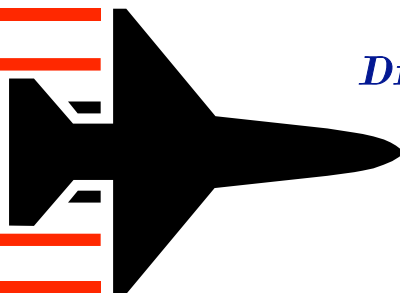




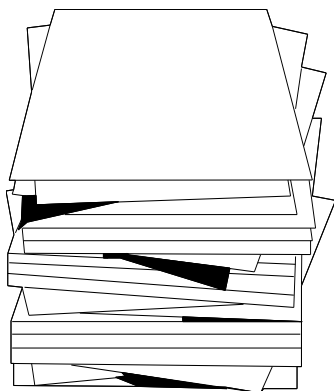
*Belmont University  
Study Abroad  
Pre -Departure  
Student Handbook*



*Kathy Skinner,  
Director*

**WELCOME!**

By deciding to participate in a Study Abroad program, you are choosing the way in which you will encounter and experience a different culture. Whether you are enrolled in an intensive language program, studying in your major area, or learning more about a different culture, your experiences will be life changing ones. You will translate involvement in a local community into international experience and global understanding.



## Forms

*The following guidelines will help you complete your acceptance materials in order to secure your place in the program.*

**Form 1: Application** – Must be filled out and turned in along with your \$500 deposit by the deadline for each individual program. You may obtain an application from the Office of International Education.

**Form 2: Disclosure & Release Agreement** – The director of your program will give this to you and explain its purpose. This form lists any risk factors related to the country where you will be studying. Once the risks have been explained, this form releases Belmont University from any responsibility for you while studying abroad.

**Form 3: Medical Information Form** – Should an emergency arise while you are abroad, it is important that your Program Director is aware of any past or potential medical conditions that you may have. A frank evaluation of your health is essential to your safety. Please be honest and comprehensive when completing the Medical Information Form. The information you provide *cannot* and *will not* be used to disqualify you from the program. These forms will be given to you by the director of your program, or you may pick one up in the Office of International Education. Information you give on this form will be kept confidential, and only the director of the program and International Education staff will have access to this information.

**Form 4: Insurance Verification Form** – You are required to show proof of adequate insurance coverage to participate in Belmont Study Abroad programs. In your acceptance packet you will find a form for your insurance provider to fill out and return to the Office of International Education prior to your departure. If your personal insurance does not provide overseas coverage, you will be required to purchase an additional policy through another carrier. In your acceptance packet, you will find brochures from three different providers.

**NOTE: Each Program Director will have mandatory orientation meetings where you will learn important information related to the country you will be visiting and the program in which you will be participating.**

### Before You Go

The decision to study abroad may be one of the most important choices you make in your life, significantly influencing the way in which you view yourself and the world around you. Aside from basic preparations for your experience abroad, it is valuable for you to take time to investigate the cross-cultural experience and the adjustment you are likely to encounter. Take time to re-evaluate your academic, personal, and professional goals for the program.

You should be knowledgeable about the country where you will be studying. You will be a far more welcome and comfortable guest abroad if you are familiar with the history, geography, political system, laws and culture of your host country. Read extensively about your new country in advance. If you have not already started, begin reading periodicals which have good international news coverage. Most libraries maintain subscriptions to foreign newspapers and/or periodicals which offer a different perspective on the news in the country you will visit and on the United States. These will also help sharpen your language skills. You can also find printed material in the Language Learning Center. Be sure to access the State Department's website (<http://www.travel.state.gov>.) for advisories relating to the country where you will be studying.

It is equally important that you become knowledgeable about the history, geography, political system, and culture of the United States. You will be asked about the U. S. often, and you will feel uncomfortable if you are not well informed. The better prepared you are, the more able you will be to assimilate new experiences into a framework of understanding, optimize your learning experiences, achieve a deeper sensitivity to the new country, and minimize the effects of cultural shock.

### What are your goals?

In order to make the most of your experience, it is important that you identify goals and objectives before leaving. The following questions may help you with this self-evaluation.

#### Personal

- What are my personal beliefs and attitudes?
- What does it mean to be an American?
- What are our cultural beliefs and customs?
- How do I plan to learn about the cultures, customs, behaviors, and values of the country where I will be studying?
- What am I willing to consider?
- Will I be open to doing things differently? Will I take risks?

#### Academic

- Why am I going: to practice a foreign language, to learn about foreign countries and cultures, to fulfill academic requirements, to explore new areas of study?
- How does this study abroad experience fit into my academic plans? What courses have I already taken to prepare me for the program?

#### Professional

- Can I use this experience in the future? Will I go to graduate school or straight into a career?

## ***Cultural Adjustments***

*(This page applies to students who will study abroad for a semester or year.)*

### **Coping with Cultural Shock**

Experiencing a period of adjustment to a new place and culture is normal. Do not react passively. Try to keep busy taking advantage of the cultural and historic resources around you. Make plans to go somewhere (e.g. local café, the market, a museum, the theater). Set goals for yourself: explore a new part of the city each week, learn ten new foreign phrases a day. Remember that your feelings and confusion will not last forever. While it may be somewhat painful, culture shock can be a very valuable learning experience which will leave you with broader perspectives, deeper insights into yourself, and a wider tolerance for other people.



## **During The On-Site Experience**

### **Cultural Differences**

Americans share certain living habits. When living at home, you take for granted that everyone follows similar cultural norms, but when you go abroad, the local cultural norms may be unfamiliar. Encountering cultural differences is part of the excitement of going abroad, but it also poses a challenge. Upon arrival in a foreign country, you may experience an immediate sense of euphoria (everything that is new seems intriguing and exciting). Inevitably, the newness wears off. You may feel frustrated or isolated; what was once an inviting cultural difference may become annoying. Gradually, though, you will adjust to the foreign culture and become comfortable living in it. As your familiarity with the local language and customs increases, you may become so comfortable in your new environment that upon returning to the U. S. you experience “reverse culture shock”. There are peaks and valleys in the process of culture adjustment. Just when you are feeling positive about your adjustment to the new culture, you may suddenly feel uncomfortable again and vice versa. Ultimately, you will adjust.

When the idiosyncrasies of a culture begin to frustrate you, you may notice that at the same time you are wrestling with a bout of homesickness or mild depression. You may blame these problems on the cultural differences to which you are adapting. However, more than likely the root of your problem is something other than adapting to cultural particularities. You may be lonely, missing family gatherings at home, or having unusual academic difficulties in your new setting. It is important to discover the source of your troubles and not succumb to the temptation to blame and disparage the new culture you are experiencing.

## **LEARNING FROM YOUR STUDY ABROAD EXPERIENCE**

### **Take an Active Role~**

*You can make the most of your experience if you take an active role.*

#### **Prepare** to learn from your experience through:

- Clarifying why you are going on the program.
- Finding out what you will be doing.
- Identifying what you might learn.
- Setting goals for yourself.

#### **Learn** on-site during your program through:

- Noting how you feel about the experience.
- Identifying the skills you are developing.

#### **Reflect** on what you have learned through:

- Comparing what you had expected with what you actually experienced.
- Identifying your impressions of your international experience.
- Considering how your semester or year abroad can lead to other opportunities.

### **Keep a Journal**

We encourage you to think and write about your study abroad experience as an out-of-classroom learning experience. Writing about this experience will provide you with:

- A summary of what you have learned for your future reference
- A way to connect your activity to your academic interests, additional out-of-classroom learning options, and work/life choices

## **Language Acquisition**

Sometimes the most difficult part of being abroad is the frustration you will experience trying to communicate in another language. You're no longer able to communicate easily on an adult level and all your efforts are draining. This initial period of exasperation will give way to feelings of pride and accomplishment as you begin to make progress in the language. Keep in mind that in future years, you will not remember your inability to ask for directions on your first day abroad. However, you will remember the day at the local farmer's market when you successfully bartered for a kilo of apples at half the asking price!

## ***Cultural Adjustments***

### **Stereotypes**

When you travel abroad keep in mind that people who do not know many Americans personally, may tend to judge the Americans they meet casually by stereotyped standards: “all Americans are wealthy...always in a hurry...ignorant of other countries...loud...racially prejudiced.” Many of these stereotypes come from U. S. television, which is available worldwide. When recognizing an inaccurate judgment or stereotype, avoid becoming angry or defensive. Just be yourself and hope that your behavior may positively change people’s perception of you and other Americans they meet. Remember that stereotypes work both ways. Undoubtedly you have prejudgments of other nationalities. Try to remain open to the likelihood that these views are inaccurate.

### **Language Preparation**

To prepare yourself linguistically for your time abroad:

- **If you are not already learning the language, enroll in a language class.**
- **Listen to radio broadcasts in your target language, watch foreign TV programs, or attend foreign films.**
- **Read the foreign language press.**
- **Arrange for conversation exchanges with international students at Belmont.**
- **Attend the International Coffee Hour on Friday mornings from 10:00-11:00am in Student Affairs.**

### **Re-Entry: Returning Home** *(This mainly applies to students returning from a semester or year abroad.)*

Once you have settled into your new culture, the thought of leaving your new friends and new home may bring on a different set of anxieties. Re-entry is the process of readjustment to the home culture and, in some cases, may prove to be more difficult than the adjustments to life in a foreign country. You may be concerned with how your family and friends will react to the “new” you, or how you will adjust to being back at your home campus, or how you will keep in touch with your host family or friends you’ve made abroad. Your study abroad experience may even have changed your academic or career goals.

## ***Academics***

## Before You Go

Students should know, as early as the application process, how their coursework abroad can be incorporated into their overall academic program. Therefore, is it important to discuss your program with your academic advisor.

## Confirm Your Academic Plans

Provide your academic advisor with full information concerning course offerings on your program. Confirm which courses you may take to fulfill major, minor and departmental requirements, and which courses you may take for an elective credit. Use this advising session to review course pre-approvals you have obtained for those courses you will take abroad. You should also discuss with your advisor the courses you will need to take upon your return. Prepare to remain in regular contact via e-mail with your advisor while you are abroad. (This applies to students on semester/year abroad programs.)

**Remember,** credit earned through Belmont programs is Belmont credit. Credit earned at institutions via exchange programs is also treated as Belmont credit. Credit earned in programs sponsored by other institutions or agencies is treated as transfer credit. Get signed approvals for course work **before** leaving Belmont.

### *What to Take*

#### Things to Take Checklist:

\_\_\_\_ **Passport** and a photocopy of the information page

**Passport:** When studying abroad, you will need a valid passport. Obtaining a passport is *your* responsibility. It generally takes three to four weeks to process a passport application, but please be aware that the process may take longer, especially during peak travel times. The Hillsboro Village Post Office accepts applications for passports ([http://travel.state.gov/passport\\_services.html](http://travel.state.gov/passport_services.html)).  
Once you receive your passport, make three (3) photocopies of the information page of your passport. One copy is for you to carry separately in

**Important:** If you are traveling on a passport other than a U. S. passport, you should check with the nearest consulate of the country to which you are traveling in order to determine whether a visa will be required. Do this as far in advance as possible and notify our office of the documentation you will need to apply for your visa. You should check with the local consulate of your home country to determine whether there are any passport or travel regulations of which you need to be aware. You should also investigate whether you will need to apply for a new visa to re-enter the U.S. upon completion of the program.

**Visa:** A visa is written permission to visit a country granted by the government of that country. To determine if a visa is necessary, contact the embassy or nearest consulate of the country you plan to visit or visit their website. (Short term programs - the Program Director will inform you if you need a visa.)

Obtaining a visa can be a long and complicated process. You cannot get your visa until you have a passport.

**International Student Identity Card (ISIC):** The ISIC permits you to obtain discounts at many museums, galleries, and cultural/performing arts events, and more importantly, qualifies you for discounted airfares. With ISIC, you have access to a toll-free hotline that provides assistance with medical, financial, or legal emergencies while abroad. The ISIC also carries a small amount of accident and health insurance coverage as well as limited coverage for emergency medical evacuation and repatriation of remains.

The ISIC card is required and can be obtained from the Office of International Education. (The cost is your responsibility if it is not covered under your program fee.)

**Medical Insurance Card:** Keep a copy of your medical insurance card in your wallet. If your insurance agency does not provide a card, then write down the name and number of your policy and the address of the insurance company. Take copies of your insurance claim forms.

**Airline Ticket:** Before departing, make 2 copies of your ticket(s). You may not realize how valuable your airline ticket is and what a hassle it is to attempt to replace a lost or stolen ticket. It is best to copy the final control page of each page of each ticket, as it contains all the information you need in case your ticket is lost or stolen. Keep one copy at home. Keep the second copy with you packed separately from your original ticket. Be sure to apply for frequent flyer mileage.

**Calling Card:** Check with your U. S. long distance carrier to obtain an international calling card for calls home. Most of the long distance companies offer these cards or special calling plans for international calls.

## ***What to Take***

### **Airline Ticket Information**

If your airline ticket is lost or stolen, contact the airline to file a lost/stolen ticket report or STA Travel if purchased from them. You will need your ticket number to do this, and it may cost you \$50-\$100. Do not expect immediate replacement of your ticket. In most instances, you will need to purchase an additional ticket to replace the lost/stolen one and then wait for up to 6 months for the airline to process your claim and send your refund. *Never* throw away any part of your airline ticket until you have completed your entire journey.

## Luggage and Packing Information

**Selecting your luggage:** Take only bags that are light, easy to carry, and sturdy. If you are buying luggage for this journey, choose bags that are soft-sided and made of heavy-grade nylon or similar material with wheels. Do not invest in expensive luggage; sturdy, mid-priced bags are sufficient.

Divide your load. Remember you can carry some things over your shoulder or on your back, which leaves one hand free for doors, etc. The best set of luggage might include one large suitcase, one smaller bag or backpack, and one on the shoulder type bag.

**Packing:** Remember to pack with the realization that you will be carrying these bags around with you when you get off the plane and you will be carrying them if you travel after the program. Keep in mind that storage space is limited, so keep packed luggage to a minimum. Do not pack valuables (cameras, money, jewelry, items of sentimental value, etc.) in checked baggage. Pack all medicines and a change of clothes in your carry-on bag.

**Luggage Restrictions:** All airlines have restrictions on the size, weight, and number of luggage items that you can take without incurring additional, and significant, expense. Most airlines allow two checked pieces of luggage and one small carry-on piece, which will be placed under the seat or in the overhead locker (Your purse does count as a carry-on piece). Check with your airline for specific information on luggage restrictions. Weight limits on international flights are 44 lbs (20 kilos).

### Take Coping Skills

Simply by going away to college and living on your own, you have already developed many of these skills which will help you adjust to a trip abroad whether it is a short-term or a long-term experience~

- Your sense of humor, the ability to laugh at yourself
- Your sense of adventure and curiosity
- Open-mindedness
- Tolerance for ambiguity
- Flexibility

## Housing Arrangements and Money Matters

### Housing

Housing opportunities vary by program and range from a home-stay to an apartment to a dorm. Since the standard of living varies from country to country, you should expect certain fundamental differences with respect to comfort. Electrical systems, heating systems, even the water pressure may be different from what you are accustomed to at home or on

### Consider Personal Property Insurance

You should consider purchasing insurance to cover loss of personal possessions while abroad. You may be covered under a policy held by your parents, so investigate this before departure. Inexpensive but limited coverage is available through Trip-Safe Insurance from the Council on

### **Determine your Budget for the Semester/Year**

You (and your parents) will find it helpful if you put together an estimated budget for your semester/year abroad. Depending on the program in which you are enrolled, fees may include tuition, housing, airfare, board, and/or excursions. You should plan to bring additional money to cover personal expenses, textbooks, course materials, and any other costs not included in your program fee.

### **Financial Aid Forms**

If you will not be at Belmont at the time the application for financial assistance is due for the coming academic year, make arrangements in advance to obtain the forms you need or request the financial aid office to forward the forms to your family for completion.

## ***Health Issues***

### **Medical Expenses**

Should you incur medical expenses abroad, you and your family must be prepared to meet these expenses up front. Be sure to pack several copies of

### **Before You Go**

**Obtain Medical Insurance** - With your ISIC card comes a nominal amount of medical insurance. However, you may wish to purchase additional coverage. Discuss this with your parents to determine what's best for you and your situation. Check to see if your parent's insurance covers you while abroad. Secure a verification letter from the insurance company if your current policy provides coverage while you are abroad.

Students on non-Belmont programs should carry adequate medical and accident

## **Visit Your Doctor**

Please remember that study abroad can be stressful both physically and mentally. A healthy mind and body are essential to a successful study abroad experience. If you are experiencing any physical or emotional problems, please address them before leaving the U.S. If you haven't felt well, make an appointment with your doctor for a check-up; if you anticipate any dental work, get it done before departure; if you are experiencing any emotional or eating problems, seek professional advice and consider deferring your participation in an study abroad program until you have the problems well under control. The pressures which lead to eating disorders or emotional problems are only exacerbated when you are coping with adjustments to a new culture, language, and way of life. Leaving the country will not make your problems go away--- if anything, it will make them worse. It is important to note that the range of counseling services available to students at Belmont and other college campuses will not be available overseas.

For your safety and well being, it is vital that you inform us of any physical, emotional, or psychological difficulties or special needs you may have. On the other hand, if you are simply nervous about experiencing a different culture, do not worry. You are not alone.

## **Obtain Copies of Your Prescriptions**

You should be sure to take copies of prescriptions for any medications you may need and for glasses or contact lenses, since medications tend to be expensive overseas. Also, it can be difficult to get the appropriate equivalent medication, we recommend that you take an adequate supply of whatever you may need while abroad. Any medications you take should be in the original, properly labeled containers. If you wear glasses or contacts, take an extra pair in case you damage or lose your original pair. If your prescription is a generic, be sure your prescription shows both the brand name and the generic name.

## ***Student Conduct and Safety***

### **Student Conduct**

While overseas, you are not only subject to Belmont's Statement of Values and Behavioral Expectations, but also the local laws and sanctions of the particular country in which you are studying. In many countries, the punishment for possession and/or distribution of controlled substances and for driving while under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances is much more severe than in the United States. You should be aware that if arrested for a crime overseas, you can not expect Belmont University or the local U. S. Consular authorities to be able to intercede on your behalf.

The Office of International Education also has the authority to establish rules of conduct necessary for the operation of the program and to reserve the right to require a student to withdraw from the program. Disregard for Belmont's Code of Conduct can result in your being sent home **at your expense**.

## General Safety in Public Places

You will soon be entering a city and culture that are probably foreign to you. Because of this, you may miss some of the danger signals that a local person would automatically take into consideration. You should also realize that in our shrinking world it is inevitable that many cultures exist within one country. For this reason, one must be aware of, and sensitive to, the majority culture, as well as the minority cultures prevalent in the host country. **Please read the following sections carefully;** they are not meant to frighten you, but rather inform you of issues of which you should be aware upon your arrival to your new setting. This advice is applicable no matter where you are in the world.

Many people's impressions of Americans come from what they see on television shows such as Dallas and Beverly Hills 90210. Americans are portrayed as wealthy, particularly in developing countries, and in many locations you really will be more affluent than the local population. Americans are easily noticed. We dress differently, we speak loudly in groups, we carry backpacks, we wear tennis shoes, and our American accent is unmistakable. By following the suggestions below, you can minimize your exposure to unsafe situations:

- Do not leave your bag(s) or belongings unattended at any time. Security staffs in airports and train stations are instructed to remove or destroy any unattended bag(s). Do not agree to carry or look after packages or suitcases for anyone. Make sure no one puts anything in your luggage.
- When traveling, use a waist pouch to carry your passport, credit card, and travelers checks. Wear the pouch under your clothes. Keep a separate record of your travelers' checks in another part of your belongings so that you will have a record if the checks are lost or stolen.
- Be as inconspicuous in dress and demeanor as possible. Downplay those elements of your appearance and manner that broadcast you are an American. Here are some "tip-offs" to avoid if you don't want to be pegged quickly as an American:
  - Wearing U. S. college or university insignia clothing or heavily patriotic American clothing
  - Wearing baseball caps
  - Talking loudly with a group of friends
  - Carrying a camera
  - Wearing a "fanny pack" (only tourists wear these)

### ***Student Conduct and Safety***

#### **Use Common Sense**

You probably take safety for granted in your home country because you feel comfortable and familiar with your surroundings, but soon you will be spending time abroad in unfamiliar territory. A general rule of thumb is to use common sense and be as cautious as you would in any large city in the United States. Be

Try to speak the local language in public, even with other Americans. Even if you have a heavy accent, you will not attract as much attention, particularly if you take a cue from the locals and speak quietly.

- Use the buddy system (or in the evening, small groups), especially in the first few weeks of your stay. Walking with someone

helps to deflect approaches by would-be harassers.

- Be careful how late you come home at night. Try to get home while public transportation is still running or plan to take a taxi. If you visit friends alone in the evening, ask them to escort you to the nearest public transportation stop/station, or even to escort you home. Do not accept rides from strangers.
- Be careful to observe traffic lights. Stay on sidewalks away from the curb, and walk facing oncoming traffics whenever possible. Drivers in large cities can be aggressive, and often erratic. Never assume a car will stop for you or steer out of your way. For those of you going to countries where drivers drive on the left-hand side of the road, you will have to make an extra effort to check before crossing the street.

## **Money and Other Valuables**

- Keep your cash and other valuables (traveler's checks, passport and visa, airline ticket) in a locked suitcase in your room or a safe in the program's headquarters, if available.
- Do not take jewelry that has sentimental value. It could be lost or stolen. Be aware that it is common in some cities for thieves on motorcycles to pull gold chains off the necks of women. Students have lost jewelry in hotels and dorm rooms. Leave valuables at home.
- Avoid putting things in the back pockets of your pants or backpack. Wear your backpack in front of you in crowded places. It is highly recommended that you take a money belt to wear concealed around your waist under your clothes.
- Do not handle or display large quantities of money (dollars or local currency) on the street. Only take as much money with you as you need for the day or night.
- Always keep an eye, and/or hands, on your purse/bag/wallet, especially in crowded public areas (public transportation, crowded sidewalks, markets, and bus, train and metro stations), it is very easy to cut a strap.
- Be particularly vigilant in areas where there have been numerous reports of pick pocketing and purse snatching, especially tourist areas. Be aware that thieves on mopeds snatch purses, so have your bag face away from the street.
- Do not leave purses or backpacks unattended.

### ***Student Conduct and Safety***

- If you suddenly find yourself being "crowded" in a market, move away from the crowd. Thieves may be slicing open your purse or backpack with a razor or cutting your shoulder strap.

## Local Transportation and Travel

- If a package is left unattended near you by someone in any crowded public place (i.e. airports, train stations, “the tube” in London or on a bus or other public transportation), notify the driver or other authority and get away from it as quickly as possible.
- Do not accept rides from strangers. Some countries are less adamant about drinking and driving, therefore driving under the influence of alcohol is more common. It is better to depend on public transportation.

### **“She’s got a Ticket to Ride...”**

Most of you will be using public transportation on a regular basis. You may see other passengers who do not appear to be paying for buses or other public transportation. Many of them have passes that are shown only when asked by an inspector. If you are caught without a bus ticket or pass, you can be pulled off the bus or tram and taken to the police station. Consider a monthly pass if you will have to take the bus or subway everyday. In the long run, it is cheaper than fines that can be 50 times the original cost of the ticket.

### **General Travel During Your Time Abroad**

- Do not travel alone. Always try to travel with a least one other person.
- Be careful of whom you allow to join your group. Make sure that anyone who joins your group is well known by someone you know.
- Update yourself on your destination and consider postponing a visit to a place if there have been problems there recently. It is better to be safe than sorry. Check for U. S. Consulates near you (commonly found in most large cities), stop and get their safety information bulletins about the country which you are planning to visit. Knowledge of current events is important. Read the paper and watch TV to stay informed.

## In Times of Political Conflict

- Keep in touch with the current political situation by listening daily to the television, radio, or reading the newspaper. In case of an emergency, advisories may be made to the general public through the media. In case of an emergency, remain in contact with the on-site staff/program director or the American Consulate nearest you.
- When in large cities and other popular tourist destinations, avoid or spend as little time as possible in potential target areas for terrorist activities. Especially places frequented by Americans: bars, discos, and US fast food restaurants; branches of American banks; American churches; American consulates and embassies.
- Keep away from areas known to have large concentrations of residents with interests unfriendly to the US and its allies. Always consult with the on-site director(s) before traveling to neighboring cities and popular tourist destinations.

### ***Student Conduct and Safety***

- Keep away from political demonstrations which can easily result in clashes between demonstrators and authorities, particularly those authorities seen as aligned with the U. S. If you see a situation developing, resist the temptation to satisfy your curiosity and investigate what is happening. Walk the other way. Go home and watch it on the news.

- Do not agree to newspaper or other media interviews regarding political conflicts or controversial issues. It is important to remain as inconspicuous as possible. Do not refer to controversial issues. In such cases, always say “no comment” and hang up or walk the other way.

## **Alcohol and Drugs**

It is important to keep the following in mind so that you do not find yourself in a situation that could lead to violation of the Belmont University Statement of Values and Behavioral Expectations:

- The use of alcoholic beverages is not allowed on any Belmont sponsored activity. Be careful and constantly aware in public places where alcohol might be consumed, and remember you are in another country with different social customs.
- If you do consume alcohol, please remember that your ability to make sound judgments is impaired, and therefore you may be putting yourself in danger.
- Many drugs are available in other countries over-the-counter that would not normally be available in the US. Be certain when purchasing medication that you know the ingredients and understand their effects, especially if you are taking other medications.
- Do not consume alcohol while taking any medication.

## **Relationships**

Entering a relationship overseas should be approached with the same precautions as at home. It is tempting to be charmed by the idea of an once-in-a-lifetime foreign romance, but you should consider any relationship carefully, particularly when you are overseas. There are different cultural values and rules regarding dating and relationships. Proceed cautiously, realizing that you are only in the country for a short period of time. Evaluate your reasons for entering into a relationship. Are you attracted to the individual or are you struggling with homesickness?

### **Advice Especially for Women**

**What may be appropriate or friendly behavior in the U.S. may bring you unwanted, even dangerous, attention in another culture. Try not to take offense at whistles and other gestures, regardless of whether they are compliments, invitations, or insults. Realize these gestures are as much a part of the culture as its food, history, and language, but if your intuition tells you a situation is dangerous, then act as if it is. Be extra careful with giving your trust. This applies generally, but is especially important when traveling alone.**

## ***Student Conduct and Safety***

### **Avoiding Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assaults**

*(Both men and women should read this section.)*

It is important that men understand and be sensitive to the kinds of problems women in the group may face. In addition, American men have been victims of sexual assaults overseas.

- Be aware of how you carry yourself and dress. Even things as seemingly insignificant as smiling and your stride will mark you as a foreigner. Avoid looking like a stereotypical American; dressing conservatively can possibly help deflect potential harassers (avoid wearing micro-miniskirts on the street, even if every local woman you see is wearing one). In some countries, particularly Islamic ones, normal American female dress could be viewed as that of a prostitute.
- Try to avoid making eye contact with men in public places. In many parts of the world, meeting a man's gaze is widely viewed as sexually provocative. You may be followed, verbally harassed, and as a result, touched.
- An effective way to avoid stares while on the subway is to read.
- Usually the best response to unwanted stares, comments, or touches, is to ignore the harasser and to remove yourself from the situation quickly and calmly. Although verbal responses often work, cursing your harasser in the local language or English may result in being struck. Avoidance is the safest tactic.
- If you continue to be followed, spoken to, or touched after repeated attempts to get away, try to remove yourself to a very public place. Tell your harasser firmly and calmly to leave you alone. Sometimes threatening to go to the police is effective, but sometimes the police are less than supportive.
- Do not judge the physical appearance of your local friends by American standards. You may be inclined to trust someone because he or she is nicely or fashionably dressed, well groomed, self-confident and outgoing. Sometimes, however, the most fashionable people are those who are the most skilled con-artist, or who make a mission of befriending Americans in order to gain money, goods, passports or sex from them.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b><i>Final Note</i></b></p>
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## **Correspondence**

Long-term study trips - Stay in touch via e-mail with the Office of International Education and your academic advisor while you are abroad. Let us hear from you on a regular basis.

Short-term study trips – Stay in touch with your Belmont Program Director while you are studying abroad.

E-mail addresses/phone numbers of the Office of International Education:

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## Final Note

Your study abroad experience, whether short-term, for a semester or a year, will introduce you to many people whose lifestyles and cultures differ from those to which you are accustomed. In fact, your experiences on the program may be quite different from what you first expected. Getting the most out of the program depends on your ability to adapt to new and challenging situations.



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