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# Responding to COVID-19

An opportunity to share strategies and updates, ask questions of each other, and process concerns

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THE  
FORUM  
ON EDUCATION  
ABROAD



## Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

CDC > Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) > Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Communities > [Colleges & Universities](#)



### Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

COVID-19 Situation Summary +

What You Should Know +

Travel Information +

Preventing COVID-19 Spread in  
Communities -

Home +

Childcare & Schools +

Colleges & Universities -

Interim Guidance for  
Administrators of US Institutions of  
Higher Education

[Guidance for Student Foreign  
Travel for Institutions of Higher  
Education](#)

# Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education with Students Participating in International Travel or Study Abroad Programs

This guidance is for Institutes of Higher Education with students participating in international travel or study abroad programs.

### Consider postponing or canceling student international travel programs

Given the global outbreak of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) institutes of higher education (IHE) should **consider** postponing or canceling upcoming student international travel programs. IHE should **consider** asking current program participants to return to their home country. Those overseeing student international travel programs should be aware that students may face unpredictable circumstances, travel restrictions, challenges in returning home or accessing health care while abroad.

IHEs should **consider** asking students participating in study abroad programs to return to the United States. IHEs should work with state and local public health officials to determine the best approach for when and how (for example, chartered transportation for countries or areas assessed as high-risk for exposure) their study abroad students might return. All plans for returning study abroad students should be designed to protect participants from stigma and discrimination.

The COVID-19 situation is dynamic. Given the speed of spread and the number of countries experiencing community transmission, IHEs should evaluate the risks associated with choosing to maintain programs abroad and take the appropriate proactive measures. IHEs that continue to maintain programs abroad should monitor [www.cdc.gov/COVID-19](http://www.cdc.gov/COVID-19) for additional information.

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## For colleges and universities

### What can colleges and universities do to prepare for COVID-19?

As the situation around COVID-19 develops, guidance will be updated. Below are some links to the latest information.

We know that your institutions frequently sponsor, organize, or are associated with individual and group international travel. At this time, **Governor Baker and Health and Human Services Secretary Sudders strongly urge schools to cancel all upcoming organized international travel for the foreseeable future.**

All campuses have protocols that were developed in response to emergency infectious diseases such as SARS and meningitis. These should be updated. In preparation for COVID-19, campuses should be reviewing and updating preparedness plans including:

- Gearing up student health services to assess availability of private rooms for quarantine and isolation of potential cases
- Standing up wraparound services (food, emotional support, teleclasses...) for students in isolation and quarantine
- Considerations of canceling mass gatherings and/or classes if community transmission occurs
- Communications strategies with students and their families

## The Forum and Pulse Issue Joint Statement on COVID-19

Posted on March 2, 2020 by Lindsay McCauslin

Dear Colleagues,

The Forum on Education Abroad and Pulse have worked together to issue this joint statement regarding COVID-19.

The US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued Guidance for Student Foreign Travel for Institutions of Higher Education on Sunday, March 1, 2020.

We want to point out that the CDC has never before issued guidance like this regarding student mobility. We have reached out to the CDC and asked for more insight into why they issued this statement. Additionally we want to reiterate:

- Both The Forum and Pulse strongly urge colleagues to read this statement as it is written – as *guidance to consider*. It is not a directive that is being handed down. Instead, the CDC is asking our field to *consider postponing or canceling student foreign exchange programs*.
- Students are not typically members of the population who may succumb to a virus like COVID-19. Those populations have often included the elderly and those with compromised immune systems.
- Unlike typical travelers, students are supported on the ground at their various study sites by professional staff, faculty, and others who work to assure that students are provided information, assistance, guidance, and help when necessary.

We also want to acknowledge that different institutions will have different capacities to manage a complex issue such as COVID-19. Not every organization can be expected to react in the same way as those with professional staff devoted to addressing international health and safety considerations. We urge those institutions to reach out to your colleagues through professional networks. Look to what they are saying and recommending and then scale it so that it fits your context.

Looking to the *Standards of Good Practice*, particularly Standard 8, is one of the best ways to assess where your institution is in managing this situation. All decisions should be based on measured, careful thought that is consistent with your established emergency action plans. Triggers should have been established in that plan and those triggers ought to be heeded.

Be sure to triangulate your sources of information so that you can create a much more complete picture of what is being recommended during these trying times. Look to multiple sources of information to inform your decision making. Advice provided by the World Health Organization is measured and practical. Other places to seek information include the

- Overseas Advisory Council (OSAC)
- WorldAware COVID-19 Hub
- Italian Ministry of Health
- The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
- U.S. Department of State's COVID-19 Travel Alert
- British Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Your colleagues at The Forum and Pulse stand ready to assist in providing credible updates as they become available.

Best regards,

Andrea M. Bordeau, Executive Committee, Pulse: Higher Education International Health and Safety Professionals

Natalie A. Mello, Vice President for Programs, Training & Services, The Forum on Education Abroad

Melissa A. Torres, President & CEO, The Forum on Education Abroad

# THE FORUM ON EDUCATION ABROAD

March 11, 2020

Robert R. Redfield, MD  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027

Dear Dr. Redfield:

Thank you for your proactive leadership in responding to the COVID-19 virus. As President and CEO of The Forum on Education Abroad, I am writing to tell you more about the work of our organization and to express some concern about the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) recent guidance on education abroad. In the following paragraphs I will explain further.

The Forum on Education Abroad is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, membership association recognized by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission as the Standards Development Organization (SDO) for the field of education abroad. The Forum develops and disseminates comprehensive standards of good practice, resources and training; advocates for education abroad and its value; and engages the field in critical dialogue to benefit students. The Forum's 800+ institutional members include U.S. colleges and universities, overseas institutions, consortia, agencies, and over 100 program providers. Our members comprise over 90% of students who study abroad, and are committed to The Forum's *Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad*. The *Standards* support the complex responsibilities inherent in offering education abroad opportunities to students. They act as a means to develop, manage, assess and improve education abroad programming. As a commonly-developed and accepted set of standards, they provide a framework for accountability. In particular, Standard 8: Health, Safety, Security and Risk Management, is one of the best ways to assess where an institution is in managing crisis situations. Standard 8 emphasizes that all decisions should be based on triangulated data and recommendations published by expert organizations around the globe that include the World Health Organization (WHO), the U.S. Department of State, the CDC and others. That information must be considered thoughtfully and decisions must be made that are consistent with the organization's established emergency action plans.

On March 1, 2020, the CDC issued *Guidance for Student Foreign Exchange Travel for Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs)* which advises IHEs "to consider postponing or canceling student foreign exchange programs" and "to consider asking students participating in study abroad programs to return to the United States." It has since been retitled *Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education with Students Participating in International Travel or Study Abroad Programs*. We believe that the unprecedented statement targeting a single, relatively small population, is inconsistent with the CDC's *Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel*, which recommends that only older adults or those who have chronic medical conditions consider postponing travel to countries with a Level 2 Travel Health Notice and that travelers should "practice usual precautions" when visiting countries with a Level 1 Travel

Tel: +1 717 245 1031 Dickinson College, P.O. Box 1773, Carlisle, PA 17013  
Fax: +1 717 245 1677 info@forumea.org www.forumea.org

# Coronavirus: Trump restricts travel from most of Europe by foreigners

The president made the announcement after the number of coronavirus cases in the United States passed 1,000 and the stock market plummeted.

Watch Trump's full speech on the coronavirus

MARCH 11, 2020 / 09:31





U.S. Passports		International Travel		U.S. Visas		Intercountry Adoption		International Parent Abduction	
Travel Advisories		Visa Alerts - Banner		COVID-19 Country Specific Information					
Legal Resources		U.S. Passports		International Travel		U.S. Visas		Intercountry Adoption	

[Travel.State.Gov](#) - Global Level 3 Health Advisory – Reconsider Travel

### Global Level 3 Health Advisory – Reconsider Travel

Global Health Advisory March 11, 2020	Level 3: Reconsider Travel
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Global Level 3 Health Advisory – Reconsider Travel

The Department of State advises U.S. citizens to reconsider travel abroad due to the global impact of COVID-19. Many areas throughout the world are now experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks and taking action that may limit traveler mobility, including quarantines and border restrictions. Even countries, jurisdictions, or areas where cases have not been reported may restrict travel without notice.

For the latest information regarding COVID-19, please visit the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's \(CDC\) website](#).

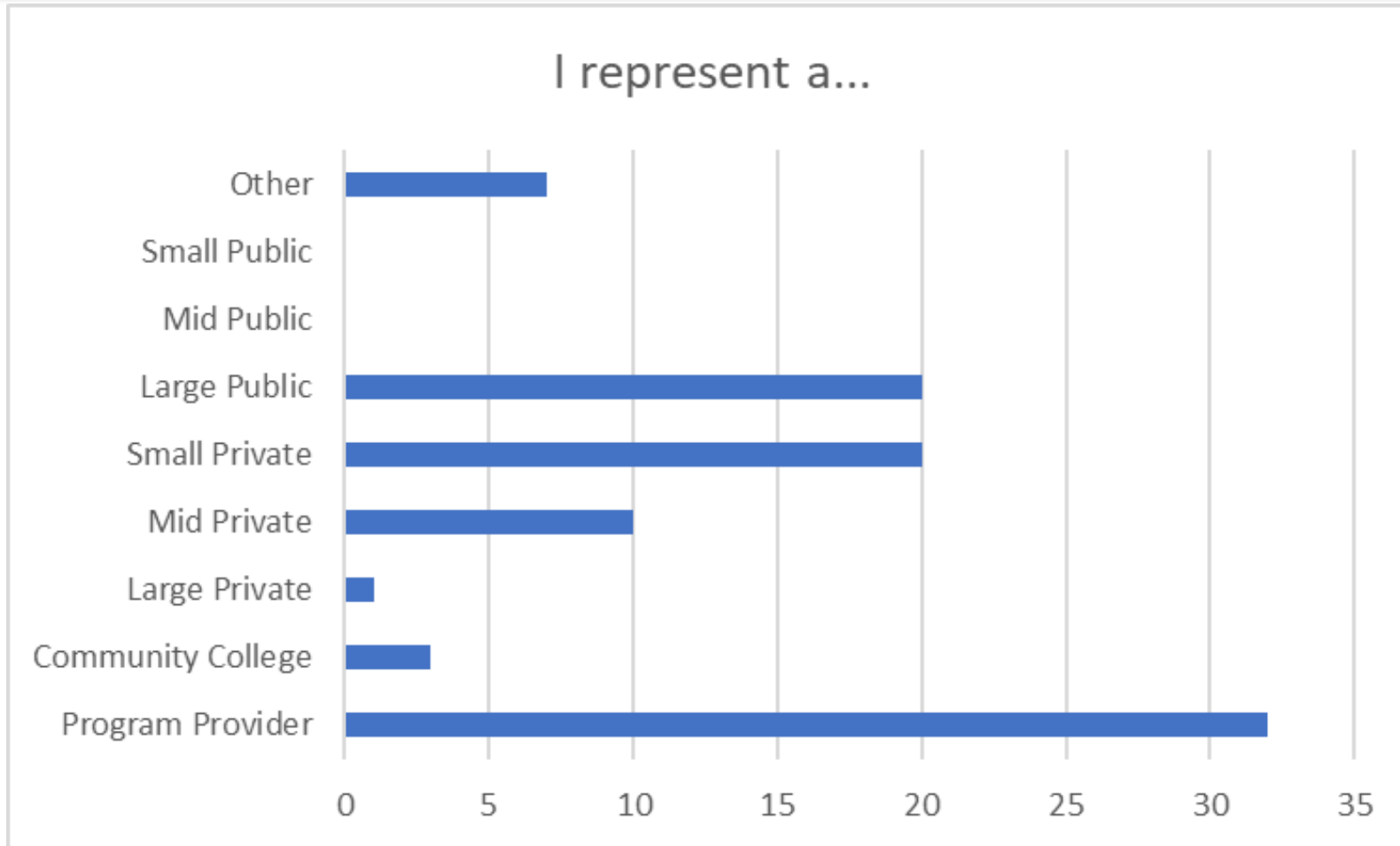
You are encouraged to visit [travel.state.gov](#) to view individual Travel Advisories for the most urgent threats to safety and security. Please also visit the website of the relevant U.S. embassy or consulate to see information on entry restrictions, foreign quarantine policies, and urgent health information provided by local governments.

Travelers are urged to enroll in the [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) to receive Alerts and make it easier to locate you in an emergency. The Department uses these Alerts to convey information about terrorist threats, security incidents, planned demonstrations, natural disasters, etc. In an emergency, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate or call the following numbers: 1(888) 407-4747 (toll-free in the United States and Canada) or 1 (202) 501-4444 from other countries or jurisdictions.

If you decide to travel abroad:

- Review and follow the [CDC's guidelines for the prevention of coronavirus](#).
- Check with your airlines or cruise lines regarding any updated information about your travel plans and/or restrictions.
- Visit [travel.state.gov](#) to view individual Travel Advisories for the most urgent threats to safety and security.
- Visit our Embassy webpages on COVID-19 for information on conditions in each country or jurisdiction.
- Visit the [Department of Homeland Security's website](#) on the latest travel restrictions to the U.S.

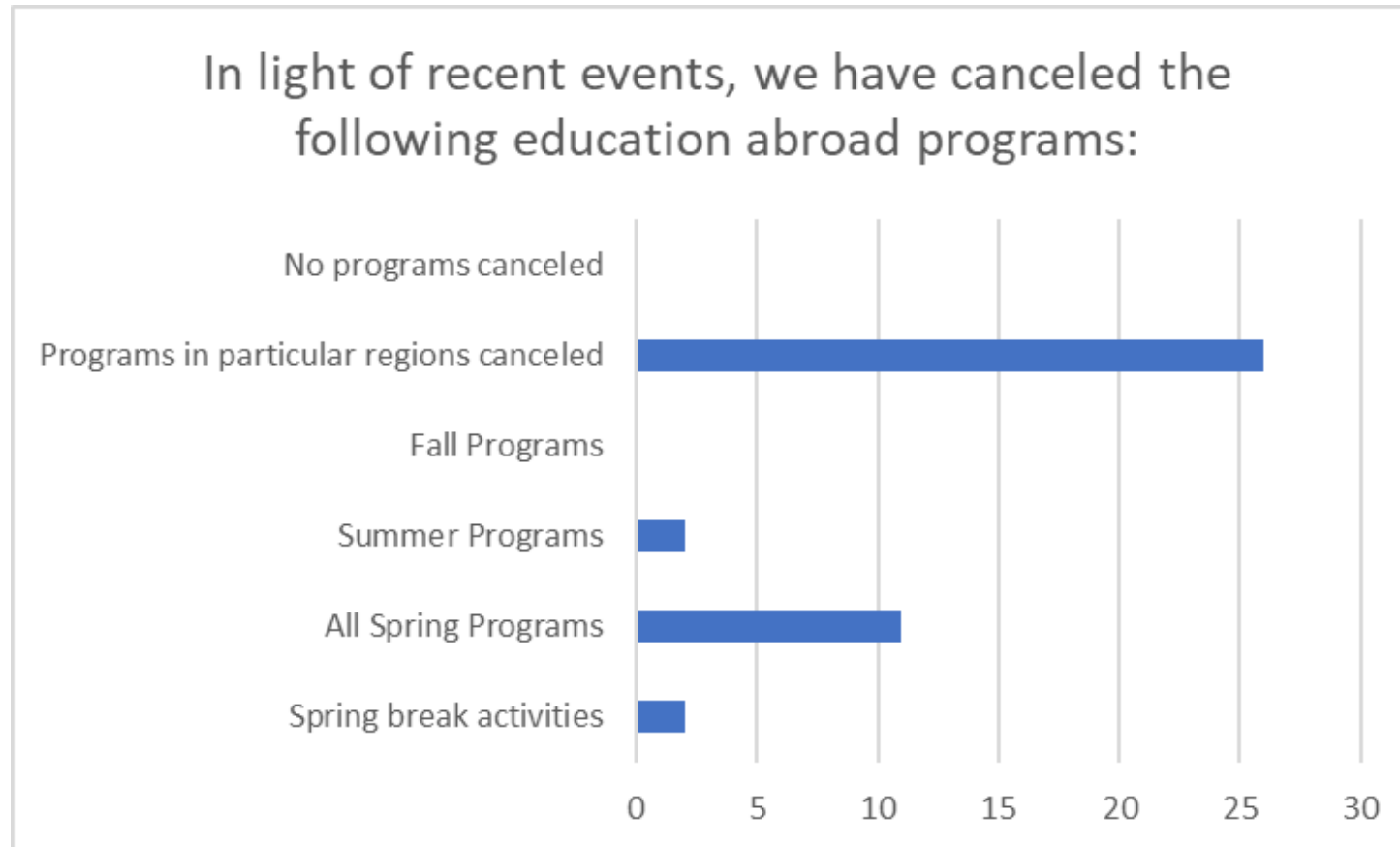
# Polling Questions (93 respondents)





# Polling Questions (41 respondents)

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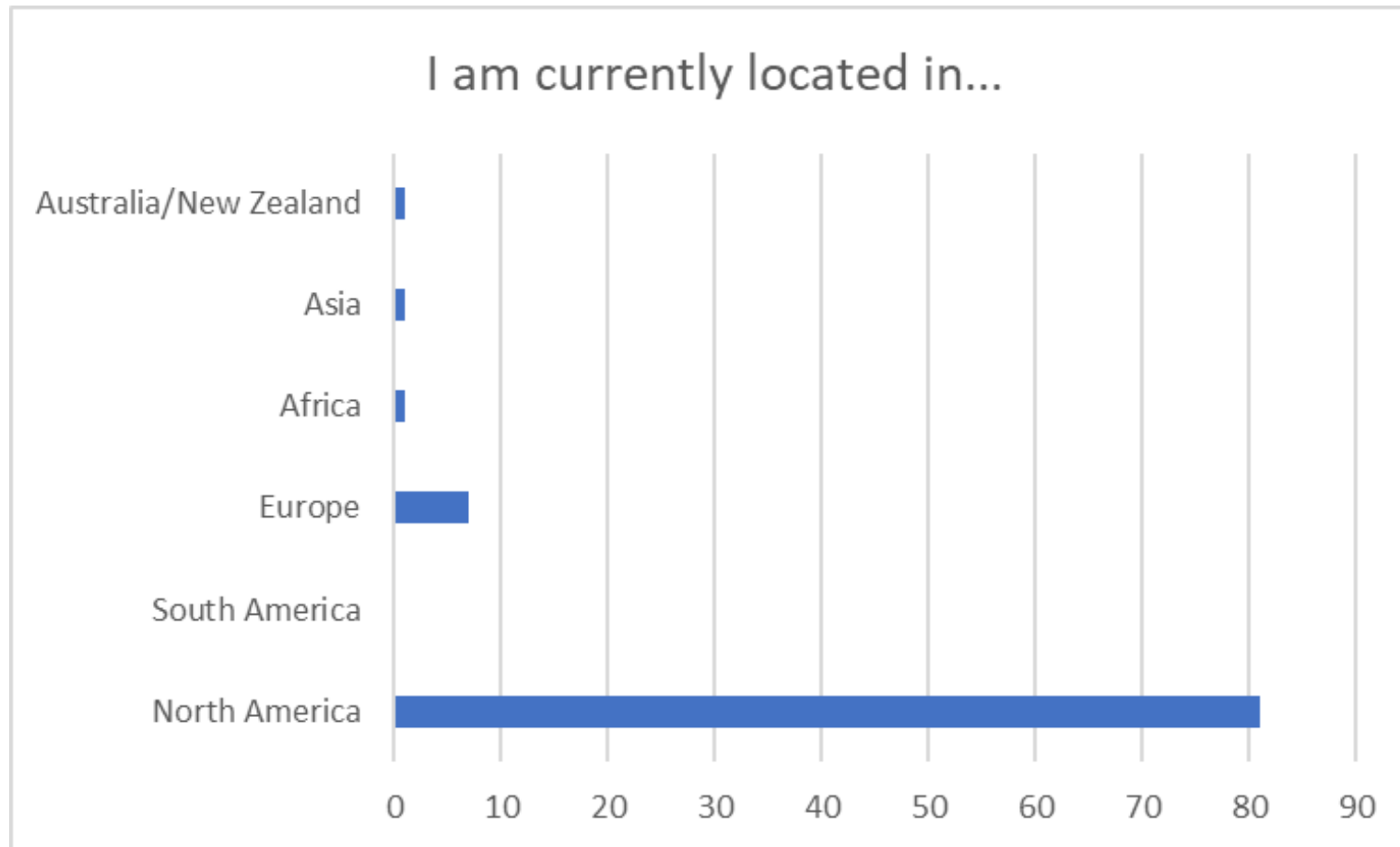
# Polling Questions ( respondents)

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# Polling Questions (91 respondents)

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# Pulse: Higher Education International Health & Safety Professionals

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- ✓ Professional association of dedicated colleagues
- ✓ Share information and best practices
- ✓ Provide support for each other

χ Crystal ball

χ Insider “secret” information

χ Available for 1 on 1 consulting on a whim

# Panelists

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## Ben Chamberlain

International Risk and  
Security Officer & Deputy  
Title IX Coordinator  
University of South Florida



## Julie Friend

Director and Deputy Title  
IX Coordinator, Office of  
Global Safety and Security,  
Northwestern University



## Vanessa Sterling

Senior Manager, Health &  
Safety  
CET Academic Programs



# Prioritizing decisions / factors to consider

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- Timing of the program (now, next month, further out)
- Ability to provide similar content in another way (w/o travel)
  - What kind of lead time do you need to make that happen?
- Available to depart, arrive or return w/o restriction or self-isolation
- Flexibility of the itinerary
  - How much can change on the fly while abroad?
- Capacity of healthcare resources on-site when stretched
- Financial flexibility – more recoverable costs for early cancelations
- Confidence in and comfort with using your international medical insurance
- Depth of your on-site network to support travelers (including sick ones)
  - Can you provide more resources (bodies / funding)?

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How are you responding to the Global Level 3 issued by the US Department of State?

# Considerations from a Public University point of view

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- Public Universities are usually part of a larger state system
  - Employees are generally state employees
- Do we have a Travel Policy and what does that require us to do?
  - CDC Level 3 is prohibited by definition (and in this case CDC Level 2)
- Coordination of response is appreciated statewide, though there will be differences
- Where are the travelers and what type are they?
  - (Faculty led/ Semester/ Exchange/ Affiliate/ Research/ Conference/ Student Org/ Athletics)
  - International Students and Travel Restrictions
- What are the risks and rewards for calling students home early?
- Early returns have needs: housing, food, supplies, monitoring, etc.



# Considerations from a Private University point of view

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- Some factors to consider re go/no go
  - Anxiety / fear by program leaders or participants to travel in general or be away from family or support network in this uncertain time
  - Age of traveler / life-home circumstances / health status of travelers
  - Part-time status of students whose employers have issued strict travel bans
  - Capacity to support travelers who are unable to return or who need care
  - Whether or not the experience is critical to the student's academic progress
  - The close environment that results from certain types of programming
  - Likely spread of cold /influenza through group, but mistaken for COVID-19 (even temp.)
  - We are a "well-funded" institution; could "afford" to wait
- Reaching consensus
  - It is important to your community that agreement on all travel be made, or will you open programs / trips for a case-by-case analysis (bandwidth?)

# Considerations from a Provider point of view

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## Understand the constraints

- Capacity
- Visa requirements
- Recoverable resources
- Time lag
- Housing constraints
- Quarantine
- Independent travel

# What to do about students refusing to return?

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- Also, how should we act in the case of a student deciding to remain, even after having been encouraged to leave Spain? Should we cancel his/her enrollment/registration?

# How are you working with insurance companies or global assistance providers?

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- How have Global Assistance Service providers contributed to ensuring the safety of those in high risk areas? Are they providing benefits for evacuations, self quarantines (lodging), return of personal items, family accompaniment (lodging, travel and meals) and coordination of medical benefits with medical plan carriers (either by coordinating or covering the cost).

# What are you doing to reassure people?

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- How are others working with anxious colleagues and/or superiors?
- What is your best advice for responding to student and parent questions that dwell on the "what if" scenarios?

# How are you accommodating returned students?

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- How are institutions handling academic credits/housing for students who return to campus mid-semester?
- Our concern is about the transfer of credits of our US students. Most of them, pushed to come back to US, are in risk of losing their credits. Our effort as host university is to offer as much coverage as we can to transfer the credits.

# What are you planning to do about summer programs?

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- How are others deciding how to handle Summer 2020 study abroad programs? Whether or not to cancel? If so, when?
- How is COVID-19 affecting plans for summer and fall programs?
- I am organizing and teaching in a Summer Study Abroad in Florence, Italy this summer. My institution is trying to decide whether or not to cancel it. Since it is four months away it is hard to know and the application deadline is in one month. A crystal ball would be helpful!

# How are you dealing with financial impacts?

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- How much financial impact are institutions passing along to students or are colleges and universities covering 100% of unrecoverable costs?



# Resources

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- [The World Health Organization](#)
- [Overseas Advisory Council \(OSAC\)](#)
- [WorldAware COVID-19 Hub](#)
- [Italian Ministry of Health](#)
- [The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#)
- [U.S. Department of State's COVID-19 Travel Alert](#)
- [British Foreign & Commonwealth Office](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- [US State Department Travel Alert](#)

# Interested in joining Pulse?

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## Contact

**Monique MacAllan**, chair of the membership committee for Pulse

Global Safety Coordinator

Global Operations and Learning

The Pennsylvania State University

Global Programs, 101 Innovation Blvd. Suite 201

University Park, PA 16802 USA

Tel: +1-814-863-3204 Fax: 814-865-6480

Email: [mlm617@psu.edu](mailto:mlm617@psu.edu) | [global.psu.edu](http://global.psu.edu)

# Thank you!

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## *16<sup>th</sup> Annual Forum Conference session:*

### *Open Forum on Developing Risk Mitigation*

- There is no agenda for this session. Instead, we invite you to bring the issues that are keeping you awake at night. What are you currently focused on that wasn't planned for – COVID-19, political demonstrations, natural disasters? Come prepared to ask about and share your strategies for risk mitigation in a world of evolving concerns.

#### Panelists:

- Rochelle Keesler, Lafayette College
- Patrick Morgan, University of Michigan
- Wendy Lou Pedersen, University of Southern California

**Date and time  
coming soon!**