Purpose of the Committee:
To expand safe and affordable opportunities for U.S. and Canadian students to study abroad in Mexico, and to evaluate trends in existing information regarding travel in Mexico including best practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS
MAMAC recommends improved communication, knowledge-sharing and implementation of best practices to ensure that the vast potential that lies in collaboration with Mexico is reached.

1. Read the Travel Warning carefully; it is very specific to certain regions.
2. Prepare and educate travelers with region-specific information, links to useful websites, explanation of insurance coverage and behavioral expectations.
3. Work closely with counterparts at Mexican institutions to determine the necessary level of support for students traveling to Mexico.

RECENT HISTORY PROVIDES IMPORTANT CONTEXT
• The number of U.S. students studying abroad in Mexico dropped from nearly 10,000 in 2007-2008 to a low of just 3,730 in 2012-2013.
• The numbers grew in 2013-2014 for the first time in six years; student mobility was up 19.2% compared to the previous year.
• However, this still represents just 4,445 students studying in Mexico as compared to the 38,250 students who studied in the United Kingdom.

SURVEY FINDINGS
To create the report, 69 institutions were surveyed on their policies for Mexico travel.

• Ninety-four percent of institutions allow student travel to Mexico, either without restriction or on a case-by-case basis.

NEXT STEPS
Moving forward, the committee will continue to examine, publicize and expand upon best practices while attempting to address perceived challenges to ensure the vast potential that lies in collaboration with Mexico is reached.
Best Practices: Given the survey results and anecdotal evidence from past successful collaborations involving academic mobility to Mexico, it is evident that HEIs are not only interested in, but capable of, meaningful partnerships with their Mexican counterparts. In order to help U.S. and Canadian institutions fully capitalize on the potential with Mexican institutions, MAMAC has drawn from the experiences of HEIs that have already been highly successful in this sphere to compile the following list of best practices for HEIs to help ensure safe travel.

Examples of how the University of Arizona has effectively implemented these practices are also included in some cases. Additional examples will be included in future reports.

1. Work closely with counterparts at Mexican institutions to determine the necessary level of on-the-ground support for university members traveling to Mexico.

Example: At the University of Arizona all employees traveling with students are expected to complete and annual interactive workshop to review best practices for travel preparation and incident response.

2. Select partners, which are responsive and timely in communication, directly address questions and concerns, recognize the potential risks to university employees and students, have sufficient security measures in place, and demonstrate 24-hour support for emergencies.

Example: At the University of Arizona travelers are provided a phone number for emergency assistance that is monitored 24/7.

3. All university members should register their international travel for official university activities. Knowing traveler destinations helps to determine the risk profile of each traveler and enables preparation and support. The risk profile will depend on experience in the given location, language fluency, and other details.

Example: At the University of Arizona all official travelers register their trips. This information is used to assess travel risks as well as identify traveler locations.

4. Complete site evaluations (on-the-ground is preferable, particularly for student mobility) and risk reviews. Use the results to adjust program logistics and plan risk mitigation strategies and emergency response procedures.

Example: At the University of Arizona, the International Travel Safety Oversight Committee (ITSOC) consists of representatives from ten university offices. Regional experts from across the university are included when appropriate.

5. All faculty traveling with students should complete relevant health and safety preparation, planning, and mitigation training annually.

Example: At the University of Arizona, the International Travel Safety Oversight Committee (ITSOC) consists of representatives from ten university offices. Regional experts from across the university are included when appropriate.

6. Students should complete country-specific health and safety training (online and/or in person) that specifically addresses student vulnerabilities as well as location-specific risks prior to departure.

7. Offer 24/7 international emergency support. This requires the establishment of duties to maintain situational awareness to potential changes in security concerns and availability to respond to traveler emergencies.

Example: At the University of Arizona travelers are provided a phone number for emergency assistance that is monitored 24/7.

8. Create a university-wide committee to assess risks for international travel and new program proposals, and to make recommendations for enhancing safety measures. For programs in countries with DOS Travel Warnings, the committee should regularly reassess the programs’ vulnerabilities and risk level.

Example: At the University of Arizona, the International Travel Safety Oversight Committee (ITSOC) consists of representatives from ten university offices. Regional experts from across the university are included when appropriate.

9. If funding permits, employ a dedicated position to provide the international security expertise, maintain situational awareness, train staff on emergency response and mitigation, and to develop health and safety policies and procedures in conjunction with the aforementioned committee. At the time of this report, 82 of these types positions at 55 HEIs are in existence.

10. Consider arrangements and logistics for travel outside the official itinerary. In some cases, potential restrictions on such travel may be warranted.

11. Be aware that some program activities may have higher inherent risks and determine if such activities are covered by insurance.

Example: At the University of Arizona the International Travel Safety Oversight Committee (ITSOC) consists of representatives from ten university offices. Regional experts from across the university are included when appropriate.

12. Healthcare availability – compile a list of healthcare facilities that accept student insurance within 25 miles of the program site. If none are identified, negotiate payment with local facilities.

13. Tap into additional resources available to universities, such as OSAC.

Example: At the University of Arizona, the International Travel Safety Oversight Committee (ITSOC) consists of representatives from ten university offices. Regional experts from across the university are included when appropriate.


The full report can be found at: https://global.arizona.edu/mamac