Dear parents/guardians:

We are sending this letter to inform you that the Hillsboro study abroad program to Costa Rica has been approved. We are extremely excited about this opportunity to give your child the experience of a lifetime and to offer them high school credit for participating in the Biology/Spanish immersion course we have planned. The purpose of this letter is to give you some important information about the trip so that we can get an idea of how many students would be interested in attending. We plan to spend 10-11 days in Costa Rica during mid-June of 2012. In order to book flights together and to organize accommodations, we must begin planning as early as possible.

General Information:
- Students will need to have had Biology AND Spanish III by the end of the 2011-2012 school year to be eligible.
- Students will need to purchase a passport for the trip
- 20-25 students will be selected based on grades, behavior, and performance in both Biology and Spanish

Course Requirements:

Biology:
Traveling to Costa Rica in Central America will provide students with a first hand account of neotropical ecology by means of immersion. In preparation for studying neotropical ecology and biodiversity, selected students will complete the projects that involve research of topics that involve the places that will be visited throughout the trip. Readings that pertain to neotropical ecology and culture experiences will be read and discussed in preparation for the trip using an on-line format. During the study abroad portion of the course, students will participate in biological data collection and develop their own inquiry based project. Students will also be required to perform a minimum of three inquiry activities during the duration of the trip. Students will focus their pre-trip research on one of the following themes:

Conservation Biology
Human Interactions and Effects on the Environment
Ecology and Conservation of Cloud Forest
Ecotourism

Throughout the ten days of the trip students will be required to keep an on going log or journal of their experience in the country. Students will collect thoughts about cultural differences, species identification, and research notes in the journal.

Spanish:
Students will gain first hand experience during the study abroad portion of the course by communicating with native speakers on various excursions. The immersion technique will be implemented to sharpen the students’ skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking in Spanish.
Course work before the trip will include reading and discussing current events in Costa Rica, in order to give the students a better understanding of how the country operates in terms of government, schooling, social behavior, etc. Students will research various aspects of the country and discuss this with one another through an on-line resource. Course work before the trip will also include extensive review of important travel vocabulary and phrases. Students will role play various scenarios such as ordering food in a restaurant, exchanging money at the bank, etc.

While in Costa Rica, students will keep a daily log of their experiences, thoughts and feelings about Costa Rican culture. The log will be written in Spanish. Students will be required to conduct interviews in Spanish with native speakers about specific topics. Students will also be required to complete various tasks using only their knowledge of the Spanish language.

The course work after the study abroad portion will include reflection and discussion about the country. The students will also be required to create a culminating project including journals, information from interviews, and new knowledge from the trip into a presentation that they will show future Spanish classes including pictures, pre-trip research, and any artifacts they may collect from the country.

**Tentative Itinerary:**
The trip will last for the duration of 10-11 days. During that time students will travel to the following locations in Costa Rica:

Curú Wildlife Refuge – Students will explore and research this protected rain forest and mangrove area.

Arenal – Students will experience an active volcano and explore various geological processes.

Monteverde – Students will spend time exploring the Cloud Forest ecosystem.

The National Theater – Students will tour this historical site located in the capital, San José.

Costa Rican Host Families – Staying 3 to 4 days with families will give students first hand experience with culture and everyday life.

**Estimated Expenses:**
Students will purchase health insurance from a selected insurance company for a one month period at an estimated cost of $45.00. This will cover any medical cost or needs while in country. The breakdown of anticipated cost for each student is as follows:

$75 per day for lodging and food x 10 days ($750)

$26 airport exit tax

$100 bus expenses
$150 park entrance fees
$45 insurance
$100 faculty subsidy

$1,171 Total per student excluding airfare

***In order to fray the cost of airfare and trip expenses, fund raisers will be held during the summer of 2011 and during the 2011-2012 school year. The money collected will be put into a single account and divided among participants according to the amount of fund raising done by each individual student. When we are able to get a better idea of how many students will be attending, we can choose a date to book flights and hotels to give a more exact break-down of prices.

We hope that this information has been helpful in giving you a more detailed description of the course, the itinerary, and the expenses. Please fill out the bottom of this form if you are interested in allowing your child to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity. Checking yes does NOT lock your child into the trip by any means. We would just like to know who would like to continue receiving information and updates as we plan.

Thank you,

Tracy L. Linder      LeAnn Frazer-Watkins
Spanish Teacher      Science Teacher
Hillsboro High School     Hillsboro High School

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______ Yes, I am interested in receiving more information about the trip.

Phone number - __________________________________________________________

Email Address - __________________________________________________________

______ No, I am not interested in my child attending this trip.

Parent Signature ______________________  Student name ______________________