

# Warnings, Waivers, Wanderlust: Balancing Risk Management with Students' Expectations

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# Overview

- \* Introductions
- \* Questionable Locations
- \* Response to Travel Warnings
- \* Effect of Active Warnings
- \* Academic Freedom and Students' Safety
- \* Non-Credit Bearing Programs
- \* Q&A

# Current Travel Warnings

as of October 12

- \* Afghanistan
- \* Algeria
- \* Burundi
- \* Central African Republic
- \* Chad
- \* Colombia
- \* Congo, Democratic Republic of the
- \* Cote d'Ivoire
- \* Eritrea
- \* Guinea
- \* Haiti
- \* Iran
- \* Iraq
- \* Israel, the West Bank and Gaza
- \* Kenya
- \* Korea, Democratic People's Republic of
- \* Lebanon
- \* Libya
- \* Mali
- \* Mali
- \* Mauritania
- \* Mexico
- \* Niger
- \* Nigeria
- \* Pakistan
- \* Philippines
- \* Republic of South Sudan
- \* Saudi Arabia
- \* Somalia
- \* Sudan
- \* Syria
- \* Tunisia
- \* Yemen

# Questionable Locations

- \* Interpreting DoS Travel Warning language
- \* Benefits & Limitations
- \* Moving beyond Travel Warnings
- \* Risk Assessment & Risk Mitigation Techniques
- \* Emergency Planning & Trip Wires

# USF Risk Assessment

## Risk Categories

- Political Instability
- Natural Disasters
- Terrorism
- Crime
- Health
- Travel Safety

## Generic Trip Wires

- ✓ Freedom of movement restricted
- ✓ Lines of communication disrupted
- ✓ Specific Targeting
- ✓ Loss of government services
- ✓ Breakdown in public order

Where you draw your red line = Risk Tolerance

- ❖ Authorized Voluntary Departure
- ❖ Ordered Departure
- ❖ Closure of Embassy

## Crossing Trip Wires

- ★ Pre – Decision
- ★ Pre – Departure
- ★ During Program



- Earlier the decision is made, consequence is reduced (Terms of Risk, \$\$ or disruption)
- Risks generally increase as crisis develops
- Options decrease as crisis develops

## Risk Assessment

1. the magnitude (severity) of the possible adverse consequence(s), and
2. the likelihood (probability) of occurrence of each consequence.

Likelihood	CONSEQUENCE				
	Insignificant	Minor	Moderate	Major	Severe
Almost Certain	M	H	H	E	E
Likely	M	M	H	H	E
Possible	L	M	M	H	E
Unlikely	L	M	M	M	H
Rare	L	L	M	M	H

Risk Management = the ability to mitigate the affects of each consequence

# Response to Travel Warnings: Rollins College

- \* **Active Travel Warning:**
  - \* Reviewed by International Programs, Risk Management, and the College umbrella travel insurance company
  - \* Approved or denied on case-by-case basis
- \* **Unexpected Travel Warning:**
  - \* Reviewed by same parties to make a determination
  - \* If program remains in session, students are not forced to leave
- \* **Haiti:**
  - \* Proposed service-learning short-term for the summer of 2011
  - \* Concerns with Faculty leader, specific State Department information, and the focus/nature of the proposed trip
  - \* Ultimately denied the proposal.
- \* **Mexico:**
  - \* Proposed as a short-term faculty-led for the summer of 2012
  - \* Focus on Mayan communities in the Yucatan
  - \* Well-designed to minimize risk
  - \* Program was approved.
  - \* Minimal student interest and the program did not run

# Response to Travel Warnings: University of South Florida

- \* Recent History Regarding Policy on Travel Warnings at USF
- \* Ad Hoc Committee to discuss Safety and Risk
- \* Recommendation to establish International Risk and Safety Analyst Position
- \* In the interim -- case histories: Honduras/Thailand
- \* New International Risk and Safety Analyst Hired
- \* Plans Moving Forward with Position Filled

# Response to Travel Warnings: University of Florida

## **Israel:**

- \* Students sign an additional waiver (developed with UF General Counsel specifically for countries with a travel warning).
- \* (Mandatory) Israeli insurance does not meet UF requirements, so they are all enrolled in CISI (for health insurance and evacuation purposes)
- \* Students are advised not to go to the Gaza Strip or West Bank (much further south than Jerusalem, Tel Aviv or Haifa)

## **Other countries (existing travel warnings):**

- \* Proposal to Risk Assessment Committee (RAC) with clear description of program itinerary, learning objectives and evacuation plan
- \* Students sign an additional waiver (developed with our General Counsel specifically for countries with a travel warning). (hand out)

## **Other countries (unexpected travel warnings):**

- \* RAC will assess current situation with input from CISI, current practices from peer institutions and advise from the local US embassy
- \* Recommendation to the Provost to either leave students onsite or bring them home
- \* If students refuse to come home, they will be withdrawn from the program and from CISI, signing acknowledgment that they are no longer under the auspices of UF



# Effect of Active Warnings

- \* **Do you have an institutional policy that restricts travel to countries with State Department travel warnings?**
  - \* If yes, is it a clear yes travel, no travel policy, or is it nuanced to pertain to the noted security concerns?
    - \* Is there a committee to review each case?
    - \* Does the committee include Risk Management, Insurance, Study Abroad, Academics, Student Affairs?
- \* **Consult the experts:** OSAC, Regional Security Officers at Embassies, Risk Assessment Firms
- \* **Preparation of the student**
  - \* Connections with people in the area
  - \* Knowledge of the Language
  - \* Knowledge of the area
  - \* Relevance to the student's work
- \* **What are your colleagues doing?** (How about non-essential embassy personnel? Peace Corps?)

# Effect of Active Warnings

- \* **Know the ways in which the US Embassy can be of service**

- \* Does this warning mean there is limited service available?

- \* *If you accept the increased risk of sending students to a country with specific risks identified by the State Department...*

## **What are you doing to mitigate the risk**

- \* Hiring of local staff

- \* Appropriate insurance

- \* Evacuation plans

- \* Additional liability waivers

# Insurance Issues: Effect of Active Warnings

- \* **Do You have a Security Coverage in your insurance policy?**
  - \* Military Issues, Political Issues? Assault or Personal Safety? Natural Disasters?
- \* **Is that coverage void if there is a Travel Warning?**
- \* **What types of services are available?**
  - \* Evacuation from the closest safe airport?
  - \* Reimbursement for commercial flights if available?
  - \* Chartered flights?
  - \* Phone support only? Regional staff? In-country staff? On-site staff?
  - \* Escorts to a point of safety?
    - \* What are the parameters of escort if the location is unsafe?

# Academic Freedom and Students' Safety

## **Prior to the start of a program ....**

- \* This scenario is probably more true for grad students than undergrads (focused research abroad vs. undergraduate study abroad experience)
- \* Proposal to be submitted that includes both academics and logistics of the program including evacuation plan (Risk assessment committee to be in place to ensure fair and safe assessment)
  - \* → Forces students to do research on and demonstrate knowledge about the area
- \* Letter of support from faculty advisor that clearly states why this trip is academically necessary
  - \* → Can the research be done at a different location or at a different time?
- \* Students will need to feel that their proposal is being taken seriously, even though it might sound dangerous
- \* Approval will always have to be **CONDITIONAL**
- \* If not approved and students go anyway, can research be applied to current degree ?
  - \* → Film students in Haiti
- \* Undergrads: If not approved, students will need to understand (and sign off on) that they are no longer under the university's auspices
  - \* → re-admission to home school, no financial aid, no insurance, no credit transfer from direct enroll or third party provider programs

# Academic Freedom and Students' Safety, cont.

## During a program...

- \* Decision to evacuate students needs to be made by the risk assessment committee taking into consideration the views / actions of CISI, DOS, peer institutions, etc.
  - \* → Recommendation goes to the Provost
- \* What to consider if pulling out students prior to the end of the program
  - \* → more true for undergrads on exchange programs, direct enroll, third party provider program
- \* Will financial aid be affected?
  - \* → not enough credits for current or future semester to keep scholarships intact
- \* Will the host institution agree to grant partial credit?
- \* Will the host institution agree for students to complete course work at home?
- \* Is it too late to integrate into the home campus semester?
- \* Will home faculty agree to work with students on some kind of independent study?
- \* Will the home school pick up additional costs incurred by the forced evacuation?
  - \* → financial aid payback for not being full time
- \* If students refuse to come home, they will need to understand that aid, insurance, credit transfer is gone

# Non-Credit Bearing Programs

- \* **For example:**

- \* International conferences
- \* Research – independent or with faculty members
- \* Athletics international competitions
- \* Student activities and organizations abroad – i.e. international debate competitions, Engineers without Borders, band playing for the Olympics in the UK, etc.
- \* Service-learning and alternative spring breaks
- \* Internships for no-credit

- \* **Travel is institutionally-sponsored if:**

- \* Students are traveling with employees (faculty/staff)
- \* The experience was advertised through a body or individual on campus (including students)
- \* Students received any institutional funding for the experience
- \* Student is using this experience as part of their academic career (e.g. thesis, dissertation, etc.)

- \* **Institutional responsibility:**

- \* No different than with credit-bearing study abroad or “traditional” study abroad
- \* Best practices: be consistent in regards to risk management for all international experiences

# Non-Credit Bearing Programs, cont.

- \* **Procedures:**

- \* Harmonize with other domestically-focused policies and procedures
- \* Track travel through a registration process
- \* Make sure students are insured appropriately
- \* May also provide pre-departure materials for students and faculty/staff leaders, collect medical information, etc.

- \* **Whose responsibility?**

- \* International and/or study abroad offices
- \* Risk Management
- \* Within certain offices/departments (i.e. internships office, service-learning office, etc.)

- \* **Unique challenges:**

- \* Resources for management
- \* Gray areas:
  - \* A group of students gets together and decides to do a mission trip to Nicaragua through an organization one student has worked with before
  - \* A faculty member puts a student in touch with a colleague who then assists in planning a research trip abroad
  - \* How will media perceive these grey areas if something happens to a student abroad?
- \* Educating the institution as to the risks and institutional responsibilities for these experiences

# Any Questions?

## Thanks for joining us!

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