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I didn't know a great deal about Wisconsin, or Madison for that matter, when I chose to study there for a semester. I largely made my choice based on the reputation of the local university, which is University of Wisconsin, Madison. I study media, and within my field it is widely regarded as among the world's top institutions in both education and research. Several universally recognized gurus in both film and media research have had or still have an office on campus, for instance Henry Jenkins and David Bordwell. So I expected to see a lot of high-quality teaching and a lot of challenging course work when I arrived, and my expectations were met to the fullest.

It was my experience, that if you show interest and involvement in the course work the professors are happy to meet you half-way, which definitely isn't always the case at KU. My institute at the UW even offers the chance of an independent study where you meet one-on-one with the professor every two weeks and discuss the readings, which are decided among student and teacher. I would recommend this option to everyone studying at the UW. I had such a course with Professor Jonathan Gray from the Media & Culture faculty who is a brilliant and funny man, and probably the best teacher I've ever had. Before each session you have to put in a little extra effort and get a pretty good grasp of the readings, but I felt that I got more out of this course than two average courses at KU. Contrary to the other Danes at the UW I didn't have any midterms or examinations during the semester, but finished my three courses with a 20-page paper on a topic of my own choice. Three big papers at the end of the semester make it difficult to organize one's work, so my last few weeks of school were more than a little hectic.

I didn't want to commit myself to a place of permanent accommodation beforehand, so I had booked a bed in the local hostel two weeks before start of school, and counted on finding a place while I was in town. This is an absolutely great hostel.. The staff is incredibly nice and welcoming (as pretty much all Madisonians are) and took a genuine interest in how my apartment hunt was going – several times updating me on opportunities of accommodation or informing me about other lodgers looking for roommates. After a week the stay in the hostel paid off as I roomed with an American guy who had found an apartment in the nicest and coziest part of the city. He was looking for a roommate and so offered me the spot. I must point out that I was probably pretty lucky – my roommate had been living at the hostel for about a month without luck.

The apartment was pretty old, and my room was very ugly and very cold in the winter. Nevertheless, these things never bothered me particularly because the neighborhood was so nice, and because I was only there for four months. Looking back, though the apartment was great, if I had to do it over again, I would probably have applied for a room in the Saxony apartment complex for students instead of moving into a regular apartment. A lot of exchange students live at the Saxony, and my friends there found a social network very fast. When you settle into a regular apartment it's more of a gamble. One of my roommates was a working man over 30 - he was a really nice guy, but just at a totally different place in his life. When he was home, he usually had to work, and didn't have much time to the spontaneous socializing of student life. In the Saxony I presume you meet more like-minded people, though it is more pricy to live there.

A few days before the start of the semester the university had arranged an orientation day for the international students. It covered most of the formalities of studying and living in Madison, and as I remember it, it was pretty useful. We received a folder with the essential paper work that covered insurance and financial matters. Maybe I could have used a bit more information about the cultural aspects of living in Madison, for instance that not tipping a service person is considered rude. This could be something that the ScanDesign coordinators could take up.

In spite of these few cultural misunderstandings I did settle very well into Madison life - I love the Midwestern charm and openness. Coming from Denmark it's unusual, and refreshing, to see perfect strangers share a frank conversation on the bus. I've heard a few Danes say that the American openness is superficial and empty, but I don't think this is true. It's just non-committal. When a Dane engages in conversation with someone for more than five minutes it's often with the expectation of something more, maybe that a friendship will grow. An American can have a pretty personal talk with a stranger for half an hour (sober), without expecting to ever see them again. They just enjoy the conversation. This was a surprise to me, when I was new in Madison and took a little time to learn. This openness also makes it easier for outsiders to get into contact with the locals. If one wants to expand the social network, just go to the local café and talk to the people there. I made a few friends this way.

I was extremely happy about the orientation and activities provided by ScanDesign. Our coordinator Julie Allen was very friendly and helpful, and through ScanDesing I got to see a lot of things that I probably wouldn't have experienced otherwise. The ScanDesign foundation enriched my stay in Madison tremendously, and the coordinators provided a stability that added a feeling of security to my stay - as the scholarship did as well, of course. I probably spent around \$1100 each month, everything

included. As an exchange student you generally spend money on more things, but Madison is a pretty cheap place to live, and definitely cheaper than Copenhagen on all accounts.

If one can live with not studying in a big city, Madison is recommendable to pretty much any student looking to go a semester or two abroad. The people are incredibly curious and welcoming which is ideal when you're new to the place. It didn't take long before I thought of Madison as home. As for the notoriously cold weather, it didn't seem that bad to me. Most of the year the weather is better than in Denmark. In my semester we experienced Indian summer as late as early November. Also, the air is dryer and crisper than in Denmark, making the cold more bearable. But I would recommend going in the fall semester, rather than spring, as the temperature is supposed to approach arctic levels in January and February.

All in all, I had a great and unforgettable time in Madison. Approaching the end of my university studies, I'm considering my future plans. One option is applying for a Ph.D., and I would definitely apply in Madison as well.