
FAMILY PRE-DEPARTURE GUIDE

**Buckman Center for
International Education**

Rhodes College



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Family Pre-Departure Guide

The Buckman Center for International Education has created a Pre-Departure Guide for your student's use, and this Family Pre-Departure Guide for your use. These materials include information on academic planning, health issues, student conduct and safety, as well as other general issues related to studying abroad. We encourage you to read and discuss these documents with your son or daughter prior to departure.

You may also find the contents of both the Pre-Departure Guide and the Family Pre-Departure Guide organized on the Buckman Center webpage. Though these guides mostly pertain to students who are studying internationally, students participating in off-campus domestic programs may find these guides useful as well.

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Preparing for Departure

One of the most essential aspects of your student's study abroad is experience is proper preparation.

What they do, or don't do, before they even leave home can determine the quality of their abroad experience. A student who forgoes a simple task such as making copies of their passport can regret at leisure if their passport is lost or stolen. The student's study abroad experience is ultimately their own responsibility. The extent to which they take their preparation seriously may determine how successful they are in their time abroad.

Documents

Obtaining the necessary documents is one of the first steps that students preparing to study abroad must take. Be aware that acquiring passports and visas can be a several month process.

Passports

If your student does not already have a valid passport, he or she should apply for one immediately. U.S. citizens can apply at the nearest Passport Agency of the U.S. Department of State or at some post offices. The U.S. Department of State maintains a website at travel.state.gov/passport/passport_1738.html that provides instructions on how to obtain a passport, and a printable application can be found at:

http://travel.state.gov/download_applications.html. Students can also call the government hotline at The National Passport Information Center (NPIC) 1-877-487-2778 for this information. Passports are mailed to the applicant two to four weeks after the application is received and are valid for ten years.

If your student's passport's expiration date is within six months of the end of the program, the passport must be renewed before your student leaves the country. Otherwise, it might be difficult to either enter the host country or re-enter the U.S. Also, your student may be required to surrender their passport, restricting their freedom to travel while abroad.

Student Entry Visas

Many countries require a student entry visa. This is an official authorization for entry into a country that is amended to the passport, and is granted by the country where the student will be studying. Each country has different requirements for obtaining visas. Furthermore, practices for granting visas can vary among consulates of the same country within the US. Keep in mind that your student may need to get visas for additional countries he or she will visit while abroad (http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html). Also, some countries require transit visas for people to change planes at their airports -- particularly the Schengen countries in Europe. For more information, see: <http://www.eurovisa.info/SchengenCountries.htm>.

Make a photocopy of the Identification Page of your student's passport as well as his or her visa in case the originals are lost overseas.

Travel

Booking Flights

Unless otherwise specifically stated, students are responsible for making their own travel arrangements to and from their program site. Be sure to ask about low-cost student rates when talking with travel agents. Thorough research is the key to getting the best bargains, and the Internet is a good source of information.

It is often best to try student travel agencies, as they often are most familiar with student rates. The International Student Travel Confederation's website is www.istc.org. They offer advice on student travel and provide contact information for major student travel agencies across the country. Additionally, try www.statravel.com.

Trip Cancellation Insurance

Since the cost of a study abroad program is not inconsequential, it is also suggested that students purchase trip cancellation insurance. Trip cancellation insurance is designed for reimbursement of financial losses incurred when it is necessary to cancel a trip prior to departure or when it is necessary to interrupt a trip. Trip cancellation insurance is not designed for reimbursement if there is no need to cancel or interrupt a trip (if someone simply changes his/her mind about traveling). Trip cancellation insurance is effective in the case of sudden illness or injury. Most policies also provide coverage due to a wide variety of unforeseen events. Some reputable companies that offer this type of insurance are: AccessAmerica, HTH Worldwide, and Travel Insured.

Arrival

Consider arrival instructions carefully to ensure that students have a smooth arrival and do not miss the beginning of the program. Please note that the arrival at a program usually involves getting settled into housing or meeting other students, as well as student orientation.

It is very important for all students to make every effort to arrive on the date and time indicated by the program. If a student arrives before the arrival date, he or she will be completely responsible for his or her own arrival transportation, lodging, and any other expenses incurred during that time. Arriving later than the arrival date will most likely result in the student missing part of the orientation. Moreover, the tight scheduling of activities during this time does not usually allow for make-up sessions.

Finances

When estimating budgets, two detailed categories should be considered: Pre-departure and After Arrival.

Pre-Departure costs may include the following: passport fees, direct consular fees for visa, airfare, local transportation, independent travel expenses (Eurail passes, etc.) luggage or backpack, and appropriate clothing, if necessary.

Upon arrival, a student usually spends more money the first few weeks while becoming acquainted with new surroundings. A student's spending habits and lifestyle should be taken into account when estimating spending budgets. Students should consider the following expenses when estimating their budgets while abroad: weekend travel, local transportation, daily meals and dining out, entertainment, museum fees, laundry, postage, telephone costs, and personal items.

Banking and access to money differ by country and site. Depending on the country and amount of time abroad, students can open bank accounts in their host country or many access their U.S. bank accounts via ATM cards.

If accessing a U.S. bank account through an ATM card, we recommend the following:

- Students should be sure to contact their bank about special procedures such as an international PIN number.
- A family member should have access to the account from the U.S. in case of access problems.
- ATM cards should be tied to checking (NOT savings) accounts.
- Students should bring a duplicate card along with them in case the card gets taken in a teller machine, as can happen anywhere.

NOTE: ATM machines overseas charge higher usage fees than domestic providers. Credit cards, American Express cards, and traveler's checks are other ways of obtaining money while abroad, albeit with a fee.

Packing

American students tend to bring much more luggage than they will need. A simple rule of thumb is that the student should be able to carry all of his or her belongings (including cameras, purses, etc.) one block and up a flight of stairs. Closet and storage space abroad is usually significantly less than it is in the U.S.

Communication

Telephone

With the liberalization of telecommunications markets worldwide, good values abound and are worth shopping for. In the past, calling cards were the cheapest and most reliable way for students to call the U.S. while abroad. For information on making international calls, contact one of the major long distance carriers (AT & T: 1-800-222-0300; MCI: 1-800-955-0925; Sprint: 1-800-877-4646) and request a wallet sized international calling guide.

Students interested in using a calling card while overseas must request this before they leave the U.S. Students also find prepaid calling cards (particularly rechargeable ones) to be a convenient way to make international calls. Besides ATT, Sprint, and MCI, other vendors also sell global calling products. Check www.idt.net as well as www.globalcalling.com/NAFSA for other deals. An Internet search should yield many more options. In addition, prepaid cards are often available once overseas, particularly in ethnic neighborhoods. Keep in mind that users of these cards often must pay a surcharge when using payphones or a toll-free number.

Telephone service abroad can be much more expensive than in the U.S. Students will realize tremendous savings if family and friends in the U.S. call them instead of the other way around. When making calls to a student abroad, please keep time differences in mind (you can go here to check the current time anywhere in the world). The following is the usual dialing procedure for international calls from the U.S.:

011 (int'l access code) + country code (usually 2 or 3 digits) + city code (usually 1 to 5 digits) + local number. *Usually, the "0" that must be dialed at the beginning of a city code from within a country is dropped when dialing from outside the country.*

Students also may have limited access to phones in homestays or apartments because of the expenses involved and lack of itemized phone bills abroad. Even local calls can run up very high bills and specific fees cannot be determined. Thus, students often have to use a nearby phone box to call parents, instructing them to call back at their home phone number in a few minutes. This method saves money and avoids hassles for all involved.

Mail and Shipping

The most convenient and easiest way to send these items to most countries is to ship them in a sturdy cardboard box through the post office. Parents should not mail prescription drugs or any other type of medication; students should therefore pack enough medication for their entire stay abroad. When declaring an item's value, keep in mind that it is not an insurance declaration and a percentage of the value (ranging from 5% to 200%) may be assessed at the other end.

In addition, please note that packages from the U.S. often attract attention and can incur a customs duty on their value. You should check with the post office regarding duties on

new items and restrictions, although you shouldn't be surprised when U.S. postal officials cannot say what the duties will be in France, etc. If a student has easy access to an airport, it is sometimes cheaper to send bigger packages via commercial airlines. Please contact individual carriers for details.

Keep in mind that what goes over probably has to come back. Because postage rates abroad are considerably higher than in the U.S., it will be more expensive to ship things back. Taking older possessions that students won't mind leaving behind (old towels, pajamas, shoes, etc.) is one way students can save space for gifts and mementos from their travels.

E-Mail

E-mail accessibility varies by program. Generally, students have some access to e-mail, but rarely to the degree that they are accustomed to at their home (U.S.) college or university. However, most overseas cities have internet cafes (particularly in student areas) that provide web access. As in the US, public libraries are another good place to check for web access. E-mail access is an important way for students to keep in touch with family, friends, and their home school, but too much time on e-mail could interfere with students' cultural integration. Limited use of e-mail is often more productive for achieving intercultural competency.

Fees, Billing, and Refunds

Program Fees and Billing

Program fees for Rhodes programs vary but generally include tuition and housing. Rhodes College reserves the right to cancel, alter, or amend any part of a Rhodes program or to increase fees should circumstances make these actions advisable or necessary.

The Bursar's Office will bill each student through the student's Rhodes student account for the amount of the program upon acceptance. In the event that a student chooses to withdraw from the program after being accepted and billed, the student will be responsible for the entire cost of the program.

Refund Policy for Rhodes College

In the event of cancellation of an entire session of a Rhodes program before commencement of the program, all monies paid to Rhodes prior to that time will be refunded. Should an unavoidable event such as epidemic, civil unrest, or threat of terrorist activity result in a partial cancellation, a prorated refund of all fees, together with an appropriate evaluation of academic credit, will follow. These actions will terminate any further liability on the part of Rhodes.

In the event that a student chooses to withdraw from the program after being accepted and billed, the student will be responsible for the entire cost of the program. Refunds will be considered only in cases of serious illness or emergency and the amounts of refunds will be determined individually on the basis of recoverable costs by Rhodes at the time of the withdrawal.

If you have chosen a non-Rhodes program abroad (that is, a program that is not owned or operated by Rhodes), Rhodes College has no control over that program's policies or procedures regarding refunds. Please check with the responsible institution if you have any questions or concerns.



Health & Safety

Your student should be prepared for any situation when studying abroad. Contact your student's program to acquire more detailed information regarding health and safety.

Theft & Property

Petty larceny is an issue for anyone when traveling. Pickpockets in heavily visited cities often single out foreigners as easy targets. Students should make copies of all important documents and: 1) leave one set at home with a family member; 2) keep one set on file with the Buckman Center for International Education; 3) keep one set in a separate location while traveling independently (e.g. in backpack or luggage).

Each set should include a photocopy of the first page of their passport and the page with their visa, the numbers of their credit and ATM cards and bank accounts as well as traveler's check and insurance card numbers.

Insurance

Property and Liability Insurance

Despite students' best efforts to safeguard their property, it is still possible for it to be lost, stolen or damaged when traveling or living abroad. As Rhodes does not insure students' property while they are overseas, all student participants are urged to purchase property insurance for the entire duration of their stay abroad. Students should investigate their parents' homeowner's insurance to verify if all the items to be brought on the trip will be covered by their policy. It is recommended that all valuable items (e.g., laptop computers) be insured.

Accident and Sickness Insurance

Health insurance is an important component of study abroad. Students participating on Rhodes programs and any of Rhodes 8 bilateral exchange programs are required to be covered by a comprehensive international insurance plan mandated by Rhodes. HTH Worldwide handles claims in various languages and from medical providers around the world. A schedule of benefits can be obtained from the Buckman Center for International Education.

If your child is participating in a non-Rhodes program, please check with the program provider to determine if insurance is provided. If it is not, you must secure insurance independently that will provide adequate health coverage outside the United States, including medical emergency evacuation and repatriation of remains.

The following major carriers provide coverage specifically designed for international student travel:

- HTH Worldwide
- Wallach & Co.
- The Lewer Agency

Questions to Consider When Reviewing Insurance Policies for Non-Rhodes Programs:

- Will the plan cover hospitalization for accidents and illnesses for the entire period while I'm abroad?
- Does the policy provide coverage in all countries to be visited?
- Is there a deductible? If yes, how much?
- Is there a dollar limit to the amount of coverage provided?
- What are the procedures for filing a claim for medical expenses abroad? Do I need to pay for expenses and then submit receipts to the insurance company for reimbursement? (Make sure that you get full information from your policy about how to arrange for routine treatment, medical emergency procedures, and what is required to pay for or be reimbursed for a claim. Many overseas health providers will not process American insurance claims and will expect payment at the time of treatment so students should have access to a minimum of \$400 (either by credit card or traveler's checks held in reserve for emergencies) in the event that medical treatment is required abroad. Be sure to obtain receipts, information, and signatures needed by your insurance company to file for reimbursement).
- Will I be required to pay cash in the currency of the host country and seek reimbursement later? What if I don't have enough money to pay cash up front?
- What do I use as proof of international medical coverage (if I need to use the insurance or if the host government requires documentation)?
- If I am not a U.S. Citizen, will I be covered by your plan? (In some instances international students have had to arrange for coverage with a company in their home country)
- Will this insurance cover me in the U.S. for the insured semester if I decide, for medical or other reasons, to return before the end of the program? (If a student has a serious accident or illness abroad, most usually he or she will return to the U.S. for further care; it is therefore important the student carry coverage that applies not only abroad, but in the U.S. during the study abroad period.)
- Does the policy exclude injuries sustained from terrorism and/or acts of war?
- Does it include coverage for medical evacuation/repatriation?
- Does the insurance company require claims to be submitted in U.S. dollars
- What kind of financial and medical documentation will be required, and is such documentation readily available in the host country?

Drugs and Alcohol

While overseas, students are subject to the Rhodes Social Regulations Code and Honor Code as well as to the local laws of the host country.

Alcohol is a serious issue for American students both at home and abroad. Students who are not of legal drinking age in the United States sometimes adjust poorly to the general availability of alcoholic drinks while abroad. Wine and beer are a regular part of social discourse and meals in the households of most host countries, restaurants, and campuses. "Responsible" drinking practices vary considerably from country to country, though none have the "binge" drinking culture often found on United States campuses. Public drunkenness is severely frowned upon in most countries and campuses. We trust that Rhodes students will behave responsibly and will remember that as a foreigner they can be more vulnerable to problems if they have had too much to drink. Student should act responsibly when choosing whether to drink or not.

Drug penalties are generally much more severe than those of the United States. In some countries, simple acquisition of prohibited drugs, including marijuana and other controlled substances, can result in heavy fines, deportation and prison sentences ranging from months to years, or to capital punishment in Southeast Asia.

United States students are expected to abide by all local laws, including drug laws. United States embassy officials are very unsympathetic to drug violations by United States citizens and will only give a list of local lawyers and will contact, by collect call, one person in the United States. One student's action often affects several others. Therefore, Rhodes takes a strong line against the abuse of alcohol and use of illegal drugs while a student is here or abroad.

Emotional Well-Being

Even under the most optimal conditions, adjusting to life in a different culture can be a stressful transition. On occasion, this stress may trigger or exacerbate more serious emotional conditions. Adjusting to another culture is a higher risk for a student who is currently under treatment for depression, an eating disorder, or any other serious condition. In these cases, study abroad should be postponed or planned very carefully in conjunction with the Buckman Center for International Education as well as other healthcare professionals.

Remember that typical reactions to cultural transitions may include homesickness, boredom or fatigue, physical complaints, feelings of depression or helplessness, and/or hostility toward the host culture. However, these reactions are usually short-lived when the student is encouraged to test new problem-solving methods that enhance their sense of mastery in dealing with a new culture.

Above all, trust your instincts. If, after an initial transition period of two or three weeks, your student demonstrates unusual or prolonged distress, you should refer him/her to the Director of International Programs.

Consider consulting the Director if you:

- Notice a student cries easily or seems sad a lot;
- Observe significant changes in a student's behavior (e.g. stops going to class or quits participating in activities);
- Feel that your student seems more dependent than before;
- Feel ill-equipped to handle the emotionality of your distressed student;
- Feel awkward or helpless when your student confides in you about their problems;
- Are concerned that your student could potentially harm him/herself or others.

Vaccinations

Vaccination requirements and suggestions vary by country. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta has an International Traveler's Hotline that provides up-to-date vaccination requirements for any region or country you select. Call Traveler's Health Hotline at 1-800-394-8747, or visit the CDC web site. We urge students to research vaccinations and health precautions for any areas they plan to visit outside of their host country.

Resources

Excellent comprehensive information on safe travel from Kroll Associates, a risk management company working with international businesses, is available at <http://www.globaled.us>. Subjects covered include pre-trip planning, airport and airline security, taxi safety, money advice, hotel security, personal security on the street, dining and drinking, bus and train travel, health precautions, and special precautions for female travelers. We recommend that all students who are planning independent travel read this information. There is a US State Department web site (<http://travel.state.gov>) that also has much helpful information.



Crossing Cultures

Studying abroad is a rewarding adventure that reaps many outstanding academic and personal rewards for students. But as exciting as living and studying overseas can be, it also requires work. Students are immersed in a culture very different from what they've been used to in the U.S. And this means they need to make important intellectual, social and emotional adjustments as they learn to navigate their way through life in a foreign country.

Adjusting to Life Abroad

This section of the site is designed to help you understand the adjustments your son or daughter will need to make through the study abroad experience, and to offer suggestions on how you can support him or her in these efforts.

How easily a student will make these adjustments depends on many different factors. For example, a student's personality, level of maturity, travel experience and foreign language skills all can affect how quickly he or she is able to adapt to life overseas. The Buckman Center for International Education tries to provide the appropriate level of support for students, while strongly encouraging them to make decisions and take actions on their own.

A Time of Change

Going abroad is an emotional time for students. There is a period of anticipation and concern about leaving family, friends and familiar routines. Once overseas, many students find that they have more freedom than at home. They also may have to cook, clean and do laundry for themselves. In addition, students may have to keep a closer eye on money and take responsibility for their actions in a new environment with different social constraints and expectations.

Adapting to a different culture is initially filled with uncertainty. Simple tasks such as finding an address, understanding a bus schedule, mailing a letter or making a telephone call can be confusing and frustrating. Students respond to uncertainty in different ways. Some need to understand everything around them and find comfort in predictability, while others flourish in an environment that is in flux, requiring close observation and new responses.

Academics, too, can require major adjustments. The strategies a student used to master academics in the U.S. do not necessarily apply overseas. This can be especially frustrating for students who have worked hard to achieve academic success at home, and then do not immediately attain the same level of achievement abroad. The student has not failed, but is learning a different approach to education. With time and assistance, students over

come these obstacles. Your continued encouragement and patience are very important during this process.

Even if it were possible, removing the differences and uncertainty and their resultant challenges would restrict a student's growth, intercultural understanding, and experience. Instead, it is important that students and those close to them realize that there will be challenges and stresses, ups and downs, and frustrations as they make their way into a new culture.

The Platinum Rule

In an effort to alleviate some of the confusion experienced when living in a foreign culture, Milton Bennett, an acclaimed cross-cultural researcher, created the Platinum Rule, which states: "Treat others the way they want to be treated (or at least be aware of what that is)."

People are different and hold different values and expectations; we encourage our students to try to empathize with host cultural values. By making the initial social leap of recognizing difference, and then looking to understand how those differences are manifested, crossing cultures is simplified and enriched. Furthermore, being aware of how a person expects to be treated from a service standpoint, e.g. at a store, restaurant, or an educational institution, can make these experiences more understandable and less trying.

Understanding Your Student's Experience

As stated earlier, everyone responds to new situations in different ways. There are, however, many similarities and stages that students go through as they prepare to leave the U.S., adjust to life abroad and return home. These stages, adapted in part from the works of Margaret Pusch and other leaders in the study abroad field, are on the next page. Reading through this information should help you understand your student's experiences. In addition, we have included suggestions on how you can help your son or daughter through each stage.

Don't be surprised if your student passes through these stages in a different order or skips some stage altogether. People adjust to new situations at their own speed and in their own manner. The Buckman Center for International Education encourages students to make the effort to learn, understand and integrate into the new culture as much as possible, from day one and throughout their time abroad.

Although it may not be immediately apparent, students gain important skills as they adjust to life in a different culture. They're developing what we call intercultural competence, the ability to recognize and respect differences among cultures, and to live and work effectively in a culture other than one's own.

Stages of Adjustment

Listed below are 13 different stages of adjustment that most students pass through before, during, and after their time overseas. We also have included suggestions on how parents can support their students during each stage. In general, encourage your student to keep an analytical notebook. You may also use your student's emails and letters to help the growth process. Please remember that all young people adjust to new situations in their own unique way, and that the stages and suggestions listed here serve only as a guide. As John Steinbeck wrote, "A person is a journey in itself. No two are alike."

Anticipating Departure

Preparing to go abroad is an exciting time. With this excitement comes the formation of expectations and goals. However, it is important that student remain realistic in their expectations so they will not face disappointments when they settle in while abroad.

Suggestions for Support:

Your son or daughter can benefit from researching the country, reading its important works of literature, and consulting local newspapers on the internet. It is also beneficial for the student to start a journal that defines goals and expectations for their time abroad. These activities will help give your student a sense of understanding and attachment to the new country.

Arrival Confusion

The first few days can be very trying and disorienting for some students. They will be recovering from jetlag, meeting new friends, adjusting to new languages, living styles, food and customs. For many young people this is very exciting, but for some it can be intimidating. However, most students recover, adjust, and do very well..

Suggestions for Support:

Particularly during the first few days, it is not uncommon for a student to call home, upset about housing, the city, jetlag, or local people. It is important that you instruct your student to speak with the Buckman Center for International Education staff. They have dealt with hundreds of students in these situations, and are ready and able to help your student during this initial adjustment period.

The Honeymoon

When a student arrives in the host country, everything is typically new, different, and fascinating. Many students respond by being on a cultural high and feel that everything is

wonderful. This stage can last from one to several weeks.

Suggestions for Support:

Sharing your student's enthusiasm, exploration, and new experience is fun. Stockpile some of the good experiences to use when times become more challenging. This is a good time to begin inquiring about the difference in food, people, and other cultural variances.

The Plunge

When the novelty of the new country wears off, students can become frustrated and confused. This is when reality sets in. They need to begin adjusting to new ways of communicating and differences in the culture. Although this is difficult, this stage prepares the student to engage in a new culture at a deeper level.

Suggestions for Support:

Listen carefully. Ask about what is frustrating your son or daughter. Avoid making value judgments on cultural differences. Instead, work together to understand these differences.

Initial Adjustment

As students develop their language and social skills, they become more confident. They feel at home with local transportation, communication and social customs. Novelty items become more commonplace and many of the initially confusing differences begin to make sense. This period can last a long time as they begin to balance the negatives and positives within the culture.

Suggestions for Support:

Cultural differences are not problems to be solved. Understanding these cultural differences and responding appropriately are important accomplishments for students. Praise these accomplishments, however mundane they may seem..

Confronting the Deeper Issues

As students confront cultural differences and personal issues at a deeper level, they begin to see a multitude of approaches to their life abroad. They learn through experience what is socially acceptable and question deeper assumptions about the world. Students may feel isolated at times.

Suggestions for Support:

This important and very challenging stage is the pathway to profound growth. Students may have strong negative feelings toward the host country or their own culture. Encour

age your student to explore his or her own values and beliefs. Avoid rushing to judgment as your students' values appear to change.

Adapting and Assimilating

The sense of isolation subsides as students begin to feel more at home in their host country. They begin to identify with new ways of thinking and doing. They may have established a strong friendship with a local student, or may accept that they will not have time to develop deep friendships. At this point, students are comfortable with their home identities as well as the adapted identities they have developed in the new culture.

Suggestions for Support:

Not all students will reach this stage, so don't be disappointed if son or daughter doesn't. Many expatriates do not reach this stage even after several years of living in another culture. You may well sense a greater maturity in your student. Share in your student's clearer understanding of both American and other cultures.

Going Home

The program is winding down and students want to take a few more pictures, visit places they still haven't seen, say farewell to friends, and pack for home. Students have to prepare for departure while at the same time complete an academically rigorous semester. They are also reflecting on what they've accomplished and where they've been.

Suggestions for Support:

Prepare yourself for your student's return home and the challenges to be faced. Help your son or daughter make the psychological adjustments to prepare for the return home.

Initial Excitement

Students are thrilled to be home, eat their favorite food, see their friends, and be with their families. They may talk endlessly about their many experiences and discoveries while abroad.

Suggestions for Support:

Listen. Enjoy their experiences with them. Try to accept their enthusiasm for the host culture and their experiences without brushing them off (even though it seems you have heard the story a hundred times.) Encourage them to reflect on how they have grown and developed in preparation for returning to their U.S. college or university.

Judgmental Period

What was once familiar and commonplace at home becomes strange, uncomfortable, or boring. Students may find fault in everything and believe it was better overseas.

Suggestions for Support:

Avoid ignoring your student's concerns or debating the relative value of U.S. culture versus the culture of their host country. Instead, help your son or daughter further explore the positive and negative aspects of each culture.

Realization Stage

At this point, students are noticing significant changes at home and in themselves. This stage can be compared to the Confronting Deeper Issues stage previously described. This is an important link between the students' adapted selves and their original self-perceptions.

Suggestions for Support:

Encourage your student to forge his or her own identity and self-confidence. Help him or her build upon his or her experiences to set future academic, professional, and personal goals.

Reverse Culture Shock

Students often experience frustration at not being able to use the skills acquired overseas that are now second nature to them. This may cause them to feel isolated and misunderstood by family or friends. Students may feel that important new perceptions and values acquired abroad have been lost.

Suggestions for Support:

Encourage your student to get involved with activities that will enable them to use their cross-cultural skills. Examples of these activities include international student organizations on campus, volunteer activities with foreign students or immigrant workers, and working with prospective study abroad students.

Balanced Re-Adaptation

During this stage, students begin to integrate their experiences abroad into their life in the U.S. They find a niche at home and are comfortable expressing their new viewpoints and values. They integrate their identities developed overseas with their identities in their home culture, resulting in a more complete appreciation of both the home and overseas culture.

Suggestions for Support:

Enjoy the observations and take pride in your student's development

Returning Home

It is important that parents understand that an overseas experience does not end when students have their passports stamped and board the plane for home. There is a period of remembering, analyzing, and interpreting the overseas experience. Students are working hard to reconcile two very different cultures. This task can take some time, but completing it is important and of great personal and social benefit to students.

It can be a challenging time, in part because it is unexpected. Students go home to what they believe are familiar, unchanged family and friends. You most likely haven't changed a great deal, but from your son or daughter's point of view, you may seem very different. This is because students bring home new perspectives from their experiences abroad, and have new frames of reference to form opinions, ideas, and relationships. It is not uncommon for students to feel temporarily homesick for their overseas friends and lifestyles. They may also find that life at home is more demanding than they expected, while at the same time they are no longer as unique and special as they were when abroad. Although each day at home may bring new challenges, they most likely are not as exciting or exotic as the challenges overseas.

Eventually a balance between the new and the old, the foreign and the familiar, will be reached. Your son or daughter will fully integrate life overseas with life at home, appreciating both cultures for their own inherent worth. And in so doing, your student will be well on his or her way to the development of intercultural competence, one of the greatest rewards of studying abroad.