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EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT

- 1. Why and Where?** After a lot of thought, Copenhagen became my choice as my study abroad location because I wanted to be in an international, dynamic European city with a culture and language much different from my own. While many cities fulfill these requirements, I also wanted to live in a city that was less “mainstream” as such places as Paris or London, which I had heard so much about my entire life. Copenhagen, on the other hand, was much less known to me, and therefore I was intrigued. Besides the obvious expectations of beautiful historic architecture, cold temperatures, and lots of blondes on bicycles – kind of kidding– I also expected my experience in Copenhagen to be challenging, fun, and a great chance to meet people different from myself. Trying to prepare for what I expected Copenhagen to be like was difficult. Of course I tried to be a smart traveler by reading a lot about Denmark before I left and making sure that I brought the essential items that I needed, but many of my experiences in Copenhagen – especially the challenging ones – were not something I could have prepared for ahead of time. But that is part of the fun! Off-hand I can think of two very important things I should have studied up on: how the transportation system works (I was fined on the metro my very first day for buying a ticket for the wrong zone), and I should have learned food vocabulary to navigate the grocery stores more effectively. There are probably many more things I should have prepared for, but these are the most important right away.
- 2. Arrival/On-Site Orientation:** When I arrived in Copenhagen, I was lucky enough to be greeted by my assigned buddy, Lærke, from Copenhagen Business School. I had no idea what I was doing so it was great that she could show me how to use the metro and show me to my apartment, which was Tietgenkollegiet. The design of Tietgen is unbelievably stunning and award-winning, which was obvious as soon as I laid eyes on the complex. It’s a big donut shaped apartment with modern square windows jutting out in random directions. I lived with mostly Danes and a handful of other Europeans, which was

absolutely awesome since I was able to learn a lot about their cultures and I learned how easily I could get along with people who came from much different backgrounds than myself. I also met people from other places besides Europe in the orientation activities offered by my host university. They had two weeks of different activities ranging from Danish *hygge* (cozy) celebrations and food tasting, to going out together at bars around Copenhagen. It was so helpful for all of us to get to know each other – especially because I lived with non-exchange students. We related well since we all were on a similar adventure. My home university also had activities that helped prepare for going abroad where we had guest lecturers discussing culture shock and safety, and prior study abroad students answered any questions we had. I also had help from the ScanDesign coordinator, Anne Line, who offered to meet up with us quite soon after arrival.

3. **Academics:** There were definitely some differences between my home university's and Copenhagen Business School's academics. Class registration at my home university is entirely online, while at CBS I had to write down my top choices with an alternate for each. Administration was not as accommodating as my school in the US – working hours tend to be shorter and sometimes I was frustrated by response times to my concerns. Grading and exams were much different in some classes. I had two written tests, one oral exam, and one paper and in most of my classes there were mandatory but ungraded projects and/or presentations. The written tests were four hours long although they didn't feel that long. The oral exam was tough for me because I was not used to that format. I really had to know the book and analyze the information with questions I didn't know ahead of time. The grading scale consists of seven grades between (-3) and 12. I thought they graded pretty fairly. The quality of instruction varied from class to class, but it was mostly very good. I thought the International Finance (with professor Lars Kolte) and International Business Law classes were very well taught and I can say that having an international perspective in both of these subjects was eye opening as I am used to classes taught within the American perspective. I have mixed feelings about having one graded assignment (i.e. a paper, written test, or an oral exam). On the one hand, I saw the benefits of having a lot of time to absorb the information and did not have to cram for midterms that may occur at

- inconvenient times semester. But with that comes a lot of responsibility in making sure you keep up. If you don't do well on the final, you won't do well in the class since there are no more tests that will help you out later.
4. **Housing:** My housing arrangement was unique compared to most of the other international students. I applied to live in Holger Danske Vej, which consisted of all international students, but then five days before I left I was informed that I would be moved to Tietgenkollegiet. I located my housing luckily with help from my Copenhagen buddy, and even though it was very close to the metro, I would have had a difficult time finding it by myself with the little travel experience I had at that point, so I was very thankful to have her assistance. At this apartment, I would be one of only two international students in my section, and the rest would be fulltime Danish (or at least non-exchange) students. I was so happy that I was able to immerse myself with the Danish culture since I lived with them. I also felt like I was a part of a family so I would recommend this building to anyone. It's only two stops on the metro from downtown and about five stops away from CBS. And like I mentioned earlier, it's one of the most unique and beautiful buildings I have ever seen. I had the nicest room and when I showed my friends back home the pictures of my kitchen/living room that I shared with 12 others, they said that it reminded them of MTV's Real World. I couldn't help but agree!
 5. **Exchange Site:** Copenhagen Business School has very modern and new facilities. There are only four buildings and they are pretty close to each other. The buildings are located in Frederiksberg, a smaller neighborhood of Copenhagen that has a smaller town feel compared to the rest. It is a beautiful area with lots of cafes and little shops. I was worried Frederiksberg would be very far away from the city, but it was only two stops away from downtown on the metro. And it was cool to be so close to the city, and yet have a totally different feel to it than the rest of Copenhagen.
 6. **Health and Safety:** Copenhagen is probably the safest city I have ever been. There were only a handful of times when I felt even slightly unsafe. We were warned about pick-pocketers in the metro but I haven't known anyone to have that happen. But just like anywhere you go, it's important to be vigilant. There are a few places that get a bad rap in Copenhagen, such as Nørrebro and Christiania, but I have been to both places and felt fine. There should be no hesitance in exploring the

different areas of the city.

7. **Cultural Aspects:** I was surprised by how quickly I was able to adjust to the new culture. I went in with an open mind and decided to put myself out there in order to meet new people. I was lucky enough to live with 8 other Danes so it was impossible not to integrate into the culture. We had traditional Danish dinners and watched soccer matches, and on almost on a daily basis, we would discuss our backgrounds and experiences. My roommates told me that Danes tend to be more reserved and are hesitant to let people into their circle of friends. I would say I agree with this to an extent. Some of my roommates took a long time to get to know, but over time we became close friends. On the plus side, when out in public, there were few people that hassle you because they are so reserved compared to the Americans, generally. Another cultural difference from college life in America is that people love to cook in Denmark. We would have huge dinners and it was important to eat with both your fork in your left and your knife in your right hand, but they did not make fun of me too much when I didn't know what I was supposed to do. People are pretty open there. Even some of the traditional gender roles in Denmark are less apparent. One of my roommate's dad's took his wife's last name instead!
8. **Financial:** Scan Design made a huge difference in my study abroad. 90% of my tuition was covered, which meant I was able to divert resources into other learning experiences, immersing myself in the Copenhagen culture and traveling to other parts of Europe. This abroad experience might have been the only time in my life that I live in another country so it would have been an entirely different experience if I was not able to do the exploring that I was able to with the generous ScanDesign scholarship. As for banking, most people opened a Nordea bank account and transferred money there. I wouldn't say I had a strict budget, but I aimed for about \$800/month, depending on if I had a trip that month. I tried to be very responsible by I bringing lunches, making dinners in, and restraining myself from shopping... most of the time. But wow, coffee is amazing there. That was definitely my vice. Copenhagen is rather expensive and it's difficult to be conscious but some important things to account for would be a monthly pass on the metro, which runs about 320DKK (about \$60), and then around that, decide how much you want to spend on food and entertainment. If you like to go out, make sure to find out about bars with good deals!
9. **Exchange/Scan Design Fellowship Administration:** I was in contact

with Anne Line before I left. She was really nice and offered us assistance if we needed it. In my first few weeks, a few of us met up at the Danish Design Centre. It was like a museum with all kinds of products that were designed in Denmark. I was amazed by how modern and clean the furniture and other product designs were even from the 1970s! I loved seeing so many progressive inventions for the environment as well. The event was a great way to be introduced to the Danish ideology of clean design with environmental innovation. The only part that could have been improved in my ScanDesign experience would be to have had a schedule of the events ahead of time so that I could have planned around them. There were several I was unable to go to because I either had tests, family or friends visiting, or had plans to go out of town. I would have loved to have gone to Aarhus or the Hven bike tour but was unable! The ScanDesign administration was always very helpful and understanding and I'm happy that I was able to go to some of the events in the beginning and meet the other recipients.

10. Program/Student Type: I do not believe there is a study abroad "type." Anyone can study abroad if they realize they are capable of stepping out of their comfort zone. I have a lot of friends who said they wouldn't be able to leave for the US for that long, but this is a once in a lifetime opportunity that no one should pass up. I was definitely a little nervous before I left, but I went to Copenhagen deciding to be open-minded and I ended up learning a lot about myself and I think I am a more flexible person thanks to my experience. Of course I missed my friends and family at times, but you would be surprised how quickly you can meet new friends and feel comfortable. I'm so happy that I have made new friends who I will have forever.

11. Overall Experience: My overall experience was awesome. I would do it all over again in a heartbeat. ScanDesign undoubtedly made a difference in my experience because I was able to set aside a lot of the stress of financing this experience and focused instead on immersing myself in Copenhagen, and it also helped that ScanDesign had so many cultural activities set up for us. I think that I met my academic and personal expectations. Studying abroad is not just a five month vacation. I took my classes seriously, just as I do at home, but even more than my typical semester at home, I learned so much outside of the classroom as well. Learning does not have to be this burdensome task. Acquiring more knowledge, being it through books or experiences,

prepares you for the unpredictable life events that lie ahead. Learning how to communicate, work with, and understand people that are different from you is incredibly enriching, and I can already tell it has enhanced all my current and future relationships with people. The greatest benefit of studying abroad is the confidence you attain from challenging yourself to face your fears and rely on yourself. The world is so much bigger than we can even begin to fathom so exploring more of this place and its people, helps you put life into perspective: every day is filled with opportunities and you shouldn't overlook them, whether you're in Copenhagen or at home!