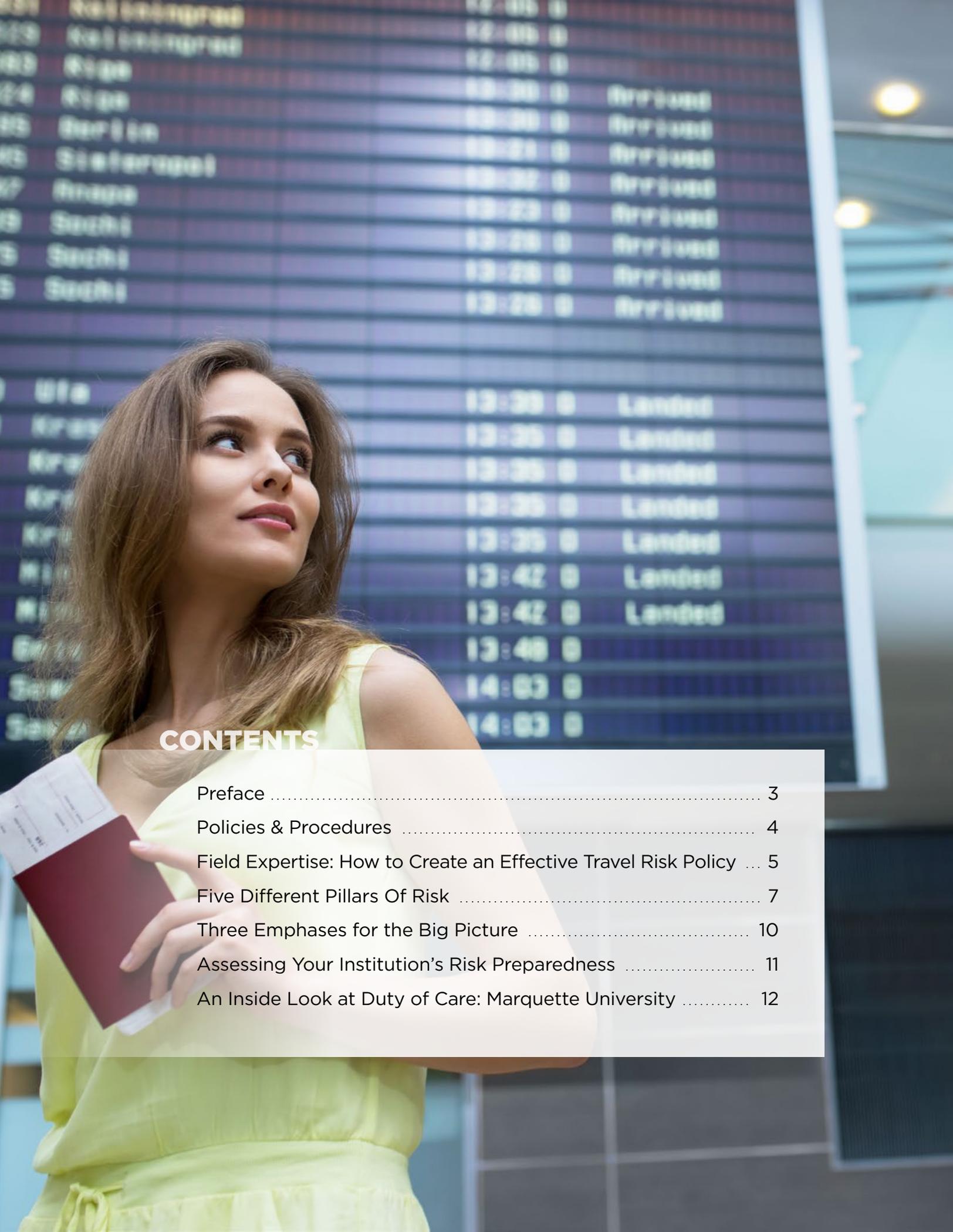


Serious About Duty of Care?

Anticipating risk and how to prevent it.



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Preface



One thing that is top of mind for many in the international education field is how we move forward by embracing the 'new normal' and better prepare for the next inevitable crisis. Many universities, institutions, and businesses have reconsidered and restructured risk response plans due to today's unpredictable global climate. Dialogue concerning duty of care is not only important, but necessary to better protect our constituents and our institutions. Let's break down Duty of Care.

Policies & Procedures

An important component of Duty of Care is Policies and Procedures. These should be a collaborative effort among staff at your institution that evaluate risk. Since stakeholders vary by institution, your committee can be made up of staff from study abroad, campus safety, risk management, public relations, health services, and so on. Policies should address how travel risk management is both maintained and upheld in the face of risk, which then creates a number of procedures, such as a waiver procedure, to follow both during risk and prior, to remain risk averse.

The policies and procedures should have an associated implementation date. Before the rollout of the new policies, all staff responding to traveler needs and travel risk management should be trained to ensure staff-wide awareness and better preparedness as travelers embark on their journeys. In addition to training, it is imperative to regularly review travel policies to ensure traveler safety as environmental, political, social, and economic factors change.

If your institution is considering re-writing travel policies, here's some advice from the field.





FIELD EXPERTISE

HOW TO CREATE AN EFFECTIVE TRAVEL RISK POLICY:

Aaron Clevenger, Assistant Provost, Dean of International Programs, and Senior International Officer at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, has worked within higher education for 17 years. After a mudslide accident where student and faculty travelers may have been nearby, the President of the university called Clevenger’s office to find out traveler locations. Not having the ability to answer his questions, Clevenger wanted to ensure that in the future, he had a better answer than “I don’t know.”

Through conversations with other experts in the field, Clevenger discovered there were few comprehensive sources available with advice on how to author a travel policy. In 2019, a group of international educators was asked to present their travel policies at the annual NAFSA conference. It was then that they came together to create the following lists as a source of information for all who are interested in developing travel policies.

First, we must consider why a travel policy is important:

- Defines the scope of responsibility for the university, traveler, and stakeholders
- Sets expectations for travelers and promotes good decision-making on safety
- Sets parameters for acceptable risk and expected mitigation on sponsored travel
- Provides a structure when risk changes during travel

Even though cataclysmic events often start risk management discussions, waiting for an event to occur may mean it's too late. To ensure better preparedness for traveler safety, the following should be considerations for policy development:

- Identify the needs
- Identify the policy leader
- Assemble relevant stakeholders and gain their perspectives
- Identify the scope and requirements, which can include types of travel and types of travelers
- Develop an efficient way to determine who your travelers are, both as an assessment and measurement
- Gather disparate policies that currently exist
- Draft policy
- Finalize policy
- Communicate and implement policy
- Consider that you may need more than one policy for your institution

While you're forming your travel policies, here are some suggestions:

- Cover all travel you can control, but avoid over-broad policies that pretend to control what you can't
- Allow or restrict higher-risk travel based on mission/academic/institutional need
- Manage risk with appropriate mitigation measures
- Set realistic expectations of travelers and the institution based on who makes travel decisions and how resources are allocated
- Make risk information available and promote its use, even for travelers not covered by the policy

These lists are adapted from Del Rossi, E., Clevenger, A. D., Rhodes, G., & Morgan, P. (2019, May 30). Global Partner Session: Impact of Technology on University International Travel Policies. Lecture presented at NAFSA Annual Conference and Expo in Walter E. Washington Conference Center, Washington D.C.



Five Different Pillars Of Risk

Risk is a buzzword we hear in articles, webinars, meetings with stakeholders, and so on. “Risk” can be viewed as an umbrella, which encompasses a number of considerations. In the field of international education, you want to make sure you consider each of these items under the risk umbrella.

1 Risk Assessment

Assessing risk is not a one-and-done task. Risk is dynamic and changes with the times, the location, and even with a set of travelers. Risk assessments should be completed on at least a quarterly basis. For heavily visited regions, risk assessments may be completed more frequently.

It’s also important to consider that travelers may pose their own set of risks that may amplify as they travel abroad. This can include medical conditions, race, religion, sexuality, and other identifying characteristics that can change as a traveler leaves their home country. As you assess risk, make sure you are considering your travelers and the support they may need.

Every institution is different when it comes to creating a travel risk policy. There are many sources that provide valuable information about travel advisories and safety ratings that you can utilize to help you firm up your travel policy. OSAC, US Department of State, CDC, etc.

2 Risk Disclosure

It is important to disclose travel risk levels and warnings to your travelers. This can help them make informed decisions while in the destination country.

Part of risk disclosure is making sure you have the right notification and communication system in place to disclose risk.

3 Risk Mitigation

One side of risk mitigation is the training of staff on policies to better safeguard travelers. Another component is having the appropriate tools to mitigate that risk, as well as remaining diligent about in-country intelligence.



Did you know Terra Dotta software synchronizes with CDC and Department of State risk ratings to better inform risk assessments?

4 Risk Monitoring

Monitoring risk requires keeping up to date with the latest travel advisories, constant communication with your partners abroad, communication with host country contacts, and monitoring of country risk warnings.

Another element of risk monitoring is determining the sources your institution will use for making risk level decisions, such as the Department of State, CDC, OSAC, other governments, etc.

5 Risk Response

This is the most important aspect of risk. Now that you have a policy with outlined procedures, and your staff is trained, you are ready to respond.

When making decisions, here are some best practices:

- **Identify Stakeholders.** These stakeholders will be the ones to whom you will want to communicate information concerning the risk. Stakeholders can range from traveling students and their families to institution officials.

- **Effectively Communicate.** Once you know with whom you need to communicate, now it's time to communicate with those stakeholders effectively. Effective communication is accurate and honest, and encourages action and shows integrity.
 - Accurate information is perhaps the most important aspect. If non-factual information is shared, it can decrease institutional trust, put travelers in danger, and expose the institution to both reputational and legal damage.
 - You also want to be honest with your stakeholders. Be transparent about both the successes and difficulties you are facing.
 - Then, encourage action. Once the facts are on the table, it's time to act. Are you trying to bring your travelers home? Ask them to practice heightened precaution? Decide on an action and emphasize it.
 - Lastly, show integrity and empathy. Emphasize that you will be with them throughout the process and will keep them updated on the changing situation. Recognize their fears, and as fit, offer reassurance.
- **Check-in.** As the situation changes and as your travelers are taking action, make sure you're checking in. How are your travelers doing? Are they safe? Do they need any additional resources? Make sure you're asking them questions.
- **Reflect.** Once the risk has passed or subsided, it's time to evaluate. What could you have done differently or better? During this reflection process, it's important to engage with the travelers who faced the risk themselves. What do they wish they saw in communication or how decisions were made? This can be a telling way to inform future decisions and response policies as you seek to better support future travelers.

“Only through Terra Dotta has our emergency response been possible! We quickly used tools to locate students, create final checkouts, and then to get quick data updates for the entire team, especially our president.

—HOLLY CARTER, UNIVERSITY OF EVANSVILLE
[2020 - REFERENCING COVID-19]

Three Emphases for the Big Picture:

Throughout the entire process of assessing and responding to travel risk, there are three areas that you want to make sure your institution is emphasizing:



Notification

At every step, you want to make sure your travelers are up-to-date. These notifications should be delivered in a timely manner and clearly documented with time stamps. You don't want to leave your travelers without an update or check-in, so it's also good practice to mark when a follow-up notification is due.



Data Management

The integrity and security of the data you are working with within travel risk management is of the utmost importance, not only for data protection but for reporting purposes and end of operations debriefing. Training should align with data management as well. This ensures that all crisis management staff are prepared to read and process the data to be passed on to travelers, emergency services, or third party providers in an event of high risk.



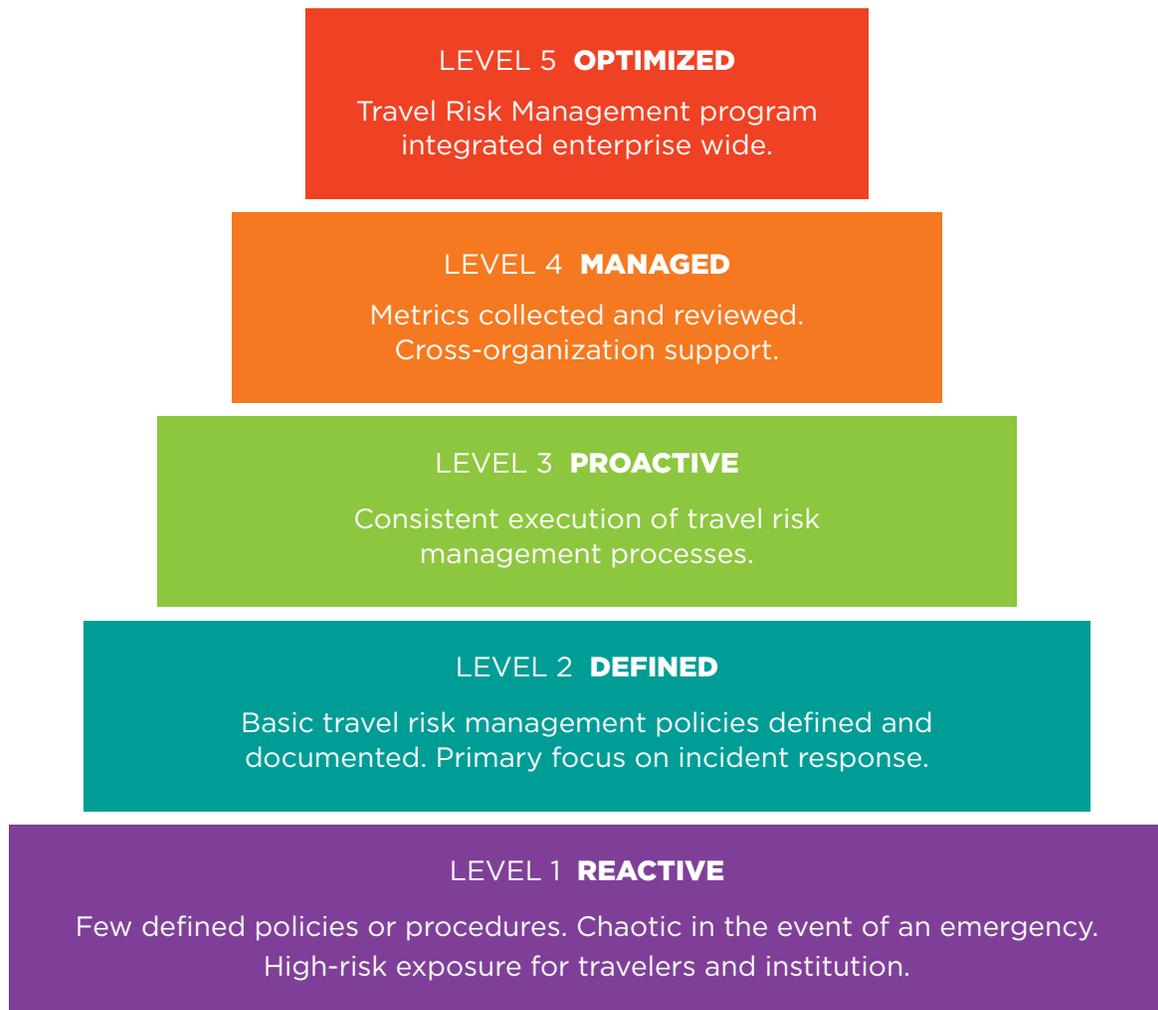
Communication

Paramount to the success of any travel risk management program will be the lines of communication from the start. By making students and staff aware of the tools used for communication, there will be no doubt where to receive alert data (SMS, email, etc.) and how to escalate a traveler's safety if they feel threatened.

In the event of failed tech communications, contingency plans should be in place to better protect travelers. Make sure your team knows the line of internal communication and how external communications are handled as well, such as social and mainstream media and parents. All of these points of communication require the correct response at the correct time.

Assessing Your Institution's Risk Preparedness

As you consider your institution's travel risk practices, where would you rank your institution on the following scale? How can you improve your institution's response? By taking a look at your institution and asking these questions, your duty of care practices can be better crafted to meet the needs of your travelers.





AN INSIDE LOOK AT DUTY OF CARE

MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

Spring of 2020 will always be on the mind of international educators as we begin to reflect on how we responded and how we will continue to respond to dynamic situations. For Marquette University, a private university in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, care is especially emphasized in their practice of duty of care.

Karli Webster, Marquette University’s Manager of Study Abroad Programs, responded with leadership and empathy as she assisted students across the Atlantic during COVID-19. For one student, who was studying abroad in Madrid, the reality hit close to home as he began to feel sick while on a weekend trip for St. Patrick’s Day in Dublin. From answering his Mother’s questions to arranging housing for the student in Dublin, Marquette’s and Webster’s responses were nothing but well-rounded and supportive.

Duty of care looks different at each institution, based on program offerings and university characteristics. At Marquette, the philosophy is to work directly with institutions and providers. By creating these direct relationships, Webster explained, it helps create contacts for help on the ground. For this specific student, that meant contacting a partner institution in Dublin which connected Webster with a landlord and in turn, safe and isolated housing for the student after his hospital stay. Webster stated, “We strive to build relationships in a number of locations, so even if a student is on a faculty-led program, they can still receive the best resources in that country. These relationships have really driven how we address duty of care.”

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, international education offices have had to transcend their duties to provide the best possible care for their students during these challenging times. Webster said that at Marquette, the goal is

to care for the whole person. She elaborated by saying, “It’s really looking at what’s best for that student throughout the whole process, whether that’s deciding which program to go on or how to handle a situation with them while they’re abroad. For me, I try to put myself in that student’s or that parent’s shoes and think about how I would want the university to react. They’re more than just a number that’s enrolled in one of our programs. They’re truly a member of the Marquette family.”

Despite Marquette’s international education office being one of the younger departments on campus, they have outlined some core practices in their duty of care.

Four Tips to Address Duty of Care

1

Know your policies

inside and out. This includes insurance policies, waivers of liability and release, and communication allowed by FERPA. Webster added that during COVID-19, having this knowledge at the forefront of her mind helped drive faster decision making.

2

Form relationships

with other universities, providers, and partners, so that you can pick up the phone and get accurate answers when you need them. Marquette staff was able to call their international health insurance provider and partner institutions as a part of their COVID-19 response, which produced better results and answers.

3

Create parent-based

resources, whether that’s a parent pre-departure webinar or centralized resource for parents on the university study abroad website. By providing these resources to students and encouraging them to pass along the information to parents, parents will feel more secure in their student’s safety and know who to turn to when emergency strikes.

4

Have a crisis

response plan in place with a number of situations. Your crisis response plan should have core questions answered that are pertinent to your institution. Here are two questions to consider:

What is your email communication plan for students?

Who are your backup emergency contacts?

“

No matter what you plan, you’re still going to have to adapt it some, but having those core elements in place, especially for maintaining contact with students and parents, when appropriate, is helpful.

—KARLI WEBSTER

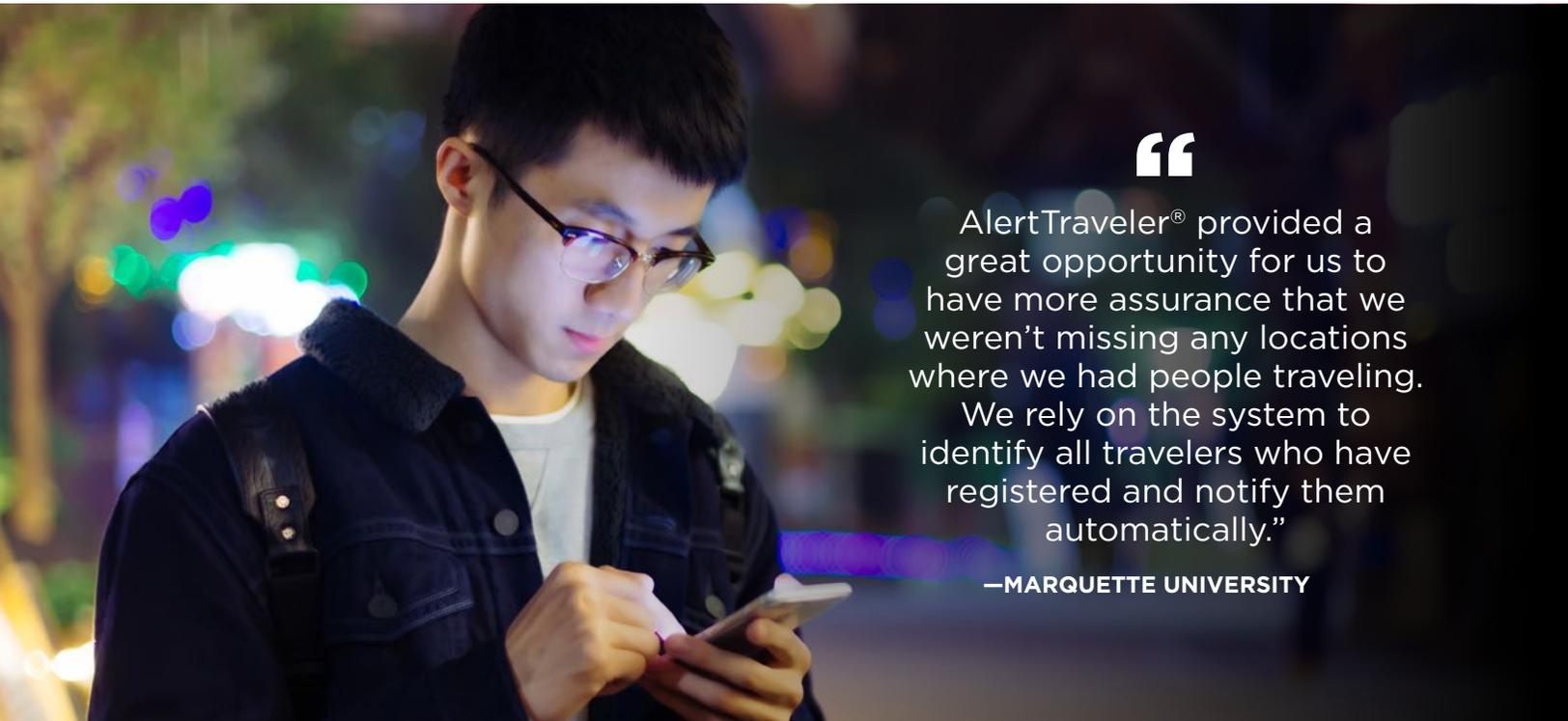
Additional Tips Learned from COVID-19

Have a central place for resources and general updates, especially for dynamic situations. Webster stated, “Even if that’s just confirming that your institution is monitoring the situation and deciding the best way to proceed, this can calm fear and uncertainty for stakeholders.”

Know that every situation or crisis is different. We can’t plan for everything, but we can make sure that we are prepared to respond. Webster commented that “global pandemic sweeping the nation in a couple of weeks” wasn’t initially in their crisis plan, but having various situations with core practices aids in their ability to make well-rounded decisions.

Have good and consistent relationships with other departments on campus. During COVID-19, Marquette coordinated frequently with their general counsel and their medical office for additional resources and knowledge to deliver the best possible responses for students.

Utilize software that can help deliver your institutional response. As a client of Terra Dotta, Marquette University and its staff were able to utilize AlertTraveler® to provide immediate country intelligence notifications, confirm location of travelers, and support students as they began to return home.



“

AlertTraveler® provided a great opportunity for us to have more assurance that we weren’t missing any locations where we had people traveling. We rely on the system to identify all travelers who have registered and notify them automatically.”

—MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY

To learn more about providing duty of care with Terra Dotta's software solutions,
visit www.terradotta.com or email info@terradotta.com.

