

Emergency Notification Procedures and On-site Crisis Management for A&M-Commerce Faculty Leading Short-term Study Abroad Programs

Introduction

As the A&M-Commerce campus further develops programming in support of its commitment to globalize, a necessary component of such programming will continue to be providing students the opportunity to travel abroad for purposes of studying the cultures, histories, arts, economies and political systems of other nations. Indeed, this is indispensable if A&M-Commerce students are to become functionally successful global citizens of the 21st century.

While study abroad travel provides students important opportunities to grow both professionally and personally, any travel, particularly to international destinations, carries with it some inherent risk. Most travel destinations and programs will be completed without incident; however, there may be the rare occasion when our faculty and students are confronted with emergencies. This guide is provided as a resource to assist faculty leaders in negotiating instances of emergency circumstances.

Emergencies come in a variety of hues and complexities, each differing according to the immediate circumstances on the ground. Thus, no single guide can be written to cover all possible eventualities. What this guide is intended to provide, however, is a framework for effectively handling unforeseen circumstances that may present themselves during your travel. The efficacious handling of emergencies abroad will be essential in reassuring students and their families; conveying timely and accurate information to media queries; and keeping the A&M-Commerce leadership abreast of situational changes. The common through-line for successfully handling any potential scenario resides with the faculty member--s/he must provide the necessary leadership and maintain control to ensure A&M-Commerce students remain safe and calm.

What is an A&M-Commerce faculty-led short-term study abroad program?

A&M-Commerce faculty-led short-term study abroad programs represent the highest level of University obligation to provide support and assistance to participants and ensure students' safety.

The A&M-Commerce faculty-led short-term study abroad program is a University-sanctioned program through one of its major academic units (college/school-level) that is led by a full-time A&M-Commerce faculty or staff member. This type of program can range in duration from a few days to several weeks.

All requisite approvals from appropriate departments, colleges/schools and campus-level administrative units must have been secured prior to the program being offered to students and faculty/staff member must have made all logistical arrangements and traveled to the program site for purposes of reconnoitering before the actual conduct of the study abroad trip.

Responses to Emergencies Occurring While Traveling Abroad

The University's response to an international crisis will be impacted by a number of factors: 1) the type and level of crisis; 2) the number of A&M-Commerce affiliated travelers; 3) duration of the crisis; and 4) travelers' proximity to the crisis.

Each crisis will be unique, requiring the A&M-Commerce program leader to assess and weigh various factors in order to ensure program participant safety. In short, each emergency will require different remedies. Part of the assessment process will require program leaders to define the crisis and its component parts in order to develop suitable responses; not all crises are created equally. For example, an upset stomach is not the same thing as contracting malaria. A public gathering to hear a speech is infinitely different from mass violent political demonstrations. It will incumbent upon the leader to sort through the various facts and apply her/his leadership and years of experience to ensure an appropriate response is developed. The following guide is designed to assist in that process.

While the program leaders(s) will function as the on-site coordinator during crisis, s/he will be in frequent contact with A&M-Commerce staff units, primarily the Office of Global Programs (GPO) and the Safety and Risk Management Office, which have responsibility for assisting program leaders(s) and disseminating information to relevant persons, both on and off campus.

Key Constituencies

Effective crisis management necessitates identifying key constituencies who facilitate the flow of information and decision-making. The specific role for each will likely differ based upon the level of response, defined in later sections. Generally, however, the following constituencies will play some role in most emergency events:

- Faculty Director/Program Leader
- Office of Global Programs
- Safety and Risk Management Office
- Academic Affairs
- Media Relations Office
- Dean of Students Office
- Colleges/School/Department sponsoring the program
- Cultural Insurance Services International-CISI (Emergency Assistant Provider)

Emergency Contact Information

In most cases, Threat Level One listed below can be handled on site by the faculty director and briefed to GPO personnel upon the conclusion of the trip. Threat Level Two can be handled electronically (telephonically if necessary at the discretion of the faculty director) directly to the GPO contact number (**903-468-2001**). Threat Levels Three and Four, however, will require the faculty director to contact the University Police Department (UPD) in order to initiate the on-campus response mechanism. UPD can be reached 24/7 for such emergencies. (**UPD: 903-886-5868**). Secondly, a call should be placed to the GPO number provided above.

Additionally, faculty directors should acquaint themselves with the provisions of the University's medical/security evacuation provider, CISI.

Response Levels

Response Level One

Situation: Circumstances of inconvenience with minimal risk of bodily injury or harm, but privacy of personal space was or could be invaded.

Examples (This is not an exhaustive list)

- Traveler misses plane (not affecting travel dates)
- Dissatisfaction with A&M-Commerce approved housing
- Minor health problems not requiring professional medical attention (nausea, minor illness, injuries requiring first aid only).

Response of Leadership

On-site: Faculty/Staff Leader

- Personally assess the situation and provide assistance as required.
- Keep other program leader(s) and student abreast of the situation as necessary and appropriate, bearing in mind issues of privacy and need to know.
- Review response procedures and be prepared to escalate response as dictated by the situation.
- Debrief immediate supervisor and Executive Director, Global Programs upon return to A&M-Commerce campus.

A&M-Commerce: None usually required for this response level.

Response Level Two

Situation: Minor physical or mental discomfort, indefinite restriction of movement; voluntary or involuntary placement in an environment of increased threat to personal well-being.

Communication with A&M-Commerce is undertaken electronically at this level, if possible. If not, telephonic communication should be initiated.

Examples (This is not an exhaustive list)

- Traveler loses passport or other important travel documents
- Victim of pick-pocketing crime
- Accidental injury requiring outpatient medical care (laceration or fractures)
- Student leaving University approved housing
- Inability to account for student for up to six hours (unless specific information exists that a serious situation has occurred, which would necessitate elevating the situation to a level three situation)
- Non-threatening illness requiring bed rest (mild influenza or diarrhea)
- Theft from within place of residence that resulted in no bodily harm

Response of leadership

On-site: Faculty/Staff Leader

- Assess situation and provide assistance as required.
- Notify and maintain contact with the GPO (Note: Level Two Response notification can be via electronic means unless the program leader deems it more appropriate to undertake telephonic notification.)
- Notify immediate supervisor (see note above).
- Keep close watch of the situation.
- Keep other program leaders and students abreast of the situation as necessary and appropriate, within the limits of privacy consideration.
- Contact CISI as necessary for medical assistance/referrals.
 - Notify the GPO of any problems with CISI service.
- Review response procedures and be prepared to escalate response as necessary.

GPO

- Maintain contact with program leaders.
- Advise associated college/school/department of situation.
- Send copies of travel documents to travel if required.
- Advise CISI of any travel plan revisions or problems with service.
- Facilitate communication with family members if desired and/or required.

College/School

- Maintain contact with the GPO.
- Assess situation and determine if additional resources are required and work with GPO to secure them.
- Assess if student disciplinary action is required.
- Determine if changes need to be made to the program and notify the GPO of such changes.

CISI

- Contact medical providers as needed.
- Contact traveler.
- Notify System Risk management of any problems providing service or limitations of service.

Students

- Provide immediate assistance as required and able.
- Communicate situation to program leader(s).
- Maintain contact with program leader(s) and fellow students.

Response Level Three

Situation: Involves some immediate physical danger, serious physical or mental discomfort, inability to travel, or requiring immediate medical assistance. Possible need for evacuation. Given the time sensitivity of events at this level, communication with A&M-Commerce is telephonic with electronic updates as appropriate.

Examples (This is not an exhaustive list)

- Sexual harassment (not including assault)
- Civil unrest in the city of travel resulting in large protests, political instability or general degradation of security
- Major natural disaster in an area of the country not being transited
- Threatening/disruptive behavior by program participants that could escalate to injurious behavior
- Hospitalization due to an accident or serious illness
- Inability to account for student for more than 6 hours and up to 18 hours
- Arrest or detention of traveler
- Physical assault resulting in minor bodily harm

- Theft from within place of residence by an outside assailant when students are present

Response of Leadership

On-site: Faculty/Staff Leader

- Provide immediate assistance to students or other travelers, if needed and able.
- Open and maintain contact with the GPO until the situation has been stabilized. Report the situation as known and follow instructions as requested.
- Verify the situation on the ground through contact with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, other Embassies or Consulates, and /or other reliable sources (specifically for civil unrest or natural disasters). If appropriate, remain in contact with the nearest Embassy or Consulate.
- Evaluate the necessity of relocating student(s), planning how, when and where to do so.
- Via UPD, initiate contact with the A&M-Commerce Safety and Risk Management Office for medical referrals/assistance or security evacuation, if situation requires. The A&M-Commerce Safety and Risk Management Office will, in turn, contact the System Risk Management Office for any required support. The System Risk Management Office will interface directly with CISI.
 - Notify the GPO at above telephone numbers of any problems with CISI service.
- Work with local police, other emergencies responders, and authorities as needed.
- Share information on management of the situation with students, as advised by the GPO.
- Review response procedures and be prepared to escalate response as necessary.

GPO

- Keep Academic Affairs apprised of the situation on site and subsequent changes.
- Coordinate information relevant to the emergency and communicate to Chief, Media Relations; provide timely and accurate information for responses to queries from the press to Chief Media Relations.
- Coordinate and disseminate relevant information to the Dean of Students Office.
- Provide talking points to program leader(s)/University leadership.
- Assist with locating mental health resources for students in need.
- Evaluate risk to traveler(s) and facilitate decision-making process regarding additional actions needed via coordination with campus study abroad advisory committee.
- Provide assistance with any incident investigation and reporting requirement for insurance and/or benefit coverage, VAWA, Clery Act or Title IX.
- Advise appropriate person within associated school, college or department of situation
- In collaboration with University administration, the University Study Abroad advisory Committee, and college/school/department, decide if an A&M-Commerce presence is needed at the location. Consultation with CISI and/or counterparts may assist in the decision.

- Coordinate debriefing upon resolution of the incident.
- Ensure accessibility to a list of potentially affected travelers, along with their home and in-country contact information.
- Contact program leader(s) to verify traveler status and needs.
- Gather information from Overseas Security Advisory Council web site, host institutions, and other pertinent resources regarding security threats and convey this information to university leadership through Academic Affairs.
- Advise CISI of any travel plan revisions or problems with service.

Dean of Students Office

- Prepare and coordinate communication with families of affected students, faculty and staff, as directed by University leadership.

Media Relations

- All queries from the media and all responses to queries from the media will be handled by the Chief, Media Relations.

CISI

- Contact medical provider(s) as needed.
- Implement security evacuation protocols, if required.
- Contact traveler.
- Notify the GPO of any problems providing service or limitations on service.
- Begin planning for any contingencies requiring evacuation of individuals or groups.
- Plan for the next response level depending on the threat level.

College/School

- Maintain contact with the GPO.
- Contact family members of program leader(s) as deemed appropriate by University leadership.

Students

- Provide immediate assistance as needed and able.
- Remain in constant contact with program leader(s) and follow all instructions.
- If program leaders are incapacitated, open and maintain contact with the GPO, following all instructions.
- Contact family if possible to notify them of current situation and share information provided by program leader(s) and/or the GPO.

- Remain in approved housing location as directed by program leader(s).

In-Country Counterparts

- Provide health care references.
- Assist with planning safe shelter refuges or escape routes if needed.

Response Level Four

Situation: traveler(s) in direct threat of or has suffered serious physical and/or mental injury (up to and including loss of life). Probable need for evacuation and/or repatriation of remains.

Examples (This is not an exhaustive list)

- Direct physical and criminal attack such as rape or assault
- Serious injury in an accident
- Extended hospitalization due to illness or injury
- Inability to account for student for more than 18 hours
- Terrorist attack or major natural disaster in the area of travel (although injury to the traveler may not be able to be confirmed)
- Kidnapping
- Plane crash
- Loss of faculty leader
- Death of traveler for any reason

Response of Leadership

On-site: Faculty/Staff Leader

- Provide immediate assistance to students or other travelers if needed and able.
- Via UPD, initiate contact with the A&M-Commerce Safety and Risk Management Office for medical referrals/assistance or security evacuation, if situation requires. The A&M-Commerce Safety and Risk Management Office will, in turn, contact the System Risk Management Office for any required support. The System Risk Management Office will interface directly with CISI.
 - Notify the GPO at above telephone numbers of any problems with CISI service.
- Open and maintain contact with the GPO. Report the situation as known and follow instructions as requested.
- Contact the nearest Embassy or Consulate and advise them of your situation. (US Embassy or Consulates should be contacted first. If unable to do so, contacting embassies or consulates of other nations, may be final, and perhaps only, recourse.

- Verify the situation on the ground through contact with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, other embassies or Consulates, and/or other reliable sources (specifically for civil unrest or natural disasters). If appropriate, remain in contact with the nearest Embassy or Consulate.
- Evaluate the necessity of relocating student(s), planning how to evacuate and to where. GPO will assist if additional support is required.
- Work with local police, other emergency responders and authorities as needed.
- Share information on management of the situation with students, as advised by the GPO.

GPO

- **Coordinate information relevant to the emergency and communicate to Chief, Media Relations; provide timely and accurate information for responses to queries from the press to Chief Media Relations.**
- Provide talking points to program leader(s).
- Assist with locating mental health resources for students in need.
- Evaluate risk to traveler(s) and facilitate decision-making process regarding additional actions needed via coordination with campus study abroad advisory committee.
- Provide assistance with any incident investigation and reporting requirements for insurance and/or benefit coverage.
- Advise A&M-Commercesenior administration, via the Office of Academic Affairs, of the situation and any subsequent changes.
- Coordinate and disseminate relevant information with the Dean of Students Office.
- Advise appropriate person within the associated school, college or department of situation.
- In collaboration with university administration, the campus study abroad advisory committee, and the associated school, college or department, decide if an A&M-Commerce presence is required at the location. Consultation with CISI and/or counterparts may assist in this decision. In the case of the death of a traveler, an A&M-Commerce representative will be sent to the international location to assist with repatriation of remains.
- Coordinate debriefing upon resolution of the incident.
- Ensure accessibility to a list of potentially affected travelers, along with their home an in-country contact information.
- Contacting program leader(s) to verify traveler status and needs.
- Gather information from Overseas Security Advisory Council web site, host institutions, and other pertinent resources regarding security threats and convey this information to university leadership through academic Affairs.
- Advise CISI of any travel plan revisions or problems with service.

Dean of Students Office

- Prepare and coordinate communication with families of affected students, faculty and staff, as directed by University leadership.

Media Relations

- All queries from the media and all responses to queries from the media will be handled by the Chief, Media Relations.

CISI

- Contact medical provider(s) as needed.
- Work with faculty leader, government officials, and the GPO to evaluate the need and procedures for an evacuation of students and staff, or to initiate repatriation of remains.
- Notify the GPO of any problems providing service or limitations on service.

School, College or Department

- Maintain contact with the GPO and assist as requested.
- Contact family members of program leader(s) as appropriate and required by University leadership.

Students

- Remain in constant contact with program leader(s) and follow all instructions.
- If program leaders are incapacitated, then open and maintain contact with the GPO, following all instructions.
- Contact family if possible to notify them of current situation and share information provided by program leader(s) and/or the GPO.
- Remain in approved housing location as directed by program leader(s).

In-Country Counterparts

- Provide health care references.
- Assist with planning safe shelter refuges or escape routes if needed.

Evacuation of a Single Student Due to Family Emergency

There will be rare occasions when, due to family emergencies, a student(s) participating in a University-sponsored study abroad program will require evacuation. While the scenario may differ from those listed above, the steps remain unchanged:

- Via UPD, initiate contact with the A&M-Commerce Safety and Risk Management Office for medical referrals/assistance or security evacuation, if situation requires. The A&M-Commerce Safety and Risk Management Office will, in turn, contact the System Risk Management Office for any required support. The System Risk Management Office will interface directly with CISI.
 - Notify the GPO at above telephone numbers of any problems with CISI service.