Connect with Alumni

While you’re in the city, you will have the opportunity to connect with another great resource: University of Chicago alumni living abroad. Whether you’re interested in working internationally after graduation, or you wish to find out more about certain career paths, networking with alumni might end up being one of the most beneficial things you can do during your summer. Before you leave for the summer, spend some time to research alumni who are currently working in your international city on the online alumni directory on the Career Advancement website.

Preparing to Leave

Congratulations on securing an internship or job abroad! We hope that you take advantage of this excellent opportunity to build your skills, explore your interests, broaden your professional network, and experience the world outside of the University of Chicago. There are many things to consider prior to your departure. We hope that this guide will be a useful tool as you prepare for your international adventure.

Getting Your Passport

One of the first things you should do in preparing for your experience abroad is to obtain a passport. You should apply for a passport as soon as possible, as this can take six to eight weeks or longer. New passports cost $100. If you are renewing your passport by mail, the cost is $75.

If you have never obtained a passport, you will need to apply for one in person. Visit http://iafdb.travel.state.gov/ to find the nearest passport acceptance facility. If you simply need to renew your passport, you can usually do so by mail. To learn how, visit http://travel.state.gov/passport/renew/renew_833.html.

Peer-to-Peer Advice

After surveying and interviewing previous summer interns, The Career Advancement staff combined a number of their suggestions, thoughts, and pieces of advice in order to make this International Survival Guide a useful tool for you as you plan your summer adventure. Career Advancement hopes this guide will make your life a little less stressful when trying to find housing, figure out the transportation system, and begin your summer abroad. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions of your own, contact Bora Un at bora@uchicago.edu.
To apply for a passport, you will need:

• Completed passport application;
• Passport application fee;
• Valid proof of citizenship (e.g., an expired U.S. passport, a certified (original) birth certificate, Certificate of Naturalization, Certificate of Citizenship, or Consular Report of Birth Abroad of a Citizen of the United States);
• Proof of identity (a valid driver’s license or government identification card are acceptable provided they identify you by physical description or photograph);
• Two identical 2 x 2-inch passport photographs taken within six months of applying for your passport.

Walgreens has the equipment needed to take passport photographs, as do some U.S. Post Offices. If your photo does not meet the specifications required, the processing of your passport will be delayed and you’ll be asked to resend two photos.

Please Note: If you already have a passport, many countries require that your passport be valid for six months beyond the dates of your trip. Keep this in mind, in case you need to renew your passport. Also, some Middle Eastern and African countries will not allow entry if your passport indicates travel to specific countries: check with the embassy or consulate of the country in which you will be studying for their requirements.

For more information on applying for a passport, see: http://www.travel.state.gov/passport or call 877-487-2778.

Work Permits and Visas

Different countries will require different forms of documentation before allowing you to work legally as an intern. Each country has its own rules, so it is crucial that you determine the requirements of the country in which you will be working prior to your departure! You can obtain this information by consulting the embassy or nearest consulate (many countries require that you apply through the consular office that is closest to your primary area of residence) regarding requirements. To get country-specific information about every nation in the world, visit http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html. The “Entry/Exit Requirements” and “Registration/Embassy Location” sections should be of particular interest.

It is worth noting that most countries only require work permits from students who are being paid directly by the organization for which they are interning. Consequently, work permits will not be necessary for many students (for example, those who are volunteering or are being paid a Metcalf stipend directly by the University). However, certain countries – including the United Kingdom – now require a work permit regardless of the source of your funding. You can often find organizations to help you secure the required permits for such countries. Students traveling to the UK, for instance, should visit http://www.bunac.org.

If you plan to travel to other countries while abroad or after your internship finishes, check the entrance requirements of each country before you leave home. It is your responsibility to make sure you have proper documentation abroad.

A word of advice: DO NOT wait until the last minute to apply for your work permit or student visa! As with passports, this can take many weeks to process, and if you do not have your student visa (and passport), you could miss your flight.

Registering at the Embassy

You may choose to register at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country you are visiting prior to leaving or once you have arrived. Registration makes your presence and whereabouts known, in case it is necessary for a consular officer to contact you in an emergency. During a disaster overseas, American consular officers can assist in evacuation were that to become necessary. But they cannot assist you if they do not know where you are.

Registration is particularly important for those who plan to stay in a country longer than one month, or who will travel to:

• A country that is experiencing civil unrest, has an unstable political climate, or is undergoing a natural disaster, such as an earthquake or a hurricane
• A country where there are no U.S. officials. In such cases, you should register at the U.S. embassy or consulate in an adjacent country, leave an itinerary with the Consular Section, ask about conditions in the country that you will visit and ask about the third country that may represent U.S. interests there

Please visit the Department of State’s website: https://step.state.gov/step/. Print out the confirmation page after you have registered; leave one copy at home and take one with you. Students of other nationalities should check with their own embassies to see if it is possible to register prior to departure.
Making Arrangements with Your Employer

Talk to your employer about their expectations and requirements prior to your departure. Ask your supervisor whether or not the organization or company will require you to sign a waiver – different from a passport, visa, or work permit – before leaving the United States. Employers occasionally have their own forms that must be completed, above and beyond what you must do for the government.

Confirm a start and finish date for your internship, and discuss whether or not vacation time will be available if you are planning to travel during your internship. You may want to ask your employer for assistance finding housing or planning your trip, though you should recognize that not all organizations will be able or willing to provide such guidance. Speak with your supervisor about the organization’s dress code so you can pack accordingly.

International Student Identity Card

The International Student Identity Card (ISIC) is issued and recognized in over 90 countries and gives you access to student benefits (mostly in European and Western countries). This card is quite a bargain, as the cost is only $22 (plus $3 for postage and handling), and you will be entitled to discounts on airfare, transportation, attractions, and accommodations, as well as basic accident, sickness and medical evacuation and repatriation insurance (which you should supplement with additional insurance; see Medical Insurance section), free web-based e-mail, phone card service, and more.

You can obtain your ISIC at the Regenstein Library. To learn how, go to http://ipo.uchicago.edu/ISIC.html. You can also visit http://www.myisic.com.

Phones, Calling Cards, and Skype

In order to call home from abroad, you may want to consider obtaining an international calling card. There are also a wide variety of other phone card services that may be available at cheaper rates, which you can research online and in the travel sections of major newspapers. One example is ekit (http://www.ekit.com), which offers a global phone card that works almost anywhere. In addition, services such as Skype can be used to call home where a reliable internet connection is available (see: http://www.skype.com for more information).

You should also consider buying your calling cards after arriving in the country in which you will be working. Buying your calling cards abroad can help you avoid the steep charges and reliability problems that are associated with some domestic cards. These cards can be purchased in post offices and newsstands in many countries.

Purchasing a cell phone abroad is the most convenient way to keep in touch with friends and family. Most foreign providers offer phones at reasonable prices with varying plans and packages. Buying one that takes a rechargeable minutes card will help keep your expenses down. Incoming calls are usually free. Two companies to compare are Cellhire (http://www.cell-hire.com) and WorldCell (http://www.worldcell.com).

Flight Arrangements

You should start looking into arrangements for your flight as early as possible. When making your flight arrangements, check around with as many different travel agencies and travel companies as possible to compare prices and options. Also, be sure to ask for student fares and/or student discounts wherever you call. STA Travel (http://www.statravel.com) is a particularly good place to start your search. Obtaining an International Student Identity Card, as discussed previously, may entitle you to additional discounts. Check into price differences (and flexibility options) between buying a round-trip or two one-way tickets. If you are traveling after your program, you may want to consider an open-ended ticket, which allows you to set your return flight at a later date.

Purchasing your airline tickets using an American Express Card provides you with several layers of travel protection, such as a Global Assist Hotline and assistance changing your flight in the case of an emergency. Check with your credit card company to see if you are eligible for similar services prior to booking your flight.

The following are suggestions of travel agencies and travel companies:

• Student Travel (STA): 800-781-4040 or http://www.statravel.com
• Advantage Travel: 800-788-1980
• AESU Travel: 800-638-7640 or http://www.aesu.com
• http://www.studentuniverse.com

For the latest flight rules and regulations, see: http://www.tsa.gov

For information on airports worldwide, see: http://www.worldairportguide.com/airport
Insurance

Medical Insurance:
You must be sure that you have adequate health insurance coverage abroad. Check your policy to see what coverage it provides for medical services abroad. If you have health insurance through the University, you should be covered. You can learn more about coverage through the University Student Health Insurance Plan (U-SHIP) by visiting http://studenthealth.uchicago.edu/studentinsurance/. If you have an alternative form of health insurance, talk to your provider about coverage abroad. Be sure to take your insurance card with you abroad, as well as any claim forms you will need.

Regardless of the type of insurance you purchase, doctors and hospitals require payment at the time of the visit. You can seek reimbursement from your insurance company only after you have paid the bill and can produce the receipt. Some of these services will take credit cards as payment.

You should also have access to emergency funds in case of hospitalization or other emergency medical care. In general, you will find medical care, particularly in the public sector, somewhat less expensive than in the U.S.

Foreign health insurance coverage should be considered complementary to, rather than a substitute for, a U.S. policy. Moreover, such insurance does not guarantee access to a public hospital, where there can be long waiting lists for all but major or emergency ailments, and private hospitals and clinics can be as expensive as their American counterparts. If you intend to travel outside of your host country, please remember that most local health insurance policies will be accepted only within the issuing country’s borders.

Be sure you have coverage for medical evacuation, in the rare case that you would have to be flown back to the U.S. (or to a different country) for medical treatment, and for repatriation of remains. Also, check to be sure that your policy covers any continuing treatment you may need for newly acquired medical conditions after you return home. The International Student Identity Card mentioned earlier provides some medical evacuation and repatriation and basic accident and sickness insurance, but you should supplement this with additional coverage.

A list of insurance providers may be found at: http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1470.html

Travel Insurance:
Travel insurance can cover a variety of potential financial risks associated with travel, such as trip interruption and cancellation, medical problems, evacuation, loss of baggage, and missed flights. Insurance costs vary widely and depend on the type of coverage you need (a particular area versus comprehensive, etc.). You can compare insurance providers and costs at http://www.insuremytrip.com.

Personal Property Insurance:
You should consider purchasing insurance to cover loss of personal possessions while abroad. It is possible that you may be covered under a policy held by your parents, so investigate this prior to departure. Inexpensive but limited travel insurance coverage can be found at http://www.insuremytrip.com.

Money:
Traveler’s checks have long been a common way to make purchases while abroad. The checks can be replaced if lost or stolen, are widely accepted, and can generally be purchased for a relatively low fee. It is becoming more common, however, to rely on debit cards to withdraw funds in the local currency. The cards are convenient to carry and generally offer a better exchange rate than you’ll receive at banks or exchange counters. Consequently, it may be cheaper for you to use a debit card than to purchase traveler’s checks. Call your bank before leaving to ask about ATM fees in foreign countries and to let them know that you will be traveling. Be sure to call credit card companies as well to let them know that you will be using your card abroad. As always, use caution when removing large amounts of money from an ATM.

It is probably wise to bring a debit card for most transactions and a small number of traveler’s checks for emergencies. You don’t want to be without access to money if the ATM network is down, the local machines are charging exorbitant fees, or you cannot understand the language used by the ATM.

What to Bring
There are two words of advice that returning study abroad students offer regarding packing: PACK LIGHTLY! It is nearly impossible to take everything you want. Most day-to-day items you might need will be available in your host country. Europe travel guru Rick Steves reminds us: “If you can’t find one of your essentials, ask yourself how more than 500 million Europeans can live without it.”
Here are a few more words of wisdom from Rick Steves:

“Packing light isn’t just about the trip over and back—it’s about your traveling lifestyle. Too much luggage marks you as a typical tourist. It slams the door shut. Serendipity suffers. Changing locations becomes a major operation. Con artists figure you are helpless. With only one bag, you’re mobile and in control...Don’t pack for the worst-case scenario. Pack for the best-case scenario and simply buy yourself out of any jams. Risk shivering for a day rather than taking a heavy coat. Think in terms of what you can do without – not what will be handy on your trip. When in doubt, leave it out.”

Be sure to bring along the following:

- passport
- visa or work permit, if necessary
- photocopy of passport (kept separately from passport; you can also scan a copy and send it to a trusted family member or friend)
- traveler’s checks, debit or credit cards, currency from your host country
- proof of insurance
- personal medical records (if necessary for medical appointments while abroad)
- prescription medications in original containers and copies of prescriptions in generic form
- International Student Identity Card
- calling card (if you are bringing one from the States rather than purchasing abroad)
- insurance card
- insurance claim forms
- letter from employer confirming your internship
- language dictionary
- extra passport-size photos for any ID cards you may need abroad

You might find it useful to bring along the following:

- photos of your family and friends, college, and your home
- country travel guide
- eyeglasses/contact lenses, including extras and prescriptions
- laptop computer
- work clothes (confirm dress codes with your employer before you leave)
- converter and/or electrical adapter
- travel first aid kit and sewing kit
- camera and equipment
- travel alarm clock
- toiletries
- contraceptives
- travel information provided by your sponsoring program or university abroad
- exercise clothes and/or swimming suit
- umbrella
- money belt and/or passport pouch

You can find more packing lists and suggestions in many guidebooks. It’s best to use a list from the guidebook for your host country.

Safety

After living in the city of Chicago, you should be well-versed in safety precautions for urban environments. However, here are some basic tips you should be reminded of before your internship abroad.

When Walking:

- Always remember that there is safety in numbers. Walk with friends, or take populated routes when going places. Be especially careful when walking at night.
- Plan your route in advance, walk with a purpose, and be alert at all times, especially when talking on a cell phone or using headphones.
- Avoid deserted areas such as parks, alleys, and vacant lots.
- If you think you’re being followed, cross the street, change direction, or go to a public place.
- If you need to use a public restroom, try a popular chain restaurant or place of business.
- Never display large amounts of cash or flaunt jewelry or cameras in public. If you need to organize your wallet, duck into a store.
- Don’t keep your wallet in the back pocket of your pants or backpack, and be aware of your wallet or purse in commotions. Pickpockets often use helpers to create disturbances nearby.
- Use caution when using ATMs and don’t carry too much cash around with you. Most places accept credit cards and there are ATMs everywhere. Just make sure you choose one that is in a busy, well-lighted area.

When Using Public Transportation:

- Avoid empty subway cars. Ride with many people or in the conductor’s car.
- In crowded subways, keep your wallet in your front pocket, and keep your purse closed and held in front of you or tightly to the side.
- When taking the subway after dark, stand closest to any security booths or camera.

Additional Resources
For more information about planning your trip, consider visiting the following websites:
• http://internationaltravel.uchicago.edu/
• http://www.transitionsabroad.com
• http://abroadview.org

Contacting Career Advancement
Best of luck during your summer abroad! If you need to contact Career Advancement, you can do so by phone or by email. Because of time differences and high costs, it is recommended that you utilize email when possible. If a phone call is necessary, you can save frustration by arranging the call ahead of time via email.

For general internship assistance while abroad, email Rachael Ward at rcward@uchicago.edu. For other email addresses, visit the About Us section of the Career Advancement website or call us at 773-702-7040.