

# LaGrange College

## Faculty Travel Risk and Crisis Management Plan

LaGrange College recognizes the importance of Study Away, both in the U.S. and abroad, as an influential part of a student's education. Students may spend a semester or academic year abroad or participate in a short-term experience led by faculty. As with any travel, College-affiliated trips may present some risk and place significant responsibility/liability on faculty. This document is provided to set policy aimed at assisting College faculty prepare for and respond to crisis-based situations while traveling with students. The first section of this document, Risk Management, addresses how faculty can prepare for trip, and the second, Crisis Management, outlines procedures for handling crisis events while on a trip with students.

### **Risk Management**

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#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this document is to assist College faculty to take the necessary steps to provide a safe educational experience while off campus. While student safety is the predominant concern, faculty should also understand that there are certain legal responsibilities that are associated with leading a group of students on an experience off campus. Faculty who fail to take proper procedures prior to a trip or who fail to exercise reasonable oversight and/or care while on a trip could face a suit for negligence in a court of law. While the College cannot provide faculty with any complete assurance that following the steps below will insulate them from legal action, the steps below constitute best practices in preparing for travel away from campus with students.

#### **Program Research and Approval**

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All faculty wishing to take students on an educational experience, whether for credit or not for credit, off campus property must complete the proper paperwork in a timely manner and receive permission from the institution.

The sponsoring faculty member must be familiar with the program, service providers, and the country's political, social, and cultural conditions. Any program provider must be fully vetted and approved by the Office of Global Engagement (OGE) before contracting their services. A pre-visit to the country or region where travel is planned is highly recommended before planning the course. Please contact OGE for a copy of the *Site Visit Guide to Evaluating Potential Study Abroad Sites and Providers*.

A preliminary budget that includes all costs and a 5-10% contingency must be submitted with the course proposal; this budget should include a realistic estimate of all required expenses. Underestimating expenses in an attempt to lower the cost of the course. Could be considered a breach of professional ethics.

Safety and security of all accommodations, transportation, and destinations must be researched with any concerns reported in the proposal. The sponsoring faculty member should be aware of and include

in the course proposal any U.S. Department of State Travel Warnings or Alerts - especially if they target a specific area the group will be traveling through, or to, during the course. Consultation should include <http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html> for advisories and Consular Information Sheets. Likewise, any health risks need to be included along with a report of vaccinations or medications recommended before traveling. The Center for Disease Control posts this information at [http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/?s\\_cid=cdc\\_homepage\\_topmenu\\_003](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list/?s_cid=cdc_homepage_topmenu_003).

### **Insurance**

Students, non-students and faculty purchase medical and travel insurance provided by the College (IMG) through the program cost and this should be included in the budget. Any adventure sport activities must be reported in the proposal because an additional rider may be needed. This should also be included in the budget.

### **Contracts**

Contractual liability stems from not providing the services or quality of services that are promised or required by the College. To help prevent contractual litigation:

- All costs should be as accurately predicted as possible and clearly specified as to what is included and what is not in the advertised cost of the course.
- Disclaimers should be included, such as that prices may vary, services may change, or costs are estimated and may change due to fluctuation in exchange rates.
- Clear, written contracts with service providers are produced and submitted for approval to OGE. These include services, costs and a refund or alternate plan that is equal to the first choice.

### **Travel Forms**

All students are required to sign a Travel Release and complete the Emergency Medical Contact Form before traveling on a college-sponsored trip. The medical form contains health and insurance information and emergency contacts; this information is to be carried by the faculty or group leader and kept on a confidential basis.

### **Supervision**

At all times, the group leader (lead faculty or other responsible College representative or travel provider representative, depending upon circumstances) is in charge of the group, and the members of the group know who that person is and have either direct contact or contact information of that person. The group leader should be available to handle emergency situations at all times. The instructor of each course is responsible for daily conversations and status checks with all students in her/his course.

### **College Policy, Alcohol, and Other Drugs**

Even while away from campus, students are bound by the provision set forth in the student Handbook. Faculty bear the responsibility for submitting potential policy violations that occur while off campus using the study-away incident form. Students are expected to follow the local laws governing the sale and consumption of alcohol in the area/region/country where they are traveling. Students, as well as institutional employees, are expected to exercise moderation and responsible conduct if they decide to consume alcohol. Irresponsible behavior, whether associated with alcohol or not, could result in disciplinary action by the institution. The possession or use of illegal drugs is prohibited. Violations of College policy or behavior that could threaten the endangerment of trip participants could result in that individual being required to return home at that individual's personal expense.

Faculty and staff members should carefully weigh the consequences of their actions which include the consumption of alcohol whether in the presence of students or not.

### **Communication**

Each program should have in place a system of rapid communication and a central meeting point in case of an emergency. Participants should have each other's contact information in order to communicate in cases of emergency.

All faculty and staff traveling abroad or in the U.S. are required to carry a cell phone at all times and share that number with their department and OGE.

OGE will register all groups traveling abroad with the Department of State's STEP program which allows local embassies and consulates to contact and notify the group regarding any emergencies.

### **Orientation**

Advising and counseling students on expectations and consequences prior to their departure is key to minimizing risk and litigation. Orientation sessions will need to be conducted by both OGE, who will cover general information about study-away, and the instructor, who will need to cover country specific information, health and safety issues, and local laws. Please refer to the section on Orientations in the *The Faculty Handbook on Developing Short-Term Study-away Programs* for topics to be included. Instructors will work closely with OGE to provide a quality study-away orientation.

### **Crisis Management**

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Study-away involves a unique set of risks and responsibilities for both participants and faculty. This section is devoted to procedures for handling crisis situations abroad. They are to be followed exactly by ALL faculty in the situations described. Please remember to take this document and keep it accessible during your study-away program.

**Prior to departure:**

OGE staff will provide faculty with the following information for each participant:

- Copies of the passport identification page
- Emergency contact information
- All medical information provided by participant

Business Office will provide you with:

- International insurance cards for each participant
- Credit card contact information in case of lost or stolen card or if the card will not accept charges.

Lead faculty member will provide OGE staff with the following information for each course instructor:

- Detailed daily itinerary
- Emergency contact information

**What is a reportable incident?**

Faculty have an obligation to report any incident that could be considered a violation of local laws or College policy. Due to the severity of the action, faculty must immediately report incidents that involve actual or threatened harm; verbal/physical harassment; and sexual harassment or violence – including but not limited to domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual assault.

It is always critical to document when the crime or incident occurred, when it was reported, and what response protocol was used by you and the program staff; contact information for all parties, including local authorities or non-college individuals, should also be collected. ALL incidents must be reported using the study-away incident report form. A copy of the completed form should be sent to the Office of Global Engagement.

**When do I need to contact the Office of Global Engagement?**

You should keep the OGE staff updated in a timely manner about any incidents that occur. If an emergency occurs, the Travel Risk Management Team should be contacted immediately following the hierarchy below:

1. Dr. Karen Aubrey, Vice President for Academic Affairs cell:
2. Dr. Marc Shook, Vice President for Student Engagement cell: 706-416-0554

**What is considered an Emergency?**

An emergency is defined as a traumatic event, or the threat of such which causes extreme stress, fear or harm to students and staff. Examples are:

- Arrest
- Victim of a crime
- Missing student
- Acute illness (physical or mental)
- Hospitalization, emergency medical evacuation, or death
- Drug and/or Alcohol abuse
- Sexual harassment or violence – including but not limited to domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual assault.
- Mental health
- Natural disaster, fire, explosion, bomb threat
- Civil disorder, act of terrorism

### **Emergency Response Plan**

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The faculty member(s) who is traveling with the group are responsible for an immediate and appropriate response to any incident occurring in a study-away program. The general rule in all crisis situations is to remain calm, try to determine all facts clearly, document all actions - including phone calls and conversations. All information related to a reportable incident should be kept confidential.

The faculty will contact the Vice President of Academic Affairs (listed above) immediately to report that an emergency has occurred. All members of the Travel Risk Management Team (TRMT) will be informed, and when necessary, the Associate Provost of Global Engagement will escalate the response by contacting senior administration to arrange a meeting of the TRMT to respond to all ramifications of the incident.

The TRMT includes:

- Vice President for Finance and Operations
- Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Vice President for Student Engagement with assistance from  
Director of Counseling Services and Chaplain, Director of Spiritual Life

The Team may add other administrators, faculty, and staff with specific expertise as needed.

### **What to do? Step by Step Responses**

Please keep in mind, that if when using a third party travel provider, the group leader should also be familiar with their emergency response plans, procedures, and resources. The Tour Director they provide should be very familiar with the location of medical facilities, local police stations and the nearest US Consulate or Embassy, but the group leader should be too.

## **1. Medical Emergencies**

Before departure it is important to read over each participant's Emergency Medical Contact Information form, identify the closest hospital/clinics to the location of your program and to learn about the general attitudes toward health care in the host culture. You should also ask all students to meet with you to discuss any concerns they have and to explain the health and medical system in the country(s) you will be visiting. This information should also be provided to students during pre-departure orientation.

In cases of serious medical situations, you should do the following:

- Take the person to a hospital/clinic, verify the nature of the emergency with a doctor, inform health care personnel about chronic medical conditions, and assist with medical insurance paperwork. The College insurance card has contact information on the back.
- Obtain the medical help indicated.
- Contact College with nature of the medical emergency, and keep in regular contact until the emergency has passed.
- Have the student call emergency contact. If the student is not able to communicate, the faculty in charge will call the emergency contact and, if possible, obtain the student's permission prior to the call.
- Remember, you are not the student's legal guardian, but you should try your best to get medical attention for her/him.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

## **2. Natural Disasters and Group Accidents**

In the case of earthquake, flood, avalanche, epidemic, bus crash etc., do the following:

- See to the safety of all group members.
- Communicate immediately with the College as to the safety and state of health of all group members, the group's location, plans, and when you will contact the College again.
- If possible, communicate the same information to the nearest American Embassy or Consulate. Diplomatic channels are an alternative way to get information to the College if public communication systems fail.
- Consult with American Embassy/Consulate, local police, local sponsors, etc. for advice on how to respond to the situation.
- Discuss plans with group members. This may include change of location, change in program schedule, cancellation of the program, or a shift in emphasis in the program.
- If necessary, OGE and the VP of Finance and Operations will coordinate evacuation procedures with the insurance company.
- Keep in touch with the College.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

### **3. Civil Disturbance or Act of Terrorism**

It is important before departure to be aware of situations and locations which can be potentially dangerous. Inform students and advise them to avoid such areas whenever possible. Discourage or forbid attendance at particularly sensitive political meetings, rallies, or other sizable gatherings because it may pose not only additional risk but it may be illegal for a foreigner to participate in these events.

- Your group will be registered with the US Department of State and they will contact you by email or phone if necessary, but it is still important to keep the American Embassy and Consulate notified of your location at all times if you suspect problems are likely to erupt. Make sure you fully understand evacuation procedures to be followed in case it becomes necessary.
- Keep the College informed of developments and follow instructions issued by the United States Embassy or Consulate.
- Contact the College as soon as possible in the event of a coup, assassination, riot, revolution, etc. so parents who call may be fully informed.
- If necessary, OGE and the VP of Finance and Operations will coordinate evacuation procedures with the insurance company.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

### **4. Missing Program Participant**

- Inquire with friends and associates of the missing participant about his or her whereabouts.
- Notify the College. The College will notify the participant's emergency contact.
- Notify American Embassy or Consulate, local police, and local sponsor(s) and give them your telephone number.
- Check with authorities daily, and keep the College informed of any new developments.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

### **5. Arrest**

- Notify the College. The College will notify the participant's emergency contact.
- Visit or call local law enforcement agency and determine what happened.
- Report situation to American Embassy or Consulate, as directed by the College.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

### **6. Robbery**

- Contact local law enforcement agency.
- Assist student in obtaining funds to replace stolen money.
- Assist student in contacting US Embassy or Consulate to replace passport.
- If necessary, have student call emergency contact.
- If necessary, contact the College, otherwise, document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

## **7. Mental Health**

- Ensure the participant's and group's safety.
- Document any observations of the student's current mental state.
- Go through medical emergencies protocol in section 1.
- If it becomes necessary for the student to return home, you will need to decide if the student can travel alone or if someone will have to accompany them.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

## **8. Assault**

- Go through medical emergencies protocol in section 1.
- Call local law enforcement agency to report incident.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed a study-away incident report to the OGE.

## **9. Acts of Sexual Harassment or Sexual Violence Contact Marc and Dawn for Title IX**

- Go through medical emergencies protocol in section 1.
- With the student's approval, call local law enforcement agency to report incident.
- Help student find counseling. Keep in mind that in many cultures medical doctors often are the first point of contact for people struggling with emotional or psychological issues.
- Help student (if requested or required) return home.
- Document all your actions and submit a completed study-away incident report to the OGE.

## **10. Death of a Student or Faculty Member**

If a student or faculty member dies while participating in the program, record all available facts accurately. The atmosphere surrounding the program will be emotionally charged, and it is very important that the tasks below are handled promptly and effectively.

Take the following steps if a student or faculty member dies:

- If word comes by phone, obtain the identity of the person giving the information.
- Determine the cause of death—if an illness, what illness; if an accident, what kind, where did it happen, who else was involved, etc.
- Find out time and place of death.
- Find out if anyone has contacted the participant's family.
- Get name and address of undertaker, if available.
- Find out participant's religion. If Catholic, check if last rites have been administered. If Jewish, contact a local Rabbi immediately. For those of other religions, wait until you have heard from the family as to their wishes.
- If the participant died in an accident, inquire about the local laws regarding autopsy.
- Contact OGE staff regarding insurance coverage and procedures for repatriation of remains.



#### Reporting the Information:

- Inform the College immediately.
- Notify the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. A trained consular officer will notify the family, and that will be followed by contacts with the family by the College president and appropriate others.

#### Follow-up:

- Continue to keep a chronological record of events and actions as they occur.
- Talk to other student and participants and keep them informed and counseled.
- OGE staff and TRMT members will give the participant's family as much support as possible.
- OGE staff with guidance from the VP for Finance and Operations will assist the faculty in making arrangements for the repatriation of the body or remains.
- Gather the participant's belongings and make an inventory.
- Ship the belongings and inventory to OGE staff, which will forward everything to the participant's family.

#### **Upon Return – After-Action Review**

It is very important for faculty to schedule an after-action review with OGE staff upon their return to the US. This after-action review is key to the continuous improvement of our processes and responses to crisis; as well as the continuation of our programs.

Information for this document was drawn from the following sources:

University of North Georgia Study Abroad Risk Management, Emergency Response Plan for Faculty-led Programs

Study Abroad Program Director's Manual, Center for International Education, Columbus State University

Crisis Management Plan for Simpson College-Sponsored Study Abroad Programs

Responsible Study Abroad: Good Practices for Health & Safety by the Interorganizational Task Force on Safety & Responsibility in Study Abroad, NAFSA

NAFSA's Guide to Education Abroad for Advisers and Administrators

*Best Practices for Addressing Legal and Risk Management Issues in Education Abroad*, PowerPoint presentation by Julie Friend, Michigan State University, Barbara Lindeman, University of Missouri, and Patricia Martin, Swarthmore College.