

### **3.1.6 STAFF PARTICIPATING IN OFF-CAMPUS ACTIVITIES SPONSORED BY THE VISION PROGRAM AND THE INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION CENTER**

#### **POLICY STATEMENT**

The Vision statement of the University of St. Thomas articulates commitment to responsible engagement with local, national, and global communities. To that end, the university is a leader in international and domestic off-campus study and service for graduate and undergraduate students through the VISION Program and the International Education Center. Both programs provide students, faculty, and staff the opportunity to affect positive social change in local, national, and global communities. In the case of the VISION Program, administered under the auspices of the Office of Mission, the selection process includes both a written application and an interview. In the case of programs administered by the International Education Center, the selection process may include a written application and an interview, or a nomination by the faculty director, in collaboration with International Education Center staff.

#### **SECTION I VISION PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

The VISION Program sponsors off-campus student-focused activities—primarily in the form of domestic and international trips—that provide students a unique learning experience, an opportunity to serve those most in need, and a chance to learn new strategies to help affect positive social change in the St. Thomas, national, and global communities. By design, VISION trips generally are for one to three weeks and take place during J-Term and Spring break.

#### **SECTION II INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

The University sponsors off-campus programs/courses—domestic and international—that provide students with unique intercultural and experiential learning and an opportunity to learn new strategies to understand the international and intercultural realities of the communities in which they are studying. By design, these programs/courses usually range from two to four weeks in duration and are offered during January Term, Spring Break and Summer Term. Staff who accompany an off-campus program or course serve in the role of assistant director. They perform a range of responsibilities specified in a written contract developed by the International Education Center staff.

Best practices recommend at least two responsible adults as a leadership team for off-campus programs. A two-person team provides:

- Support for students in emergency cases.
- Mutual support for the leadership team given the 24 hour responsibility for these programs/courses.
- An intercultural or international experience for the staff which deepens their own intercultural awareness and appreciation of diversity, thus enhancing their ability to

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support student learning and the university mission on the home campus.

Under certain conditions, it may be necessary to appoint a non-faculty assistant director (based on availability of faculty, location of program, type of experience, size of student group, etc.) to form a leadership team for off-campus courses/programs.

#### **SECTION III PROGRAM CRITERIA**

These criteria apply both to the VISION Program and programs administered by the International Education Center. Eligible exempt and non-exempt employees may participate in either program. All employees interested in doing so must

- Meet all state and federal laws and institutional policies.
- Successfully complete a thorough background check.
- Receive advance approval from both the candidate's Academic and Administrative Advisory Committee member and supervisor.
- Be qualified to serve in a designated VISION Program or Off-Campus course/program capacity and be properly trained.
- For VISION a candidate may be approved to take a VISION trip once every three (3) years.

#### **SECTION IV COMPENSATION AND LEAVE**

Employees approved for a VISION trip will be placed on a paid leave for the duration of the trip up to three (3) weeks. If the trip exceeds three weeks, the employee must use his or her paid leave time (PLT) or vacation.

Employees approved as assistant director for an off-campus course/program administered by the International Education Center will be placed on paid leave for the duration of the course.

In the case of a non-exempt, hourly employee, he or she must be paid for all overtime hours while working on the VISION trip. According to the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), overtime begins after an hourly employee has worked 40 hours in a given work week. Overtime pay represents one and one-half (1 ½) times the hourly employee's current hourly rate of pay.

For more information about employee pay issues while on VISION trips or serving as assistant director of an off-campus course/program administered by the International Education Center, please contact the Human Resources Department.