Student Conduct

Northwestern Michigan College (“NMC” or “College”) seeks to provide all members of the College community with an environment conducive to learning. Membership in this community entails rights and responsibilities for each of its members. By enrolling in or attending a course or program of study sponsored by the College, all persons are deemed to have agreed to respect the rights of the College and its members, to abide by the provisions of the code of Student Rights and Responsibilities and the rules and regulations of the College, and to be subject to any sanctions that may be imposed for their violation. NMC reserves the right to rescind program acceptance, suspend or dismiss any student for failure to maintain a satisfactory academic record, acceptable personal behavior, or satisfactory standards of health.

While participating in the program, you are not only subject to the NMC Standards of Conduct and Disciplinary Sanctions, but also to the local laws and sanctions of the particular location in which you are studying. In many countries the punishment for possession and/or distribution of controlled substances and for driving while under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances is much more severe than in the United States. You should be aware that if you are arrested for a crime overseas, there is little NMC or the local U.S. Consular authorities can do to intercede on your behalf.

NMC also has the authority to establish rules of conduct necessary for the operation of the program and to reserve the right to require a student to withdraw from the program. In such instances, the student will be entitled to the same due process established on the NMC campus.

Judicial and Academic Status

All participants must be in acceptable judicial and academic standing. If NMC becomes aware of judicial or academic issues after a student is accepted into a program, we reserve the right to rescind acceptance. NMC is not responsible for costs incurred by the student resulting from rescinded acceptance.

Any NMC student in academic suspension or expulsion status is not eligible to participate in an international travel program through NMC during the period of suspension. Any NMC student in residence separation status is not eligible to participate in a international travel program during the period of residence separation.

General Safety in Public Places

You soon will be entering a city and culture that are probably foreign to you. Because of this unfamiliarity, you may miss some of the danger signals that a local person would automatically take into consideration. You should also realize that in our shrinking world the coexistence of many cultures in a given country is quite likely. For this reason, one must be aware of, and sensitive to, the majority culture, as well as the minority cultures, prevalent in the host country. Please read through the following sections carefully. They are not meant to frighten you, but rather to inform you of issues of which you should be aware. This advice is applicable no matter where you are in the world.

Many people’s impressions of Americans come from what they see on television shows. Americans are often perceived as wealthy, particularly in developing countries, and in many locations you really may be more well off then the local population. Americans may also be easily noticed. We may dress distinctively and speak loudly in groups. We may carry backpacks, wear sneakers, and our American accents can be unmistakable.
By following these suggestions, you can minimize your exposure to unsafe situations:

- Do not leave your bags or belongings unattended at any time. Security staff in airports or train stations is instructed to remove or destroy any unattended luggage. Do not agree to carry or look after packages or suitcases for anyone. Make sure no one puts anything in your luggage.

- When you travel, use a money belt to carry your passport, credit cards, and travelers’ checks. Wear the pouch under your clothes. Keep a separate record of your travelers’ checks in another part of your belongings so that you will have the necessary information if the travelers’ checks are lost or stolen.

- Be as inconspicuous in dress and demeanor as possible.

Downplay those elements of your appearance and manner that broadcast that you are American. Here are some things to avoid if you do not want to be pegged quickly as American:

- Wearing U.S. college insignia clothing or heavily patriotic American clothing.

- Wearing baseball caps or U.S. sports teams’ shirts or jackets.

- Talking loudly with a group of friends. Try to speak the local language in public, even with other Americans. Even if you have a heavy accent, you will not attract as much attention, particularly if you take a cue from the locals and speak quietly.

Use the buddy (or in the evening, small group) system, especially in the first few weeks of your stay. Walking with someone else helps to deflect approaches by would-be harassers.

Be mindful how late you come home at night. Try to get home while public transportation is still running or plan to take a taxi. If you visit friends alone in the evening, ask them to escort you to the nearest metro station or even to escort you home if you are concerned. Do, however, be extremely cautious about accepting a ride with anyone.

Be alert to the people with whom you have contact. Be wary of people who seem overly friendly or overly interested in you. Be cautious when you meet new people and do not give out your address or phone number. Be careful sharing information about other students or group events. Be alert to anyone who might appear to be following you or to any unusual activity around your place of residence or classroom. Report any unusual people or activities to on-site staff and/or authorities immediately.

Be careful to observe traffic lights. Stay on sidewalks away from the curb, and walk facing oncoming traffic whenever possible. Drivers in large cities can be aggressive and often erratic. Never assume a car will stop for you or steer out of your way. For those of you in countries where drivers drive on the left-hand side of the road, you will have to make an extra effort to check both ways before crossing the street.

Use Common Sense

You probably take your safety for granted in your home location because it is an environment in which you feel comfortable and with which you are familiar. But soon you will be spending time in what may be unfamiliar territory. A general rule of thumb is to use common sense and be as cautious as you would in any large city in the United States.

Be aware of your surroundings. If you want to visit a new neighborhood, try to go during the day. Look at a map before you leave, and note the nearest metro stops and bus/trolley routes. Walk at your own pace, but look alert and purposeful. If you find yourself in uncomfortable surroundings, act like you know what you are doing and where you are going, and move to a place where you are comfortable.

Money and Other Valuables

Keep your cash and other valuables (travelers’ checks, passport and visa, airline ticket) in a locked suitcase in your room or use the safe in your program’s headquarters, if one is available.
Jewelry that you love or that has sentimental value is at risk of being lost or stolen, and is best left at home. Be aware that it is common in some cities for thieves on motorcycles to pull gold chains off the necks of pedestrians.

Avoid putting valuables in the back pocket of your pants or backpack. Wear your backpack in front of you in crowded places. We highly recommend bringing a money belt that you can wear concealed around your waist under your clothes.

Do not handle or display large quantities of money on the street. Only carry as much money as you need for the day or night.

Always keep an eye, and/or your hands, on your purse, bag or wallet, especially in crowded public areas (public transportation, crowded sidewalks, markets, and metro stations).

Be particularly vigilant in areas where there have been numerous reports of pick pocketing and purse snatching, especially tourist areas. Be aware that thieves on mopeds have been known to snatch purses from pedestrians, so position your bag away from the street.

If you suddenly find yourself being “crowded” in a market, move away from the crowd. Thieves use such occasions to slice open purses or backpacks with a razor.

If you are working at an internship, do not leave purses and backpacks unattended.

Local Transportation and General Travel

While abroad, you should remember that public transportation is the way the great majority of local residents get around their town and country, so it should be a part of your experience as well. We strongly discourage students from renting automobiles or other motorized vehicles. If your internship, community placement, or cultural reimbursement activity involves travel, you may not rent a car or other motorized vehicle for that purpose.

If someone leaves a package unattended on a seat near you in any crowded public place (i.e., airports, train stations, “the Tube” in London, or on a bus or other public transportation), notify the driver or other authority and get away from it as quickly as possible.

Be careful with whom you ride in a car. Some cultures are less adamant about not driving while intoxicated, and therefore driving under the influence of alcohol is more common.

Do not travel alone. Always try to travel with at least one other person.

Be careful whom you allow to join your group. Make sure that anyone who joins your group is known well by someone you know. Terrorists and thieves have used unsuspecting travelers as covers.

Update yourself on your destination and consider postponing a visit to a place if there have been problems there recently. It is better to be safe than sorry. If there is a U.S. Consulate near you, stop and get their safety information bulletins about the country you are planning to visit.

Have sufficient funds or a credit card on hand to purchase emergency items such as train or airline tickets or to fund a hospital stay.

Public Transportation

You will most likely be using public transportation on a regular basis. You may see other passengers who do not appear to be paying for buses or other public transportation. Be careful not to imitate them. Many of them have passes that they show only when asked by an inspector. If you are caught without a bus ticket or pass, you can be pulled off the bus or tram and taken to the police station. Consider a monthly pass if you will have to take the bus or subway every day. In the long run it is much cheaper than the fines, which can be 50 times the cost of the ticket.
In Times of Political Conflict

Knowledge of current events is important. Read the paper, listen to the radio, watch some television, or check the internet to stay informed. For up-to-date information, check the U.S. State Department Website at: www.travel.state.gov. In the event of an emergency, advisories may be made to the general public through the media. In case of an emergency, remain in contact with the on-site staff and the American Consulate nearest you.

When in large cities and other popular tourist destinations, avoid or spend as little time as possible in potential target areas for terrorist activities, especially places frequented by Americans: bars, discos, and U.S. fast food restaurants, branches of American banks, American churches, and American consulates or embassies.

Keep away from areas known to have large concentrations of residents with interests unfriendly to the United States and its allies. Always consult with the on-site director(s) before traveling to neighboring cities or popular tourist destinations.

Keep away from political demonstrations, which can easily result in clashes between demonstrators and authorities, particularly those authorities seen as aligned with the United States. If you see a situation developing, resist the temptation to satisfy your curiosity and investigate what is happening. Walk the other way. Go home and watch it on the news.

Do not agree to newspaper or other media interviews regarding political conflicts or controversial issues. It is important to remain as inconspicuous as possible. Do not make reference to your program group. In such cases, always say “no comment” and hang up or walk the other way.

Alcohol and Drugs

It is important to keep the following in mind so that you do not find yourself in a situation that could lead to violation of the NMC Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook:

Avoid consuming large quantities of alcohol, particularly with people you do not know well. You should be careful in public places where alcohol may be consumed. Do not lose sight of the fact that you are in a location with a different set of social customs. Until you are familiar with these customs, you should err on the side of caution.

Alcohol consumption can impair your ability to make sound judgments and jeopardize your safety. If you choose to drink alcohol, drink responsibly and take appropriate precautions so as not to put yourself in danger.

Many drugs sold over-the-counter in other countries are not normally available in the U.S. When purchasing medication be certain that you know the ingredients and understand their effects, especially if you are taking other medications.

Do not consume alcohol while taking any medication.

Penalties for any violation may include expulsion from the program.

Relationships

Entering into a relationship away from your home campus should be approached with the same precautions as at home. It can be very tempting to be charmed by the idea of a once-in-a-lifetime foreign romance, but you should consider any relationship carefully, particularly when you are overseas. There are different cultural values and expectations regarding dating and relationships. Proceed cautiously, recognizing that you are in the country for only a short period of time. Evaluate your reasons for entering into a relationship. Are you attracted to the individual or are you struggling with a strong bout of homesickness?

Please be aware that in a physically intimate relationship, wherever you are, you run the risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease or AIDS, becoming pregnant, or getting someone else pregnant. This is not meant to scare you but
rather to help you realize that it can happen and has happened. Be sure that you know the person very well before
developing a more intimate relationship and always demand that you both practice safe sex. Some countries do not
admit that they have an AIDS epidemic. Assume AIDS is everywhere. No matter what your current commitments or
plans are, bring protection if you are sexually active.

Sexual Harassment Policy

NMC is committed to the principle that no employee, student, or applicant for employment should be subject to sexual
harassment. The College strives to provide workplaces and learning environments that promote equal opportunity and
are free from illegal discriminatory practices, including sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is a violation of federal and state laws and College policy, as is retaliation against any individual who
in good faith files a complaint of sexual harassment or cooperates in the investigation of such a complaint. Upon receipt
of a complaint of sexual harassment or retaliation, NMC will undertake a fair and thorough investigation, with due
regard for the rights of all parties. Every reasonable effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of the parties
during the investigation. After an investigation, any person who is found to have sexually harassed or retaliated against
another will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination of employment and, if a student, expulsion from
NMC.

Culture or Harassment

What may be appropriate or friendly behavior in the United States may bring you unwanted, even dangerous, attention
in another culture. Try not to take offense at whistles and other gestures, regardless of whether they are complements,
invitations, or insults. These gestures may be as much a part of the culture as its food, history, and language, but if your
intuition tells you a situation is dangerous, then act as if it is. Be extra careful with giving your trust. This applies
generally, but is especially important when traveling alone.

Avoiding Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assaults

Men and women should read this section:

It is important to understand and be sensitive to the kinds of problems men and women in the group may face. Anyone
can be a victim of sexual assault. Should you become a victim of sexual assault, please know that you can contact the
resident director at any time.

- Be aware of how you carry yourself and how you dress. Even things as seemingly insignificant as your smile and
  your stride may mark you as a foreigner. Dressing fairly conservatively will help deflect potential harassers.
- In many parts of the world, meeting another’s gaze is widely viewed as sexually provocative, and you may be
  followed, verbally harassed, or touched as a result.
- Usually the best response to unwanted stares, comments, or touches is to ignore the harasser and to remove
  yourself from the situation quickly and calmly. Avoidance is often the safest tactic. An effective way to avoid
  stares while on the subway or bus is to read.
- If you continue to be followed, spoken to, or touched after repeated attempts to get away, try to remove
  yourself to a very public place. Tell your harasser firmly and calmly to leave you alone.
- Do not judge the physical appearance of your local friends by American standards. You may be inclined to trust
  someone because he or she is nicely or fashionable dressed, well groomed, self-confident, and outgoing.
  Sometimes, however, the most fashionable people are those who are the most skilled con artists or who make a
  mission of befriending Americans in order to gain money, goods, passports, or sex from them. Be wary of
  smooth operators.
Cults

Cults refer to religiously oriented groups that may not have any affiliation with an established church. Cults differ from traditional churches in a number of ways. Cults generally operate in a secretive way; members’ personal possessions sometimes become the group’s property, and complete obedience may be required from their members.

Cult members try to recruit other members by offering friendship, help, and answers to problems. They often choose people who appear lonely or confused, because such people are believed to be more vulnerable to cult members’ ideas. Cults abroad have similar recruitment techniques as in the U.S. You should be wary of people who tell you they can provide easy solutions to your problems, or who urge you to join them because “everyone is doing it.” Be wary of people who push a sense of guilt on you for not joining their organization, or who invite you to retreats without stating clear goals. Do not go to meetings where you are not free to leave at any time.

A FINAL NOTE

Your off-campus study will introduce you to many people whose lifestyles and cultures differ from those to which you are accustomed. In fact, your experiences on the program may be quite different from what you initially expected. Getting the most out of your program depends on your ability to adapt to new and challenging situations.

Our staff in Traverse City and at each program site is trained to assist you in adjusting to your new environment. However, we cannot anticipate the exact course of events you might experience during the semester, nor can we make the world run as we wish it would. The decision to study in a particular program or region of the world must be made by each student and her or his family, in light of their own interpretation of events and the student’s willingness to live with a certain degree of ambiguity. Unfortunately, it is impossible to predict future events or guarantee a completely safe environment in any region of the world, including our own. Therefore, we reserve the right to alter or cancel a course or program due to unforeseen circumstances.

Going out of Town? (for those of you on extended study abroad itineraries)

Keep the resident director informed of your whereabouts. You must let the resident director and your host family or roommate know of any traveling you plan to do and how you may be reached. This is so we can contact you in case of an emergency.