

## **University of Northern Iowa International Travel Safety Policy (Students)**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Policy is to set standards to enable safer student experiences abroad by specifying a process for approving University sponsored or sanctioned international travel activities and programs for students and by providing a mechanism for evaluating and managing risky international travel. This policy does not replace, but rather complements, Policy 3.14 International Study Programs.

### **Policy Statement:**

The University of Northern Iowa encourages students to travel to foreign countries to engage in study, research, projects, performance, or sport. Such experiences will provide students with a better understanding of the foreign culture(s) they will visit and a concomitant understanding of their own culture. Such “transformative learning experiences” will “inspire students to embrace challenge, engage in critical inquiry and creative thought, and contribute to society.” Nevertheless, travel to some destinations may be at significant risk. Such risks must be managed in accordance with the University’s health and safety obligations to its students, and with reference to travel advice issued by the US Department of State (“State Department”). In addition, those sponsoring a university activity overseas need to take reasonable steps to protect those students in their charge when traveling and to ensure that their acts or omissions do not create or increase a risk to the health and safety of students. Any University employee, who is planning international travel activities or programs involving students, whether credit-bearing or non-credit bearing, must follow the procedures outlined in this policy before traveling internationally. Nothing in this policy shall mitigate the student’s responsibility for ensuring their own safety and the safety of fellow travelers when traveling overseas.

### **Procedure:**

#### **1. Definitions**

1.1. **“Activity Sponsor”** means, with respect to a University Activity, the UNI faculty or staff member who has actively organized or coordinated a University Activity, or if there is no such person, the Head of Unit.

1.2. **“Head of Unit”** is the head of the academic unit or the administrative unit that approves the University Activity, sponsors the university activity or gives academic credit for the University Activity. Particular instances include:

1.2.1. In the case of travel sponsored by the Study Abroad Center, the Director of the Study Abroad Center.

1.2.2. When the University Activity is related to a particular University course the Head of Unit is the Head of the Department offering the course.

1.2.3. When the university activity is non-course related the Head of Unit is the Director of the Administrative office or Head of the academic department in which the travel is organized.

1.2.4. In the case of a student enrolled in a Continuing Education course the Head of Unit is the Head of the academic department offering the course.

1.3. **“Student”** means individuals enrolled in a program of study or registered in credit or non-credit courses at the University.

1.4. **“University Activity,”** for the purpose of this policy, means any activity:

1.4.1. Undertaken by a student to fulfill a requirement for academic progress at the University; or

1.4.2. Officially organized by the University; or

1.4.3. Paid for in whole or in part from University funds, including without limitation, third party research or other funds administered by the University.

University activities do not include:

1.4.3.1. Activities organized solely by a student or group of students; unless they otherwise meet the definition of University activities above. Activities organized solely by a student or group of students that do not otherwise meet the definition of University activities, for the purposes of this policy, may still be subject to other university policies.

1.4.3.2. **“State Department”** means the United States Department of State.

#### **2. Scope**

2.1. This policy applies to any student travel outside of the US in connection with a university activity.

2.2. Faculty and staff are frequently approached by individual students or groups of students for advice regarding planned international travel. Faculty or staff providing advice to such students should clarify with the students at the outset whether or not such travel is for a university activity and if so, inform the students of their obligations pursuant to this policy.

2.3. If people are uncertain whether or not contemplated travel is considered to be for a university activity pursuant to this policy, they should consult with the Associate Provost for International Programs.

2.4. All students planning to travel abroad for a purpose other than a university activity do so as private citizens independent of the university. Such students are solely responsible for making their own travel arrangements and making their own decisions regarding personal safety. While they are not required to comply with this policy, such students may take advantage of University services such as passport photos or the travel health clinic by paying the usual fees and may consult travel brochures and information in the Study Abroad Center and record their travel arrangements in the student Safety Abroad Registry.

### **3. Travel Planning and Responsibilities**

3.1. The University provides resources and support services aimed at facilitating safe travel experiences for student travelers. The Study Abroad Center educates student travelers about health and safety issues, facilitates student travel in a safe manner, and acts as a resource for student travelers, Activity sponsors and Heads of Units. However, the University cannot ensure that student travel will be problem free or account for all the potential health and safety risks that students might experience while out of country.

3.2. All student travelers have the primary responsibility to prepare themselves in advance of international travel, to research and be aware of the risks involved in their planned trip, to ensure that they are physically and mentally prepared for the travel, to ensure they have appropriate medical and other insurance for the travel, to conduct themselves in a safe manner while traveling, and to bring any concerns they may have to the attention of the senior University official at the place of travel (if any) as well as the Study Abroad Center as soon as possible after the concern arises.

3.3. Prior to participating in University activities outside of the US, students must register their travel plans with the University through the Student Safety Abroad Registry and obtain any authorizations to travel that are required in the procedures to this policy.

3.4. Any student planning to travel for a University activity who has concerns about their personal safety during the upcoming travel should identify their concerns with the activity sponsor and/or their Head of Unit as well as the Study Abroad Center who will work with the student to address the issue.

3.5. Where required by the procedures, activity sponsors must consult with the Study Abroad Center regarding University activities outside of the US and must comply with the directions of the Study Abroad Center.

3.6. Each Head of Unit must consider applications for authorization to travel for students participating in University activities in accordance with this policy and any accompanying procedures.

3.7. The University has no control over international events, and will not be responsible to refund any costs or losses, including the loss of timely academic progress, associated with student travel or the cancellation of student travel. This will be the case whether:

3.7.1. the student travel is not authorized pursuant to this policy; or

3.7.2. authorization for travel is revoked pursuant to this policy; or

3.7.3. the student doesn't travel because of concerns for personal safety.

### **4. Travel Support**

4.1. The Study Abroad Center provides support for the implementation of this policy by:

4.1.1. Maintaining the UNI Student Safety Abroad Registry, including student emergency contact information;

4.1.2. Staying informed of changing conditions as articulated in the State Department Travel Advisories and communicating these changes to affected University units and students traveling abroad provided the students are registered with Study Abroad Center in accordance with this policy and these procedures;

4.1.3. Working with activity sponsors, academic units and other programs to provide advice and assistance, particularly in cases where there is a State Department Travel Advisory, and advising university authorities on decisions to restrict student travel;

4.1.4. Working with academic units and other programs to assist when a State Department Travel Advisory is issued after students have departed on a program;

4.1.5. Offering pre-departure checklists, workshops and resource materials, and advising, to outgoing student travelers.

### **5. Risk Assessment System**

5.1. The University relies upon the Risk Assessment System established by the State Department to assess whether or not students should engage in University activities in various regions of the world. The table below lists the State Department categories and the recommendations of the State Department associated with them. The Risk Assessment System is generated and maintained by the State Department. The Study Abroad Center website (<http://www.uni.edu/studyabroad/>) provides a link to the State Department Travel Advisories but the University is not responsible for the accuracy and content of the travel information provided by the State Department.

- **Travel Alerts** are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions, either transnational or within a particular country, that pose significant risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert.
- **Travel Warnings** are issued when long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable lead the State Department to recommend that Americans avoid or consider the risk of travel to that country. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist American citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff.

## **6. Travel to countries that are the subject of State Department alerts or warnings**

6.1. The University will not authorize student travel to engage in a University Activity to a country or region of a country that is the subject of a State Department alert or warning unless exceptional circumstances exist. Worldwide or regional weather alerts are excluded from this policy. If a student believes exceptional circumstances exist to justify the University giving the student a special authorization, he or she may apply for special authorization as outlined in Article 6.2 of these procedures.

6.2. A student seeking special authorization to travel to a country or region of a country with a Travel Alert or Warning must apply to the Associate Provost for International Programs to seek authorization following the process provided by the Study Abroad Center, within the timeframes stipulated by the Study Abroad Center. The Study Abroad Center website at (<http://www.uni.edu/studyabroad/>) outlines the process needed to apply to the Associate Provost for International Programs, and the timelines for such application.

6.3. It is the responsibility of the Associate Provost for International Programs to recommend to the Provost whether to grant the authorization requested in Article 6.2 of these procedures. The Associate Provost for International Programs has the authority to decline such requests, and such decisions may be appealed to the Provost. Such determination must be made using the process outlined on the Study Abroad Center website which will include notification to the student. Before recommending travel, the Associate Provost for International Programs must be satisfied that:

- 6.3.1. The travel has the written support of the activity sponsor;
- 6.3.2. The travel has the written support of the Study Abroad Center;
- 6.3.3. For a student under the age of 18 years, the trip has the written support of the student's parents or legal guardians;
- 6.3.4. The travel is academically necessary for the student and, if not carried out at the proposed location and time, there will be serious negative consequences for the student's academic program;
- 6.3.5. The activity sponsor or student has submitted a risk assessment and emergency planning document which has been developed in consultation with the Study Abroad Center and which is deemed by the Study Abroad Center to be satisfactory;
- 6.3.6. The activity sponsor or student can demonstrate that the student has taken adequate steps to mitigate risks at the location and will have adequate support and guidance while in the region. In making this assessment the Associate Provost for International Programs should consider the student's experience and background in the region, whether a University employee is traveling with the student and/or whether the student is traveling with an established local organization with expertise in providing safe travel within the region;
- 6.3.7. If the travel is to a country or a region of a country with a State Department alert or warning, the travel has written support of the Dean of the student's College; Special authorizations of this nature will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. The fact that the conditions listed above have been met does not create any entitlement to a special authorization.

## **7. Changes to Risk Assessments**

7.1. Should the State Department issue a travel alert or warning regarding a country or region of a country while students are participating in University activities there, the Study Abroad Center will advise students registered in the Student Safety Abroad Registry and the appropriate Head of Unit. In this situation, students are required to follow the direction of the University, and leave the region or country if instructed by the University to do so. Students who refuse to follow the instructions of the University will be considered to be on unauthorized travel and will be subject to the provisions of Article 8 of the procedures.

7.2. The Study Abroad Center, when it is in receipt of compelling information that a country or region of a country presents a material increased risk to travelers, may determine that a country or region of a country is deserving of a warning for the purposes of this Policy, notwithstanding that the State Department has not done

so. In such cases this Policy will apply as if such country or region of country has received a State Department warning, and the Study Abroad Center shall take steps to communicate this decision to appropriate persons in the University community. Nothing in this Article 7.2 shall act to create an obligation on the part of the University to independently assess risk levels in other countries in any particular case.

## **8. Unauthorized Travel**

8.1. Where the University has not authorized student travel for a University activity, or where such authorization has been revoked as a result of safety concerns, and nevertheless the student undertakes the travel, he or she will be considered to be traveling as a private citizen and may not hold himself or herself out as traveling for a University activity.

8.2. No University resources can be used, or University sponsorship provided, in support of unauthorized student travel for a University Activity. In the event the University becomes aware of such unauthorized travel, the Provost, Vice President for Student Affairs, Associate Provost for International Programs or Head of Unit may, at his or her discretion, take any of the following measures:

8.2.1. Suspend or cancel the University Activity or the student's participation in the University Activity;

8.2.2. Suspend or cancel any funding to the student from sources controlled by the University;

8.2.3. Subject to applicable laws,

8.2.3.1. Advise third parties of the student's situation (for example government agencies, or the parents, guardians or next of kin of the student);

8.2.3.2. Advise third parties that the student is not traveling under the auspices of the University or with the authorization of the University;

8.2.4. If the Head of Unit is the head of an academic unit;

8.2.4.1. With the approval of the Dean of the relevant College, withdraw the student from registration in any course or program related to the travel;

8.2.4.2. With the approval of the Dean of the relevant College, decline to award academic credit for activities undertaken while traveling;

8.2.4.3. Determine that any research conducted while traveling may not be used as a means of meeting a degree requirement at the University.

8.2.5. Impose such other restrictions, within bounds of law and university policy, believed to be warranted by the situation.

8.3. When making a decision pursuant to Article 8.2, the Associate Provost for International Programs or Head of Unit must consider any information that has been received by Associate Provost for International Programs and the Head of Unit from the student.

8.4. Decisions made pursuant to Article 8.2.4 may be subject to appeal within the student's college and can be ultimately appealed to the Provost.

## **9. Requirements to Report Problems**

9.1. UNI staff and faculty must report significant problems related to the health and safety of students abroad to the Associate Provost for International Programs or designate as soon as possible after learning of the problem;

9.2 The Associate Provost for International Programs will notify the Threat Assessment Team of the problems. The Threat Assessment Team is authorized to manage situations that may threaten the health or safety of members of the campus community and will work closely with the Associate Provost for International Programs and others as appropriate to respond to such concerns.

9.3. UNI students should report any concerns or problems related to their own health and safety abroad to the senior University official in the place of travel (if any) and to the Study Abroad Center as soon as possible during their travel;

9.4. The Study Abroad Center will provide the student with access to all relevant UNI resources, and where necessary, will coordinate a response to any problem and notify the appropriate University officials.

## **10. General Travel Procedures**

10.1. Any student who travels for a University Activity abroad must register in the Student Safety Abroad Registry maintained by the Study Abroad Center and comply with any other requirements issued by the Study Abroad Center.

10.2. All students with US citizenship are required to register in the State Department Smart Traveler Enrollment Program at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration\\_4789.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/registration/registration_4789.html). Students who hold other citizenships should register with the embassy or consulate of their home country.

10.3. Students traveling outside of the US for a University activity are required to complete the online pre-departure health and safety checklist offered through the Study Abroad Center.

10.4 Students participating in travel for a University activity are expected to abide by the rules and regulations described in the Student Conduct Code. Alleged policy violations that may occur during the course of travel for a university activity are adjudicated in accordance with the procedures set forth in the Student Conduct Code.

10.5. Students who have been authorized to travel outside of the US for a University Activity to locations with a State Department alert or warning pursuant to this Policy must meet the conditions outlined in Article 3.2 of the Procedures, must work with Study Abroad Center to complete a risk assessment and emergency plan, and must complete an in-person pre-departure health and safety briefing.

10.6. The Study Abroad Center will keep a copy of all written authorizations granted by the Provost, refusals to authorize travel made by the Associate Provost for International Programs, as well as the risk assessment and emergency plan developed for each student traveler.

Office of International Programs

Approved by the Academic Affairs Council on August 23, 2011

Policy Committee Approved, \_\_\_\_\_

President's Cabinet Approved, \_\_\_\_\_