

Grand Canyon Semester Program Demands

- Twenty or more students and staff will live together for the duration of the semester. In addition to physical activity, the close proximity of peers and faculty, as well as exposure to unfamiliar built and natural environments requires mental stamina.
- Travel to and from destinations across the Colorado Plateau by van: approximately 4-6 hours of sitting at a time are possible.
- Altitudes will vary from about 1000 feet above sea level in deserts, to more than 7000 feet above sea level in higher mountain country.
- Discomfort may arise for some students due to unfamiliar tasks and environments, unanticipated changes in schedule and travel plans (due to field conditions such as weather). These may be compounded by limited access to phones, computers and, therefore, limited access to family and support groups.
- Days are long, with outdoor experiential programs beginning at sunrise (6 am) and occasionally concluding after sunset (9 pm).
- Students may be expected to wear silly costumes while on the river or during field excursions. These costumes are intended to build community among the group and are not intended to embarrass the students or faculty.
- Students often walk or hike 1 to 3 miles/day, sometimes on steep mountain trails. Service projects include, for example, stuccoing houses, building rail fences, planting trees. This work is rigorous and service projects can fill 6-8 hours a day for 2-3 consecutive days.
- Students will travel as passengers in rubber rafts for several subsequent days in cold, fast moving water up to Class V whitewater (Class 10 on the Grand Canyon Whitewater Scale).
- Climate will vary over the course of the experience from lows at night below freezing to daytime highs of over 90 degrees. Staff will teach students about sun exposure and proper hydration, but students are occasionally in the sun for up to 12 hours a day with limited shade.
- Students have little control over their diet while in the field. Meals are often part of the experience and can be locally grown and organic, fast food eaten while traveling, as well as native foods prepared by families on the reservations, high in protein, fat and starch.
- Students will often be expected to participate in meal preparation and cleanup. Students who are excellent cooks will be asked to contribute to mentoring less accomplished cooks.
- Lodging may include all of the following: college dorms and camping in tents and on open ground. Bathing facilities vary from private showers, shared bathrooms, washing in the river, to no bathing facilities in the field up to ten days at a time. Toilets will range from indoor flush toilets to primitive outhouses to a portable river toilet or “groover”.
- Staff is trained in CPR and Wilderness First Aid (or Wilderness First Response) and although emergency evacuation procedures for an injured participant are in place, some destinations are remote and medical facilities are not readily accessible. Some field locations are a 3+ hour drive from the nearest hospital. Cellular and satellite phones are available during the semester in case of emergency; however, due to the deep canyons they can have intermittent service.