



Dean’s International Initiatives Fund

Application for funding

PART I – Applicant & project information

Applicant (for correspondence and notification)				
Last Name: Kondan		First Name: Silviu		
Sponsoring department: Slavic Languages and Literature		Email Address (must be UTOR) xxx.xxx@mail.utoronto.ca		
If student applicant:				
Student #: XXXXXXXXXX		Student Subject POST Major Peace, Conflict and Justice Studies, Major Equity Studies, Minor Slavic Studies		Year of Study: 4
Co-Applicant (if applicable)				
Last Name: Djuric		First Name: Jelena		
Sponsoring department: Slavic Languages and Literature		Email Address (must be UTOR) xxx.xxx@mail.utoronto.ca		
If student applicant:				
Student #: XXXXXXXXXX		Student Subject POST Specialist Peace, Conflict and Justice Studies, Minor Political Science		Year of Study: 4
This project involves research on/with:	<input type="checkbox"/> Human Subjects	<input type="checkbox"/> Animal Subjects	<input type="checkbox"/> Biohazards	<input type="checkbox"/> None of the above

Project Title: The Refugee Crisis and the Involvement of Grassroots Organizations in Serbia

Location(s) of proposed activity:

Country and city: Belgrade, Serbia

Institution/Organization (if applicable): Refugee Aid Serbia (RAS)

Dates of activity: February 11-21 **Number of Arts and Science Undergraduates participating:** 2

Total number of students participating (if different from above): N/A

Specify the course or academic program this project relates to: Peace, Conflict and Justice Studies/ Slavic Studies

AMOUNT REQUESTED FROM FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCE: **\$4,520**

PART II – Details of proposed project

1) Please briefly describe the proposed project or activity, including the role of any collaborating individuals or organizations.

The massive influx of refugees in Europe fleeing conflict from the Middle East is undoubtedly one of the gravest and most serious humanitarian crisis of our time. The Balkan countries have acted as a transit route for these

vulnerable persons on their way to more prosperous countries in Northern and Western Europe. For this project, we propose to travel to Belgrade, Serbia over reading week where we plan to volunteer with Refugee Aid Serbia (RAS), with whom we have already established contact with, working in: logistical planning, research, liaising between grassroots and international organizations, social media advocacy, stakeholder relations and language translation. Our personal experiences as first-generation Serbian and Romanian fleeing conflict as refugees to Canada is a testament to our passion and dedication towards the cause. We hope to combine volunteer work with advocacy initiatives in Toronto prior to, and upon our return, in order to effectively contribute to the cause and to assess the long term impact this crisis will have on the Balkan region.

2) What are the planned outcomes for this project or activity? (e.g. research/joint conference with another University/performance at an international venue)

Considering our immense dedication to this cause, we would like to emphasize that this project would start immediately. To begin, we would set up an online blog which would: track the movements of refugees in the Balkans, their day-to-day needs such as food/ water/ shelter, impact of climate change. We would contextualize this on-the-ground perspective by looking at funding that is being allocated to the region, following news outlets to analyze the discussions being held amongst political elites and using our fluency in Serbo-Croatian to look at how the crisis is perceived in Serbia and the wider region by analyzing domestic media. This comprehensive, ongoing analysis of the situation will serve as a valuable resource in Belgrade, and upon our return to Toronto where we hope to organize a joint conference with the Slavic and Peace, Conflict and Justice Studies Department which will focus on the timeline of the crisis and the complexity of the situation. We hope this platform will educate students at UofT and the wider Toronto community and will draw attention to the cause.

3) Is this project related to an academic course or a program of study? If so, describe how.

This project is related to both of our subject posts (Peace, Conflict and Justice Studies) and to Slavic and European Studies of which we have both taken courses in. The PCJ program has given us context to the precarious situation in Serbia as a post-conflict state following the Yugoslav wars. This has given us an understanding of where refugees are coming from and why. Slavic studies has enhanced our understanding on the memorialization of war, Serbia's perception of conflict and who the key players are in the region. Furthermore, courses in European Studies has shown us that it is important to recognize the extent to which political rhetoric is influenced by the country's desire for European Union accession. In other words, to what extent is the government actually committing itself to admitting refugees or aiding their transition to Europe? Other questions to consider include: what happens when Serbia accepts? How are they resettled/ what social services are provided? Although both of us have taken many courses related to the project and have immersed ourselves in the PCJ discipline, we feel that currently, no course offers a comprehensive understanding on the influx of refugees in the Balkans and the dynamics associated with the crisis.

4) Are there long-term outcomes for this project (e.g. a new program, new international opportunities for Arts and Science students)? If so, how are they sustainable? What criteria and methods will be used to measure the success of the proposed project?

We want to make our research and perspective on the crisis accessible to other students through our ongoing personal blog, and through guest blogging on the PCJ student website, of which we have already gotten approval for from the Program Director. This is a means of documenting the ways in which the humanitarian crisis will develop throughout the next few months and the changing needs of RAS. In conjunction with the joint conference proposed between the PCJ and Slavic Department, we hope to raise funds for RAS and any other grassroots organizations who are assisting with the immediate needs of refugees. We plan on including other stakeholders in this fundraising initiative including: Serbian Student Societies at Ryerson and York, the Serbian Consulate, and professors at UofT who have already expressed a desire to help. It is our goal to foster a long term measurable impact on the crisis by connecting Serbian grassroots organizations with the University of Toronto, diaspora

community in Toronto, and other organizations focused in humanitarian aid. Furthermore, while in Belgrade, we hope to establish internships for Slavic and PCJ Students in the Balkans with developmental organizations such as RAS and the Red Cross. We are confident that while in Belgrade, we will use our network and language skills to forge relations with more organizations which are in need of interns and volunteers.

5) How is the planned project or activity different from [current international opportunities](#) (398/399 Research Excursions Program, International Course Module Program, Germany/Europe Fund, Undergraduate Research Fund) available for Arts and Science undergraduates?

This project is based on our own initiative which is unique to our personal histories, expertise and skills. This is not a research-based project despite the blog component which will primarily serve as a resource tool for our volunteer work in February and our advocacy initiatives upon our return. Our project mandates that we go to Belgrade to work on the ground with grassroots organizations in order to fully understand the needs of these organizations and the role they play in assisting refugees who are either in transit or situated in the Balkans. Since the crisis has only received mass public attention over the last 4-6 month period, an analysis of the humanitarian aid provided by smaller organizations remains insufficient, and as such, an understanding of the capacities and roles available for these organizations remains inaccessible. Through our coursework, we understand that within humanitarian crisis, things change quickly. Grassroots organizations are essential to these crisis, as they help to mitigate problems which arise. Yet, throughout our studies, and in discussions with the founder of RAS (Nenad Popovic) and our faculty supervisors (Dragana Obradovic and Christina Kramer) we recognize that these organizations have difficulty managing day-to-day tasks, have limited funding and have a lot of difficulty establishing international cooperation. We hope to offer our expertise and knowledge with respect to these issues and to establish cooperation between Belgrade and Toronto by connecting the Serbian diaspora and UofT community to the issue.

6) How will you share these experiences with the wider Arts and Science community?

One of the most accessible ways of sharing our experience during our trip abroad is by updating our personal blog and to the PCJ website. This is a quick and up-to-date way of documenting our trip in a way that is both relevant and informative to our peers. The joint event we are hoping to organize upon our return from our trip would involve inviting faculty, students, experts, and practitioners from within the University and across Toronto. Considering that the refugee crisis in the Balkans has fallen off the front pages of multiple newspapers, we hope to keep the conversation going, especially with an emphasis on the needs of the refugees and the grassroots organizations positioned in the region.

7) What are the preliminary plans for meeting U of T [Safety Abroad](#) guidelines? (All students awarded funding will be required to attend a Safety Abroad Workshop and be registered on the U of T Safety Abroad database.)

Both of us have travelled for both academic and professional purposes. For example, Jelena has worked in Jerusalem with a non-governmental organization examining human rights abuses and Silviu has worked in Hungary with a grassroots organization focused in education and poverty alleviation. Both of us have previously taken the Safety Abroad seminar so we are familiar with safety precautions while travelling, however we know the importance of re-familiarizing ourselves with the safety guidelines by attending any seminars that the university is offering. Additionally, we are fortunate to have extensive support from both Professor Kramer and Professor Obradovic. Professor Kramer will be travelling with us on our way to Belgrade and back to Toronto, while Professor Obradovic will be consulting with us in Belgrade since she is currently on sabbatical in the city. Both Silviu and Jelena, and Professor Kramer and Obradovic, are fluent in Serbo-Croatian and have extensive experience travelling to the region in both a professional and leisurely capacity.

PART III – Itinerary and Budget Information

Please provide an itinerary or detailed description of timing and location(s) of activity and a budget in Canadian dollars. The budget should include any additional sources of funding received or applied for. Examples are provided below.

ITINERARY

Dates	Location	Activity
<i>February 11</i>	<i>Toronto</i>	<i>Depart for Belgrade, Serbia</i>
<i>February 12-14</i>	<i>Belgrade</i>	<i>Meeting with Professor Obradovic Professor Kramer departs for Skopje February 14 Meeting with Refugee Aid Serbia (Nenad Popovic)</i>
<i>February 15-19</i>	<i>Belgrade/ Novi Sad</i>	<i>Volunteer with Refugee Aid Serbia/ other relevant organizations Professor Kramer returns February 19</i>
<i>February 20-21</i>	<i>Belgrade</i>	<i>Debrief with faculty supervisors Depart for Toronto February 21</i>

BUDGET

Item	Amount and description	Total
Travel <i>Flight: Toronto – Belgrade (stopover in Munich) Belgrade - Toronto (stopover in Frankfurt) Belgrade - Skopje Skopje - Belgrade (Professor Christina Kramer will be our chaperone to Belgrade, where she will drop us off with Professor Dragana Obradovic who is on sabbatical in Belgrade. She will continue to Skopje where she has a conference, and return to Belgrade to accompany us back to Toronto) Belgrade metro pass Intercity train pass</i>	<i>\$1000 x 2 students \$1000 x 1 faculty member (Kramer) \$250 x 1 faculty member \$50 x 2 students \$100 x 2 students</i>	<i>\$3550</i>
Accommodation <i>February 12-21</i>	<i>\$65/day x 9 nights x 2 students = \$1170</i>	<i>\$1170</i>
Food <i>February 12-21</i>	<i>\$40/day x 10 days x 2 students = \$800</i>	<i>\$800</i>
Subtotal		<i>\$5520</i>
Other funds received or applied for	<i>Dept. Slavic Studies providing roundtrip plane ticket for Professor Christina Kramer Toronto to Belgrade</i>	<i>-\$1000</i>
Total Amount Requested		<u>\$4,520</u>

PART IV – (For student applicants only, to be completed with a faculty member with a continuous undergraduate appointment to the Faculty of Arts & Science, St. George, who is familiar with the project and can attest to its academic merit and the student’s ability to complete the proposed project.)

Faculty Supervisor Name:
Christina Kramer
Department: Slavic Languages and Literature
Email: xxxxx@utoronto.ca
Phone: 416-XXX-XXX-XXXX

Comments on the strength of proposed activity:
Silviu and Jelena have been following the movement of refugees up through the Balkans. Because of their backgrounds, their courses of study, and their linguistic knowledge, they are able to contribute in a meaningful way to the crisis and, equally importantly, they can report back to others in the U of T community about grass-roots efforts, logistical issues, political and security ramifications of the crisis taking place in one of the most central locations of the crisis. The blog-postings prior to departure is an excellent idea since it will keep them up-to-date on the changing situation. Given that winter will be a difficult time along the Balkan corridor, this is an excellent time for them to study the complex human rights issues involved in protecting refugees.
Both Prof. Obradovic and I think this is an extremely strong proposal and provides a first-hand account to members of the University Community who are concerned about the Refugee Crisis.

Comments on the strength of the applicant:
Silviu and Jelena are both superb students who are deeply engaged in active contribution to Peace and Justice initiatives. Their unique combination of academic achievement, work experience, overseas experience, and relevant languages make them extremely qualified to carry out this work.

Comments on applicant(s) ability to undertake the proposed activity in an international context:
I mention strengths above, but I will reiterate here: Grassroots organizations need help, but they need help from people who actually can contribute. The fact that both Silviu and Jelena have work experience, strong academic skills, and language ability (both fluent in English and Serbian), makes them particularly well-qualified for this initiative. The refugee crisis seen from a distance is one thing, experiencing the day-to-day complexities of it is quite another. There is no way to do this, other than by going there and contributing to our understanding by participation.

Signature: