STATEMENT ON SAFETY: International
GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS OFF-CAMPUS PROGRAMS
Adopted from National Statements of NAFSA (Study Abroad Association)
and the IIE (Institute for International Education)

Gustavus Adolphus College has gained experience in all aspects of operating off-campus programs. Students study in various parts of the United States and the world for one month to one semester. In planning these programs, the concern for safety of our students and faculty is given careful attention. We know there are risks involved in travel. It is therefore important to prepare for both the known and unknown circumstances. The goal is to “manage risk” to the greatest extent possible. The following are policies and procedures followed by The Center for International and Cultural Education in assessing risks and assuring safety of our students and faculty on off-campus programs. We have also included common sense tips to help you avoid safety-related problems and promote a positive off-campus study experience.

A Comparative Perspective
It is important to have a comparative perspective of the United States and the world. The United States is known around the world as a comparatively dangerous country. Our street crime statistics back up this view. No country has as many guns or gun-related injuries and deaths. U.S. drug and alcohol abuse is among the highest in the world. Although international visitors come in great numbers to visit the United States, many arrive concerned about what they think they will find.

Yet, the perception is often that life at home is safer than life “over there.” U.S. media coverage of the rest of the world focuses on overseas political upheavals, violent strife, and natural disasters, rather than on positive political and social developments or on the richness and human warmth of life as it is actually lived. Students who study abroad often comment on how “normal” life seems abroad, in spite of cultural differences. This discovery comes when you can look past the stereotypes and misperceptions and see people and cultures with your own eyes.

Policies and Procedures
The following are policies and procedures followed by Gustavus Adolphus College and its employees in assessing risks and assuring safety of students and faculty on off-campus programs. We have also included common sense tips to help avoid safety-related problems and promote a positive study abroad experience.

1. An orientation program is offered for students and faculty to assist in preparation for the off-campus experience. This provides practical information about other cultures and countries. It teaches attitudes and skills which aid in understanding and interacting. Personal safety is increased when a student is sensitive to the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behavior in a different culture, including the areas of traffic and public transportation (trains, buses, cars). Danger more often lies in personal confrontations or accidents than in international political instability.

2. Faculty leading Gustavus programs are required to attend a series of orientation session led by staff of the Center for International and Cultural Education designed to assist faculty members in dealing with health and safety issues which might arise on off-campus programs. They are requested to call, e-mail or fax the International Education Office immediately should there be concern for the group’s safety. All Gustavus students are registered with the appropriate US Embassy/consulate when studying abroad.

3. Students on programs without a Gustavus faculty member are under the supervision of an on-site coordinator, who will assess students’ safety and notify us of crises or concerns. Gustavus
Adolphus College has strong relationships with many respected institutions and individuals in the United States and abroad.

4. In case of a crisis, re-arrangements of travel plans may be necessary and steps would be taken to act accordingly. Informed on-campus personnel, State Department personnel, and on-site advisers would be included in the decision-making. The Center for International and Cultural Education has access to immediate international information over the Web. Each student and parent receives a copy of the crisis management plan and an emergency card.

5. Information is provided below for participants and their parent/guardians/families regarding when and where Gustavus Adolphus College and employees responsibility ends and the range of aspects of participants’ off-campus experiences that are beyond our control begin. In particular Gustavus Adolphus College:
   a. Cannot guarantee or assure the safety/and or security of participants or eliminate all risks from the study abroad environments.
   b. Cannot monitor or control all the daily personal decisions, choices and activities of individual participants.
   c. Cannot prevent participants from engaging in illegal, dangerous or unwise activities.
   d. Cannot assure that U.S. standards of due process apply in overseas legal proceedings or provide or pay for legal representation for participants.
   e. Cannot assume responsibility for the actions or events that are not part of the program or for those that are beyond the control of the sponsor and its subcontractors, or for situations that may arise due to the failure of a participant to disclose pertinent information.
   f. Cannot assure that home-country cultural values and norms will apply in the host country.
   g. Cannot assure that participants will be free of illness or injury during the abroad program.
   h. Cannot assume responsibility for acts and events beyond our control.
   i. Cannot ensure local adherence to US norms of due process, individual rights, political correctness and sensitivity, relationships between the sexes, or relations among racial, cultural and ethnic groups.

A realistic assessment by both students and parents of safety risks associated with any area of the world is strongly advised. Safety is everyone’s responsibility. Parents, students and the Center for International and Cultural Education all have a role to play in minimizing potential dangers.

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFETY**

We believe that participants have a major impact on their own health and safety through the decisions they make before and during the abroad program by their choices and behaviors. Participants on Gustavus sponsored programs must:

1. Assume responsibility for all the elements necessary for personal preparation for the program and participate fully in orientations.
2. Read all materials issued or recommended by Gustavus which relate to safety, health, legal, environmental, political, cultural and religious conditions in host countries, and prior to departure.
3. Conduct their own research on the country(ies) they plan to visit with particular emphasis on health and safety concerns, as well as the social, cultural and political situations.
4. Consider personal emotional, physical and mental health and safety needs when accepting a place in a program.
5. Make available to Gustavus accurate and complete physical and mental health information and any other personal data which is necessary in planning for a safe and healthy study abroad experience.
6. Report any emergencies or concerns FIRST to faculty directors or on-site coordinators.
7. Obtain and maintain appropriate insurance policies and abide by any conditions imposed by the carriers.
8. Inform parents/guardians/families and any others who may need to know, about participation in the study abroad program. Provide them with emergency contact information and keep them informed on an ongoing basis.
9. Understand and comply with the terms of participation, codes of conduct and emergency procedures of the program.
10. Learn the culture and laws of the country in which you will study. Comply with local codes of conduct and obey host-country laws. Americans are NOT immune to local law.
11. Be aware of local conditions and customs that may present health or safety risks when making daily choices and decisions. Promptly express any health or safety concerns to the program staff or other appropriate individuals, before and/or during the program.
12. Behave in a manner which is respectful of the rights and well-being of others and encourage others to behave in a similar manner.
13. Accept the consequences of your own decisions and actions.
14. Avoid illegal drugs and excessive or irresponsible consumption of alcohol.
15. Become familiar with the procedures for obtaining emergency health and legal system services in the host country.
16. When traveling to countries beyond your program site for more than a week, register upon arrival at the US consulate or embassy having jurisdiction over the location.
17. Inform the Resident Director, host family or foreign university official where you are studying as to how to contact you in an emergency. If you travel, even if only overnight, leave your itinerary.
18. Know and obey local laws. Laws and systems of justice are not universal. Do not assume that because something is legal in the US, it is legal abroad.

PARENT/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFETY

Parents/guardians/families play an important role in the health and safety of participants by helping them make decisions and influencing their behavior overseas. It is important for parents/guardians to:
1. Be informed about and involved in the decision of the participant to enroll in a particular program.
2. Obtain and carefully evaluate health, safety and security information related to the program, as provided by Gustavus and when necessary from the Center for Disease Control, the U.S. State Department and other sources.
3. Engage your daughter/son in a thorough discussion of safety and behavior issues, insurance needs and emergency procedures as related to the program.
4. Be responsive to requests from Gustavus for information needed regarding your daughter/son.
5. Keep in touch with your son/daughter via letters while they are abroad.
6. Be aware that the participant rather than the program may most appropriately provide some information.

GENERAL SAFETY

The excitement of travel and the newness of the environment can make it easy to become careless or distracted. The following suggestions offer no guarantee of safety and are mostly common sense. The idea is to be aware of where you are and what is going on around you at all times.
1. In preparing for your time abroad, talk with students from the places you intend to study. Their insights will prove very helpful.
2. Safety begins with packing. Dress conservatively. Short skirts and tank tops may encourage unwanted attention. Avoid the appearance of affluence.
3. Always travel light. This enables you to move quickly. You will be less tired and less likely to set your bags down. Never leave your baggage unattended; it contains everything you own. A thief knows this and will take advantage of even a few seconds of your inattention. This holds true no matter where you are—in a hotel, at the train station, in the train or bus, at a restaurant or resting in a park.

4. Protect your valuable documents. Carry them in a money belt or neck wallet at all times. Wear them under your clothing.

5. Do not agree to meet a person whom you do not know in a secluded place. Be aware that sometimes people from other cultures tend to mistake the friendliness of Americans for romantic interest.

6. Do not use illegal drugs. This has been said many times before. You are subject to the laws of the country in which you are traveling. Hundreds of American travelers end up in foreign jails each year as a result of carrying, using or being suspected of using drugs. There is little the American embassy can do on your behalf in these cases and the laws in many countries are more severe than at home. It just isn’t worth the risk.

7. Think and act confidently and self assured. Be purposeful when you move about and do not look like a victim. Avoid flashy dress, jewelry, luggage, or conspicuous behavior which would draw attention to you.

8. Do not participate in demonstrations, especially in politically volatile countries. Read the local newspaper and learn about potential civil unrest. What appears peaceful can suddenly become a dangerous situation, and you could be caught in the middle.

9. Travel with a companion at night and stay in populated, well-trafficked areas. Do not travel to areas of a city or country which the program host has labeled as “unsafe.” Use common sense if confronted with a dangerous situation. At times it may be best to attract attention by screaming or running. Yet, if confronted by superior or armed force, it may be best to not fight attackers, but give up valuables. Your personal safety is far more important than any property. In some countries it will be important to have a male companion in the group.

10. Try to avoid arriving in unknown towns at night. If you must arrive at night, make sure you have reserved accommodations.

11. Plan where you are going in advance and be aware of your surroundings. This is not paranoia—it’s good common sense. You know what feels comfortable and what doesn’t. If your instincts tell you a situation is uncomfortable, trust them and move along. If you become lost, ask directions from individuals in authority (police, merchants, etc.).

12. Use banks and authorized money exchanges. Do not exchange on the black market or on the streets. Learn currency prior to arrival in a country to keep from being a target as you use money.

13. Taking photos of police or military installations is usually prohibited—your camera can be confiscated. Watch for the sign of a camera with a line through it, which means “Don’t take pictures.”

14. Do not swim at an unfamiliar beach unless you are positive it is safe. Watch the waves and the other swimmers. There can dangerous undertows even at marked beaches. Beaches can also be contaminated, which only the locals might be aware of. If no one is in the water, think twice.

15. Stay healthy by eating well and getting sufficient rest. If you become ill, take care of yourself by getting the proper care. Don’t be afraid to visit a doctor or hospital because you don’t speak the local language. Usually there is someone who speaks English.

16. Watch for anyone following you or loitering and observing your comings and goings. Keep a mental note of safe places, such as hotels, hospitals, police stations, etc.

RESIDENCE SAFETY
1. Keep your hotel/residence doors locked when you are there and when you leave.
2. Do not open your door to people you don’t know and don’t give your room number to persons you don’t know well. Meet visitors in the lobby. Let someone know when you expect to return, especially if you will be out late at night.
3. Know your exit options (stairways and exit doors)
4. Keep valuables in a safe place - this may be different for each place you stay. When in doubt, carry money and valuables with you.
5. In many countries it is customary that people will offer their apartments for rent at the train station by holding up “Room for Rent” signs. This is not always a safe option.
6. Close curtains after dark and lock ground floor windows.
7. If you are alone, do not get on an elevator if there is a suspicious looking person inside.

TRANSPORTATION SAFETY
1. Learn the traffic signals, patterns and signs when you arrive in a country (or before if possible), even if you are not driving.
2. Many countries drive on the opposite side of the road than the U.S. Be aware of our natural reaction to look to the left and then right. This is reversed in the countries which drive on the other side.
3. If you are riding with a driver you feel is putting you at risk, ask to get out at the nearest safe place.
4. Bus accidents do happen. Be aware of the road conditions when and make appropriate decisions.
5. Take only taxis clearly identified with official markings and when you get in note the cab number. Beware of unmarked cabs. Lock taxi doors if possible, especially at night in strange cities. Settle on a price before leaving and pay while in the taxi. Don’t share personal information with the taxi driver.
6. Well organized, systematic robbery of passengers on trains along popular tourist routes is a serious problem. It is most common at night and especially on overnight trains. If you see your way being blocked by a stranger and another person is very close to you from behind, move away.
7. Where possible, lock your compartment, especially at night. If it cannot be locked securely, take turns sleeping. If you must sleep unprotected, tie down your luggage, put your valuables in your hidden money belt and sleep on top of your belongings.
8. Do not accept food or drink from strangers. Criminals have been known to drug food or drink offered to passengers.
9. As stated in the Policies and Procedures for Gustavus Adolphus off-campus programs: There is risk involved in operating any motor vehicle. It is strongly recommended that students do not operate a motor vehicle in another country.

AIRPORT SAFETY
1. Arrive early and check in with your airline as soon as possible and proceed immediately through security clearance. All shops and services available in the non-secure area will also be available once you have passed through the security check.
2. Consult the airlines for specific rules regarding what is allowed in luggage due to new safety regulations.
3. Put your name and address inside and outside each piece of luggage; bright or fluorescent string or tape around your luggage will make it easier to find. Make sure you receive a claim check for EACH piece of luggage you check. Make certain the airport listed on the claim check is your destination.
4. Do not make jokes about terrorism of hijacking, or you may find that you are the object of unwanted attention. Respond to all questions asked by security personnel seriously and honestly. Be aware of what you discuss with strangers or what may be overheard by others about your travel plans.
5. NEVER carry packages or letters for strangers or agree to watch a stranger’s luggage. Be watchful for suspicious abandoned packages and briefcases. Report them to airport security and leave the area.
6. Do not carry on your person, or in your hand-luggage, anything that could be regarded as a weapon. Matches and lighters are forbidden in baggage. Metal objects in your suitcase may activate security devices, causing delays in the arrival of your luggage.
7. On the plane, check under your seat and in overhead baggage compartments. Report anything suspicious to flight personnel.
8. Machines that sell flight insurance can be a waste of time and money. They sell policies that pay family or friends in the event of a plane crash. Check with your family’s insurance agent; you and your belongings are probably already covered.
9. When landing in airports abroad, don’t be surprised if you see military guards and police carrying guns or automatic weapons. They are there to protect you.

SAFETY IN CITIES
1. When possible, avoid places frequented by large numbers of Americans, especially military personnel. This would include fast food restaurants and other American chain stores.
2. Many students dress in a way that immediately identifies them as American. It’s important to realize that this can bring you unwanted attention. College or fraternity sweatshirts, baseball caps, and white athletic shoes worn for non-athletic events will highlight the fact that you are American. You may decide to wear a college sweatshirt with hopes that other Americans will introduce themselves - but you can always meet Americans in America.

WATCH OUT FOR THIEVES
1. Beggars may approach you with children. They may offer to carry your bags. Some beggars are in genuine need but others make as much as several hundred dollars a day. Giving money is a personal decision, but use common sense. If you are hassled or uncomfortable in a situation, speak angrily in a language that neither of you understand. This will break communication, an essential element in their asking for money.
2. Pickpockets usually do not work alone. Be aware of distractions by strangers, as the “lift” often follows.
3. Sometimes children in at train stations or in cities will wave cardboard signs to confuse you, and then swarm around you to relieve you of your possessions. Yell at them and swing whatever is in your hand to scare them away. They use their age to hide their intentions of thievery.
4. If any of your possessions are lost or stolen, report the loss immediately to the police and other appropriate authorities. Keep a copy of the police report for insurance claims and an explanation. Traveler’s check loss must be reported within 24 hours.
5. It is important to be aware that some people make a living of preying upon honest people. Follow your instincts with casual friendships—they are not always what they seem to be.
6. If someone tries to take your purse, backpack, or other property by force, let them have it. Your personal safety is far more important than any property.
7. A camera is the most often lost or stolen item on off-campus programs. Be especially careful to not leave the camera in a taxi, hotel room, or on a bus. Carry your camera inconspicuously.

Again, following these safety precautions will not GUARANTEE your safety, but they reduce your chances of problems.