



Obtaining Academic Credit with Cross-Cultural Solutions

Organizational Information

Cross-Cultural Solutions (CCS) is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit, non-governmental organization that employs volunteer humanitarian action to empower local communities, foster cultural exchange, contribute grassroots solutions to global challenges, and catalyze experiential learning.

We have been profiled in more than 500 news outlets, including *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Travel + Leisure*, *The Today Show*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *CNN*, and *the ABC Nightly News*.

Steven Rosenthal founded CCS in 1995 and serves as its Executive Director. We have been operating international volunteer programs for over ten years, with over 4,000 volunteers participating each year. CCS has a worldwide staff of over 250 people in 12 countries, with administrative offices located in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. In the UK, CCS is a Registered Charity (No. 1106741) and a Registered Company Limited by Guarantee (No. 4991010). In Canada, CCS is a registered non-profit corporation (Federal Corporation No. 445810-9).

Our Mission, Vision, and Values

Our Vision is of a world where people value cultures different from their own, are aware of global issues, and are empowered to effect positive change.

Our Mission is to operate volunteer programs around the world in partnership with sustainable community initiatives, bringing people together to work side-by-side while sharing perspectives and fostering cultural understanding. We are an international not-for-profit organization with no political or religious affiliations.

Our Values are:

- **Shared Humanity**
When people of different cultures have an opportunity to connect, there comes an understanding of our shared humanity.
- **Respect**
We accept, appreciate and respect that people know and understand what is appropriate for their own communities.
- **Integrity**
We commit to ensuring the safety, flexibility, professionalism, transparency and excellence of our programs.

Learn more about CCS at www.crossculturalsolutions.org

Experiential Learning with CCS

A Unique Educational Opportunity

In accordance with the goals of international volunteerism, CCS is dedicated to cultivating the profound learning that hands-on service and cultural exchange provide, and sharing that learning with others. CCS facilitates programs with the realization that creating and sustaining climates conducive to cross-cultural cooperation are essential for a well-rounded education. Collaboration with grassroots organizations for social change leads to reciprocal rewards for students and host communities alike.

The most authentic way to learn about a country is by living and participating in the culture itself. Students who engage in this experiential education will emerge with a heightened understanding of the community and culture, and broader knowledge of our interconnected world.

CCS allows students to combine experiential learning with their formal academic studies while transforming images and myths into tangible realities and first-hand knowledge. Students have the exceptional opportunity to undertake a holistic exploration of the community in which they are living.

CCS programs, although based in the fields of education, health, and social services, are interdisciplinary by nature. For instance, programs may involve issues relating to history, religion, the arts, anthropology, language, political systems, economy, development, human rights, psychology, the environment, and beyond. In light of this, it is appropriate for students from a variety of disciplines to participate in CCS programs.

Programs

CCS international volunteer programs combine hands-on service with cultural learning opportunities. Currently, programs are offered in Brazil, China, Costa Rica, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Morocco, Peru, Russia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Thailand. Since 1995, CCS has sent over 20,000 participants overseas. Our programs are highly successful for experiential learning, and our volunteers range from college and university students who want to earn academic credit toward a degree, to seasoned professionals who want to gain valuable work experience.

Volunteer Abroad: CCS' flagship program that features our unique Program Design:

- A volunteer placement with one of our Partner Programs working on a locally-driven community initiative
- Cultural & Learning Activities, which includes language instruction, guest speakers, excursions and other cultural enrichment activities
- Free time for the volunteer to engage in activities that meet his/her specific needs and interests

Intern Abroad: The ideal program for those who have specific learning goals. Interns benefit from the same Program Design that our Volunteer Abroad program offers. However, additional benefits include:

- An intern placement that is guaranteed to fall into the chosen field of study—education, health or social services
- An Intern Supervisor who will monitor the Intern's learning goals and progress through the use of a critically reflective Intern Journal and individual weekly meetings
- A written or oral final project, presented to the Intern Supervisor at the end of the program
- A full Record of Service after completion of the program, detailing the total hours spent at the intern placement as well as hours engaged in cultural education activities

The Academic Program Design

Resources for Program Participants

CCS offers a spectrum of support services to program participants. Our U.S. staff facilitates the program in coordination with its in-country offices and partners. Each host country maintains a full staff of development and education professionals with an average of 15-20 years experience amongst them. The broad network of support—from U.S. headquarters to CCS in-country staff to our Partner Programs, all local, sustainable community initiatives—helps to ensure that students reap the full benefits of participation in their program.

The Learning Experience

CCS' Program Design is the foundation of the learning experience; however, it is crucial to remember that the cross-cultural experience begins before departure and continues long after the program. For students to fully attain learning objectives and personal goals, it is important to consider the multiple facets of the experience.

- **Program Preparation**
Prior to program departure, participants receive a Participant Handbook. This literature acquaints participants with the culture in which they will immerse themselves. CCS also provides a resource list which offers a foundation for further studies. Preliminary research will greatly enhance both the academic and the personal aspects of the learning experience. CCS always advises volunteers to engage in an appropriate level of language training before departure. Although this is not necessary, being familiar with the local language can only enhance the experience.
- **In-Country Orientation**
Upon arrival, volunteers will participate in an extensive orientation designed to help deepen their understanding of the local culture and customs. Volunteers will be introduced to CCS in-country staff members who play key roles in facilitating the learning experience. Placements are always tailored to suit volunteer's goals and interests, within the framework of the dynamic needs of the host community.
- **Hands-on Service & Cultural Exchange**
The CCS program impacts education in a myriad of ways. Cooperative endeavors offer the opportunity to establish meaningful relationships with project staff and local people. The hands-on service results in continual cultural exchange that contributes to cross-cultural competency in immeasurable ways. The program challenges participants to use their knowledge and imagination in innovative ways to effect positive change for the local community and gain understanding of the intricacies of our global community.
- **Feedback Meetings**
CCS staff members facilitate frequent feedback meetings and group discussions to allow participants and professionals to share knowledge, observations, and insights with one another. Ongoing dialogues allow participants to express their ideas and broaden their learning.
- **Writing**
CCS considers writing to be an essential element of the academic program. CCS encourages writing as a means of reflection that can serve to deepen learning. Writing throughout the program is also useful because it will help participants later when creating the final report for an academic institution.
- **Guest Lecturers**
In addition to learning from in-country staff at the home base, CCS also invites guest lecturers to speak on topics that are relevant to issues affecting the community in which the volunteer is working. Because CCS' Country Directors are local experts in their field, they have a wide range of contacts who can address areas of interest to the volunteers.
- **Post-Program**
The impact of the CCS experience resounds far beyond the borders of program participation. Our participants often find that their experiences exceed their original expectations and offer new possibilities. One of the goals of CCS is that participants share their experience with others.