

Dear Mexico Bound:

Please read everything here very carefully and ask me (Professor Haber) questions about anything that is not clear to you. Parts of this I will need you to print, sign and return to me. I suggest that you also print out the travel instructions and take them with you in route to Mexico.

I begin with a few requests:

- 1) Travel information. Most or all of you will be flying. Once you get a travel itinerary, email it to me. Students are responsible for arranging and paying for their own transportation to Pátzcuaro. I regularly assist students to form small travel groups, it is better than flying alone, especially if you are new to Spanish and/or Mexico. Everyone will receive a visa when passing through Mexican immigration. **Hold on to it!** You will need to turn it back in to the authorities when you leave the country.
- 2) Students have the option of living with a Mexican family during our stay in Pátzcuaro. To assist me in matching you to a family, I will ask you to answer the following questions:
 - a. Do you want to live in a big family with lots of kids or do you prefer not to live with children?
 - b. How important is privacy? Would you really prefer a cottage the back of a house? The advantage: privacy. Disadvantage: not as close a relationship to your family.
 - c. Are you a vegetarian?
 - d. How important is it for you to live close to the school? The closest houses are five minutes away from the school; the furthest away are about a 30 minute walk or 15 minutes on public transportation (the program partially subsidizes those who have to take public transpo).
 - e. Someone in the house that speaks English.
 - f. Socio-economic class of your home stay. I have families who are upper middle class; middle class; working class; low income. I will be happy to illustrate this for you in our meeting so you will get a feel for what this will mean in real life.

A note on homestays. Homestays are valuable experiences. They provide you a key into Mexican culture. It is also nice to have someone else doing the cooking, etc. while you are busy with school. However, they are optional. It is conceivable that someone or a group of students could rent a house for cheaper. If you are pressed for cash, and want to explore this possibility, let me know. It would be your ultimate responsibility to get this together, but I would be happy to help.

- 3) Money: Everyone must pay me a total of \$1553.50. As explained on the program description, this covers home stays (787.50), language classes (366), and program fees (400). If you have already paid the \$500 deposit this means that you have an outstanding balance of \$1053.50. Please pay at Griz Central (check, cash, credit card, etc.). Any questions on this: ask me. Please have the total paid by April 1 or talk to me and let me know when I can expect it to be in.
- 4) Emergency Contact Information. Please ***email me*** your contact in the United States in case of emergency ***in addition to*** filling it out on the form below. Also, on the medical form below, be sure to inform me regarding any medical situation (allergies, conditions, etc.) that I should know about. I will keep this information private, it will only go between you, me, and if needed, a health care professional.
- 5) I will need signed copies of the three forms to fill out at the bottom of this communication. Please bring them to our next get together, mail them to me at work, slip them into my mailbox at work, or hand them to me in my office. Mailing address:

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Dept. of Political Science
University of Montana
Missoula, Mt. 59812

What I need from you before you leave: I need everyone to have registered for summer school and paid tuition BEFORE arriving to Mexico. This is one Spanish class and the two political science classes. If you have problems, talk to me.

Make sure you bring your insurance card/information with you to Mexico.

Table of Contents for what follows:

How to get to Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, México

What to bring to Mexico

Forms to fill out

HOW TO GET TO PÁTZCUARO, MICHOACAN, MEXICO

Here be hotel/hostel and ground transportation information. I suggest that everyone print this out and keep it handy. You might also want to leave a copy with a trusted person here in the states that you could call in case of emergency.

To the best of my knowledge, everyone is flying into either Guadalajara or Morelia. If anybody needs directions from Mexico City, Morelia or somewhere else, let me know.

I will end with directions from the Pátzcuaro bus station to the Acuña family. The Acuña family runs a guesthouse. They will charge you \$22.50 a person per day to sleep and eat there. If you prefer to find a hotel in Pátzcuaro, no problem - just be to the Acuña house by 10:00am on Monday May 28. Paco Aguilar, the director of the language school, and I will offer a tour around the lake on Sunday May 27. Monday morning we will place you in your family stays. Monday afternoon we start classes.

Guadalajara

Where to stay in Guadalajara: I am going to suggest that folks stay at the youth hostel. Hostels are kind of cool, you can meet other student types, they are cheap (about 15 dollars a night per person), and this one is nice. You can and should make your reservation in advance from the United States. It is easy to do on this web site:

<http://www.hostelguadalajara.com/>

For folks that would like a bit more luxury, I would recommend (with some hesitation) the Hotel Francés. It is the oldest hotel in Guadalajara and very styling. The phone is 613-11-90. Address is Maestranza 35. A single or double is somewhere around 60 dollars. It is right down the block from the hostel. My hesitation comes from the fact that it can be very noisy, especially on weekend nights, with live music on the downstairs floor and a disco next door that stays awake until sunrise. But, then, most of you are quite young, and you may enjoy this more than an old man like me.

If you come in late or otherwise just want to get close to the bus station in Guadalajara, there is a hotel right across the street called Serena. You can walk right across the street to the bus station. Not much charm, but its ok. 37 dollars for a single in 2010. All the taxi drivers are going to know where it is.

Where to eat in Guadalajara: There are of course 43,222 restaurants in Guadalajara. However, I am going to suggest one of my favorites that is also very centrally located: Restaurant La Chata at Corona 126, specialty of the house is Platillo Jalisciense. You will not leave hungry or broke. Sometimes there is a long line.

There is also the Café Madrid at Juárez Madrid, near corner of Corona. Good, cheap food. Excellent coffee.

Ground transportation from Guadalajara Airport. Take a taxi. Either right inside the exit door on the extreme left side is a place that sells tickets for the taxis. Go to the window and tell them where you are going. They should know right off where both the Hotel Frances and the Hostel Guadalajara Centro is located. If not, give them the address. The hostel is located at Maestranza #147 in Colonia Centro. It costs about 30 dollars to get downtown and the cost to go directly from the airport to the bus station (if you want to skip staying the night in Guadalajara) is about 21 dollars. There is also a local bus that goes to the bus station if you want the challenge of figuring this out and want to save some cash.

**Taxi drivers are notorious for having deals with hotels where they take guests. So, they may tell you all kinds of things bad about where you are going to stay and why you should stay at the hotel of their choice. My advice: don't listen to them.

Getting to the bus station and what to do once you get there. Both the hotel and the hostel should be able to help you figure out how to get to the bus station, which is called la central de autobuses. You can take a taxi or some form of public transportation. Once you get there, you are going to need to get to Pátzcuaro, Michoacan.

Bus schedules change, but here was the situation in 2010:

1. Option one is getting a direct bus from Guadalajara to Pátzcuaro. There are not very many of these. I took the 8:30am on the bus company called La Linea. Travel time about 4.5 hours. Cost was 23 dollars in 2010. Primera Plus also has a direct bus to Patzcuaro. Check out options on <http://www.differentworld.com/mexico/buses.htm> No doubt there are other sites as well to get info, plus they should have helpful info at the hostel and also have computers there.

Location of bus line offices: Primera Plus is the very first one you see as you enter the terminals. La Linea is in the third set of offices. Taxi drivers should be able to help you find them.

2. Option two is going to Morelia first and then catching a second bus separate bus (probably on another bus line). Guadalajara to Morelia is 3.5 hours and cost 23 dollars. Many bus lines go there, including La Linea and Primera Plus. Once in Morelia, catch a bus to Pátzcuaro. It takes about an hour and is cheap. Last bus out of Morelia for Pátzcuaro in 2008 was 9pm. You might be able to find a later one but don't count on it.

So, travel time on the two options is about the same, a bit faster taking the direct because you don't have to do the transfer.

**If it were me, I would do it this way: Arrive into Guadalajara on Thursday May 26, hang out there Thursday and Friday, take the Saturday early morning bus direct to Pátzcuaro on Saturday, have lunch at the Acuña house, hang around Pátzcuaro for the rest of the say on Saturday, go on the tour with Pablo y Paco on Sunday. Bottom line is that you need to get a hold of me when in Guadalajara and let me know when to expect you at the Acuna house so that they will be there and ready to let you in, feed you, etc. If the 8:30 La Linea bus is still operating, then you would arrive at about 1:00 and I can give a heads up to the Acuña house so they will prepare comida (lunch) for you. If you don't give heads up, they might or might not prepare that meal for you.

Option 3: I know some reliable drivers who will come pick people up at the airport and transport you to Pátzcuaro. Cost is about US\$200. Not bad if there are four of you. Let me know if you are interested in this option and I will help you out.

Morelia

Folks coming into Morelia are likely going to go directly to Pátzcuaro, so I will not include information on lodging. If this is not the case for you, and you want to spend the night in Morelia on the way in, let me know and I will get you some info.

Getting to Pátzcuaro from Morelia airport. There are two ways to do this. The first way has two stages. First, you will need to take a taxi to the bus station. Buy your ticket inside the airport. There should be clear signage. I have a friend that picks me up when I come in, so I don't remember the price, but it is probably about 20 dollars. It's a pretty long drive. At the bus station, walk in the main doors and before long you will see a number of different companies with ticket counters. A number of them go to Pátzcuaro. It is only an hour drive and the busses leave frequently. Galeana is one bus line that works well. You can also walk up to any of the ticket counters and ask who goes to Pátzcuaro. Again, it is only an hour drive, so no need to be too picky.

The other way is to take a taxi all the way to Pátzcuaro. Cost is about 40 dollars if you arrange it advance with Nacho who can be contacted at transporte_nacho@hotmail.com. It can be much more expensive if you are paying directly from the Morelia airport. I can help people to arrange this if you would like or you can practice your Spanish directly with him (tell him Pablo sent you). Especially if there is more than one of you that can split the cost this is an easier way to do things. Taxis will usually allow up to four people with their stuff to cram in. Cost stays the same. You can have the taxi driver drop you off at the Acuña house if you are staying there.

From Pátzcuaro bus station to the Acuña house and downtown: It's not very far, and the adventuresome can take a local bus or walk. But, taxi rides are quite cheap (about 25 pesos, or two dollars). The address for the Acuña house is Calle Dr. Coss #36. You can tell the taxi driver that it is the street of Los Once Patios. He will know what that is. When you get there, just knock on the door. The house is right next to the dentist office that has the sign, Dr. Eliseo Acuña. The living quarters is right next door (it's a big gold colored door). The mother of the house is named Clotilde. The charge in 2008 was 18 dollars a night without food and 20 dollars with food. With food is the better deal.

Directions to CELEP, the language school: In case you want to see where the real work will be happening....

For those of you staying at the Acuña household, directions to the language school are real easy. You just walk down the hill from the house and take the first left, which is Navarete. Walk down this street one long block, cross the street and continue walking on the left side of the street. The school is about half way down the block, there is a sign in front of it. Here is the phone number and email info for the school.

CELEP Centro de Lenguas y Ecoturismo, A.C.

Tel: (434) 2 47 64

Fax: 2 33 68 or 2 08 52

e-mail: celepatz@prodigy.net.mx

Communications: The CELEP phone can be used as an emergency phone number so feel free to give it to parents, husbands/wives, boyfriends/girlfriends, etc. Please do remember that this is for emergencies, not chit chat. Some families will have phones you can use, some will not. Easiest and most common form of communication is cell phones and email. Lots of internet cafes in Pátzcuaro. Phone calls are cheapest if your people in the U.S. call you in Mexico. If you have a phone at your house, they can call you there. If not, perhaps one of your friends in the program will have a house with a phone that you could use to receive a couple calls. Or, you may use the phone at my house.

****In recent years, many US based cell phone companies, including Verizon, have created a Mexico phone plan option. You can do it for however long you want. In 2011, it was only an extra 15.00 or 20.00 a month.**

Also, feel free to give my phone number to your loved ones as a contact number. My cell phone number is (406) 214-2334. My land line number in Mexico will probably be the same as past years, which is dialing from the U.S., 011 52 434 342 6322. 011 is international. 52 is the country code. 434 is the area code and then 342-6322 is the seven digit number. When you are in Pátzcuaro, you can call me with just the 7 digits.

Other than cell phones, if you are going to want to be phone calling back to the US from Mexico, the best way that I know of to do this is to buy an international calling card before you leave and take it with you to Mexico. Make sure it will work from Mexico. Many places sell them, including Costco. I have used the MCI international calling card (can be purchased at Costco and other places I think). Again, don't forget to activate the card before you leave and learn how to use it (you have to get the toll free number to use in Mexico). Folks who want to call you in Mexico can get one of these phone cards also, it is certainly cheaper than dialing the old fashioned way. Some students bring their cell phones with them but most use them only to text or for emergencies or very short calls because the rates are very high on all the plans that I know about (check with your own carrier for details).

Also, some of the internet cafes have Skype. If you have questions, ask me.

Getting pesos: Buying pesos in U.S. airports is a rip off. Sometimes I will buy 20 or 30 dollars worth just to be safe, so I can pay a taxi and buy a taco if I have to before I can get to a place to change money. But, you can almost always buy pesos with dollars in the Guadalajara airport. There is a money exchange window that is open except late at night and there is an ATM that works 24/7. Do get some pesos at the airport before you head into town. It is also a smart idea to carry maybe 20 dollars with you in small US dominations to use in case there are any problems getting started with pesos at the airport.

Visas: You do not need to get a visa before departure; they will pass out the paperwork while you are on the plane. Important: check the boxes for being a tourist, not a student!! If you check student, they will ask you for special documentation for a student visa, which you will not have, and will cause you a BIG HASSLE. So, fill out the paperwork and say you are coming in as a tourist. Say your base will be Pátzcuaro. Make sure they give you enough days on your visa. The standard they give is 90 or 180 days. Most of you will only need 60, but make sure they do not write in 30. **And, hold on to the visa, do not throw it away!!!**

WHAT TO BRING TO MEXICO

Here are a few ideas meant to be helpful in thinking about what to bring:

Luggage: Backpacks are nice, because they are easy to carry. Personally, I prefer them. We go to the beach and at least one additional overnight fieldtrip. If you bring a suitcase, it's nice if it is easy to carry.

****Passport:** you need one, and it must be valid and up to date. I also strongly suggest that you photocopy your passport and keep it in a safe place in case you lose the original. Most of the time you while in Mexico you will want to keep your passport along with your visa that you get upon entering the country in a safe place. You do not need to carry it around with you except when traveling overnight away from Pátzcuaro.

Spending Money. You can bring traveler's checks or a cash card. I find cash cards to be much easier. Traveler's checks can be a real hassle. You might want to bring a little in traveler's checks, just to be more flexible. Remember: your family stays include at least breakfast and comida (main meal of the day, mid-afternoon). Some families also provide cena (a light dinner), but they are not obligated to. All fieldtrips (basic food, transportation, and accommodations) are covered by the program fee. Amount really varies. Students have told me in the past that a hundred dollars a week (600 dollars if you are just staying the program length) is enough for the prudent. Bring an extra couple hundred if you have it. I have also seen people spend well over a thousand (extra trips to the beach, guitars, buying big presents for the boyfriend back home, etc.). For most students coming into Guadalajara, the biggest required expense will be traveling between Guadalajara and Pátzcuaro. Bus and lodging will be around a hundred dollars for the round trip, plus food.

*Day pack
 Sun glasses
 *Water bottle
 *Spanish Dictionary (small paperback type)
 griz card (can help with some student discounts)
 **mosquito repellent, mosquito medicine if you have sensitive skin and sunscreen (expensive in Mexico)
 Camera If you use non-digital bring film. It is expensive in Mexico.
 Recreational reading. If you are a novel reader, bring a couple of them and we can trade around.

CLOTHS Some students have asked me what I bring, so I send this along in case you find it useful. Questions? Bring them to the meeting.

Basic idea: I bring enough cloths to make it two weeks between washings. Some families will have washing machines or other ways to wash cloths in the house. Most will not, and you will need to wash by hand (possible at all the houses) or take your stuff to a laundry mat. There is a nice one, a bit expensive, right by the school that I use. They wash, dry, and fold.

2-3 pairs of comfortable pants
 Good rain jacket. (It rains a lot in Pátzcuaro)
 Warm clothing (think Missoula in the fall) I bring a sweatshirt and a heavy shirt. People really vary on this, so if you get cold easily, bring more of this stuff. (A winter jacket is not necessary even for cold wimps)
 Lightweight rain pants (if you have them and like them)
 Umbrella (if you like them)
 T shirts
 Two nice short sleeve shirts
 No long sleeve dress shirts
 Underwear and socks
 Comfortable shorts (Some men and women wear shorts in Pátzcuaro, some don't. So, it depends on what you are comfortable with. My only suggestion is that women not wear super short shorts – unless you are really looking for male attention.
 Comfortable lightweight hiking boots or sturdy tennis shoes
 Sandals
 **Bathing suit. All kinds are fine. The beach has a much more liberal dress code than does Pátzcuaro.
 Toiletries

One nice outfit (men, this means nice shirt and pants, women can mean nice top and pants or a skirt)

School materials: Notebooks and pens: bring um or buy them there. There will be textbooks for the poly sci classes. I will announce the titles to you soon. **YOU WILL NEED TO BUY THESE AT THE UM BOOKSTORE, AMAZON.COM OR SOMEWHERE ELSE AND BRING THEM WITH YOU TO MEXICO.** So, if you are ordering by mail, be sure to order well in advance. Spanish materials will be given to you there. Lap top computers are optional. Most students don't bring them.

Gifts for your host family: This is totally optional. I have noticed that families love to receive personal things that remind them of you. Like huckleberry jam or a picture of you (and perhaps your family) in Montana or some silly Griz football thing. You get the idea.

FORMS TO FILL OUT: Please print out and sign the following three forms. Hand them in.

Release from Responsibility and Assumption of Risk And Power to Authorize Medical Treatment

It being my intention to participate in The University of Montana-Missoula course offering titled *Mexico Study Abroad* and it being known and understood by me that said participation shall necessarily involve exposure to risks to my person and my property incident to travel and program activities, I do hereby assume the full responsibility for any such risks and do hereby waive any right to any claim against The University of Montana-Missoula or any of its employees or agents for any injury, loss, damage, accident, delay or expense resulting from any act or omission of any carrier, government, private legal entity, or third person. I also assume sole responsibility for and agree to indemnify The University of Montana-Missoula against any loss due to any financial obligations or liabilities that I may personally incur, or any damages or injury to persons or property that I may cause during the time of my participation in the course.

I further release The University of Montana-Missoula from any claims arising from the aggravation of any physical disability or illness not disclosed in my application and grant the employees of The University of Montana-Missoula full authority to take whatever actions they may consider to be warranted under the circumstances regarding my health and safety, and, at their discretion, to place me in any hospital or in the hands of any local doctor for medical treatment at my own expense, or to transport me by any means of conveyance required at my own expense for medical treatment or in the event of my demise.

I understand that field course activities do carry certain risks. I am in good health and to my knowledge, I do not have any physical problems which would hamper my participation in said activities. I, the undersigned, being cognizant of the hazards of this field trip, assume the risks of same and agree to indemnify and hold harmless The University of Montana-Missoula and its employees against any and all claims for damage on account of any injury to my person or property.

While on this field course, I am personally responsible for my own health insurance.

Wherefore I have subscribed this document on this the ____ day of _____, 20 ____.

Participant Name (Please print and then also sign)

Witness Name (Please print and then also sign)

Emergency Contact Information

Student information:

Social Security No. _____

Last Name _____

First Name _____

Home Address _____ City/State/Zip

Home Telephone _____ Birthdate _____

Blood Type _____

1. Do you have any health conditions (e.g. allergies or chronic conditions) or special circumstances (e.g. religious convictions or legal arrangements) which may affect program participation or that we should know prior to emergency treatment?

No Yes **If yes, please explain, and list any current medications:**

Emergency Contact Information

In case of emergency, who should be notified?

Name _____

Relationship _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip

Day Telephone _____ Message Telephone _____

Statement Regarding the Academic Demands of the Program

I understand that this program has an academic focus. I will be receiving six credits of upper division political science credit and from 3-6 credits of Spanish credit in a six week program. While in-class contact hours and the reading load are both less than they would be if taking these classes in Missoula the pace is nonetheless face paced. Furthermore, I understand that the courses taught in Mexico, both the political science classes and the Spanish classes, are run as seminars. This means, amongst other things, that I will be asked to participate verbally in the classes more than is the norm at the University of Montana. Professor Haber has also explained to me that most students find many interests will vie for my attention in Mexico: time with my family; time with other students in the group; a desire to visit cultural landmarks in the area, from ruins to salsa dance clubs.

Professor Haber has explained to me that there are several strategies that he has observed can help ease the tensions involved in such a situation. First, he has advised me to consider taking some or all of the classes for credit/no credit. He has explained to me that the university allows pass/fail up to 18 credits during my time at the university. However, if I am going to count them towards my major or General Education requirements, there may be restrictions. If I plan to take the classes credit/no credit, I realize that I am responsible for making sure that this would not cause me any difficulties. For example, international business students taking these classes to fulfill their major requirements can not take the political science credits pass/fail, nor can political science majors. I have been advised by Professor Haber that if I have questions about this, I should discuss them with my departmental advisor before leaving on the program. Professor Haber has also stressed that taking a class credit/no credit should not be interpreted to mean that it is ok to “check out” of the class: by this he means stop doing homework, stop coming to class, stop studying for tests. Credit/no credit is meant to take the stress that so often accompanies striving for high letter grades and to allow the student to take classes that they might not otherwise take.

A second strategy is to pick up the copies of the political science texts before leaving for Mexico and to read them through once before the classes begin. He has advised me that students who spend 10-15 hours reading and taking notes on each of the two core texts before arriving in Mexico often find that they are better able to absorb the material when in Mexico and need to spend less time doing so.

The final idea that Professor Haber has mentioned is to plan to stay on in Mexico for a week or two or more after the academic program has finished. This will allow me time to hang around Pátzcuaro, spend time traveling to the beaches or other of the other places in Mexico that I will learn about during the program. Obviously, it will cost me money to do this, and so I should plan ahead.

Signed and dated

Supplement: Observations from the ages

Below is a list of observations that I have been making over the years based on the experience of students in the program.

--Do everything you can to read the required reading before coming to Mexico. If you can not do it all, do some of it. It has proven difficult for some students to get all the reading done and come prepared to discuss the reading in class if you have to do it all in Mexico. It is hard for many students to motivate themselves ahead of time to do the reading, but if you do, you will be happier when in Mexico. This is based on years of observation and student comments to me. If there are particularly difficult readings, prioritize these to get done ahead of time, so that you can re-read while in Mexico. If you would like advice on this, ask me.

--Consider taking the classes for credit/no credit if you do not plan on using these classes to fulfill general education requirements or to count toward your major. There is no shame in taking classes for credit/no credit. All students are allowed to take up to 18 credits this way and have them count toward the 120 total credit requirement. Why do this? For some students it makes life less stressful in Mexico. Questions about this? Ask me or discuss with your academic advisor.

--Pátzcuaro is colder than you think it is going to be. Like fall sometimes, not always like summer. This is because of the altitude – 7100 feet. So, especially if you get cold easily and are uncomfortable when cold, bring enough cloths. This is at the level of sweatshirts and sweaters, not down coats.

--People in Mexico will ask you for money on the street. It is not an assault, it is a question. Students whose primary experience of panhandling is Missoula will notice a different style in Mexico that might take a while to get used to. Questions or concerns? Ask me.

--Eating on the street requires good observation, judgment, and intuition. Be careful! If you have a sensitive stomach, you might want to avoid it all together. We will discuss this as a group, but if you have questions anywhere along the way, ask me. One key thing to remember is that if you are going to eat it raw it must be peeled and if it is cooked it needs to be cooked in clean conditions and cooked well. For example, strawberries are dangerous because you can not peel them and so are taco stands that are not clean. For meat eaters, taco stands are wonderful and I can show you a couple that I have eaten at for years and are reliable.

--The most general and perhaps important observation I have to make has to do with attitude. I have observed over the years that those students who think of Mexico as a different place to figure out, a place that they have to adapt to, do better than students who expect Mexico and Mexicans to adapt to them. Mexico will not adapt to you. Taking responsibility for this adventure and the challenges it presents will make you and those around you happier.

--If possible, fly your entire trip on one airline. It increases the likelihood that your luggage will arrive with you in Mexico rather than get derailed somewhere, which is not fatal (it always shows up, eventually) but a hassle you can live without.

--Travel with a travel buddy. Should things go wrong, it is usually nice to have company. This is especially true for the trip to Mexico. It is less important when traveling back home.

--Study abroad programs such as this one can be emotionally challenging at times. In different ways for different people. Sometimes you might feel lonely. Sometimes you might feel overwhelmed by how different things are and feel stressed because you do not know what to do in particular situations. If you are not feeling well, let me know. Some students are reluctant to tell me that they are not feeling well – emotionally and/or physically – for fear that they will appear weak or I will somehow think less of them. I encourage you to believe that this is not the case. And, I will share with you something I have learned from doing this program for many years: when things get tough or tricky, if students talk to me about it, more often than not, the student goes away feeling better.