

Exchange evaluation report Thit Wange Staerkaer

I am a 4th year BA student of China-studies at university of Copenhagen. I always wanted to go to the US and study, because I had heard a lot of good things about American universities and the whole college experience. The University of Washington Seattle offered a lot of interesting courses in my field. In Denmark china studies is a relatively small study and does not have a real good equivalent of the international studies such as the UW does.

In the orientation process I felt a little confused about how to choose courses and get in touch with professors, and a lot of classes were already full before I could choose. I found, on the other hand, that professors were very willing to guide students and take me into a class. In general professors were very helpful, and although the relationship seems more formal with politeness it also seemed more personal in a way.

The classes were mostly larger than I am used to from China-studies at home. Also people come with more varying backgrounds since some have their major in political science, some in china studies and some in business school which gives a good forum for exchanging view points, but also demands for the teaching to begin at square one for everything in most courses, where after there are only 10 weeks to learn everything. Therefore the amount of material covered is large but there is not as much time to go into depth with specific themes as compared to the Danish system where BA students have a much more focus study program and roughly the same prerequisites.

The FIUTS introduction was very helpful to make contacts. Also I found my accommodation on a note in the FIUTS office. I lived in a private house owned by and elderly man. We were 7 students living there. It would probably have been fine if we had been an age wise more homogeneous group. My housemates were mostly a lot younger than me and pretty new to college and we did not share so much. I think I would advice other students in the same situation to find a new accommodation instead of staying if you do not quite fit in. There are lots of accommodation possibilities in the area around campus, and moving is not that hard as I saw from other exchange students, you do not have as many things as at home and there are more places to find.

I thought the campus was great compared to having no common campus in Copenhagen. There was a great feeling of student community and it was a good opportunity to meet people from other majors than one's own. Especially, it was great that the recreational facilities such as kayaking club and such was so close to where you had classes, it made it so much easier to socialize. In that connection I would like to stress the

importance of telling new exchange students about such club sports since it is in my opinion the best way to meet Americans and really get into the culture. Personally I did not get involved in the kayak club until last quarter, which was a shame since I had some of my best social experiences there.

I will also like to make a positive remark about health system; it is great that you have the first visit every quarter for free. It saves you for a lot of insurance trouble. However, it is not easy when you come in for the next visit and have to figure out all the insurance paperwork when you are really ill as I were in my second quarter. I find the care-attitude a little annoying. When you have a high fever and just want something against a bad flue, you first have to be weighed and discuss you last period before a doctor will see you.

I found the administrative services for students at the UW and exchange students pretty good, It was quite easy to get in touch with someone to help you with your problems.

Apart from the various clubs on campus, I found in that the FUIITS was a great way to become a member of a community. In the beginning it was hard to integrate in the group of people I lived with and other students in my classes. Because undergrads are not attached to a class group like we are in Denmark, the network seems to be more outside the classroom. Also it can be hard to build a close friendship with Americans as they know you will be leaving in a year and therefore do not want to "invest" too much in you. However, in the end, after I had been in a number of the same classes as a group of girls I started to get to know them better and went out to eat with them a few times.

Financially my scholarship from the scan design foundation helped a lot since I was not able to get a lot of other scholarships. It made it possible for me to have some more experiences that I otherwise might not have found within my budget like small trips to the surrounding area of Washington State and experience participate more in the international community's activities than I would have had time for if I should have earned the money from a job.

I opened an account at Bank of America from the very beginning and it functioned very well, although they do not many cash machines in the central US. I transferred money by wiring from my Danish account, it is a good Idea to watch the exchange rate and transfer as much as possible from the beginning. Also if you are not used to the check system, be sure to write the right account number on the check, as the bank does not automatically transfer between your accounts; even if you have enough money in total you will be fined for overdrawing on one account. As for phones I had a prepaid T-mobile phone which was fine for the most. However, T-mobile does not have the best coverage, Verizon seems to be better, and remember than you usually also pay when someone calls you or you receive a text message.

Going out for food was cheaper in Denmark. But buying nice food in supermarkets was about the same price. Accommodation may be a little cheaper relative to Denmark but it depends on the type of accommodation. I had my own room in a shared house with 7 people 10 minutes walk from campus and paid 490 dollars a month all included, which is pretty reasonable. A rent of up to 600 for something similar is common.

I greatly appreciate the scan designs role in the exchange. The network of scan design gave us Danish students a place to discuss our experiences in a different country and to get good ideas of how to solve problems or what was interesting to do in Seattle. Also on the trips organized by the Scan design and Anni Fuller we went on some really great trips. The only problem I felt in it is that it was a shame the program only takes care of some of the group of Danish students that is the ones in the program.

I think this exchange trip to the US has been one of the most exciting and self-developing experiences of my life. I have lived in the culture of another country and met a lot of exiting people from around the world. Many of them I am still in touch with. Furthermore, staying at a university in another country is a very interesting learning experience it shows you that things can be done in a different way and gives you new glasses to view your own system, these alternative ways of looking at academic problems and at teaching methods has given me a lot of initiative and new perspectives in my studies.

Thanks a lot to Scan design for helping me to experience all this☺

Sincerely

Thit Wange Staerkaer