Dear Students, Parents and Families,

I am writing to you in response to growing concerns about safety and security abroad, especially as it relates to UWM’s study abroad programs. This is not my first message on this topic, and, unfortunately, will likely not be my last. However, I am expanding the audience of this message to engage with you as parents and family members of the students on our programs.

With the recent, and incredibly tragic attacks in Paris, Beirut, and Bamako, and the escalating situation on the Syrian/Turkish border, as well as the enactment of the U.S. State Department’s Worldwide Travel Alert, I want you to know, as part of our community, what we are doing at the UWM Center for International Education to ensure the safety and security of students:

If you haven’t already, you can read the Worldwide Travel Alert here. It’s also worth noting that there was already a Worldwide Caution in place, last updated on July 29, 2015, and available here. While these messages, when released, garner a lot of attention, the unfortunate reality is that they provide little-to-no actionable information or specific instructions. They highlight what we likely already knew, and certainly know now: the world is an unpredictable and uncertain place.

**For programs in Paris, and elsewhere in France, including our UWinteriM faculty-led programs:**
- At this time, all programs will proceed as planned.
- Modifications of the itineraries and/or excursions to the above programs will take place as needed in order to ensure student safety, but only after consultation with local, national and international resources and contacts in the various regions, or if specific travel restrictions are put in place by the U.S. State Department.
- Any changes will be immediately communicated to students on these programs.

**For all programs regardless of location:**
- We are closely monitoring messages from the U.S. State Department, the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC), or international insurance provider CISI, and other news sites in countries where we operate to stay informed of all potential international crises situations that might affect our students abroad.
We enroll all students in CISI medical and accident insurance, which includes a Security Evacuation Benefit.

We are reinforcing our message about safety and security in our already thorough on-site orientations and reminding students that they need to be aware of their surroundings at all times.

We are communicating to students our expectations about checking-in immediately following any incident or emergency situation. This check-in should be with their families, their local contacts there in-country, and with the CIE Study Abroad Office here at UWM.

We are ensuring that each student has an emergency contact information such as a local 24/7 phone number, our national US-based 24/7 phone number, the local police, and the US embassy.

We are holding weekly reviews of our programs relative to the evolving security assessments we receive, and continue to review and assess our protocols and programs.

Future Communication
We’ve created a page on the CIE Study Abroad Website for you, as well as your families, to access additional information and communications generated by the CIE Study Abroad Office during an emergency. On this page parents and family members can also sign up to receive emails from the CIE Study Abroad Office in the event of an emergency. The link is as follows: [http://uwm.edu/cie/?p=5851](http://uwm.edu/cie/?p=5851)

Please understand that in these emergency situations, our first priority is to those in closest proximity and most directly impacted by the emergency. As we move to account for our students and meet their respective needs, we will then begin to communicate more broadly. For those wishing to reach out, the CIE Study Abroad Office can always be reached at overseas@uwm.edu, as well as at 414-229-5182. Outside of regular business hours, please contact UWM Campus Police at 414-229-9911.

The situation is constantly evolving and can change quickly, and if, based on the information received, I feel that any of our program locations are not safe, I will not hesitate to make arrangements to modify plans accordingly.

Keep in touch. Be safe. Ask me any questions you have.

Mark Eckman
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