

Fulbright U.S. Specialist Mid-term Follow-up Report

Dear Grantee,

Thank you for your participation in the Fulbright U.S Specialist Program. For the Fulbright Commission in Colombia it is very important to make sure that all U.S. Grantees have a positive and meaningful experience in the country. Please complete this report and send it as an attachment it to ssanchez@fulbright.edu.co (copying apoyoprogramas2@fulbright.edu.co) within eight (8) days after receipt.

Grantee Name: James Christopher Westland

Host Institution: Corporación Universitaria Remington

City: Medellin, Colombia

Date: 10/17/2024

1. Below is a list of statements regarding different aspects of your experience as a grantee of the Fulbright U.S. Specialist Program in Colombia. Please indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each:

1: Strongly Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neutral 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree

Statement	1	2	3	4	5
On the whole, I am satisfied with my experience in Colombia					X
My host institution has been supportive					X
In general terms, I achieved the research project objectives as planned to date					X
Guidance provided by the Fulbright Commission during my grant period was helpful					X
I have a positive perception of the security conditions of my city/region of placement					X
I interacted with Colombian students, professors and researchers in my field of interest					X
I participated in conferences or other academic events in my field of study					X
I have been able to improve my proficiency in Spanish					X
I had an enriching cultural exchange experience in Colombia					X
I would recommend the Fulbright U.S. Specialist Program to colleagues or friends					X

2. In the following chart, please share your comments and perceptions about the following aspects of your stay in Colombia, as detailed as possible:

<p>Project main outcomes and impact to date</p>	<p>I have engaged in extensive discussions with faculty at UniRemington regarding my ideas for enhancing classroom protocols for the LEGO Serious Play workouts in the school's Innovation and Creativity Laboratory. In several academic papers and a formal presentation, I have outlined my vision to expand the laboratory into a Simulation Lab, housing a library of simulation workouts that can be integrated into existing curricula, such as accounting, finance, and human resources. These simulations would serve as one-week "creativity" modules within various courses. Additionally, I have promoted the use of my book, <i>Global Innovation Management</i>, as a foundational resource to potentially evolve the Laboratory into an entrepreneurial incubator for new business ventures. The faculty and administration have been very receptive to these proposals, and I look forward to further collaboration.</p> <p>I have also discussed with a representative from the Accounting Department the possibility of incorporating software programming from my book, <i>Audit Analytics</i>, to support accounting and auditing tasks. They expressed enthusiasm for this initiative, and I will continue exploring its implementation with them. Furthermore, I plan to assist the department in developing a new accounting journal, to be based at UniRemington.</p> <p>In addition, I have visited a class (with another visit scheduled) where I engaged in in-depth conversations with students about their experiences and expectations. I also presented at an accreditation meeting with representatives from the Ministry of Education for the school's new MBA program. My discussions with faculty have extended to exploring greater involvement with my research journal, <i>Electronic Commerce Research</i>. I participated in an Escape Room activity with faculty, which was aimed at innovating new protocols for the LEGO Innovation and Creativity Lab. Separately, I will meet with a representative from Colombia's Ministry of Education regarding the establishment of a new Ph.D. program in Bogotá. Lastly, I will work with the Dean on securing grant funding and overseeing the recertification of two academic programs.</p>
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<p>Participation in academic events and collaborations</p>	<p>I have had the privilege of engaging directly with students in the classroom, where in-depth discussions have allowed me to gain valuable insights into their experiences and expectations. With another session scheduled, I look forward to further understanding their needs and how we can elevate their learning journey. In addition, I had the honor of presenting at an accreditation meeting with the Ministry of Education representatives regarding the launch of the school's new MBA program—an exciting milestone that sets the stage for academic excellence.</p> <p>My conversations with faculty have also opened up the opportunity for greater collaboration with my research journal, <i>Electronic Commerce Research</i>, which could serve as a key resource for advancing scholarship within the institution. Furthermore, I had the opportunity to join the faculty in a dynamic Escape Room activity, designed to push the boundaries of innovation for the LEGO Innovation and Creativity Lab. The ideas generated from this experience will play a crucial role in redefining the Lab's protocols.</p> <p>On a broader scale, I am preparing to engage with a representative from Colombia's Ministry of Education regarding an exciting new project—the establishment of a Ph.D. program in Bogotá. I will also be working closely with the Dean to secure grant funding and facilitate the recertification process for two academic programs. These initiatives represent a tremendous opportunity to drive forward academic leadership and innovation at UniRemington.</p>
<p>Interaction with your host institution(s)</p>	<p>I've had the pleasure of sharing meals with the Dean and department faculty, which has fostered great conversations and new ideas. I recently visited a class, with another visit coming up soon, where I had engaging discussions with students about their experiences and expectations. It's been insightful to hear directly from them and understand how we can support their academic journey.</p> <p>I also had the opportunity to present at an accreditation meeting with representatives from the Ministry of Education about the exciting launch of the school's new MBA program. Additionally, I've had productive conversations with faculty about increasing involvement with my research journal, <i>Electronic Commerce Research</i>, which could serve as a valuable resource for both faculty and students.</p> <p>One particularly fun and productive activity was participating in an Escape Room game with faculty, designed to inspire new ideas for improving the LEGO Innovation and Creativity Lab's protocols. It was a creative way to approach problem-solving and innovation together. Looking ahead, I'm set to meet with a representative from Colombia's Ministry of Education to discuss a new Ph.D. program in Bogotá, and I'll also be working closely with the Dean on securing grant funding and navigating the recertification process for two of the school's programs. Exciting projects are on the horizon, and I'm looking forward to contributing to them.</p>

<p>Adaptation to your city of placement</p>	<p>The people here have been incredibly kind and consistently helpful, making our experience all the more enjoyable. Despite our limited proficiency in Spanish, we've found that we can navigate daily life with relative ease, relying on a combination of basic language skills and the assistance of a translator when needed. This has allowed us to feel comfortable and well-supported during our time here.</p> <p>One of the standout aspects of our stay has been the affordability of the country. We've been able to explore the city extensively, discovering an array of wonderful restaurants and lounges that offer a delightful blend of local and international cuisine. Each day brings new culinary experiences, and we've thoroughly enjoyed walking around the city, immersing ourselves in its vibrant culture and rich history.</p> <p>Our travel and accommodations have been fully covered, which has allowed us to focus entirely on the experience without any logistical concerns. Overall, we are extremely satisfied with the arrangements and our stay so far.</p> <p>In terms of sightseeing, we have already visited several key landmarks. We spent time in La Comuna 13, a neighborhood renowned for its transformative urban art and vibrant atmosphere. We also explored the Botero Park, taking in the fascinating sculptures, as well as nearby museums that provided deeper insight into the city's artistic heritage. Additionally, we've walked through three or four distinct neighborhoods in Medellín, each offering its own unique character and charm.</p> <p>Looking ahead, we are excited about the upcoming weekend when we plan to visit Guatapé, famous for its colorful houses and the impressive El Peñol rock. We also have a trip scheduled to a local coffee farm, which promises to be a captivating experience, offering us a firsthand look at the country's renowned coffee culture. All in all, we are thoroughly enjoying our time here and eagerly anticipating the adventures still to come.</p>
<p>Migratory Procedures</p>	<p>We encountered no issues during our travel to Medellín, and the journey was largely uneventful, even though we passed through Miami, Florida, during a hurricane. The border procedures, including visas and passports, were efficient, straightforward, and processed quickly. Overall, we have not faced any challenges, and the trip has been smooth and seamless.</p>

Financial matters	<p>The affordability of this beautiful country has been a pleasant surprise, allowing us to fully immerse ourselves in its charm without concern. Each day has brought the delightful opportunity to stroll through the vibrant streets of the city, uncovering hidden gems in the form of charming restaurants and cozy lounges, each offering a unique culinary or social experience. Whether it's savoring local dishes or enjoying the ambiance of a new spot, every discovery adds a layer of richness to our time here.</p> <p>Our travel and accommodations, generously covered in full, have allowed us the freedom to focus entirely on soaking in the many experiences this destination has to offer. In every respect, we find ourselves deeply satisfied with both the arrangements and the overall experience.</p> <p>.</p>
Safety and Security	<p>We have found our hosts to be exceptionally, almost overly, protective of us, which speaks volumes about their kindness and concern for our well-being. While we deeply appreciate their attentiveness, we've experienced Medellín as a city that feels quite safe, provided that one exercises the standard precautions that should always be followed when exploring any new place, especially where the language may present a barrier. From our perspective, the level of safety here feels quite comparable, if not even more reassuring, than in my own home city of Chicago.</p> <p>While the locals may voice concerns about certain security issues, the majority of incidents appear to involve relatively minor thefts, nothing that has caused us alarm. In fact, by simply avoiding certain risks—such as walking around late at night after bars and restaurants have closed—we have been able to fully enjoy our time here without feeling unsafe. Were I to venture out during those late hours, I might feel more cautious, but for the vast majority of our experience, from morning through evening, the city has revealed itself as a vibrant, beautiful, and thoroughly livable place.</p> <p>With its welcoming atmosphere, Medellín has left us with the impression of a city that, with just a bit of awareness and common sense, can be enjoyed to its fullest. We have embraced its charm wholeheartedly, and we look forward to continuing our exploration of this wonderful city.</p>

Health	<p>We are pleased to report that we have remained in excellent health throughout the duration of our trip, a testament to the quality and care that has clearly been invested in the local food and dining establishments. While we have not been overly cautious about what we consume, choosing instead to embrace the full range of culinary experiences—including street food and raw vegetables—we have found the overall food quality to be outstanding. The restaurants we've visited consistently exhibit high standards of cleanliness and service, further enhancing our dining experiences. Each meal has been a delightful opportunity to explore the rich flavors and diverse dishes that the region has to offer, and we have enjoyed every opportunity to savor the local cuisine. In addition to the superb quality of the food, we have also been pleasantly surprised by its affordability, allowing us to indulge in a variety of meals without hesitation.</p> <p>We feel deeply appreciative of our hosts and the care they have taken to ensure that we experience the very best of what this beautiful country has to offer, both in terms of hospitality and culinary delight.</p>
Dependents (if applicable)	<p>My wife has had the pleasure of accompanying me on this journey, and while I am engaged with the faculty at UniRemington, she takes the opportunity to explore the city—whether shopping or sightseeing, she has fully embraced the experience. Her independent explorations have allowed her to appreciate the city's vibrant culture and charm, all while I collaborate with the esteemed faculty here.</p> <p>In the evenings, we have enjoyed delightful dinners with faculty members, and I must mention that my wife has become quite popular among them. Her warmth and genuine interest in their work and lives have made her a welcomed addition to our social gatherings. Together, we have participated in the faculty's innovative Escape Room gameplay activity, an experience that brought us even closer to the team and fostered a deeper connection with those who are so kindly hosting us. It has truly been a joy to share these moments, both professionally and personally, in such a welcoming environment.</p>

3. Please mention any additional feedback, improvement opportunities or any other comments regarding your experience in Colombia that should be considered by the Fulbright Commission:

Sharing the stories and experience of our U.S Grantees is key for attaining the Fulbright Commission outreach goals and provide significant guidance to future exchange participants. We would be grateful if you could send along with this report some photos with good resolution, posts, videos, articles or any additional material related to your academic exchange and experience in Colombia.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

The Colombian people have been nothing short of delightful—polite, helpful, and remarkably attentive to every detail of our experience. Their warmth and hospitality have made our time here truly special. The country's infrastructure is also impressive, with affordable and efficient transportation options, including trains that make it easy to travel anywhere. In addition, there are at least three different ride-hailing companies—DiDi, inDrive, and Uber—along with the local taxis, all of which provide fast, reliable, and inexpensive ways to get around. Moving from point A to B here is seamless and stress-free.

Every day, we explore the many activities Colombia has to offer, always discovering something new. Weekends are reserved for longer adventures, like our memorable trips to La Comuna 13 and a coffee plantation. And the weather—well, it's simply perfect. It reminds me of California at its absolute best, with ideal conditions for enjoying everything the country has to offer.

At UniRemington, I've had numerous opportunities to socialize with both the faculty and the Dean. We've shared lunches, visited coffee shops, and even participated in an Escape Room activity, which was not only fun but also provided valuable insights for the strategies we are developing for the LEGO Lab. The generosity of my hosts extends beyond the university; my wife and I have been invited to dinners with faculty on the weekends, and these social gatherings have deepened our connection to this wonderful community.

Socially, Colombia has been a true revelation—a country that offers both professional growth and personal fulfillment. I am eagerly looking forward to future collaborations with my hosts, whether in developing programs, incubators, or curriculum. But beyond the professional realm, we have made friendships here that I genuinely hope to sustain long after this trip. The relationships we've built on this journey are ones I treasure, and I am excited to continue nurturing them through future projects, collaborations, and personal connections.

Throughout this trip, I have captured countless photographs and videos, and I've been keeping a journal to document the incredible experiences we've had in Colombia and at UniRemington. I plan to carefully organize these memories into a blog that will reflect the beauty, warmth, and hospitality we've encountered here, as well as the professional and personal growth we've experienced. It will be a way to not only share our journey but also honor the kindness and generosity of our Colombian hosts. Once completed, I will be posting this blog on my personal website at westland.github.io, where I hope it will serve as a lasting tribute to our time in Colombia.

