



# **VCU Education Abroad: 2009 Program Director Workshop**

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# INTRODUCTION- Why are we here?

- ❖ Reiterate information in **Program Director Handbook** pp 19-26 (available at [www.international.vcu.edu/abroad](http://www.international.vcu.edu/abroad) click on “For Faculty”)
- ❖ **Prevent** and **prepare** for the unknown
- ❖ **Share** and **learn** from one another’s experiences



# **YOUR ROLE as Program Director** ***Before, During and After the Program***

## **BEFORE PROGRAM**

### **❖ Provide Country-Specific Pre-Departure Orientation/Meetings**

- ❖ Schedule at least one in late March/early April in addition to general orientation in which EAO covers basic travel, health, safety, packing, course enrollment, etc.
- ❖ Work with us to reserve room, notify students (at least notify us!)



## ❖ You must provide info on the following:

- » Flights & arrival (and plan in case of delay/cancellation)
- » Detailed daily itinerary including excursion information
- » Housing, meals, money exchange
- » Their contact info to give to emergency contacts in U.S.
- » Cultural, religious, political, environmental, legal issues
- » Drugs and alcohol
- » Packing list
- » Academic requirements/expectations: SYLLABUS
- » Behavioral requirements/expectations
- » Health and safety risks and emergency response measures
  - Disclosure of risks: be clear, specific, obvious and comprehensible



## ***BEFORE PROGRAM* continued**

### **Group Building**

- ❖ Reiterate the team/family concept
- ❖ Communicate with students (Blackboard, Facebook, Blogs, GoAbroad.net, etc.)
- ❖ Discuss their expectations, desires and ideas



## **BEFORE PROGRAM** continued

### **Insurance**

- ❖ Familiarize yourself with ISIC insurance:  
715-295-5452 call as soon as an accident happens and they will help identify a physician; student usually must pay up front and seek reimbursement for expenses (students must save receipts!)
  
- ❖ Familiarize yourself with your own coverage



# ***BEFORE PROGRAM*** continued

## ❖ **Obtain a cell phone**

- ❖ Plan to bring or purchase a phone that will be available to VCU, emergency contacts, students and turned on 24/7

## ❖ **Register** your group with US Embassy, or help us to encourage it: <http://travel.state.gov>

## ❖ Provide VCU with **your contact information** and 1 or 2 back-up contacts

## ❖ Obtain copies of students' **passports** (electronically and in hard copy)



## ***Your Role DURING PROGRAM***

- ❖ **Conduct on-site orientation:** reiterate buddy system, advise students of known risks, obtain student cell phone #s, create a “communications tree,” implement the “buddy system,” never leave residence w/o money or ID



## ***Your Role DURING PROGRAM*** continued

- ❖ **VCU liaison:** check-in with us regularly
- ❖ **Professor:** make yourself available to students; supervise academic experience and determine how you will assess final grades (documentation is essential); consider requiring a journal or blog during program so students can reflect on their academic/cultural experiences
- ❖ **Counselor:** culture shock is real and travel can exacerbate pre-existing conditions such as depression, eating disorders, self-mutilation, alcohol/drug abuse, anxiety, etc.



# ***Your Role DURING PROGRAM*** continued

## **Disciplinarian**

- ❖ Keep group's best interest a priority
- ❖ Issue a verbal warning if problems arise
- ❖ Keep a written log documenting details of events
- ❖ Dismiss participant for reasons including repeated disruptive/detrimental behavior, alcohol misuse, physical or sexual assault, harassment, possession or use of drugs, theft, etc.
- ❖ Upon dismissal, have student sign statement acknowledging the fact that he/she is no longer a participant and must vacate housing. Accompany student to airport if necessary.
- ❖ If student must leave early due to personal reasons, be sure to discuss situation, then have him/her sign a statement acknowledging that withdrawal is voluntary and that all expenses are his or her own responsibility. Send to EAO via e-mail or fax.
- ❖ Keep in mind that the students do not always have to like you! Your decisions may not always make everyone happy.



## ***Your Role DURING PROGRAM*** continued

### **Emergency Response Coordinator**

- ❖ **BE PREPARED:** take first aid kit, passport copies, health/prescription/emergency contact info provided by student on application, phone numbers, faculty handbook, contact for US embassy, cell phone, wallet guide

- ❖ **3-phase plan**



## ***Your Role DURING PROGRAM*** continued

Emergency card including your phone #, US embassy # and address, insurance #, accommodation #, back-up contact #, VCU number (you may also want to create a card for yourself)

### **In Case Of An Emergency While Abroad**

❖ Contact your faculty leader.

Local phone: \_\_\_\_\_

❖ Call the local emergency services.

Local phone: \_\_\_\_\_

❖ Call the VCU Police and be prepared to provide a number where you can be reached.

804-828-1234

Record your international cell phone number here:

\_\_\_\_\_

(be sure to include your country code)



# What is an emergency?

Arrest of a student, crime against a student, death, disease outbreak among participants, missing student, political emergency, natural disaster, medical health emergency, serious injury/illness/hospitalization, sexual assault, etc.



Follow through with crisis response before students call/e-mail home  
(response may or may not happen in this order):

## **STEP 1: Contact VCU**

OIE main line: 804-828-8471

EAO main line: 804-827-7882

Stephanie direct line at work: 804-828-8406

Stephanie's mobile: 804-319-9821

Stephanie's personal cell: 434-996-2816

Barbara's direct line at work: 804-828-8412

VCU Police: 804-828-1234



STEP 2: Get appropriate care for student; have Stephanie contact emergency contacts; **make no public statements** which should only be made to Pam Lepley, University News: 804-828-6057 pager: 750-7800)

STEP 3: Keep written log

STEP 4: Contact local police, embassies, consulates as necessary

STEP 5: Inform other students that they may contact family/friends



## Your Role as Program Director *AFTER* the program

- ❖ Evaluation and assessment: **timeline** should be given in advance with **due dates** for assignments, and students should be told when **grades will be posted**...which also means that you are responsible for making sure that your grades are reported to your department **ON TIME** or else...
- ❖ Communicate **outcomes** of program with EAO (begin planning 2010)
- ❖ Recruit **volunteers** to help promote for next year
- ❖ Stay **connected** with your students: Facebook, reunions, post program feedback/focus groups



# PARENTS' ROLE

- ❖ You should not make direct, initial contact with family members without student's permission. When possible, student should communicate with parents re: critical incident. NOTE: Do not presume that the student's parents are the listed emergency contact! Students provide EAO with emergency contact info at time of application (and they are not always the parents...sometimes it is a roommate, boyfriend, girlfriend, etc.).
- ❖ You should contact EAO whenever a student is ill or injured, even if it's not an emergency, so EAO is not caught off guard when contacted by the parents. (In this case, e-mailing Stephanie is fine).
- ❖ Parents want to be more involved and informed than ever before. Facebook groups and blogs are a way to give parents access to the information you are sending.



## Last, but not least...STUDENTS' ROLE

- ❖ Remind students that they are not on vacation (hence “study” abroad) and they are not traveling alone (and that they have voluntarily registered for the program)!
  
- ❖ Communication is key, and this goes both ways.



# *QUESTIONS/COMMENTS/SHARING*

