Education Abroad

Student Handbook
2013-2014

Occidental College
International Programs Office

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The central theoretical challenge is to develop a perspective that allows you to understand how personal experiences abroad are connected or related to the historical, political and cultural traditions of the host society.

~ *Writing Across Culture*, Wagner & Magistral
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Goals for Study Abroad Participants

1. Have as profound an experience as your capacities allow.

2. Reflect on the exceptional good fortune that enables you to have the support resources, and opportunity for such an experience at this stage of your life.

3. Open your receptors sufficiently to participate, to experience, to share in the daily life of the host country, and to experience both the culture and yourself in it.

4. Be an interested observer and participate in the local culture in contrast to the passive consumer. Ask questions! Contemplate the meaning of cultural practices! Appreciate the physical expression of visual and aural culture around you.

5. Feel that you are fortunate to be in your particular location and with those people, and to be able to communicate it.

6. Have the host families, communities, schools, and institutions with whom you have had contact say at the end, “I learned something from that student!”

7. Deal consciously with relationships and processes, as opposed to just dealing with factual data and content.

8. Be open to adopting new attitudes and behaviors in the development of appropriate behavioral responses to the new culture.

9. Have the opportunities to develop awareness in important ways: self, intellect, culture, career, faith, social justice, leadership.

10. Experience education from a different cultural perspective.

11. Have fun!

*Adapted from Scripps College Goals for Study Abroad & Pitzer College Goals for External Studies
**Checklist**

**Travel Documents:**
- Passport
- Visa
- Plane ticket
- Immunizations
- Certification letter from Oxy
- Admission letter from your program

**Before You Leave Campus:**
- CLEARANCE – on-line, in-person, whatever it takes to get “clear.”
  - STUDENT ACCOUNTS
  - FINANCIAL AID
  - ACADEMIC ISSUES (no incompletes, Ds or Fs the semester prior to participation)
  - CONDUCT
- Check with RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION to secure housing upon return
- Assign Power of Attorney
- Change mail forwarding address online
- Consult with on-campus advisors regarding scholarships and/or summer research opportunities
- REGISTRATION for the semester abroad – NOPE! IPO handles that.

**Preparing for Life Abroad:**
- Read information in your orientation packet thoroughly
- Purchase a guidebook
- Read an on-line newspaper for your country
- Read U.S. newspapers and on-line journals about current politics and events, for both your country and the U.S.
- Consult bibliographies in guidebooks and program materials to access books, films and music related to your country before you go
- **Power of Attorney** – Authorize a family member or trusted friend to handle your affairs.

**While Abroad:**
- **Check your Oxy email account** - It remains OFFICIAL College communication.
- **Registration for semester returning to Oxy** - on-line in the usual manner. Ask your academic advisor for your PIN number and registration time and date (Los Angeles time)! If you will have limited access to the internet, contact IPO.
- **Room Draw** – Check the Housing website and communicate with your proxy.
Travel Documents

You will receive additional, specific information on many of these topics from your program directly or Oxy faculty member leading your course. The information in this section is meant to be very general.

PASSPORT

You must have a US passport that is valid for 6 months beyond return from abroad. If you don’t have one, or you need to renew it, you will need to apply for one. Find out how here: http://travel.state.gov/passport. You may apply for a passport at many post offices including the Eagle Rock post office on the corner of Colorado and Figueroa.

Not a U.S. citizen? You need a valid passport from your home country and visa requirements may vary. See below.

Usually it is not necessary to carry your passport with you at all times while abroad - only when you need it for identification. See the Do’s and Don’ts page for more important information.

Lost Passport? - If your U.S. Passport is lost or stolen, report it immediately to the local police and nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. A consulate can issue a replacement passport, often within 24 hours. The copies/scan mentioned above help with this process.

VISA

A visa is official permission to enter a country. Not all countries require a visa, and often it depends on your country of citizenship as to whether you are required to have one. The representative of the program you are enrolled in overseas may assist you in obtaining one.

You should consult the US Department of State’s website. See travel.state.gov/travel, find your country and choose “ENTRY REQUIREMENTS.”

Have your acceptance letter from your overseas host school and the Oxy certification letter (in your orientation packet) available when you travel. This document, along with your passport, will be required to get through immigration even if you did not need to get a visa. Participants are responsible for the first $100 of the actual visa fee. Bring the receipt to IPO for reimbursement of any portion over $100. Fees for visa agencies are the expense of the student.

It is not uncommon for consulates to require that your documents be notarized. Many banks have notaries, so check with your branch. There is one notary on campus:

Kat Garcia  
Email: kgarcia@oxy.edu  
(323) 259-2945  
Department: Human Resources  
(Please make an appointment several days in advance)
Travel Planning

**Arrival**
Arrive by the designated start date and time for your program, including all orientation activities. **Before making your travel arrangements, verify your program dates and arrival instructions with your program sponsor, e.g., CIEE, SIT, or IES.**

**Group Flights**
If you choose to utilize your program’s group flight, you will be billed for this directly and are responsible for any additional costs.

**Booking Your Ticket**
Unless your program has scheduled a mandatory group flight, it is your own responsibility to set your itinerary and pay for your tickets. Make travel arrangements early. This is especially true for discount student airfares. In addition, some consulates of some countries require proof that you have purchased a round-trip ticket in your application for a visa.

Round-trip airfares are usually less expensive than one-way fares or “open return.” Ask about change/cancellation fees, taxes and restrictions. Stopovers are usually more expensive. Think creatively – sometimes good fares can be obtained by flying into one city and out of another.

While not officially endorsed by Occidental College, many students have had success working with **STA Travel or Student Universe**, both on-line student travel brokers. Travel agencies may also be able to tell you about train and bus passes or other options for travel before or after your program. Some of these discounted passes can only be purchased in the U.S. prior to departure, e.g., Eurail pass.

Read the airline’s travel restrictions and baggage rules before booking in order to avoid unnecessary fees. If you are not careful, you could end up paying more for strict baggage fees than your actual plane ticket.

**Independent Travel**
Travel during breaks is not subsidized by the college and is subject to all the rules and regulations of your host organization.

When choosing an airline, do not assume that travel procedures and rules are the same in a foreign country as they are here in the U.S.
Packing

Most airlines have strict weight limits for baggage and restrictions may differ for overseas flights and in-country domestic flights.

Packing suggestions:

- Light-weight luggage that is very durable. Wheel/back-pack combinations are good since wheels are great in airports and on the street, but back-packs are better in train/subway stations.

- A large hiking backpack is another investment to consider for traveling. Make sure you buy one with an internal frame, good hip belt, small side pockets for storing small items and good back support.

- A day-pack is useful. Many hiking backpacks include a detachable day pack.

- In your carry-on luggage, bring a change of clothes and any essentials, including any prescription medications in their original containers with accompanying prescription, in case your luggage does not arrive with you. Include your destination address on all luggage in case it gets lost.

**Rule #1** PACK LIGHTLY! Remember that you will be carrying everything that you bring. Frequent flyers often advise, “Bring half as much as you initially intend.” Bring outfits that coordinate well and don’t wrinkle too much. Clothing should also be durable, comfortable and be able to be worn several times before being washed—washing machines can be very harsh on clothing and expensive. Also, bring clothing you really like; you’ll be wearing it a lot.

**Rule #2:** Research the weather. For example, while it may be summer when you first get to England, consider that winter will be approaching quickly and may be long and harsh. You may want to buy some clothing there, made specifically for the weather. Plan accordingly.

**Rule #3:** Think twice about bringing American electrical appliances abroad as they are not compatible in most countries and will not work because of differences in current outlet configurations. If you do bring appliances, bring a converter or adaptor as well. You may want to purchase inexpensive electronic appliances in the country or bring battery operated ones (and plenty of batteries) with you. A wind up or battery operated alarm clock is much more useful than an electric one.

Financial Matters

**Comprehensive Fee**

Students studying off-campus are charged the Comprehensive Fee which covers the academic program abroad, room and board during the academic program, and a stipend toward local transportation costs between housing and the academic site, if required. The Comprehensive Fee excludes travel to/from the academic program, and room and board before or after the academic program and during vacation periods. The Comprehensive Fee is billed to the Oxy student account. Work with Student Accounts to maintain your preferred payment plan.
Participants are responsible for personal and incidental expenses such as but not limited to: books, laundry, internet cafes, postage, telephone calls, gym membership, airport taxes, medical fees, travel insurance, books, immunizations, purchase of bedding or cooking equipment, refundable housing deposits, passport fees, visa fees, and other incidental expenses. Many of these costs may be higher abroad than they are at Occidental. Also, many of the services that appear to be free at Oxy may not be at campuses abroad. Part of the learning process is adjusting your lifestyle to approximate students at your host institution or local community standards. “When in Rome, or Cape Town or Tokyo . . . . “

**Program Stipend**
Occidental covers the cost of room and board while abroad. For programs which are not all inclusive, participants will receive a stipend to cover the remainder. This is a country specific amount determined by your program provider. All funds are carefully researched and described in a detailed letter with a check to the student. Budget carefully – these funds are not meant for pub crawls or personal travel. SIT and OTS programs are all inclusive, so there is no stipend from Oxy. For CIEE, IES and Arcadia programs, the stipend is dependent on housing assignment, so let IPO know as soon as you are assigned housing.

**Financial Aid**
The College continues financial aid for study abroad on approved programs. Communicate with the Office of Financial Aid while off-campus in order to obtain and sign necessary documents associated with aid awards. Consult “Getting Aid for Study Abroad” [http://www.oxy.edu/financial-aid/current-students/aid-study-abroad](http://www.oxy.edu/financial-aid/current-students/aid-study-abroad). Please contact the Financial Aid Office with questions at 323-259-2548 or finaid@oxy.edu.

**Withdrawal Fees**
Voluntarily or involuntary withdrawal from off-campus is subject to a $300 withdrawal fee, as well as all unrecoverable costs incurred on the student's behalf.

**Accessing Money Abroad**

**ATM Cards** - Used in many countries, especially if your account is on a major network such as Cirrus, Plus or Visa and typically the best and fastest method for accessing your cash. Find out what the card requirements are for overseas use by checking with your bank. Inform your bank that you are traveling abroad so your card is not cancelled by the fraud prevention department. Also, find out from your bank what the amount of withdrawal fees is for overseas use and what the daily maximum money withdrawal is.

**Credit Cards** - Cash advances can usually be obtained from credit cards. (Beware of high interest rates, though!) Be sure someone is paying your bills for you in your absence. The credit card must be in your name to avoid any complications. The “big” credit cards (MasterCard, Visa) are accepted almost everywhere. Check with your credit card company to see what rules and regulations apply to overseas use and for a PIN number. Be aware, though, that some of the smaller cities overseas (particularly rural areas) may not accept any credit cards at all.

**Wiring money** - In order to have money wired to you, you need to have a foreign bank account and there is usually a high fee for this. This option should be used as a last resort.
One of the most interesting and challenging aspects of study abroad is “learning how to learn” like the locals do or -- depending on your program structure -- learning via activities that feel more like immersion than classroom work.

**The Academic Environment Abroad**

Oxy’s study abroad program is intentionally designed to facilitate significant interaction with the host culture. This means relying on the resources available to students within the educational institution or system in the host country. Host country professors may have been educated within the foreign system themselves. Prepare for differences both in the academic structure of the institution overseas, and also in teaching styles such as classroom pedagogy, student/teacher relationships, syllabi and reading lists, class assignments, and grading. Expect differences in administrative procedures such as course and housing registration. Flexibility and openness are essential.

**Transcripts & Grades**

Grades are converted into Occidental equivalents, listed on the transcript, and factored into the student’s Oxy GPA. All courses, grades and credits appear on the Oxy transcript.

Typically, transcripts are received from abroad between one and four months following the completion of the academic program abroad.

**Academic Requirements**

- **Take a full load.** All students must enroll in 16.0 units abroad. If you take fewer units, you will earn fewer units and jeopardize your progress toward your degree and your financial aid eligibility.
- **Don’t repeat.** No credit is granted for courses that duplicate previously completed college-level coursework.
- **No pre-professional courses.** Oxy awards credit for courses within the American liberal arts curriculum. Do not take culinary skills, hotel & restaurant management, applied business and marketing. When in doubt, ask IPO. ipo@oxy.edu
- **Course Planning Worksheet.** If courses change on site, contact the department and IPO via e-mail. Keep copies of all syllabi, reading lists, papers and exams to assist the department chairperson or Core Program office in ascertaining the viability of credit.
- **Follow program/host academic regulations.** For grading policies, illness, late work, incompletes, contesting grades, etc. Oxy cannot get you out of the host rules and regulations or change the grades which appear on your transcript from abroad. When in doubt, ask IPO.
Housing Abroad

Housing & Meals Overseas
You are subject to all the housing norms, policies and procedures of your program!
The local situation determines what housing options are available and situations can vary widely among
program sites. Overseas living conditions vary widely. Be prepared to adapt to host country’s standards
and environments. Private rooms, private telephones and computers, cars, as well as varied diets and
hot water are considered luxuries in some countries. Computer facilities and access to email may be
limited or unavailable. Utilizing public transportation may be a daily experience. To gain the most from
encountering these types of cultural differences, be flexible, adaptable, considerate and sensitive to
different situations.

Homestays
Homestays provide a cultural immersion environment in which relationships are formed which lead to
different kinds of learning:
- To function as a member of the family and community;
- To utilize family as a support system and problem solving network;
- To observe accurately without judgment culture on a micro/macro level.
- To practice/use language.

Upon moving into a homestay abroad, discuss expectations with the family as well as such details as use
of appliances, telephones, kitchen privileges, meal times, curfew, and other household rules.

University Residence Halls
On some programs, students live in single or double rooms. Residence halls may house first-year
students and international students. Residence halls overseas may be operated by the university, but are
seldom physically on-campus. Expect to commute! Meals may be “self-cater”, in kitchen facilities located
in their residence hall.

Apartments
When available, apartments may be university-operated, or independently arranged through a program.
Students may find they are living with other students from the program or from the host country.
Expect to prepare your own meals. There is the greatest degree of freedom and independence with
apartment-living, but some students may find the experience isolating and detached from the host
culture. Students generally commute to their classes.
Gift Suggestions for Host Families and Friends
It’s very likely that you’ll be grateful for the hospitality and friendship of the amazing people you’ll meet on your journey. Here are some suggestions, if you decide you would like to show your gratitude with a gift:

- Clothing and souvenir items with the Oxy logo or your state’s name
- Special edition American stamps and coins
- American cookbooks or recipes
- Linda Lyke’s Oxy Art Cards
- Obama at Oxy brochure
- Black book bags the bookstore uses
- Maple syrup or candies
- Scenic potholders, aprons, mugs, and glasses
- Lapel pins
- Typical non-perishable food items (i.e. Mrs. Field’s cookies, raspberry preserves, honey, etc)
- Saltwater taffy
- Placemats with American prints
- Items with state birds or state flowers
- Regional foods to make a special dinner
- Calendars with U.S. scenery
- Baseball caps
- Well-known U.S. icons (i.e. things from Disneyland, Warner Bros., Mt. Rushmore, World Cup, NBA, NFL, etc.)
- CDs of American music (jazz, blues, Zydeco, etc.)
- Drawings, paintings or professional-quality photographs of well-known areas of the U.S.
- Ansel Adams reprint photos (very famous American nature photographer!)
- Any hand-made craft or jewelry (especially Native American)

Cultural Adjustment

It’s a well-known fact that people experiencing a new culture for an extended time will experience periods of adjustment. This is sometimes referred to as culture shock, but this term seems too severe, as symptoms of adjustment aren’t always blatantly recognizable. Most times, individuals are not aware they are going through adjustment until they reflect back on their experiences. If you’re thinking it won’t happen to you — don’t be fooled!

The following sections will give you detailed information on what to expect, what to keep in mind and ways to help you navigate through your new surroundings.

Psychological Intensity Factors
These are factors that impact the adjustment process:

1. **Cultural difference** - your perception, whether true or false, of the gap and what the gap actually is between your culture and “theirs”.

2. **Ethnocentrism** - the attitude - both **yours** and **theirs** – that your (and your “group’s”) way of doing things is the best way.

3. **Language** – your fluency (or lack thereof) in the language of your host country may cause anxiety.

4. **Cultural isolation** – access to other Americans for constructive reflection vs. an “enclave” of negativity towards the host culture.
5. **Cultural immersion** - the more contact with the host culture, the quicker you will learn and adjust . . . but you will probably make more social, linguistic and cultural mistakes! But don’t despair, this is an opportunity for personal growth, learning and acquiring new perspectives.

6. **Prior intercultural experience** – the less intercultural experience you’ve had, the higher the psychological intensity of the overseas study experience.

7. **Expectations** – the more unrealistic your expectations are, the more intense your cultural adjustment will be. Form realistic expectations: learn what you can about your host country and culture before you go overseas; talk to others who have had experience in your host country. *Reality minus expectations = happiness*

8. **Visibility/invisibility** - Visibility = the elements of your identity that may call attention (hair color, height, gender, American, etc.). Invisibility = the elements of your identity that may be hidden or difficult to see (sexual orientation, feminist, vegetarian, person with a disability, etc.).

**Mitigating Factors That Influence the Psychological Intensity of the Experience**
- Program design (independent vs. structured)
- Your personality
- Previous experiences combined with meaningful reflection & informed strategizing!
CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROCESS

Cultural adjustment is experienced by individuals in many different ways. The following graph depicts typical psychological ups and downs that occur during adjustment. As you can see, even re-entry home will come with its own fluctuation of feelings! Almost everyone experiences “culture shock” or cultural weariness to some degree when abroad. In fact, it can happen each time a well-traveled person goes abroad. Culture shock is the process of adjusting to new customs, worldviews, and everyday life in a new culture – from basic philosophies to daily chores.

2. Honeymoon: I've arrived. Everything is great here. I LOVE it!
3. Initial Stress: Where can I find a stupid grocery store?
4. Culture Shock: I'm not eating. I'm not sleeping. Why doesn’t anyone speak English?
5. Adjustment: Things are more comfortable. I am making friends and getting their jokes.
6. Integration: This culture feels like home-away-from –home and things feel almost 2nd nature.
7. Competency: I dreamed in French! I was able to give directions to a “tourist” to the nearest ATM.
8. Depart: I'm excited to go home and see my family and friends but I am going to miss my new ones, too.
9. Home: I'm back and happy to see everyone! I missed the great professors at Oxy.
10. Re-entry Adjustment: No one wants to hear my stories. I’m so different but no one here has changed.
Some Symptoms of 

Culture Shock


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<tr>
<th>Overall Symptoms</th>
<th>Withdrawal Symptoms</th>
<th>Aggressive Symptoms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Anxiety</td>
<td>• Physical and/or psychological withdrawal</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Homesickness</td>
<td>• Spending excessive amounts of time reading or on-line with friends and family at home</td>
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<td>• Feelings of helplessness</td>
<td>• Need for excessive amounts of sleep</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Boredom</td>
<td>• Only seeing other Americans or Westerners</td>
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<td>• Depression</td>
<td>• Avoiding contact with host nationals</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fatigue</td>
<td>• Short attention span</td>
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<td>• Confusion</td>
<td>• Diminished productivity</td>
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<td>• Self-doubt</td>
<td>• Loss of ability to work or study effectively</td>
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<td>• Feelings of inadequacy</td>
<td>• Quitting and returning to your home country early</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Unexplained fits of weeping</td>
<td>• Compulsive eating</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Paranoia</td>
<td>• Compulsive drinking</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Physical ailments and psychosomatic illness</td>
<td>• Exaggerated cleanliness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Irritability</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Family tensions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Marital stress</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Excessive chauvinism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Stereotyping</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hostility toward host nationals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Verbal aggressiveness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Physical aggressiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Deciding to stay but permanently hating the country and its people</td>
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Reflections on the learning process of ........

Culture Shock

1. To some degree, *Culture Shock* is virtually **inevitable** and there are **NO** magic solutions to escape it altogether.

2. *Culture Shock* describes the more pronounced reactions to the psychological disorientation most people experience when they move for an extended period of time into a culture markedly different from their own.
   
   **Realize that . . .**
   - Everyone will experience it to some degree
   - It is **NATURAL** and not a sign that you are deficient or strange
   - You'll live through it!

3. Be ready for the lessons that *culture shock* teaches:

   *Culture* is the way of life that is lived by a group, includes its social norms, belief systems, and customs, and is passed down from generation to generation. As a survival mechanism, a culture's members may believe that their way of doing things are right and superior. *Culture shock* stems from an in-depth encounter with another culture in which one learns to the contrary that there are many different ways of doing things that are neither wrong and inferior nor right and superior. It teaches a lesson that cannot be learned as effectively by any other means -- that one's own culture does not possess the single right, best or even better way of providing for human needs and enjoyments. Believing that one's culture does so is a kind of imprisonment - from which the experience of *culture shock*, as uncomfortable as it may be, can liberate you!

4. Pack a copy of Robert Kohls “*Survival Kit for Overseas Living*,” (Intercultural Press, Yarmouth, ME, 1996) and reread it when you're feeling down or uncertain.

5. Develop a structured plan for maximum contact with host country nationals. Informed participation is richer, more meaningful and more satisfying. Connect with your local faith group while abroad to foster connections.

6. Begin to consciously look for logical reasons behind the host country's culture which may seem strange, difficult to understand, confusing or threatening. Take every aspect of your experience and look at it from the host culture's perspective. Search for patterns and interrelationships.

7. Try to discover what the cultural value underlying “strange” or troublesome behavior might be.

8. List all the positive things you can identify about your present situation. Post it in a prominent place so you can consult it often.

9. Try not to spend too much time writing letters or e-mailing home if that means you might be avoiding interaction with the host culture.

10. **AVOID OTHER AMERICANS** who are in a permanent state of culture shock and spend their days seeking fellow complainers. They ultimately will **INCREASE** your culture shock, even though a gripe session might feel good at the time. Recognize the difference between a griping session and a dynamic, intellectual, analytical discussion with a supportive friend.

11. Don’t succumb to the temptation to disparage the host culture. **Keep your sense of humor** but don’t tell “dumb native” jokes! Laugh at yourself, not others.
12. Talk to another foreigner who has been there longer than you who has successfully overcome culture shock. This will help you gain some perspective.

13. Make friends with host nationals –THAT'S WHY YOU WENT, RIGHT? If you hang out with other Americans you will never really adjust to the host country and you'll miss out on deep, meaningful interactions.

14. Cultivate a “cultural informant,” a host national friend to whom you can ask questions about cultural values, behaviors, and attitudes. Do take care to ask questions in an open, non-critical way.

15. When you seek advice, focus on what YOU are feeling inside rather than what you consider the causes of your problems.

16. Don’t worry about losing your own values. Your values are MUCH deeper and more permanent than you may think -- remember -- you've spent your lifetime cultivating them. Acting according to the customs of your host country (when appropriate) does not make you less of an American, just a more sensitive one!

17. Keep busy; keep active; keep your mind occupied. Don’t sit around and feel sorry for yourself.

18. During the deepest plunges, take a trip to a scenic spot or nearby country. When you return, be open to having positive “coming back home” feelings.

19. Share American (or others with which you identify) culture with your hosts. You’ll become an unofficial ambassador whose mission is to correct some of the many misconceptions promoted by American media.

20. Have faith that you will work through it! Cross-cultural effectiveness has a way of sneaking up on you.

21. Get help from your local faith-group, the Resident Director, faculty member, the International Student Officer, the IPO staff, or your host university’s counseling center.

22. One of the best ways to reflect on your experience abroad is by writing about it in a culturally sensitive fashion. Keeping a journal can help you process your experience – and be a wonderful record of your own growth.

23. If you start a blog abroad, please share it with International Programs!

Cross Cultural Effectiveness

Effective functioning in a foreign culture is based on meaningful human interaction. This requires the following core skills and attitudes:

- open-mindedness toward new ideas and experiences
- the ability to empathize with people from other cultures
- accuracy in perceiving differences and similarities between cultures
- being non-judgmental
- astute non-critical observation of your own and other people’s behavior
- being less ethnocentric
- understanding concepts: empathy, adjustment, culture, ethnocentrism, etc.
- understanding the process of communication within the context of cultural differences
- cross cultural communication skills
- ability to fail, sense of humor, low “task” orientation


Stumbling Blocks in Intercultural Communication

Recognizing the stumbling blocks is a first step toward finding ways to reduce misunderstandings and increase learning.

1. Assuming Similarity Instead of Difference ~ Both the guest and the host can easily fall into this trap. Especially when people dress appropriately and speak some of the language, it is easy to believe that they basically have similar ways of communicating nonverbally and similar thoughts and feelings.

2. Language ~ This seems obvious, but language refers not only to vocabulary, grammar, idioms, slang, etc., but also to understanding the meanings that are intended and implied by the words people say. For example, in some languages and cultures it is common to use sarcasm, irony or plays on words, while in others it is not.

3. Nonverbal Misinterpretations ~ People from different cultures live in different "sensory realities" that is, they only see, hear, feel and smell things that have meaning or are important to them. Some nonverbal signs and symbols - gestures, posture and body movements--are relatively easy to observe, and with effort, understand. Less obvious cultural meanings, values or significance can be found, for example, in the use of time and space. These cultural differences are much harder to notice.

4. The Existence of Preconceptions and Stereotypes ~ Stereotypes interfere with looking at things objectively: in other words, once stereotypes or preconceived ideas are formed, we are less likely to look for clues to help us understand someone else’s “reality.”

5. The Tendency to Judge or Evaluate ~ The tendency to approve or disapprove of the words, actions, ability of the other person instead of trying to understand the feelings and thoughts that are being expressed by the other person and trying to find the ways to look at the world from the other person’s perspective.

6. High Anxiety ~ People in intercultural situations are often anxious. Anxiety can amplify the other stumbling blocks.
Independent Pre-departure Preparation

There is only so much information that can be covered in a structured orientation program. In order to facilitate your own independent learning, these questions may help you prepare yourself to face the challenges and maximize the educational rewards of your experience. Answers to these questions can be found from a range of resources -- written materials (check the World Wide Web!!!), former participants and current international students on campus. The list is not intended to be exhaustive … what else is important TO YOU???

Deepen Your Knowledge – Maximize Your Potential Learning

History
- Who are prominent people in your host country? (political, religious, artistic, etc.)
- Who are the country's heroes and heroines?
- When was the country founded, by whom?
- What dates are significant in the history of your host country?

Politics
- What is the political structure of the country? How long has the structure been in place? Who is the president?
- Is military training compulsory? For whom?
- What is the history of the relationship between this country and the U.S.?
- Have many people emigrated from this country to the U.S.? When? Why?
- What is your political position as a foreigner in this country? As an American?

Religion
- What is the predominant religion of the country? Is it a state religion?
- Are you familiar with any of its sacred writings?
- What are the most important religious observances and ceremonies?
- How regularly do people participate in them?
- What other religions are practiced in the country?
- What is the attitude of members of the predominant religion towards other religions?

Values/Attitudes
- What is the attitude in this country towards alcohol?
- What things are considered taboo (or frowned upon)?

Language
- Are there other languages spoken besides the dominant language?
- What are the social/political implications of language usage?
- What type of language instruction will be available to you?

Family
- What are the most common forms of marriage practice?
- What is the attitude toward divorce? Extra-marital relations? Pre-marital relations?
- At what age is it common to marry?
- What is the typical family size?
- What games do children play? How are children disciplined?

Dress
- What is the usual dress for women? For men?
- What is appropriate dress for you, as a foreigner?

Social Etiquette
- What are the special privileges of age? Of gender?
- If you are invited to dinner, should you arrive early? On time? Late? How late?
- On what occasions would you present (or accept) gifts? What kinds of gifts are appropriate?
- Do some flowers have a particular significance?
How do people greet one another? Take leave of one another? Are there variations?
What are the social norms surrounding dating? Mixed gender friendships?
Are there cultural differences in nonverbal behavior such as personal space, gestures to avoid, etc.?

Leisure
- What are the favorite recreational activities of adults? Students?
- What sports are popular?
- What kinds of television programs are shown? What social purposes do they serve?
- How are important holidays observed?

Transportation/Travel
- How will you travel to your host country? To your host university?
- What types of public transportation are available? Do people of all classes use it?
- Who has the right of way--vehicles? Animals? Pedestrians?

Health
- What health/beauty items should you take with you?
- What kinds of health services are available? Where are they located?
- Where can medicines be purchased?
- What precautions should you take to remain healthy? (food, water, sexual practices, etc.)

Living Arrangements
- What options are available to foreigners?
- What costs should you anticipate? Restrictions?
- Will arrangements be made for you? Where will you go upon arrival?

Academic Considerations
- Is education free in the host country? Compulsory? Are children segregated by race, class, gender?
- What are the common teaching/learning methods?
- What are the important universities? Who goes to university?
- How does university course work relate to our university system?
- What academic load should be taken to gain both academically and culturally?
- What is the university calendar?
- How/when do you register for on-site classes?
- What types of assignments/exams should you expect?

Daily Life
- Is the price asked for merchandise fixed? If not, how is bargaining conducted?
- What is the normal daily schedule for a student? A family? Meal schedule?
- Is there a daytime rest period?
- What is the customary time for visiting friends? Are such visits scheduled?
- How does the banking system work? What is the best way for you to handle money? Receive it from home?

On Being Foreign
- How will your financial position/living conditions compare with those of the majority of people living in the country?
- Are there many U.S. expatriates in the country?
- How do you retain your own identity while adapting to the new culture?
- Should you register with the U.S. embassy? With the police?
- What are the visa requirements? What if you plan to travel to neighboring countries?

Some of these questions were adapted from the Survival Kit for Overseas Living, L. Robert Kohls, Chicago: Intercultural Press, 1979.
66 Ways We Differ

1. How we define “proper” behavior
2. How and when we greet each other
3. What’s considered common courtesy
4. What’s considered polite or impolite
5. How closely we stand to each other
6. The holidays we celebrate and how we celebrate them
7. How we show respect and disrespect
8. How and when we use money
9. The range in which we negotiate
10. What is modest or risqué
11. What is embarrassing or shameful
12. What makes us feel good, and what depresses us
13. What makes us proud, and what shames us
14. What, when, and how we eat and drink
15. What we wear, and when and where we wear it
16. How we see and behave toward sickness and health
17. How and when we seek and use health services
18. What we find funny or sad
19. How and when we use means of transportation
20. What we buy and sell, and when, how, and with whom we do it
21. When, where, and how we sit and stand
22. If, how, and when we touch each other
23. What we believe
24. What we value
25. What makes “common sense”
26. What are worthwhile goals in life
27. What is beautiful and ugly
28. The nature of God and other religious beliefs
29. What we believe we need and don’t need
30. Whether privacy is desirable or undesirable
31. Who makes what decisions, and in what circumstances
32. Whether a person is in control of his or her own life, or whether fate determines it
33. What should be communicated directly, and what indirectly
34. What or who is clean or dirty
35. What language, dialect, and tone of voice we use
36. To whom we speak and to whom we do not speak
37. The role of the individual
38. The roles of men and women, and how each should behave
39. The roles of parents and children, and how each should behave
40. The importance of harmony in a group
41. The importance of competition between individuals
42. Social class
43. Education levels
44. Hierarchy in business relationships
45. How time is understood and used
46. Whether schedules are important or unimportant
47. The importance of tradition and rituals
48. How often we smile, whom we smile at, and what it means when we smile
49. How strangers interact
50. How we interact with a person in authority
51. How we interact with a person serving us (e.g., in a restaurant)
52. Relationships and obligations between friends
53. Relationships and obligations toward extended family members and relatives
54. Facial expressions and other nonverbal behavior and gestures, and when they are used
55. Crowd or audience behaviors
56. The importance of preparing for the future
57. How we see old age and how we value elders
58. Whether conversation should be formal or informal
59. What should be said; what should be left unsaid
60. Whether, when, how, and with whom we make “small talk”
61. How we perceive what is friendly or unfriendly
62. How open or guarded we are with information
63. What behavior is ethical and what behavior is not ethical
64. How, whom, and how much we entertain
65. How or whether we take turns, stand in line, etc.
66. How often we change jobs or “move house,” and where and why

And there are many, many other ways in which we differ!!!

**American Cultural Patterns and Contrasts**


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Assumptions Often Encountered on U.S. Campuses</th>
<th>Cultural Variations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All people are different individuals</td>
<td>All people are integrally related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal change and growth are valuable and desirable</td>
<td>Conforming to time-tested ways of behavior is desirable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals have control over life’s circumstances</td>
<td>Circumstances are dictated by external forces</td>
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<th>Common Assumptions Often Encountered on U.S. Campuses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal problems can be solved</td>
<td>Problems are fated to occur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional counselors are genuinely interested in the welfare of strangers</td>
<td>Only close friends and family members may be trusted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People are (more or less) equal</td>
<td>There is a hierarchical ranking of people in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisions are best made by focusing on what is practical and feasible</td>
<td>Decisions made based on aesthetic and/or emotional factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicts are best settled through a forthright discussion</td>
<td>Conflicts may be avoided to prevent personal embarrassment (saving face)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect is accorded as a result of personal achievement</td>
<td>Pride in the family name can be just as important as accomplishments (or more so)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuality and privacy are important</td>
<td>The overall welfare of the group can be just as important (or more so)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Values Americans Live By
(Adapted from L. Robert Kohls)

1. **Personal Control Over the Environment** ~ Americans believe that every person should have control over his or her own environment. Thus, problems are not seen as a result of bad luck, but of laziness or incompetence. It is considered normal for everyone to look out for his or her own interests first and foremost.

2. **Self-Help Concept** ~ In the U.S., a person can only take credit for what he or she has accomplished by him or herself. Americans take pride in having been born poor and then succeeding through sacrifice and hard work. The American social system has made it relatively easy to move up the social ladder. The “self-made man/woman” is still very much an ideal in present day American society.

3. **Individual/Privacy** ~ In the U.S., every individual is seen as unique and therefore special. Americans resist being thought of as representatives of any homogeneous group. They tend to join many groups but to view themselves as a little different from the other members of the group. They tend to leave groups as easily as they join them. They tend to have a great variety of opinions.

4. **Equality/Egalitarianism** ~ Equality is one of the most cherished values for Americans. It has even been given a religious basis: that all people have been “created equal.” Everyone is seen as having an equal opportunity to succeed in life.

5. **Competition and Free Enterprise** ~ Americans believe that competition brings out the best in any person. They are trained to be competitive beginning from childhood. The U.S. has also devised an economic system to promote competition: free enterprise. Americans feel very strongly that the society that fosters competition will progress most rapidly.

6. **Action/Work Orientation** ~ Americans view any action as superior to inaction. They tend to plan and schedule an extremely active day. Americans believe that leisure activities should make up a relatively small portion of one’s total life. This has created many “workaholics.”

7. **Practicality and Efficiency** ~ Americans have a reputation for being extremely practical and efficient people. The practical consideration is likely to be given the highest priority in making any important decision.

8. **Materialism** ~ Americans view material objects as the natural benefits which result from hard work and serious intent.

9. **Change** ~ In the American mind, change is definitely seen as a positive condition. Change is strongly linked to development, improvement, progress and growth.

10. **Time and Its Control** ~ For the average American, time is of the utmost importance. Americans may seem to be most concerned with getting things accomplished on time, according to a predetermined schedule.

11. **Future Oriented** ~ Americans value the future and the improvements it may bring, which means that they tend to devalue the past and to be unconscious of the present. Almost all energy is directed towards obtaining that better future.

12. **Informality** ~ Americans are among the most informal and casual people in the world, even when compared to their near relative, the Western European.

13. **Directness, Openness and Honesty** ~ Americans have always preferred the direct approach. They consider anything other than the most direct and open approach to be dishonest. They quickly lose confidence in and trust for anyone who hints at what is intended, rather than saying it straight out.
Cultural Differences

“I” Cultures
--------------------------
- Independent
- Low Context
  Direct
  Precise
- Individual Goals
- Linear Logic
- Self-Face Saving
- “Say what you mean”

“We” Cultures
--------------------------
- Interdependent
- High Context
  Indirect
  Metaphorical
- Group Goals
- Spiral Logic
- Mutual Face Saving
- “Read between the lines!”

Low Context and High Context Communication

In his book Beyond Culture (1976), Edward T. Hall claims that human interaction, on the broad level, can be divided into low-context and high context communication systems.

**LOW-CONTEXT**

By low-context communication we emphasize how intention or meaning is best expressed through explicit verbal messages.

In general, low-context communication refers to communication patterns of direct verbal mode—straight talk, nonverbal immediacy, and sender-oriented values (i.e., the sender assumes the responsibility to communicate clearly). In low-context communication, the speaker is expected to be responsible for constructing a clear, persuasive message that the listener can decode easily.

When we use low-context communication we stress the importance of explicit verbal messages to convey personal thoughts, opinions, and feelings.

**HIGH-CONTEXT**

By high-context communication we emphasize how intention or meaning can best be conveyed through the context (e.g., social roles or positions) and the nonverbal channels (e.g., pauses, silence, tone of voice) of the verbal message.

High-context communication refers to communication patterns of indirect verbal mode—self-effacing talk, nonverbal subtleties, and interpreter-sensitive values (i.e., the receiver or interpreter of the message assumes the responsibility to infer the hidden or contextual meanings of the message). In high-context communication, the listener or interpreter of the message is expected to “read between the lines,” to accurately infer the implicit intent of the verbal message, and to observe the nonverbal nuances and subtleties that accompany and enhance the verbal message.

When we use high-context communication we stress the importance of multilayered contexts (e.g., historical context social norms, roles, situational and relational contexts) that frame the interaction encounter.

Kazuko Ieda, Ph.D., Pacific University, and Janet Bennett, Ph.D., The Intercultural Communication Institute. Based on Communicating Across Cultures by Stella Ting-Toomey, Guilford Press, New York, NY, 1999
Occidental monitors current situations around the globe, such as political unrest and natural disasters as they pertain to study and research abroad. The College has established protocols that will enable action, if needed, while students are abroad.

**Insurance - Required Coverage**

All students studying off-campus must carry adequate medical insurance equal to or greater than Occidental's accident and sickness insurance. The plan covers students worldwide and is effective from August 1-July 31. Some Programs (CIEE, IES, Arcadia, & SIT) provide adequate insurance and participants may be notified with the option to waive Oxy insurance. **Avoid any gaps in coverage during pre- or post-program travel or upon return to the US.**

Insurance brochure of Oxy’s coverage: [https://www.uhcsr.com/](https://www.uhcsr.com/)

For more information on Oxy’s coverage contact:  
**Julie Gordon** (jgordon@oxy.edu)  
(323) 259-2836

- Be prepared to pay for medical services at the time and be reimbursed through the insurance company.
- Carry your insurance card at all times. Don’t wait to print it out when you are too sick to get to a computer!!

**Health Risks**  
Consult the web pages of the [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention](http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx) and the [World Health Organization](http://www.who.int/en/) to investigate health risks for your country or region. Both the CDC and WHO have information on immunization requirements for particular regions. Some immunizations are given in a series over the course of several months, so be sure to plan ahead and get your immunizations early. Failure to follow immunization standards of your program or the above resources may result in serious consequences.

**Emmons Health Center**  
On campus: (323) 259-2657  
Phone: (323) 259-2657  
Fax: (323) 341-4970  
e-mail: [OxyWell@oxy.edu](mailto:OxyWell@oxy.edu)

**Healthy Traveler Clinic**  
1220 East Green Street  
Pasadena, CA 91106  
626.584.1200  
Staying Healthy Abroad

The pressures of living and studying off-campus are considerable. In some cases, mild disorders can become serious under the stress of life and study in a new environment. Physical problems can be exacerbated by local conditions such as pollution, new pollens, climate, etc., the stress of cultural adjustment, local differences in medical practices available overseas, changes in the diet and exercise. Further, the system of US health care may not be replicated in the host country. Therefore, it is important that Occidental College be forewarned of any medical or emotional problems which might impact the student in an off-campus study context.

The student is solely responsible to:
- disclose health conditions to the home school and on-site staff in order to adequately discuss the impact of any serious health risks on those conditions.
- inform yourself of possible health and sanitation conditions in their program location and discuss the impact of those conditions on their health with their providers prior to departure.
- obtain and carefully evaluate health and safety information related to the programs provided by the sponsor, the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the US Department of State and other sources.

Medical Care Abroad

The on-site coordinator or director of the program will be able to help you contact the appropriate physician or other medical authority when attention is required. In order to provide such persons and local medical authorities abroad with sufficient information to respond promptly and effectively to situations that require medical attention. Take a copy of the medical history report you completed prior to departure.

Personal travel may take you into unfamiliar or remote locations. If you are not fluent in the language, seek out an English-speaking doctor, if possible. **Call the number on your Global Emergency Services card for a referral.**

Prescriptions and Over the Counter Drugs

If you are under the care of a physician or require regular medication or injections (e.g. insulin or allergy shots), be sure to check with your personal physician for any advice or recommendations concerning your welfare while abroad. Notify the on-site coordinator of any special needs.

Whenever possible, students should get their prescriptions filled before they go abroad. Normally benefits are subject to supply limits (up to 31 days), however students can get a "travel override" for up to a six month supply. Present your prescription, proof of travel and your United Health Allies ID cards to a Medco pharmacy. If you do not use a network pharmacy, you will be responsible for paying the full cost for the prescription.

Persons with diabetes, those who are allergic to penicillin, or those who have any physical condition that may require emergency care should carry some kind of identification, such as a tag, bracelet, or card at all times indicating the specific nature of the problem, in case they are unable to communicate this information themselves. If possible, get the tag in the local language.

All prescription medicines should be accompanied by a letter from the supervising physician. This letter should include a description of the condition, the dosage of prescribed medications to assist medical
authorities during an emergency, and the generic name(s) of medicine. Any special health needs or medical conditions should be noted on medical history forms. Students who are required to take a medicine containing habit-forming or narcotic drugs should carry a doctor’s certificate attesting to that fact. It is also advisable to keep all medicines in their original and labeled containers. To avoid potential problems and because laws may vary from country to country, consult the embassies of the countries you will visit before departing the U.S. to be sure the medication is admissible to the country.

**Special Medical Needs**
Inform your program provider prior to departure of any special needs which may include dietary restrictions, physical concerns, learning disabilities, allergies, or strict religious observances in advance. This will help for you to receive the appropriate assistance and support needed ahead of time to ensure a positive transition from the start. In terms of accommodations, it is not guaranteed but will be very much considered.

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**Maintaining Strong Mental and Emotional Health**

*SAFETI Adaptation of Peace Corps Resources "Maintaining Strong Mental and Emotional Health" module, Pre-Service Health Training for Volunteers Binder, Peace Corps Office of Medical Services reprinted with permission from Gary Rhodes, Ph.D., Director Center for Global Education.*

**STRESSES OF TRANSITION**

**Experience with previous transitions and coping mechanisms**
Students who have been through a variety of previous transitions may already have many of the skills, techniques, and instincts needed to adjust to a new country. It is useful for them to review the coping mechanisms they have applied in the past and recognize those that worked and those that didn’t.

**Assessing current stress levels**
It is important to be able to identify what it is that is bothering us. It is natural as a student to be overwhelmed from time to time. Just pinning down what’s the matter can be something of a relief.

**MANIFESTATION OF STRESS**
Many emotions and reactions are to be expected when you are stressed. Some common manifestations are:
- Irritability over small things
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- Queasy stomach
- Desire to run away
- Constant feeling of tiredness
- Psychosomatic illness
- Excessive criticism of others
- Poor work performance
- Difficulty making decisions
- Unusually introspective
Feelings of guilt, worry and anxiety

COPING CHOICES STUDENTS MAKE

POOR Coping Choices
When a student is in a low mood, he or she is vulnerable, and people who are vulnerable can make poor coping choices. Examples of these include:

- Resorting to heavy alcohol use
- Staying in bed 12-14 hours a day
- Staying in your living quarters all day
- Eating excessively
- Avoiding friends and neighbors
- Escaping into sexual relationships
- Excessive

BETTER Coping Choices
The more coping strategies a student has identified and thought about before his/her struggles begin, the more likely he/she is to make good choices. Based on feedback from numerous students, the following six basic techniques are especially helpful in dealing with the stresses and strains of adjustment:

- Immerse oneself in study/reading that is satisfying
- Find a local person with whom one can talk regularly
- Practice one’s faith through prayer, meditation, reading, etc.
- Write letters/e-mails (or make audiotapes) to family and friends
- Visit fellow students
- Meet with Resident Director/Faculty to talk about the stress

SEEKING HELP
It is "normal" to experience stress in your adjustment to being a student, and other students will also have to cope with stresses, strains, low moods, etc.- such struggles are natural. However, whenever your usual coping mechanisms are not working for you or you find yourself making coping choices that are not in your best interest, realize that you may need more support and seek help.

You should understand whether a discussion will be confidential and be familiar with all the available counseling and support services providers. Available support could include your resident director, local counseling and healthcare professionals at your host institution or health center, program administration representatives, and the counseling center at your institution.

Signs of a serious problem that you recognize in yourself or a fellow student that would require intervention include:

- Prolonged depression
- Marked changes in eating or sleeping patterns
- Excessive anxiety that interferes with the ability to function
- Self-destructive or violent behavior
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Failure to comply with medical recommendations
Personal Safety

SAFETI Adaptation of Peace Corps Resources "Personal Safety" module, Pre-Service Health Training for Volunteer Binder, Peace Corps Office of Medical Services reprinted with permission from Gary Rhodes, Ph.D., Director Center for Global Education.

BACKGROUND
According to the Peace Corps, the number and severity of personal safety and security issues is rising in virtually all countries. Problems range from minor verbal harassment to theft and robbery to serious physical and sexual assault. These incidents are of concern to all students and staff. Try to obtain country and region specific statistics on physical and sexual assault. Some incidents are not avoidable, but many are.

CONDITIONS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO RISK
According to records, the situations which place students at greatest risk are:

- Being out after midnight
- Being alone at night in an isolated area
- Being in a known high crime area
- Sleeping in a unlocked place
- Being out after a local curfew
- Being intoxicated

STRATEGIES USED BY STUDENTS IN THE U.S. TO REDUCE RISK
Be reminded that you have been using a variety of strategies to avoid harm while living in the U.S. These strategies are:

- Listening for what is being said around them
- Keeping watch for suspicious people and vehicles
- Knowing what hours of the night are more dangerous than others
- Staying in and walking only in those areas that are well lit
- Avoiding being alone in unfamiliar neighborhoods
- Knowing where to get help (stores, phones, fire station, etc.)

It is important to discuss with on-site program staff the extent to which these strategies are or are not applicable during your time abroad.

FACTORS PLACING STUDENTS AT RISK
Your circumstance as foreigners place you at some increased risk. Specifically, you:

- Are new to this country
- May not speak the local language well
- Are traveling to new places and making new friends
- Are curious about your new home and the new culture you are living in
- Probably stand out in a crowd
- Have not yet learned the best way to say no in this culture
- May not yet pick up the "clues" in this culture that you are in danger
- Have not yet established personal daily routines in your new home
STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING RISK
Safety is ultimately the responsibility of each individual student and each person should actively develop his or her own personal safety strategies. Administrators can assist you in developing personal awareness and personal safety strategies. Some suggestions include:

On site:
- Establishing relationships with hosts, neighbors, and local authorities
- Improving structural security of residence (shuttered/barred window, door locks, sealed walls/ceilings, etc.)
- Ensuring access to emergency medical care
- Developing emergency support/communications network
- Screening night visitors

While Traveling:
- Notifying the program director of your travel plans
- Wearing prudent attire
- Restricting night travel
- Projecting certainty of route and destination
- Avoiding "high risk" regions
- Traveling with a friend/trusted other
- Inspecting vehicle for safety (tires, overloading, brakes, etc.)
- Establishing rapport with regular drivers
- Determining risk levels of varying means of transport (bus, train, taxi, hitch hiking, etc.)
- (Women) sitting with other women or middle aged couples

Urban Area:
- Demonstrating vigilance/confidence/"street smarts"
- Being aware of surroundings
- Avoiding "high risk" areas
- Identifying "safe zones"
- Using "buddy system"
- Carrying whistle or other personal safety device
- Locating safe hotels/guest houses
- Moderating alcohol consumption
- Carrying only sufficient cash in safe place (pouch, money belt)

REPORTING CRIMES
If you are a victim of an assault, reporting this incident to the administrator is important because:
- You may need medical attention
- You may need to or choose to talk with someone about what has happened
- You may want or need assistance in working with the local authorities
- You should be aware of whether the discussion is confidential.
Alcohol Abroad
SAFETI Adaptation of Peace Corps Resources "Dealing with Alcohol" module, Pre-Service Health Training for Volunteers Binder, Peace Corps Office of Medical Services reprinted with permission from Gary Rhodes, Ph.D., Director Center for Global Education. Adapted from Seattle University’s Education Abroad Student Handbook.

BACKGROUND
Alcohol (ethanol) is a psychoactive drug that causes depression of the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord). It is a legal drug, readily available, and its use is generally accepted throughout the world. Alcohol, when consumed responsibly (e.g., with meals, at social gatherings, celebrations, and in religious ceremonies), is generally not harmful for healthy people. However, the potential for abuse of alcohol is quite great, and it is extremely difficult to alter a pattern of alcohol that has the potential of becoming psychologically and physically addictive. It is important that students realize that they are at risk for alcohol abuse.

ALCOHOL AND THE CULTURE
The use of alcohol is encouraged in some societies and prohibited in others. In most cultures there are methods for controlling drinking, but these vary and may not be obvious to a person unfamiliar with a particular culture.

WHY STUDENTS ARE AT RISK
Excessive or inappropriate use of alcohol is often associated with stress. An individual may begin or increase drinking after a loss, disappointment, changes in environment, or because of loneliness. These stressors are common among students. Students are at particular risk for increasing alcohol use or developing an abusive pattern for a variety of reasons. Among them are:

- Stress of adjustment
- Depression
- Boredom
- Desire to please others
- Easy availability and low cost of alcohol
- Peer pressure
- Pressure from the local culture
- Student may be a "novice drinker"
- Frequency of alcohol consumption in the local culture

Alcohol dependence often has a familial pattern and at least some of the transmission can be traced to genetic factors. The risk for alcohol dependence is 3-4 times higher in close relatives of people with alcohol dependence.

DEFINITIONS
Abuse: Misuse of a drug causing adverse consequences (physical, social or psychological)
Dependency: Relying on, being influenced by, or needing a particular drug.
Intoxication: A spectrum of alteration of behavior and/or conscious state caused by alcohol or drug ingestion.
**Tolerance:** The ability to endure continued or increasing use of a drug, thereby requiring larger doses to achieve the desired effects.

**Withdrawal:** A psychological and/or physical syndrome caused by the abrupt reduction in dose, or cessation of a drug on which a person is dependent. **Detoxification:** The process of safely removing a drug from the body.

**EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL**
Alcohol abuse has many **behavioral** and **physical** effects that can include:

- Irritability
- Moodiness
- Anxieties, loss of judgment
- Violent behavior
- Impulsiveness
- Inability to cope

Physical effects can include:

- Alterations of muscle coordination, tremors and convulsive disorders
- Liver damage
- Sexual dysfunction and impotence
- Heart disease
- Gastrointestinal irritation and ulcers
- Malnutrition
- Cancer of the mouth, esophagus, or stomach

**SYMPTOMS OF ALCOHOL ABUSE**
The essential feature of alcohol abuse is a maladaptive pattern of use manifested by recurrent and significant adverse consequences related to the repeated use of alcohol. Symptoms of abuse may include:

- Daily use of alcohol (particularly if required to function normally).
- Inability to reduce intake, despite efforts to do so.
- Increasing alcohol consumption.
- Neglectful appearance.
- Blackouts (loss of memory of events which occurred when intoxicated).
- Continued drinking despite having a serious physical disorder that is aggravated by alcohol.
- Violence when intoxicated.
- Unexplained injuries.
- Binge drinking (episodes of remaining intoxicated for days at a time).
- Drinking alone.
- Legal difficulties (e.g., DUI).
- Failure to meet obligations to family, friends, or at work.
- Erratic or compulsive behavior.
- Deterioration of physical or psychological functioning.
RESISTING SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PRESSURES TO DRINK
Some personal strategies, which may help, include:
- Understanding why you are choosing to use alcohol
- Making rules for oneself to guide drinking
- Setting personal limit for drinking, sticking to it, or drinking less
- Providing more non-alcoholic than alcoholic beverages for oneself, friends and guests
- Maintaining daily physical activity
- Drinking only with meals
- Making oneself aware of the impact one's drinking has oneself and others

WHO HAS A DRINKING PROBLEM?
Positive responses to any of the following may indicate that a drinking problem exists:
- Can you drink more than other people without showing it?
- Do you have a drink at about the same time every day?
- Have you ever spoiled a party or outing by getting drunk?
- Have your family or friends talked to you about your drinking?
- Have you ever lost time from work because of your drinking?
- Do you need a drink in the morning?
- Do you ever wake up unable to remember what happened the night before?
- Do you take a drink before going to a party where drinks will be served?
- Do you ever drink enough to get high when you are alone?
- Has drinking become the most important and pleasurable of your activities?

GETTING HELP
A student's use of alcohol can become such a part of daily life, that it may not be recognized as a problem. Denial is a common defense which can also interfere with seeking help. However, few people struggling with alcohol can overcome that problem alone. Administrators should support treatment of alcohol abuse as both a medical and social/personal problem to be addressed. Students should be made aware of whether a discussion will be confidential.
Sexually Transmitted Diseases

SAFETI Adaptation of Peace Corps Resources "Sexually Transmitted Diseases" module, Pre-Service Health Training for Volunteer Binder, Peace Corps Office of Medical Services reprinted with permission from Gary Rhodes, Ph.D., Director Center for Global Education. Adapted from Seattle University’s Education Abroad Student Handbook.

BACKGROUND
Advisers and students themselves have a critical role in the effort to prevent sexually transmitted disease (STDs). Many students have one or more sexual partners during their stay. Studies have shown that the transmission of information alone frequently does not result in reduced participation in high-risk behaviors. Even educated and informed individuals may need help to effectively translate their knowledge.

Students should understand the following:
1. These diseases are communicable, and prevention (from becoming infected and from infecting others) is a matter of personal responsibility.
2. Although recognition of symptoms and seeking medical attention when they are present are essential, it is most important to remember that STDs are frequently present with no symptoms.
3. The presence of a STD significantly increases the risk of acquiring HIV.

TRANSMISSION
There are two general categories of risk behavior for the transmission of sexually transmitted disease:

Intimate Sexual Contact
The risk spectrum of behavior which can lead to transmission of STD's by intimate sexual contact includes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safe</th>
<th>Unsafe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Massage</td>
<td>Any intercourse without a latex condom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hugging</td>
<td>Oral sex on a man without a latex condom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body rubbing</td>
<td>Oral sex on a woman during her period or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kissing (dry)</td>
<td>vaginal infection with discharge without a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masturbation</td>
<td>latex barrier such as a dental dam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand-to-genital touching or mutual</td>
<td>Semen in the mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masturbation</td>
<td>Oral-anal contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sharing sex toys or douching equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blood contact of any kind, including</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>menstrual blood, sharing needles, and any</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sex that causes damage and/or bleeding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Possibly Safe

- Kissing (wet)
- Vaginal/rectal intercourse using latex condoms
- Oral sex on a man using a latex condom
- Oral sex on a woman who does not have her period or a vaginal infection with discharge (use a latex barrier such as a dental dam for extra safety)
**Parenteral Transmission**
Dirty needles and blood transmission of STD microbes present in blood of infected persons can be prevented by avoiding unsterile needles and unscreened blood products. Other mechanisms of transmission include tattooing and contaminated instruments used in traditional ceremonies.

**GENERAL SYMPTOMS OF STDs**
Any of the following symptoms may indicate a sexually transmitted disease and should prompt medical evaluation:

- Discharge from the penis or change in vaginal discharge
- Itching or burning in the genital area
- Redness or swelling in the genital area
- Sores, blisters or rash in the genital area
- Pain or tenderness in the abdomen, pelvic area or genital area
- Urinary tract symptoms such as burning on urination or urinary frequency

**SPECIFIC DISEASES**
Sexually transmitted diseases are infections caused by microbes - bacteria, viruses, and protozoa.

**Bacterial STDs include:** Chlamydia/Gonorrhea/Syphilis /Chancroid /Lymphogranuloma venereum

**Viral STDs include:** Herpes simplex /HIV/Human papilloma virus (HPV)/Hepatitis B

**Protozoal STDs include:** Trihomoniasis

**Ectoparasites** such as scabies and lice, though not microbes, are frequently spread by sexual contact.

**DIAGNOSIS**
Physical examination and lab tests (specimens, cultures and/or blood tests) are needed to help detect symptomatic and asymptomatic STD’s.

**TREATMENT**
Antibiotics can cure STDs caused by bacteria (Chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis). Immunity, however, is not acquired and re-infection can occur. Although manifestations of some viral STDs can be treated, the infection cannot be cured. These are lifetime infections. Partner notification and treatment, where applicable, are essential. Polices and procedures regarding confidentiality are important in this process. Blood tests for HIV and syphilis are indicated when an STD is diagnosed.
Staying Safe Abroad
The US Department of State webpage is an excellent resource for information on travel and study abroad: www.travel.state.gov and http://studentsabroad.state.gov. The site includes the following information:

Country Specific Information is available for every country of the world. This document includes such information as location of the U.S. embassy or consulate in the subject country, unusual immigration practices, health conditions, minor political disturbances, unusual currency and entry regulations, crime and security information, and drug penalties.

Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions, generally within a particular country, that pose imminent 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 to describe long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable. If there is a Department of State Travel Warning in effect for a country, Occidental cannot send students to that country without special permission from the Dean. In the event that students are already on site when a travel warning is posted, IPO will work with overseas program staff to determine the safest course of action for students. In the event a student has not yet departed, please contact the IPO.

As of February 19, 2013, there is a Department of State “Worldwide Caution” in place. The full text can be found here: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_4787.html

Concrete steps Americans abroad can take to increase safety:

- Use the same common sense traveling overseas that you would at home. Be especially cautious in or avoid areas where you are likely to be victimized. These include crowded subways, train stations, elevators, tourist sites, marketplaces, festivals and marginal areas of cities.

- Don’t use short cuts, narrow alleys or poorly lit streets. Try not to travel alone at night.

- Don’t draw attention to yourself as an American – avoid places where Americans tend to gather Avoid public demonstrations and other civil disturbances.

- Keep a low profile and avoid loud conversations or arguments. Do not discuss travel plans or other personal matters with strangers.

- Wear the shoulder strap of your bag across your chest and walk with the bag away from the curb to avoid drive-by purse-snatchers.

- Try to seem purposeful when you move about. Even if you are lost, act as if you know where you are going. When possible, ask directions only from individuals in authority.

- Know how to use a pay telephone and have the proper change or token on hand.
AMERICAN EMBASSY ASSISTANCE ABROAD

What a U.S. Embassy/Consulate CAN Do for You:

1. Contact you in the event of a national or personal emergency. IPO or your program registers your presence with the State Department prior to your departure to facilitate this. By registering with the U.S. Department of State, the in-country consulate staff will know how to contact you if a national or personal emergency occurs.

2. Re-issue passports to replace lost or stolen ones.

3. Disappearances: Missing persons are reported to the Overseas Citizens Services - Emergency Center in Washington, D.C. It provides a 24-hour line at 1.888.407.4747 or 1.202.647-5225 by which you (call collect if necessary) or your relatives can get in touch with the U.S. embassy in the appropriate country. They also maintain information in times of crisis with regularly updated reports from each embassy/consulate.

4. In the event of an arrest, a consulate officer will be able to operate within the framework of the law of the host country, visit U.S. citizens in jail, provide a list of local attorneys, notify family and friends and relay requests for money and other aid, intercede with local authorities to make sure rights under local law are fully observed, the U.S. citizen is being treated humanely according to internationally accepted standards and protest mistreatment or abuse to appropriate authorities.

5. Illnesses: The Citizens Emergency Center can get in touch with relatives of Americans who become ill or injured while overseas. They may pursue various courses of action to ensure the traveler’s safety. First, the traveler’s own funds will be used for his/her return and/or treatment. If the traveler does not have funds, the Citizens Emergency Center may approach the traveler’s family for funds. In emergencies, the Center can provide small government loans for returning American travelers who are in distress until private funds arrive. The Center can also send a telegram in the event of a death overseas, notifying the family and informing them they need to send money for the repatriation of the body.

6. The Citizens Emergency Center, 1.888.407.4747 from within the U.S. or 202.501.4444 from outside, can get in touch with the appropriate U.S. embassy in the event that someone is missing, injured or ill.

What a U.S. Embassy/Consulate CANNOT Do for You:

1. Exempt you from in-country laws, regulations and practices. It is your responsibility to learn and follow them.

2. Demand release or get anyone out of jail.

3. Represent U.S. citizens at trial or give legal counsel.

4. Pay legal fees and/or fines with U.S. government funds.

See the U.S. Department of State’s emergency assistance website at: http://travel.state.gov/
Security and Health
Do’s and Don’ts of Study Abroad

Do’s
1. Scan and email to yourself one copy AND bring paper copies of your passport and credit cards and keep them separate from your passport and credit cards – give a copy to your family and a copy of your passport to your in-country director.
2. Bring two passport size photos and a photocopy of your birth certificate in case you lose your passport. Scan and email to yourself one copy AND bring a paper copy in case you don’t have internet access.
3. Bring prescription drugs with you in their original containers. DON’T pack them in your checked luggage. Bring additional contacts/glasses or your corrective lens prescription with you.
4. Check with Emmons to find out if your prescriptions are controlled or prohibited abroad. You may need to carry a doctor’s certificate attesting to your prescription.
6. Understand completely what your health insurance covers and does not cover. Oxy insurance requires you to pay for services abroad and get reimbursed.
7. Only take the credit cards you need. Notify your bank ahead of time that you will be traveling to ensure that your cards are validated for access abroad.
8. Mark all your bags inside and out with your name and address – both home address and address of your program office abroad.
9. Scan and email to yourself a copy of your flight tickets or itinerary AND bring a paper copy in case you lose your tickets and don’t have internet access.
10. Carry a wallet-sized card with emergency contact info on it.

Don’ts
1. Leave home without getting IMMUNIZATIONS for the local health conditions.
2. Forget to secure the proper VISA 3-6 months in advance of your departure. Consult with your program and IPO.
3. Pack essential documents or medicines in your checked luggage.
4. Bring any clothing that is obviously patriotic about the USA.
5. Bring any expensive jewelry.
Pre-departure orientation includes discussion of general threats to health and safety. Country specific threats are addressed in on-site orientation. The following Personal Crisis Management Plan outlines threats to health and safety and how to plan for and avoid problems. Remember – the more you know about the culture, the more you immerse yourself in the culture, the safer you will be.

# Occidental College Education Abroad ~ Personal Crisis Management Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>KNOW</strong></th>
<th><strong>CARRY</strong></th>
<th><strong>COMMUNICATE</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know where and how to get to:</td>
<td>1. Addresses of above.</td>
<td>1. Contact your in-country crisis point-person immediately to report any incident and/or your status and needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Clinic/Hospital &amp; pharmacies that carry the meds you need</td>
<td>3. In-country crisis point-person contact info on paper.</td>
<td>3. As soon as possible, report status to IPO and your family. Call Campus Safety collect 323-259-2599.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. US Embassy or Consulate</td>
<td>4. Your cell phone fully charged at all times with point-person info saved.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Coins to call from a public phone.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Copy of your passport and local student ID.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Condition

### Natural Disaster
(flood, earthquake, hurricane, etc.)

1. Know the common threats specific to your location.
2. Plan your reaction and evacuation route from residence and program site.
3. Plan a back-up ‘safe place’ in case your evacuation site is compromised.

### Political Unrest
(protests, strikes, communication disruption, gov’t clores, etc.)

1. Stay informed!
2. Learn to recognize symbols of local political or activist groups.
3. Stay away from areas frequented by American tourists (Hard Rock café, US consulate, corporate headquarters) or targets for local political groups (union or political headquarters)

### Crime & Assault
(theft, pick-pocket, ATM, violence, fighting, rape, injury, etc.)

1. Pay attention! Observe!
3. Learn where dangerous areas are and stay away.
4. Learn how the time of day or certain events (athletic events, festivals?) can change a “safe” place to a dangerous one.

### Injury & Illness
(requiring hospitalization or extended absence from classes)

1. Read CDC information for your country
2. Get all recommended immunizations before departure. Take all prophylaxis medications.
3. Carry address of hospitals and clinics.
4. Carry insurance card.
5. Know the local names of medicines you are allergic to. Wear allergy alerts at all times.
6. Know host country vocabulary for your chronic conditions.

### Wide-spread Disease/Health Threats
(water or air quality, radiation, disease)

1. Stay informed by reading the local press and balancing with international media sources.
2. Know your program’s policies for managing risks and if necessary for withdrawing.

### Avoid & Plan

1. Move away, stay away. Monitor local media.
2. Follow your reaction/evacuation route from residence and program site.
3. Stay where you are if instructed to do so or if conditions make it more dangerous to travel.

### React

1. Move away, stay away. Monitor local media.
2. Plan your reaction/evacuation route from residence and program site.
3. Stay where you are if instructed to do so or if conditions make it more dangerous to travel.

1. Report to/summons police.
2. Get medical attention.
3. Report to in-country point-person and/or Oxy IPO.
4. In case of serious crimes, contact Embassy and IPO.

1. Let your US family know the local conditions.
2. Adhere to local and international medical recommendations.
3. Follow program guidelines.
**Purpose**
To ensure that in urgent or serious situations Occidental College students receive prompt, appropriate and thorough care, intervention or referral from both program staff and Occidental College officers.

**Situations**
Any situation or condition which jeopardizes the Occidental student(s)’ physical, or mental health, safety, well-being or program participation and/or requires the intervention of program staff. Such events or occurrences may include, but not be limited to: civil disturbances, natural disaster, severe or prolonged illness or injury requiring hospitalization, disciplinary action, emotional or behavioral disorders, illegal actions (i.e. drug use), absence from the program site, academic probation, etc.

To assist program directors and staff in addressing or resolving an urgent or emergency situation, it is vital that an Occidental official be promptly notified.

**Notification Procedures**
Campus Safety will contact Occidental’s crisis response team including:

Robin Craggs, Executive Director, International Programs  
Office: 323/259-2728  
rcraggs@oxy.edu

Barbara Avery, Vice President for Student Affairs  
Office: 323/259-2661  
bavery@oxy.edu

Jorge Gonzalez, Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Office: 323/259-2634  
jorgegonzalez@oxy.edu

Please be prepared to provide the following information:

- Student(s) name(s)
- Date & time of occurrence/condition
- Description of occurrence/condition
- Action taken by program staff
- Return contact information
- Action requested of Occidental officer (if appropriate)

**24 Hour Campus Safety at (323) 259-2511**

**U.S. Department of State Overseas Citizens Services - Emergency Center**
Washington, D.C. 24-hour line at (202) 647-5225 or 1.888.407.4747