



Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s),

Now that your student has returned from abroad (or will any day now) you must be very excited to learn about his/her educational and cultural experiences. He/She will be anxious to see family and friends, to share special moments and memories.

While abroad, your student may have experienced "culture shock." This well-studied phenomenon refers to the loss of emotional equilibrium suffered when one leaves a familiar environment, especially when moving between countries or cultures. Now, as your student returns home, "reverse culture shock" can occur and can be, for some students, a more difficult transition.

Although the symptoms of reverse culture shock are similar to those of initial culture shock, they are often unexpected. The symptoms can vary in severity and may include minor illnesses, depression, withdrawal, lethargy, and excessive longing to go abroad again. Your student may be concerned about the pressures of returning to the University of Richmond, sorting out transfer credits, adjusting to the next academic year, and/or planning for life beyond graduation. It is not uncommon for returning students to be surprised that life at Richmond has continued without them and to find that they are out of touch with happenings and people on campus. In addition your student may be eager to talk about his/her experiences abroad, but his/her friends who did not study abroad may not be as eager to listen and may not understand where your student has been – both in a physical and psychological sense. These are all normal reactions and part of the re-entry process.

In order to help returning students with re-entry or reverse culture shock, our office offers various events and opportunities. One of our first events of the year is a re-entry event where returnees are invited to come and talk, laugh, and reflect about their time abroad. We ask returning students to participate in the annual study abroad fair and to be our "expert" advisors at pre-departure orientations. We encourage them to join our Ambassador Club, a buddy system that pairs them with new international students, and to participate in international events and organizations on campus. We hope they will also see that international learning can be a permanent and evolving part of their lives.

As parents, you can help by continuing to offer patience, love and support as you did throughout your student's time abroad. You might also wish to consult the following parent's re-entry guide, which was designed by the School for International Training, which can be found online at <http://studyabroad.richmond.edu/?go=SITParentReentryHandbook>. We feel the SIT handbook is a good resource from which parents of students returning from any study abroad program can benefit.

In the end, most students readjust quite well with time. Please know that our office, as well as Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), are available to assist your student with the transition back to campus and to the United States. Thank you again for your encouragement and support of study abroad and international education.

Sincerely,

Dr. Martha L. Merritt, *Dean of International Education*  
Dr. Anthony Russell, *Associate Dean of International Education (interim)*  
Michele Cox, *Director of Study Abroad*  
Chris Klein, *Associate Director of Study Abroad*  
Amy Bergmann, *Study Abroad Advisor*  
Patrick Schweiger, *Study Abroad Manager*  
Jennifer Stevens, *Administrative Specialist for Study Abroad*

**Office of International Education**  
28 Westhampton Way  
University of Richmond, VA 23173  
(804) 289-8836 Fax: (804) 289-8904

[www.richmond.edu](http://www.richmond.edu)