ARGENTINA – INFO RE: SAFETY AND SECURITY (www.travel.state.gov)

COUNTRY DESCRIPTION: Last year, Argentina's charm, natural beauty and diversity attracted more than 400,000 American citizen visitors, and this year's total is expected to be even higher. The country suffered a major financial crisis in 2001-2002. While it has made a dramatic recovery, continued economic hardship has been linked to a rise in street crime.

ENTRY/EXIT REQUIREMENTS: A valid passport is required for U.S. citizens to enter Argentina. U.S. citizens who arrive in Argentina with expired or damaged passports may be refused entry and returned to the United States at their own expense. Travelers worldwide are advised to avoid packing valuables in their checked baggage. An airport tax is collected upon departure, payable in dollars or Argentine pesos.

SAFETY AND SECURITY: Traffic accidents are the primary threat to life and limb in Argentina. Pedestrians and drivers should exercise caution. Drivers frequently ignore traffic laws and vehicles often travel at excessive speeds. Demonstrations are common in metropolitan Buenos Aires and occur in other major cities as well. Protesters on occasion block streets, highways, and major intersections, causing traffic jams and delaying travel. While demonstrations are usually nonviolent, hooligans in some of the groups sometimes seek confrontation with the police and vandalize private property. Groups occasionally protest in front of the U.S. Embassy and U.S.-affiliated businesses. U.S. citizens should take common-sense precautions and avoid gatherings or any other event where crowds have congregated to protest. Passengers on buses, trains, and the subway should be alert for pickpockets and should also be aware that these forms of transport are sometimes interrupted by strikes or work stoppages.

CRIME: Most American citizens visit Argentina without incident. Street crime in the larger cities, especially greater Buenos Aires and Mendoza, is a problem for residents and visitors alike. As in any big city, visitors to Buenos Aires and popular tourist destinations should be alert to muggers, pickpockets, scam artists, and purse-snatchers on the street, in hotel lobbies, at bus and train stations, and in cruise ship ports. Criminals usually work in groups and travelers should assume they are armed. Criminals employ a variety of ruses to distract and victimize unsuspecting visitors. A common scam is to spray mustard or a similar substance on the tourist from a distance. A pickpocket will then approach the tourist offering to help clean the stain, and while doing so, he or an accomplice robs the victim. Thieves regularly nab unattended purses, backpacks, laptops, and luggage, and criminals will often distract visitors for a few seconds to steal valuables. While most American victims are not physically injured when robbed, criminals typically do not hesitate to use force when they encounter resistance. Visitors are advised to immediately hand over all cash and valuables if confronted. Thieves will target visitors wearing expensive watches or jewelry.

Your passport is a valuable document and should be guarded. Some travelers have received counterfeit currency in Argentina. Unscrupulous vendors and taxi drivers sometimes pretend to help tourists review their pesos, then trade bad bills for good ones. Characteristics of good currency can be reviewed at the Argentine Central Bank web site at www.berca.gov.ar.

Along with conventional muggings, so-called express kidnappings continue to occur. Victims are grabbed off the street based on their appearance and vulnerability. They are made to withdraw as much money as possible from ATM machines, and then their family or co-workers are contacted and told to deliver all the cash that they have on hand or can gather in a couple of hours. Once the ransom is paid, the victim is usually quickly released unharmed. There have been some foreign victims.

INFORMATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. The Argentine Federal Police have established a special Tourist Police Unit to receive complaints and investigate crimes against tourists. The unit, located at Corrientes 436 in Buenos Aires, responds to calls around the clock at 4346-5748 or toll-free 0800-999-5000 from anywhere in the country. The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in the city of Buenos Aires or in the surrounding Province of Buenos Aires is 911 for police assistance. In the city of Buenos Aires, dial 100 in case of fire and 107 for an ambulance.

MEDICAL FACILITIES AND HEALTH INFORMATION: The public health system in Argentina provides emergency and non-emergency services free of charge to all, regardless of nationality or immigration status. However, the quality of non-emergency care in public hospitals is generally below U.S. standards. Medical care in private hospitals in Buenos Aires is generally good, but varies in quality outside the capital. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization in private facilities and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars or more. Private physicians, clinics, and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services.
Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's Internet site at http://www.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad, consult the World Health Organization (WHO) website at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith.

MEDICAL INSURANCE: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policies apply overseas and will cover prior conditions and emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation, which could cost tens of thousands of dollars. If not covered, visitors are encouraged to consider purchasing travel insurance. No Medicare benefits are available abroad. Please see our information on medical insurance overseas.

CRIMINAL PENALTIES: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can also be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses.

Suggested Packing List

List of Carry-on Items

- Passport
- Airline ticket or e-ticket documentation
- All other forms of identification (ISIC card, etc)
- Debit card, credit card, cash: 1.) contact your bank and let them know you are traveling, 2.) take new, crisp, clean bills if you plan on exchanging dollars
- Medication in original containers, other health supplies
- Emergency contact info for ISU and your program itinerary
- Photocopies of your ticket, passport/visa, credit card (kept away from originals)
- Anything else that may be easily damaged by baggage handling or pressure/temperature differences (cameras, laptop, etc)
- Extra change of clothes in case you need to layover somewhere, or baggage is delayed

Checked Luggage - (Pack light!! You will be responsible for carrying your own luggage!)

- Comfortable shoes for walking
- Comfortable clothing
- Light jacket
- Swimwear (?)
- One nice outfit (check with group leaders on this: formal dinner, theater?)
- Sun screen, sunglasses, bug spray
- Toiletries: soap, shampoo, toothbrush/paste, deodorant, etc (travel/trial size)
- Extra contact lenses or glasses
- Kleenex packets
- Small flashlight (a mini Maglite works great)
- Travel alarm clock
- Backpack or shoulder bag for day trips
- Journal, notebook, pens
- Camera (with new/extra batteries), film/extra memory card
- A few small gifts or souvenirs from home to give to people you meet
- Small towel
- Cards, magazines, book
- A few photos of your family, home, campus, etc, to share with people you meet
- Small First Aid Kit: Neosporin, band-aids, Imodium AD, pain relief tablets (Tylenol/Advil, etc), cold/sinus medicine, vitamins, etc
- Raincoat and/or umbrella
- Hand sanitizer
- If possible, all liquids and gels should go in checked luggage