

To: Deans, Chairs, Directors, Faculty and Advisors

From: Timothy Greene, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: February 9, 2015

Subject: WMU Study Abroad Policies

One of the clearest examples of the Global Engagement pillar of the University's strategic plan is the growing number of Western Michigan University (WMU) students who choose to spend portions of their degree programs studying outside the United States. Each year, almost 600 WMU students conduct academic work abroad on both WMU and non-WMU programs.

As WMU strives to achieve the objectives of the strategic plan and looks for ways to demonstrate our success, I am reminding everyone that WMU Study Abroad in the Haenicke Institute for Global Education has full responsibility for administration, development, and implementation of our study abroad programs, and for collaborating with faculty interested in participating in them. **All activities conducted outside the United States for which WMU academic credit is assigned or is an option must be registered with WMU Study Abroad. In addition, international non-credit activities for students supervised by WMU faculty, non-credit internships, field research, and service learning must also be registered with WMU Study Abroad. This includes overseas programs offered by other U.S. universities or non-university providers. WMU Study Abroad also works with University groups traveling overseas for appropriate insurance coverage and risk management. WMU Study Abroad has responsibility for disseminating insurance, travel advisory, and other risk management information pertinent to international travel by WMU students.**

Education abroad, including study abroad, internships, practical training, or field experiences in an international setting, can be an extraordinary experience for our students. However, the conduct of academic programs outside the U.S. legal environment also raises potential issues of risk and liability which the university must address, as well as procedural issues involving academic credit and concerns for students receiving financial aid.

Although an important practical consideration, potential liability is not the only reason for ensuring that our students involved in international activities work with WMU Study Abroad. It is critical that WMU Study Abroad be able to report to external organizations an accurate figure each year for the number of WMU students participating in international study programs. That data, just like our level of research support, our graduation rates, our retention levels, and even our athletic records, is an important barometer in measuring our university's success and progress in the eyes of potential students and supporters as well as in our national rankings.

Please direct your inquiries about our study abroad policies and programs to the Haenicke Institute for Global Education at 269-387-5890.

Let me take this opportunity to thank WMU faculty and staff who have worked so hard over the years on behalf of our students to develop and implement study abroad programs as well as research and professional experiences outside the United States. I look forward to continued growth in this area, and the benefits that it brings to our students and the entire academic community.