**DOMINICAN UNIVERSITY**

**TIPS FOR TRAVELING OVERSEAS:**

# Safeguarding your Identification Documents and Funds

* Ensure that your passport is in good condition (e.g. lamination is intact, pages are not torn or missing) before departure. A passport, which appears to have been tampered with, could cause you a great deal of inconvenience at a foreign airport, including refusal of entry.
* Take all necessary precautions to safeguard your passport and other identification documents, travel tickets, money, traveler’s checks, credit cards and insurance documents. As a safeguard try not to carry these items together. There is a risk of being left entirely without identification and funds in case of theft or loss.

# At Immigration Checkpoint of Foreign Country

* For entry into and departure from a foreign country, always check before leaving the checkpoint to ensure that your passport is stamped if it is a requirement. This is to safeguard you from breaching the host country’s immigration laws.

# Customs Regulations

* Be familiar with the local customs regulations. In some countries, there are stringent requirements for the entry of food and agricultural products.

# Currency Regulations

* Check up on local currency regulations. The country you are visiting might require a currency declaration upon arrival and departure. (These countries include India, Russia, Algeria, and Georgia). In some countries it might be prudent to declare all items of value, including cash on arrival. Ensure that the customs declaration forms are stamped and keep them safely until you leave the country.

# Illegal Drugs and Narcotics

* To deter drug abuse and drug trafficking, most countries impose severe penalties for possession or trafficking of even small amounts of illegal drugs. Be very careful if you are asked by a stranger to convey or transport any parcel, however small, especially across a border. Should such parcels contain illegal drugs, you risk being found guilty of possession, smuggling or trafficking in drugs. You should also never leave your belongings unattended or under the “care” of any stranger.

**While you are there . . .**

* Obey the laws and respect local customs of the country you are visiting.
* Take special care of your passport and other documents of identification and keep them in a safe place.
* Do not carry too much cash or other valuables.
* Never leave your belongings unattended.
* Always take care of personal safety and security.
* Beware of the food and drinks you consume in areas where hygiene standards are low.
* Be mindful of alcohol consumption.
* If you drive, be sure that you have an International Driving Permit or know what you need.
* Make sure you know the rules of the road.
* Ensure that you, your passengers and the vehicle are covered by insurance.
* Read the small print on the car hire agreements before you sign.
* Stay in touch with your family or friends and inform them of any change in your itinerary or contact details.

# Personal Safety and Security

* Care should be taken to avoid isolated, unfamiliar places or places with a high incidence of crime.
* Do not carry too much cash or other valuables, especially expensive jewelry, as they may draw unwelcome attention.
* In case of disturbance or unrest, you should exercise caution and prudence at all times, and avoid large gatherings and demonstrations. Monitor media reports closely. Should the media report that the situation is deteriorating, you are advised to leave the destination as soon as possible. You may also wish to check with the nearest American Embassy on the situation.

# Local Laws

* You are subjected to the local laws in the country you are visiting and have to abide by them.

## Learn About the Host Country

Read as much as possible about the country where you plan to reside. Learning about a nation’s culture, customs, people, and history will make your stay more meaningful. Libraries, bookstores and tourist bureaus are good resources for this information. Keep abreast as well of the international news for the latest political developments in the country where you live. Although English is spoken in many countries, learning the language of the nation in which you plan to reside will make the transition to your new environment easier.

One of the best ways to learn about living in a foreign country is to get advice from U.S. citizens already residing there. Countries with large numbers of U.S. expatriates often have a U.S. Chamber of Commerce, a bicultural organization, or clubs for Americans that could give you information on living in the country. In countries with fewer U.S. residents, you may be able to meet fellow expatriates through a local international club. The Consular Section of the U.S. embassy or consulate may be able to assist you in finding these organizations.

## Background Notes

The Department of State publishes *Background Notes* on countries around the world. These are brief, factual pamphlets with information on each country’s people, culture, geography, history, government, economy and political conditions. They are available for about 170 countries worldwide and often include a reading list, travel notes, and maps. To purchase copies, contact the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C. 20402 or call 202-512-1800. Select issues are also available on the Depart of States home page: [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)

 **Consular Information Program**

The U.S. Department of State issues fact sheets on every country in the world called *Consular Information Sheets*. The sheets contain information on crime and security conditions, areas of instability and other details relevant to travel in a particular country.

The Department of State also issues Travel Warnings and Public Announcements. Travel Warnings are issued when the State Department recommends deferral of travel by Americans to a country because of civil unrest, dangerous conditions, and terrorist activity and/or because the U.S. has no diplomatic relations with the country and cannot assist an American in distress. Public announcements are issued as a means to disseminate information quickly about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term and/or transnational condition, which would pose significant risks to American travelers.

How to Access Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements

Consular Information Sheets, Travel Warnings and Public Announcements may be heard any time by dialing the Office of Overseas Citizens Services at: 202-647-5225 from a touchtone phone. The recording is updated as new information becomes available. They are also available at any of the 16 regional passport agencies and U.S. embassies and consulates abroad, or by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope and indicating the desired country to the Office of Overseas Citizens Services, Bureau of Consular Affairs, Room 4811, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20520-4818.

## By Fax

From your fax machine, dial 202-647-3000, using the handset as you would a regular telephone. The system prompts you on how to proceed.

## By Internet

Information about travel and consular services is now available on the Internet. The address is: **travel**.**state**.gov/**travel**/cis\_pa\_tw/tw/tw\_1764.html

Visitors to the website will find travel warnings, public announcements, and consular information sheets, passport and visa information, travel publications, background on international adoption and international child abduction services, international legal assistance, and the Consular Affairs mission statement. There is also a link to the State Departments main site, which provides users with current foreign affairs information.

## Help for American Victims of Crime Overseas

The Bureau of Consular Affairs, Overseas Citizens Services is committed to assisting American citizens who become victims of crime while traveling, working or residing abroad. Government officials, known as consuls or consular officers, at embassies and consulates in nearly 250 cities throughout the world are responsible for assisting the U.S. citizens who may be traveling, working, or residing abroad. To contact the Office of Overseas Citizens Services in the U.S. call 1-888-407-4747 (during business hours) or 202-647-5225 (after hours).

If you are the victim of a crime overseas:

* Contact your international field supervisor
* Contact the nearest U.S. embassy, consulate, or consular agency for assistance.
* Contact Dominican University as soon as possible then contact the local police to report the incident and obtain immediate help with safety concerns. Additionally, the emotional impact of the crime may be intensified because the victim is in unfamiliar surroundings. They can help American crime victims with issues such as:
	+ Replacing a stolen passport
	+ Contacting friends, family or employers
	+ Obtaining appropriate medical care
	+ Addressing emergency needs that arise as a result of the crime
	+ Obtaining general information about the local criminal justice process and information about your case
	+ Obtaining information about local resources to assist victims, including foreign crime victim compensation programs
	+ Obtaining information about crime victim assistance and compensation programs in the U.S.
	+ Obtaining a list of local attorneys who speak English
		- Consular officials cannot, however, investigate crimes, provide legal advice or represent you in court, serve as official interpreters or translators, or pay legal, medical or other fees for you.

## Resources and Information for Crime Victims

*Victim Assistance:* If you are the victim of a crime while overseas you may benefit from specialized resources for crime victims available in the U.S. Throughout the United States thousands of local crime victim assistance programs offer help to victims of violent crime and most will help residents of their community who have been the victim of a crime in another country. These include rape crisis counseling programs, shelter and counseling programs for battered women, support groups and bereavement counseling for family members of homicide victims, diagnostic and treatment programs for child abuse victims, assistance for victims of drunken driving crashes, and others. Information about locating crime victim assistance programs is below.

*Victim Compensation:* All states operate crime victim compensation programs and nearly half of them offer benefits to their residents who are victims of violent crime overseas.

The toll-free 24-hours a day/7 days a week hotline for sexual assault crisis counseling and referrals in the United States is: 1-800-656-HOPE. It is operated by a non-profit organization, RAINN (Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network), which also has information on the Internet: <http://ww.rainn.org>

Information about local sexual assault victim assistance programs in the U.S. is also available from each state’s sexual assault coalition. Contact information for these state coalitions are listed at the website of the U.S. Department of Justice Violence Against Women Office: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/help.htm>

Information about local domestic violence victim assistance programs in the U.S. is also available from each state’s domestic violence coalition. Contact information for these state coalitions is listed at the website of the U.S. Department of Justice Violence Against Women Office: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/help.htm>

Information for crime victims on the impact of crime, safety planning, legal rights and civil legal remedies, and options for assistance and referrals to local programs is also available from the National Crime Victim Center. Call toll free (8:30 am – 8:30 pm EST) 1-800-FYI-CALL or call TTY for hearing impaired (8:30 am – 8:30 pm EST) 1-800-211-7996.

Information and referral to victim assistance programs is available from the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA). Call toll free 24 hours a day/7 days a week: 1-800-TRY-NOVA.

Access to Consular Assistance

* In distress you have access to consular assistance during and after regular office hours. In an emergency you can contact the nearest Mission. Outside office hours, the Mission’s answering service will usually provide the number of the Duty Officer whom you can contact.
* For more information, log on to <http://www.mfa.gov.sg/consular>