FSU International Programs

Broad Curriculum, First Year Abroad, First Semester Abroad Pathway

2019-2020

PANAMA
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**IMPORTANT CONTACTS**  
1

**ACADEMICS**  
2
ACADEMIC MATTERS
FSU ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS RELATED TO STUDY ABROAD
TUTORING RESOURCES
STUDENT DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER

**BEFORE DEPARTURE AND PROGRAM SPECIFICS**  
3-6
PASSPORT
VISA REQUIREMENTS
FLIGHT INFORMATION
IN TRANSIT
ARRIVING IN PANAMA
THE PANAMA CAMPUS
HOUSING
TRANSPORTATION IN PANAMA
PERSONAL TRAVEL
CLIMATE AND PACKING

**COMMUNICATION AND ELECTRONICS**  
7
MAIL
CELL PHONES & COMMUNICATION
COMPUTERS

**CURRENCY AND EXPENSES**  
8
EXPENSES WHILE IN PANAMA
CURRENCY
BANKING

**HEALTH**  
9
INOCULATIONS/MEDICAL CONCERNS
ALCOHOL AWARENESS AND ILLEGAL DRUGS

**POLICIES AND SAFETY**  
10
RULES, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
SAFETY AND SECURITY

**TIPS AND RESOURCES**  
11
ONLINE RESOURCES

**EXPLORING THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA INFOGRAPHIC**  
12-13
IMPORTANT CONTACTS

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS OFFICE
A5500 University Center
282 Champions Way
P.O. Box 3062420
Florida State University
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2420

PHONE 850.644.3272
1.800.374.8581
FAX 850.644.8817
850.645.4659
EMAIL IP-Info@fsu.edu
WEBSITE international.fsu.edu
HOURS 8:00a.m. to 5:00p.m. EST, Monday - Friday

FSU-PANAMA CAMPUS
Calle Jacinto Palacios, Building 227
Ciudad del Saber (City of Knowledge)
Clayton
Panama, Republic of Panama

PHONE (011) 507-317-0367
FAX (011) 507-317-0366
WEBSITE http://panama.fsu.edu
HOURS 8:00a.m. to 5:00p.m. EST, Monday - Friday

You may use the physical address listed above for receiving DHL, FED/EX or UPS packages, but NOT for letters and regular mail items sent through regular postal services. For regular mail, please use the following mailing address:

MAILING ADDRESS IN PANAMA
Florida State University – Panama
c/o (Student's Name)
PO Box 0819-05390
Panama, Republic of Panama

IMPORTANT FSU-PANAMA CONTACTS
Dr. Carlos Langoni, Resident Director
Phone (011) 507-317-0367, ext 228
Cell (011) 507-6674-2545
Email clangoni@fsu.edu

Dr. Alexandra Anyfanti, Vice Rector
Phone (011) 507-317-0367, ext 238
Cell (011) 507-6676-4071
Email aanyfanti@fsu.edu

Dr. Raymond George, Director of Student Affairs
Phone (011) 507-317-0367, ext 223
Cell (011) 507-6648-8071
Email rgeorge@fsu.edu

Maria Elena Puerta, Inter. Programs/Housing Coordinator
Phone (011) 507-317-0367, ext 224
Cell (011) 507-6676-4296
Email mpuerta@fsu.edu

Hector Miranda, Program Assistant
Phone (011) 507-317-0367, ext 224
Cell (011) 507 6678-4969
Email hamiranda@fsu.edu

Keila Villareal, Program Assistant
Phone (011) 507-317-0367, ext 224
Cell (011) 507 6672-1075
Email kvillarreal@fsu.edu

The first points of contact for you in regards to assistance, guidance or support are the Program Assistants (Resident Assistants). Upon arrival, you will be given the Program Assistants’ emergency contact numbers, which are also posted in each housing unit. If you need further assistance or cannot reach one of the Program Assistants, you should use the phone numbers previously listed, in this order: Maria Elena Puerta, Raymond George, Alexandra Anyfanti, Carlos Langoni.

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS
Emergency Services 911
Ambulance (011) 507-236-5050
Code: 13417
Police (011) 507-317-9142
(Central Dispatcher 104)
Fire Department of Balboa (011) 507-228-2837
Fire Department of Clayton (011) 507-512-6177
(Central Dispatcher 103)
Red Cross Emergency 228-2187

U.S. EMBASSY AND CONSULATE - PANAMA
Building 783
Calle Basilio Lakas
Clayton, Panama
Republic of Panama

PHONE 507-317-5303
AFTER HOURS/EMERGENCIES 507-317-5000
WEBSITE https://pa.usembassy.gov/

INTERNATIONAL CALLS
Making international calls from the U.S. to Panama: First dial “011” (for international call), followed by “507” (the country code), then the location number.

Time Differences: Panama time is the same as Miami and Tallahassee (EST) except when the States are on Daylight Saving Time. Panama does not observe Daylight Saving Time, thus they will be one hour behind during our Daylight Saving Time.
ACADEMIC MATTERS
This program is first and foremost an academic one, so you should be prepared to invest as much time, effort and thought into your coursework as you do on your home campus. Since classes are small, you will have more interaction with your fellow students and with faculty than you have on main campus. There will be a greater emphasis on participation in class discussions. This means you must be prepared to maintain a high level of performance by being an active and committed participant in your class.

FSU ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMS RELATED TO STUDY ABROAD
FSU students are encouraged to get involved with the Garnet and Gold Scholar Society and the Global Citizenship Certificate program. These two resources provide special recognition as global-ready graduates.

The Garnet and Gold Scholar Society program facilitates involvement and recognizes the engaged, well-rounded student who excels within and beyond the classroom in the areas of Leadership, Internship, Service, International, and Research. A student who has met the criteria in three of the five areas is eligible for consideration. All study abroad programs organized through the International Programs Office qualify for the international experience portion of the International Area. Visit http://garnetandgoldscholar.fsu.edu/ or email GarnetGoldProgram@fsu.edu to learn more.

The Global Citizenship Certificate program helps undergraduate students develop invaluable cross-cultural skills and global competencies needed to be a global-ready graduate. Students who enroll in the certificate take 1 required course, Global Perspectives, and 3 electives. The required course counts toward FSU Liberal Studies X, E-series, and writing requirements. Students can choose from 500+ courses to fulfill the elective course requirement. In addition, students participate in 8 intercultural events on campus and a sustained international experience abroad, which you have already done! Enroll in the Global Citizenship Certificate to ensure your study abroad experience counts toward the certificate. Visit cge.fsu.edu/globalcitizen to learn more about the benefits, criteria, and requirements. You can also email us at globalcitizen@fsu.edu with questions.

TUTORING RESOURCES
There are a number of tutoring resources available at Florida State University to assist students academically, both in Tallahassee and abroad. Online tutors are available through the following programs:

- **Reading & Writing Center (RWC)**
  http://wr.english.fsu.edu/Reading-Writing-Center/RWC-Online

- **Academic Center for Excellence (ACE)**
  [http://ace.fsu.edu/](http://ace.fsu.edu/) ACE provides free tutoring in many subject areas, including accounting, biology, chemistry, economics, math, statistics, and physics.

- **University Libraries: Office of Distance Library Services**
  https://www.lib.fsu.edu/department/distance-learning

On-site assistance is also available in the areas of English Writing and Mathematics through the FSU Panama Writing Center and the FSU Panama Math Learning Center.

OFFICE OF ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES (OAS)
OAS provides reasonable and appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Documented disabilities and accommodations vary in nature, and though the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 do not apply extraterritorially, we do our best to accommodate our students. If you anticipate needing to request accommodations for a documented disability, please **schedule an appointment with OAS** by calling 850-644-9566 (Voice) or 850-644-8504 (TDD). For more information, visit http://dos.fsu.edu/sdrc.
VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR U.S. CITIZENS

Fall, Spring, & First Year Abroad (FYA) Students: In order to study in Panama legally, you must apply and obtain a valid student visa. The visa will be applied for in country but there are visa support documents that must be completed before departure. Please review the following important aspects of the visa process.

- **Passport:** You must hold a U.S. passport that is valid for at least 6 months beyond your return from Panama and contain at least 2 blank visa pages.

- **Visa Instructions:** You will be sent a “Visa Packet” via email with information and guidance on obtaining the visa support documents prior to departure. Failure to complete the visa support documents within the stated timeline will possibly result in late arrivals or inability to participate in the program. Any financial penalties associated with delayed arrivals or cancelations will be your responsibility.

- **Background Check & Apostille:** One visa support document required is a background check and apostille. You will need to complete this Background Check and an Apostille prior to departure but are asked to not start until prompted to by email.

- **Immigration Meetings:** Once in Panama you will be required to attend immigration meetings in order to obtain your visa. Failure to attend these meetings could result in your visa being denied, a $2,000 fine, and not participating in the program.

- **Flight Restrictions:** Due to airline restrictions, traveling on a one-way ticket may not be allowed. Please check with your airlines before purchasing a one-way.

Summer Students:

- **If your Summer program is under 90 days:** you are NOT required to obtain a visa. However, please review the following passport and flight restrictions:
  - **Passport:** You must hold a U.S. passport that is valid for at least 6 months beyond your return from Panama.
  - **Flight Restrictions:** Due to airline restrictions, traveling on a one-way ticket may not be allowed. Please check with your airlines before purchasing a one-way.

- **If your Summer program is over 90 days:**
  In order to study in Panama legally, you must apply and obtain a valid student visa. The visa will be applied for in country but there are visa support documents that must be completed before departure. Please see the information under Fall/Spring Students for the visa Information.

VISA REQUIREMENTS FOR NON U.S. CITIZENS AND US CITIZENS LIVING ABROAD:

If you are a non-U.S. citizen or U.S. citizen living abroad, contact an International Programs’ Immigration Specialist at IP-Visas@fsu.edu. You may be required to apply for a visa on your own or you may have additional visa requirements and expenses.

All visa information is correct at the time of publication, but terms, fees, and guidelines are subject to change without notice.
BEFORE DEPARTURE & PROGRAM SPECIFICS

FLIGHT INFORMATION
There is no group flight for this program, and your Program Fee does not include airfare. It is vital that the name on your airline ticket is exactly the same as the name on your passport. As previously stated, traveling on a one-way ticket may not be allowed due to airline restrictions. Please check with your airlines before purchasing a one-way ticket.

As an admitted Broad Curriculum, First Year Abroad, or First Semester Abroad Pathway student, you may purchase airfare for your program. You should arrive in your study abroad location on the start date of the program and depart on the end date of your program as stated on the International Programs website and IP student portal. All orientation/welcome activities that take place upon arrival are mandatory.

There will be two group pick-ups to accommodate those arriving on the start date of the program. An FSU van will leave from the airport at approximately 2:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Panama time from Tocumen Airport on the start date of your program. Meet the group as you exit the customs hall. Students whose flights won’t arrive at the times mentioned above are welcome to wait for the closest group pick-up.

We advise against the Spirit Airlines flight(s) that arrive in Panama City late night or early morning. These flights may be cheap, but it is not the safest time to arrive in Panama and you would incur additional costs for taxis to and from the airport. If, however, you choose to disregard our advice and take a flight arriving late at night/early morning, you must advise the IP Office of this (in addition to submitting your travel itinerary).

Your program housing will begin on the start date of your program and end on the end date. IF YOU PLAN ON ARRIVING EARLIER OR WISH TO STAY LATER, YOU MUST MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO STAY IN A HOTEL. View our list of recommended hotels online: http://www.international.fsu.edu/Documents/ImportantDocuments/StudyCenters/Panama_AreaAccommodations.pdf

Your return flight should depart Panama the Saturday after exams. FSU-Panama housing officially closes on Saturday at noon – you must check out of housing at this time. Two airport drop-off shuttles will be provided. The flight information will be collected from the group, and shuttle times will be chosen based on the student needs. If your flight is at a different time than the airport drop-offs, you will be responsible for getting yourself to the airport in time for your departure. Our staff can help coordinate transportation.

First Year Abroad students only: you are welcome to arrange to stay in university housing between semesters. Please discuss your housing needs with the FSU Panama staff. You cannot stay in university housing prior to the start of the fall semester or after the end of the summer semester.

Once you have completed your travel arrangements, you must submit your flight itinerary through the IP student portal. Your flight arrangements will be provided to the Panama staff and it is very important that they receive this information in order to monitor student arrivals.

You may want to consider purchasing travel insurance when booking your flight. Travel insurance typically covers flight cancellation fees, lost luggage or other losses incurred while traveling, etc. Speak with your airline for more information.

If your flight is canceled, delayed, or you miss a connection on your way to Panama, contact the International Programs staff via email or phone.

IN TRANSIT
- Domestic flights, in general, require arriving at the airport ticket counter two hours before your departure time. Check with your specific airline to find out the recommended pre-flight allowance.
- International flights. Arrive at the airport ticket counter three hours before your departure time.
- Keep your boarding pass until you have landed, cleared immigration and customs, and have collected your luggage.
- Have your passport and immigration letter accessible in your carry-on luggage.
- During your flight make sure to drink lots of water to stay hydrated. Get up and walk around once an hour to help your circulation. Do simple stretches while in your seat. Try to sleep; it will help you combat jet lag. Wear layers, as the temperature on the plane and in airports can vary.
ARRIVING IN PANAMA
When filling out your landing card, your address will be the address of the Florida State University Panama Study Center – Ciudad del Saber (City of Knowledge) in Clayton listed in the Contact Information section of this packet. When you land in Panama, you will go through Immigration and will need to show your passport and plane ticket. Have your passport readily available—not packed in your checked luggage.

You will be housed in the City of Knowledge, Clayton. You will receive an email indicating which residence you should check-in with if you miss the group pick-ups. If your flight arrives at night you should go directly to your residence.

If you miss the group pick-up, we recommend you do the following:
As you exit the Panama Customs area on the ground floor of the airport terminal with your baggage, walk towards a small kiosk located inside the terminal area and located in between the automatic sliding exit doors called “Autoridad de Turismo Panama” (Panama Tourism Authority). Tell the agent (in English or Spanish) you need to take a taxi to go to Florida State University located in the City of Knowledge (Ciudad del Saber) building 227 in Clayton.

The agent will ask you a few questions to better serve you and direct you to a waiting taxi outside the doors behind the kiosk. The taxi fare for transporting you to CLAYTON should be between $30.00 and $40.00. ALWAYS VERIFY THE TOTAL COST OF THE FARE WITH THE DRIVER BEFORE ENTERING THE TAXI! The taxis in Panama are small and only two people per taxi are recommended when there is luggage.

Although there are plenty of taxis waiting outside to take passengers, there is better control over the taxis that the Autoridad de Turismo recommends. So, we recommend that you do not just jump in any taxi you see. When you reach the City of Knowledge, request to be taken to the location indicated in the email from International Programs.

Recommended cab companies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>America Libre</td>
<td>800-8294 224-0122/221-1932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi Nacional</td>
<td>224-1132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi Concordia</td>
<td>236-7848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clayton Taxi</td>
<td>317-0386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Taxi</td>
<td>264-8569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Taxi Panamá</td>
<td>224-4390</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE PANAMA CAMPUS
Florida State University’s first international campus opened in Panama in 1957. It has served thousands of students seeking either short-term study abroad experiences or associate and bachelor’s degrees. We are based at the City of Knowledge where our newly renovated classrooms and administrative office building overlook the rainforest in one direction and a quad/park in another. The City of Knowledge is located in the suburban area of Clayton, just across the street from the Miraflores Locks of the Panama Canal. Other international universities with local and study abroad programs will be represented as well, allowing for possible networking with FSU students. Feel free to check out the online tour of the City of Knowledge campus: http://www.ciudaddelsaber.org/en.

Florida State University Panama has recently renovated a multi-purpose sports court in the City of Knowledge near building 227. This investment was funded solely by FSU Panama as a contribution to the City of Knowledge Foundation in order to promote a healthy lifestyle. It can be used for football, basketball, volleyball and several other sports and is available free of charge to all FSU students and users of the City of Knowledge anytime during daylight hours. FSU Panama students also have access free of charge to all sports facilities in the City of Knowledge administered by the Kiwanis.

HOUSING
At the present time, you will be housed in a dormitory style complex within the City of Knowledge. Each room has two single beds, two night tables, two safe, one small refrigerator, independent bathroom, intelligent AC, hot water, balcony, telephone, television and wireless internet. In addition, you will have access to a living-dining area and a fully equipped kitchen, coin-operated laundry, and vending machines. The complex is located in the City of Knowledge, within a 15-minute walk to the main classroom building. Shuttles are available during weekdays between the main building and the dormitory complex.

You will be provided with linens and a bath towel upon arrival. Rooming assignments and locations will be made based on a combination of factors such as type of program, housing preference, availability and special needs as indicated in the information you provide on the Medical, Special Needs, Housing questionnaire in the IP student portal. Roommate assignments are made in Panama and will be communicated upon arrival. These assignments cannot be changed.

During your on-site orientation, you will be advised of the Housing Rules & Regulations. Violation of any of the housing policies is grounds for dismissal. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the housing rules and regulations for your specific program. Refer to the FSU International Programs Contractual Agreement and the Housing Terms and Conditions for details. You are required to sign the FSU International Programs Contractual Agreement as it outlines your contractual obligations as a participant on our program.

At the end of the program, the housing facilities will be inspected. They should be neat, clean and in the condition in which they were found. If the flat is left in an un-fit state or if any damages are found upon your departure, additional charges may be assessed to your FSU account.
TRANSPORTATION IN PANAMA

The cheapest way to travel in Panama City is by using a car share app like Uber, but you can also take a taxi. The fare from FSU-Panama to the heart of downtown Panama City should be no more than $7-$10 (one-way). A tip is not necessary. **ALWAYS VERIFY THE TOTAL COST OF THE FARE WITH THE DRIVER BEFORE ENTERING THE TAXI!!**

Travel outside Panama City requires plane, bus, or car. Most in-country flights depart from Albrook Airport, located only two miles from the FSU-Panama campus. Express buses leave from downtown Panama City to all parts of Panama frequently every day. The Bus Terminal is only a 10-minute car ride away from the FSU Panama Campus.

Riding the local buses is also a great cultural experience and a very economical way of going places. The new bus system (Metrobus) requires the use of a card which can be purchased at most supermarkets. One of the Metrobus lines goes through Morse Street, only a block away from the dormitory complex, and takes you to the bus terminal at Albrook where you can connect to other areas of Panama either by bus or by the subway. A bus ride currently costs $1.25. Routes that connect to the suburban areas of Panama City cost $1.25. We suggest you start riding the city buses only when you are familiar with the different places and have a better sense of the distances. Avoid riding the bus at night unless you know exactly where you are going and you are certain about the bus routes.

In addition, City of Knowledge has a free internal shuttle system which provides free transportation service within the City of Knowledge from 7:00 a.m. thru 6:15 p.m.

PERSONAL TRAVEL

It is best to wait until you have arrived in Panama and begun classes before you book any trips away from Panama. Waiting until classes have started will allow you to make your plans around the following factors:

- **Academic deadlines for exams, papers and presentations.** You do not want to book a once-in-a-lifetime trip only to discover that you have a major research paper due around that time.
- **The Cultural Calendar includes additional activities and opportunities.** It would be a shame to book a trip only to discover that its dates conflict with an activity.
- **The travel plans of your peers.** One of the joys of studying abroad is the opportunity to develop friendships through travel and shared experiences.
- **Owing to the compact nature of the summer programs, course meeting times will be intensive and cultural events will be scheduled throughout the program.** It is therefore possible that you will have limited opportunities for independent travel.

Do not plan travel that will cause you to miss classes; strict academic standards will be maintained on the programs. If you are participating on a summer program, you may have mandatory academic excursions that take place over a weekend. You should be flexible with your weekend plans. For safety purposes, you will be instructed to fill out a mandatory online independent travel form each time you plan on traveling outside of Panama. More information will be provided to you in the IP student portal prior to departure.

CLIMATE AND PACKING

All airlines have different policies regarding the number, size, and weight of bags allowed on domestic and international flights. Fees for having too many bags or exceeding size and weight limits are steep, and also vary by airline. It is important that you determine the restriction on your particular airline before you pack. **Please be aware that you will be responsible for carrying your own bags, packs, etc.** Restrictions regarding carry-on baggage are different for each airline and sometimes vary depending on your originating, transferring and/or terminating airport. Also, requirements change based on current events. It is imperative that you check your specific requirements just prior to your departure and plan accordingly. Use the IP luggage tag to mark your bag in capital letters with your name, address, and final destination both on the inside and on the outside of the bag. Pack 1 to 2 outfits in your carry-on in case of flight delays/cancellations or lost luggage.

Make several photocopies of the pages in your passport that contain the issue date, your signature, and your photograph. Leave one copy at home with your family and take another copy with you in case your passport is lost or stolen. Carry a copy separate from your passport when you are traveling.

As an FSU Panama student, you will purchase your textbooks in Panama City. You should not purchase any textbooks or course required materials prior to departure.

Panama City is warm, averaging around 80 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit in the day and cooling down in the evenings. The “dry season”, usually between December-April, brings little rain. Tropical rains are common the remainder of the year. So be prepared for the 15-minute walk to class by bringing rain boots, jacket and an umbrella.

You should monitor the weather before departure to plan accordingly: [https://www.accuweather.com/en/world-weather](https://www.accuweather.com/en/world-weather).

Pack accordingly—and conservatively. Former students recommended packing half the clothing you think you will need. You can buy just about everything you need in Panama. Buildings in Panama tend to have really cold air-conditioning, and the classrooms at FSU-Panama will usually require a sweatshirt, so pack a variety of clothing. You should not bring any valuable or sentimental items or keepsake items you would regret losing.

Reference the International Programs packing list for more packing tips!
MAIL
Please share the following information with those in the U.S. who are interested in sending you mail while you are abroad.

The Panamanian mail system is sometimes unpredictable. Airmail will take from 7-14 days, but local holidays or other contingencies may stretch this time. Use international airmail stamps; regular mail will cause your letter to go by boat, taking about six weeks to deliver. When sending packages, neither overestimate nor underestimate the value of the materials in the package. You will pay up to 30% customs duty on the amount shown as the insured price. There should be no commercial value on the package. When mailing items from Panama you need to buy local stamps available at the nearest post office. Please be advised that the boxes and packages you receive are opened in order to clear customs and you will have to pay a percentage of the registered value of the items in the package. The Panamanian Customs Office will not tax personal packages whose reported insured price is under $50.00. Anything more than $50.00 will be taxed between 5 – 20% depending on the item. Also note, there is no door to door delivery of packages in Panama unless you pay a courier company which is very expensive, and it is not a good idea to send good and items through Panama Postal office to our P.O. Box because they can get lost. Therefore, think twice before having items mailed to you. You may be able to purchase those items in Panama at a much lower price than the cost of shipping and taxes.

CELL PHONES AND COMMUNICATION
Staying connected to your family and friends while you are abroad is extremely important. Establish a communications plan prior to departure. Whether it’s setting up a Skype meeting every Sunday night, sending them messages over WhatsApp, or checking-in with them on social media, make sure you keep in touch!

Though it is not mandatory to use your cell phone abroad, consider one of the following options. Do your research to see which option is the best fit for you:

Add an international plan through your current service provider. This tends to be the most expensive option. Talk to your service provider for details. Each provider offers varying international plans.

Purchase a sim card in-country for your current phone. You will need to unlock your phone and make sure your phone is GSM-capable before departure. You can buy a prepaid Panama SIM plan, either for phone calls only or for calls and data.

Purchase an inexpensive phone with a local plan in-country and pay for more minutes/data as needed. You can buy cell phones in Panama at very low prices. We strongly suggest that you do not buy a pay-as-you-go cell phone in the U.S. to take to Panama. Students who have done this in the past have frequently found the phones do not work. It is far cheaper and more efficient to buy the pay-as-you-go phone in Panama.

Use the Wi-Fi available in the Study Center and around the city while the phone is in airplane mode. Make sure to turn off roaming before you leave, just in case. Otherwise you might end up with a very large phone bill when you return to the U.S. Apps you can easily use while connected to Wi-Fi include Skype, FaceTime, Viber, and WhatsApp. If you have a smartphone, download these apps before you travel abroad so you will be able to activate the account.

If you have access to a landline phone, you can purchase a calling card to make international calls. We advise that you wait until you have arrived in Panama to purchase a calling card because many of the ones in the States are costly. The country code for Panama is 507. To call Panama from the U.S.A., dial 011+507 followed by the local number. Each room in the dormitory complex on campus has a telephone, and you may use International and local calling cards from there. International calling cards are available through the local carriers and they can be bought from any grocery or convenience store.

COMPUTERS
The housing units are wireless and each student has an electronic safe in his/her bedroom for storing up to a 17” laptop and other valuables. The main building and the Library located in the ground floor of building 225 also have wireless internet connection. Past program participants recommend bringing a laptop. If you want to bring your laptop, we recommend doing the following:

- Taking your laptop with you is at your own risk. Check your homeowners insurance to make sure that it is covered when you are away from your primary residence. If it is not covered by this insurance, you may want to check into laptop insurance through www.safeware.com, a worldwide insurance provider for all electronic devices (e.g. laptop, digital camera, iPod, etc.). They also have a provision for non-electronic personal property.
- Do NOT pack your laptop or laptop charger in your checked luggage.
EXPENSES WHILE IN PANAMA
In estimating your financial needs while abroad, calculate the amount of money you will need for meals for the entire period of your stay; your transportation and lodging costs for any personal trips you will be taking and your personal entertainment and social activities costs. Based on past participant’s feedback, a 15-16 week semester budget of $1,000 - $3,000 is needed for meals, incidental expenses in Panama, and personal travel. This $1,000 amount is only for those who plan to live on a shoestring budget. The average estimate of student spending during the spring term is $2,000. The average estimate of student spending during a summer 10-week session was about $2,000. By most standards, you will find the cost of living in Panama is about the same as in Tallahassee and you should plan your budget accordingly.

CURRENCY
Panama’s medium of exchange is the U.S. dollar. Bills larger than $20 are rarely accepted (carry lots of singles and fives).

BANKING
We recommend you set up online banking for your bank accounts prior to departure from the U.S. so you can monitor your account while overseas.

Bring or have access to at least one credit card in the event of an emergency. If you need to visit a doctor or hospital, you will likely have to pay prior to the service, and then submit an insurance claim afterward. Credit cards are also useful for everyday purchases and offer excellent exchange rates.

MasterCard and Visa are the most widely accepted credit cards overseas. A credit card with “chip and pin” technology is recommended, as this is the standard abroad.

Before using an ATM or debit card overseas, we recommend the following:
- Contact your financial institution(s) before you leave the U.S. to make sure your ATM or debit card is activated for international use. You will also need to inform them of your dates/location abroad. If you fail to contact your financial institution(s), it is not unusual for credit card companies to “freeze” an account if suspicious or fraudulent activity is suspected.
- Make sure your debit/ATM card is linked to a checking account, rather than to a savings account, so you will have access to your funds.
- If you have a pin longer than 4 digits or based on letters, you may have trouble using it abroad. You will need to change your pin before departure.
- You should also contact your financial institution for information regarding ATM transaction fees. You can limit the fees if your U.S. bank has a ‘sister’ bank in the host country and/or if you limit your withdrawals, though we do not advise keeping large sums of money on your person or stored in your residence, even if a safe is provided. If a safe is not provided, we encourage students to lock valuables in their suitcase when leaving the housing accommodation.
- Keep a record of all credit/debit/ATM card numbers and the phone numbers you would need to call, with area codes, if they are lost or stolen. Keep this record in a safe place separate from your cards, and you should provide a copy to family at home.

For those who receive financial aid, ensure that any student loans you have requested will be available for disbursement during the term abroad. Disbursement usually occurs after students have left the U.S. Make arrangements for your check to be deposited, if that is your chosen method of disbursement.
**HEALTH**

**INOCULATIONS/MEDICAL CONCERNS**
Florida State University requires certain immunizations prior to your registration for classes. All newly admitted degree-seeking students (freshman and transfer) and non-FSU students must complete the required Student Immunization Form. If you fall into one of these categories, you will be required to submit this form through the [IP student portal](http://www.nc.fsu.edu/)

It is very important that you make yourself aware of specific requirements and health matters in your program location. The FSU Health and Wellness Center offers a travel clinic which provides immunizations. We recommend visiting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s webpage regarding Panama for the latest vaccination information: [http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/panama.aspx](http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/panama.aspx).

Please note that some countries have specific requirements for inoculations based on past location(s) the traveler has visited. It is the student’s responsibility to confirm whether or not the previous travel requires additional inoculations.

In addition to a tetanus booster (tetanus booster would be needed only if you have not had the vaccine in the last 10 years), we recommend Hepatitis A and B and Typhoid vaccinations (at least six weeks prior to departure) to protect against viral infections. *Malaria prophylaxis is only required for those students that plan to trek into the deep rainforest.* In addition, Panama is a country with a risk of *yellow fever* transmission. Although the yellow fever shot is not necessary for your entrance to the country you may wish to discuss getting it with your local doctor, especially if you are planning on visiting other Latin American countries that do require the vaccine or in the event that you will be traveling outside the urban area of Panama. You will need to bring your International Certificate of Vaccination to Panama. The Health and Wellness Center provides consultations and immunizations through their travel clinic. To make an appointment, phone 644-4567 or view their website: [http://www.tshc.fsu.edu/](http://www.tshc.fsu.edu/).

Be sure to bring sufficient quantities of your *prescription medication* with you to last for the duration of your stay. Keep these in their original containers with copies of the prescriptions and place them in your carry-on luggage. Bring a copy of a legible prescription from your doctor and be aware that not all U.S. drugs are available elsewhere. *In particular, Adderall and Concerta are not available in all countries.* Don’t postpone discussing your prescription needs with your doctor. You will likely need to work with your insurance company to cover your vacation prescription. If you experience difficulty in obtaining a prescription for your time abroad, seek assistance from our office.

We also recommend doing the following:

- **If you wear glasses or contact lenses, take an extra pair and/or the prescription if you wear glasses or contact lenses.**
- Complete routine **medical and dental care** before you leave.
- A **tetanus booster shot** is suggested if you have not had one within the past 10 years.

The CISI insurance provided is included in your program fee and the policy is available on our website: [http://international.fsu.edu/Documents/HealthSafety/CISIInsurancePolicy.pdf](http://international.fsu.edu/Documents/HealthSafety/CISIInsurancePolicy.pdf). You will want to familiarize yourself with the coverage details. This policy is **NOT intended to replace your domestic coverage.**

Although the insurance plan works on the basis of claims, whereby you need to pay first and then fill out the form to receive reimbursement, our Panama campus has an agreement with a Panama first-class hospital (Hospital Nacional— [www.hospitalnacional.com](http://www.hospitalnacional.com)) that will receive IP students in case of a medical emergency without requesting a deposit or credit card. Additionally, the campus is covered by a 24-hour ambulance service.

**ALCOHOL AWARENESS AND ILLEGAL DRUGS**
The legal age for drinking alcohol in Panama is 18. This means that you will likely have the opportunity to buy and drink alcohol legally. It is in your interest to recognize that this right carries a great deal of responsibility. FSU Panama has a strict code of conduct relating to the use of alcohol, violations of which will likely result in a judicial hearing with the possible outcome of being dismissed from the program. In short, know your limits and drink in moderation if you choose to do so, but not to excess.

Florida State University has a zero-tolerance policy regarding the possession, use, manufacture, production, sale, exchange or distribution of illegal drugs by students participating in FSU study abroad programs. Violation of this policy may result in immediate dismissal from the program; and disciplinary action onsite or upon return to campus. International Programs’ policies follow either the U.S. law or local law, whichever is more stringent with regard to drug use. For complete information on student judicial processes, victim’s rights, and appeals see the Student Conduct Code: [http://dos.fsu.edu/srr/](http://dos.fsu.edu/srr/).
POLICIES & SAFETY

RULES, POLICIES & PROCEDURES
Florida State degree-seeking, transient and special students are bound by the rules, policies, and procedures set forth in the FSU General Bulletin and Student Handbook. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with these before you leave. You may locate the FSU General Bulletin online at http://registrar.fsu.edu/ and The Code of Student Conduct at https://dos.fsu.edu/srr/conduct-codes/student-conduct-codes. The Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities updates any changes to the Code of Student Conduct.

SAFETY & SECURITY
Our highest priority is the welfare and security of our students, faculty, staff and facilities. We have emergency plans in place for each of our locations and work closely with our insurers and 24/7 emergency response providers to monitor and respond to all situations worldwide. It is our policy to follow guidance from the respective U.S. Embassies, U.S. State Department, as well as local officials and keep students apprised of any new information. For more information on IP’s security policies and procedures, please contact our Director of Risk and Emergency Management, Chris Carroll at 850.644.7823 or ccarroll@fsu.edu.

- Resources. Even though students are not on the main campus, they have access to many resources should they encounter issues while abroad. Program staff members are available to support students in a variety of ways, including connecting students with other professionals locally and/or on the main campus.
  - **Victim Advocate Program.** The University takes very seriously all types of victimization, including sexual violence, relationship violence, and domestic violence. Advocates are available and on-call 24 hours a day to provide confidential support services, even for students who are abroad. For more information on the Victim Advocate Program, visit http://victimadvocate.fsu.edu.
  - **University Counseling Center.** The Counseling Center is a welcoming and confidential place to discuss questions and concerns such as homesickness, struggles with relationships, sexual identity, cultural issues, and more. Visit https://counseling.fsu.edu/ for more information.
  - **Center for Health Advocacy & Wellness.** The Center for Health Advocacy & Wellness encourages students to make healthy lifestyle decisions that facilitate academic success and lead to life-long health and wellness. For more information, visit http://chaw.fsu.edu/.

- The U.S. State Department maintains a web site of information for Americans studying abroad, including current travel advisory warnings, at: http://studentsabroad.state.gov/.

- **The Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)** is a free service provided by the U.S. Government to U.S. citizens who are traveling to, or living in, a foreign country. STEP allows you to enter information about your upcoming trip abroad so that the Department of State can better assist you in an emergency. We strongly recommend you register here: https://step.state.gov/step/.

- **Waivers.** All IP participants must sign and submit a Waiver of Liability through the IP Student Portal.
- Be aware that you are subject to the laws of the country in which you are traveling.
- Always carry a photocopy of the picture and signature pages of your passport with you. Keep another copy in your room separate from your passport. Leave one copy at home in the U.S. with your family or a relative.
- Use the buddy system—try to travel with friends as much as possible and always tell your roommates or friends where you are going and when you expect to return. Bystander intervention is a powerful opportunity and responsibility for those within our community.

- **Valuables.** Students should not take sentimental valuables on their program. Students should not leave cash, passports, or other items of value unattended in their rooms. If a locker or safe is provided, students are strongly encouraged to use it to store anything of value at all times. Students should plan regular visits to the cash machine rather than leaving large amounts of cash in their rooms. Students are responsible for ensuring their rooms are left secure at all times – do not prop open doors, do not leave doors and windows unlocked, do not give keys to anyone. If students notice others in the building leaving the main entrance door unsecured, they should notify the IP staff immediately, even if there are others living in the building who are not FSU program participants. Students are strongly encouraged to purchase insurance that will cover their belongings while abroad, whether a standard homeowners or renters policy. The International Programs insurance policy does not cover loss or theft of participants' possessions.

- **Pickpocketing.** In most large cities throughout the world, pickpocketing is the most common crime and can happen anytime, anywhere! We caution you to always be aware of your surroundings. While traveling in some areas beware of beggars who try to distract you with papers, boxes, or excessive body movements. Coats and purses are often stolen in crowded areas. Keep them close to you and lock your pack zippers with a combo lock. Secure your valuables if you are traveling on an overnight (“sleeper”) train.

- **Weapons.** Students are strictly prohibited from keeping or using firearms, knives, weapons (including pellet, air guns, paintball guns or other dangerous articles or substances). Furthermore, mace and/or pepper spray may be illegal in the countries that you visit. It is your responsibility to know the laws regarding weapons in the host country if you intend to bring any item for self-defense.
TIPS & RESOURCES

TIPS FROM STUDENTS ON WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW
These comments came from students who recently attended our study abroad program in Panama:

- Leave extra space in your suitcase for souvenirs.
- Research the weather in Panama before leaving.
- Bring closed toed shoes or sneakers for the excursions.

ONLINE RESOURCES
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Panama (general information about Panama)
http://www.worldpress.org/newspapers/AMERICAS/Panama.cfm (Panama newspapers and magazines)
http://www.statravel.com (student travel information)
http://www.panamainfo.com (Panama Travel Guide)
http://cnn.com/WEATHER/ (daily weather forecasts)
http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/national/panama/ (learn about conservation of the heritage of Panama)
http://studentsabroad.state.gov/ (U.S. State Department’s info for Americans living abroad)
http://www.studyspanish.com/freesite.htm (brush-up on your Spanish!)
http://panama.fsu.edu/ (FSU-Panama’s own web site)
http://www.wordreference.com (translation/Spanish dictionary)
https://nolesabroad.international.fsu.edu/ (FSU International Programs blog with articles from former program participants)

USEFUL APPS
Google Translate (instantly translates words, phrases, and web pages between English and over 100 other languages)
Dark Sky (With down-to-the-minute forecasts, you’ll know exactly when the rain will start or stop, right where you’re standing)
Mobile Passport (authorized by U.S. Government to get through customs upon your return to the U.S. Allows you to use the dedicated mobile passport line in 21 participating airports).

(Note: Florida State University is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.)

Connect with International Programs on social media
International Programs Facebook
International Programs Twitter
International Programs Instagram
FSU Panama Facebook
FSU Panama Instagram
FSU Panama Twitter

Last Updated 8/2019
EXPLORING THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA

ATTRACKTIONS
Panama Canal / Panama Viejo
Casco Viejo / Ancon Hill
Biomuseo
Sabores del Chorrillo
Taboga Island
Contadora Island
Embera Village

Metropolitan Natural Park
Amador Causeway
Avenida Balboa – Ginta
Costera 2 and 3
The Fish Market
Albrook Mall
FOODS TO TRY
- Empanada
- Plátanos Fritos
- Ceviche
- Ropa Vieja
- Tres Leches
- Sancocho

BASIC SPANISH
- Hello: Hola
- Goodbye: Adiós
- Please: Por favor
- Thank you: Gracias
- You’re welcome: De nada
- Pardon me: Perdón
- English: Inglés
- Yes: Sí
- No: No

QUICK TIPS
1. Time is perceived with fluidity. Panamanians may show up an hour or two late to a dinner party. Lunch and dinner can extend for hours.

5. Waitstaff, taxi drivers, tour guides, and bartenders will appreciate tips of 10%. Baggage handlers value $1 per bag.