

EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT

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Institution: University of Wisconsin – Madison
Year: Academic 2010 – 2011.

1. WHY AND WHERE:

- a. Why did you decide to study in the US or Denmark as an exchange student?

My intended purpose, studying 1 year at UW-Madison, has been to further develop and strengthen my academic competences and knowledge within the field of film studies. It has been my hope to achieve this goal by attending classes under the Graduate Program of Film Studies (Department: Com Arts), which deals with historical research, critical theorizing, in-depth analysis and a practical take on the field of film studies.

On a personal note, I always wanted to experience USA and the American culture, which I had otherwise only encountered through the influence of American popular cultural in Denmark, and of course especially through movies.

- b. Why did you select the program/University ?

The UW-Madison Film Program has generated some of the most interesting and presently significant film scholars, among others David Bordwell, Carl Plantinga and Murray Smith. Within my home department of Film Studies at the University of Copenhagen these scholars writings continue to be a fundamental and ongoing influence. At the same time I found it intriguing to let my first meeting with the American culture begin in the Heartland of the country instead of choosing what most Danish exchange students do, which is to go to either the west coast (San Francisco, Seattle, L.A. San Diego) or East Coast (New York, Boston).

- c. What were your expectations?

My expectation was that it would be a great challenge to live and study in a foreign country. In a personal level my hope was that I would meet interesting persons, especially Americans, that I would develop my English, and have the opportunity to travel around the country and experience the multicultural diversity of the USA. Academically I knew it would be a challenge to study abroad.

d. What preparations did you make prior to departure?

What comes to my mind among the many smaller and larger tasks on hand before my departure were: Get a Visa, get notice to quit my room, move my address to my parents, apply for grants/scholarships, buy insurance, take TOEFL language test, find accommodation in Madison, buy flight tickets,

e. How could you improve your preparations?

I have to say that I think my preparation went more or less smoothly and this, I think, is due to the fact that I started my planning early, more than a year before going abroad, and tried to get things done along the way instead of waiting to the last moment.

2. ARRIVAL/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

a. Please recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.

I lived in a private resident with 4 other American Students, which I can highly recommend.

b. Please comment on the orientation and activities offered at both your home University and the host University, what did it cover and how did it help you adapt?

There are many things that need to be done, when you want to study abroad. The University of Copenhagen has an orientation event, by The International Office, where they basically tell you, that you have a lot to do and that you better get started. You can not rely on the International Office to help with much, they know very little about more specific things concerning issues connected to American conditions generally and the American host University specifically. It would be nice if the International Office at one's home University had people who could guide one when it comes to more specific questions.

The Intro activities at University (ISS) were fine both socially and academically. Though, the introductions were very general and I would have liked that they were centered around activities with students from the department where I studied.

c. Was the Scan|Design Fellowship Coordinator of any help for your preparation, arrival, or orientation?

I only heard about the Scan Design Foundation shortly before departure and first met and talked to the coordinator when I had arrived in Madison. But the coordinator was a great help after that.

2. ACADEMICS:

a. Please evaluate the instruction you received. Compare the following to your home institution's system:

- class registration: starts earlier than at my home university, which means you can browse courses and select them earlier, which I like. However, as a special student you can not be sure to get the courses you wish.
- classroom structure: 15-20 students, teacher lectures and asks questions, engage in discussion with students, good use of empirical material to exemplify. It seems like there is a widespread attempt to make the teaching interesting. More than I normally experience at my home university.
- instruction: very knowledgeable, interesting to listen to, engaging.
- teacher/student relations: informal, like in Denmark.
- grading/exams: No external examiner! Otherwise more or less the same as in Denmark.
- administration: Easy to get in contact with, Helpful when needed. Essay then at home University.
- library, computer, and classroom facilities: Good condition.

b. Please evaluate the quality and content of instruction.

Very knowledgeable, interesting to listen to, engaging. Material was well-chosen considering the subject.

c. In general, what did you like best and least about the academics?

Pros: Interesting course subjects, high level of academic involvement, more weekly courses hours than I am used to.

d. Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?

From the Com Arts department I can recommend: Jeff Smith, Ben Singer and Kelley Conway.

3. HOUSING:

a. How would you assess the housing arrangements?

It is pretty easy to find accommodation in Madison, whether it is subletting a room private, in a coop or an apartment building.

b. How did you locate your housing?

I talked to a friend from Denmark who had studied in Madison and he got me in contact with an UW-M Student who was interested in living with me.

c. Which did you choose, and why? Private housing, I wanted to live with American.

d. What would you recommend? Everybody has different preferences when it comes to finding a place to live, I can only say that I am happy that I choose to live in a private house with other American Students.

4. EXCHANGE SITE:

In general, please describe your impressions of the host University campus and its location and surrounding community.

Madison is a nice city where you feel the presence of the University everywhere. The campus is spread around the northern part of the City, resting on the shore of Lake Mendota. It is easy to get around since biking is accommodate around the city.

It is always easy to find help if need, people in Madison are generally very friendly and smiling. The city is full of activities all year long both on campus and in the Madison Community. The link between University and surrounding community seems strong which create a cultural creative and animate atmosphere.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Please describe any health or safety concerns (e.g., quality of medical facilities, unsafe districts, theft, etc.) associated with your study.

I have had no unpleasant experiences in Madison and no encounter with medical facilities. You can walk in the City night and day without feeling insecure or threatened.

6. CULTURAL ASPECTS:

a. How did you integrate into the host country culture and meet members of the community? (e.g., mentors, clubs, sports, extracurricular activities, pubs, etc.)

Beside the 4 American students that I lived with I have mostly hung out with other students that I take courses with. As a fan of NFL I have meet and spoken to several locals both at Camp Randall (Football Stadium) and while Watching NFL games at bars and restaurants. I have also meet other American Students through my American Friends.

b. Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them. (e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)

Well, it is a challenge to finish a plate of food before the waiter will come and remove the plate. A custom difficult getting adjusted to. Superficial and too eager politeness/interest can be exhausting but should be meet with a smile. Political correctness is the norm, and one should remember that Americans do not, generally speaking, share the cynical and dark Danish humor.

7. FINANCIAL:

a. Please describe how the Scan|Design Foundation fellowship assisted you / made a difference in your decision to study abroad.

The Scan Design Foundation contributed to make my stay in USA even more interesting and giving then I could have expected. The social events and different tours became highlight that made me some good friends and let me experience things I would otherwise not have experienced.

b. What is the best way to access/transfer money?

I used my own bank in Denmark during the stay, which worked fine for me. There is no fee when you withdraw money from many for the ATMs in Madison. It is, however, easy to open an

account in Madison where you can transfer money from you Danish to the American account and get an American Visa card. Bank: UW Union.

- c. How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.

An Estimate depending on what you pay in rent, which can vary between \$350-\$800, I would say you need \$1000-\$1500 a month.

School Books pr. semester: \$100-\$200

Food pr month: \$300-\$500

Transportation: Bus is free when you are a UW-M Student, Bike: \$25-\$100

- d. Please note any unexpected expenses you incurred.

Furniture, Kitchen tools.

- e. Please comment on the relative "cost of living" between your home University and the host University.

It is difficult to make a 1:1 comparison between living expenses at home and abroad since you will must like not follow the same habits abroad as when home – that's part of the experience! However, in my case I would say that I have had the same expenses on a daily basis during my stay in the States (rent, food, transportation, books etc.) as at home.

8. EXCHANGE/SCAN|DESIGN FELLOWSHIP ADMINISTRATION:

- a Please comment on the assistance and activities by the Scan|Design Fellowship coordinator before your departure, upon arrival, and during your stay. What worked and what could be improved or changed?

I meet the Scan Design Coordinator shortly before the beginning of the semester at a picnic arranged by Scan Design. During the semester a range of tours and gatherings were arranged that made it possible to meet with the other Danish exchange students. Both Julie and Karen have been fantastic during the stay, showing us around Madison and helping with practical questions. It has been nice to have some fellow Danes to share you experiences with. Besides the coordinators we also meet some American students that had studied in Denmark. Perhaps the interaction between Danish and American students could be extended.

- b. Please evaluate services and effectiveness of the University administrative offices.

I found the UW-M administration easy to get in contact with and quick to respond on any questions I had. This is also help by a smart Intranet that give you access to all the necessary information about the ongoing study and your personal data.

9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:

Please describe the type of student for whom this exchange is best suited and what advice would you give to future students.

Studying at UW-M is for anybody with the interest of experience the American campus life, engaging in intents and invigorating academic studies and taking advantage of a rich local culture.

10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

a. How would you rate the quality of the overall experience?

Studying abroad has not been a life changing experience but it has, however, help me shape my academic abilities, given me a more clear idea about what I want to do, and been a personal challenge that has taught me more about myself.

b. How realistic were your academic and personal expectations and how did the Scan|Design Fellowship Program make a difference?

One of the things I struggled with, unexpected I should add, is the language. I had a preconception that it would be easy to adjust to speaking English on a regular basis then it turned out to be. It influences you ability to engage in conversions, in calls and out side of class and has been bite of an annoyance.

ScanDesign made the encounter with the American culture more easy and exciting.

c. What did you consider to be the greatest benefit and challenge of studying abroad?

The knowledge I have gained both academically and personally, the great persons I have meet, and all the different places that I had time to experience during my stay.

FEEL FREE TO ADD OTHER COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE.