



AUBURN UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE PROVOST
AND VICE PRESIDENT FOR
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

August 30, 2010

MEMORANDUM TO: Deans

FROM: Mary Ellen Mazey
Provost

SUBJECT: International Education Risk Assessment

Attached is the new policy that was adopted on August 26, 2010. Please work closely with the Office of International Education as we implement this new policy.

I appreciate your cooperation.

Attachment

c: Lee Armstrong
Andy Gillespie ✓

DRAFT

ARG 7/21/2010

TO: Vice Presidents, Deans, Directors, Department Heads, and Faculty

FROM: Mary Ellen Mazey, Provost

DATE: July 21, 2010

RE: International Travel of Auburn University Students

This memorandum outlines policy for student participation on Auburn University-sanctioned activities to countries having political, social, or environmental difficulties where such problems cause the United States government to issue formal warnings to its citizens about safe travel. To ensure the safety and security of Auburn University students, it is University policy that all student travel to any country with a U.S. Department of State Travel Warning is prohibited. An appeal of this policy can be made to the Risk Assessment Committee of the Office of International Education and the restriction on such travel waived by the Provost upon recommendation of the Committee.

Faculty or staff members sponsoring or giving oversight to graduate or undergraduate students planning on visiting Travel Warning countries for any reason are expected to petition the Risk Assessment Committee to seek approval. For those students or student groups working through non-academic units that sponsor travel, leadership in these units will also be expected to interface with the Office of International Education and the Risk Assessment Committee.

Following these simple university policies and procedures will help all of us monitor travel and ensure student safety in Auburn's international programming. Thank you for your cooperation.

ASSESSING RISK FOR STUDENT TRAVEL TO AREAS UNDER TRAVEL WARNINGS
Office of International Education
July 21, 2010

BACKGROUND: THE NEED

As a rule, the Office of International Education (OIE) at Auburn University does not allow study abroad programs, and discourages individual student travel, to countries that are under a US Department of State (US DOS) Travel Warning. These warnings, issued periodically by the US government, are widely --but not universally -- used by universities in making decisions about which overseas sites are "safe." University policy is now being established to ban all student travel to Travel Warning countries.

However, it is recognized that Travel Warnings are often not specific. Different countries and different regions of a given country may present very different situations. Specific programs present different risk profiles. Given that no overseas program, anywhere, is automatically "safe," it has become clear that Auburn needs a way to respond flexibly to the information conveyed in Travel Warnings.

Many other schools have a process for making exceptions to policies which ban travel to countries under a State Department Travel Warning. This memo outlines a procedure we would use for Auburn, based on the experience of a number of other universities. The proposed procedure is being developed in consultation with all of the units listed below.

THE RISK ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

This Committee would have the authority to approve the safety of programs and sites for study, research, work, or service abroad, as well as the ability to cancel or revise programs based on safety and security issues. This would apply to all students (i.e. both graduate and undergraduate students) on all sanctioned Auburn University overseas activities, whether students are traveling individually or on an AU program. Cancellations or revisions could take place upon knowledge of a US DOS Travel Warning or in the absence of a US DOS Travel Warning or Public Announcement -- based on other known factors. The latter case would be rare given the speed with which the US DOS assesses and announces danger to its citizens. The Committee's findings would be sent to the Provost as a recommendation, and the Provost's decision would be communicated by OIE to the relevant members of the faculty and administration.

The Risk Assessment Committee would meet at least quarterly, and would be composed of representatives of the following:

- Assistant Provost for International Programs (OIE)
- Office of Study Abroad
- Division of Student Affairs
- Office of Risk Management
- Office of Communications and Marketing
- Office of the VP for Research
- Department of Public Safety and Security
- Other medical and student travel expertise
- One or more at-large country experts, not associated with the program (as needed, at the invitation of OIE)

WAIVER DECISIONS

Requests for exemptions from Auburn's travel policy will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis for individuals and credit/non-credit programs by the Risk Assessment Committee. The request for an exception should be submitted to the Assistant Provost for International Programs and should clearly describe the following:

- The importance of this experience for the individual student or program participants, particularly with respect to its importance in their degree program, and why no other country can provide a similar experience;

- The nature and logistics of the proposed travel and the local support structure, including information on the program organizers (from Auburn or the host institution, government agency, or NGO);
- The geographic, cultural and political environment of the proposed travel and its relationship to safety and security issues in the country concerned (include modes of travel, routing, other details, and maps);
- Procedures for keeping track of students' whereabouts and communicating this to Auburn (e.g. housing information, in-country contacts, mobile telephones, and the emergency contact protocol to be followed by the individual and/or the on-site contacts and Auburn personnel);
- Planned orientations both prior to departure and on-site which include information on safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural, and security-related issues;
- An emergency response plan for dealing with crisis situations on the program site;
- An evacuation plan for moving participants off the site (including key decision makers and how resulting plans will be funded);
- A communication plan for how program leaders or a student's supervisor will monitor and report situations to Auburn University officials during the period of travel;
- Details of how faculty or other program supervisors (affiliated and not affiliated with Auburn) will be instructed in these procedures;
- Other relevant information associated with a specific waiver request.

OBLIGATIONS OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT or PROGRAM AFFECTED

If waivers are granted, the individual student (and their faculty supervisor) or, in the case of a program, the program leader and participants, will be required to complete the following activities prior to departure:

- Submit a signed Travel Waiver Form with the Auburn Office of International Education;
- Submit a signed Parent Travel Waiver notification;
- Update the Emergency Response plan, the Communication plan, or the Evacuation plan as needed;
- Submit Auburn University forms for enrollment in international emergency medical, evacuation, and repatriation insurance through the Office of Study Abroad;
- Complete online Travel Registration with the US Department of State.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Should a Travel Warning or other crisis situation present itself while a student or program is overseas, OIE will determine whether conditions warrant suspension of the program and/or departure of the student from the host country. When time permits, this will occur following appropriate consultation with the sponsoring Auburn unit, program leaders, the Risk Assessment Committee, any on-site staff, area experts, peer institutions that may be co-located, and other organizations that may be appropriate to the situation.

RESOURCES

The following resources were consulted in the preparation of this memo.

- Association of International Educators (NAFSA). "Responsible Study Abroad: Good Practices for Health and Safety."
- Center for Global Education. Safety Abroad First - Educational Travel Information (SAFETI) Clearinghouse. Loyola Marymount University.
- The Forum on Education Abroad. "Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad."
- Indiana University, Office of Overseas Study
- Michigan State University, Office of Study Abroad
- University of Minnesota, Learning Abroad Center, International Programs
- University of Wisconsin, Madison, International Academic Programs
- Purdue University, Office of International Programs
- SEC institutional Offices of International Programs