

ARISE Rio Grande Border
Service Immersion Handbook 2024



SALVE REGINA
UNIVERSITY

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History of ARISE

ARISE

Founded in 1987, **ARISE (A Resource In Serving Equality)** is an organization of women engaged in leadership development and community- building in three Rio Grande neighborhoods in Hidalgo County, South Texas. Built by women who reside in the neighborhoods, the grassroots network of community centers combine direct responses to each group's request with activity in larger movements to improve lives of immigrants both on the local, regional and national levels. *Creo en la paz siempre joven.*

Rio Grande Border

ARISE is located in in three neighborhoods (Colonias) that border the Rio Grande – the river that serves as the boundary between the United States and Mexico. It is also the river which has created the rich earth that has encouraged the agriculture of corn, fruits, vegetables, sugar cane and sorghum. Its success has been based on a large number of farm workers drawn from both sides of the border. Due to floods and draught, more immigrants find work now in factories which package goods made in Mexico. Hidalgo County is rich in history and economy but is also home to some of the poorest communities in Texas.

History of the Border Witness Program

ARISE assumed leadership of the Border Witness Program in 1994, as its understanding grew of the structural implications of the lives of the people it serves, giving it the potential to be an advocate for its improvement.

Initially The Border Witness Program was created to inform U.S. citizens of the plight of Central American refugees crossing into the United States, a migration which has recently included a large number of children unaccompanied by their parents. Participants became witnesses to the refugees' demand for human rights, and their testimonies as victims of war, oppression and upheaval.

Today the Border Witness Program also calls people to understand the unique struggles of this population which lives along the Texas/Mexican border - a region formed by people who came to seek a better life for themselves and their children, and whose hope continues despite poverty, economic change and social conflict.

The Border Witness Program invites groups of people of all ages (delegations) to join in an experience of listening, observing, learning and sharing with the people of the Rio Grande Border towns. Important social, economic, religious, cultural, and political issues are presented in a direct way through personal visits, discussion, and reflection - thus giving a voice to families, workers, and community organizations.

The Border Witness Program facilitates the understanding of the struggles and strengths of the border communities,

analyzes the systems that perpetuate poverty and marginalization, and promotes direct participation in the issues that affect the Rio Grande area.

Student Learning Outcomes

Students who participate with The Center for Community Engagement and Service program will:

- Develop leadership and communication skills and strengthen self-confidence
- Develop critical thinking about social issues
- Develop a life-long sense of civic responsibility
- Work and communicate effectively across differences
- Plan and implement community-based service activities or programs
- Integrate the values of service and social justice into career and life goals
- Use reflection as a means for learning and personal growth

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ARISE Service Immersion

March 11-15, 2024

Service Immersion Description:

The immersion delegation will be educational and include time for reflection. Participants will be expected to return to their communities to help raise awareness about immigration and its root causes, as well as use their experience to engage in advocacy and educating others.

Together the group will:

- Deepen understanding of the current situation at the US–Mexico border and how church and humanitarian groups are responding.
- Witness conditions on the Mexico side and learn about the desperation driving people to risk the journey.
- Learn about how U.S. policies have contributed to conditions of violence and poverty from which people are fleeing.
- Reflect on how to make these realities known more in Mercy and in the U.S. We will strategize on ways to raise consciousness and bring greater depth to the polarizing public discourse on immigration: helping shift the conversation to one of unity and compassion, rather than division, racism, and hatred.

Mission Statement ARISE:

ARISE Adelante Is A Community-Based Program That Works With Colonia Families To Strengthen Their Communities. Located In Four Colonias In South Texas, Each ARISE Center Responds To The Specific Needs Of The Community. ARISE'S Mission Is To Aid Communities By Helping Residents Identify Life Goals And Providing Resources To Help Them Reach Those Goals On Their Own. ARISE Adelante Is Co-Sponsored By The [Sisters Of Mercy](#) And The [Sisters Of Charity Of The Incarnate Word](#).

ARISE Service Immersion 2024 Timeline

- ✓ **Applications Due: Friday, December 1st at NOON online**
- ✓ **Applicant Reviews/Selection:** Week of December 4
- ✓ **Notification of Acceptance Offer to participants:** December 8
- ✓ ***Notification from participants if they decline acceptance offer (told to us by):*** December 11
- ✓ **One-on-one meetings with Director of Center for Community engagement and Service:** December 11-15
- ✓ **Special Forms Due December 15:** \$175 Arise Program Non-Refundable (individual participant agreement form for ARISE) and \$35 Arise Registration Fee is due to SRU Business **(\$210 Total).**
- ✓ **Estimated \$950 Airfare Down-Payment:** Due to the SRU Business Office before January 16, 2024
- ✓ **January 18 -** First group meeting, Gerety 201 from 5-6pm (Topic: overview & team building)
- ✓ **February 22 -2nd** group meeting, Gerety 201 from 5-6pm (Topic: Q&A Travel Details)
- ✓ **February 22, 2024:**
 - ✓ **Waivers:** Fill out your Salve Regina University Service Immersion Code of Conduct paper
 - ✓ **Fee:** Your accommodation, transportation, and food fee of estimated **\$500** for your ARISE Service Immersion is due to the SRU Business Office.
- ✓ **February TBA**– your second installment of **TBA** airfare payment is due to the SRU Business Office
- ✓ **March 4 - 3rd** group meeting, Gerety 201 from 5-6pm- pre immersion participant question survey online (Topic: donations and packing)
- ✓ **Service Immersion:** March 11-15, 2024
- ✓ **ARISE Service Immersion Reunion:** Spring 2024 TBD

Money Matters

Financial Information: *Please note that the following figures are estimates only and are computed using the current exchange rate. We believe them to be reasonable estimates but reserve the right to change the fees should the flight rate change.*

****All students will pay a \$950 (estimated) airfare before January 2024***

The Estimated Program fee of \$1,800 includes:

- Round-trip air fare
- Round trip van transportation from Salve campus to airport and ground transportation while in Texas on service immersion.
- ARISE registration and program fees.
- 4 nights lodging
- All transportation fees.
- Most meals while on service immersion (not including travel days in airport and recreational days).
- Project construction materials
- 24/7 ARISE staff

Students outside anticipated cost:

- All recreation, cultural, and tourist activities (previous cost was about \$40 per person).
- Airport food on travel days (Monday, March 11 & Friday, March 15).
- Personal Doctor vaccinations
- You also may bring an additional \$80 (in small dollar bill amounts) of personal spending money for any souvenirs you purchase when you go to the markets.

Financial Assistance: Students can send a letter of request and are required to meet one-on-one to request financial assistance, with the Director of Center for Community Engagement and Service. Financial assistance will only be given to cover partial cost of the flight cost. Financial Assistance will be given on a case by case basis.

How to pay for my flight: The \$950 (estimated) airfare down payment is due before January through the Business Office at Salve Regina University. Students can pay the business office by VISA, MasterCard or by electronic check through their portal.

Refund policy: All the service immersion fees are non-refundable.

**To be an eligible participant on the ARISE Service Immersion all students must adhere to the timeline application process, and have all required documents submitted on time. You will receive an electronic notification of all completed requirements to confirm your place on the Immersion.*

Health, Wellness, and Safety

Please be advised that this immersion involves a significant level of physical activity.

- Hats, sun glasses, sun screen and casual comfortable clothing and shoes, will make the experience a comfortable one;
- Participants are encouraged to leave prejudices behind in order to remain open to the people they meet and programs they learn about and are expected to be cordial when making site visits.

Components of Visit Experience:

The Delegation will experience **site visits** which can include: participation in the activities of one or more Arise Community Centers; Deportation Center; Refugee Center; Border Patrol Office; Homes of Immigrants; and view of the Border and the Border Wall.

The Delegation will participate in **interactive presentations** which may include: the Rio Grande Valley; population of the Border towns - their religion and culture and reason for immigration; Mexican reality and factories (maquiladoras) on Mexican border; obstacles to immigration; and the contribution of immigrants to economy and culture of the United States.

Special Needs:

These should be indicated on the Final Delegation Application, and Individual Participant Application, so that the ARGBWP staff can adequately prepare for the visit. Examples include dietary needs, hearing/visual needs, wheel chair accessibility needs.

Delegation Follow-up: The ARGBWP encourages Delegation participants to share what they have learned with others, so the understanding and actions necessary to improve the life of immigrants can be understood by the larger community. Examples include speaking engagements, slide shows, newspaper articles etc. Further suggestions for follow-up will be made at the time of the visit.

Travel Tips

- Be cognizant of your surroundings.
- Do not carry large sums of money or place all of your money and credit cards in the same place. Do not place your wallet in your back pocket as this is the easiest target for pickpockets.
- Trust your instincts, if something doesn't look or feel right, avoid it.
- Do not leave sensitive documents or equipment unattended out in the open in your room.

Daily Schedule:

Each day will begin at 9 A.M. with a morning reflection followed by a site visit or presentation, Lunch and a rest period will take place between 12 Noon and 1:30 followed by a second site visit or presentation. The day will end with discussion and reflection, followed by a prayerful meditation.

Packing list for ARISE

WHAT TO PACK: A backpack or duffel bag is easiest to carry. Please do not over-pack. You may also want a separate (drawstring bag) to hold an extra shirt, water bottle, camera, etc. You will not have a place to lock up your belongings during the immersion, so it is suggested you limit what valuables you bring to those which can be carried in your day pack (a small drawstring backpack is fine).

CLOTHES: The weather during March can range from high 50s at night and up to 70s during the day. Shorts, jeans, lightweight shirts, and a jacket or sweatshirt for layering are best. You will need clothes and shoes which can get dirty at service projects. *Anything you pack, you can donate on the last day!!

- ___ 2-3 outfits for service projects (these may get dirty).
- ___ 1-2 Salve T-shirts (for group pictures)
- ___ 1 long-sleeved shirt or sweatshirt
- ___ 1-2 pairs of shorts
- ___ 1 pair of closed-toe shoes for service projects/ropes course (sneakers) **Again, these may get dirty.**
- ___ 1 pair of shower sandals
- ___ 1 Rain Jacket or Poncho

TOILETRIES (Airplane size)

- ___ Toothbrush/Toothpaste
- ___ Deodorant
- ___ Soap
- ___ Shampoo/conditioner
- ___ Medications
- ___ Contacts/case/solutions
- ___ 1 Roll of Toilet Paper

LINENS (*We will be sleeping indoors at hotel or local accommodation)

GEAR: ESSENTIAL

- ___ Sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher)
- ___ Mosquito Repellent
- ___ 2 Personal Water Bottles
- ___ Sunglasses/hat
- ___ Additional Copies of your passport
- ___ Small \$\$\$ bills (Ex: \$1/\$5/\$10) for touring day

OPTIONAL

- ___ Camera
- ___ Cell phone (USE OF CELL PHONES WILL BE **VERY** LIMITED)
- ___ 1 Flashlight

What to leave at home:

- Laptops, iPods, etc.

Pre-Immersion Meetings

*All participants are required to attend the pre-immersion meetings before going on the ARISE Service Immersion. No exceptions will be granted.

- ✓ **January 18-** First group meeting, Gerety 201 from 5-6pm (Topic: Immersion overview & team building)
- ✓ **February 22-** 2nd group meeting, Gerety 201 from 5-6pm (Topic: Q&A panel of past participants)
- ✓ **March 4th -3rd** group meeting, Gerety 201 from 5-6pm Pre- Immersion participant question survey online (Topic: donations and packing)
- ✓ **March 11-15, 2024** – Service Immersion

Frequently Asked Questions

What can I expect from an Immersion with ARISE?

The immersion delegation will be educational and include time for reflection. Participants will be expected **to help raise awareness about immigration and its root causes, as well as use their experience to engage in advocacy and educating others.** Together participants will:

- Deepen understanding of the current situation at the US–Mexico border and how church and humanitarian groups are responding.
- Witness conditions on the Mexico side and learn about the desperation driving people to risk the journey.
- Learn about how U.S. policies have contributed to conditions of violence and poverty from which people are fleeing.
- Reflect on how to make these realities known more in Mercy and in the U.S. We will strategize on ways to raise consciousness and bring greater depth to the polarizing public discourse on immigration: helping shift the conversation to one of unity and compassion, rather than division, racism, and hatred.

What are my options on getting to the airport?

Participants have the option of taking a Salve shuttle from campus to and from the Airport. Or participants also have the option of being dropped off at the Airport on the morning of departure and being picked up on the day the group returns.

How many students are selected for the immersion?

There is a 10 student capacity for the Service Immersion due to the dorm style setting where the group sleeps.

How does the waitlist work?

The waitlist will be activated after any original participants have not paid their airfare down payment or if people have decided to drop out. Waitlist participants are always emailed regarding their change in status if anything happens.

What is the daily schedule like?

Each day will begin at 9 A.M. with a morning reflection followed by a site visit or presentation, Lunch and a rest period will take place between 12 Noon and 1:30 followed by a second site visit or presentation. The day will end with discussion and reflection, followed by a prayerful meditation.

Sample Schedule

Daily Schedule:

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Delegation Follow-up:

The ARGBWP encourages Delegation participants to share what they have learned with others, so the understanding and actions necessary to improve the life of immigrants can be understood by the larger community. Examples include speaking engagements, slide shows, newspaper articles etc. Further suggestions for follow-up will be made at the time of the visit.

Created by:

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