April 1, 2020

Dear Study Abroad Student,

We are very sorry to let you know that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Study Abroad UC San Diego cannot support OAP and independent study abroad programs for summer 2020. We strongly advise you to cancel your study abroad plans for summer 2020 and postpone your international educational experience until after the COVID-19 pandemic has ended.

Because of the pandemic, there are currently unprecedented risks to studying and traveling abroad. According to the current US Department of State Global Level 4 Health Advisory: Do Not Travel, US citizens are advised not to travel at this time: "The Department of State advises U.S. citizens to avoid all international travel due to the global impact of COVID-19. In countries where commercial departure options remain available, U.S. citizens who live in the United States should arrange for immediate return to the United States, unless they are prepared to remain abroad for an indefinite period."

The Opportunities Abroad Program (OAP) is designed to provide health and safety support services and to integrate your study abroad coursework into your four-year graduation plan which in turn allows you to apply your state and federal financial aid if you qualify. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant interruption to OAP services. These interruptions include:

- UC Trips Insurance: Critical Services may be unavailable due to local shortages and conditions
- Admissions, academic departments, and colleges: May be unable to process Academic Planning Forms (APF) which could prevent study abroad
- Financial Aid: Unable to package state and federal aid without the APF

Warning: As study abroad professionals, we cannot recommend study abroad until further notice because of the numerous risks surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

We realize some students have circumstances where they may need to study abroad as an independent traveler unaffiliated with UC and outside the OAP process. Due to the uncertain times it is our duty to inform in these instances that students may be taking significant academic, financial, and most of all, health and safety risks in choosing to study abroad.
If you still decide to participate in a study abroad program for this summer, then discuss your choice with your family and next-of-kin. Also, consider that it may be potentially difficult for the local study abroad provider and/or host university staff to support you during this time due to restrictions in place by local governments. We do not know what to expect in the months ahead, but it could become difficult if not impossible to return to the U.S. Potential problems could arise such as contracting the virus and becoming ill, quarantine requirements, shortage of international flights, travel restrictions, and being stranded abroad for long periods of time without financial support. As the situation changes daily, we cannot predict if study abroad programs and/or host universities will postpone or suspend all teaching in a certain location.

Please consider that your decision to study and travel abroad at this time my inadvertently lead to the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. As global citizens, we have a responsibility to think of the larger impact of our actions on people around the world.

Any travel support services through UC Trips insurance may be unavailable because of the COVID-19 pandemic. MEDIVAC (medical evacuation services) may not be available under current lockdown conditions. All such support services that may have been available in the past may no longer be available for the foreseeable future.

Review the Notification document that accompanies this OAP memo. It provides critical legal information that you are responsible for reading and understanding.

Next Steps:

We strongly advise you take the following course of action:

1. **Withdraw from OAP and/or independent study abroad program:** Withdraw from the study abroad/direct enroll program because of the risks and restrictions mentioned in this memo. Please contact your study abroad provider or host university to discuss your withdrawal decision and keep us updated about your status.
2. **Cancel your international plane ticket**: Contact your airline and explain that you cannot study abroad due to the travel warnings from the US State Department and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Ask for a refund of your airfare due to these extenuating emergency circumstances.

3. **Alternative course planning**: Contact your college and departmental academic advisors to plan courses at UC San Diego that fit into your graduation requirements. Your advisers are available to answer questions via the Virtual Advising Center (VAC).

4. **Register for UC San Diego Summer Session Courses**: UC San Diego Summer Session enrollment begins April 13th. Consult the Summer Session web site for more information about courses and registration: summersession.ucsd.edu

5. **Seek Counseling if needed**: This is a stressful time. If you would like to speak to a counselor, please contact CAPS. For more information, consult their web site: wellness.ucsd.edu

6. **Plan a future Study Abroad**: We understand that this is all very difficult news, but we want to offer some hope for the future. This pandemic will end, and the advisors at Study Abroad UC San Diego are committed to assisting you in planning for a future study abroad when the COVID-19 pandemic has passed. We will help you plan a future study abroad experience that will allow you to fit the courses into your four-year graduation plan, use your state and federal financial aid if you qualify, apply for scholarships, and most importantly to support your health and safety while you are abroad.

Please contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jim Galvin
OAP Director
Study Abroad UC San Diego