

2007 Study Abroad Student Deaths

Death date/ Day of week	Name (age) Home state	Home university/ Education abroad program/ Student status/ Country of study	Location of death/ Cause of death/ Details/ News links	About this student
2/13/07	Spencer ("Spence") James Akers / (17) Massachusetts	Monument Mountain Regional High School/ Leysin American School/ High school/ Switzerland	Leysin, Switzerland/ Medical Event, injury/ Spence was spending his senior year attending a work-study-adventure school in Switzerland. Tuesdays and Thursdays were ski days. Two friends had followed Spence down the mountain, but then lost track of him. Spence was later found under an avalanche. LAS teachers spoke of how often they'd taken the same trails with no problems, and "with only the luck...on that day...it hadn't been [my] time." LAS faculty assured the family, Spence had "exited this world at the pinnacle of worldly happiness." In contrast, a local mountain expert spoke of the danger of these mountains and the regularity of avalanches, expressing frustration at the death of another young person who perhaps did not understand the risks of the landscape. In the immediate aftermath of Spence's death, the family traveled to Switzerland and met with Spence's friends, saw all the places that had been important to him, including the place of his death. In a blog written by Spence's father, he describes this trip as a kind of healing experience. Spence's	Spence loved to ski. He taught fellow students how to wax skis and snowboards and how to improve their technique. He also loved his time at LAS. Though Spence was said to "hold his emotions close," classmates described him as awestruck by the beauty of some of the places he'd visited while in Switzerland.

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			<p>little sister graduated a few years later, and in her salutatorian speech spoke of the impact her brother's death had had on her.</p> <p><a href="https://medium.com/@mainandme/mourning-in-the-wake-of-an-avalanche-a6539a94dc72">https://medium.com/@mainandme/mourning-in-the-wake-of-an-avalanche-a6539a94dc72</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.akersarchitecturalrendering.com/blog/2010/6/7/natalie-akers-salutatorian-speech-monument-mountain-regional.html">http://www.akersarchitecturalrendering.com/blog/2010/6/7/natalie-akers-salutatorian-speech-monument-mountain-regional.html</a></p>	
4/6/07 Friday	Joseph Rock/ (?) Panama	Florida State University/ Florida State University Campus in Panama/ Panama	<p>Panama/ Vehicular/ Two cars carrying students from FSU's Panama City Campus were headed to a weekend camping trip. At about 2a.m., one of the cars plunged nearly 500 feet off a cliff, killing two students and injuring two more. FSU has had a campus in Panama for over fifty years.</p> <p><a href="http://www.chronicle.com/article/Crash-Kills-2-Students-at/38516">http://www.chronicle.com/article/Crash-Kills-2-Students-at/38516</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.panama-guide.com/article.php/20070407190439154">http://www.panama-guide.com/article.php/20070407190439154</a></p>	[Unable to find further information about this student.]
4/6/07 Friday	Elizabeth Von Heiland/ (18) California and	Florida State University / Florida State University Campus	<p>Panama/ Vehicular/ Two cars carrying students from FSU's Panama City Campus were headed to a weekend</p>	Family said that Elizabeth was born with a smile, like "sunshine breaking out of a dark cloud,"

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	Panama	in Panama/ Panama	<p>camping trip. At about 2a.m., one of the cars plunged nearly 500 feet off a cliff, killing two students and injuring two more. FSU has had a campus in Panama for over fifty years.</p> <p><a href="http://www.chronicle.com/article/Crash-Kills-2-Students-at/38516">http://www.chronicle.com/article/Crash-Kills-2-Students-at/38516</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.panama-guide.com/article.php/20070407190439154">http://www.panama-guide.com/article.php/20070407190439154</a></p> <p><a href="http://elizabeth-von-heiland.memory-of.com/">http://elizabeth-von-heiland.memory-of.com/</a></p>	<p>adding that as she grew up her smile remained. They said Elizabeth will be remembered for her “insatiable zest for life” and ability to “light up a room.”</p>
6/29/07	Tyler Hill/ (16) Minnesota	Mount Westonka High School/ People to People Ambassador’s Trip/ High school, academic program/ Japan	<p>Japan/ Medical event, illness/ At the age of five, Tyler was diagnosed with diabetes. He learned about his illness and for over a decade managed it well. As a teenager, Tyler received a letter from People to People saying he’d been “chosen” as a student ambassador. Given his health status, his parents focused on People to People’s safety protocols. The company assured them that they had “a 24-hour response team that could manage any medical emergency.” Thirteen days later, Tyler was brain dead and on life support. The family subsequently discovered that their son had been unwell multiple times during his time in Japan, including on June 26<sup>th</sup>, when his group hiked Mount Fuji. Tyler returned from the hike</p>	<p>Tyler was an honors student at his high school. He particularly loved history and considered Dwight D. Eisenhower to be one of his heroes. Because of his diabetes, Tyler knew he’d not be eligible to serve in the military, but he aspired to be an “ambassador of peace.” Family said he was, “Easy to talk to...a humble teen.” He “made friends easily and reached out to new kids.”</p>

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			<p>feeling so unwell that he requested medical attention, as well as a phone call to his parents. Neither of these requests was granted. Tyler died from untreated altitude sickness. His family filed suit against People to People. In 2009, the case was settled for an undisclosed amount. The Hill family went on to found ClearCause, which has been rebranded as Depart Smart, an online travel safety course geared to student travelers.</p> <p><a href="https://www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2008/01/p2p_hill.html">https://www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2008/01/p2p_hill.html</a></p> <p><a href="https://forums.childrenwithdiabetes.com/threads/settlement-people-to-people-teen-with-type-1-in-japan.42106/">https://forums.childrenwithdiabetes.com/threads/settlement-people-to-people-teen-with-type-1-in-japan.42106/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.tylerhill.org/">http://www.tylerhill.org/</a></p>	
7/1/07	Andrea Sperka/ (21) Wisconsin	University of Wisconsin, Madison/ University of Cape Town in South Africa/ Undergrad, study abroad/ South Africa	<p>Palapye, Botswana/ Vehicular/ Students were riding in a night-traveling tour truck. The truck swerved to avoid a stalled vehicle. The driver lost control and the truck rolled. Andrea died at the scene. Another student was injured. The accident happened at 3am.</p> <p><a href="https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-">https://www.iol.co.za/news/south-</a></p>	Andrea was sociology and legal studies major in her senior year. She was an honors student and a member of Phi Beta Kappa. She was also active in Campus Crusades for Christ.

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			<a href="http://www.africa/exchange-student-killed-in-car-accident-360690#.U23AqIFdUdV">africa/exchange-student-killed-in-car-accident-360690#.U23AqIFdUdV</a>  <a href="http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/jsonline/obituary.aspx?pid=90387042">http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/jsonline/obituary.aspx?pid=90387042</a>	
7/8/07	Nathan Boals/ (21) Tennessee	University of Tennessee at Knoxville/ Undergrad, study abroad, professor-run program/ France	<p>Paris, France/ Fall/ Nathan was one of 18 students (7 from UT and 11 from MSU). They had been in Paris for about a week. The group had spent the evening and into the night at a Paris nightclub. Nathan became separated from the rest of his group. At 5pm, he was found dead at the bottom of a stairwell. Nathan's possessions were found on him. Months later, friends and family still did not know what had happened to Nathan and why.</p> <p><a href="http://www.local8now.com/home/headlines/12043466.html">http://www.local8now.com/home/headlines/12043466.html</a>   <a href="http://dailybeacon.webfactional.com/news/2007/jul/17/students-remember-late-friend/">http://dailybeacon.webfactional.com/news/2007/jul/17/students-remember-late-friend/</a>  <a href="http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/nathan-boals-obituary?pid=1000000090913174&amp;view=guestbook">http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/name/nathan-boals-obituary?pid=1000000090913174&amp;view=guestbook</a></p>	Nathan was a communications major. Friends described him as funny, sometimes sarcastic, someone who would make you smile and laugh. "He walked to the beat of a different drum," one said, with "a unique sense of humor that matched his individualism." Nathan aspired to be a fiction writer, and was influenced by Jack Kerouac, especially his book <i>On the Road</i> .

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7/18/07	David Pupp/ (59) Wisconsin	University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point/ U-W/ Undergrad, study abroad/ Poland	Krakow, Poland/ Medical Event, illness/ David was attending U-W's annual 6-week summer College of Natural Resources European Environmental Studies Seminar. News reports suggested that David died of a heart attack.  <a href="http://host.madison.com/news/local/uw-stevens-point-student-dies-abroad/article_1e65b2d5-5d3a-5c28-b4f1-b70e047a3977.html">http://host.madison.com/news/local/uw-stevens-point-student-dies-abroad/article_1e65b2d5-5d3a-5c28-b4f1-b70e047a3977.html</a>	David had been a student since 2006. He was an urban forestry major.
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Non-lethal events in 2007:

Motor vehicle accidents with injuries

Illness with lasting effects

Injury with lasting effects

Fire and evacuation

Multiple students underfed, at least one with lasting impact to organs

Illnesses requiring treatment for malaria and salmonella

Fall with injury

Sexual assaults

Drugged