

## **Guidelines for planning successful off-campus (domestic and international) travel courses December 2009**

As stated in the Simpson College catalog, “May Term provides a change of emphasis in the academic year and permits three weeks of intensive study of a single academic course,” and therefore it is an ideal time for the college to offer short-term, off-campus travel courses. These courses, both domestic and international, are intended to capitalize on opportunities unique to the locations where they are taught and to integrate classroom instruction and experiential learning activities into a well-conceived whole. Proposals for off-campus travel courses shall provide a rationale for conducting the course off-campus by explaining the significance of the location(s) to the overall educational experience, and they shall provide a clear picture of the careful integration of course content and on-site living and learning opportunities.

May Term 2011 off-campus **international** travel course proposals are due to the Office of International Education (OIE) by **January 15, 2010**, while **domestic** travel course proposals are due to the OIE by **February 15, 2010**.

### **General guidelines:**

1. Each course should have a well-defined focus, whether disciplinary or interdisciplinary.
2. Instructors should be mindful of the course’s intended audience(s), whether it be majors, non-majors, or both.
3. Courses should have academic integrity and coherence. The relationship between course content and the course location(s) should be articulated clearly. Instructors should give careful thought to the integration of course readings, lectures, site visits, and appropriate methods of evaluation.
4. Courses shall generally combine on-site experiential learning with more traditional academic learning.
5. The type and amount of work required of students shall be appropriate to the focus and level of the course and the academic expectations of the course should be comparable to on-campus courses. The time devoted to classroom or course-related activities shall be at least as much as for on-campus May Term courses, and normally significantly more to take advantage of the off-campus site.
6. Means of evaluation shall be clearly stated, realistic, adequate and appropriate for the course.
7. It is expected that the duration of a May Term travel course will generally be consistent with the length of on-campus May Term courses, although not all of this time must be off-campus.
8. In the interest of the health and safety of all participants in off-campus travel courses, Simpson College will only offer courses in countries with which the United States has official relations and for which no Department of State Travel Warnings have been issued and are in effect (see [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis\\_pa\\_tw/tw/tw\\_1764.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html) for a current listing).

## **A few notes about best practice in short-term study abroad:**

As you design your May Term Travel Course, it might be useful to you to reflect upon what current research has identified as best practice in short-term study abroad programs.

According to a recent article published by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (Peer Review, Fall 2009), the following characteristics are hallmarks of effective short-term study abroad programs:

- Programs are “highly structured, require ongoing reflection, and include in-depth experience working or studying with host country participants (14).”
- Programs are created and managed internally, rather than by external service providers such as travel agencies (14).
- The number of sites visited is limited to one or two countries (15).
- Students enrolled in the programs have ample opportunities to engage in authentic interactions with residents of the host countries via classroom activities, service-learning, or home stays (15).

## **Timeline:**

International travel course proposals will be reviewed by the Study Abroad Committee (SAC) soon after the January 15 deadline, and therefore it is imperative that proposals be submitted in a timely fashion.

Following review by the SAC, the proposals will then be sent on to EPCC for their consideration. By the end of January 2010, course proposals will also be sent to the Business Office and to the Controller, Adam Voigts, for his review.

Faculty who will be teaching approved May Term Travel Courses will submit updated budget to the Business Office (Cathy Hoch and Adam Voigts) by September 1, 2010. Faculty and the Business Office staff will determine a range in cost for each course, to be presented to the student body at the Study Abroad Fair in September.

In October 2010, faculty will receive logistics forms from the Business Office staff. Faculty will submit completed Logistics Forms to the business office no later than November 1, 2010. The forms should include updated budgets.

Costs to students of May Term Travel Courses will be finalized prior to billing students for the Spring 2011 Semester. May Term Travel Courses fees are due on December 31, 2010.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Marzia Corni-Benson ([marzia.corni-benson@simpson.edu](mailto:marzia.corni-benson@simpson.edu)) until May 31, 2010 or Jay Wilkinson ([jay.wilkinson@simpson.edu](mailto:jay.wilkinson@simpson.edu)) after May 31, 2010 in the OIE.