

Scan Design Evaluation by:

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I just finished a semester on University of Wisconsin – Madison. I've always known that I wanted to do an exchange in the US because I have an interest in American politics and culture. I study political science and chose UW because the political science department has a broad selection of courses and because the university and the town had a good reputation at my faculty in Denmark. I expected the teaching to be of quite high quality but also very different than Denmark. I had some concerns about writing papers in English, so I did try to catch up on my grammar to prepare myself.

I found the university orientation the first week answered my practical questions about class, visa, grades etc. It did however very poor in terms of bringing people together. I find that as a graduate student it would have been more rewarding to have an introduction to your area of study, both meeting the other international students who study the same as yourself, but also some American students. I did however not participate in any of the social activities following the official introduction day. I found that talking to the American exchange students that had been to Denmark in the spring helped answering a lot of my practical questions because they with their knowledge on Denmark knew where the major difference lay.

The instruction was in general very good. In comparison to my home University I find that the professors on UW seemed much better trained to teach. I was surprised to realize that the classes were so small that the professor of course knew your name (not always the case in Denmark), and expected you to stop my his/hers office once and a while and talk about things. Two out of my three professors gave me written feedback on every hand in and also my final paper – so this I was also very pleased with. In the beginning I was overwhelmed by the amount of written assignments I had, but soon discovered that I easily got an A. The amount of readings assigned was about the same as in Denmark, but with the written assignments on top of these, the workload was definitely heavier than back home. But all though there were many assignments I unfortunately got the impression that quantity was valued over quality. That is all though I had to produce a lot more, the quality of the content was lower than in Denmark.

I chose to take a course outside my normal sphere of the political science department, on the public affairs school called *Comparative Family Policy*. I was very excited about this course because it was so practice oriented and challenged my usually theoretical way of thinking. I can only recommend for political science students to take course on neighboring faculties because it gives some new perspective.

I loved studying on College Library that has great view over the lake. I cannot understand with such a beautiful campus and surroundings that so many of the classrooms are designed without windows or with a view to brickwalls.

I found Campus and Madison to be beautiful. I appreciated that campus and downtown are located the same place, because it meant that you didn't need a car to get around. I loved the structure of Madison with Campus and Bascom Hill at one end, State Street leading the way up to the beautiful Capitol and the lakes on both sides. Madison is in spite of its relative small size quite lively, liberal and diverse, and thus shares in many ways characteristics with a big city.

Both Scan Design but also the Americans I lived with did a great job introducing me to the American culture. Because Madison is so characterized by its student population, it was nice when you were introduced to regular people and families. This kind of gave you a peak into regular Americans everyday life – not only students. I generally found it easy to integrate with this culture, because Americans are.. easy going. One cultural difference that I stumbled upon several times was the sensitivity about race and nationality. I knew of course that this is a special topic in light of American history. In my house you often experienced an American come to the rescue of an international that in the eye of the American were stereotyped with his/her race or nationality. Often the international would have no problem being characterized as being in this group. Internationals often also made more fun about racial or national stereotypes (including their own) which some Americans found offending. I often found myself debating with them whether this overly sensitiveness to race could give the reverse result than the one intended. Also I experienced and heard from other Danes that almost all courses they had taken at some point touched upon this issue. I was surprised that Americans still have to process this question that much in order to overcome their past.

I was recommended by a fellow Danish student who had been on exchange to Madison to apply to a co-op for accommodation. I applied early on to the International Cooperative House and got accepted. I can really recommend this to other exchange students because you get to know some other American and International students. Furthermore it's really cheap and an easy way of living because all cleaning, cooking and maintenance are shared. I would not recommend living on Saxony or other houses where mostly internationals live, because it can be really hard to meet Americans students. So try to find living arrangements with Americans.

I chose to open a bank account at transfer enough money from Denmark so that I could pay rent every month from this account. I did this because a fee is charged every time you cash money in the US on you Danish Visa card and because there is a daily limit. The transfer costs a lot too in fee so only do this if you have all the money to transfer that one time.

It's a lot cheaper for a Danish student to live in Madison than in Copenhagen. You can both find cheaper rent, and even if not so rest of your living expenses are notable smaller than in Denmark. Eating and drinking out is much more affordable. My rent plus basic food in the co-op was approx. 427 USD a month, which is very low, but then I ate out a lot, so I would guess that 500-600 USD is more accurate.

The Scan Design Foundation Fellowship both provided me with a lot of unique experiences in the US that I would have had without them. The scholarship allowed for me to travel in January before returning to Denmark. I travelled both to New York City, and around California after my semester in Madison, and thus saw a different side of the US.

Julie Allen and Karen Bien did a great job welcoming the Danish exchange students and arranging different activities for us. These activities were great and I can hardly complain about this. However keeping in mind that the objective of the foundation is to strengthen American and Danish relations

I feel it's a mistake to bring the Danish students together alone for these activities, especially when its such a large group. Instead of introducing Danes to Danes one should instead try to introduce the Danes to Americans. One of the hardest thing as an exchange student is to meet the 'regular' American students and not just other international students. If the foundation somehow could work harder on this I would think the objective of the Foundation is better reached. We were introduced to the American students who exchanged with Denmark in the spring, and this was really great. In my opinion the foundation should keep building on these relationships; bringing past Scan Design recipients together with the new ones. So I would definitely recommend the foundation to take advantage of the group of Danish students now returned from Madison by hooking them up with the American exchange students in Denmark at present. This way the Americans will get to know Danish students and get a closer connection to Denmark.

Yours sincerely,

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