An open letter to students (and parents) participating in a 2016 Calvin Off-Campus Interim Class:

Greetings from the Off-Campus Programs office! We are excited that you have committed to participate in one of over 25 different off-campus interim classes in January or May 2016. We hope and pray that this opportunity will be a deep and rich experience for each of you to grow in so many ways (academically, personally, emotionally, and spiritually). We also hope that your studies off-campus will give you a bigger perspective of what is going on in the world and your place in our global community.

In addition to my excitement for the many adventures that lie ahead for you and your classmates, I am also concerned for the safety of all Calvin faculty, staff, and students as they navigate in an increasing complex and broken world. Recent world events certainly give us pause and make us realize how little we are in control, despite our best efforts to try. But within the whirlwind of world events I am also thankful that God enters into our lives and whispers, trust in me. The realization that God is in control is comforting, but it does not mean we can shrink from our responsibilities to make good decisions and plans. As we look to our upcoming January off-campus inters we do so knowing that we have addressed risk management and safety in a number of different ways, including:

- **Experienced Faculty.** Calvin faculty have experience in the place where they are teaching and work with local, trusted partners whenever possible.
- **Networks.** The Off-Campus programs office receives daily briefing on world events from the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), which operates in cooperation with the U.S. Department of State. In addition, the Off-Campus Programs Office is a part of a crisis response team of the Christian Reformed Church, which has networks around the world that we can draw on in the case of an emergency. On campus, Calvin has initiated a group of professionals (the Travel Safety Committee) from across campus to make decisions related to the safety of specific interim trips.
- **STEP Registration.** We encourage all students to be enrolled in the Smart Travelers Enrollment Program, this process is facilitated by each individual instructor for their specific group.
- **Risk management protocols.** Calvin has developed a large number of protocols related to specific situations that students may encounter. These protocols can be found on the off-campus programs website: [http://www.calvin.edu/academic/off-campus/instructors/risk-management/](http://www.calvin.edu/academic/off-campus/instructors/risk-management/)
- **Resources.** Calvin provides students with resources related to health and safety while traveling abroad. as well as working to create safer spaces as it relates to alcohol consumption and sexual harassment/assault.
- **Orientations/Training.** Calvin does provide on-going training for all off-campus interim instructors. As a part of this training we encourage each instructor to develop site-specific orientation for each location where they will be teaching.
- **Health briefing and vaccinations.** All students studying internationally are required to complete an on-line health briefing and receive all necessary vaccinations.
- **Travel Insurance.** Calvin purchases supplemental travel insurance for all students studying internationally during interim. The policy can be found in the student and parent resource page of the off-campus programs website.

In addition to the work of the college related to health and safety for students, the college also asks students to partner with us to minimize risks as they travel and study off-campus. Specifically we ask students to:

- **Foster a sense of situational awareness.** We encourage students to develop their own situational awareness related to their surroundings.
- **Work to develop community.** Commit to look out for one another and to hold each other accountable for appropriate behavior throughout the experience.
- **Make good decisions.** We encourage students to make good decisions especially about alcohol, dress, and avoiding bad situations.
- **Fully communicate.** Students are encouraged to communicate openly and regularly with their professor and each other.

Although no one can guarantee the safety of participants or eliminate all risks from a study-abroad experience, Calvin College is committed to doing its utmost to provide secure environments in which students can live and learn. Our goal is to minimize risks and keep students and parents aware of special situations as they make decisions about studying off-campus. If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the off-campus programs office.

Humbly,

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