SUMMARY OF PROGRAM:
Pre-departure orientation was held from 4-8 p.m. on Friday, April 17th in Mercy. The purpose of the pre-departure orientation is to prepare students for their study abroad experience. This orientation is an important way for CIE staff to convey information that will be relevant to students’ time abroad. It also affords an opportunity for students to ask pressing questions and meet with past participants and current international students. The Spring 2015 pre-departure orientation was held for students studying abroad in Fall/Academic Year 2015 on all programs, including Loyola exchange and study abroad, ISEP exchange and direct, and non-Loyola programs. 47/53 students attended the orientation. 5 students attended the make-up orientation and 2 students withdrew from the program after orientation so did not come. 1 additional student attended the make-up session due to being added late. 45/47 evaluations were received this session as compared to the 39/41 evaluations received in the previous Session.

OBJECTIVES/GOALS:
• Clarify policies and procedures
• Make students aware of the preparation that they need to do both on logistics and practical information as well as learning about their host country.
• Provide students with practical and logistical information
  ▪ Travel documents
  ▪ Travel arrangements
  ▪ Money matters
  ▪ Computers and communications
  ▪ Health and safety
  ▪ Academics
  ▪ Travel documents
  ▪ Registration and transfer of credits
  ▪ Academics abroad
  ▪ Resources for preparing
• Help students develop realistic expectations
• Help ease pre-departure anxiety
• Provide intercultural training
• Provide opportunities for students to meet other future study abroad participants, past study abroad participants, and current international students
• Enhance relationships between students and CIE staff

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT METHODS:
All participants are asked to complete an evaluation at the end of the pre-departure orientation presentations by CIE. The evaluation questionnaire asks students to comment on the following: day and time of orientation, topics of orientation, helpfulness of orientation, highlights of orientation, and suggestions for improvement. CIE staff reviews the event and the student evaluations, conducts an overall assessment, and proposes changes for future orientations.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES IMPLEMENTED FOR THIS PROGRAM:
• Many changes suggested from the Fall session were postponed due to time constraints so the changes in this session were small.
• The “Preparing to Go Abroad” session went over time last time and it was decided that more time would not need to be dedicated in the schedule since the students had many more questions. This session may need more time as explained in the last section.
• The “Cultural Adjustment and Resources for Preparing” was abbreviated and improved upon to include more examples and to make it more interactive for students
• For the adjustment section we tried to implement more testimonials from students about adjusting as well as reverse culture shock rather than simply presenting the different theories and generic tips.
  ▪ This was also done during the panel discussion with returned students which took place immediately following this presentation.
• The peer advisor team was a little disjointed and confused last semester mainly due to the Study Abroad Advisor’s lack of preparing them. For this session they were more carefully briefed and expectations were reviewed. Additionally it helped to have just 3 presenting and giving them slides they were comfortable with presenting on.
• We have done this partially but will continue to expand more with prepared emails on the following topics:
  o LGBT
  o Women abroad
  o Sexual assault
  o Alcohol and drugs
  o Learning about your country
  o Include all areas covered in orientation in case they need these.

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION/MEETINGS:
The students generally agreed that the day and time was convenient:

- 45/47 evaluations received
- The opening activity/ice breaker while simple, seems to work best. Students were asked for one thing they’re most excited about one they’re most nervous about.
  - It’s a good transition into introducing what we talk about in preparing to go abroad and the cultural adjustment process since many students bring up similar topics or concerns.
- Although there were so many students, we stayed on track for the 40 minute introduction time limit
- Evaluations indicate that students were very satisfied with the pre-departure orientation
- Students found the “Preparing to Go Abroad” session quite helpful in preparing for the study abroad experience
  - 40/45 “strongly agree” or “agree” that this session helped prepare them for their experience.
- 40/45 students “strongly agree” or “agree” that the “Cultural Adjustment” Session helped prepare them for the experience.
- Students were generally satisfied with the content of the various sessions
- The opening activity/ice breaker while simple, seems to work best. Students were asked for one thing they’re most excited about one they’re most nervous about.
- The Peer Advisors were better prepared for public speaking this semester. The students still seemed to pay attention to the information given. Katie presented on packing, which has been cited about one they’re most nervous about.
- Generally, the students found all of the information to be helpful but many students had suggestions for material to be added or deleted:
  - 1 student wanted more in-depth culture differences
  - 1 student wanted a discussion on how “race could affect you in different locations”
  - 1 commented that international student perspectives would have been nice on the panel
  - 3 students wanted more information on logistics:
    - “Added: more information on logistics, peer advice on how to manage money, etc.”
    - “I think more time should be focused towards the technical aspects of study abroad (financial aid, declaring pass/fail classes, etc.)”
    - “Add info about housing in general when studying abroad.”
  - 1 student simply commented “less usage of papyrus font.”
- In comparison to last semester, this session seemed less regionally focused with no one specifically requesting country specific info although some said the info was too general.
- The Peer Advisors were better prepared for public speaking this semester. The students still seemed to pay attention to the information given. Katie presented on packing, which has been cited as good info from many evaluations.
- The students generally agreed that the day and time was convenient:
  - 1 student stated that the day was not convenient this semester: “No, Friday afternoon is terrible. Maybe split up the orientation to two days?”
  - 2 students said that although the time was convenient, they would suggest splitting it into 2 sessions
  - “It wasn’t preferable but it works.”
It was a little long, but this would have been the only time I could come.”

25 returnees and exchange students committed to attending the dinner compared to 15 in the previous semester.

Additionally, about 10 more students showed up as well as in facebook groups. Heavy inbus involvement also
seemed to be a driving force in the connection with students

Additional comments from student evaluations included:

“Though it was long, it was very informational. Maybe have something for parents or something?”

“Long but found it very informative.”

“Nope, it was overwhelming but a good overwhelming.”

Changes for Next Program:

The “Preparing to Go Abroad” session went over time again although quite a bit of information was cut.

More time does need to be dedicated to this session

Although the information has been cut, the slides on grades/academics took more time and seemed to receive the most questions

The health and safety info may need to be further condensed to allow for more time

The layout of the rooms worked well for dinner but the organization of the food needs to be improved. With over 60 people, even with trying to create 2 lines, the lines moved slowly. For next time it may be best to serve food in the hallway or a classroom with 2 doors for an in/out.

Due to time constraints between semesters, the following changes were not implemented as suggested in the previous evaluation so they are restated here.

Prepare learning content and assessments in Studio Abroad on the following topics, possibly prior to the session:

- Grades and credit transfer
- Financial aid and budgeting
- Visas and immigration info

The handbook needs to be digitized.

This could be a web document or other material in Studio Abroad. This would allow students to read the handbook and directly click links to outside websites such as those dedicated to diversity or even just flight finders.

Uploading it to the website with anchored pages and links to content may also shorten the actual handbook text

While the Mercy classrooms are convenient, the room was packed to capacity. There was very little room for staff and peer advisors. For the next session if we have over 50 students in attendance we will either:

- Have 2 separate sessions on 2 different dates dividing students either by region or program type.
- Have concurrent sessions on the same night but divide students into similar groupings and have smaller rotating sessions (as done in Spring 2012).

The “Cultural Adjustment and Resources for Preparing” was rushed in order to account for lost time

Most of the students seemed to enjoy the culture talk so improvements should be made to make this session more interactive

- For the culture session, an activity should be added to connect the students more with the information.
  - A “Curious/Obvious” activity was suggested in the previous evaluation but could be added with pictures that could possibly introduce many concepts such as gender and sexuality and other issues to demonstrate the importance of changing perspective.

For the adjustment section there should be more testimonials from students about adjusting as well as reverse culture shock rather than simply presenting the different theories and generic tips.

Although many students said the visa info was helpful, we need to do a separate session specifically for visas as students go on more exchanges:

Specific countries this is needed for include Italy, France, Spain, and the UK

Adjustments to food order (see below).

Pre-Departure Orientation Evaluation: Fall 2015

Evaluation Responses

Likert scale evaluation of sessions
1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3 – Neutral, 4 – Agree, 5 Strongly Agree,

Preparing to Go Abroad- This session helped me prepare for my study abroad experience.

1 (1) 2 3 (4) 4 (19) 5 (21)

Cultural Adjustment- This session helped me prepare for my study abroad experience.

1(1) 2 3 (4) 4 (18) 5 (22)

Recording/Reflecting- This session helped me prepare for my study abroad experience.

1 2 3 (8) 4 (17) 5 (20)
Returning Home - This session helped me prepare for my study abroad experience.

1. Has the orientation influenced your attitudes/goals for studying abroad?

-Yes, it’s made it very clear than an open-minded approach is key.
-Not really.
-Yes, it has helped me get a better perspective on the things that need to be done before the trip. Additionally, while not completely changing/creating goals for study abroad it has helped me in things I should keep in mind for my goals.
-It just redefined them more.
-Yes, how I know what I need to prepare for (especially culture shock and reverse culture shock)
-It has influenced my attitude because I am very excited to go.
-It has encouraged me to make a list of all the cultural differences (that I can find) so I can be as prepared as possible.
-Yes, it made me even more excited.
-The orientation gave me really good tips/advice for my preparation that didn’t occur to me.
-I think this has made me realize this is not an extended vacation. This is living in a different country and that makes me more excited.
-I know more of what to expect and what to do to prepare.
-Yes, I want to brush up on my language skills before going.
-Mostly it reinforced my excitement.
-It has made me more excited.
-It really has. I know I have goals for studying abroad but going through orientation, I’m excited to record my goals in a journal.
-Yes, I will read travel books about where I will be traveling now.
-Yes, it has made it more real and I’m really excited.
-It taught me to take full advantage of going abroad.
-Definitely made me to be more aware of all the necessities I need abroad.
-Super excited!
-Yes. Got me super excited. Scared about getting good grades.
-Yes, I am encouraged to research Ecuador more before going.
-Yes, it put my potential experience abroad in perspective; understanding reverse culture shock and feeling the ups and downs is normal.
-No.
-Yes, the orientation has helped me want to become much more prepared. I will create a check list and practice using my language much more. I will also do research on the political aspects. Orientation helped me see much more about what the experience should be.
-It has made me think about some of the more subtle cultural adjustments I’ll have to make.
-Yes, I am a procrastinator so I am happy that you all expressed the importance of planning.
-I think that the orientation solidified my attitudes/goals for studying abroad in the way it promoted cultural examination and intuition.
-Yes, it has given me a lot of info that will be important.
-Yes. It was very helpful in guiding my research and now I can research things I’ve never talked/thought about before.
-I do feel better about the preparations I have already made.
-Just the fact that I need to prepare and remembering that I’ll be leaving soon, so I need to start getting ready.
-It definitely has influenced how much I am going to pack. I am excited to journal and keep track of everything.
-Not really.
-Yes, it prepared me for my next pre-departure steps and really got me excited about studying abroad. My goals pretty much stayed the same.
-I want to plan more and make sure I know what I am doing.
-Yes, helped influence my desire to learn the language.
-Yes, it helped me gain a better idea of the goals I want to make while abroad.
-Made me excited to go.
-Observing cultural differences.
-No, my goals are the same for my study abroad.
-Yes- much more excited.
-Yes, got me more excited!! Reminded me on things I have to do before I leave.

2. Have your feelings about studying abroad been affected by pre-departure orientation? If yes, in what way?

-Yes, it cleared up my outlook on what to expect in traveling to Ecuador.
-I feel more prepared and ready, and I met Sydney who will be going to Sogang at the same time.
-Not really, except for a little nervousness and excitement.
-I wouldn’t say that the orientation has changed my goals, but solidified them more. The sessions were very informational in organizing my thoughts/goals.
-I am more excited and definitely feel more confident and more sure about the process.
-I’m a little more nervous but not in a discouraging way- more like I need to prepare.
-My feelings have not been affected that much because coming to college here is the same experience as going to another country.
-Yes, I feel more organized/comfortable with my preparation.
-This has made me more excited to travel alone (I usually travel with family).
- Just made my excitement stronger.
- I feel relieved that I know it’s okay to be slightly nervous and scared.
- I’m more excited to have more concrete goals.
- No my feelings have not changed because I have traveled in Latin America before and I love it.
- Yes, now I am more aware of what I need to research before I leave.
- No.
- Maybe I’m a little bit more nervous, but I know things are possible and I’m ready to go through ups and downs.
- Just more excitement.
- I’m really excited.
- I’m a bit more confident.
- Just made me more excited.
- Just made me more informed about the steps I need to take before-hand.
- Yes I feel confident and able.
- I feel ready to go abroad and know where to look if I have more questions.
- Yes, I will be more aware of how I come across.
- Yes, it’s made me a little more nervous thinking of the paperwork/flight/luggage/money. But I think it’s also reassured why I want to go to the country I’ve chosen.
- No (4)
- It’s made me a little nervous and I’m going to start preparing for my visa.
- I feel a little bit more prepared and know what resources I’ll have available for me when I get back.
- My feelings about study abroad have been affected in that I need to do a lot more studying.
- Yes, I am more excited.
- Definitely. It taught me that it’s okay to be nervous, and I’m glad I met others that are going.
- Yes, it has made me even more excited to meet new people and to not exclusively interact with other American students.
- I feel more assured and comfortable.
- Yes, it scared me a bit.
- I am more hopeful.
- I feel like I need to do more research about my country before I leave.
- Yes, I am really nervous but orientation has made this a reality and provided more comfort.
- The panel of returnees made me a little more relaxed about my doubts.
- Anticipation of returning culture shock.
- Not really, I’m still excited for studying abroad.
- Nervous about reverse culture shock.
- No, still really want to go.

3. Is there anything that should be added to or deleted from the orientation?

- I thought it was all pretty necessary.
- Less usage of papyrus font.
- Not that I know.
- Orientation made me realize that while I have prepared a lot, there is still a lot more planning to come.
- Not that I can think of.
- I think that international students should be exempted from an orientation this long. It is very helpful for local students but not so much for international students.
- A discussion on how race could affect you in different locations.
- Shorter
- No (8)
- The orientation was quite redundant. I felt like it dragged on.
- You may shorten the journaling section.
- No, well organized and balanced.
- No it was good.
- Meeting a significant other abroad experience.
- Everything discussed definitely has a purpose. I see no real reason to change anything.
- Perfect.
- Nah. It was good as it was.
- Added: more information on logistics, peer advice on how to manage money, etc.
- Info too general. Maybe divide it up into sections depending on where they’re going.
- I knew a lot about my pre-departure. Packing was most valuable.
- I think that the orientation program was fine as is.
- I wish that the differences about culture were more in-depth.
- I think more time should be focused towards the technical aspects of study abroad (financial aid, declaring pass/fail classes, etc.)
- No, it was good as it was to highlight the main points.
- I think it was fairly comprehensive.
- Some parts of cultural adjustment and heavy.
- It would be beneficial to have students that are currently studying abroad at Loyola talk about their experience here.
- Add info about housing in general when studying abroad.
- Some of the basic info in the 1st presentation was a little redundant.

4. What information did you find most valuable or helpful in preparing to go abroad?

- The information surrounding interaction when abroad and pointers.
- Heavy previous students to a panel.
- The preparation part.
- The reverse culture shock is very valuable because I had no idea it even existed.
- The preparing to go abroad section.
- Financial stuff and cultural stuff.
- The courses and registration.
- Letting me know what it will be like when returning (culture shock).
- Pack light.
- 1st presentation by Alisa. Really practical/in-depth information.
- Talking to the students who have gone recently.
- Alisa's presentation.
- Researching about your country beforehand.
- The "planning to go abroad" section.
- What to bring, health insurance, communication.
- Light packing and documentation.
- Banking information.
- Packing/culture.
- All the talk about managing finances I realize it is not as easy in Europe.
- Logistical stuff and culture graphs/diagrams.
- About health and stuff. UK specific stuff.
- Culture and communication styles.
- Peers talking; about experience and basic info/logisms.
- Packing, paperwork.
- The stories about cultural adjustment from panelists.
- Planning, learning cultural differences.
- Only pack one suitcase.
- The first presentation, which talked about packing safety and health.
- The information about financial aid and registration was very valuable.
- The visa information.
- Panel!
- The basic info Alisa covered at the beginning is just relevant and necessary.
- Visa info, returnee panel
- Panel questions with former study abroad students.
- Packing and adjusting
- Packing and health info.
- The preparation to go abroad, like the visa, phone, etc.
- The student panel brought very helpful information that I hadn't heard before. I also liked the part about recording the experience.
- What you need beforehand.

5. **Was this day and time convenient for you? If not, what day and time would be best for future orientations?**

- Yes (19)
- This worked, but it’s my birthday 😊
- Yes, but Fridays are a bit rough.
- No, Friday afternoon is terrible. Maybe split up the orientation to two days?
- Yes, I do with it had been split into two meetings. It was really hard to follow for so long.
- It was convenient.
- This worked best.
- This day worked well.
- Maybe split the orientation into 2.
- This time was good but not on a Friday.
- Yes, considering the length, Friday evening was best for me.
- Yes, it was right after all of my classes.
- Yes, Fridays isn’t always open though.
- Any day as long as its communication at least 2 weeks in advance.
- It was a little long, but this would have been the only time I could come.
- It wasn't because I work on the weekends, but it would probably be the same situation.
- It wasn't preferable but it works.
- This worked for me.
- A very large chunk of time/runs late for a Friday.
- Friday makes the most sense.
- Yes, it was after class and when I had nothing else to do.
- Yes, good time and day.

6. **Any additional comments?**

- Though it was long, it was very informational. Maybe have something for parents or something?
- shorter.
- More about your country, separate groups.
- I really liked the panel of students who returned from study abroad.
- Long but found it very informative.
- Great job! Thank you!
- I liked it a lot. The panel was great. I don’t suggest splitting it up.
-This has been very useful. Thank you.
-Nope, it was overwhelming but a good overwhelming.