

Accompanier Frequently Asked Questions

What are immersions?

Immersions are three-day to three-week experiences that allow students to engage issues of social justice by being immersed with communities locally, domestically, or internationally. Some immersions include opportunities for direct service, and all invite students to hear diverse perspectives that can expand their understanding of critical social and/or environmental issues. Student coordinators plan the experiences, and all UP students are invited to apply for participation at the beginning of each academic year. Participants spend one or two semesters preparing for their immersions through Moreau Center seminars, group meetings, and sometimes fundraising activities. Usually each immersion has one Moreau Center staff person, one Participant Accompanier and two student coordinators.

These programs are markedly different in content and execution from study abroad programs. There are times when groups sleep on the floors of churches, participate in rural home stays, or go several days without showering. These trips invite students to engage the Moreau Center's core commitments of Community, Social Justice, Solidarity, and Reflection which are rooted in Catholic Social Teaching. It's important that our accompaniers be aware of our Center's emphasis on simplicity.

What is the role of an accompanier?

For each immersion we invite a Participant Accompanier to join a Moreau Center staff person as non-student participant, which have distinct roles described below. Due to the schedule and format of our immersions, the accompanier opportunities are limited to exempt employees at this time.

A Moreau Center staff person accompanies each immersion and serves as the University representative and primary support for the student coordinators. Responsibilities include:

- Work together with student coordinators for planning of the immersion, seminars, group meetings, etc.
- Be present at advising meetings, Moreau Center preparation seminars, and group meetings for group development, education, and planning.
- Provide a sounding board for student coordinators.
- Observe group dynamics and interact with students who are struggling as necessary.
- Be fully present to discussions and reflections.
- Intervene in emergencies.
- Handle the finances of the immersion working with student coordinators

The **Participant Accompanier (PA)** is a faculty or staff person who is interested in learning and serving alongside students during the program, but has no formal responsibilities as an advisor or leader. The PA is expected to participate in the program much like the students, though they will naturally bring more mature thought and expertise to group decisions and conversations. This role is designed to promote the mission of the University as it is exhibited in Moreau Center programs, encourage cross-divisional and inter-departmental campus collaboration, provide opportunity for professional development, and foster staff/faculty relationships with students outside of formal contexts. The cost of participation for a PA is fully

covered by the Moreau Center (except for things like passports, visas, immunizations, and personal spending). We ask Participant Accompaniers for the following:

- Attend as many preparation seminars, group meetings and social gatherings as possible (and ask for attendance at a minimum of two seminars/meetings).
- Fully participate in the service, learning, and reflection activities with the group.
- Share community responsibilities like cooking, cleaning, and planning reflections.
- Bring individual expertise, skills, and talents to enrich the group experience.
- Participate in debriefing or reunion activities after returning from the program.

We do not require the following of the PA:

- Participation in fundraising meetings or activities
- Advising students as to immersion content
- Disciplining students or coordinators

Who plans the immersions?

Student leaders are selected and supported by the Moreau Center to plan and execute our immersions. Each immersion works with Tyler Wagner, the Program Manager of Immersions, and/or another Moreau Center staff person who meets regularly with the student coordinators to plan the experience.

What kind of reflection happens?

Reflection is an essential piece of the immersion experience. Immersion content often challenges basic assumptions about the way we live and how we understand ourselves and others. Immersions expose students to difficult social realities and inequalities that exist in our world. We ask that our immersion accompaniers help to provide safe opportunities for students to process and explore how their experience relates to their personal beliefs and values.

Accompaniers are asked to allow their own assumptions, values, and opinions to be challenged and enriched by reflection. They will be asked to participate in daily reflections which may include journaling, discussion, quiet times, or group activities. The primary responsibility for planning reflections is that of the student coordinators. At times the group shares the task of reflection.

How is accompanier participation financed?

The Moreau Center is committed to covering the cost for accompaniers. Expenses are not covered through student fees or fundraising but through other sources. Personal costs such as airport food, souvenirs, passports, immunizations, visas, and toiletries are the responsibility of the accompanier.

We believe immersions provide an important connection between students, faculty, and staff. These programs allow learning to go outside the boundaries of the classroom and provide opportunities for students to grow comfortable with professional staff at the university. We also see the immersions as important training for staff and faculty in facilitating groups and meeting students' developmental needs in a more intensive way. We encourage you to share these rationales when making requests to your office or department.

How is it best to arrange my time away from the university?

It is up to you and your supervisor or department head to decide how your time on the immersion is arranged. Some offices are willing to count this time as conference/professional development.

What is the selection process for accompaniers? What are your criteria?

We look for staff and faculty who can integrate professional experience or academic interest with attentiveness to student needs. Our best accompaniers are those who listen well, create safe spaces for student development, and are flexible and open to new experiences. Accompaniers can assist with fundraisers by offering their supportive presence and encouraging colleagues to participate in opportunities.

To best assess if a staff or faculty member is a good fit for one of our programs, we ask that you fill out an Accompanier Application form (please contact Laurie Laird at laird@up.edu). All applicants must have the approval from their Dean and the Provost or the Vice President for their division. Interested candidates meet with Moreau Center staff. We seek feedback from the student coordinators about prospective accompaniers for their immersion. Once we've considered staff and student input, we extend offers for participation. This process is designed to assist both you and the Moreau Center in discerning whether our programs are a good fit for you.

What is the time commitment?

We have consistently found that the more time an accompanier spends with the student group before the program, the more meaningful their experience is on the immersion. We ask accompaniers to attend at least two seminars, group meetings, or social gatherings with the group. Most meetings/seminars take place on Fridays from 4-6pm. For Fall Break Immersions, there is usually just one Friday afternoon intensive from 4-6pm. We ask that the accompaniers plan to attend the entire intensive.

If you have further questions or comments and to request the application form, please contact Laurie Laird at laird@up.edu or x8559.