

# Mexico Week in Mexico

by COURTNEY MARTINEZ

**C**ARLY CASTETTER and I knew that working as LLILAS interns would present us with a number of opportunities, but we never expected the job description to include international travel. Along with Lautaro Millaman-Teruel, Javier Rojas, and Mario Guajardo, we had the privilege of representing the University of Texas at Austin student body and joining a number of UT faculty and staff in March 2008 for a week of panels and discussions as part of the *Norteamérica y el Dilema de la Integración* conference. The conference was the culmination of efforts from UT as well as five Mexican universities: Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE), Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), Instituto Tecnología de México (ITAM), El Colegio de Mexico (COLMEX), and Instituto Tecnológico de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM). Each day's events were hosted at one of the participating universities' campuses, allowing us to see parts of Mexico City that most first-time tourists wouldn't visit as well as connecting us with university students who gave us a Mexican

perspective on college life like our own.

Carly and I joined the UT group, already establishing itself in Mexico, on the third day hosted at ITAM. Though we missed the visit of President Powers, we were welcomed to Mexico City with a formal dinner hosted by Provost Leslie held in the courtyard of Museo Interactivo de Economía just blocks from the Zocalo. We spent our second day at COLMEX, where we listened to talks largely on the political atmosphere between Mexico and the U.S. The day ended with a reception hosted on campus in which we met several COLMEX students who told us about their lives in Mexico City. They even started a mini-fan club for UT government professor Sean Theriault. He had been especially well received as the speaker ending the day's panel, giving his insights on the upcoming U.S. presidential election, which we learned was as interesting to our Mexican peers as to us. The conference's last day was held at the ITESM–Santa Fe campus, which we found to be extremely modern and colorful. Though the speakers each day were incredibly interesting and diverse in topics, the panels at ITESM were especially compelling. Mexican Secretary of Public Education

Josefina Vázquez Mota opened the day with a plea to embrace multinational education. Furthermore, we were privileged to hear Carlos Monsivais—a Mexican writer with whom we weren't familiar and didn't realize was famous until we saw a quote of his on a billboard while walking through Chapultepec park the next day. ITESM also presented an opportunity to interact with our Mexican peers, this time in a lunch setting, where we learned about the more business-oriented studies of ITESM students.

Our week spent in Mexico was much more eye-opening than any trip we could have taken on our own. The conference surely achieved its goal of integration through us—we made Mexican friends and ingratiated ourselves with the city as best we could in the little time we had there. The unique opportunity that LLILAS provided us opened our eyes to the great possibilities with our Mexican neighbors and gave more meaning to our desire to major in Latin American Studies.

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Left to right: 1) Lautaro, Javier, Courtney, and Carly await lunch accompanied by a speech on energy economics at ITAM. 2) Carly and Courtney join Christian Clarke Casarez and students of Colegio de México to show our support for Professor Sean Theriault at a reception after a day of panels. 3) A large group of the UT faculty and staff present in Mexico for the week, including Provost Leslie and Vice Provost Givens, gather at Colegio de México.