Whatever your academic major or career aspiration may be, a semester abroad leads to a first-hand understanding of world affairs, languages, cultures and eco-systems that is invaluable in today's interconnected world. As a result of his travels across borders and among peoples of diverse cultures, ethnicities, languages, and religions, Francis of Assisi came to a deep respect for the inherent dignity of all. Inspired by his example, Study Abroad at Siena College aims to develop within students the knowledge, generosity and skills which will contribute to the building of a more peaceable and just world.
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PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

Before You Leave

☐ I have read thoroughly all materials sent to me by my study abroad program and by Siena’s Center for International Programs, including this Handbook.

☐ I have completed all forms and paperwork as required by my program provider and by Siena.

☐ I have made sure my passport is valid for at least one year beyond the end of my program.

☐ I have obtained all the required visas (if applicable) for my program and the countries I plan to visit. This process can take months to complete, so I will not wait until the last minute!

☐ I have reviewed the State Department’s Travel Information Sheet for each country I plan to visit: http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/english/alertswarnings.html

☐ I have made sure that I have information on my international medical insurance and I have shared this information with my parents.

☐ I have discussed with my physician or counselor any relevant concerns, such as a medical condition, or medications or counseling, and I have communicated with my program abroad about any health or other special need which may require assistance or attention.

☐ I have checked with the Center for Disease Control to see which immunizations are recommended for my program site, if any. http://www.cdc.gov/travel/

☐ I have researched the culture, history, customs and politics of my host country.

☐ I know how I will handle money-related matters. I will exchange a small amount of money ($100 to $200), so that I will have some local currency when I arrive in country.

☐ I have enrolled my study abroad trip in the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP) through the U.S. Department of State.
ACADEMICS – CREDITS AND GRADES

General Information

- You must take all classes for a grade. No pass / fail credits are accepted.
- Grades will not be factored into your overall GPA.
- You must enroll in a full course load, i.e. the equivalent of 15 U.S. credits. If there is a personal or medical reason that forces you to drop below a full load, you must receive approval from both the program in which you are enrolled and the Center for International Programs at Siena College.
- If you check your registration on-line you may see a simple 15-credit “place holder” for the semester abroad. Do not be concerned. This is a computer function and indicates simply that you are in the system as a full-time student. Credits are evaluated and added to the CAPP upon your return.

Course Changes while Abroad

No matter what type of program you are on, all of your courses must be pre-approved with the Assistant Dean of your School. If your course selections change while you are abroad – especially courses going toward your major, minor or other requirements – you must check with the Assistant Dean to make sure that new course(s) are appropriate. When you correspond with the Assistant Dean, include the name of the class and a course description/syllabus. Course descriptions are often available on line.

Transcripts

- Upon completion of your program, transcripts should be sent to the Center for International Programs (not the Registrar).
- If you plan to apply for graduate or law school, an original transcript from your program abroad is sometimes required as part of the application. Siena cannot get you an official transcript from your host university. Therefore, we suggest that you request – before you depart from your program and return to the US – a number of official, sealed transcripts from the host university. (They will send them to you in the States after the program ends.) These documents can be difficult to get after you return, and, again, Siena cannot get them for you.
- At your request, a supplemental “Study Abroad” transcript can be attached to your Siena transcript. This supplemental transcript will indicate where you studied, what classes you took, and what grade you earned. On Web for Students, courses will appear as a “T” only. However, because the supplemental transcript does list grades, it is incumbent upon you to do well. Graduate schools and potential employers will see the grades, should they request them.

Registering for your next semester at Siena

- At the appropriate time (normally in mid-March for the upcoming fall term and mid-October for the spring term), the Registrar will contact you via email with information and instructions about course offerings and registration times.
• You should correspond with your academic advisor about which courses you intend to take.

• Your academic advisor will provide you with your PIN. You will then register at the time allotted to you for your class and status.

• If you have issues connecting to the Siena site for registration, try using a computer in a different location. Sometimes a university will have a firewall that may not allow you access. If this is the case, a local internet café usually works. If you still have problems, contact the Assistant Dean of your School and the Center for International Programs.

• Be sure to factor in any time difference between your location and the time for registration at Siena. You may have to get up in the middle of the night/rise very early in the morning to register at the correct time.

Extending Your Stay

Many students who plan to study abroad for only one semester enjoy it so much that they decide to stay for a second. We are always pleased to help a student extend her/his stay. To do so, start by talking with your program provider to be sure that you understand their policies and procedures. You then contact the Center for International Programs at Siena. It is generally an easy process to extend your stay abroad, and we in the study abroad office will contact all administrative offices concerned on your behalf. It is your responsibility to correspond with your academic advisor, and with the Assistant Dean for course approval. Failure to do so could jeopardize your ability to stay abroad or to graduate on time.

ACADEMICS WHILE ABROAD

It is a good idea to make yourself aware of the academic system of your host country before you immerse yourself in it. Learning how to adapt to a new academic system is one of the first challenges you may face once you begin classes. Professor/student relationships are not always what they are in the U.S. Try to discover what is expected of you early on. It may appear that students from the host country are not doing much work, and the time spent in class may be less than what you are used to. Do not let this fool you. There could be the expectation that you will conduct more independent research, and students may simply be used to studying during the day.

Do not be upset if you find that your grades are not what you are used to. In many other parts of the world, it is rare for students to receive a grade of A. To receive the equivalent of an A, one would have to obtain superior knowledge of the subject matter. Therefore, it is more common to receive Bs and Cs if you are being graded by foreign faculty.

Finally, foreign libraries offer another adaptive challenge to U.S. students. Library systems vary from country to country. For example, in some countries, libraries are only open during daylight hours and closed in the evening. Some libraries may not allow books to leave the building. Likewise, computer and Internet access may not be as available or as widely used as in the United States. Learning to adjust to such differences is part of the study abroad experience.

If you withdraw from a program, most especially after a semester is underway, Siena is neither able to guarantee you housing on-campus nor the availability of courses you may need. If you withdraw early, Siena likewise cannot assist with academic completion of a semester or program. Completion of all academic requirements is your responsibility.
HOUSING AT SIENA UPON RETURN

Office of Community Living

- **For Fall Study Abroad Students**: Any current Siena student who will be returning to campus for Spring semester from a semester off-campus due to internship or studying abroad will be filling out a Housing Preferences Form. This will be sent out by Community Living via email. This form will be asking about lifestyle preferences so that we can assign you to a space that will allow you to be successful as a student upon your return.

  If you have someone that you would like to live with, there will be a spot on the Housing Preference Form to list preferred roommates. This includes other returning to campus or students currently on campus. We will do our best to meet all requests but our ability to do so will depend on our open spaces on campus.

- **For Spring Study Abroad Students**: If a student is participating in an internship or studying abroad during Spring semester, then they would participate in the Upperclassmen Housing Selection process, which is completed online. All students participating in an abroad program are encouraged to identify a proxy for housing selection.

- For the most up-to-date return housing policies, please visit the Office of Community Living’s website. You can direct your housing-related questions to housing@siena.edu.

CODE OF CONDUCT

*Siena Life*

Students studying abroad are expected to adhere to the same social and academic policies in place at Siena College. Students who break Siena’s Code of Conduct and/or the code of conduct used abroad may face disciplinary action by their study abroad program and by Siena College. Students who face disciplinary action may be responsible for sanctions imposed by Siena in addition to those applied by the study abroad program. In the case of conflict among policies the more stringent policy shall apply. Students are responsible for understanding Siena Life as well as any code of conduct used by their study abroad provider.

MONEY MATTERS @Siena

*Program Costs and Billing*

- In nearly all cases, you are charged Siena College fees for your academic year or semester abroad. This fee is equal to Siena tuition, standard room, and, if a meal plan is provided through the program, standard board. You will be billed directly by Siena College Business Services.

- If you will be attending a program with charges in excess of Siena’s costs (DIS, for example), you will be responsible for paying the difference.

- Questions about bills should be directed to Business Services. Business Services handles payments to program providers on your behalf.
• You are responsible for airfare, books and personal expenses.

• If you withdraw from a program, whether it is before or during the semester, you will most likely incur some financial loss. In most cases, if you withdraw from a program once you have begun, you will be responsible for payment in full with no refund. At a minimum, students are responsible for any non-recoverable cost.

Financial Aid

• Siena students participating on Siena Approved Programs may use their financial aid to offset the costs of the program. If you currently receive financial aid, you might make an appointment with the Office of Financial Aid to review the use of your financial aid package. You must do this before you leave for your study abroad program.

• Siena scholarships will be applied to your time abroad, i.e. you will keep such scholarships as the Franciscan Scholarship, Presidential Scholarship, etc.

• If you are a scholarship athlete you must check with the Athletics Department regarding your eligibility for scholarship monies to be applied to study abroad.

MONEY MANAGEMENT WHILE ABROAD

One of the most frequently asked questions is, “How do I handle my money once I’m overseas?” There are many answers to this question. The best way to handle money varies depending upon your site and your preferences. However, there are some general rules to keep in mind. We strongly encourage you to discuss your budget and money management with your parents or guardians before you depart, and to read thoroughly the pre-departure materials sent to you by your program abroad. It is important to understand how these matters will be handled and to have a support person at home to assist you in case of an emergency. In all cases, be sure you make your bank aware of your study abroad/travel dates.

Foreign Currency

Although it seems obvious, please remember you will be dealing with a foreign currency while abroad. This money will look odd and seem like Monopoly money for a while; but, trust us, it is real. Some countries deal mainly in coins and have coins worth almost $10. Once you arrive you may be tempted to exchange all of your money into foreign currency and then start to spend. Please wait! It will take you a few weeks to really figure out how the exchange rate works and what everything is actually worth. Students can find themselves broke after only a month or two because they didn’t understand how the new currency really works. Whatever you “need” to buy will be available within a few weeks after your arrival. Take the time to get to know the currency before you spend all your cash.

Traveler’s Checks & Cash

One of the most important things to remember: do not travel with a lot of cash. Cash is impossible to replace if lost or stolen. Traveler’s checks, though a safe form of money in that you can have them replaced if lost or stolen, are no longer recommended, as it is proving difficult/almost impossible to cash them in many locations.

While you should not carry a lot of cash, you should exchange a small amount of U.S. dollars into the local currency of your destination before you depart – enough local currency to cover the first few days in your new
country. Your program provider should be able to give you an idea of how much local currency to bring. Currency can usually be ordered ahead of time through your bank (best exchange rates) or exchanged at the airport prior to your departure (less favorable exchange rate).

**ATMs and Credit Cards**

The ATM machine has facilitated money transactions abroad. Most countries offer this service on a wide scale basis. Be sure to read your program’s pre-departure materials before planning to use ATMs as your sole means of obtaining money. Also check with your home bank to be sure you understand any fees or surcharges applicable to the overseas use of your ATM card. These charges can be steep and will determine how you budget your money.

If ATM machines are widely available where you will be studying, you may want to look into obtaining a "debit" card that takes money directly from your account. This way, if you need additional funds, your family can deposit them directly into your account in the U.S. and you can have access to them almost immediately. Again, make sure that your card has international withdrawal privileges, that you understand the fees associated with the use of an ATM card, and that you have a numerical PIN number.

Credit cards are another source of money which is widely accepted throughout the world. As in the U.S., credit cards can be used in shops, restaurants, and hotels in many locations. If you do decide to get a credit card for your trip, Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are the most widely accepted names. Credit cards can also be used for cash advances in case of an emergency. We do not, however, recommend that you use them for this purpose unless it is truly an emergency! Cash advances carry tremendous fees and interest charges, which, if not paid immediately, add up to huge expenses. It is a good idea to check with your credit card carrier for details before you depart. Remember to leave your credit card numbers with someone at home in case they are stolen or lost while you are abroad.

Outside of the U.S., most credit cards now utilize a more secure “chip and pin” system, where, upon checkout, you insert your card into a reader and enter a personal identification number instead of signing. The U.S. is slowly transitioning to this system, and some American retailers (such as Target) already allow transactions to be completed in a similar way. If you have a “chip-enabled” credit card, this is especially helpful while abroad. Check with your bank or credit card company to see if you can obtain one. If you must use a chip-less card abroad, be sure you avoid self-checkouts and automated ticketing machines. It’s always safer to actually speak with a human being.

**Important:** Make sure to call your credit card company/bank in advance to let them know when you will be abroad and where. If you do not notify them, they may assume the card has been stolen and they may deactivate it.

**Your Budget**

It is important to understand the total out-of-pocket expenses you will incur so that you can budget appropriately. Otherwise, you could end up running out of money halfway through the semester. The organization sponsoring your program should be able to provide you with an estimate of costs you will be expected to cover while abroad. You should discuss this information with your parents in order to establish a realistic budget. Be sure to include expenses such as daily transportation, books, extra meals, entertainment, laundry, and travel during breaks, etc. Before you leave, talk with students who have participated in the program to learn more about realistic budgeting. (Your program abroad or the *Center for International Programs* at Siena can provide you with the names of program alumni.)
SAFETY ABROAD

In choosing to study abroad you have demonstrated that you are open to an adventure of the very best kind. We here in the Center for International Programs hope that you’ll challenge yourself and take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves to you. Your safety and security are always important when traveling and living overseas. As you know, the world situation is constantly changing. Therefore, we offer the following safety precautions for Americans studying abroad. In addition to these guidelines, please rely on your on-site support staff to guide you as needed.

- When possible, travel with local citizens; they will have knowledge of landmarks and areas that you might not get from a guide, blog, or tour book. Avoid travelling with large groups of tourists/Americans.

- Remember that you are a guest in a foreign country; make an effort to use the local language, dress as the locals do, and engage with other cultures while you are abroad. Not only will this enhance your study abroad experience, it will make you stand out less.

- Avoid American establishments such as fast food chains and typically American bars.

- Be especially vigilant whenever you are in areas frequented by travelers, including but not limited to tourist attractions, airports, train and bus stations, or hotels; these areas tend to have heightened criminal activity.

- Do not get drawn into arguments, especially over politics.

- Be aware of your surroundings. Remove yourself from situations that seem suspect or uncomfortable. Keep your head on straight and use common sense.

- Make sure that you have the address and contact information for any place that you are staying, particularly in an unfamiliar city.

- If you attend a sporting event, wear home team or neutral colors; even if you are in the ‘away’ section, you are still travelling through the other fan base as you leave the stadium.

- Do not freely offer information regarding your program or other students.

- It is best to meet people in public places. As in the U.S., do not leave a bar or club with someone you have just met. Have another person accompany you.
• When traveling away from your program, leave a detailed itinerary with your family, your host family, and with an official from your program. Communicate with family while away. Extended trips are best registered with the STEP Program (see Resources in Case of an Emergency).

• Pay attention to the advice given by your on-site program directors. Remember that your health and safety are your responsibility.

**Resources in Case of an Emergency**

You should always know whom to contact in case of an emergency, medical or otherwise. Your first contact should be the Resident Director of your program overseas. Please keep this person’s phone number on you at all times. If you are living with a host family, they will be an important resource for you as well. You should also be aware that in the event of an emergency abroad, the Siena College Center for International Programs may need to verify your safety and/or whereabouts. Please monitor your email, Facebook, and mobile messaging apps for communication from Siena College and respond as quickly as possible.

In addition to your on-site support system, the U.S. Department of State offers important information in case of a global emergency. Travel Information Sheets and Travel Advisories are issued by the U.S. State Department; consult [http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/country.html) while planning a trip, and follow links to local agencies as well, so that you can have the most accurate picture of current safety conditions. The Center strongly encourages students to register with the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), which allows you to receive travel updates from the State Department, and allows the State Department to reach out to you in the event of an emergency ([https://step.state.gov/step/](https://step.state.gov/step/)); this service should be used for any extended (overnight/weekend) trip outside of your host city.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs, a branch of the State Department, can help you find medical treatment, legal counsel, or financial assistance in emergency situations. Their advice: In an extreme medical emergency, first get medical treatment from local sources. If immediate medical treatment is not necessary, call the nearest Embassy or Consulate to get advice about what to do next, including notifying local police or finding English-speaking doctors. Of course, you should always contact your resident director and keep her/him informed of your health and well-being.

**Drugs and Alcohol**

As a visitor in your host country, you are subject to the laws and regulations of its judicial system. Refusing to obey local laws, especially those that concern illicit drugs, will get you dismissed from your program and could get you thrown into jail. Do not assume that laws are more lenient abroad or that foreign governments are more tolerant. Do not assume you are protected as an American. If you are arrested, there is very little your program, Siena College, or the U.S. Embassy can do for you. In fact, the U.S. Embassy has absolutely no jurisdiction to intercede in the host country’s judicial system. In some countries, prisons are primitive and overcrowded. We cannot reiterate strongly enough not to use, possess, or distribute illegal drugs of any kind while you are abroad.

In addition to the legal concerns surrounding drug use, you must strongly consider the safety issues involved. Although you may think you are not at risk and that you can handle yourself in any situation, this is just not the reality when overseas. You do not know the culture. You do not know how to read local behavior. Do not under any circumstances put yourself at risk by participating in drug-related activities.
Alcohol is a more difficult matter to deal with. Your host culture will exhibit a very different attitude toward alcohol than is typically known here in the U.S. In your host culture it is likely that getting drunk is considered vulgar and unacceptable. Concerning your safety, you are much more at risk if you have been drinking, by becoming an easy target and by impairing your judgment. You will have to decide what to do for yourself, but be sure that alcohol does not interfere with your studies or with your safety.

HEALTH ABROAD

Staying healthy while abroad is important to having a successful experience. We strongly recommend that you read all the information your program provides on health issues in your host country. We suggest you discuss your health needs with your doctors to ensure you understand if there are any restrictions to your activities while abroad.

Please be aware that the stress of travel and adjusting to a new culture can exacerbate physical or emotional conditions that may be under control at home. Therefore, if you have a physical or emotional condition it is important that you meet with a professional to discuss how studying abroad could affect your situation. Addressing your health issues prior to studying abroad will help you to identify those resources that will and will not be available at your program site. Also, if you have particular health issues that people overseas should be aware of, please make sure you inform them before you depart. You have already been accepted to your program. Therefore, any information you share with them should in no way affect your participation. It is critical that your program provider be aware of any special needs you have. Only with this knowledge can they be prepared to deal with any health emergencies that might arise.

Before You Go

Before you leave for your program you should have a routine physical. (You might also want to have a dental checkup.) If there are any prescription medications that you need to take while abroad, get them filled shortly before you leave. Keep them in their original, labeled containers and pack them in your carry-on luggage, not in checked luggage. If possible, bring enough medication for the duration of your stay. Take the actual written prescription with you in case you need to show them at Customs or have an emergency and need additional medication. Syringes and needles necessary for medications must be accompanied by a doctor’s letter. Students with a chronic medical condition will want to consider wearing a medical alert style bracelet.

Immunizations

You should be sure that all of your routine immunizations are up to date. Students who have not had the meningococcal vaccine should consider this vaccination. Your program sponsor should tell you about any needed vaccinations or medications particular to your program location. Other immunizations are rarely required for travel to most of Europe, Australia, or New Zealand. However, travelers going to many developing countries may need immunizations. If you will need them, start your immunizations early. Some cannot be given at the same time as others or may require a series of shots over several months. No matter where you are going, make sure your immunizations for tetanus, polio and measles, mumps, rubella, are all up to date.

Health Insurance

Siena College requires all students studying abroad to have international health insurance. The International Student Identification Card (ISIC) which you purchased through the Center for International Programs includes international medical insurance.
It is also important to consider how your current U.S. based health insurance works while you are overseas. It is important that you understand HOW your insurance coverage works overseas, WHAT types of illness and emergency care your insurance covers, WHERE you will go to receive your health care abroad, and WHY you should have coverage that provides for medical evacuation and repatriation.

Be sure you understand the extent of your coverage abroad. Pay special attention to restrictions that may apply to overseas living. At a minimum you should understand the following about your insurance before you leave the United States:

- Will you be covered for an office visit if you get sick and need to see a physician while you are abroad? Will the cost of any prescription medicine be covered? What information do you need to provide to your health insurance provider to be reimbursed for these expenses?

- What happens if you require emergency care or need to be hospitalized? Does overseas hospitalization need to be pre-approved? How would this work? If pre-approval is not required, when does the insurer need to be notified about the hospitalization and by whom?

- Will your insurance cover medical evacuation? What about repatriation in the event of death? (This last question can be very difficult for students and parents to address, but is necessary. In the event you are involved in a serious accident, the cost of evacuation can be in the tens-of-thousands of dollars.)

- Will your insurance cover you if you travel independently of your study abroad program?

- If you intend to travel before or after your program, does your health insurance cover you while you are not formally registered for the program?

Supplemental travel and health insurance may be available through your program provider. Please contact them to learn more about additional coverage.

Your host country may provide free (or heavily subsidized) health care to students. Refer to pre-departure materials from your program for more information on country-specific health care service and support.

**Relationships Abroad**

While abroad, we hope you will have the opportunity to make friends and form lasting relationships with locals. This is one of the most enriching experiences you can have. Your friends will help you learn about the culture and discover the city and country where you are studying. Therefore, we encourage you to be courageous and meet people while you are overseas.

However, learning to distinguish between culturally acceptable behavior and culturally inappropriate behavior abroad can be difficult. This becomes especially difficult when it comes to dating. During your orientation on-site, ask what types of relationships exist between men and women. Are platonic friendships possible? In some countries, culture prohibits men and women from developing friendships. How do people date? Do students usually go out in groups? What is the perception of Americans as far as social relationships are concerned? Are there preconceived ideas about American women that would make it difficult for a female to be friends with a male? Educating yourself will help you distinguish between true friendships, and relationships you’d be better off without.
If you identify as LGBTQ, make sure that you research/understand the attitudes and cultural practices related to LGBTQ issues/persons in your host country. Your study abroad program will be an excellent source of information on this topic.

**Sexual Misconduct While Abroad**

You are entitled to an environment free from sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment (i.e. unwanted sexual advances), dating violence, stalking, and other gender based offenses.

You maintain all of your rights and responsibilities under the Siena College Sexual Misconduct Policy while you are studying abroad. If you are a survivor of sexual misconduct while abroad, we can help.

**Immediate Emergency Services:** Your study abroad program contact, usually a Resident Director or Student Life administrator, should be able to assist you with seeking immediate emergency services (i.e. medical care, requesting safe housing, pursuing criminal charges). Contact the Center for International Programs for assistance with determining the appropriate local contact if you are unsure.

**Emergency and Ongoing Resources:** Our Title IX Coordinator, Public Safety Officers, Counselor on Call and others on campus are available to assist you while you are abroad and when you return to campus. We can connect you to resources, reporting options and services that can help (i.e. reporting to law enforcement, counseling services, medical services, academic accommodations, etc.).

**Confidential Resources:**

- Center for Counseling and Student Development: 001-518-783-2342; npruitt@siena.edu
- Office of the Chaplain: 001-518-783-2332, landerson@siena.edu
- Health Services: 001-518-783-2554; chogan@siena.edu

**Private/Non-Confidential Resources:**

- Public Safety: 001-518-783-2999; publicsafety@siena.edu
- Title IX Coordinator: 001-518-782-6673; lgoland@siena.edu
- Dean of Students: 001-518-783-2328; jbebb@siena.edu
- Center for International Programs: 001-518-786-5047; gjabaut@siena.edu

We want you to be safe and we are here to help you get support. For more information, please visit Siena College’s sexual violence prevention website at [www.siena.edu/sexualviolenceprevention](http://www.siena.edu/sexualviolenceprevention)

**STDs and HIV/AIDS**

No place in the world is immune from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or the HIV/AIDS virus. Despite what you may hear expressed by locals in your host country, HIV exists everywhere. Abstinence is the only way to be certain that you will not contract the HIV virus or other STD.

**INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL**

As you have probably realized, there is quite a bit to do before you depart. Aside from the different issues you need to consider (health, safety, finances), there are some very practical items you need to handle as well.
**Passport**

Your passport should remain valid for at least 6 months (and preferably one year, which is required by some countries) after the end date of your program.

It is a good idea to make several photocopies of your passport and keep them in separate locations. This way, if you lose your passport, you will have a record of your passport number and other information that will help to expedite replacement. Leave one copy of your passport with someone in the U.S. and keep another copy with you but separate from your actual passport.

**Visas**

In addition to a passport, some of you will need a visa. Your program sponsor should inform you about visa requirements and application procedures. Basically, a visa is a stamp/sticker in your passport that allows you to enter a country for a specified period of time to do a specific thing, i.e. study. Without this stamp, you could be turned away at the border. The application process for a visa can be long and unpredictable so it is a good idea to plan ahead and to start the application process early. Do not forget that you must submit a valid passport along with your visa application that the consulate will keep until your visa is ready. This could be a day or three months. We cannot stress enough that the visa process varies from country to country. Please check the consulate of the country you will be studying in for detailed information. Please follow all instructions carefully and completely. The consulate can reject your application for a visa and there is not anything Siena or your study abroad provider can do to help if this happens. It is your responsibility to carefully and thoroughly complete your visa application in order to avoid delays or a rejection. All visa-related issues are your responsibility.

If you will travel to other countries while you are abroad, you should find out about visa requirements before you leave the U.S. In general, Western European countries do not require visas for stays of less than 3 months for U.S. citizens. However, many other countries will require a tourist visa, in addition to a passport for any length of stay. Most countries now have their visa requirements on the web.

**Entering your Host Country**

When you arrive at your destination, you will pass through Customs and Immigration. Customs is a country’s method of regulating the goods and currency brought into or taken out of that country. Immigration establishes that you are legally entitled to reside in that country for a period of time. At many airports, customs and immigration are handled simultaneously, but occasionally you may be asked to go through immigration procedures separately. Remember, honesty is still the best policy in the customs business – do not try to bring into a country items that are forbidden, such as fruits and vegetables.

**Flights / Program Arrival and Departure Dates**

Please check with your program provider for specific instructions regarding flights to and from your program site. Some programs will offer a group flight. In most cases, these flights are not required; check with the program provider to be sure you know whether or not you must take the group flight. They are offered as a benefit to participants and are usually a good idea.

If there is a group flight, yet you decide to make your own individual arrangements, let your program provider know your final itinerary (including airline carrier, flight number, date, and time of arrival). Also, talk to your program provider about the program calendar (and make plans accordingly) and what you should do when you arrive. With some programs, the Resident Director will meet the group flight. If you are not on the group flight,
you may have to find your own way to your family or to the orientation site or program center. All of this can be overwhelming after a long flight. Therefore, make sure you have clear instructions concerning how to proceed upon arrival.

Whether or not you travel with a group, reservations for international flights should be made well in advance of your departure date. Since many programs travel to popular destinations at the same time of year, inexpensive flights to certain cities might be difficult to obtain. Also, inexpensive flights very often have severe restrictions regarding changes in flight dates or cancellations. It is important to understand the restrictions of your ticket before buying it. Once the ticket is paid for, you will be responsible for working within those rules.

Other programs will not have group flights and will expect all participants to arrive on-site by a specific date and time. These programs will provide you with detailed information about how and when the group should meet up in country. Read these instructions carefully and be sure to have them with you in your carry-on luggage when you arrive. Also, always carry emergency contact information, even on your flight over to the program site. Should anything happen to change your travel plans or arrival time, you will be able to contact the program director for additional instructions.

There are several types of tickets available: one way, round trip with a fixed return date, and round trip with an open return date. Usually, the round trip ticket with a fixed return date is the least expensive type. In most cases, the return date may be changed for a fee and within a certain window of dates (i.e. within two weeks of travel or before a certain date). If you are taking regular classes at a foreign university, you will probably need some flexibility in your return date. Exam schedules are not normally published until a few weeks into the semester and will affect the date on which you may fly home.

Again, be sure you understand what you need to do to change your return date and how much it will cost you.

**Travel While Overseas**

Although travel within each country of destination will vary according to services available when you arrive, there are some questions that many of you will have when trying to plan your personal travel while overseas. The following resources might be useful as you plan your travel:

- [www.statravel.com](http://www.statravel.com) (Let’s Go Travel Guides specific to your country of destination)
- [www.roughguides.com](http://www.roughguides.com) (Destination specific information designed for more adventurous and independent travelers)

**Packing**

Packing for an entire semester or year can be baffling. You want to pack everything you need, but don’t want to arrive at the airport with bags that are over the weight limit. Know the weight and size limits for luggage on your flights. You can find this out by contacting each airline directly. You may be carrying your luggage through subway and train stations, so don’t over pack. A general rule of thumb is to actually take only half the amount you would like to bring. Lay everything out you think you should bring, and then reduce by half; this is what you actually need to bring. Many items will be available after arrival in country.

The best way to figure out what you really need is to read the suggestions provided by your program or to talk to someone who has participated on the program in the past. It is important to consider what clothing and other items will be necessary, acceptable and appropriate in your new environment.
LIVING ABROAD

Your program should provide you with information about your day-to-day living arrangements while you are abroad. Should you have specific questions about your living situation, housing and meals, on-site support, excursions and activities, opportunity to travel independently, etc., please consult pre-departure materials provided by your program or contact your program advisor.

Living with a Host Family

Living with a host family is your chance to transcend the tourist’s visit and become a participating guest and member in a family and neighborhood community. Homestays often can be the most meaningful part of your international living experience. The success of your homestay depends a great deal on how you approach the situation.

Most students find that a good way to break the ice is to bring gifts from home for your host family. Local jams or jellies, local wine, coffee-table books, and other regional items (e.g., maple syrup) are always a good idea. If you’re going to a country where gift giving is an important part of the culture, you may want to stock up on small items like novelty pencils, pens, or other college-logo items to give as "friendship" gifts. Before giving flowers in a foreign country, be sure to find out if they hold any cultural significance. For example, you wouldn’t want to present your host with chrysanthemums in France, as they are associated with mourning and funerals.

Other Living Situations

In some cases, you may not be living with a host family. You may be in an apartment or dormitory, with other students from your program or with students from your host culture. Living on your own comes with a unique set of pros and cons. While it lends to a greater amount of independence, it also places greater responsibility on you to take care of your daily needs and integrate yourself in the host culture (especially if you are sharing an apartment with other students from the U.S.). Paying utility bills, grocery shopping, doing laundry, and cleaning can be a challenge and are time-consuming. Discuss how these things will be handled with your roommates early on. Things that you take for granted (like using an electric clothes dryer to dry your laundry) may become a big deal if you have roommates from the host culture. For example, because the cost of electricity is quite high just about everywhere, students forego using the dryer in favor of air-drying clothes outside – even in the middle of winter. You can imagine how our casual use of a dryer would be perceived (and cause some friction) in this situation. Communication is always critical and can help to fix or avoid any conflict that might occur.

COMMUNICATIONS

Phoning the U.S.

International calling is big business and can be confusing and expensive. It is worthwhile to research this well before you leave the U.S. You may want to contact your phone company for information on how to get a calling card with international access. All major carriers offer international calling cards. Rates on U.S. calling cards can be less expensive than dialing direct.

If you will reside with a host family, please realize that local calls often are not free and may be charged by both time and distance. If you must use your host family’s phone, always ask for permission and offer to pay for your call. Don’t be offended if they ask you to use a pay phone or only allow you to receive but not place calls. In some countries itemized bills are not available making it impossible to know the actual cost of your call.
Cell phones are very accessible in most countries. They are a good way to ensure you have access to a phone at all times. Also, they are a good way to receive calls from your family and friends.

Many students are now using Skype/FaceTime/Google for making international calls over the Internet. This is a good alternative to expensive calling plans. There are also many texting/messaging apps available for download to your smartphone (WhatsApp, Viber, etc.) that allow you to contact family and friends with only a wireless connection and without incurring any long-distance fees/data charges.

Read carefully through the information provided to you from your program. Suggestions for phone use on a country-specific basis will be included in your pre-departure materials.

**Email**

You may be studying abroad in a location that does not have email access to the extent you are used to at Siena. While your university will have internet access, the hours when computers are available will likely be limited. Internet cafés will be prevalent no matter where you are. However, rather than be frustrated, remember that one of the reasons you chose to study abroad is to experience a different culture. This means adapting to the use of technology as it is used in the host culture.

Email can be a mixed bag when it comes to study abroad. While email is an inexpensive and convenient way to stay connected with family and friends back home, beware of the temptation to spend too much time chatting with friends in the U.S. The time you spend chatting and surfing the net is time you are not interacting with the new culture. (If this is how you want to spend your time, then why study abroad?)

You will not need to set up new email accounts while abroad. If you have Internet access, you can access your Siena account. Or you may set up an account on a free server like Gmail, Yahoo or Hotmail. Some residential arrangements abroad will have internet access. Check with your program to see if you will have access to internet in your residence, and whether bringing a laptop is recommended.

**Staying In Touch With Your Family**

Going abroad is a moment that you have been preparing for, and, though you may be a bit nervous, you are now ready for the adventure. Your family, however, might not be quite as enthusiastic. While you are worrying about what to pack and how to survive jetlag, your parents are worrying about whether you will be able to call them in case of an emergency, who will take care of you if you get sick, and whether you have enough clean underwear! Here are some suggestions about how to deal with your family to help put them at ease.

- Communicate openly. Tell your family your own feelings, hopes, and fears. Don’t hide what you’re experiencing to try to “protect” them. By opening up to them, you will allow them to open up to you. It will also show them you have thought hard about this decision and are prepared to take on this challenge.

- Schedule an hour each week to talk to your parents/family. This will prevent you from feeling like you need to constantly update them (which detracts from your overall experience), and will allow you to have plenty to tell them each week. You may also want to create a blog that you share with your family and update regularly.

- Remind your parents that they shouldn’t believe everything they read or hear through the news and other media. The media has a tendency to sensationalize. On the other hand, there is some truth in what the media reports. The problem is that your parents are not abroad with you and do not know what is
really happening where you are. With this in mind, make sure you stay in touch with your family and friends if there are any news-worthy incidents.

- Remind your parents that it is a misconception that you are in more danger while overseas than in the U.S. The truth is that, in most countries, theft, assault, and violent crimes are far less frequent than they are here in the U.S. Having said that, make sure you take appropriate precautions to protect yourself against crime and violence.

- Reassure your parents that you have chosen a program that offers on-site support in the form of a director or staff who will be available to help you with any personal or academic issues.

- You are not alone. There is someone overseas to help take care of you. Not that you need to be taken care of, but to your parents you are still their son or daughter.

**COMING HOME**

"Coming home?" You must be thinking, "But I haven’t even left yet!" While this may be true, we’d still like to highlight a few things for you to consider before leaving that can help make your eventual journey back to the United States a smooth one.

Returning to the United States and Siena College can be a huge adjustment from the life you will have experienced abroad. Returning home may even be more difficult than going abroad. You probably won’t return to the U.S. the same person you were when you left. This can be a surprise to your unsuspecting family and friends. The extent of the changes you’ve gone through abroad probably won’t be as apparent to you until you return home and realize that you’re seeing things through a new set of eyes, and maybe even a new set of values.

The signs of re-entry adjustment are similar to what you went through in adapting to your new culture. You may become critical of home and friends and their apparent disinterest in foreign affairs or international activities. You may feel disconnected with those closest to you or become irritable for no reason. Or you may simply experience a feeling of homesickness for your overseas site. Just like culture shock, the re-entry adjustment period will pass. Be patient and give yourself time to adjust. Much of the impact of study abroad comes after you return home and have had time to reflect upon your experiences and the insights you have gained.

Study abroad doesn’t have to be a singular experience for you. Instead, look at it as just the start of a lifetime of international experiences. When you get back to Siena, there will be ways in which you can keep your study abroad experience alive.

- Volunteer through the *Center for International Programs* or the International Studies minor to tell prospective students about your study abroad experience and your host country.

- Stay in touch with your friends and host family abroad.

- Become involved with student groups at Siena (like the Model U.N.) related to international issues.

- Participate in a foreign language table.

- Look for community service activities to teach English to local refugees.
• Write about your international adventures for The Promethean.

• Make an appointment in the Career Center to discuss how to maximize and market your study abroad experience for future career opportunities.

• Consider pursuing international graduate study, English-teaching abroad, an international postgraduate fellowship, or a work/volunteer experience abroad.

• Stop in and say “hello” in the Study Abroad Office. We love hearing about your adventures – of which we’re certain there will be many.

*This document is adapted in part from the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) Emergency Preparedness Plan and from pre-departure materials of Skidmore College and the University of Rochester.*