from landslides occur while people are sleeping.
- Listen to local news stations on a battery powered radio for warnings of heavy rain.
- Listen for unusual sounds that might indicate moving debris, such as trees cracking or boulders knocking together.
- Move away from the path of a landslide or debris flow as quickly as possible. The danger from a mudflow increases near stream channels and with prolonged heavy rains. Mudflows can move faster than you can walk or

run. Look upstream before crossing a bridge and do not cross the bridge if mudflow is approaching.

- Avoid river valleys and low-lying areas.
- If you are near a stream or channel, be alert for any sudden increase or decrease in water flow and notice whether the water changes from clear to muddy. Such changes may mean there is debris flowing activity upstream, so be prepared to move quickly.
- Curl into a tight ball and protect your head if escape is not possible.

After

- Stay away from the slide area. There may be danger of additional slides.
- Listen to local radio, television stations, or guidance from your post for the latest emergency information. Watch for flooding, which may occur after a landslide or debris flow. Floods sometimes follow landslides and debris flows because they may both be started by the same event.
- Check for injured and trapped people near the slide without entering the direct slide area. Direct rescuers to their locations.
- Look for and report broken utility lines and damaged roadways and railways to appropriate authorities. Reporting potential hazards will get the utilities turned off as quickly as possible, preventing further hazards and injuries.
- Check the building foundation, chimney, and surrounding land for damage. Damage to foundations, chimneys, or surrounding land may help you assess the safety of the area.

3.4. Fulbright Colombia Phone Tree

What is a phone tree?

A phone tree or emergency tree is a premeditated system, which aims to confirm the safety of the individuals when an emergency has been reported due to a terrorist act or natural disaster. The emergency tree system is activated by a phone call or a text message. This type of system will allow the Commission to send a message or alert quickly and efficiently to a large group of grantees and seeks to have a response from them in the same way.

To this end, the Fulbright Colombia Commission has created a phone tree for. Grantees who are in Colombia in the event of an emergency. The phone tree can be implemented at the national level or a local level depending on the emergency.

How does the phone tree work?

Upon your arrival to Colombia, you will be added to several WhatsApp groups that may be used only in emergency situations. During such events, a notification will be sent by the Fulbright Commission prompting US Grantees to confirm their status. Bearing in mind that, during emergency situations, telephone lines often do not work, the notification will be sent as a text message. This is because texting requires much less bandwidth than calling.

In the case that the wireless networks are not functioning, text messages sent via Whatsapp are saved and sent automatically as soon as the wireless network is again active, thus communication by this means is highly effective.

What is considered an emergency?

To activate the phone tree emergency protocol, two main situations qualify as emergencies:

- A natural disaster such as an earthquake, flood, volcanic eruption, wide-ranging forest fire, biological disaster, hurricane, etc.
- A terrorist attack including high-range explosion, bomb, firearm attacks or actions by armed groups.



IV. COVID-19

The Fulbright Colombia Commission highly encourages the U.S. Grantees to follow all government guidelines regarding COVID-19 pandemic. Below are some links where grantees can find updated and official information about travel to Colombia, recent pandemic developments, and biosecurity guidelines among others.

U.S. INFORMATION

- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
www.covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_cases-per100klast7days

COLOMBIA INFORMATION

- Ministerio de Salud de Colombia
(Colombian Health Ministry)
www.minsalud.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/e18894fa4dd546d094e8267179562413
- Instituto Nacional de Salud- (National Health Institute)
www.ins.gov.co/Noticias/Paginas/coronavirusdepartamento.aspx
www.ins.gov.co/Transparencia/Manuales/MANUAL%20-DE%20BIOSEGURI-DAD%20DEL%20INS%20MNL-A01.0000-001.pdf

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Grantees are expected to follow any recommendations provided by the Colombian Government, Fulbright Commission and host institutions regarding biosecurity protocols. Failure to follow these recommendations may result in a grant revocation.
- By signing and accepting the grant, grantees confirm that they are aware of the COVID-19 situation in Colombia and are willing to travel to Colombia regardless.
- Grantees placed at host institutions using a virtual format may not travel or work from a different city without previous approval from the host institution and the Commission.
- Neither the Board, the U.S. Department of State, the cooperating agency, the Commission nor any other post assumes responsibility for any contingency related to COVID-19 which may befall the grantee during, or as a result of the stay abroad, travel or other activities related to the grant.
- The policies of the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board authorize the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) to suspend the Fulbright Program if local or international conditions warrant it.
- Political instability, travel advisories, or safety and security concerns may require the temporary suspension of the Fulbright Program in the host country (FFSB Policy 436) and may necessitate a delayed.

grant start date and/or the short- or long-term withdrawal of grantees. Should your grant be suspended while you are on your program as a result of safety and security concerns, the Fulbright program will provide funding for early return travel to the United States, plus a fixed transition allowance determined at the time of the program suspension.

The Fulbright Program's limited health benefit policy, ASPE, will not be available upon your return to the United States. If after the suspension of the Fulbright Program you choose to remain in the host country and not return to the United States, you will be doing so as a private citizen and will be considered a Fulbright alumnus/a, not a grantee. If the program is suspended either before you depart from the United States or are scheduled to begin your Fulbright grant, you will not be able to begin your grant and will not be eligible to receive grant benefits.

COVID-19 TEST

- Travelers to Colombia must complete Migracion Colombia's Check-Mig immigration form and follow protocols upon arrival. This includes reporting any symptoms that occur within 14 days of arrival in Colombia.
- The use of face masks is obligatory in public spaces including airports and flights.
- We strongly recommend grantees to monitor media reporting and official announcements from the Colombian government for details and updates to these requirements.

In the United States

COVID-19 testing in the U.S. varies greatly by location, with testing being widely available in larger cities and less available in smaller towns and rural areas. Most towns offer at least one testing location, but it depends on how large the town is. Many cities have several specific places where people can get tested for free. If grantees are not near a free testing center, they will need to locate a nearby health center where testing is available. Some health centers offer free testing to individuals who have been exposed to the virus, while charging for preventative testing. Grantees will have to find out by themselves where local testing is available.

In Colombia

There are three (3) different kind of testing in Colombia. In order to choose the best test for your particular situation, please have in mind that the efficiency and accuracy of the results depend on the incubation time of the virus in the body. It is important to select the most appropriate test for you and follow medical advice.

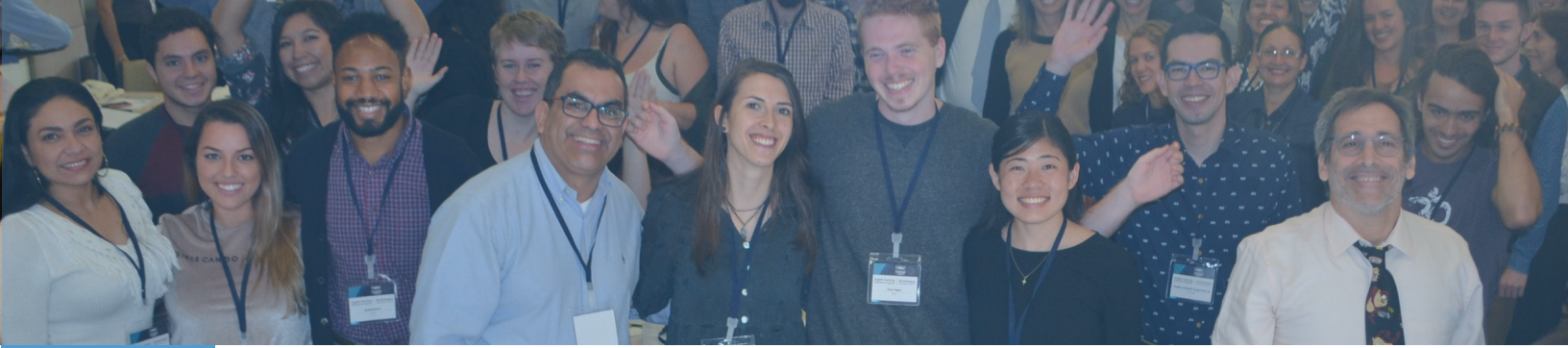
In some cases, the test may be covered by ASPE or your health insurance (if applicable) and can even be taken at home. For cases that are not covered by any insurance please find below the approximate costs for each test:- Antibody test performed by venipuncture or capillary; detects the virus on the seventh day of infection.

- Approximate cost: of \$ 90,000 COP. Effectiveness: 97%. Results available in 10 to 15 minutes.
- Antigen test performed by nasopharyngeal swab, detects the virus from the third to the fourth day of infection. Approximate cost: \$140,000 COP. Effectiveness: 99%. Results within 6 business hours.
- PCR test performed by nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swab; detects the virus after 1 day of infection. Approximate cost: \$ 260,000. Results delivered in 48 to 72 business hours.

More information about COVID-19 testing in different cities in Colombia:

- Bogotá www.vitalea.com/reserva-drivethru
- Barranquilla www.clinicaportoazul.com/pruebas-rapidas-covid19-drive-in
- Medellin www.vitalea.com/reserva-drivethru
- Bucaramanga www.rvgips.com/publicaciones/6/pruebas-de-covid-19-en-vid-19-ips-lavid-19-en-rvg-ips-laboratorio-clinico-especializado
- Cali www.vitalea.com/reserva-drivethru
- Villavicencio www.laboratoriocolcan.com/covid-19

NOTE: This Handbook offers recommendations. It is the grantee's responsibility to carefully review the ASPE guide for more coverage information.



INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES

Being part of the Fulbright program requires a full commitment, not only to academic excellence, but also to the intercultural experience. In this sense, Fulbright grantees must be prepared for the possible challenges of culture shock. Participating in an experience of cultural exchange represents a challenge to adapt to the new social, political and cultural environment, but also, it represents an opportunity to enrich one's intercultural skills.

An intercultural encounter is by definition: "a type of relation that is intentionally established between cultures and that enables a dialogue and cross-cultural exchange, taking the mutual recognition of values and worldly visions as a starting point" (Byram, 1997). Similarly, the concept of intercultural competence is defined as: "the capability to shift one's cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities" (Bennet, 2015).

When acclimating to this new experience in Colombia, Fulbright grantees will find themselves in contexts in which cultural proficiency may be low due to lack of exposure of Colombians to foreign cultures. In many cases, Fulbright grantees may be the first Americans staying long term in their host city.

During their experience, Fulbrighters may find themselves in situations in which locals ask questions such as: Where are you from? Where is your family from? Where is your last name from? Or comments like: "You don't look like other Americans".

In general, these questions and comments are usually related to the lack of exposure of locals to foreign cultures. These expressions are not meant to attack personal or cultural identities of foreign citizens. Rather, they stem from genuine curiosity and generate a window of opportunity for Fulbright grantees as cultural ambassadors, explain the diversity of U.S. culture and open spaces for dialogue and exchange in which both sides can learn from each other and enrich their understanding of one another.

With the purpose of facilitating the cultural enrichment of the Fulbright experience, in the following sections, we will look at 4 strategic tools aimed at guiding Fulbright U.S. grantees through intercultural challenges.

a. Learn how to identify / address critical events

Usually, when facing unknown contexts in which culture shock is unavoidable, cultural confrontations are frequent. Frequently, personal values or traditions can collide with those of the host country. It is important to recognize these scenarios as a critical event. Critical events may have a negative outcome if not seen as an opportunity for growth in intercultural competencies by each person.

- **Most comments from locals are not meant to be offensive.** Some comments may be the result of a low cultural proficiency or a genuine attempt to start a conversation. Although those comments may infringe upon your values, they are most likely innocent.

- **You may have more intercultural knowledge than your local counterpart.** It is important for you to remember that, most likely, you are more prepared to face intercultural challenges than your local counterpart because of the background for which you were selected as a Fulbright exchange student. Please, keep in mind that your previously acquired intercultural knowledge is probably the best tool to solve these episodes.

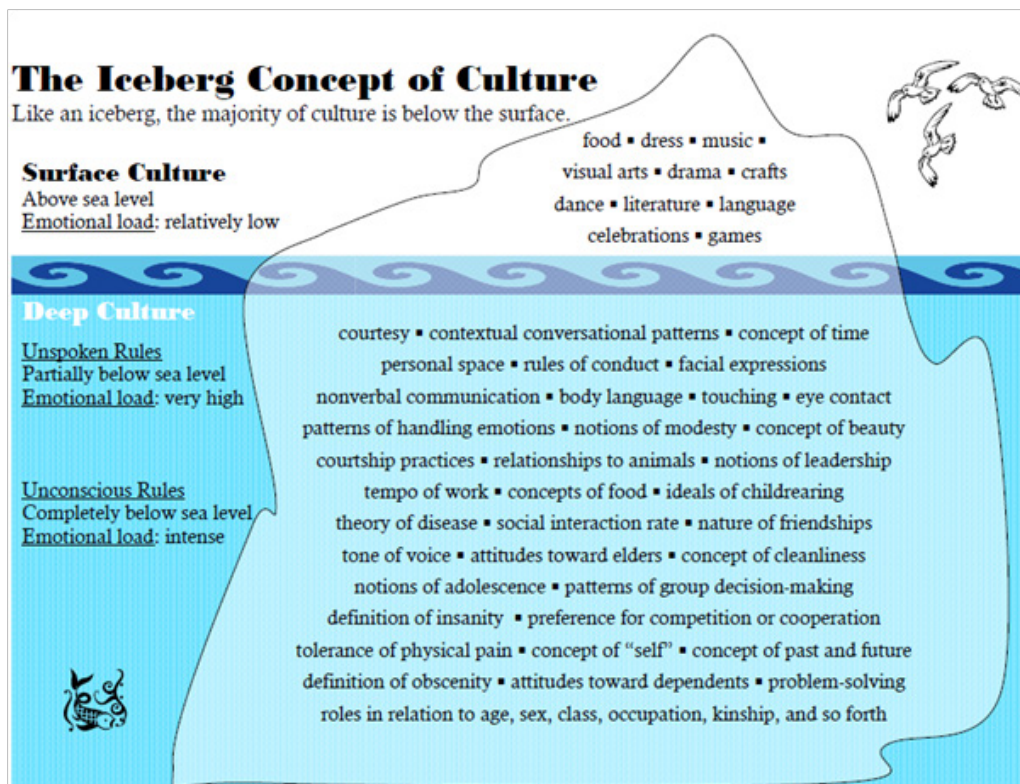
- **Critical events are the best opportunity to learn.** Dealing with situations such as the ones described above in which a local shows curiosity about your background is a window into helping you better understand Colombian culture and perspectives, something that helps build your won intercultural competencies.

- **Critical events are an ideal opportunity to teach.** These situations present an unbeatable opportunity to enrich intercultural competences for both parties. When facing a critical event, you can take advantage of the situation to educate your counterpart in the reasons why their comments or behaviors may hurt or attack your cultural or individual identity. You can also invite them to learn about how those words or expressions may be unacceptable in other cultures. This is also a good opportunity to teach your counterpart about your own culture and how culture shock is perceived and addressed. Remember, as a Fulbrighter in the host country, you also have the role of teaching intercultural competencies.

b. When addressing a two-way conflict, create a safe “3rd space” for dialogue

- Usually, confrontations that arise from cultural differences, are motivated by a difference of ideas, values and behaviors.
- Frequently, discussions are worsened when the two parties are too immersed in their own perspective and worldview to be able to understand the other person’s ideas, values or behaviors.
- In this sense, another useful tool to cope with culture shock scenarios, is to communicate with your counterpart and establish a “3rd space”: a safe place to speak, in which you can take distance from your own beliefs and hear the other’s perspectives without prejudices.
- Remember, never judge!
- In this space, you can have a productive and non-aggressive conversation about your “dos” and “don’ts”, and the way in which you consider it is the best to solve your differences.
- These spaces require the will to reach agreements and make concessions. Both persons must know that the goal is not to agree, but to gain a deeper understanding of the other’s perspective.
- Whenever you find yourself in a “3rd space”, remember that your duty is to understand that the other’s concerns are equally important as yours.
- Always try to favor the existence of a third space, if the counterpart is still reluctant, you can try to find a third person who can facilitate the conversation between both sides.

c. Remember the “Iceberg Concept of Culture”



*Indiana Department of Education, Office of Language Learning & Migrant Education
www.doe.in.gov/englishlanguagelearning

- On many occasions, conflicts arise as a result of the lack of cultural proficiency or prejudices that emerge from shallow observations.
- The “Iceberg Concept of Culture” is a tool that lets us remember that there are many invisible features in every culture, and that they play a key role in our understanding of others.
- When we let ourselves be guided by our shallow observations, we may be ignoring very important aspects of the culture, thus making us more likely to fall into misinterpretations, and behaviors perceived as offensive.
- Thus, when facing situations which require intercultural competences, it is important for you to remember that the first step is to take distance yourself from biases, prejudices, and shallow observations.
- Once you have made the effort to go beyond your first impressions, you can try to understand the deeper features of the culture, and thus notice behaviors or comments that differ from your own.
- Once you have fully understood this concept, you can instruct others in the features of your own culture that may not be perceived by others. It is important to take the initiative of teaching and learning about intercultural differences.
- Share the Iceberg concept of culture with others when explaining why their actions or comments may be offending you. Making them understand that the problem is broader than personal disagreements will make the conversation easier and more productive.

d. Build and maintain a “Support Network”

Encountering in daily situations in which personal or cultural identities are compromised can be exhausting and discouraging. No one is immune to feeling attacked or undermined, and those feelings are normal. It is important for you to build and maintain a network of close people (friends, family, roommates, fellow Fulbrighters or others) with whom you can discuss your concerns regarding the difficulties of coping with intercultural differences.

In order to properly use this tool/strategy, you can follow these steps:

- Identify those expressions, behaviors or comments that make you feel attacked or uncomfortable.
- Identify people close to you that maybe undergoing similar experiences or that are more likely to understand them.
- Fellow Fulbrighters, Senior ETAs, former Fulbright Program members, Fulbright staff, other foreigners in your city or close friends are good examples of people that you can include in your support network.
- Establish a conversation with those people that you have identified as your “Support Network”.
- Let them know about those situations in which you have felt attacked or uncomfortable, let them know what you think and feel in these episodes.
- Ask for their opinions and advice on how to address these situations and how to cope with negative feelings.
- Maintain close and frequent contact with them, and use those conversations as your “safe zone”.
- Remember that the Fulbright staff is also prepared and willing to provide you with necessary assistance to overcome difficult moments.
- Request every form of assistance that you consider necessary. Efforts will be made by all parties to assist you in solving problems.
- Keep in mind that you can receive support, but may also be asked to help someone else. Be prepared and willing to receive and provide necessary assistance.

As a member of the Fulbright program, you are expected to be willing to be a cultural ambassador and a resource for others to learn about your culture and about intercultural skills as a whole, so keep an open mind when approaching the new culture, and maintain a willingness to teach and learn.

Finding yourself in very uncomfortable situations or feeling vulnerable is very likely part of an intercultural exchange. If this happens, remember that you have a network of people to support you as you adapt to a new culture. Remember, being competent in intercultural skills is the best way to contribute to the growth of the cultural exchange between yours and Colombian culture. Thank you in advance for your effort to learn, teach, and become an agent of change for Colombia and the Fulbright Program.

Below, you will find a series of resources that you may find helpful:

Resources

• DACN Colombia Website

The DACN is the Direction for Afrocolombian, Raizal and Palenquero communities from the Colombian Ministry of the Interior, on their website, you can learn about their services for members of the community and helpful resources at your disposition.

<http://dacn.mininterior.gov.co/>

• OCDR Colombia

The OCDR "Observatorio contra la Discriminación y el Racismo" is an institution of the Colombian government, specifically created to address cases of discrimination and racism in the country. The OCDR offers personal orientation in its offices on (carrera 8 No. 12 B – 31, piso 13) or through their phone line: 2427400 ext. 3382.

<http://dacn.mininterior.gov.co/ocdr>

• Community centers and psychological orientation resources for LGBT communities

In the following link provided by the organization "Colombia Diversa" you can find the contact information for community centers that provide orientation for members of LGBT communities.

<http://colombiadiversa.org/noticias/conoce-directorio-organizaciones-paque-ofrece-servicio-orientacion-psicologica/>

• Resources for LGBT community members in Colombia

On this website, you can find information regarding the current situation for members of the LGBT communities in Colombia.

<http://colombiadiversa.org/ddhh-lgbt/EN/>

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PREPARING FOR LIVING IN COLOMBIA

I. Before your arrival

What should I pack? Is it hot in Colombia?

It depends on your placement city. Regions range in temperature, so do some research on your city's average climate. For example, in Bogota one must always carry an umbrella because you never know when it'll rain, and it is often chilly. If you will be on the coast where it is extremely hot, it is advisable to bring a light jacket for our orientation in Bogota. You can find common things such as shampoo, conditioner, and lotion everywhere. However, below is a list of things that can be quite expensive in Colombia, so you may want to purchase it beforehand:

- Sunscreen
- Contact solution
- Tampons
- Products from Cetaphil, Almay, Maybelline, etc.
- Peanut butter
- Bug Spray

Here's a good packing list to get you started:
<http://www.tatteredpassports.com/colombia-packing-guide/>

How many pieces of luggage can I take to Colombia?

You will be allowed two bags to check in (50 lbs each), a carry on, and a personal item. If you feel you have over packed, only bring what you think you absolutely won't be able to find in Colombia. You may want to leave some room to bring gifts and souvenirs for your friends and family from Colombia.

Should I exchange money before coming here?

You will get the best rates withdrawing money from an ATM. The money exchange booths in airports have less competitive rates, but you can exchange a small amount for emergencies upon arrival if you wish. There are booths in cities that will give you better rates than the airport as well.

Any book recommendations?

Yes! There are many. The list below includes books written in English and in Spanish:

- The Zen of Fulbright: The Unofficial Guide to Making the Most of Your U.S. Fulbright Scholarship. Paperback by Thomas M Burns.
- Colombia: A Concise Contemporary History by Michael J. LaRosa.
- Cien años de soledad de Gabriel García Márquez.
- The Dispossessed by Alfredo Molano.
- Blood and Fire: La Violencia in Antioquia, Colombia, 1946-1953 by Mary Roldán.
- Walking Ghosts: Murder and Guerrilla Politics in Colombia by Steven Dudley.
- La ficciones del poder. Patriotismo, medios de comunicación y reorientación afectiva de los colombianos bajo Uribe Vélez (2002-2010) de Fabio López de la Roche.
- No hay silencio que no termine (Even Silence Has an End) by Ingrid Betancourt.
- Moon Colombia (Moon Handbooks) by Andrew Dier.

a. Geography and weather



One of the country's biggest differential values is its environmental relevance. Colombia is one of the world leaders in fauna and flora.

Colombia is host to nearly 10% of the world's wildlife; it contains five worldwide biosphere reserves and is the second country in the world in terms of wildlife per square kilometer. These facts make it an environmental powerhouse and place it amongst the Megadiverse Countries of the World.

Thanks to its favorable geographical conditions, Colombia has is highly biodiverse. Concerning species, it is considered the first nation in amphibians and birds, the second in plant diversity, the third in reptiles, the fourth in taxonomic groups and the fifth in mammals. 68% of Colombia's continental surface is covered by about 314 natural ecosystems, including forests, scrublands, grasslands and natural bodies of water.

All of these statistics make the country a great one in biological mega diversity along its six regions: Andean, Caribbean, Insular, Amazonia, Orinoquia and Pacific.

Considering the absolute importance of the environment in the development of a country, mega diversity becomes one of the fundamental pillars of sustainability and growth in Colombia. The Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development is leading the process of updating the Biodiversity National Policy. Similarly, in a local sphere, regional autonomous corporations known as CAR design environmental management plans suited to ecosystems' needs.

Colombia has different climatic zones. Below 1,000 meters (3,281 feet), the climate is warm (hot land), where temperatures are above 24 ° C (75.2 ° F). About 82.5% of the country's total area is in warm weather.

The majority of the country's population lives in the temperate climate (temperate land, between 1,001 and 2,000 meters in height (3,284 feet and 6,562 feet)), where temperatures vary between 17 and 24 ° C (62.6 and 75.2 ° F) and the cold climate (cold land, 2,001 and 3,000 meters high (6,565 and 9,843 feet)).

In the cold land the average temperatures oscillate between 12 and 17 ° C (53.6 and 62.6 ° F). Beyond the cold land are the alpine conditions of the wooded area and then the prairies without trees of the páramos. Above 4,000 meters high (13,123 feet), where temperatures are below zero, it is frozen land, an area of perpetual snow and ice.

b. Government and politics

Colombia has a presidential system of government and is one of the oldest formal democracies on the continent. The Constitution of 1991 reformed the highly centralized system, removing power from the Executive Power represented of the President of the Republic and assigning more autonomy to local authorities.

That Magna Carta, also recognized the multicultural nature of the country and improved the representation of minority groups, such as Indigenous; Afrocolombian; Raizal and Roma, giving them direct representation in the Legislative Power. Additionally, the Constitution sets participatory democracy mechanisms, such as plebiscites, referendums and popular consultations and established a legal mechanism called "Tutela" that allows individuals to appeal government decisions affecting their constitutional rights.

The President of the Republic is elected every 4 years by universal suffrage. As the head of the Executive Branch, he appoints the government, which must be approved by the Congress. Legislative Power is comprised by the Senate (102 members) and the Chamber of Representatives (166 members). Members of the Congress are also elected by voting every 4 years.

Besides the Executive and the Legislative branches, there is also a Judicial Branch in the Politic System, conformed by a Supreme Court and a Constitutional Court as well as regional, municipal and district courts. In addition, Colombia's peace process has introduced a Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), which will oversee investigation and sentences related to the conflict.



II. Arriving in Colombia

a. Registering with the Embassy

Within the first week in Colombia, every Fulbright grantee must register his/her personal data and passport number with U.S. Citizen Services at the U.S. Embassy in Bogotá. This can be done in person or online at www.travel.state.gov/content/travel.html. in the International Travel section, and then on Registration with Embassies and choose Bogotá.

b. Colombian Identification Card

Within 15 days of your arrival, all Fulbright grantees with an issued Colombian visa must complete an online form to apply for an identification card (Cédula de Extranjería), Migración Colombia has Migration Service Centers, Centros facilitadores de Servicios Migratorios, in most of the cities in Colombia.

The cedula (your Colombian identification card) is an indispensable document during your stay in Colombia, especially for financial transactions. Please be advised that a certification of your blood type is required for issuance of the cédula. Every grantee must also notify Migración Colombia of his/her address in Colombia within five days of any change of residency. The cédula must be issued in the city of residence, so grantees with placements outside Bogotá will obtain the ID card from the local Migración Colombia: Centros Facilitadores de Servicios Migratorios in their city of destination.

For more information about how to get your Colombian identification card visit Migración Colombia web page: www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/cedula-de-extranjeria

Also, to get information about the Centros Facilitadores de Servicios Migratorios visit this link: www.migracioncolombia.gov.co/informacion-general/content/31-centros-facilitadores-de-servicios-migratorios

As a participant in the Fulbright Exchange Program, Fulbright will also issue an identification card for English Teaching Assistants and U.S. Researchers, which is acceptable in almost any circumstances except for bank transactions or other official business. Grantees should carry this card with them at all times.

c. Banking

English Teaching Assistants and U.S. Student Researchers grantees will receive a pay card upon arrival to Colombia where their monthly stipend will be deposited. During the orientation seminar, grantees will have a special session with Fulbright's Administrative Director to get the cards. This product does not have any bank account associated with it because it is the easiest way for the Commission to disburse the funds. All major U.S. credit cards are accepted in Colombia, including American Express, Visa, and Mastercard. However, grantees may want to check with the International Division of the credit card companies or their bank to obtain specific information about credit card in Colombia.



We recommend that you arrive in Colombia with some cash or traveler's checks that can be exchanged at the airport for Colombian pesos.

d. Housing

Fulbright Colombia provides information to grantees with information about housing options but does not make any arrangements. It is highly encouraged that grantees contact the International Relations Office, Oficina de Relaciones Internacionales (ORI) at their host institution; they usually receive foreign students and therefore have a complete database with housing options in the different cities. Housing options in Colombia vary enormously. Some of the best sources of information on this topic include the Commission, U.S. Fulbright grantees who are ending their stay in Colombia, classified ads in local newspapers, and the universities. While it may be stressful, it really is better to wait until you are in your host city to find housing. Reserve a hostel for a week or so while you look for options.

This will allow you to look with less stress and get to know some of the neighborhoods in your placement city. Moving forward, if you EVER move out of an apartment/living space and just need some "cushion time" to find your new place, use hostels for those days you are looking. For those without renting experience, don't pay rent for days you won't be in the living space and don't pay too much at a hotel. Find to a hostel nearest to your workplace. Look for Facebook groups for housing options in your placement city. Search for your placement city plus one or more of these keywords: arriendos, habitaciones compartidos. Bogota has one called Bogota Short Term Rentals, so some pages may be in English. You can also ask the previous U.S. grantees in your city to give you tips about finding housing and perhaps ask a fellow U.S grantee to accompany you to see some of the places you like.

Leases of less than one year can be difficult to obtain. Many short-term grantees rent furnished apartments. Furnished one-bedroom apartment rents begin at about COP\$850,000 or more, plus utilities (this varies through cities). Rents and utilities depend on the apartment's location. A complete inventory should be made of the furniture before moving in. Furnished apartments usually provide refrigerators and stoves as well as major items of furniture and generally provide dishes, sheets, blankets, pots and pans, and other minor household items.

For those grantees planning to live in a shared apartment, availability and costs, much like in the U.S., depend on the city, neighborhood, and number of people the grantee will be living with. Finding and signing a lease in Colombia is an extremely onerous task (even for Colombians) when going through the traditional process with a real-estate agent, but many Fulbrighters have been able to find apartments dealing directly with the owner or lease holder of a house/apartment, and do not have to sign a contract. It is important to take into consideration that this option leaves the person less protected under the law if something were to happen in the apartment, but it offers much more freedom for mobility if the person feels like moving.

It might also be particularly difficult to find young Colombian roommates, especially outside major cities, as most Colombians live with their parents until later in their 20's. It is important to keep in mind that it is not advisable to agree to an apartment without first going there and meeting the roommate(s)/landlord (this is best to do with a friend) and look around the area to make sure it seems safe. Some landlords are okay with having visitors and others are not. Some of them even charge you (15.000-25.000 COP) a night for visitors sleeping over. So, be sure to speak with your landlord about what their rules are. There are a few websites that can be used to start on the apartment hunt. www.compartoapto.com is the "Craigslist" of Colombia for apartment searches. There, the person can create a profile that includes the desired price-range, neighborhood, ideal roommate, etc.

One thing to keep in mind when looking for an apartment is the social stratum, “estrato”, in which it lies. Legally, there are six estratos. The lowest stratum is 1 and the highest is 6. The classification by estrato determines how much one must pay in property taxes, the charges for public services, utilities, access to health care services, and tuition paid at state universities, among other government charges. Estrato 1 and 2 and sometimes 3 are subsidized by the payments made by estrato 4, 5 and 6 and usually get more benefits from the state for certain services. The boundaries are not symmetrical and there can be a mix in each neighborhood.

The estrato of a building is decided based on various factors including: conditions of local roads and access to public transportation, quality of electrical service, access to local green spaces, crime (there can be high crime rates even near estrato 6), and access to services such as shopping, average rental price, etc.

It is quite common to move during your grant. Almost everyone moves at some point during their grant, so don't feel bad about it and just be aware of the minimum stay required by your landlord to avoid a monetary penalty.

e. Grant Funds

Grantees will receive their stipend as a direct deposit every month in advance from the disbursing office of the Commission. Although the grant specifies quantities in U.S. dollars, the grantees will receive the maintenance allowance, stipend, per diem and any other money in Colombian pesos. Currency conversion is calculated according to the living cost in Colombia, previously arranged by the Commission, the Colombian government and the universities.

f. Filing taxes

If you don't know how to report your grant to the IRS, take a look at the official word on how to report you Fulbright grant in this link: www.irs.gov/individuals/international-taxpayers/fulbright-grants

III. Living in Colombia

a. Communications – Phone and Internet Service

Staying in contact with family, friends and colleagues in the U.S. during your stay in Colombia is much easier than it used to be. Email and Skype are probably the easiest and cheapest ways to communicate. Traditional phone service is very good, although international rates are still quite expensive.

The following Internet providers are the most used in Colombia:



UNE
www.une.com.co



CLARO
www.claro.com.co



EPM
www.epm.com.co



MOVISTAR
www.movistar.com.co



ETB
www.etb.com

You can use your American cell phone in Colombia. The phone must be unlocked before arriving in Colombia. Please be aware that some phones such as pre-iPhone 5, may not work outside of the US. Additionally, there is a law in Colombia that requires that a phone purchased/used outside Colombia be registered. Once you arrive in Colombia, you must register your phone. Some U.S. grantees have had their phones blocked after 3 months because they didn't register it. Others have had success in registering their phones. If you aren't able to register your phone, you can purchase a phone in Colombia. The purchase is worth it as it will be registered with your Cédula de Extranjería, but it can be pricey. It is recommended to purchase a phone for no more than 300,000 (100 dollars in 2018). This will get you a good smartphone and you can download some apps, but you probably won't get too much storage space.

To get a Colombian SIM card, go to a phone company such as Claro, Tigo or Movistar and bring your passport and about 4.000 COP to purchase a SIM card and get a Colombian number. Once you get your phone number, you will have the option of opening up a contract with the company (having a pospago plan) or just paying monthly and choosing the package you want on your phone (having a prepago plan). Most U.S. grantees use the prepago option. To do this, you charge money to your phone (do a recargo) by going to a stationary store (papelería), OXXO store (looks like a convenience store) or any place that has the recargo signs with the popular phone companies: Claro, Tigo, Movistar, etc. Go to the cashier and say you came to do a recargo. They will ask you for your phone number (double check that it is correct!) and you will pay them. Verify that you received a text message saying the recargo was successful. Once you have charged your phone with money, you will be ready to activate the package you want. Some packages include minutes and data (Paquete todo incluido) and are others are just a data package (Paquete datos). Most recargo packages will be about 38.000-42.000 COP a month.

If you do decide to do a pospago plan you will need to have a Colombian co-sign the contract for you. Phone stores will not give pospago plans to anyone with a cédula de extranjería or a foreign passport. Any future changes you make to your plan or issues you have (like getting your phone stolen) will mean that the Colombian person who signed for you has to go in with you to deal with the issue.

Many Colombians use Whatsapp, which allows you to call and text people in the country with ease. This will also be a good way to keep in touch with family members as well. Of course, you can also use Skype using a good WiFi source. To add a Colombian phone number to Whatsapp, add +57 to the front of the number.

b. How do you make a phone call in Colombia?

There are two types of phone numbers used in Colombia: cell phone numbers and landlines (teléfonos fijos). To call a landline starting with (018000), you must call from a landline phone. For the other company phones that start with the area codes below, you can place a call from your cell phone by first finding the area city code of the number you want to dial. For example phone numbers in Bogota start with (031). So if you wanted to call Avianca, you'd dial (031) 401-3434. Here is a list of the area codes in Colombia:



City	Area Code
Armenia	036
Barranquilla	035
Bogotá	031
Bucaramanga	037
Buenaventura	03222
Cali	032
Cartagena	035
Cúcuta	037
Ibagué	038
Manizales	036
Medellín	034
Neiva	038
Palmira	032
Pasto	0327
Pereira	036
Santa Marta	035
Soledad	03831
Villavicencio	038

If calling from a landline, you'd dial (01 800). So, if you see find numbers that start with (01 800), know that they can only be called from a landline.

Activating a Claro plan on your cell phone:

1. Dial *611#
2. Choose the right plan you want and follow the prompts.

Speaking to a Claro representative on your cell phone:

- 1) Dial *611
- 2) Dial 1, 1, 6, 1, 9 (wait for prompt after each number).

c. Navigating your city

Become familiar with the layout of your city. Learn which areas to avoid, where people go to have fun, and how people get around. There is a lot written on Colombia online, so google your heart out! Be aware that cars have the right of way here in Colombia, so be careful while crossing the street.

Learn the different types of roads:

Carrera: avenue

Avenida Carrera: like a big boulevard

Calle: street

Diagonal: an avenue going diagonally

Transversal: an avenue going from east to west

There are Carreras (Avenues) and Calles (Streets), which run perpendicular to one another with a few exceptions. Check this website for more information on how to interpret addresses:

<https://medellinliving.com/how-to-locate-street-addresses-in-colombia/>

Here is an excerpt from a website on roads in Bogota (will also apply elsewhere):

<http://www.culturarecreacionydeporte.gov.co/es/bogotanitos/bogodatos/avenidas-calles-y-carreras-en-bogota>

“Las Carreras van paralelas a las montañas de sur a norte y se pueden encontrar con abreviaturas como “Cra”, “K” y “Kra”. Las Calles van del este al oeste y atraviesan las Carreras verticalmente. La abreviación de calle es “Cl”, “Cl”, ó “C”. Además de las carreras y calles tenemos las “Diagonales” y las “Transversales”. Las diagonales con las calles que están trazadas de manera tal, que no respetan la cuadrícula normal del trazado urbano. Avanzan con una recta formando cierta inclinación. Las diagonales van del este al oeste, como las calles. Las transversales van como las carreras, de sur a norte. Las avenidas van paralelas, diagonales o perpendiculares a las calles; son calles principales y en general, más anchas que las otras. Por ejemplo: Calle 42 # 15-34. Esto significa que la casa está situada en la calle 42, a 34 metros de distancia de la esquina de la carrera 15 hacia la carrera 16.”

Honestly, Google maps will be your best friend! Just be careful about using it for public transport as it doesn't always give you the fastest route. You may need to consult a different app like Waze or ask some locals.

d. Food

All of Colombia's major cities have modern, well-stocked supermarkets. Some specialty shops also stock imported foods, although the selection will not be as wide as the one in the U.S.

The supermarkets have abundant fresh products, especially tropical fruits, available year-round. Neighborhood stores, “tiendas”, and typical farmers' markets are also common.

You can call restaurants to see if they do delivery (domicilio) or order online through domicilios.com or rappi.com. If ordering online, you choose your payment option at check out. Cash is efectivo. And Card is tarjeta. If you want to pay with your Pay Card or your American credit card, choose tarjeta and the delivery person will bring a datafono, a device to process payments with debit/credit cards.

Prepared or processed foods are not that common and generally more expensive in Colombia. Meals are generally prepared at home, or else eaten in restaurants. Though in Bogotá and a few other major cities the water is fine to drink (Medellín, Cali, Bucaramanga), as a simple precaution, it is recommended to drink bottled mineral water, to wash products well, and to peel vegetables and fruit. It is not recommended to consume food sold by street vendors.

e. Transportation and travel

Grantees should plan to use taxis and public transportation for getting around. Grantees should avoid hailing cabs on the street at all costs, day or night. Fulbright recommends calling for a cab.

For smartphones, there are also apps like Tappsi, Easy Taxy, Taxis Libres or Uber (this last one is slightly more expensive and requires payment with a credit card or cash). When driving in a taxi, the meter will not tell you the exact cost of your trip. The number on the taximeter, *taxímetro*, is a number that corresponds to a monetary amount shown on a yellow chart that ALL taxis will have hanging on the back of the front-passenger's seat. It has happened in the past that a taxi driver might try to over-charge a foreigner. An additional rate is added during weekends and at night. It is probable that taxis change taximeters, so you will be able to find tablets in the taxis to type your destination, see the cost of the travel and qualify the service.

Buses should generally be used with caution. In Bogotá, it is recommended that grantees stick to the Transmilenio and buses from the Integrated Transportation System, *Sistema Integrado de Transporte (SITP)* and avoid other buses as they sometimes work in a less organized way. Theft is common on public transportation. In Medellín, the grantee can use the Metro as a reliable means of transportation. Cali has implemented a similar transportation system to the Transmilenio in Bogotá, called MIO, and Barranquilla has Transmetro, which are also considered reliable. Moovit is the best app for navigating SITP and Transmilenio in Bogota. In all the cities, regular buses work but in a less organized way with no defined bus stops. In many cities, especially if they are small, one can find *mototaxis* which are motorbikes that serves as taxis. These are less reliable and more dangerous as they do not belong to any transport association and there is no guarantee about who the driver is. Mototaxis should be avoided if there are other transportation options.

What is Pico y Placa?

In several cities there is an anti-congestion system called Pico y Placa which prohibits certain drivers from using their vehicles on certain days. The days on which a vehicle cannot be driven depends on the license plate number.

What is the Ciclovía?

A Ciclovía can either be a permanent bike path or the closing of certain streets to automobiles for cyclists and pedestrians. Each Sunday and public holiday from 7 am until 2 pm certain main streets of Bogotá, Cali, Medellín, and other municipalities are blocked off to cars for runners, skaters, and cyclists. The inspiration for Ciclovías is credited to Bogotá and the events have taken place since December 1974. In Bogotá, permanently designated bikeways are also known as *ciclorutas*, while streets temporarily closed for that purpose are called Ciclovías.

Here's a map (www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/colombia) of green, orange, and red zones in Colombia. The vast majority of Colombia is safe to travel in. Given that Fulbright must clear travel within Colombia for security reasons, specific recommendations will be made on inter-municipality travel or travel between departments on a case-by-case basis. Due to both security concerns and road conditions, air travel is generally preferred. In the past, grantees have found good fares with a less known company operating in Colombia, "Viva Air" (www.vivaair.com/co), it is the equivalent of Spirit; be aware that they have a reputation for canceling their flights last-minute and having long delays, but some U.S. Grantees haven't had any issues with them. Satena and Avianca are other popular airlines with more reliable service. It is highly recommended to sign up for Avianca's *lifemiles* program! It is so easy to get free flights with your miles if you travel a lot. Occasionally, the flight search engines Despegar and Easyfly can also unearth good rates.

There is so much to see in Colombia! Each region is different in terms of culture and sights, but you will also find diversity in terms of geography and plant life. Colombia has it all: mountains, desert, tropical forest, the Pacific Ocean, and the Caribbean Sea. Here are some examples of must see places: The Amazon (fly to Leticia), La Guajira, Salento and the coffee region, Jardin (waterfall rappelling, etc), Barranquilla (for the Carnival in February), Parque

Tayrona, Ciudad Perdida, San Andres, Palomino, San Augustin, the list goes on and on. Check out the Colombian government's Official Travel Guide to Colombia (www.colombia.travel/en) . Also, if time allows, visit your fellow Fulbrighters, you will surely be able to find a couch or hammock to sleep on.

f. Cost of living

Compared to the U.S., Colombia is a cheaper country to live in with the exception of cities like Bogotá and Cartagena.

In any Colombian big city, life can be quite inexpensive or very costly depending on the lifestyle of the grantee. The good news is that grantees generally are not affected by what expats generally find so costly in Colombia – vehicles, gasoline and private secondary education.

The cost of living in Colombia also varies by region. Cartagena is generally in about the same price range as Bogota, while all other regional cities are less expensive.

There is no official source of information regarding the cost of things in Colombia. The following link presents price ranges in different Colombian cities, which will give you a rough idea of what the peso will buy visit www.costedelavida.com/colombia/index.html

The accuracy of this site may vary.

g. Electricity

Electrical voltage in big cities and most areas of Bogotá is 110-120 volts. Flat prongs are used throughout the country. Power outages are frequent in Colombia, especially during rainstorms. It is also a good idea to keep a flashlight, candles and matches in an easily accessible place in the apartment in case of loss of power.

h. Mailing address and postal services

Grantees in Colombia are welcome to use Fulbright's address for receiving regular mail at the Commission during their grant period. Mail should be addressed to:

Grantee's Name
Fulbright Colombia
Calle 37 No. 15-73
Bogotá, Colombia
South America

Colombia's national mail service is "4-72". Using 4-72 will not be as reliable as the U.S. postal service, especially when sending something internationally or packages of value. Deprisa, Servientrega and DHL are reliable and relatively fast in comparison to 4-72. Including your Colombian cell phone number on the package is a good way to make sure someone can get in touch with you in case there is a problem.

Letters from the States will likely take between 2 and 4 weeks to arrive. If the packages are more important or urgent, those sent via FedEx, UPS, and DHL will be more likely to arrive.

i. Tips

In Colombia a 10% tip is expected in restaurants and bars. It is increasingly common for the 10% tip to be already added to the bill, in which case it is not necessary to give an additional tip. Look for a line on the bill that says: voluntary service, "servicio voluntario," which is included and thus appears to not be voluntary. In most cases, the "voluntary" service included in the bill is much less than what would normally be given to waiters in the U.S. Tipping taxi drivers or for personal services is not customary. Porters at the airport or the hotel generally expect about \$5,000 pesos for each bag.

j. Days off and holidays

Your family and friends can visit you. Some U.S. Grantees choose to go home during the Christmas/"Winter" break and others have loved ones who visit them during this time. Your longest break will be the winter break, which may range from the end of November until the end of January. The vacations allotted to you are based on your university's calendar so check with them. If you aren't given an academic calendar, try to search for it on your school's website.

A number of political and religious holidays are generally observed in Colombia by schools and universities, banks, offices, and most stores. Many holidays that fall on a Saturday, Sunday or weekday other than Monday are observed on the following Monday so as to give everyone a "Puente", or 3-day weekend. Please note that the U.S. Embassy is closed on most Colombian and all U.S. national holidays. Fulbright is closed on all Colombian holidays.

New Year's Day 1 January	Ascension 14 May	Virgin Assumption 20 August
Epiphany 8 January	Corpus Christi 4 June	Race Day 15 October
St. Joseph's day 19 March	Sacred Heart 19 June	All Saint's Day 6 November
Holy Week (semana santa) Thursday and Friday, one week in March or April	Saint Peter and Saint Paul 2 July	Cartagena Independence 12 November
Labor Day 1 May	Independence day 20 July	Immaculate Conception 8 December
	Battle of Boyacá 7 August	Christmas Day 25 December

k. Additional information

Many topics related to your day-to-day life in Colombia have been left out of this handbook. Tourist guides, local newspapers and specialized websites on all the major cities are one of the best sources of additional information on restaurants and nightclubs, cultural events, theaters, museums, soccer games, bullfights, race- tracks, tours, excursions, etc.

Much information about Colombia and about the specific city where the grant will be carried out is now available online. These websites are particularly good sources of information:



Tourism in Colombia:

- www.colombia.travel/en
- www.lonelyplanet.com/colombia
- www.museoscolombianos.gov.co



News:

- www.eltiempo.com
- www.elspectador.com
- www.semana.com
- www.lasillavacia.com



Entertainment:

- www.goguiadelocio.com.co
- www.culturarecreacionydeporte.gov.co



IV. Courtesy and customs in Colombia

Colombians are a very friendly and welcoming people. As a country without a very developed tourism industry, and whose security problems have had a chilling effect on international travel, grantees visiting Colombia for the first time will almost certainly be pleasantly surprised with the warm reception they receive. This is especially the case in regional cities and in university settings, where student exchange programs are few.

In general, the inhabitants of colder regions, “tierra fría”, of Colombia are considered more formal, reserved and distant than those in warmer regions, “tierra caliente”, who are considered more open, relaxed and spontaneous. Foreign visitors will be treated with almost impeccable courtesy until a friendship is developed, which is usually on Colombian terms. Once the friendship is established, you basically become a member of the family.

Colombians are also extremely sociable. Privacy and down-time are not as important as they are to people from the U.S. If you are invited to a lunch on a weekend, expect it to be an all-afternoon affair. Likewise, dinner invitations may be for 8 pm, but the meal may not be served until after 10 or 11:00.

a. Social customs

Social relationships in Colombia are conducted according to various rituals that are adhered to at all levels of society. Colombian social customs are more formal and traditional than those in the U.S.

Greetings and farewells are always expected. Hands are shaken, or cheeks kissed in greeting, on almost every occasion with the exception of very informal situations. This is a custom to which most Americans will have to become accustomed. Women also shake hands in professional situations, unless there is an established relationship, in which the greeting is accompanied by a kiss on the cheek. In social situations, women always greet and say goodbye to both men and women with a kiss on the cheek.

In social situations it is expected that every individual in the room will be greeted, even if you have seen the person only a few minutes before. Except in the case of a very large party or reception, upon entering the room or restaurant, you must greet every person present.

It is customary to stop at each small gathering and shake hands or kiss each person present, whether you know him/her personally or not. Likewise, when another guest arrives (or leaves), you can expect to be greeted individually whether the person knows you or not, even by children and adolescents. It is considered extremely bad manners to give a general greeting and to begin a conversation with one or two persons while ignoring the others. In the case of greetings, a simple good morning, “buenos días,” or good afternoon, “buenas tardes,” or good evening, “buenas noches” is usually sufficient. The greeting depends on the time of day, of course.

When leaving, the same form of individual leave-taking with a handshake, a kiss in the case of women, and a thank you and goodbye is expected. When leaving, goodbye “adiós”, see you later, “hasta luego”, or see you tomorrow, “hasta mañana”, are used. Not surprisingly, leaving large groups can be quite time-consuming

For professional meetings, it is essential to make an appointment. It is also advisable to arrange interviews through contacts that are familiar with your research and acquainted with the person being interviewed. The “how and through whom” an interview is arranged can be very important to the substance of an interview. This is where personal contacts previously established become essential.

Be punctual for meetings. In spite of the reputation that Colombians, and Latinos in general, have for being fairly lax about time commitments, business schedules in Colombia are usually taken very seriously by everyone and time is allocated sparingly, with rare exceptions.

Unlike for people from the U.S., religion and politics are not taboo subjects for Colombians. In fact, politics is a favorite topic, so come prepared for intense discussions about Colombian politics, the internal conflict, U.S. foreign policy, the U.S President and Plan Colombia. Personal and family issues can also be approached and discussed, but usually not during the first meeting.

b. Machismo

Though there is a significant degree of machismo in Colombia, slowly but surely homosexuality is becoming more accepted throughout the country, especially in the larger metropolitan areas. It is, however, much more likely that the LGBT community maintains less public openness in regards to their orientation and relationships.

American women may find the machismo of Colombian men disconcerting at first. Some men in the street enjoy staring quite frankly at young women, making suggestive comments as they walk by, offering cat-calls, “piropos”, or addressing them in an extremely familiar way. Many Colombian women are not usually bothered by this, and may even be flattered by the attention, depending on who is making the comments. Foreign women, who usually have a rather different take on this, are advised to not be confrontational, and to simply ignore such behavior.

c. Living with a family

If you are going to live with a Colombian family, you will be able to learn much more about how Colombians feel about many issues. At the same time, you will have to exercise your patience and flexibility to adapt to their way of life.

Helping with the household chores, punctuality, use of the phone, food consumption, use of the kitchen, laundry, going out, the door key, TV viewing, participation in family events, and receiving visits are some of the matters that should be clarified in order to avoid incorrect assumptions which are liable to cause misunderstandings. The best advice is to try to adjust your behavior to the norms of your host family; in this way, you will be able to enjoy their hospitality without problems.

d. Phrases of courtesy

Living in Colombia will surely improve the Spanish language skills of all grantees. This is a gradual process that will come with time. Nevertheless, in this section we provide a few Spanish language suggestions to get you started in social situations that you may find useful.



Chévere / Bacano

“Cool”, un bacán is a really cool person



Mentiras

“Just kidding”. Sarcasm, you will find, is so imbedded in American English that you will not realize how often you use it. It is far less common in Colombia, and after making a mistake, exaggerating, or saying something sarcastic, most people will reassure you even in the most obvious cases that “...no, mentiras”



Nos vemos / Estamos hablando

They may mean “we’ll be seeing/talking to each other”, but they’re just an empty conversational formality in Colombia and should be taken with a grain of salt. Don’t feel bad if you never see or talk to that person again.



Ocho días / Quince días

One week/Two weeks



Cuadrar

Cuadrar is a common verb meant to arrange a meeting/outing. This is not to be confused with “cuadrarse”, which would mean to “hook-up”.



Rumbear

To go out and have a good time. La rumba is the party (dancing, drinking), which should not be confused with “rumbearse” (to kiss/- make out).



V. Academic life in Colombia

Levels of education

The academic system in Colombia is composed by these levels:



Initial education:

Non-formal nursery programs

1-5

Preschool:

3 levels (one level is compulsory)
Basic Primary Education
Grades 1st to 5th (compulsory)

6-9

Basic Secondary Education:

Grades 6th to 9th (compulsory)

10-11

Middle education:

Degree to complete high school called: "Bachiller"
Technical or academic pathways grades 10th and 11th

Higher education:



Graduate

Doctoral programs "Doctorado" (3 to 5 years)

Masters "Maestría" or 'Magíster' (2 years)

Diplomas "Especialización" (1 year)

The language of instruction in universities: Spanish, some include classes in English
Years of required English instruction in universities: None are required but English proficiency is a graduation requirement for most universities



Undergraduate

Professional level: Bachelor degrees in all areas (4 to 5 years) eg. "Abogado, "Ingeniero Mecánico"
"Licenciado en Educación Básica"

Two Vocational levels:

"Tecnólogo" (3 years)

"Técnico profesional" (2 years)

Academic calendar

There are different options for Primary and Secondary Schools

Calendario A

February to November



Calendario B

August/September to June

Universities use semesters from January to May/June and July/August to December.

Major school holidays/break:

Holy Week
July/August,
Second week of October
Mid-December to mid/late January.

Major exam period(s):

March
May
July
November

Grading system

Since 2009, institutions for Basic and Middle Education are autonomous to set grading scales and evaluation methods as long as they provide equivalences with the 4 point National Scale:



In Higher Education, a 5 points scale is usually used. Equivalency with the U.S. scale:

A = 4.0 - 5.0

C = 3.0 - 3.4

B = 3.5 - 3.9

F = 0.0 - 2.9

*Lowest passing
grade: 3.0*

Higher education facts

- It is a public service that can be provided by the State and by the private sector.
- Types of Higher Education Institutions (IES): Technical Professional Institutes, Technological Institutes, University Institutions, and U-Universities.
- There is a National System of Quality Assurance in place.
- The State guarantees the quality of the educational service through the practice of rigorous inspection and supervision of Higher Education Institutions.
- CONACES and its rooms, organized by fields of knowledge, is the body in charge of studying the compliance with the minimum quality standards and handing in their report to the Ministry of Education in order to grant the Qualified Registry certificate to the Programs.
- There is a National System of Accreditation in which the National Council for Accreditation, created in 1992, participates. It publicly attests to the high quality standards of institutions of higher education and their academic programs.
- All students take examinations administered by ICFES to enter higher education (Pruebas Saber 11) and obtain academic degrees (Pruebas Saber PRO).

Educational authorities and international education resources

National Ministry of Education

www.mineduccion.gov.co

Email: cooperacioninternacional@mineduccion.gov.co

Telephone: (57-1) 307-8079

Governmental body in charge of setting up education policies; planning, regulating, supervising, and controlling educational institutions; and assessing the minimum conditions for the operation of institutions and academic programs and the granting of the corresponding authorizations.

Institute for Educational Funding and Studies Abroad - ICETEX

www.icetex.gov.co

Telephone: (57-1) 417-3535

It promotes enrollment and retention of students in higher education, through educational loans to finance their tuition and maintenance, especially those lacking economic resources.

Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education (National Testing Center)- ICFES

www.icfes.gov.co

Email: contactenos@icfes.gov.co

Telephone: (57-1) 484-1460

It evaluates the Colombian system of education by testing students throughout their studies (3, 5, 7, 9, 11 grades and after they finish a higher education program). It evaluates the results to support the improvement of the Colombian education system.

National Council for Accreditation (CNA)

www.mineducacion.gov.co

Email: cna@cna.gov.co

Telephone: (57-1) 341-1050

COLCIENCIAS

www.colciencias.gov.co

Email: contacto@colciencias.gov.co

Telephone: (57-1) 625-8480 ext. 2081

Colciencias is the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation within the Colombian government and it is responsible for leading activities related to the promotion and the realization of scientific and applied research in Colombia.



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Web References

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)

www.travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html

ASPE

www.sevencorners.com/gov/usdos

US Department of State

www.state.gov

US Embassy in Colombia

co.usembassy.gov/es/

DACN Colombia

www.dacn.mininterior.gov.co/

OCDR Colombia

www.dacn.mininterior.gov.co/ocdr

Community centers and psychological orientation resources for LGBT communities

www.colombiadiversa.org/noticias/conoce-directorio-organizaciones-paque-ofrece-servicio-orientacion-psicologica/

Human rights for LGBT community members in Colombia

www.colombiadiversa.org/ddhh-lgbt/EN/

Senado de Colombia

www.senado.gov.co/historia

Cámara de Representantes de Colombia

www.camara.gov.co/camara

Migración Colombia

<http://www.migracioncolombia.gov.co>

IRS

www.irs.gov

Official Travel Guide to Colombia

www.colombia.travel/en

Fulbright Distinguished Awards in Teaching Program of U.S. Teachers

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Versión	Fecha	Numerales	Descripción de la modificación
1	12-07-2018	Todos	Se crea el documento
2	03-07-2019	Todos	Se actualiza nuevo logo Fulbright por rebranding
3	07-12-2020	Todos	<p>Se actualiza los nombres del Staff de Fulbright Colombia y los datos de contacto.</p> <p>Se actualiza la carta de bienvenida de la Directora Ejecutiva.</p> <p>Se actualizan los números de teléfono y cuenta de correo electrónico de ASPE ASSIST (antes Fulbright ASSIST).</p> <p>Se aclara que la línea de teléfono fijo de la Comisión puede estar restringida de acuerdo a disposiciones de trabajo remoto desde casa.</p> <p>Se actualizan o se corrigen enlaces de: STEP, U.S. Citizens Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory, Cédula de Extranjería - Migración Colombia, Centros Facilitadores de Migración Colombia, Costo de Vida Colombia, Cultura Recreación y Deporte, Embajada de los Estados Unidos de América en Colombia.</p> <p>Se incluye una sección sobre COVID-19.</p> <p>Se aclara que los becarios deben dirigirse a un hospital o centro médico privado en caso de usar el ASPE para reembolso de gastos médicos.</p> <p>Se elimina la no cobertura de pre-existencias médicas.</p> <p>Se recomienda verificar la página de ASPE antes de usar dicho beneficio, con el fin de confirmar las condiciones y cobertura.</p> <p>Se aclara que los becarios deben compartir su información de contacto actualizada en Colombia con la Comisión.</p> <p>Se incluye una sección sobre Fulbright Phone Tree.</p> <p>Se aclara que el registro ante Migración Colombia se hace a través del formulario para solicitud de Cédula de Extranjería.</p> <p>Se aclara que los Fulbright ID se expiden para English Teaching Assistants y U.S. Student Researchers.</p> <p>Se aclara que la cuenta bancaria se abre para English Teaching Assistants y U.S. Student Researchers.</p>



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