24 May 2017

Statement on European Travel and Baylor University Risk Assessment

We truly believe international education—whether study abroad, internships, or service learning—is important to a student’s worldview, citizenship, career path, and professional growth. The Center for Global Engagement at Baylor University takes the health and safety of Baylor students, faculty, and staff seriously. We work diligently to minimize risk, but we cannot eliminate all risk. The Global Engagement team assesses each program individually before the University approves travel. For example, longstanding programs in Egypt and Turkey are currently suspended. At this time, our risk assessment process has not lead us to cancel any of our Europe-based programs. The U.S. Department of State’s May 1 recommendation on travel in Europe remains in place: https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/alertswarnings/Europe.html

The recent incident in Manchester, England was tragic and deeply concerning. We are aware that such events can happen anywhere, both at home in the U.S. or abroad. This is why we invest considerable resources into training faculty, staff, and students, as well as monitoring global safety and security data on a continuous basis. Baylor is one of less than 100 universities in North America who have dedicated staff monitoring international programs as part of their daily duties, and we have mandatory self-awareness and situational awareness training that all students are required to complete.

Our international response team consists of staff who have experience leading student trips abroad, experience in corporate security, the Department of Homeland Security, FEMA training, and international risk management. We monitor all U.S. State Department issued information, warnings, and advisories as well as receive daily private security briefings from a contracted security provider. Additionally, we have invested resources in new technology that makes communication and our response time faster in the event of an emergency. For instance, dedicated Baylor staff members monitor phone calls 24 hours, 7 days a week answering questions from students traveling abroad.

While tragic events are an all too common aspect of life in our modern world, we remain committed to our mission to educate men and women for worldwide leadership and service, within a caring Christian community. The safety of Baylor students traveling abroad is our highest priority. We recognize that while we can never eliminate risk, we will continue to work diligently to assess and mitigate risk. Ultimately, the final decision on whether or not to travel remains the responsibility of the student and...
his or her family. We do our best to provide the most up-to-date and pertinent information to help students and their families make that decision.

Thank you for your support of Baylor University. Please feel free to contact me with specific questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr. Jeffrey S. Hamilton
Vice Provost for Global Engagement
Baylor University