PREPARING FOR YOUR SEMESTER ABROAD
Fall 2012
**Student Life:**

SPbCU has a student handbook and rules that are comparable to those at many Christian colleges. While at SPbCU, you will be expected to honor and follow the SPbCU Handbook just as your Russian colleagues need to do.

Student life at SPbCU is in many ways similar to student life on Christian College campuses in the West. The administration tries its best to offer each student a balance between academics, spiritual growth, and relaxation. You can often find students gathering in the kitchens or in each other’s rooms for fellowship and tea. There are three “chapels” a week and all of these are mandatory for all students. You will be asked to honor this rule as this is an important part of your experience in Russia. (Every attempt will be made to provide translation as needed.)

During your time in the Semester Abroad program at SPbCU we ask that you do not date students from SPbCU or anyone else, including students among your Semester Abroad group.

**Clothing:**

When you arrive in St. Petersburg the weather will probably be warm, similar to the climate of summer or early fall in Canada. But the temperatures will begin to drop in September and by October there could possibly be snow. You will want to plan accordingly. The ability to add or delete layers is very helpful. Buildings here are often on the cold side. Tights or long-johns are definitely in order. Warm turtle-neck tops and wool sweaters also help. It is not necessary to wear something different every day, but do be prepared for a variety of temperatures.

People do a lot of walking in Russia. Therefore you will want to have a comfortable pair of walking shoes as well as a comfortable pair of boots for rainy and cold days. Please don’t bring shoes or boots that have not yet been broken in. When it’s cold, many have found that 2 pairs of socks are better than one; keep that in mind for boot size. And be sure your boots are water-proof.

**For Class and for Chapel:**

Skirts, dresses, slacks or jeans may be worn for class and chapel. These should be clean and in good order. People usually choose something a bit dressy (skirt, dress, or good slacks, suit and tie) for Sunday church. Although quite appropriate in the dorm, T- shirts and shorts are not acceptable for class, church, museums and within the university academic building.

**For Leisure:**
Students wear pretty much the same things here as you would wear at home: jeans, sweats, t-shirts, etc. **House slippers** are worn in the dorm and in homes here, so you may want to bring some, although they can be purchased here.

Small washing machines are available for doing laundry, but there are only a few and you may need to schedule a time for this. There are no dryers, but there is a drying room. And you might like to plan on not washing everything at once; it can take several days to dry. To avoid loss of articles, you may want to mark your things with your name or initials using a permanent marker.

**Living Arrangements:**

You will be living in the SPbCU dormitory along with Russian students. There are normally two to three people in each room. There are community bathrooms and showers as well as community kitchens. Please keep your expectations modest as accommodations in Russia are different from those to which you may be accustomed.

Sheets, blankets, pillow cases and medium size towels will be provided, although you may bring your own. You should, however, be sure to bring your own wash cloth if you want to use one.

You will be sharing a room with one or two other Russian students. Many of the students speak a little English (although some are too shy to try, especially in the beginning of the semester). This opens a lot of opportunities for conversations and cross-cultural learning and will give you a chance to practice the Russian that you will be studying in class.

On schooldays, your lunches will be provided in the school cafeteria. On weekends (Saturday and Sunday), you will need to provide for your own meals. This means going to the store and buying what is needed as well as preparing it. You will need to plan for that. We advise you to **learn to do some cooking** before coming to Russia, since you will be required to cook for yourself. Please keep a few things in mind when thinking about meals.

- First, meals in Russia sometimes consist of foods that we do not often eat in our home country (such as lots of cabbage, garlic, red beets, and fish salads). When it comes to trying new things, remember that part of your Russian experience is to experience the food within the culture. Please be polite and do your best to partake and enjoy these meals.

- There are many fast food places in St. Petersburg, Russian and otherwise, as well as nice sit-down restaurants, all of which you can try at your own expense. Sub Way and McDonald’s restaurants, several Pizza Huts and Kentucky Fried Chicken places, as well as some Russian and European fast food restaurants are easily accessible.
Food:

Food is plentiful in St. Petersburg and the variety increases all of the time. There is a decent grocery store located across the street from the university and two others are nearby. Most everything is available here that would be available in North America, although the selection may be smaller and you may have to look harder. Food items that you are familiar with, such as chicken, beef, frozen pizzas, fish, frozen and fresh vegetables, cereals, hot dogs, pasta, pop, chips, candy, and ice cream are all available in St. Petersburg.

Herbs and seasonings are becoming more available. But, if there is something that you use a lot, then you may want to bring it. (Peanut butter is sometimes available but the flavor is not the same and if we bring it from home, it seems to taste especially good here.) Baking powder, brown sugar, chocolate chips, vanilla and pumpkin pie seasoning can be more or less hard to find. There are no pop-tarts and only a few pre-packaged meals like macaroni and cheese.

Please be aware that Russian students generally eat more affordable foods. Try not to flash your wealth.

You will need to be careful with the water that you drink. Do not drink any water unless it has been filtered and/or boiled first. (There will be a filter available for you to use while at SPbCU. So far, store-bought water seems to be preferable.) Your body is not accustomed to the bacteria that is in the Russian water and it will cause you to have some really uncomfortable times if you drink it straight from the tap. (Tip: Some people have contacted their local doctor before going to Russia and obtained a prescription for Flagyl. This is the drug that combats Giardia which is the most common infection from drinking water in St. Petersburg. However, no one has needed it in more than 10 years.)

Shopping:

You may not be able to find the brand that is your favorite but you will be able to find something here that works. Most kinds of toiletries are available here.

Specialty items such as Saline Solution for contacts seem to be regularly available now, although you may want to bring your own anyway to be sure. You should also bring any frequently used over-the-counter and prescription medications, including cold pills. If you are used to using antibiotics every year, ask your doctor for them. If you routinely take other prescription medicines, be wise and consult your doctor and insurance company ASAP so you can bring enough for your stay; this process can be long and stressful.

Shopping in Russia is fun if you like hunting for treasures. You will not easily find a store here like Meijer’s or Wal Mart where you can get everything in one place (although they do exist). There is a large department store near SPbCU as well as lots of smaller stores and other shops. You will just need
to be adventuresome and curious enough to go looking.

**Money:**

Any money you bring with you should be in **fresh, clean** bills. **Old, faded, wrinkled, torn and marked on bills are not accepted in Russia. Bills with uneven borders or pin-prick holes are also not accepted.** It is suggested that you bring only $20's, 50's or 100's.

All purchases in Russia must be made in Russian Roubles; therefore, you will need to exchange Dollars for Roubles as needed. The exchange rate often fluctuates, so it is preferable to only exchange what you think you will need for a 2-3 week period.

A VISA credit card can be used in some stores. Generally speaking, it is the larger stores that accept VISA and Master Card. But **credit cards are not as safe here as at home.** You may bring one for emergency use in traveling, but probably should not count on using it otherwise.

Students from previous Semesters Abroad in Russia have advised that you bring from $500 to $1,000 for your personal expenses (such as internet access, long-distance phone cards, paper), souvenirs and special outings that can be arranged at your expense. But this is up to you. You may want to consider using a traveler’s pouch (worn around the neck or waist under clothing) to protect it.

You may also consider opening a checking account through Citibank. There are several Citibank branches throughout St Petersburg and Moscow and this number is growing. With a Citibank ATM card, you can withdraw money at little or no charge in Dollars as well as converted to Roubles; you will not need to bring a lot of cash into Russia; and in (a very rare) case of fraud, you'll be backed by a reputable bank back home. Another advantage is that you (or your parents) can easily refill the Citibank account from another account in North America (you can do this through an electronic banking service even while in Russia). For more information please visit Citibank's Canadian website – [www.citibank.ca](http://www.citibank.ca).

Another option is the use of a **Debit card.** This worked out well for students in the last two years. Machines for this are now readily available; some include a minor fee, others do not. Most allow withdrawals of only about $200-300 a day, and cash will be given in rubles, which is the only currency allowable for transactions here. HOWEVER, if you decide to use this, **please check with your bank at home to be sure that they permit its use in Russia and to learn what their requirements are. Be sure they have a record of your dates to be in Russia.** And you might need to check with them twice to be sure that account is activated for use in Russia. Many of us have found it didn't get done the first time we made arrangements for this.
**Churches:**

Most of the Church services in St. Petersburg are in Russian but it is possible to find a few that are conducted with an English translation. All students at SPbCU are required to be actively involved in a specific church. We would encourage you to try out a few churches to find one that is a comfortable fit for you. It will help to enhance your Russian experience to visit a variety of churches that are available here. But **after that, it is best to stick with one** and get to know the people there.

The students at our university come from a variety of denominations. SPbCU is an inter-denominational school. We have students from conservative denominations such as the Russian Baptists and we have students from Pentecostal and Charismatic denominations. If you practice the use of tongues, it is requested that you do so only in private and not in a public setting while on the SPbCU campus.

**Communication:**

There are basically five different methods that you can use to communicate with family and friends. These methods are: E-Mail, Skype, Regular Mail, Telephone, and Fax.

**Internet and E-Mail:**

This is the least expensive method of communication. If you bring a computer, arrangements to use it can be made. You can also use SPbCU computers, but access is limited and the computer lab is usually open only from 7 A.M. to 9 P.M. on most days (not Sundays and holidays). You will need to buy an inexpensive card for this. Currently that costs about $6 (although it might be slightly higher next fall) and for some students that lasted about 2 weeks. (It goes by megabytes used.) There are also internet cafes, especially in the downtown area. Some of them offer free or paid Wi-Fi service, but this is not yet as common as in North America or Western Europe.

If you have **Skype** possibilities on your computer, that also can be used.

**Regular Mail:**

This method of communication is possible but takes about 2 to 4 (or 6) weeks. The address at SPbCU is:

St. Petersburg Christian University  
YOUR NAME  
Narvsky Prospect 13-B  
Box 211  
St. Petersburg, Russia  
190020
Telephone:
This is the most expensive method of communication, but phone cards are now available and make this form of contact more affordable. These cards currently cost about $30 for a 12 hour period. Calls can be placed from the dorm, but you will need to be sensitive to the other students’ needs. Phone calls are not appropriate (except in an emergency) during Quiet Time after 11 P.M.

The telephone number for the main university office from Canada and the USA is: 011-7-812-747-25-47. (Other local numbers may be available after you arrive.) The hours when there is a secretary at the university to accept calls is 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM Russia time. –Russia is 9 hours ahead of US Eastern Daylight Time. After office hours, all calls are greeted by an answering machine.

To reach you from North America, your parents and friends may consider buying a calling card. Several on-line dealers offer very inexpensive rates, such as: http://www.russianseattle.com/bestcard/index.htm; www.idc4u.com. However, it is usually easier for you to call them since you will be living in a dorm and will not always be in your room.

Cellphone:
Cellphones are very common in Russia and it is fairly easy to get a local number. As in Europe, all incoming calls (including the ones from the overseas) are free of charge, so your parents and friends will be within easy reach.

However, in order to use your North American equipment you have to make sure that (1) your phone is an International phone (i.e. it supports 900/1800 Mhz radio frequencies used in Russia); (2) it has a removable SIM-card which can be replaced by a SIM-card purchased from a Russian carrier; (3) the phone is “unlocked”. If any of these is a problem, you can purchase a cellphone in St Petersburg at a minimum cost of about $50.

Fax:
This is the next most expensive method of communication. If this is needed, we will check the cost. If calling from North America, the fax telephone number is: 011-7-812-747-26-47. Faxes may be received 24 hours a day but you will not be able to get them and read them until the office opens during regular office hours.

Packing:
It’s wise to start early to think about all the things you want to bring with you. There is a suggested starter packing list at the end of this booklet. Add to the list as you think of things.

You may want to bring something to give away to roommates or other special friends that you make. Key chains, mugs, pens or something unique from your hometown are ideas offered by previous Semester Abroad students. Be sure to bring photographs of family, friends, home, college, etc.; they
will brighten up many a conversation.

**Transportation:**

**To and From Russia:**
You will be flying internationally to Russia. The rules change from time to time as to how much luggage you may bring. Check with your airlines on this. The Russian Customs Officials also have a limit on how much baggage may be brought into the country. Ask in May or June for a current listing on this. (Please do not challenge the weight limit or number of bags allowed; you will be charged and it will be an expensive personal cost.) Return flights have in the past had a lower allowable weight. Currently that is 2 pieces at 50 pounds and 1 carry-on at 17 pounds.

**In Russia:**
The main modes of transportation within the city are metro (subway), bus, trolleybus, tram, and taxis. Transportation expenses will be covered for you only on official course-required trips.

As a group you will go on a one-day trip to Novgorod and make many smaller excursions to historical settings in or around St Petersburg. You will also make a short trip to Moscow, which will involve an overnight ride on a train. Trips taken as part of your course requirements are included in the program cost you pay to your university. You may want to bring a **back-pack** for use on these trips.

**Safety:**

**In the City:**
This section is not intended to scare you, but to make you aware of some safety issues. St. Petersburg is a city of five million people and just as in any large city there are always a few bad people in the crowd.

- **Pickpockets** - Pickpockets are common in St. Petersburg. Therefore, do not ever carry more with you than you need. For example, carry only the money you need for that particular trip. Do not count or expose money in public unless you are buying something. Never carry your credit card unless you are intending to use it on that trip. Don’t carry your driver’s license. You will, however, need to have passport, visa and migration card (which must be obtained at the airport on arrival). Please bring with you a good copy of your passport and visa to use as a backup; it will be worth it in case the original is lost or stolen.

- **Walking alone at night** - Never walk alone at night. If you must be out after dark make sure you are with a group of people that includes at least one Russian.

- **Don’t talk loudly in public** - Talking loudly in public is seen in a negative light in Russia. The average Russian will identify you as a foreigner before you even open your mouth. By talking
loudly you will draw even more attention to yourself. Safety considerations cause governments everywhere to warn their citizens to avoid the limelight when in foreign countries.

At SPbCU:
Generally speaking, your things will be safe while living in the SPbCU dormitory. Access to the dorm is guarded by a door code, but that is not foolproof. If you bring a laptop, an anti-theft cable might be advisable. When you leave your room, even to sit in the kitchen, it is best to lock your room door.

A Few General Russian Words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello</td>
<td>Привет</td>
<td>Pree vyet'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goodbye</td>
<td>До Свидания</td>
<td>Doe’ svee dan'ya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bye</td>
<td>Пока</td>
<td>Pa kah'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you</td>
<td>Спасибо</td>
<td>Spa cee' ba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please</td>
<td>Пожалуйста</td>
<td>Po zhal' oosta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Да</td>
<td>Da</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Нет</td>
<td>Nyet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My name is ….</td>
<td>Меня зовут......</td>
<td>Men ya' zah voot’ ....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your name?</td>
<td>Как вас зовут</td>
<td>Kak vas zahvoot'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t speak Russian</td>
<td>Я не говорю по-русский</td>
<td>Ya ne go var yoo' pa roo'skee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t understand</td>
<td>Я не понимаю</td>
<td>Ya ne pan ee ma' yoo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Emergency Information:

Alexei Belov  
Home Telephone: 7-812-783-4898*  
Cell phone: +7-921-636-2601  
E-Mail: abelov@spbcu.ru

Janyne Johnston  
7-812-783-4898*  
+7-962-719-11-71  
Janynej@gmail.com

St. Petersburg Christian University  
Narvsky Prospect 13-B, Box 211  
St Petersburg, Russia  
190020

Telephone: 7-812-747-25-47* (From 9:00AM to 5:00PM Russian Time)  
Fax: 7-812-747-26-47* (Available 24 hours)  
E-Mail: iprogram@spbcu.ru; spcu@infopro.spb.su

*Remember to start with your local code for access to international phone lines. From the US and Canada this is (011).

U.S. Consulate - St. Petersburg Russia  
Furshtatskaya Ulitsa 15  
Telephone: 7-812-331-2600 (This is an automated system.)

Medical Services:  
Euro Med  
Suvorovsky Pr, 60  
Telephone: 327-0301 (24 hours)

MEDEM International Clinic & Hospital  
6 Marata Ulitsa  
Telephone: 336-3333 (24 hours)

Notes:

◆ Please try to have your university insurance card with you. It is needed right away for registration in the city. If you don’t have it, other insurance will need to be purchased here at your expense.

◆ Please do not forget to bring your textbooks. We cannot buy them here. Do not wait until the last minute to get them, counting on a fast delivery policy. Sometimes books are out of stock and take a while to get to you. If you need to ship them “overnight” to Russia, it still takes 10 days and will be VERY expensive.
Canada and the U.S. use a 110 current and Russia uses 220. It is not advisable to bring any electrical equipment from North America unless it is already made with a way to switch it from one current to another. This may be found in special hairdryers made for travel to Europe (sometimes available at Meijer’s or other large stores) and with newer computers (which sense the current and switch on their own). Other equipment needs a special transformer, which is not the same as an adapter or a converter and many people even in travel stores do not know the difference. If you use equipment without the proper connection, it will burn up. That loss will be your responsibility.

Previous students suggest that you start walking 2 miles 3-4 times a week for 2 months prior to coming. It helps to get in shape.

As you travel, be sure to carry phone numbers for your university contact person, your parents, Alexei Belov (International Program Director) and Janyne Johnston (International Program Assistant) in case of problems or delays.

Basic Packing List suggested by previous students:

Passport, Visa and xerox copies of them
Plane tickets and itinerary
A printed list of phone numbers and email addresses for the university and for home
Briercrest College Student ID
Insurance card
Umbrella
Hand sanitizer
Safety pouch for carrying money
Winter jacket, gloves, boots
Good shoes, broken-in
Skirt, head scarf for girls
1-2 nice dress pants
1-2 jeans
Pajama’s
Slippers (rubber soles were preferred)
Contact solution
Sweater/sweatshirt
Cold meds, prescription meds
Shower caddy and shower shoes
Small gift for Russian friends or roommates
Pictures of family
Textbooks
Money
Devotional books
MP-3 music files
A camera that works
Room decorations (pictures to put on the wall)
Personal entertainment activities (light reading, Uno, music CD’s, a favorite video)
Laptop/ anti-theft cable
Back-pack

This is a starter; it’s not all-inclusive.