Dear Parents,

Welcome to the St. John's University Global Studies family! We are excited to welcome your sons and daughters to their new homes abroad and introduce them to a life-changing experience. To make the most of their time away, St. John’s encourages students to take advantage of all of the opportunities we offer abroad. Your student’s journey abroad will be a time to grow personally, academically and professionally. Your support and interest will help immensely in their success.

The main purpose of this letter is to orient you to the Global Studies experience and keep you informed of important information about the study abroad program. This letter will help you understand how your student should prepare, where you can go for answers, and how you can assist your son or daughter with the process.

Each of the St. John’s University campuses is unique. The materials we provide to your student reflect these distinctions so your family knows what to expect. To be best prepared, we encourage you and your student to research areas that are important to your family, such as health, insurance, finances, and travel—so that you both know what to plan for and anticipate. One important point that you may notice as you conduct your research is that studying abroad is quite different from vacationing abroad. As a result, an open mind is essential for adapting to each new culture and location. Moments of frustration are normal, but it is often in these moments that your child will learn the most.

We suggest sitting down and discussing the following topics with your student before they leave for their destination

**Arrival**
- All students must arrive at their program location by the designated start date and participate in a mandatory onsite orientation. To ensure that all students are properly prepared for their time abroad, no exceptions can be made. Double check your student’s flight information to make sure they are arriving on the program start date. Airport pick-up may be provided as a courtesy.

**Essential documents**
- Make sure you have copies of all of your student’s important documents including their airline tickets, passport, visa (if applicable), and credit cards.
- Make sure they meet all their document deadlines—required forms, visa, housing etc.

**Emergency Contact Information**
- We will be using the emergency contact information that is listed on your student’s UIS account. This information was given when they applied to St. John’s University. Please make sure that his/her information is updated prior to their departure.
Communication

- Know the time difference between your current time zone and your student’s host city/cities.
- Know the long distance country code and city code you must dial to call your student’s new home.
- Discuss how and when you will communicate upon your student’s arrival in his/her host city, and be aware that he/she may not be able to reach you until several hours after the plane lands.
- Discuss how—and how often—you will communicate throughout the semester and by what method—e-mails, phone, on-line chat, etc.

Medical

- Medical support is available abroad; however, it is very important that your student disclose any health issues on his or her medical forms including, but not limited to, medical conditions, psychological issues, allergies, learning disabilities, and eating disorders. Disclosure of such information will not affect your child’s overseas study participation, but it will help us properly care for him/her. Please also feel free to call our office at 718-990-6105 if your student has a particular health issue you would like to discuss with an administrator prior to departure.
- Prescriptions written in the United States cannot be filled abroad. Make sure that your child brings enough prescription medication to last the entire stay overseas. In the case of daily-prescriptions, your student will likely need to get a “vacation override” from the insurance company in order to do this. Discuss this with your doctor and/or insurance provider.
- Prescription medications should be carried in their original, labeled bottles with the generic name of the drug. Students should have the prescription or a letter from their doctor on hand in case a customs officer requests it. Make sure the prescription drug(s) can enter the country by checking www.rxlist.com. Do not send prescriptions through the mail.

Student Health Insurance

- St. John’s University contracts with an insurance company to provide health insurance coverage during the course of a student’s program.
- Enrollment in the insurance program will happen automatically, and there is no additional charge. The student will be notified by email once enrolled, and the notification email will also have instructions for printing out an insurance card, accessing the website, and accessing important emergency contact information.
- While a student is abroad they should always try to contact St. John’s staff when in need. Students will receive more information about how to reach St. John’s staff at their on-site orientation. However, the insurance company can also serve as an invaluable resource, and will be able to provide students with local resources such as healthcare providers and pharmacies in their immediate vicinity. The insurance company can also work directly with students to arrange for a doctor’s appointment if needed.
- The coverage provided ensures that students in need of medical care will not have to pay out of pocket. Once contacted, the insurance company will begin to assist immediately and will communicate with on-call STJ staff to coordinate services.
Culture

- Living abroad has its ups and downs. Your student may experience culture shock and will transition through a range of emotions. It is important to try to understand these emotions and be ready to support your student as he/she adjusts to the new culture. Please note that adjustment is an on-going process, and that difficult moments may happen throughout the term. Our onsite staff is experienced, compassionate, and accessible to your son or daughter at all times. If your student contacts you with a concern, please encourage him or her to keep the local staff informed. They are best equipped to handle any situation.

Passports

- Make sure your passport is up to date and does not expire in the next twelve months. If you don’t have a passport, it may be a good idea to get one. In the unlikely event of an emergency, having a valid passport will help avoid any unnecessary delays in your travel plans.

- Your son’s or daughter’s passport will need to be valid for a minimum of six months after the final date of his or her program, and it is advisable that yours also be valid for that same period of time.

Visiting

- If you are planning to visit your student, please try to schedule your trip during their designated vacation times or toward the end of the program. Students are not able to miss class during your stay, so check on your student’s schedule before booking flights and hotels. We do not recommend travelling with your son or daughter to the abroad location or visiting them soon after their arrival. This often interferes with their adjustment and acclimation to the new environment.

Everyone’s comfort level with study abroad varies, and we have resources to help you learn more. One such resource is a brochure entitled, “What parents need to know! Before, during and after education abroad” for you to look over. This brochure has been published by NAFSA, an Association of International Educators and we believe it may be valuable to you as you help your son or daughter make the most of this amazing opportunity. If this is of interest to you, please contact our office and we will send one to you right away.

We look forward to assisting your son or daughter in preparing for an amazing journey overseas. We take great pride in our rich academic programs, and with your help we are certain that your child’s time abroad will be memorable. We consider ourselves very lucky—and very honored—to be part of that experience.

Please let us know if you have any questions at any point. We can be reached by phone at 718-990-6105, by e-mail at globalstudies@stjohns.edu, and online at www.stjohns.edu/globalstudies.

Sincerely,

Shannon Okuonghae,
Assistant Director of Global Student Services