To the Education Abroad Committee,

Given that, “a Loyola student may file a petition for individual exemption in the Center for International Education for consideration by the Education Abroad Committee,” I am including the following issues in my essay:

1. evidence of support in the host country, either from family or from the host institution, including with living arrangements.
2. the academic necessity and appropriateness of the proposed study,
3. the individual's personal preparedness and familiarity with the country,

*Please open all documents included in ‘Petition’ folder in case links are broken.*

1] Firstly, I would like to begin my petition for individual exemption with an apology. I am sincerely sorry for the complications incurred in the process of my study abroad application. By no means have I intended any deceit or trickery. I have just been doing whatever I can to complete what I have started, which is to study abroad in Israel at the University of Haifa. As stated in the Center for International Education’s mission, I was hoping to be a part of the “participation of all students in education abroad programs without regard to finances, ethnicity, gender, or academic major” ([http://www.loyno.edu/cie/mission](http://www.loyno.edu/cie/mission)).

The $30,000 study abroad fee at Boston University (BU) made my participation infeasible. When asking Patrick Tuck, the BU’s Study Abroad Program manager, to explain the reason for the difference between the University of Haifa’s program fees ($8840) and BU’s—he replied that “we charge the cost of on campus BU tuition as all students will receive an official transcript from BU for the equivalent number of credits if they were on campus” ([email conversation](mailto:)). The conversation may be read (in standard .rtf) by clicking the citation link.

Patrick Tuck did not reply with information regarding specific security concerns that cover BU’s study abroad students above Haifa’s international students. A good example of the universal security of Haifa’s students may be found in the following excerpt of university President Hanan Alexander’s response to the Carmel fires, “I want to reassure you that all of our international students are safe. Rector David Faraggi and President Aaron Ben-Zeev took immediate steps in coordination with local authorities to cancel classes and evacuate the campus. The staff of the International School contacted all international students via SMS at 2:00 PM and then walked through the dorms and other university facilities to insure that all of our students understood what was happening and received proper instructions as to how they should proceed. By 3:00 all of the International Students had been accounted for and were asked to congregate in a central location to insure their safety. By 5:00 PM they were evacuated from the campus and arrangements had been made for those who did not have plans to leave the area for the weekend to be hosted by nearby families away from the flames. The Haifa
municipality has graciously arranged housing for the weekend at a youth hostel in an area north of Haifa and has offered transportation for a tour on Friday of the ancient city of Acre, on the other side of the Haifa Bay” (UniversityOfHaifaResponseToFire).

Fortunately, “this emergency has brought to the forefront the urgent need for immediate action to improve and upgrade safety and security at the University of Haifa in the event of a similar disaster. A $10 million worldwide emergency campaign has been established by the University of Haifa to purchase and install fire protection equipment, as well as to provide financial support and psychological counseling services for our students” (http://newmedia-eng.haifa.ac.il/?p=4016).

President Hanan Alexander’s reference to “SMS” regards the mandatory policy that all student’s have cell phones so that the "University of Haifa will be able to send text messages (SMS- Short Messaging Service) to all students on the plan automatically, meaning you will be automatically updated about safety and security issues” (Page 5 of PreArrivalInformationMay2010.pdf). This policy provides a rigid structure of support that has proven to be effective and efficient, as according to Haifa’s homepage “studies at the University [were] back on schedule after a full day of regular studies Monday” (http://www.haifa.ac.il/index_eng.html).

In digging through Haifa’s website for security support information, I found several reassuring bits of information. One of the first points mentioned in their ‘Pre-Arrival’ form is that "the welfare of our students is [their] highest priority” (Page 5 of PreArrivalInformationMay2010.pdf). Also, "during orientation at the beginning of each semester, students will receive an updated list of security instructions" (Page 5 of PreArrivalInformationMay2010.pdf). Included in orientation “each semester or summer session begins with a tour around Haifa, enabling you to become familiar with the city,” and “all of [their] trips and tours are organized and run in consultation with the relevant security authorities, including the University's Security Division and the Israeli Police and Defense Forces” (http://overseas.haifa.ac.il/page.asp?id=32&a=a7&b=b32).

After searching through both BU’s Haifa program homepage, their entire study abroad website, and all of Haifa’s website—I couldn’t find any concrete information regarding the exclusive support given to BU students (BU Haifa). But as an added measure, I also contacted Mr. Patrick Tuck regarding the security and support concerns. When I asked, “Do Boston University's study abroad students receive any special security support or consideration that other students do not?” Mr. Tuck replied, “We do provide a large amount of support from our office here in Boston for all of the students on our programs and even purchase travel insurance for every student. If you scroll down to the Health and Safety section on our website here: http://www.bu.edu/abroad/apply-go/information-for-parents/, you can see where we discuss our safety provisions.

Once a student is on site in Haifa, we leave the bulk of on-site safety and security up to the University of Haifa’s International School, although we are in close contact with their staff throughout the semester. They outline their safety provisions here: http://www.uhaifa.org/page.asp?id=32&a=a7&b=b32. “

As Loyola’s institution is concerned, the University of Haifa’s “health insurance covers all injuries or illnesses that occur while you are in Israel,” and also that "the insurance coverage for each participant will take effect the moment student leaves his/her country of origin for Israel" (HealthInsuranceForms2010).
So essentially, Haifa has the exact same insurance coverage as Boston University. The travel insurance is equated to Haifa’s insurance policy that covers students the moment they leave their country. Now, since I have addressed security and insurance concerns, I will continue to discuss the “academic necessity and appropriateness of [my] proposed study.”

2] In searching for the academic home for my college career senior year, I came across a single stone that essentially made my choice. It read, “A discerning mindset: Finding God in all things.” This stone is located outside Loyola University’s library. The school’s introduction to my Jesuit academia laid a foundation that highlighted critical thinking and passed on a foundation that was laid by a single man, Saint Ignatius of Loyola. He, just as me, went through struggles of temptation throughout his adolescence. But when he found God, he was completely dedicated. His heart, just as mine, was set on Israel.

Currently, there is no affordable American study abroad program to Israel. If I wanted to pay Ivy League tuition for school, I would have applied to one. As an English writing major with a personal focus on world religions, Israel is the quintessential location for my academic studies.

The Haifa Language Program requires an 8-hour language course, and I have chosen to take Hebrew. The 6-credit course will complete my language requirement listed on my English Writing major’s DCPL.

I am planning on taking the “Writing Israel” course that will give 3-credits toward my literature requirement. The course asks students to use various creative mediums “as a way of processing their experience of living and studying in Israel.” I look forward to creating a concrete record of my experience in Israel. This will help expand my writing and expression of emotion and thought through language.

The “Biblical Theology” course offered at Haifa will give 3 more credits toward my literature requirement. It is listed as a “Religion, Literature, and Philosophy” course. It follows the texts that deal with Messianic History and the story of the Messiah. This is one of the most powerful and recurring stories in all of language. Just about every epic has the messianic character, and this is the type of character I would hope to create in my novel. Researching the history of the Messiah will undoubtedly raise my ability to understand and express such a character through writing.

The last course I plan on taking in the spring is called “Literature of The Shoah”. It takes the phenomenon of the Holocaust as its subject and highlights it through Israeli writers who share their experiences of survival and death. The tragedies incurred during the Holocaust are some of the most emotionally invoking stories in the world. Families were torn apart, an entire group of people was slaughtered. I look forward to reading the stories of survivors who fought their way through starvation. The fact that they have beautiful families of their own, and that they have made major contributions to society is very moving. I believe this 3-credit course will fulfill an elective requirement. It is a literature course, so it will be directly relative to my major, but when I was getting it approved, one of the signers mentioned that the course content couldn’t contribute towards a literature course. It will be an elective that pertains to my major and helps me as a writer and a humane person in this world.

The previously listed courses will contribute 15-credit-hours to my major. I am also contemplating taking a “Rabbinic Literature” course that would add another 3-credit-
hours to my major. It discusses the literature that forms the basis of Jewish society. It focuses on Jewish literature written during the second temple period. There has been a lot of talk on the news about a “third temple” being built. I want to learn from the literature of the past in order to understand the times and literature of the present. I wish to stretch myself academically while I am in Haifa, and I think that the listed courses will test my ability to comprehend and express intellect and emotion through language. Learning to write in another language while living in a new country will undoubtedly broaden my horizons as an English Writing major. I will do everything I can in and out of the classroom to make my writing will improve. After Israel, I will be one step closer to my major and dream of becoming a professional author. I have been preparing over a year for this trip.

I know it doesn’t compare to hands on experience in the host country, but I have been reading, researching, and trying to find answers about Israel. Since September 2009 when I met with Mariette the first time I was completely determined to go to the Holy Land and study. I studied Hebrew with a personal tutor for 7 months before taking a course at Tulane, I began reading the Torah and memorizing it for familiarity with the countries religious text, I have read books about Israeli-Palestinian conflict, I have done research on the rise of Zionism and the establishment of Israel under the UN in 1948, I have been following Jerusalem Post, Al Jazeera, Arutz Sheva, and National News (Israeli), every week through RSS feeds, and I have been comparing the Arab and Israeli music to one another to get a feel for the cultural differences in their modes of expression.

I have been in constant communication with my cousin Breezy Beckler’s sister whose name is Mandy Kelley. Mandy and her husband Justin moved from California to study archeology at Hebrew University’s graduate school in Jerusalem. I have read every single blog post, from day one of arriving in Jerusalem and living in a shanty hostel, to their latest excursions to Egypt. I might not have had the same experiences as them, but I surely have learned from them. Jerusalem is less than two hours away (1 hour and 44 minutes by Google Maps), and communication technology bridges that gap almost instantly.

I have several close friends who are Israeli citizens; one of them is named Rachel Weiss. Her father worked for 10 years at Haifa’s Technion and he has many relatives and personal connections in Haifa and the surrounding communities. He has given me a list of names, email addresses, and physical addresses for people I should visit when I am in Haifa. I am working with my Dad’s close friend David Chao on helping organize a million person prayer day in Israel. The communications are still in their infancy, but the intent and network is there.

Once again, I hope you accept my apologies in the complications incurred in the study abroad process. I have pure intentions, and will bring every bit of knowledge, compassion, and passion back to Loyola if an exemption is made to study abroad. Unfortunately, I have already committed all of my efforts to next semester in Israel, and
my plane ticket was booked a day before I received word from Miss. Debbie Danna about the need for a petition. So if the board decides not to accept my petition, I would greatly appreciate any information about how I could formally transfer to Haifa University, and any information about how I could formally transfer back in the fall.

Overall, I think you have a great program going here, and I hope that each and every one of you has an amazing Christmas break.

Thank you very much for your time,
John Ellison