

Subject: Cancellation of Fall 2020 Study Abroad Programs

Dear Fall 2020 OCS students,

I write you with the June update that we promised regarding the status of Fall 2020 semester off-campus studies in light of the ongoing COVID19 pandemic. While we had sincerely hoped that our students could study abroad as part of their Whitman education this fall semester, it has become increasingly clear that conditions with the pandemic have not improved enough for students to do so safely and for us to be confident that you would have a quality experience abroad this fall. **Whitman College has therefore made the decision to withdraw study abroad approval for you and all Whitman Fall 2020 semester study abroad participants.** We are sincerely sorry to bring you this disappointing news and want to assure you that Whitman remains committed to global learning opportunities for our students.

A primary reason for our decision is the guidance from government authorities about ongoing risks associated with travel. The Department of State (DOS) Global Health Advisory remains at the highest warning level, *Level 4 - Do Not Travel*. Similarly, the Centers for Disease Control's worldwide warning is at their highest level, *Level 3 - Avoid Nonessential Travel*. In addition, there are numerous travel restrictions still in place worldwide and other logistical obstacles to studying abroad this fall. Most countries are no longer issuing student visas to foreign students because they are considered non-essential visas. And, because the United States is a COVID19 hotspot, even if students could obtain permission to enter the host country, students coming from the United States are typically subject to quarantine (usually 14 days) and/or COVID testing upon arrival in host countries.

We also took into consideration the quality of the experience a student would likely have abroad this fall based on what we learned this past semester. Our students abroad this past semester faced extreme challenges when outbreaks of the virus in their host country resulted in travel restrictions and rapid alterations to their program, curtailing opportunities to engage with the host culture and impacting the quality of the experience abroad overall.

We are making this decision now, rather than two months from now, to give you sufficient time to make alternative plans for the fall semester and the opportunity to defer study abroad until the spring 2021 semester while there is still space in spring programs.

Next Steps:

1. We understand from the Registrar that all Fall OCS students have already pre-registered for Fall 2020 courses at Whitman. We will notify the relevant Whitman offices including the Registrar, Financial Aid, Student Accounts and Dean of Students of your change in OCS status for the fall semester.
2. If you are interested in study abroad in spring 2021, please consult with your major adviser soon about whether that is a suitable option for you. If so, then inform your Whitman OCS adviser of your intentions and we can easily switch you from fall to spring OCS, so you don't need to re-apply to Whitman. But you will need to contact your program directly about what steps you need to take to defer to spring 2021 and to secure a place in their spring program.

3. If you do not wish to defer to spring 2021 and if you paid an OCS enrollment deposit, check directly with your program about requesting a refund for the deposit. Most study abroad providers are offering enrollment deposit refunds for the Fall 2020 semester due to COVID19 uncertainties.

We are so very sorry that study abroad will not be possible this fall, but want to assure you that Off-Campus Studies will do our best to assist you with plans for study abroad in spring 2021 or identifying other global learning opportunities for a later date.

Thank you and be safe this summer.

Sincerely,
Susan Holme, Director of Off-Campus Studies