



Trek for Knowledge
Nicaragua 2008
Vassar College Maguire Internship
June 15 - July 21
or
June 22 - July 21

In partnership with the non-profit organization Building with Books, Vassar College is pleased to announce the Maguire Internship Program for the Summer of 2008. Up to two Vassar Students who will be juniors or seniors in the fall of '08 will be selected to participate as interns for this exciting opportunity. (members of the Classes of '09 and '10 may apply)

The Partner Organization: Building With Books

Building With Books (BwB) is a non-profit organization working in six regions and throughout the United States (CT, NY, PA, IL, MI, CA) and in six countries (Nicaragua, Haiti, Senegal, Mali, Malawi, and Nepal). The BwB mission statement is: enhancing education and empowering youth in the U.S. to make a positive difference in their communities, while helping people of developing countries increase their self-reliance through education. BwB is currently working in 108 high schools in the U.S. Students are engaged in local community service, global education, and fundraising to help build schools in developing countries. Internationally, BwB works with communities to build schools - more than 215 to date and counting! For more information on this organization, please visit the website at: www.buildingwithbooks.org.

The Program: Trek for Knowledge

Although BwB engages thousands of high school students domestically, only around 200 of them have the opportunity to participate in the Trek for Knowledge enrichment program. The Trek for Knowledge is a 15-day journey to a very rural and remote village to live with host families and work alongside them to build a school for the community. Living conditions are rustic - no electricity and running water.

The goals of the BwB Trek for Knowledge program are for high school students and teachers to:

- Participate in the construction of a BwB schoolhouse in one of the BwB project countries
- Participate in the cross cultural exchange between the host country and American culture
- Return knowledge gained from the Trek experience to their classrooms, schools, and communities

A typical day on Trek for Knowledge is as follows:

5:30 am Wake Up • 6:00 am Breakfast • 7:00 - 11:00 am Work (Group A)
9:30 - 11:00 am Cultural Education & Journaling (Group B)
11:00 am Lunch • 12:00 pm Group Reflection • 1:00 - 5:00 pm Work (Group B)
1:00 - 2:30 pm Cultural Education & Journaling (Group A)
5:00 pm Return to host families • 9:00 pm Go to bed

Worksite: The work consists of digging, picking, sifting, mixing concrete, making bricks, carrying water, and tying rebar. It is physically hard work; everything is done by hand and you will surely have blisters and sore muscles.

Cultural Education: The workshops will consist of conversations and/or activities with the village leader, the artisans, the midwife, the schoolteacher, and other prominent figures in the community that will be sharing their lives and skills with you. The workshops are different in each village based on the resources of the community and interest of the group.

Free Time: There is lots of time spent enjoying your host family when you're not at a scheduled activity. For example: playing games with the children, doing laundry, carrying water, making tortillas, and listening to the radio at night. After dinner the favorite pastimes may include marbles and general conversation. No matter what the activity or the time of day, many hours will be spent repeating simple Spanish words and teaching basic English.

The Vassar Maguire/BwB Internship

Interns play a critical role in the BwB Trek for Knowledge. While Building With Books Trek Coordinators and Support Staff are responsible for the leadership of the trip, Vassar Interns are part of the Trek Leadership Team. Interns serve as role models for the high school Trek participants and assist BwB staff in many aspects of the Trek. Duties of a Vassar Intern vary by Trek, but may include following:

- Attending Pre-Trek workshops to learn more about Trek for Knowledge and to meet the team
- Taking photographs to document the trek experience
- Participating and facilitating journaling, group reflection, and cultural education workshops
- Managing and working alongside small groups on the worksite
- Checking in with students regarding physical and emotional health
- Supervising students as they filter water
- Monitoring levels of filtered water to ensure the trek team has ample access to clean drinking water
- Keeping your eyes and ears open so that you can assist the Trek Coordinator with managing group dynamics and individual behavior issues
- Assisting where needed to make sure the trek runs smoothly
- Translating for the team
- Working with the Trek Coordinator to set-up prior to the team's arrival

Each Intern is required to:

- Attend at least one Pre-Trek workshop at in New York City (tentative dates are April 5, May 3, and June 7)
- Be available to travel to Nicaragua from June 15-July 21 or June 22-July 21, 2008
- Prepare a brief report to be submitted to the Office for Fellowships by the end of the summer
- Present your Trek experience at an information night for 2009 candidates

The Vassar Maguire Internship will fund the cost of the Trek to Nicaragua and will provide a stipend of \$1,500 directly to each of the Vassar participants. This stipend should cover incidental expenses associated with the trip—immunizations, passport fee, plus provide a small stipend.

The Qualifications

- Experience working with youth (preferably 14-18 year olds)
- Demonstrated commitment to community service or service learning
- Teaching or participating in experiential learning programs: NOLS, summer camps, after-school programs, community-centered activities etc.
- **Strong Spanish language skills**
- International travel or cultural exchange experience
- Course of study: International Studies/Relations, Anthropology, Sociology, Education, Latin American Studies, History, English, or related area

The Application Process

Maguire Internship Program candidates are required to complete:

1. A personal statement of no more than two double-spaced typed pages addressing the qualifications above including information about your interest in this program.
2. One letter of recommendation from a faculty member who can speak to your qualifications. You may submit an additional letter from a person from outside of Vassar if you feel that such a letter would be directly related to your qualifications for this opportunity.
3. A current unofficial copy of your Vassar transcript and a copy of your course schedule for this semester.
4. A resume or listing of related extra-curricular activities and interests.

The deadline is February 15, 2008 firm! You are responsible for being certain that all portions of the applications are received by this date, including the letter(s) of recommendation. Please discuss this internship with your recommender(s) and provide adequate information about the nature of the organization as well as about your experiences and interests in this area. Helpful letters will be specific to this opportunity and not overly general.

All application materials should be sent electronically to:

Fellowships@vassar.edu

The selections will be made by the Vassar Maguire Internship Selection Committee. An interview may be required. Decisions will be announced after spring break.

Additional information and advice is available in the Office for Fellowships. Please do not contact Building with Books directly. These internships originate at Vassar and are for current Vassar sophomores and juniors only (members of the Classes of '09 and '10).

This can truly be a

“Summer Experience that Makes a Difference!”