

Crisis Management

Case Study



The Client

Our client is a respected U.S. land-grant university with dozens of college campuses across a Northeastern state.

The Crisis

The official declaration of COVID-19 as a worldwide pandemic led to a chain reaction of travel restrictions and border closures. When the first round of these restrictions was announced, our client had undergraduate students engaged in study abroad programs around the world. More than 300 of these students were located in areas of viral outbreak, including Italy, France, and two countries in Asia. To complicate matters, some faculty members were traveling under different visa parameters than the students. In order to comply with the newly enacted travel restrictions, the Direct Travel team had less than 24 hours to book and tickets travelers before flight schedules changed. Additionally, an executive announcement at the state level had already been planned regarding the return, necessitating the arrival of the students and faculty stateside before the announcement was made public.

The Strategy

We quickly understood that the unique circumstances of this situation required we expedite the pace of a typical workflow to meet the deadlines in place. Direct Travel started by contacting preferred suppliers—prioritizing safety, speed, and the client’s financial commitments to taxpayers. This led to the brokering of two solutions, one of which offered alternative pricing.

Because the crisis at hand was the result of an evolving health emergency with much information still unknown, Direct Travel opted to create its own set of criteria to address safety concerns. Travel precautions included establishing vehicle cleaning protocol and requiring all drivers and passengers to wear masks and gloves. Our team also faced a lack of guidance for how to properly repatriate foreign exchange students due to the fluidity of the situation. In response, we coordinated individual ground transportation

options for effected students to take them to quarantine campuses. This ensured a safe and secure transfer and allowed for a commitment to social distancing for targeted arrivals.

Ultimately, Direct Travel was able to secure two, single-plane solutions from Italy and Asia. The entire strategy was confidential and timed with the official executive announcement on the state level.

The Result

Our team coordinated the requirements with key partners and expedited the entire process in less than 72 hours. All students and faculty who planned to return to the U.S. were able to do so without major incident. Our client noted the unprecedented level of service, specifically Direct Travel's ability to anticipate unexpected challenges and take the solution from start to finish.

Most importantly, Direct Travel was able to put the health and safety of our client first. After the successful return home of the students, the client referred Direct Travel to another university to provide a similar solution. We were able to apply our experience to create a best practice for future clients to follow.

Learn More

In need of a rapid response solution for your own travel program? Our experienced team can provide a complimentary consultation of your program's strategies and goals.

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