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### Fall 2013, UNH Evacuates Student Researcher in Egypt Creates New Opportunity in Jordan

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#### Recommended Citation

Murphy, Georgeann, "Fall 2013, UNH Evacuates Student Researcher in Egypt Creates New Opportunity in Jordan" (2013). *International Educator: the Newsletter of the UNH Global Engagement Editorial Board*. 164.

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# International Educator



*The Newsletter of UNH Global Engagement*

*Fall 2013*

## UNH EVACUATES STUDENT RESEARCHER IN EGYPT

### *CREATES NEW OPPORTUNITY IN JORDAN*

*Contributed by Georgeann Murphy*

*UNH International Research Opportunity Program Coordinator*

2013 International Research Opportunity Program (IROP) student Austin Perea ([read Austin's story](#)) has both benefitted from and tested UNH's relatively new agreements with International SOS and University Health Plans (see <http://www.unh.edu/cie/international-travel-assistance-insurance-program> for details). As IROP Coordinator these past thirteen years, I remember all too well that the scariest part of my job used to be planning for emergencies that might befall our student researchers, who travel alone to often challenging research sites around the world. Things are better now!

Over recent years, UNH has developed a more nuanced and nimble travel policy: It used to be that UNH prohibited student research or study in a country the U.S. State Department had placed on its official Travel Warning list—case closed. Now the International Travel Risk Review Committee (ITRRC) requires petitions for student research or study in destinations where there is a significant health or safety concern. This is just what the ITRRC did for IROP student Austin Perea (and his predecessor to Cairo during summer of 2012, Hannah Lawrence). Austin presented an extraordinary research opportunity, including a detailed and thoroughly researched emergency plan. The ITRRC carefully considered Austin's request and approved his research trip to Egypt.

Austin was thus newly arrived in Cairo when the Muslim Brotherhood-led government was unexpectedly toppled this past June. As violence spread through the city, Beth Kiliņ (administrative director of education abroad) and I and Austin's UNH mentor, Prof. Jeannie Sowers, were watching closely until it became clear that though Austin was not himself in immediate danger, his research contacts through the American University in Cairo were growing less and less approachable, even as the possibility of his exit from Cairo (should that be necessary) was growing less feasible with each passing day. With the Fourth of July holiday fast approaching, we all concluded that Austin needed to make plans to evacuate to another location, and Austin himself, re-thinking the possibilities, rightly concluded that he could find a foothold (and temporary digs) with other UNH students studying Arabic in Amman. So on the Fourth of July, an armored car secured by SOS International and paid for by University Health Plans delivered Austin to the Cairo airport. He flew from there to Amman, Jordan, to complete his research—and spend an especially significant Independence Day I expect he'll long remember.

As Austin re-settled in his new research site, I was in touch with William Maddocks, coordinator of the Sustainable Microenterprise and Development Program (SMDP) at the University of New Hampshire's Carsey Institute about helping Austin locate a new Jordanian mentor. Bill contacted a colleague he'd met in Ghana, Deena Burjorjee of the Access Alliance, who in turn recommended Austin be in touch with Jordanian lawyer Alaa Abbassi, a microfinance policy expert very knowledgeable about the topic of Sharia-compliant microfinance. Attorney Abbassi generously agreed to assist Austin's research. With that, broken research plans reformed at the speed of internet access—all thanks to the long reach and speedy cooperation of well-connected UNH colleagues.

**About IROP**

The International Research Opportunities Program promotes and fosters advanced research at the undergraduate level in an international setting, supporting collaborations among students, UNH faculty members, and researchers around the world. The program awards fellowships to students through a competitive grant proposal process. Grant recipients receive support for nine weeks of research during the summer between their junior and senior years, when students work with the research partners and colleagues of UNH faculty. All IROP students complete language, cultural, and research training before leaving the U.S., and all share their research and cultural experience upon returning to campus at both the annual International Symposium and more discipline-specific venues.

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