

# Study Abroad Handbook for Parents



# Congratulations!

Your son or daughter is embarking on an incredible journey rich in personal, professional and academic rewards that will last a lifetime. We know how hard this may be for you as you send your son or daughter to live in a culture you may not have experienced yourself. Your reservations are quite normal and to be expected. Your child's upcoming adventure is something new and different from what he or she has ever experienced before.

This Study Abroad Handbook for Parents has been designed to help parents understand the step-by-step process of study abroad at Kansas State University. It also includes useful information about the stages of adjustment students encounter while abroad and answers to frequently asked questions.

The Study Abroad Office believes that each student is ultimately responsible for his or her experience abroad. This encompasses a wide range of responsibilities, including meeting deadlines, advance preparation, personal safety and being a responsible representative of K-State and the United States. The Study Abroad Office is here to guide your son or daughter through the process. Your support throughout the entire process is extremely important as well.

K-State has people and offices that are here to help you and your child. Please feel free to contact the following people or offices with your questions or concerns.

## Study Abroad Program

304 Fairchild Hall  
Kansas State University  
Manhattan, KS 66506  
oip@ksu.edu  
Phone: (785) 532-5990  
Fax: (785) 532-6550  
[www.ksu.edu/oip](http://www.ksu.edu/oip)

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## Why study abroad?

We live in a global society and students need intercultural skills to be fully prepared to live and work in today's world. While K-State has an impressive number of international students and faculty, most students don't spend much time with people from other cultures. So the best way to gain these important intercultural skills is to have an experience in another country. Going abroad during the undergraduate years is a perfect time, since once students begin working they most likely won't have time to go abroad for an extended period of time.

## What happens when students study abroad?

Studies show that a cultural experience overseas is life-changing. Returned students tell us that they feel more confident and independent, that they are more mature and they have a clearer idea of who they are and what they want to do with their lives. They learn important interpersonal skills, languages, problem-solving skills, and travel skills. Students who learn to understand another culture can see things from different perspectives. They also learn more about their own culture!

# Steps to Study Abroad at K-State

- All students attend an information session. Students learn about different program opportunities, credit, funding and the application process.
- After researching programs, students meet with a study abroad advisor. Advisors help students decide on a program, review funding and scholarships, look at courses and credit, and start the student on the application process. The academic advisor helps students choose their classes. A financial aid officer helps students with funding opportunities.
- Students turn in the K-State application by October 1 or March 15 (some programs have an earlier date). Application fee: \$50.
- Applications are reviewed and sent to host institutions, when required. Once students are accepted into the program abroad, they are notified of their acceptance status. Study Abroad Fee: semester \$450; summer \$200. An administrative fee is built into the program fee for Faculty-led Group study abroad programs and is not charged separately.
- Once accepted, students attend a country/regional orientation and the mandatory study abroad orientation where the following topics are discussed: academics and enrollment abroad, health and medical matters, cultural adjustment, travel safety, money issues, travel preparations and current political situations.
- Students enroll in Modern Languages 001 (ML 001) for 12 credits for the semester or 6 credits for the summer. This keeps them enrolled full-time at K-State and enables them to receive financial aid, if eligible. A \$25 enrollment fee is charged for this class, not regular tuition. Enrollment in ML 001 for 12 (or 6) credits does NOT mean students take 12 (or 6) credits abroad (they may take more or fewer credits). Students going on faculty-led programs enroll in the indicated course(s).
- Students on K-State Faculty-Led programs are often charged program costs in installments during the semester(s) prior to the trip. Many times, the money is used to reserve housing, transportation, etc., and must be collected prior to the program start-date. Students going on other kinds of programs sponsored by K-State are billed by the Office of International Programs accordingly at the normal time tuition is billed at the beginning of the semester or summer. Sometimes students pay housing or other costs overseas. Students on direct enrollment programs are billed by the host or sponsoring institution.
- Students going on K-State programs or with a host that does not provide health insurance will enroll in the K-State Study Abroad Insurance Plan and will be billed for the number of days requested.
- When students arrive at the study abroad site, they notify parents and the study abroad office immediately. Students remain in contact with the Office of International Programs during the term abroad.
- Upon return, students are expected to check in with the Office of International Programs to report on their experience abroad and fill out a program evaluation.
- During the first month of the semester, the Office of International Programs will contact the student to attend a re-entry workshop.
- Students will be notified by e-mail when their transcript arrives.

# Before Going Abroad

Before your son or daughter leaves to study abroad, please request a copy of the following travel documents to be left at home with you, the parent(s). Students should also take copies of all travel documents with them and keep them in a separate place. These items can be more easily replaced if students have proof of each one. Make sure that all names, numbers and dates are legible.

## Get copies of these travel documents:

- Passport (signed)
- Plane tickets or electronic confirmations
- Credit card with pin number for emergency cash
- ATM/Debit card
- Driver's license
- OPTIONAL—International Student Identification Card (ISIC)

*It is a good idea for another family member to have a valid passport, in case it becomes necessary to travel overseas in an emergency.*

## Some very important things to discuss:

- Your child's departure information.
- Arrange how you will communicate with them (phone, e-mail). Set a time to hear from them within a day or two of arrival. What is the country code?
- Where will your child stay in an emergency? (ex. if plane is delayed or they don't meet up with their group at the appointed time)
- Know the difference in time between the U.S. and where they are going.
- Program dates and any travel they plan to do before the program, during or after.
- How to send money in an emergency
- Contact person in the country (program director, university coordinator, or someone else)
- How to contact your son or daughter's study abroad advisor and financial aid advisor.

## Important Bank Information:

For your safety and security while studying abroad, please notify your bank and credit card company that you will be studying abroad so companies are not suspicious of fraud and strange activity, which may result in the cancellation of your account. **It is also recommended that someone else be allowed access to your financial accounts while you are studying abroad.** If travel documents are lost or stolen, many times a signature from the holder of the bank account is needed to issue replacement documents. Also, credit card companies are unable to freeze accounts for customers unless they are notified by the card holder or someone who has access to the account. ATM machines overseas do not give you your balance, so it is important to obtain online access to bank accounts in order to check your status. Sometimes it is necessary to do this at home, not overseas.

# Stages of Cultural Adjustment

Study abroad students will experience a wide range of emotions once they leave home. It is important for parents to understand what their child is going through and to be patient and supportive as their child adjusts to the new culture. Most study abroad students spend the first few days settling in and trying to adjust; however, adjustment is not accomplished in a few days. Adjustment is an on-going process demanded by one situation and then another. What follows are the four stages of cultural adjustment identified by Gregory Trifonovitch.

## The Honeymoon Stage

Characterized by exhilaration, anticipation and excitement, the study abroad student is fascinated with everything new. The students are embarking on their “dream come true,” which is to study in a foreign country. While delighted with the new culture, students also face cultural differences and misunderstandings. When their misunderstandings mount up, they are likely to experience the second stage of adjustment.

NOTE: If your daughter or son calls home in the first few days to complain about the housing, the food, the weather, the university, etc., remember that they may be experiencing **culture shock**. Read on...

## The Hostility Stage

Characterized by frustration, anger, anxiety and sometimes depression, following the initial excitement, frustration comes with dealing with bureaucratic matters and the weariness of speaking and listening to another language every day. Students are upset because, although they have studied the language, they don't seem to understand anyone. Even in an English-speaking country, students will find accents, attitudes, and lifestyle different and foreign to them. Students react to this frustration by rejecting the new environment in which they feel discomfort. The internal reasoning

might be, “If I feel bad it's because of them.” The students blame their external environment for their bad feelings. Some of these hostilities are translated into anger over minor frustrations, fear and mistrust of locals, absenteeism from class, lack of interest, lack of motivation, and, at worst, complete withdrawal. Academic problems may begin at this stage.

## The Humor Stage

When the student begins to relax in a new situation and begins to laugh at minor mistakes and misunderstandings, which, in the hostility stage, would have caused major headaches. This more relaxed state of being occurs after the student has made some friends and is able to feel comfortable academically in classes.

## The Home Stage

This stage occurs when students not only retain allegiance to their home culture, but also “feel at home” in their newly acquired one. Students have successfully adjusted to the norms and standards of the university and should be commended for the ability to live successfully in two cultures.

## Returning Home

Often students experience another kind of culture shock when they return from studying abroad. Sometimes they find fault with everything American. Sometimes they find their old lifestyle dull and boring after all the exciting and interesting things they experienced overseas. Remember that your sons or daughters have changed as a result of studying abroad, and even though they look the same, they probably feel different inside. Just as they needed time to adjust to life abroad, they need time to re-adjust to life back home.

# Health and Safety

## HEALTH ISSUES

### Physical & Emotional Health

Any conditions or health issues students have at home go abroad with them. Sometimes conditions are exacerbated by the additional stress of living in an unfamiliar place and culture. Please discuss health issues with your son or daughter.

Most study abroad sites K-State students choose have excellent health systems, but keep in mind that health care is different in different cultures. For example, they might have the same medications we have, but they could come in different dosages. If your son or daughter has any health issues, please check on how to deal with them while your student is abroad.

It is likely your son or daughter will get sick during the time abroad. Exposure to unfamiliar germs can often cause illness. Changes in climate, water and diet also affect one's health.

Students also need to think about their mental and emotional health while abroad. The host institution's coordinator can help find solutions to problems and students should contact them if they need assistance. Also, the K-State Counseling Center will accept phone calls and emails.

Family health issues can also cause distress to students abroad. If a member of the family has a problem, it is not always best to hide it from your sons or daughters, just because they are away. Give them the same consideration you would if they were home.

### Sexual Health

Issues of sexuality can be complex in our own cultural environment, and even more so in one with which you are less familiar. While living in a culture that is not your own, it is more challenging to evaluate situations and to assess risks for emotional distress, disease, and assault as a result of intentional or non-intentional sexual contact.

Sexually transmitted diseases are prevalent everywhere in the world, and the HIV virus can lead to death. We strongly recommend that students educate themselves on safe sex practices, pack condoms from the U.S. and be cautious about their sexual activity while abroad. For further information regarding HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, please consult the LaFene Health Center at K-State.

Learning about your host country's culture with regard to acceptable and safe sexual behavior is essential. It is also very important that participants understand the local norms and cultural patterns of relationships. What are the local dating patterns? Is it the custom for females to have male friends (or vice versa) or is that considered unusual? If you accept a drink or some other "gift", are you tacitly consenting to sexual activity? If you invite someone into your living space, is it culturally and/or legally acceptable for him/her to expect intimate contact? Is the legal and/or cultural definition of "consent" different from the definition in the United States?

At a minimum, you must be aware that some behaviors at home that may be culturally and legally acceptable, and seemingly safe, may not be culturally or legally acceptable or safe in your host country – and vice versa. Certain behaviors will also communicate different messages in your host culture than they do in the United States.

### Insurance

All K-State students are expected to have special study abroad insurance while overseas. Most health care plans do not provide for all the kinds of issues that can occur overseas, so additional coverage is necessary. Many study abroad programs include health insurance in the package and some countries, like Australia, require students to buy their insurance in order to obtain a visa. Students going abroad on a program that does not provide adequate coverage will be required to enroll in K-State Study Abroad Insurance provided by T.W. Lord & Associates. Their phone number is 1-800-633-2360. You can see the policy that is included in the orientation packet.

# STAYING SAFE

## Safety While Abroad

You will have to learn some new “street smarts” that are suitable to your new location. We suggest that you spend the first couple of days on site engaged in your own orientation to the city. Learn which neighborhoods or districts should be avoided, and when you should avoid them. Learn the transport system. Learn how to ask for and understand directions. Learn how to blend in—how to dress, act, and walk, and how to handle looks or approaches by strangers. Watch, ask, and imitate the locals.

## Safety Tips

As an American (and even if you carry a non-U.S. passport you might be taken for an American), there will be times that for reasons of personal safety you do not want to be marked as an American or otherwise be identified as an easy target for theft or assault. Learn how the locals keep from getting ripped off. Here are some general tips:

- Act like you know where you are going and what you are doing
- Don't dangle purses or cameras from your wrist
- Backpacks and big purses can be targets
- Don't carry wallets in a back pocket
- Don't carry large amounts of cash.
- Don't carry your passport UNLESS you absolutely need it; a photocopy will do just fine for everyday use
- Don't walk or ride the bus alone at night--spend the money on a taxi
- Don't stay in dives. The few dollars saved on a cheap hotel room won't cover the replacement costs of a rail ticket, passport, camera, etc.
- Don't hitchhike--This is policy!
- Don't stay out late at night. When students are assaulted or robbed on the street it most often occurs late at night. Thieves like the dark and they like drunks.
- Don't travel alone.
- Stay informed about what's going on in your host city and country and in the world. U.S. foreign policy does affect how people overseas will treat you. If the United States decides to launch a military or economic action, you will immediately become a representative of your country--whether you want to or not. If your travel destination is having political or military difficulties--ranging from demonstrations to terrorist attacks to civil war--don't go to see it!

## Sources of Health Information

### Foreign Travel Clinic at KSU's Lafene Health Center

We recommend students go to Lafene Health Center for a free appointment in the Foreign Travel Clinic. Doctors will interpret the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) travel information in light of each student's particular health conditions and concerns.

Students can also get their vaccinations at Lafene Health Center (fees apply).

### The Centers for Disease Control and the World Health Organization

The CDC and WHO provide information for travelers online.

CDC Traveler's Health:  
<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>

WHO International Travel and Health:  
<http://www.who.int/ith/en/>

*Don't assume everything is the same as at home.*

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# Emergencies and Emergency Procedures

True emergencies are actually quite rare. While losing luggage, tickets, or even a passport is inconvenient, they are not emergencies. Emergencies are situations in which there is an immediate threat to a student's health and/or safety. An emergency is an occurrence or situation that poses a genuine and sometimes immediate risk to the health and well-being of program participants.

Everyone needs to learn how to use the telephone and know how to locate and contact the appropriate individuals and organizations at your son or daughter's program and in the countries that your son or daughter visits.

## Emergencies at Home

You should have a conversation with your son or daughter before they leave about what you will do in the event there is a death or serious medical

## Other Resources

World Weather  
<http://www.worldweather.org/>

Currency Converter  
<http://www.xe.com/ucc>

World Fact Book  
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>

Maps  
<http://www.embassyworld.com/maps/maps.html>

situation in your family. Be sure you always know how to reach your daughter or son, even when they are traveling.

## Emergency Phone Numbers

KSU Office of International Programs  
785-532-5990

KSU Office of International Programs Emergency Line  
785-532-5494

T.W. Lord Study Abroad Insurance  
1-800-633-2360  
FAX 770-429-0638

To call overseas, normally you dial 011 – Country Code – area code – phone number

Here is a website where you can find any country code or area code and time zone:  
[www.countrycallingcodes.com/](http://www.countrycallingcodes.com/)

### **State Department Travel Warnings**

**General safety issues for a country or region are monitored by the U.S. Department of State. They issue travel warnings from time to time and it is not recommended that students travel to those regions. Go to <http://travel.state.gov/> for information.**

# Frequently Asked Questions

by William Hoffa, Academic Consultants International at the School for International Training

## Why is study abroad so popular these days?

At the beginning of the 21st century, in a world becoming every year more interdependent, the ultimate educational value to students of pursuing at least some portion of their undergraduate years living and learning in another country is no longer really debatable. Not only is the global competence and awareness gained by such an experience crucial to American national and international interests, but students who leave college without having had a significant 'globalizing' experience as part of their undergraduate education, many educators now believe, will increasingly be thought of as not fully educated for the professional world they will enter. Your son or daughter understands this.

Indeed, the proverbially well-rounded education in preparation for living and working successfully in the 21st century needs not only to be "higher," but also deeper, broader and less nationalistic and monocultural than that which has served past generations. As stated by national report after national report, we now live in a global society in which knowledge, resources and authority transcend national and regional boundaries. The knowledge, skills and attitudes it takes to understand and prevail in such a society can be best achieved by living and learning through direct experience in a culture beyond one's own.

*Study abroad deepens intellectual and personal maturity, fosters independent thinking and builds self-confidence.*

## But why does one need to go far away to learn these lessons? Don't nearly a half million students from other countries come each year to study here?

It is important to learn about the "foreignness" of other lands, cultures and people, but it is also important to learn invaluable lessons about what it means to be an "American." Students studying abroad learn how to distinguish those parts of themselves which are products of their time and place in American society from those parts which are universal to all of humankind. This degree of personal and national self-knowledge simply cannot be gained at "home." Whatever the resources of their college or university and however high their motivation, students' perspectives remain limited by the blinders of being only in their own culture.

## What would a summary of all the reasons for studying abroad look like?

First, study abroad enriches and diversifies undergraduate education by offering courses, programs and academic learning of a sort not possible on the home campus. Second, study abroad provides American students with a global outlook, which emphasizes the contemporary inter-relatedness of nations and cultures, the universality of human values, and the necessity for working together. Third, study abroad enhances career preparation by teaching cross-cultural and workplace skills of value to today's employers, often through internships and other hands-on experiences. Finally, study abroad deepens intellectual and personal maturity, fosters independent thinking and builds self-confidence.

## **What are the primary causes of health and safety problems that students might face overseas?**

Many of the health and safety problems students find abroad are similar to those they find on U.S. college and university campuses. Anecdotal evidence strongly suggests individual student behavior (sometimes misbehavior) is the cause of most illnesses, injuries and fatalities. When students do not prepare themselves properly, ignore the advice and counsel of campus and overseas personnel, or act naively or as if they are invulnerable, they can get into a lot of trouble. This is especially true when they travel excessively on their own or engage in dangerous social behavior, such as binge drinking or hanging out in unsavory local nightspots. Your daughter or son is considerably less likely to be the victim of a natural catastrophe, social violence, disease, or program negligence than of being victimized by her or his own poor judgment exercised in unfamiliar surroundings.

However, there are health and safety problems that are not the direct responsibility of students themselves, but which can victimize them. These involve modes of travel (airplane, bus, van, taxi, car, etc.); criminal behavior directed against them (theft, sexual assault); and permanent or evolving health and safety conditions in the local environment (disease, natural catastrophes, political upheaval). In order to be prepared to meet the challenges specific to particular programs and locations, it is important that you and your daughter or son learn from information provided by the program sponsors, as well as, if possible, from the experiences of past study abroad students. Make sure to cover not just what's what during the academic portion or the study abroad program, but what can happen on excursions, as well as during independent travel. Obviously, there are many variations between countries, regions and programs.

## **How do we know that study abroad will be safe for our child? Recent newspapers and TV accounts suggest that overseas risks may be great. Is this true?**

Established overseas study programs fully recognize the responsibility to provide a secure and unthreatening environment in which your daughter

or son can live and learn safely. Responsible campuses and programs regularly consult with colleagues around the country who are involved in the administration of study abroad programs, with resident directors, with responsible officials of foreign host universities, with contacts in the U.S. Department of State, with governmental and non-governmental agencies, and with other experts, including faculty who are well-informed on issues and events. It is in no one's interest to risk student safety or wellbeing.

## **How does K-State's Office of International Programs know what is going on overseas?**

The ability to communicate almost instantaneously worldwide via fax machines and e-mail enables campuses, third-party program sponsors, and parents to obtain and share information quickly and accurately in planning programs. Modern telecommunications also allows for the monitoring of evolving events. In the event of an overseas emergency that may have repercussions for study abroad programs and students, it is possible to take immediate action. Most campuses and programs have an effective system of consultation in place for these purposes. They are thus able to make proactive and reactive decisions concerning the safe operation of their programs.

## **Aren't most countries just inherently dangerous to Americans? What do U.S. embassies do to guarantee safety of American citizens?**

Most Americans know what they know, not from direct experience in other countries, but from the mass media, which tends to sensationalize world events. Few countries, for instance, have as much street crime and the potential for stranger-upon-stranger violence as the United States. U.S. students may be statistically "safer" in foreign cities and towns than they are at home or on their own campus. Many U.S. students report, when they return from a period abroad, that they had never felt safer in their lives. This does not mean that there is no crime elsewhere, or that your daughter's or son's personal safety is ever completely assured. Minor street crime (especially pick-pocketing) is a fact of life in many countries, especially in crowded cities that receive regular influxes of foreign visitors.

## Who can help my daughter or son if trouble occurs?

In those few locations where even remote danger might occasionally exist, program directors work with local police, U.S. consular personnel, and local university officials in setting up whatever practical security measures are deemed prudent. In such places, students will be briefed during orientation programs and reminded at times of heightened political tension about being security-conscious in their daily activities. Terrorism is a 20th-century reality and is not likely to diminish (or increase) significantly. To succumb to the threat by reacting in fear may well be the objective that terrorists seek to achieve. On the other hand, no one wants to make this point at the expense of the health and safety of your daughter or son. It is important that your son or daughter has sufficient insurance. Be sure to talk to your child about alternate insurance plans if your current family plan does not cover your son or your daughter overseas.

If our child is abroad when something dangerous develops, how can we make contact? What if something happens here and we want to communicate this immediately?

Don't let your child leave home without having as many reliable means of contact as possible in place – a mailing address, an e-mail address, and phone and fax numbers. As noted, overseas programs and home campuses are likely to have set up regular and reliable means of communication, so it may be

best to utilize these systems as a first resort, rather than trying to make direct contact with your daughter or son overseas. Nevertheless, you should develop a family communication plan for regular telephone or e-mail contact, with contingencies for emergency situations. With this in place, in times of heightened political tension, natural disaster, or other difficulty, you should be able to communicate with each other directly about safety and wellbeing. On the other hand, responsible programs may even anticipate your concerns, and make contact with you immediately. Instant international communication in emergency situations continues to improve with easy access to e-mail and international cell phones.

## Can anyone absolutely guarantee our child's safety?

No. Nor can her or his home college or university guarantee safety on-campus in the United States. As long as you have asked all the questions of the campus, of the program sponsor, of your son or daughter, and have the answers you need concerning potential health and safety risks, you have done all you can do. If the risks are unacceptable, you have every right to find another alternative or decide not to support study abroad in any form. If they are acceptable, then only fate can interfere with what should be a great journey and return.

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## When Your Student Returns

*We asked a former study abroad participant to contribute her feelings upon returning to the United States after a semester abroad. She hopes her thoughts will help you and your family prepare for your child's return.*

I was flying home on Christmas day. Not the most convenient time for my family, I know, but the ticket was cheaper. I had teased my mom about the surprise party they were going to throw me when I returned. I had only been teasing, but after missing Thanksgiving, I couldn't wait for some good, ole' turkey and mashed potatoes and gravy. My flight didn't get in until 9 p.m., but after a semester of late-night European dinners, it didn't seem very late, and I figured my family would wait for me. After a day of traveling, my study abroad buddy and I arrived at the Kansas City airport. Her entire family had driven from Western Kansas to meet her at the airport. I walked off the plane, and nobody from my family was there. My dad was only 10 minutes late, but it still hurt a little not to have any excited faces to meet me at the end of a long flight. I had been gone for four months!

We went back to the house (the rest of the family didn't want to be bothered to drive out to meet me), and I got a couple of hugs and a, "So how was it?" And, well, that was it. I didn't get the good, ole' turkey and mashed potatoes and gravy. I got leftover Kraft macaroni and cheese because my mom hadn't wanted to cook a whole meal. They hadn't even waited to eat the Kraft dinner. I ate the leftovers, distributed the Christmas gifts I had bought for my family, and then I opened my Christmas gifts -- they hadn't waited to exchange the presents, either. Then everyone went to bed. I was still wired, so I stayed up by myself and watched *Cosby Show* re-runs until I was finally ready to sleep. I didn't expect a song and dance. I guess I just wanted a little special treatment—four months is a long time. I wanted a little recognition they were happy I was home. I came back a completely different person. My career goals had changed. I had a million stories to tell. I had made a million new friends. I know my family loves me, and I love them, but there is nothing harder in this world than experiencing something only a few really care about. Those who can't relate to the monumental experience you just had want to know you had a good time, and that's it. They don't care about all the glorious wine you drank, all the wonderful, exciting people you met, all the things you learned in your classes. They want to hear, "Yeah, it was awesome!" and then go back to their daily lives.

My situation was pretty much a worst-case scenario. The best you can do is be there for your child and listen to the stories when no one else will. At the most, throw your son or daughter an elaborate welcome-home party with imported wine and cheese. At the least, turn off the television, have a family dinner and ask questions. Then listen to the responses. So many people don't want to hear about the details. You and your family might be your child's only willing ear.

Your son or daughter will also probably experience homesickness for the other culture. Again, be there to listen. It's hard to return from a place you just got used to. Encourage your son or daughter to think about joining international clubs on campus or think about other international experiences like the Peace Corps. There are lots of resources on the Office of International Programs Web site at [www.ksu.edu/oip](http://www.ksu.edu/oip). Please-oh-please encourage your child to share their feelings with you. After returning home, I woke up at 5 a.m. the next morning and couldn't go back to sleep. I decided to cook my favorite meal from my host country. Not only did I get in trouble for making too much noise, but no one wanted to try what I made when they did wake up. I would have been ecstatic if someone had just shown an interest in something they had never experienced before.

Your child will also probably have very different world views. They've lived and adapted in another culture. They might be a little more critical about the U.S. government; they might see home with critical eyes. I did, which really surprised a family full of Republicans. Listen to and respect their opinions—even if you don't agree with them. Your son or daughter will come back a different person, but he or she is also going to return ready to make the world a better place. And they'll thank you for all of your love and support.

For more information, please see chapter 8 of the document "Reentry Guide to Study Abroad by SIT" for more information on reentry.