

Off Campus Programs Communicating with Students and Parents

GOAL OF OFF CAMPUS PROGRAMS

One of the goals of the Off-Campus Program Office is to facilitate the growth and development of all students who participate in an off-campus semester or interim. The College believes one way to encourage this development in students is to treat them as adults (see the parent resources guide -- www.calvin.edu/parents/communication). The Off Campus Programs Office seeks to encourage the development of students in the following ways:

- Communicate directly with students and encourage parents to do the same;
- Encourage students to communicate directly with their parent(s);
- FERPA (the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974) provides guidelines that inform how the college interacts with students and parents (for more info on FERPA: www.calvin.edu/parents/communication). Student's permission is requested to share general information with his or her parent(s) (i.e. financial information, academic progress -- grades, academic services and accommodations, general group updates, group dynamics, and personal counseling matters). However, in the case of an emergency (as deemed by the college, see examples below), parents will be contacted immediately;
- Even though communication to parents via students is the operative principle, it is not an absolute one. Exceptions could include:
 - Hospitalization such that students are unable to contact parents personally;
 - Serious disciplinary action for a violation of the student conduct code (e.g. most case resulting in disciplinary probation and in cases of suspension). In these cases, parents must be notified. Our preferred method is to allow students a short but reasonable time frame to make contact with their parent(s). Parent(s) are then asked to contact the Director of Off-Campus Programs for further discussion;
 - Suicide attempt; and
 - Permission by the student to deal directly with parent(s).
- The Off-Campus Programs staff **is available to answer your questions or concerns regarding the program and your son/daughter's involvement.**

PREPARING FOR THE OFF CAMPUS PROGRAM. Parents can help their son/daughter prepare for an Off Campus Program experience in the following ways:

- Discuss both the benefits and costs of participating in an off-campus semester/interim program.
- Review all the forms required for student signature to understand the financial, emotional, and educational commitment to this Off Campus Program experience.
 - **Waiver Form**
 - **Health Form**
 - **Financial Responsibility Form**
 - **Travel Form**
 - **Emergency Contact Form** – this information is imperative to communication efforts while your son/daughter is traveling.
 - **Verification of Insurance Form**
- Encourage your son or daughter to speak directly to the Off Campus Program Director or Off-Campus Programs Office staff if any problems or issues emerge prior to departure.

PARENT ROLE DURING THE OFF CAMPUS PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

- Expect that the first days/weeks will be a time of transition for your son/daughter . Periods of homesickness can occur and/or anxiety about the semester long commitment. Encourage your son/daughter to talk through these issues with other students and/or the Director.
- The Off Campus Programs Office is committed to relay updates to parents when emergency situations develop. Make sure your son/daughter has submitted the necessary emergency contact information to the Off Campus Program Office.
- Many groups traveling have blogs set up to share the experience with family and friends – check this out.
- Encourage your son or daughter to engage with the culture and place where they are studying. Help them balance the need to stay connected to family and friends with making the most of exploring a new environment.

- The Off Campus Programs Director and office staff are available should parents have questions or concerns.

PARENT ROLE UPON STUDENT'S RETURN FROM AN OFF CAMPUS PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

- Should your son/daughter have any concerns about his/her experience with the program, please have him/her contact the Off-Campus Programs Office;
- If your son/daughter became ill while traveling, please monitor his/her condition and inform the Off Campus Programs Office of the situation;
- Expect that the student will be impacted by the experience and may need time to re-adjust to the states. There are a variety of resources available for students on campus to help with this transition. Encourage your son or daughter to make use of these resources.