

Alternative Break Domestic Trip Proposal

Spring 2009
St. Bernard's Parish, New Orleans

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Executive Summary

Alternative Break

Alternative break is a student managed organization which endeavors to provide service-learning experiences to the Carnegie Mellon Community. Alternative break accomplishes this goal by planning student trips which involve academic credit, pre-departure educational sessions, experimental service-learning opportunities and outreach sessions to share experiences with the larger campus community. Previous Alternative Break trips include Immigration Studies in the United States and Mexico border region, Hurricane Relief in the Gulf Coast, Poverty Studies in Washington DC, homeless studies in Georgia and Bio-Marine and Terrestrial Studies in Ecuador. For the 2008-2009 Academic year, Alternative Break is planning both domestic and international trips.

Spring 2009 Domestic Program

This proposal details a service-learning trip to St. Bernard's Parish, Louisiana, right outside of New Orleans. Volunteering will be coordinated through The St. Bernard Project, which helps to rebuild houses in the area. The proposed trip dates are March 7 through March 15.

Funding

Alternative Break proposes a trip comprised of 13 participants and 2 trip leaders and 1 advisor. The total expenses for this trip will be \$1000 per person, or \$16000 for 16 people. We will meet this expense largely through a participant fee of \$300 and various fundraising activities, although we anticipate an unmet need of \$6,000. We are requesting your assistance in realizing this amount.

Volunteer Opportunities

Participants will volunteer for one week in and around St. Bernard's Parish, LA, where the St. Bernard Project is located. Volunteers work closely with the staff from St. Bernard Project, as well as the home-owners themselves. While exact activities may vary, participants can expect to build a house, doing anything from applying dry-wall to spackling to installing a floor to painting.

Academic Credit

Once Alternative Break is given word that we may begin formally organizing this trip, we will be in contact with any academic departments that may be interested in sponsoring a 3-unit course to supplement the trip. In the past, students have been asked to produce a reflective piece detailing some aspect of the trip they found interesting or enlightening.

Impact on Participants and Carnegie Mellon

It is very powerful knowing that you did a big part of the work to get a family back into their home. For the people of St. Bernard Parish, they have been living without a true life: they have nowhere to go home to, and are filled with constant worry of what will happen to them. St. Bernard Project helps alleviate much of this worrying, by providing a home, and helping to rebuild their lives. The trip participants will most likely work on the same house for the entire week. This means they will really get to know the story of the family who lives there. Most of the time, they are more than willing to share, and are very grateful to the people who come down to help them. This personal connection will affect deeply those who participate.

On a broader scale, most of the time people don't think about the problems that are going on in our country. Helping people in need in our own country is a great experience. Additionally, New Orleans has a special culture that many people are not exposed to. Living the music in this cultural bubble in the country is something everyone should experience.

As the participants reflect upon their experiences in New Orleans, they will document in order to eventually share this with the campus community.

Domestic Trip Proposal Spring 2009

St. Bernard Project

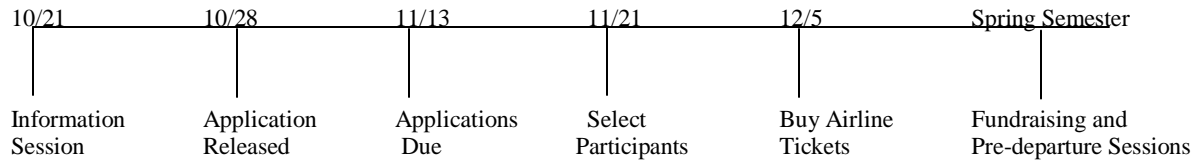
The St. Bernard Project (SBP) is a nonprofit, community-based organization that began rebuilding homes in August 2006 that were damaged by floodwaters from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in St. Bernard Parish, Louisiana. The mission of the St. Bernard Project is to remove barriers for families who wish to move back into their homes in St. Bernard Parish.

The St. Bernard's Project Rebuilding Program rebuilds homes for senior citizens, people with disabilities and families who cannot afford to hire a contractor to rebuild their homes. It takes them about 12 weeks and \$12,000 worth of building supplies to complete a house. They have completed 150 houses and are currently working on 40 more.

Logistical Details and Timeline

Meals and lodging will be provided by Camp Hope, a volunteer facility organized by the New Orleans Area Habitat for Humanity. They provide breakfast and dinner each day, and supplies to make bagged lunches while we are out working. We will be renting three cars for our transportation. These will be picked up/dropped off at the airport. Upon arriving at Camp Hope, we will engage in an Orientation session, to learn about the Parish, the camp and work sites. Alternative Break has set several deadlines in place in order to ensure the progress, quality and affordability and make it a more meaningful experience for both the trip participants and

campus community. We will select participants before Thanksgiving, and they will provide a deposit before winter break. In Spring Semester we will devote our time to fundraising, pre-departure sessions and campus outreach sessions.



After the participants are selected, we will have group meetings. Most of these meetings will occur during the spring semester. We will learn all we can about St. Bernard's Parish's community and how Hurricane Katrina affected the parish and its people. We will also fundraise to support SBP.

Participation

This trip will include 16 individuals. In addition to the 2 trip leaders and 1 graduate student, staff or faculty advisor, Alternative Break will select 13 trip participants through a written application process. We will select participants based on their enthusiasm and heart for helping others.

Pre-Departure Preparation

During the spring semester Alternative Break will prepare trip participants for their experience via weekly pre-departure educational sessions.

These sessions will include finalizing logistical details and educating participants. We will discuss the culture of New Orleans, and the ways the city has changed since the Hurricanes. We will also talk about the emotional repercussions moving back into a ghost town is having on its people.

Finance

Alternative Break will focus on grass-roots fundraising, to be performed by group officers and participants. But, due to the high costs of our trip, we will depend on funding and support from academic and institutional resources. The more assistance we receive, the better and more successful the trip will be.

Expense Summary

	Expense per Person	Expense for Group (16 people)
Camp Hope (includes food and lodging)	\$25/day (8 days) = \$200	\$3,200
Airfare	\$500	\$8,000
Transportation in New Orleans (rent 3 cars)	\$150	\$2,400
Cultural Experiences	\$50	\$800
Miscellaneous	\$100	\$1,600
TOTAL	\$1,000	\$ 16,000

Funding Summary

	Per Person	Group
Grassroots Fundraising	\$100	\$1600
Alternative Break and Community Service Budget	\$200	\$3200
Institutional Sources (your money will be placed in this category)	\$375	\$6000
Student Participation Fee	\$325	\$5200
TOTAL	\$1000	\$16,000

Academic Credit

It is our hope that trip participants will have the chance to earn academic credit once they return. In the past, the Modern Languages Department has offered a 3-unit course, giving the students the chance to fully reflect on their experience and strengthen its impact for them. To receive credit, participants will need to produce a tangible, reflective project describing their cultural experience and lessons learned in New Orleans. This project will help guide students through fully processing the trip and facilitate the incorporation of their experiences into their daily lives.

Volunteer Opportunities

Alternative Break participants will be spending the majority of the time that they are in Louisiana volunteering with the Saint Bernard Project. The trip will focus on rebuilding, both homes and people's lives, to help restore some hope in New Orleans. We will have the opportunity to work directly with the homeowners to help them get a life back, starting at their home. Our efforts will bring them closer to getting the city they have always known and loved back. While participants work on whatever projects they have going at the moment, they will most likely be spackling, installing floors, painting, or various other components that go into putting a family back into their home.

Lodging arrangements are organized through Camp Hope, a housing facility for many volunteers working in New Orleans. After the day of working with St. Bernard Project, participants will

retire to Camp Hope and hear the stories of the other volunteers, from many different organizations. Camp Hope runs by volunteer work, so in addition to helping rebuild homes, each group member will help upkeep Camp Hope through janitorial/building/grounds maintenance related jobs.

St Bernard's Parish (Info from the St. Bernard Project website)

“In August and September 2005, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita ravaged the Gulf Coast region. St. Bernard Parish, a community adjacent to New Orleans' Lower 9th Ward, was inundated with floodwaters averaging 6 to 20 feet in depth for 2-4 weeks. One hundred percent of the Parish's 27,000 homes were rendered officially uninhabitable. Families in St. Bernard Parish lost everything: houses were flooded; possessions were destroyed; tools and methods for livelihoods were ruined. Over 200 residents of the Parish lost their lives as a result of the hurricanes.

Before Katrina in St. Bernard Parish

- Population was 67,000 and the Parish had 27,000 homes and 14,000 businesses
- Unemployment rate was 4%
- Home ownership rate was greater than 70%
- Median family income was \$36K
- Many residents worked as fishermen, in the trades, and at refineries

Tracking Recovery in St. Bernard Parish

According to the April 2008 New Orleans Index, a report published regularly by the Brookings Institute to track post-storm recovery, indicates that St. Bernard Parish is beginning to show real signs of progress:

- Approximately 33,000 residents have returned to St. Bernard Parish or half of the pre-storm population
- 42% of pre-storm households receive mail (about half of these residents live in FEMA trailers or elsewhere and the other are living in their rebuilt homes)
- 4229 students are enrolled in the public schools or about half of the pre-storm number
- Approximately 50% of residents in St. Bernard Parish have received their Road Home funds

Families are determined to rebuild their lives; however their success is hampered by myriad barriers. Families have not received adequate reimbursements from their insurance companies or the government's Road Home Program. Many families are split up with members living across Louisiana or in other states. delete this--one family member is living with the children in an outlying community or state while the other parent is living in a FEMA trailer family house trying to rebuild the property and hold down a full-time job. There is limited affordable rental property or temporary housing in the Parish and FEMA trailers will soon be taken away.”

Impact on Carnegie Mellon

Alternative Break focuses on the personal growth of participants. But we are excited about sharing our experiences with others on campus. Before departure, we will raise awareness of the need for help in New Orleans and collaborate with similar organizations to provide some related programming.

After we get back, we will hold sessions which will spread impact of our trip beyond Alternative Break. Here, the participants will share their experiences and lessons learned with the CMU community. we will also show the video made during our trip. This video will be taken throughout our journey, documenting our entire time on the trip. It will include personal statements from each group member about how they are feeling about a specific project and narratives from people we encounter and their stories. We hope to bring a true sense of the city back to CMU, both the struggles and the joie de vivre that is fighting to come back.

Map

