

Vanderbilt Professional Staff On-Site Support for Faculty-led Travel

Traveling with undergraduates can be a fun and rewarding opportunity and simultaneously a daunting affair. It is strongly recommended that two adults accompany students abroad. In case of illness, inaccessibility to an excursion/event, or some other mishap, someone will be on-site with the individual or group who cannot participate. Ideally, there would be one (1) adult for every ten (10) students. There are many forms of on-site support including 3rd party providers. If you choose not to work with a 3rd party provider, you may consider traveling with a professional staff member.

Professional staff have a great deal of expertise including travel experience, world languages, and experience mentoring undergraduate students.

Appropriate tasks for a staff member include:

- Planning local transportation
- Planning or leading an excursion
- Staying behind with a student who is unable to participate in an activity
- Collecting receipts and balancing the budget at the end of the day
- Leading a reflection or discussion activity

Professional staff should not be involved in:

- Grading
- Academic disciplinary issues

Of course, the professional staff member must have permission to travel and may be asked to continue some of their regular duties while supporting the faculty-led travel opportunity.

The Office of Undergraduate Education is **piloting** this support with a member of the Study Abroad team on a Maymester 2024 course. During the Maymester course, the staff member anticipates the following responsibilities:

1. While traveling, they will continue their usual role as stipulated by GEO.
 - They will be expected to be “on call” to support other faculty and students while traveling with my group.
 - They will respond to email, make phone calls, or conduct occasional Zoom calls while traveling.
2. As a co-faculty, they are expected to participate in an on-site, in-country orientation prior to the beginning of the program, which will serve as another informational session.
 - They will help review information that students have previously received about the program.
 - They will also help students to bond with each other and with the primary faculty.
 - We view this orientation as an ongoing process, starting in advance of departure and continuing throughout the program.

3. They will inform students about resources available in a crisis, including information about how to access local emergency medical services. They will
 - provide students with basic emergency information, such as the nearest local hospital/ clinic and the phone number for emergencies.
 - Inform policies regarding use of cars and other modes of transportation.
 - Relate behavioral expectations.
 - Information about cultural adaptation and culture shock.
 - Encourage students to take care of their health, sleep, and eat well.

4. They will provide information on location-specific safety information. They will
 - Remind students that they are serving as ambassadors of Vanderbilt.
 - Review behavioral expectations.
 - Create a buddy system for free-time excursions.

5. To help with an inclusive community building,
 - The co-faculty advocates appropriate student conduct and behavior-related problems.
 - They will help shape an expectation that the Maymester is an academic experience and that academic responsibilities take priority over personal interests and not a travel vacation or a trip.
 - They can meet with students regularly to discuss non-academic issues such as language issues, health concerns, personal difficulties, and any hazardous behaviors to harm the group.
 - On an equal footing with a visiting faculty from the Foundation of International Education, they will participate in discussing the itinerary of the program in collaboration for the best experiences of our students.
 - They will meet once a week to check in and debrief the progress of the Maymester and the well-being of students. They will be a highly valuable partner for this Maymester and be respected by all.

These duties are subject to review and revision following the Maymester experience. They are offered here solely as an example.