



November 8, 2014

Dear Parent,

Congratulations, your son or daughter, enrolled at Montana State University, has been accepted into the study abroad program. Studying abroad supports the mission of Montana State University. Students, who travel to another country and live in an entirely different culture, are forced to challenge themselves, develop flexibility, and sharpen their sensitivity to new people and different ideas. They must adapt to a different academic system.

Our office makes every effort to assist interested students in their choice of location, the application procedure, the actual placement, and the pre-departure orientation. **We inform students of their role in being responsible for their study abroad experience.**

As part of the ups and downs and the cultural adjustment it is common to receive a distressed phone call from your son or daughter at some time during their stay abroad. This is something that occurs with most students. However, please do not hesitate to contact us if you are ever concerned for their well-being; their health and safety is our top priority.

Safety abroad cannot be guaranteed, just as it cannot be guaranteed in Bozeman, but there are steps a student can take to help keep him/herself safe. We discuss health and safety issues at some length in our **required** orientation program for all students going abroad and students are required to attend a Travel Health class hosted by Student Health Services. The single greatest threat to traveler safety is automobile accidents, a risk that students can largely control by their own decisions and actions. Exploring new places in pairs, rather than alone, is a good rule of thumb. Students are at a risk-taking, experimental stage of their lives, and often take college-age-related problems such as alcohol abuse with them. As a parent, you will want to be sure your student is covered by adequate insurance that includes provision for emergency evacuation and repatriation. (MSU student insurance, CISI and ISEP insurance all have these provisions.)

If we can give you further details, help with clarifying procedures, and offer assistance with your important questions during the time your student is abroad. Our office phone number is above, and my e-mail swelker@montana.edu. Please keep in mind that in order for us to legally be able to talk to you about your son/daughter's study abroad we need a FERPA form on file giving us permission to do so. We give this form to students to fill out and turn into us. While we are happy to talk with you as parents,

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your son or daughter is legally considered an adult and we are obligated to keep certain information private, even with a FERPA. Also note that since your son or daughter is the person studying abroad, it is our policy to keep our main line of communication directly with the student, when possible.

For your information the following sites may be of interest. The first is travel information the State Department and the other is the Centers for Disease Control:

<http://travel.state.gov>

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>

If you do not already have a valid passport we strongly encourage you to get one now so that in case of a sudden desire or need to visit your son or daughter's host country you will already have a passport on hand. In most cases, US citizens must have a valid passport to leave the country. Issue of a passport can take several weeks and even an emergency application can take days.

We are pleased that you have encouraged your MSU student to take advantage of this opportunity to study abroad and broaden his or her horizons. We're confident that it's a choice they will never regret!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan Welker". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Susan Welker
Study Abroad Manager