I. Preparation for your trip to France

A. Packing

Pack LIGHT! Luggage has a tendency to expand in foreign countries; the fewer bags you start off with, the less stress -- and expense -- you will have to handle. Most airlines now have a 50 lb. limit on checked luggage, and many, including US Air, will charge you for a second suitcase (as of April 2012, the second bag fee at US Air is $70 USD).

You might be surprised by how little you can get by on here. The French, for instance, tend to have smaller (but classier) wardrobes than most Americans and wear items often. You should not need many summer clothes, as it can start getting chilly in Paris as early as mid-September. Bring outfits that can be layered, since French weather tends to be highly variable. In a typical year, it tends to be cooler and wetter here than in Davidson, and you will probably be outside and walking a lot more than usual. Recommended (among other things): a good great pair of walking shoes for discovering Paris and making excursions, scarf, hat & gloves (it can get cold in November!).

--Essentials:

It can rain pretty often in this part of Europe, so an umbrella and a raincoat (with a hood) are essential. You will need a winter coat, scarf, gloves, hat, lightweight spring/fall jacket or waterproof jacket (type Columbia/Northface), good walking shoes (flip-flops do not qualify!), rainy-day shoes, and one nice outfit suitable for the opera, concerts, or special occasions. Rather than bringing numerous bulky items such as sweaters, consider buying them at stores and consignment shops (ETAM, on rue Nationale, is great for cheap sweaters, and stay alert for periodic sales). For women, a small black purse or bag which can hold a camera, a small water bottle, a sandwich, and odds and ends is very handy, especially for excursions and the time in sightseeing in Paris. It would also be a good idea to bring a very small carry-on bag or a backpack for short trips/2-day excursions. Many European airlines have very strict one-carry-on-only rules, and dimensions tend to be smaller than most American airlines. Check the company website before you travel. Don't forget an alarm
clock (battery operated is simplest), dictionary, camera, replacement batteries, converters/adaptors for any electrical appliances, and your favorite deodorant. Certain items (such as contact lens solution and specific vitamins) can be difficult to find or more expensive than in the US, so you might want to bring extra. If you have a favorite cold/sinus medication that you know works for you, pack some! Mouthwash and toothpaste also tend to be more expensive with less variety. Ladies, make sure you bring enough mascara to last your entire trip—a tube of Maybelline here can cost between 10-20€!

--Nice to have:
Bring an iPod with your favorite songs; a small photo album with pictures of family and friends; favorite recipes (converted to metric!).

-- VERY nice to have:
Most students now choose to bring their laptop computer. While not a requirement, the consensus is that having your laptop -- an adapter for France -- will make life easier.

With a few exceptions, all of our host families now provide Internet access, although this does not necessarily guarantee 24/7 reliable service (see chapter on technology and cultural differences). Students without Internet at home can request a 3G key and 30 hours of connection from the program. In addition, students enrolled at the Institut de Touraine can sign up for free WIFI access, and both the Institut and the Université François Rabelais have WIFI hot spots. The vast majority of French professors will accept handwritten papers, so do not stress about not having a printer. If you are at the Institut, you also have access to free computers with Internet access and printing (for a small fee) during regular business hours. If you are enrolled exclusively at the university, there are lots of computers available there and lots of users, but there is wireless access at the university for your laptop.

--Suggestions for host family gifts:
Specialties from your home state, calendars, stationery, items made by local craftspeople. Some families have already developed quite a collection of coffee table books from various states...so get creative! Past gifts have included table cloths, vases, cookbooks, pottery, etc... If you like to cook, most host families are delighted when you offer to prepare a meal. Certain ingredients, however, are hard to come by, so you may need to find some creative replacements! There is also an American épicerie in Paris (rue St. Paul) called Thanksgiving which carries various American products. These tend to be expensive though.

B. Money
Credit cards come in handy in Europe, but keep in mind that VISA and MasterCard are much more widely accepted than American Express and some others. Since French cards have a microchip — une puce — some stores and will not be able to process your US card if it only has a magnetic strip. Because each American bank has different policies, it is VERY important to contact your home bank before leaving for France to get advice on exchange rates, transferring money, possible fees for using an American ATM card abroad, etc. It is also important to notify your bank that you will be traveling abroad, so that your overseas purchases will not set off a “fraud” alarm and result in your card being frozen.

It is convenient to have some euros already on hand upon arrival in France. Some European banks charge a fee to withdraw money from ATMs with an American card, and the same goes for purchases with some American credit cards. (Wells Fargo, for example, charges a percentage fee on all transactions made outside the US, as well as a flat $5 fee for ATM
withdrawals made with their check card). Check with your home bank to see if it has any European partners (Bank of America is partners with BNP Paribas, which waives the ATM fee when you withdraw cash with your BofA card; your purchases, however, may still be subject to transaction fees.) Since there are BNP branches in Paris, Tours, and throughout France, you may want to consider opening an account with BofA to save on bank fees.

Students spending the year in France may wish to open a bank account at Credit Lyonnais (LCL) when they arrive in Tours. It will cost you next to nothing, and there are LCL branches across France, meaning that free withdrawals from ATMs are usually within walking distance of wherever you happen to be. Your LCL debit card can really come in handy when you plan on traveling. It allows you to avoid lines and to use European automated kiosks that only accept the carte à puce. The Resident Director will be happy to make arrangements with the local branch for you. Your job? Stop using the debit card two weeks before you leave France and then arrange to close your account before departure.

II. PARIS

Year-long students and first-semester students spend the first 3-4 weeks of the program discovering Paris and taking morning classes three days a week at the Alliance Française. The second-semester group visits Paris for several days at the end of their program (typically just before or after the group cultural trip (Morocco in 2010, Senegal in 2011 and 2012). The fall group stays at the FIAP Jean Monnet, a four-star youth hostel located in a safe neighborhood on the Left Bank. The Resident Director will plan frequent excursions and outings to the theater, museums, opera, etc., but students will also have plenty of free time for exploring on their own. While staying at the FIAP, you will eat breakfast and most dinners there. (If you have enough points on your declining balance meal card, you may return to the FIAP for lunch, too!) There are also plenty of good sandwich shops, cafés, and restaurants near the Alliance Française, where you can find lunch when your classes are over.

A. Getting around

While staying at the FIAP, you can walk to many places. Davidson will provide you with a Passe Navigo, a monthly pass that gives you unlimited access to all Metro, bus, and RER lines within the city center. The Metro is relatively safe, but can be dangerous late at night in some areas, particularly around Châtelet-Les Halles and Pigalle. Remember that the Metro stops running at 1:00 a.m., though certain metro stations can close as early as 12:30 am. The metro runs until 2:30 on Friday and Saturday. The Passe Navigo can also be used on the bus system, which allows you to see more of the city than when you take the subway. Should you need to get to or from either airport, Air France buses have reliable shuttle routes to/from both Orly and Charles DeGaulle. (You do not need to be an Air France passenger to take their bus, and you may purchase your ticket from the driver.) The AF shuttle helps you avoid schlepping bags in the subway and traveling through potentially dangerous areas of the city. The RER B can take you to Roissy (CDG), but this is not recommended if you have much luggage or are traveling at off hours. Super Shuttle offers a door-to-door van service that you can reserve online (http://www.supershuttle.fr).

B. Sightseeing

- The Champs-Élysées, a famous main street of Paris, stretches between the Arc de Triomphe and the Louvre. A haven for both tourists and beggars, it boasts classy cafés and shops, including the Virgin Records megastore. The best hot chocolate in Paris is at Ladurée, a truly Parisian experience.
The area around La Madeleine and Place Vendôme has luxury shops such as Cartier, Rodier, Givenchy, Dior, and Chanel, which make for good window-shopping.

The Latin Quarter is the gathering-place for university students from the nearby Sorbonne and a younger crowd drawn by reasonable prices and a lively atmosphere. There are a lot of bars and cafés which draw a young crowd.

The Luxembourg Gardens is a vast park ideal for people-watching or reading. Wide variety of affordable food options in the area.

Rue Mouffetard has nice markets and is a great place to find inexpensive sandwiches and crepes, especially at Place de la Contrescarpe.

The Marais, with the Place des Vosges and rue des Rosiers, is a nice area for a pleasant stroll and falafel pitas. And there is usually more open on Sundays in the Marais area.

Rue Pigalle is at the heart of the nightclub district, and the famous Moulin Rouge sits among the sex shops and peep shows. Watch out for pickpockets. It’s all a little frightening for females at night!

Montmartre, in the north end of the city, is the site of Sacré Coeur basilica; its narrow pedestrian streets attract many artists, especially to the Place du Tertre.

--Museums to visit in under two hours:
- Musée Rodin (M°13: Varenne)
- Musée des Égouts de Paris -- yes, that is the word for sewers (M° Alma-Marceau)
- Musée Marmottan-Monet (M°9: Muette)
- Musée Carnavalet (M°8: Chemin Vert)
- Les Catacombes de Paris – lines are often long (M°: Denfert-Rochereau)
- Musée de l’Orangerie (M°1 : Concorde)
- Musée du Jeu de Paume (Metro : Concorde)

III. TOURS
A. Family life

Living with a host family is an ideal way to learn about French culture. The Resident Director uses information provided in your housing questionnaire to place you with a family in Tours, which you should complete as honestly and candidly as possible (For instance, if you are extremely independent, please let us know, we’ll try to find a family that corresponds to that spirit). Do not expect a perfect match, for this seldom happens in reality. Adaptability is key; if you make up your mind to remain flexible and considerate of others, you and your host family should get along well. Many families host several international students during the semester. This can be a great way to meet other international students in Tours. The Resident Director and the Institut de Touraine take care of everything related to the families and are available to assist you with any problems that might arise.

--Behavior

While at home, most rules are just a matter of common sense. Your host family can serve as a good model of what is considered proper according to French culture. Feel free to ask any questions you might have about household procedures such as telephone use, laundry practices, refrigerator space, cleaning issues, showers, etc. Energy costs are much higher in France than in the US – natural gas prices have jumped a whopping 20% in the past year – so avoid long showers and always turn off the lights when leaving your room. You should use the formal "vous" with your host parents unless you are told otherwise. Communication is essential; for instance, don’t forget to let your host family know if you will be missing a meal or going out of town. You can usually invite friends over for dinner once in a while, and some families don’t mind your having a friend spend the night. When inviting friends from out of town, ask your family in advance. In most cases, your friend can stay at your host
family's house, either in your room or a spare room, but some families prefer that your friends get a hotel room, especially for friends of the opposite sex. Finally, spending all of your time in your room, coming downstairs only the meals, and only answering yes/no questions is not acceptable behavior, even if you are perfectly polite and nice. This may sound obvious, but misunderstandings happen more often than you think!

--Room
For the most part, the rooms are comparable to those on a US campus. Apart from the essential bed, the rooms are furnished with a desk, a closet, and some bookshelves. In a few houses, you will have your own bathroom, although you will still have to share the toilet. In others, you will share the bathroom with the entire family. So, be prepared for whatever situation awaits you. Rooms are usually cleaned once a week, but sheets may only be changed every other week. Your families will, of course, appreciate it if you keep your room clean. (To be honest, it is more expected than appreciated). Be mindful of how loud your alarm clock is -- walls will be thinner!

--Laundry
When laundry is done depends on the family, although it is usually once a week. In general, French people produce less dirty laundry than Americans, and their machines can only handle small loads. Some families, therefore, may ask you to limit the amount of dirty clothes you ask them to wash. Some host parents may offer to put your laundry in the washer (perhaps for fear that you may break it), but others will let you do it on your own.

B. Cuisine
The French pride themselves on their worldwide culinary reputation. So it seemed fitting when UNESCO added *le repas gastronomique français* to its inventory of *patrimoine culturel immatériel* in 2010. Although breakfast is usually limited to coffee or juice and toast or cereal, dinners include several courses and often last longer than meals in America. Since the French tend to be much more omnivorous than Americans in their food choices, you will be happier if you adopt an adventurous attitude towards meals. Vegetarianism was not born in France, where people tend to eat a wider variety of meats (e.g., rabbit, venison, duck, snails, stingray, pheasant, and, on very rare occasion, horse); their meats tend to be cooked less thoroughly, and they also eat more parts of the animal than most Americans do (e.g., organ meats, intestines, and blood sausage). Your family will probably ask you what foods you like to eat, but may also encourage you to try a dish not on your list. You might be surprised at some of the new foods you come to like, even if you are a picky eater. And if you really cannot handle a particular dish, maybe you can try just a tiny piece, and politely say that you'd rather stick to veggies that day!

--Meals
Unlike many American study abroad programs, the Davidson program covers you for three meals a day, seven days a week. This does not mean that you are required to be at home for every single evening meal or spend every weekend in Tours, but it does mean that you'll need to alert your family when you will be out or away. Your morning and evening meals are provided by the host family, while you are generally expected to eat lunch out, using the meal allowance paid into your home bank account by the College. (Please make sure that your host family is OK with you returning to the house occasionally for lunch -- some families do not expect to see your smiling face at noon.) Breakfast is usually self-serve from a variety of pre-determined items such as milk, bread, cereal, fruit, and yogurt. The families should provide you with brunch on weekends when you're in town and will usually prepare a
sandwich for you to take on weekend excursions (if you remember to ask ahead of time!). At
dinnertime, you will eat with your host family and any other students staying in the home.
Dinner time is perhaps the most interesting part of the day, as much for the conversation as
for the food. You’ll have the opportunity to discover more about your host family and
French culture in general, all while exercising your newly-acquired language skills. For the
most part, the meals are delicious, and you won’t cease to be amazed by how varied French
cuisine can be. Some of the families eat later than you are used to eating at Davidson
(between 7:30 and 8:30, some even as late as 9), but after a few weeks you’ll find yourself
getting used to it. Many students purchase a little snack at 4 or 5, e.g., coffee and a croissant.

--Lunches
Sandwich shops, patisseries, and small grocery stores are the best places to get the most out
of your 8€ lunch allowance in Tours. Most offer baguette sandwiches, panini (Italian grilled
sandwiches), kebabs, slices of pizza, crêpes, quiche, fruit, and a variety of desserts. Two
grocery stores, the Marché Plus and Carrefour City are located just down the street from the
Institut and also have some inexpensive lunch choices if you’re looking for a change of pace
and cheaper fare. (For instance, you can buy microwaveable meals that you can heat up at the
Institut’s cafeteria, or get creative with baguettes, cheese, fruit, and other grocery store
goodies.) A popular sandwich/boulangerie near the Institut is “La Croustille” (75, rue des
Halles). There is a Co-op Bio grocery store (Organic/Vegetarian) on rue Chalmel and an
African supermarket on the same street. Les Halles, the main indoor market where you can
buy bread, a variety of cheeses, ready-made Asian cuisine, and yogurt is a bit more expensive
but has many choices. Look for the open-air market there on Wednesdays and Saturdays for
the best prices on produce. One additional option is the various Restaurants Universitaires
(CROUS), which offer an average-quality, well-rounded cafeteria meal for 3€. Tours also has
a variety of ethnic restaurants, ranging from Moroccan to Lebanese to Vietnamese to Sushi.
They are a slightly more expensive possibility, but can be especially nice on cold winter days.
Most have lunch menus for under 10 € that will include an entrée, a plat, and a dessert.

The most convenient and, therefore, most popular places to eat are at Place Plumereau and on
the surrounding streets: rue du Commerce, rue Marceau, rue du Grand Marché, rue de la
Rotisserie, and rue des Halles, which are filled with small, inexpensive sandwich shops and
kebab stands. Mezzo di Pasta on rue du Commerce near Place Plum is a good restaurant
rapide. In 2011-12, many students were regulars at Chacha Pasta (7, rue du Change) or
enjoyed the sandwiches and salads at Délices du Fournil on Place Plum. La Mie Caline
and Brioche Dorée on rue Nationale are also good choices. Do try to explore other areas,
particularly rue Colbert, rue de Bordeaux, and avenue Grammont. There are plenty of great
restaurants in Tours, which are often overshadowed by “Place Plum,” so take the time to
walk a little extra distance, and you will discover some hidden treasures. The following is a
list of suggestions to get you started; check out le Petit Futé or l’INDIC for more ideas:

*Le Village Gascon (place des Petites Boucheries) specializes in southwestern French
cuisine.
*Le Café (rue Bretonneau) serves an inexpensive lunch with several choices, and is always
full of Institut and University students.
*Le Mille Pâtes (31, rue Bretonneau) is a fun place with a large variety of pasta dishes and
pizzas.
*L’Atelier Gourmand (37, rue Etienne Marcel) is a reasonably-priced restaurant which
specializes in a variety of authentic French dishes.
*Le Restaurant Douro (16, rue de la Grosse Tour) is a Portuguese restaurant that is always
fun and lively.
L'Escabeau, a crêperie near La Place Plume, was a popular choice back in 2003; for crêpes in 2010 there was also Mâmie Bigoude near the Basilique St. Martin.

Lou Pas d'Aï (on the corner of rue de la Grosse Tour and rue de la Serpe) is run by the Compagnons of Tours, an elite group of craftsmen specializing in certain trades, including cuisine. Some of their specialties include magret de canard, canard confit, salades Quercinoises, and fondant au chocolat.

Grillothèque (1, rue Lobin) serves very good, authentic French food and is run by a nice Française. Because of the cozy, calm atmosphere, this is an ideal place for special occasions.

Vegetarians, do not despair! Although most boulangerie sandwiches contain meat (and cannot be made to order), there are some delicious vegetarian options to be found:

- **Hardouin** (both in Les Halles and on the place du Monstre) has a mozzarella/sun-dried tomato/lettuce/butter sandwich for 4€, and several vegetarian fougasses (similar to mini pizzas) for 1€85.

- **Les Délices de Lucie**, near Place Plumereau, sells two vegetarian sandwiches for 4€: a mozzarella/pesto/zucchini Panini and a chèvre/pesto/sun-dried tomato sandwich (réchauffé, s'il vous plaît!).

- A boulangerie on the far side of Les Halles also has several veggie options (combinations of chèvre, tomatoes, and cucumbers for only 2€80.

C. Academics

Institut de Touraine

Established in 1897, the Institut de Touraine is an internationally-renowned French language center for foreign students. It takes pride in being situated in the region where French is spoken “with the most beautiful and purest accent of all” (Jules Michelet). Depending on their level in French, students on the Davidson program either take all of their courses at the Institut site or create a hybrid course of study involving both Institute work and classes taken at the nearby Université François Rabelais. In addition to a class taught by the Resident Director (typically introduction to literature), other courses designed specifically for the Davidson program are usually offered. Most recently, supplemental courses have included History, Art History, and International Relations. Please note that Davidson-only options may require a minimum enrollment. Be aware, too, that taking classes at both the Institute and the University can be a difficult -- although not totally impossible -- undertaking, since it is tricky to coordinate the two schedules.

Before arriving at the Institut, students take an online proficiency test, which places them at appropriate level (levels run from 1 for débutants to Avancé 2). Placement is then confirmed or modified by an oral interview that takes place on the first day of the Institut program. The workload in the Institut is not very heavy, but the amount of time students spend in class makes up for it. (Remember, though, that you can receive two course credits for this work!) Mandatory classes are typically between 9:00 AM-12:15 PM, Monday through Friday. Classes also meet certain afternoons for phonetics labs or oral and written expression and comprehension courses. Davidson students however are exempt from afternoon classes if they conflict with Davidson-only options. Additional class options are available in the afternoons according to the level and will vary from year to year. Past Institut classes have included Civilization, History, and Art History. While afternoon options are offered at all levels, the largest choice will be open to those working in levels 4, Avancé 1 or Avancé 2.
Some Institut facilities are at your disposal for individual language study. In the library (open Monday through Friday) you will find dictionaries, travel guides, fiction, historical documents, newspapers, and magazines in French. It is also a quiet place to study or do your homework. The audio-visual room offers videos and phonetic tapes to help improve your comprehension and pronunciation. A computer room is also available for those who want to use a program to improve their grammar, phonetics, pronunciation, and written expression. Internet access, however, is reserved for a separate computer lab at the Institut and for WIFI in select areas. The Institut also has a high-tech computer program called Speedlingua which is available, free of charge, to all enrolled students. It will help you work on your pronunciation and accent.

In addition to improving your French in class, the Institut also provides fun distractions that allow you to work on your French skills autrement. Recent French films are screened on Wednesday afternoons for free. There are also regularly scheduled cooking courses and ateliers vin et fromage. These are free for Davidson program students, as long as they sign up in advance and identify themselves as being on the Davidson program. The Institut occasionally organizes wonderful guided day trips (various châteaux of the Loire Valley, Mont Saint-Michel) on Saturdays. In 2010-11 and in 2011-12, Davidson teamed up with the BGSU program and offered a number of Saturday excursions to local sites not on the Institute schedule or not easily reached by public transportation (e.g., Bourges, Angers, Fontevraud.)

Students enrolled at the Institut in the fall are encouraged to register for the DELF B2 exam given in December. Davidson picks up the tab for the exams, which are based on the European Common Framework and recognized throughout Europe (and increasingly in the US). Year-long students and qualified spring semester students have the opportunity to prepare for the DALF C1 (advanced level) test administered in May. Students who pass these standardized tests receive a diploma from the French Ministry of Education.

--Université François Rabelais de Tours

The organization of the university is very different than what we are used to in the US. Due to overpopulation (11,000 students in buildings intended to hold 5,000) it is difficult to work out classroom arrangements among all the different departments; therefore, class times and rooms are subject to change. In fact, it is probably wise to keep in mind that posted dates, times, and locations – even for major events such as exams – may be subject to change, and sometimes at the last minute.

However, although it may seem that the word best describing the French university system is "chaotic," finding interesting classes and getting into them is not a problem, and professors tend to be friendly and helpful.

French classes are broken down into two types: C.M. (Cours Magistraux) are lecture classes that usually last two hours a week, and T.D. (Travaux Dirigés, or discussion groups) are usually another 1.5-2 hours a week, broken down into “smaller” (10-40 students) groups. In addition, UE Libres (UEL) are courses for non-specialists that meet for two hours per week over a period of ten weeks. They are accessible for foreign students, but will require completion of a ten-page research paper to compensate for the shortfall in contact hours.

French students already have a specialization as they first enter university: for instance they are enrolled in specialized degree programs in which they will have 4 or 5 years of Biology only (or Poli.Sci. only, or languages only, or whatever...), or 7 years of med school. Also, some classes in some disciplines are year-long, or cover 2 semesters in a sequence. While
university courses are increasingly offered on a semester (vs. year-long) basis, final exams for fall-semester courses may be scheduled for early January. Moreover, classes in disciplines other than humanities take place in locations other than the Faculté des Lettres (Faculté de Droit et Sciences Economiques, Faculté des Sciences, etc.). For all those reasons, it can be challenging — but not impossible — for American students to take a semester class in Biology, Math, Science or Political Science, etc. Most year-long students on the Davidson program have taken university classes at the Fac des Lettres in areas such as Literature, Translation, History, Philosophy, Sociology, Languages, and Psychology. With a little luck and a lot of determination, however, advanced level students who test high at the Institut may be able to take a class in Political Science, Ecology, Economics, or Math. Especially if they make their desires known to the Resident Director early on in the game!

In contrast, subjects taught at the Fac des Lettres are more easily accessible. At the Fac des Lettres, most classes start in mid-late September and mid-January, with exams in early-mid January and early-to-mid May (students taking University classes in the fall may be able to take their exams in December with special permission). Grades are generally based on one final exam and/or a short paper or class presentation. Classes may meet for two, three, or four hours per week, depending upon level. Therefore you may sometimes have to combine courses to have enough hours for a Davidson credit (a minimum of 3 hours per week.) This is not a huge problem, though, since each class requires considerably less work than the average Davidson course. In addition it is sometimes possible to do supplemental work to account for fewer class hours, depending on circumstances.

Some suggestions for finding direction in the chaos… Try to take as many classes as possible in the same department at the same level. French students are required to register with one department and to follow a fixed schedule for that department, so this is the best way to get to know French students and find a schedule that works. If you decide to take classes in more than one department or at more than one level, go to a few extra classes the first week or two at the beginning of the semester, because you most likely will not be able to keep your original schedule. Be sure to check your ENT account everyday for class changes. If you have core/major requirements to fulfill, as a precaution, take multiple classes that would fill the requirement. Do not count on any one class. Also, take advantage of support and guidance offered by Professor Carine Berberi, the university’s designated academic advisor/ liaison person whom you will meet at the start of each semester. Never be afraid to ask the other students in your class if you have a question about anything— they usually know what’s going on, and can help explain it to you.

Davidson program students have also been able to take classes at the university through the Bucknell in France program. In this situation, you will attend the university class as usual (one day a week) but have an extra session with the Bucknell group one day a week (in lieu of a “T.D.,” or discussion group). This counts as one course credit. There are also Bucknell courses outside of the university, which Davidson students have been able to take part in.

--Ecole des Beaux-arts
Regular courses at this institution are not open to Davidson program students. Evening courses, taught by art professors, are, however, open to the public. For about 130€ you can register for a year-long drawing or painting class. The application deadline is at the beginning of October, soon after the arrival in Tours, and the list of accepted students is announced in mid-October. Generally, the number of applicants outnumbers the availability of places, so you need to be quite convincing in explaining why you want to take the class. If as a year-long student you are interested, plan on bringing a portfolio to submit with your
application. The courses provide a good base for beginners, but also they have something to offer to more advanced students. Different media are explored, such as pencil, ink, and watercolor. Seven to eight sessions are with live models. Once registered for a class in the Fine Arts School, students can also use its library and attend art history lectures. (Another option for non-credit art studio courses is the Atelier du Cygne with a maximum of eight students per class.)

D. Social life

--Making friends
Your main source of friends will most likely be the Institut. Since it is a rather small place, you will end up meeting quite a lot of people there. In general, most Institut students are very cosmopolitan and well-traveled and have studied abroad previously. One can learn a lot from their experience and cultural differences. There will also be the opportunity to meet foreign students at your own house.

Making French friends can be a lot harder at times than you might think. (You may even come to believe that it is easier to make a French friend in the U.S. than it is to make one in France!) In spite of the difficulty and time involved, however, you will find that it is well worth the effort.

If you attend the Institut, your best option may be the members of your French host family, their friends and relatives. There are always the local bars, but remember that those favored by Institute students (i.e., the Alexandra and La Cabane) tend to cater to international students.

Taking a course at the Université François-Rabelais is a great way to make French friends. A lot of the courses are lecture-based and therefore do not require you to speak in class, but you will still have the advantage of being surrounded by French students and having the opportunity to approach them if you are willing to make the effort. (These folks know that you will be returning home in a matter of months, and may not be all that motivated to take the first step, so it really is up to you!) Unfortunately, there are relatively few organizations, clubs, and teams sponsored by the university (one notable exception is the Model UN group, which was very active in 2011-12). Consequently, if you do not have at least a couple of classes with the same French students, it may be difficult to get to know them. As with many aspects of life in France, persistence is the key, along with a willingness to venture into French student territory (i.e., the occasional soirée étudiante at local clubs) and to tag along with French classmates if you can. Because some French university students live in Tours during the week and go home to their family and friends on the weekends, the big “going out” night in Tours is Thursday, although there are still a lot of students out on the weekends.

One of the most successful ways to make French friends is by participating in the University’s parrainage program, where international students are matched with French students to help them navigate the university system. Participating is extremely easy. “Registering” consists of filling out a form listing your interests and then waiting for the university to assign a marraine or a parrain (sort of like a Big Sister/Big Brother). In the fall of 2011, there were so many French students eager to participate in the program that a few of the Davidson program students were paired with two French students. Your marraine/parrain serves as a great way to plug into French student life and culture. (Many students have their own apartments and will invite you to soirées with their friends.)
Although the selection process itself is fairly random, you can end up having a nice circle of French friends with whom you can enjoy hanging out (especially if all of the Davidson program students participates in the parrainage program!).

One of the best things to do is pursue your passion—your favorite sport, music, cooking, etc. -- and look for people with the same interests. Davidson students enrolled at the university will have both the Passeport Culturel and the Pack Sport (a card that gives you unlimited access to various club sports and aerobic classes sponsored by the University, as well as reductions to local gyms and clubs). This can be a great way to meet French students. Check at the Maison des Associations on the Place Plum”. You will soon realize that Tours is not a very large place and that most people go through “Place Plume” at one time or another—don’t be shy if you recognize one of your classmates at a café. French students typically love meeting Americans and love asking questions.

--Night Life
Going out at night in Tours is cheaper than in Paris, but still not the same as in Davidson, where students are often provided with free drinks and food wherever they go.

Nightlife is concentrated mainly in le Vieux Tours, around Place Plumereau, where several discothèques and and most of the bars are located. The most popular bars among foreign students are the Alexandra and La Cabane. La Cabane is significantly less expensive than other bars in Tours, and is frequented by both foreigners and French students. Le Palais (15, place Jean-Jaurès) hosts the Café des langues every Monday night, which is a great way to practice your French and meet people from different cultures. French, English, Polish, Italian, Esperanto, Russian, German, Spanish, and Dutch, among other languages, are spoken. The Pale (rue Colbert) is a pub owned by a man from Ireland, and shows many televised sporting events. Beer fans will love the Académie de la Bière (43, rue Lavoisier), which offers a wide selection from all over the world, as well as live performances by amateur musicians. For a quieter bar with an atmosphere that lends itself to studying or conversation, try the Pub Continental (Place Jean-Jaurès), Le Duclos (rue de Bordeaux), or Au Bureau (Place Plum”) or the Café Chaud. Also check out the Wine Bar, located between the Institut and Place Plum”; it is small, relatively inexpensive, and has a very good atmosphere.

The bars in Tours close at 2:00 am (apart from Le Joulen, the one bar on Place Plum’ open until 4:00 am); discos are open until 5:00 am or later. Most of the discothèques have an entry fee. Whereas girls are often allowed entry for free, guys almost always have to pay, as well as meet a dress code (no sneakers, etc). Café Chaud, next to Excalibur, is open late, and admission is free although you may have to buy a drink once you’re inside.

--Safety
Tours is a large city, so please use caution when walking at night. Use major, well-illuminated streets, even if it means taking a longer route home. If you’re a runner, try to find a running partner and run during the day. You can usually find someone else to walk home with though, either another foreign student living with you, or a Davidson student who lives nearby. Whenever possible, walk with someone else, but if you must: walk home alone, never hesitate to call a taxi, or to enter an open hotel or café and ask somebody to phone for you (just make sure you have access to cab fare!). There is 24/7 cab service available from Taxi Tours tel.: 02.47.20.30.40). Girls: French guys tend to be more aggressive and forward. Always be prepared to ignore someone completely or to tell him forcefully to leave you alone!
--Movies
The best of the three movie theaters in Tours is Studio Cinémas (rue des Ursulines) hailed as one of France’s premier cultural centers. Whereas the other cinemas show movies dubbed in French, at Studio Cinémas almost all films are shown in their original version, with subtitles, meaning plenty of American movies are shown in English. Student tickets cost 3.80€ after the purchase of a movie pass (covered by the Davidson program—a great deal!) and holders of the pass receive a magazine detailing the month’s film schedule, film festivals and speakers. Cinéma Pathé is more similar to an American movie theater, and movies are 5.50 € with the student discount.

- Studio Cinémas: 2, rue des Ursulines
- Cinéma Pathé: Place François Truffaut
- MegaStudios: près de la gare

--Church
There are many churches in Tours, most of them Catholic. Ask your host family, and other students at the Institut for information on nearby churches or different churches. Some churches that Davidson students have attended in the past:
- Eglise St. Etienne (rue Michelet)- Catholic, masses at 9:30 and 11:00am
- Basilique St. Martin (close to the Institut)- Catholic, mass at 11:00am
- Eglise Réformée (Presbyterian) rue de la Préfecture
- Eglise Evangélique, rue George Sand

E. Sports, leisure, and service opportunities
Students registered at the Université François-Rabelais can participate in any of the athletic courses offered for University students free of charge, while students at the Institut de Touraine can purchase an activities card which allows them to participate, as well. Typical options include yoga, rugby, handball, fencing, and a variety of dance and martial arts—a complete list of courses available, along with registration dates, is usually announced at the Institut at the beginning of the year. Students must sign up in the beginning of the first semester in the University Sports Center. Second semester students can join certain courses after talking to the instructor, however, some courses prove more difficult to get into than others. The only inconvenience about taking courses offered by the university is that most of them take place in the University Sports Center, a 20-minute bus ride from the city center.

A closer option and student favorite is Nova Gym on rue Nationale, where a monthly subscription is 33€, but there may be a registration fee (66€ in 2011), and no group classes are offered. There is also Centres Halles-Gym where a monthly subscription costs about 45€, but no registration fee (although students in 2011 found the facilities lacking). Club Moving might be your gym of choice if you’re housed closer to the Jardin des Prébendes (a 5 minute walk versus 25 minutes to Nova Gym) — the subscription costs 47€ a month, but there is no registration fee. This was a popular choice in 2010-11, and again in 2011-12. The staff will learn your name, and the classes are REALLY fun and upbeat. Davidson will pay for half of the monthly subscriptions, up to 80€ per semester. An ice-skating rink, basketball courts, and an olympic-sized swimming pool are located in the Palais des Sports. Ten tickets cost less than 15€, while a single one is about 2€. Numerous clubs are available for activities not related to the university. Moreover, Tours has opportunities for sailing, kayaking, and horseback riding. If you enjoy spending time outdoors, the region of the Loire Valley abounds in scenic hiking trails and bike routes.
If you are a real ping-pong devotee, Christine Pierre at the Institute can provide contact information for a club in Tours. In 2011-12 students joined a local club that met twice per week, and participated in regional tournaments. Club membership cost 50€, with an additional fee of 50€ for participating in tournaments. If you do not join a health club, you can ask the program to reimburse you for half of the cost (up to 80 € per semester).

Useful addresses:
- SUAPS (Centre Sportif Universitaire)
  14, Avenue Monge
- Centre Municipal des Sports
  Boulevard de Latrine-de-Tassingy
- Centre Halles Gym
  14, rue Henri Barbusse
- Ellafit
  34, rue de la Paix
- Club Moving de Tours
  184, blvd Thiers

Volunteering: The fact that 2011 was declared the Année européenne du bénévolat et du volontariat reflects changing European attitudes regarding service and volunteer work. If you are looking for ways to get involved, consider volunteering with the local Croix Rouge once a week. The 2011-12 program participant who drove around at night in the Red Cross van distributing food and clothing to those in need found it a great way to practice his French and meet lots of interesting people. If you are not a night owl, an Association called France Bénévolat Touraine has links to the Institute, and can help put you in touch with a number of local organizations interested in having your help (www.francebenevolat.org).

F. Cultural activities

Every three months, the Office de Tourisme (78, rue Bernard Palissy) publishes a free booklet containing the program of all activities in Tours for the coming months. One popular event is the marché de Noël (blvd. Heurteloup), where regional products can be sampled.

If you enjoy theater or dance, check out the Centre Choréographique National de Tours, Théâtre Louis Jouvet, Salle Thélème at the university, Carré Davidon, and the Théâtre Municipal. Music enthusiasts will enjoy the numerous concerts which take place at the Centre Musical Jean de Ockenghem and Centre Vinci (classical), Le Petit Faucheur (jazz), Le Bateau Ivre and Les 3 Orfevres (rock). Tickets for performances in Tours can usually be purchased from the box office, at the Office de Tourisme, or through the FNAC.

--Museums

The paintings in the museums in Tours may not always compare with the world-famous works found in Paris, but their particular orientation towards the history and art of the Touraine region makes them unique. If you are interested in many museum visits, the Office de Tourisme offers an inexpensive Carte multi-visites to holders of the student cultural passport. Valid for a year, the card provides you with a free, guided visit of the city and one entry in each of the municipal museums of Tours: Musée des Beaux-Arts, Centre de Creation Contemporain (CCC), Château Royal de Tours, Musée de Compagnonnage, Musée des Vins de Touraine, Musée Saint-Martin, Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, and Château de Plessis-les-Tours. Other local museums include: Chapelle Saint Michel/Centre Marie de l'Incarnation,
Hôtel Guin, and Musée du Gemmail. The Château de Tours has entered into a partnership with the Jeu de Paume museum in Paris and now hosts traveling photography exhibits.

G. Transportation and travel

--Bicycles
If you live further from the center of town, a bicycle might make getting around easier. There are several used bike shops in town, including Vélomania at 109 rue Colbert. Or you may want to consider renting a bicycle through the city’s Vélociti program. For a refundable deposit of 300€, and a minimum rental of 3 months for 15€, you can easily have a bicycle. The deposit will be returned when the bike is returned undamaged. It comes with a bike lock, light, and bell. Don't forget that while they are a convenience, bikes can also be an added hazard and theft is a danger. Buy a good lock and investigate whether you will need additional insurance. Be sure to ask your parents before buying a bike if there is a place to store it. Many families will not allow you to carry the bike indoors.

--Bus
If you live in the center of Tours, as most students do, you will seldom need to take the bus unless you are participating in sports offered by the university or attending university classes up at Grandmont or in the Quartier des 2 Lions. You buy a monthly credit card type bus pass ahead of time at the bus office or in many tabacs. A map of the bus lines and a list of their schedules are posted at every bus station. Buses are convenient during the day, but the last ones pass at 8PM or earlier—check at the central office in the Galerie Jean-Jaurès for information on the various bus lines. There is a night bus that starts after 9 pm and runs every hour until around 12:30 am. University students will be reimbursed for bus passes in order to reach buildings far from the city center.

--Train
The extensive French rail system can take you practically anywhere you want to go in France, and even outside of France. Train reservations can be made online (www.voyages-sncf.com), at the train station, or through a travel agent such as Thomas Cook Voyages (8, place du Grand Marché). When purchasing tickets online, purchase an e-ticket only if you have access to a printer. If you wish to pick up your ticket at the gare SNCF, keep in mind that the automatic distributor, or kiosk, will not accept a US credit card; unless you have a French card with microchip you'll need to go to the window. While you can ask that tickets be mailed to your house (without charge), know that they will be returned to sender if no one is at your house to receive them.

To make the most of SNCF discounts, the program will provide you with a carte 12-25 ans, which guarantees a 25% reduction in all trains, and often gives a 50% reduction. (The discount only applies to trains in France.) The card pays for itself in two round trips to Paris! There are great bargains to be had with Prem’s fares, but you need to reserve well in advance. Tickets may or may not be exchangeable or refundable. If you plan to travel outside France, consider a Eurail pass. Not for sale in Europe, the passes can usually only be purchased in the US. A railpass may be a good idea for travel after the Davidson program ends. Whichever travel formula you choose, you should be prepared for the possibility of occasional strikes, and delays/cancelations in the event of snow. C'est la France.....

--Car
If you are over 21 and have been licensed for over a year, you can rent a car in France. With four or five people splitting costs, renting a car is a fun and cheap way to discover the French
countryside and other areas not covered by the train network. However, gasoline is very expensive ($2.00/litre in April 2012 and climbing) and getting used to French driving habits can be stressful. Note that French cars primarily use manual transmission.

--Air
Traveling by plane in Europe can be convenient and relatively inexpensive. For instance, rather than taking the 18-hour train ride from Paris to Rome, you could pay a little extra for a 2-hour flight. (You may even find that the train ride is more expensive than a cheap flight.) See a travel agent or check out the internet for low prices; the earlier you make reservations, the better deals you will find. For national holidays, such as Toussaint (Nov. 1st), be sure to make reservations early; or finding cheap tickets and hostels could be difficult. One of the cheapest airlines for flights within Europe is Ryanair. However, the airline charges 15€ for each checked bag, and can throw in additional charges (like a 50€ penalty if you fail to print out your boarding pass in advance). Also realize that when flying with Ryanair out of Paris-Beauvais, there is a 15€, hour-long bus ride to the airport from the center of Paris. The most helpful airline website for comparing all airlines/flight is probably www.kayak.com

H. Keeping in touch

--E-mail
Most students find the free Internet access provided by the Institut sufficient for surfing the web and checking email. There are plenty of computers, and the connection is fairly reliable. And, as we said above, basically all of the host families now have Internet access. If, however, you need to use the internet after 7:00 pm or on the weekends, you’ll need to explore one of the several other places with internet access. Although you probably will not need to use them, Internet cafés charge by the hour (usually around 3€). Found in Tours:

- Cyber Micro Touraine: 2, Place de la Victoire
- Webcontact: 35, rue Néricault Destouches
- Café/bar l’Alexandra: rue du Commerce
- Cyber Café: 27, rue Lavoisier
- Le Paradis Vert (bar): 9, rue Michelet
- Alliance Micro: 7, rue de la Monnaie
- Espace Internet: rue Nationale (on the second floor of a phone store)
- (McDonalds across from the train station offers free WiFi Access to its customers)
- The French Coffee Shop, off Place Plum’ (83, rue du Commerce) offers free WiFi to its customers. Buy a cup of tea or one of their awesome smoothies or milkshakes and sit for a couple of hours to surf.

--Snail mail
Family and friends can send you mail and packages in the care of your host family. **WHATEVER YOU DO, DO NOT HAVE PRESCRIPTION MEDS MAILED TO YOU IN FRANCE!!** (The package may be held up indefinitely in customs and/or may be subject to a fee.) Speaking of fees, be aware that some students have been charged a $25 customs fee upon arrival of the package, depending on the declared value of the package. (Packages valued at over $45 are subject to a tax, although not all packages are taxed). Normally, mail takes 5-10 days from the U.S. to France, and 7-10 days the other way. Stamps for US-bound letters of up to 20 grams are currently 0.89€ each (http://about-france.com/postal-rates.htm), although you will save money by purchasing ten-packs of prêt-à-poster envelopes. The main post office is located on boulevard Béranger, with smaller offices on rue de la Victoire and rue Nationale. Mailboxes are bright yellow and everywhere throughout the city.
--Phone
Davidson will provide you with a very basic cell phone and "starter minutes" while in France, but you will pay for your own calls. It is significantly cheaper to text message fellow Davidson students in Tours than to call. Incoming calls are free for you on your cell phone from anywhere in the world, although calling to a French cell phone from the U.S. is more expensive than calling to a French landline. In order to place both domestic and international calls from a mobile phone, you must buy cell phone calling cards, les Cartes Nomades, available at any bureau de tabac. Although convenient, calling on a cell phone to the U.S. costs about 0.40€ per minute, so you may want to reserve lengthy long distance calls for the less expensive payphones. (Small foreign shops, all over town, sell international phone cards at very attractive rates.) Some pre-paid cartes de téléphone internationales such as Telecartes, Kosmos, OmniCarte, Carte Monde, Phonepass, and Intercall have special rates for calls to the US and can be purchased at most bureaux de tabacs. Also, if you have a smartphone (not an iPhone) and are very attached to your apps and internet, you should be able to place the French microchip in your American phone (age of your phone may matter).

The cheapest way to talk to your family and friends is via SKYPE (hands down), or for them to find a good European calling plan and have them call you. You can receive free incoming calls at payphones. You can also receive free calls on your cell phone, though it costs more for your caller to call a cell phone than a pay phone.

While you may be reached at the host family's home number, most families do not want you to tie up the phone line for long periods of time, in which case you should use a payphone or cell phone. Calls are more expensive in France than they are in the U.S., so you might have to change your calling habits. Calling during off-peak hours (after 9:30 pm) and weekends (after 3:30 pm on Saturday and all day Sunday) will help keep costs down.

Students in the past have also recommended websites such as www.skype.com, www.noble.com, or www.ldpost.com where you can buy phone cards to call different countries at really good rates. Also try looking into Google phone, which allows you to make free calls from your Gmail account to any cell phone or landline in the US or Canada for free.

IV. FINAL NOTE
To complement your education at the Institute or university, try to immerse yourself in la vie touristique. Going to a café or bar and talking with French people is a terrific way to actually apply what you learn in class (the difference between taking daily French classes in Tours, France, vs spending three hours per week in a Davidson classroom). So don't miss this opportunity! At the same time that making the most of your social life here is important, don't forget to watch French TV, see French films, listen to French radio and podcasts, and read French newspapers and magazines, as these are all great ways to improve your comprehension skills.

Do your very best to speak French as much as much as possible. You'll discover that the temptation to "get by" in English can be very strong at times, since most students at the Institute also speak English and will want to practice speaking with you. While this will take some genuine effort on your part, we promise that you will realize later on how worthwhile it is to try and make yourself speak French as often as you can.

BON VOYAGE! BONNE CHANCE!
Updated April 2012 by Blake Candler, Jane Morrison, and Sara Simon (Davidson '13).