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Decision-Making Procedure regarding Student Safety for Study Abroad and Travel Study Programs

Overview

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) facilitates and supports study abroad, travel study programs and student research globally. SIUE carries significant responsibility for oversight of the wellbeing and safety of students, faculty and staff while abroad. The following safety guidelines apply to study abroad, travel-study programs and individual student travel as part of the student learning experience that are planned through the Office of International Affairs. Recognizing that conditions can change quickly, SIUE reserves the right to cancel or suspend any program at any time at its sole discretion if it determines that there is significant risk to participants. If an approved program is cancelled prior to or during travel, SIUE will make reasonable efforts to secure any recoverable costs.

To make a final decision about safety and approval for travel, the Office of International Affairs considers the following primary resources: U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In addition, the following resources may be consulted: administrators, faculty and/or staff (SIUE and location-specific); legal counsel; others who have specific knowledge of the location and context.

Procedures for Approval

Proposed programs arranged through the Office of International Affairs will be evaluated using the U.S. State Department Travel Advisories and the CDC's Notice Levels (see below) prior to final approval of the program or travel and again before departure. Depending upon circumstances, travel may be monitored after departure.

Program locations with Level 4 Advisory Level through the U.S. State Department and/or Level 3 Notice Level through the CDC will not be approved for travel because of safety issues. Program locations with Level 3 Advisory Level through the U.S. State Department and/or Level 2 through the CDC will be further investigated and evaluated prior to approval. Program locations with Travel Advisory Levels of 1 or 2 through the U.S. Department of State and/or Level 1 through the CDC will be approved for safety. However, other academic approvals (e.g., chairperson, dean, executive director of International Affairs, provost) must be in place for a program or individual travel to be fully approved.

Primary Sources of Information

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs

Each country in the world is issued a Travel Advisory by the U.S. Department of State and advisories are updated as circumstances change. Travel Advisories and their definitions follow:

Level 1: Exercise Normal Precautions: This is the lowest advisory level for safety and security risk. There is some risk in any international travel. Conditions in other countries may differ from those in the United States and may change at any time.

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Level 2 – Exercise Increased Caution: Be aware of heightened risks to safety and security. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

Level 3 – Reconsider Travel: Avoid travel due to serious risks to safety and security. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

Level 4 – Do Not Travel: This is the highest advisory level due to greater likelihood of life-threatening risks. During an emergency, the U.S. government may have very limited ability to provide assistance. The Department of State advises that U.S. citizens not travel to the country or to leave as soon as it is safe to do so. The Department of State provides additional advice for travelers in these areas in the Travel Advisory. Conditions in any country may change at any time.

Note: Levels of advice may change from one location in a country to another location within that country. Before travel, checking the level in a specific location is important as this level may be different from the country advisory level.

Source: U.S. Department of State-Bureau of Consular Affairs (n.d.). Safety and security messaging. Retrieved from <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel/before-you-go/about-our-new-products.html>

For information on Travel Advisories in a particular country, see travel.state.gov/traveladvisories or for a color-coded world map of Travel Advisories, see travelmaps.state.gov.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issues health and safety notices for persons traveling to another country. These notices are periodically updated. Below are definitions of the notice levels.

Level 1: Watch – Reminder to follow usual precautions for this destination, as described in the Travel Notice and/or on CDC’s Travelers’ Health website.

Level 2: Alert – Follow enhanced precautions for this destination.

Level 3: Warning – Avoid all non-essential travel to this location.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.). Travelers’ health. Retrieved from: <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>.

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Best Practice for Students Traveling Internationally

To mitigate risk as much as possible, the following are suggested for student participants in study abroad, travel study programs or individual student travel as part of the student learning experience.

- Students should register with the Department of State's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) prior to departure. <https://step.state.gov/step/>
- Students should be informed about emergency evacuation procedures from the group leader.
- Students should review and understand how to obtain healthcare if needed.
- Students should always travel in groups with approval of the group leader.
- Students should not take valuables or show anything of value in a public place.
- Students should not leave passports or other documents in a vehicle.
- Students should exercise caution when using public transportation.
- Students should exercise caution when using ATMs.
- Students should not let their credit cards out of sight.
- Students should keep copies of passports & other documents in a separate place from the originals (i.e., one copy with the group leader and one copy with someone in the U.S.).