UMD Alternative Breaks
Frequently Asked Questions

What is Alternative Breaks?
The Alternative Breaks Program sends hundreds of students each year on service-learning trips across the nation and the world. Participants engage in active service to address some of the most pressing issues of our time. Alternative Breaks are substance-free and take place during winter, spring and summer breaks.

Who can participate in an AB experience?
ALL students (undergraduate and graduate students) enrolled at UMD at the time of the AB trip can participate in ANY trip. The only exception is the graduate student only trip to Cuzco, Peru.

What will I gain?
- New perspectives
- Unique experiences
- Opportunity to reflect and think critically about pressing issues
- Exposure to a new location and community
- A new group of friends all interested in service and creating a better world
- Life-long memories
- An incredible winter, spring or summer break!

How much does it cost?
Trip costs range according to location-- $200-$300 (low cost); $400-$500 (medium cost); $1500-$1800 (international & South Dakota). This includes ALL food, lodging, transportation and cultural/educational activities. In addition, a lot of support is available through scholarships and fundraising!

How do I apply for scholarships?
Scholarship due dates, information and applications are available on the AB webpage:
http://thestamp.umd.edu/student_involvement/lcsl/involvement/alternative_breaks/resources_and_links

How are participants selected?
Participants are selected based on their application. Applications are reviewed based on the quality of responses and the commitment the applicant expresses towards the AB experience. No previous service experience or involvement level is required. Participants are placed in trips depending on their preferences and our desire to create a well-rounded team from many different backgrounds, experience levels and perspectives.

Am I guaranteed a spot on a trip?
No applicant is guaranteed a spot on a trip. Due to our capacities in transportation and budgets, we are unable to initially select every participant for an AB experience. However, those not initially selected for a place on an AB trip are placed on an alternate list. Because participants end up withdrawing from trips, every year we offer opportunities later on in the year to alternates. The past few years every applicant has had the opportunity to participate in an AB experience.

Can I go on more than one trip a year?
We want to allow as many different students as possible to participate in an AB experience; therefore, students are limited to one trip per school year.
Can I switch trips/Are there any open spaces?
Due to the number of applications we received, we have currently filled all spaces on all Alternative Break trips. There were many students who applied who, unfortunately, we were not even able to place on any trip. If you would like to be switched to a trip due to attend with someone you know, we assure you that the AB community is a welcoming one, you will meet so many new people and you and your friend will be able to share your different experiences with each other! If you would like to switch trips due to the location, we ensure you that all trips will provide equally rich experiences and the focus of the AB program is not on the geographic location but rather the community you will interact with and the social issue you will explore. If you would like to switch trips because you are no longer available during the time of the trip, we strive to offer as many different students the opportunity to participate in AB. Therefore, when spots become available, we first offer the open spots to students who have not yet been placed on trips. If you choose to drop the trip you have been selected for, it is not likely that you will be able to participate in another 2013 trip.

Is the October 12th Kickoff and/or pre-trip meetings mandatory? Is it okay if I am late?
October 12th from 4:30-6:30 pm is the annual Alternative Breaks Participant Kickoff. It is a very exciting celebration and welcome to the Alternative Break family! It is also the first time you will meet your AB team and trip leaders and get to hear more about what the semester has in store as you prepare for your AB experience. We require you to make any and all efforts to attend the Kickoff event for as long as possible.

The Alternative Break experience is more than a one week trip. You committed to the extended AB experience, when you initialed your application and signed the Participant Contract. Pre and post trip activities are what make the AB experience so significant and are absolutely necessary for you to be prepared for your trip. Participants are required to attend all pre/post trip activities and may be asked to drop from the trip roster if they are not fully engaged. If you have work or a class that you cannot work around for scheduled AB events/meetings, be sure you follow up with your Trip Leaders about very important information, dates, dues and deadlines that you need!

When do I officially have to decide if I can/want to go?
By submitting an application, we hoped that you were expressing your commitment to the AB program. Since you were offered a place on a trip, it took the place of another student who also wished to participate in this great experience. Due to pre-trip meetings, service and orientation, as the departure date of the trip nears the more of the experience you will be taking away from another participant who could be fully engaged in the AB experience. We need to receive confirmations of participation by Monday, October 15th to proceed in our planning and organization. Furthermore, ALL TRIPS have a non-refundable $75 deposit is due on November 2nd which verifies your solid commitment to the AB experience.

Why did I not get selected? Why did I not get my top trip choice?
We wish that we had enough spaces to allow all interested students the opportunity to participate in any Alternative Break experience; however, due to transportation and community partner capacity, each trip is limited in the number of students we can take. Applications are reviewed based on a number of factors. The three guiding values we ask all reviewers to consider are: Fairness & Equality to ALL applicants; Diversity (in terms of age, previous service experience, campus involvement, personal backgrounds, and majors); and Commitment to AB. Reviewers are looking for well thought out and completed applications. Participants are assigned to trips based on reviewers’ application ranking and the participants’ listed preferences. We work extremely hard to place participants as adequately as possible based on the information they provide on their applications.
When are fees/payments due?

ALL TRIPS have a non-refundable $75 deposit due on November 2nd! This is a date when it is HIGHLY suggested all participants turn this in at this time to show their commitment. However, participants will have until the first of the month before their trip (AWB-Dec. 1/ASB-Feb. 1/SAB-April 1) to pay this $75 deposit**. If you do not pay the deposit by this date (AWB-Dec. 1/ASB-Feb. 1/SAB-April 1), you will be dropped from the trip and replaced. Remaining trip costs are due AWB-Dec. 1/ASB-Feb. 1/SAB-April 1 and if they are not paid by the time the trip departs, participants’ UMD student accounts will be charged for the remaining amount.

**Guatemala & Haiti- We MUST have all deposit and passport information from your trip participants by Oct. 30th due to flight reservation dates.

**Bahamas & Peru- We MUST have all deposit and passport information from your trip participants by Nov. 22nd due to flight reservation dates.