

## EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT

**Student Name: Alexander Carlsen**

**Institution where you studied: Dept. of Architecture**

**Semester of participation: Fall 2014**

**E-mail address (if possible not University email): a.carlsen@me.com**

### 1. Pre-Exchange. Why and Where:

- a. Why did you decide to study in the US or Denmark as an exchange student?
  - Going to the US to study was a big decision. I wanted to try something study wise than I was used to in Denmark. At Aarhus School of Architecture we are very focused on the artistic approach to architecture whereas at UW (and US in general) there is a more academic background with more literary and tectonic focus.  
Having said all that the main reason I wanted to go was to explore and experience something different than Denmark.
- b. Why did you select the program/University?
  - After researching the different exchange options Aarhus School of Architecture offered I decided that Seattle was a great place to go in terms of what I wanted to achieve academically. But more importantly it seemed like Seattle would be an awesome city to live in!
- c. What were your expectations?
  - Before going I was very excited and a little bit nervous about how everything would pan out. How would it be living in a city without knowing? What would my fellow students be like? Would my new roommate be a cool guy and how would I react in a different setting and outside my normal comfort zone.
- d. What preparations did you make prior to departure?
  - Preparing to go to the US is quite a daunting task. There are so many papers that need to be prepared. Visa, school, financing, accommodations. So much information that needs to be read – and most information is very scarce and scattered across multiple sources. I would recommend all new fellows to start preparing early and to seek help from past fellows as they can guide you along the right way.
- e. How could you improve your preparations?
  -

### 2. ARRIVAL/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

- a. Recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.
  -
- b. 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 prepare / adjust after arriving?
  -

### 2. ACADEMICS:

- a. Evaluate the instruction you received. Compare the following to your home institution's system:
  - class registration

- Quite confusing. As an exchange student you can't sign up online and you've to get the department advisors to do it for you. I wasn't aware of this to begin with and it was stressful seeing the spots fill up quickly.
- classroom structure
  - Very well structured. Everything was planned and communicated clearly. I was never in doubt about where or when I needed to be or hand in assignments.
- instruction
  - Concise and understandable.
- teacher/student relations
  - Excellent. The professors were structured, knowledgeable and friendly. I felt like my professors did an extra effort to connect with me as an exchange student.
- grading/exams
  -
- administration
  - After just a few weeks in Seattle I pretty much knew where to go with all my academic questions. The administration was well organized and always helpful.
- library, computer, and classroom facilities
  - I was very impressed with the department's computer and workshop facilities. There were literally computers and laser cutters in the studios.
- b.** Evaluate the quality and content of instruction.
  - The structure of taking classes is a concept that we don't have at Aarch and the format really helped me gain a more theoretical understanding of subjects that I wanted to dive deeper into.
- c.** In general, what did you like best and least about the academics?
  - The biggest strength of the program was the class structure but it was also very stressful. The quarter is so short and you get so much homework that you sometimes felt like you neglected your studio project which is the most important thing in the end.
- d.** Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?
  - Dan Stettler was an excellent studio instructor. I would recommend him any time. If you're interested in Japanese architecture I can't recommend taking a class with Ken Oshima enough. He knows everyone and everything worth knowing of Japanese Architecture. I also really enjoyed the drawing class I did with Judith Swain.

### **3. HOUSING:**

- a.** How would you assess the housing arrangements?

- 

- b.** How did you locate your housing?

- 

### **4. EXCHANGE SITE:**

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

- 

### **5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:**

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

- Take care when you're biking around. I encountered some dangerous situations. Be careful in the U-District at night – it can be kinda sketchy especially at Safeway and Jack in the Box.

## **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.)
  - There are lots of opportunities here. FIUTS is a really good place to meet other exchange students. And Scan Design is such a great foundation as well to meet both current and past fellows.
- b. Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them. (e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)
  - The cultural difference between Denmark and Seattle is not all that different. I didn't encounter any difficulties during my stay.

## **7. FINANCIAL:**

- a. Describe how the Scan|Design Foundation Fellowship assisted you / made a difference in your decision to study abroad.
  - I wasn't aware of how awesome Scan Design really was before I actually was in Seattle. Once I was there though I wouldn't have been without Scan Design. All the trips and activities they arranged really helped make my trip a great experience.
- b. What is the best way to access/transfer money?
  - Usually you come a long way with a credit or debit card.
- c. How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.
  - Apart from my three months of study I also traveled in the US a month prior and after the studies. This certainly raised the overall cost. In total I spent around 65.000 dkk.
- d. Comment on the relative "cost of living" between your home University and the host University.
  - I found that it was actually more expensive to live in Seattle than Aarhus overall. Most of this was also due to the fact that I participated in more activities as well.

## **8. EXCHANGE/SCAN | DESIGN FELLOWSHIP COORDINATORS AND ADMINISTRATION:**

### **Coordinator team**

Comment on the assistance by the Scan|Design Fellowship coordinators and administration before your departure, upon arrival, and during your stay. What worked and what could be improved or changed?

- I didn't know much about Scan Design before arrival. However while I was there the Facebook group provided all the information I needed. An introductory email before arrival with an overview of what Scan Design is all about could be a nice way to introduce you to the fund and Seattle before hand.

### **Activities**

Comment on the number and type of activities arranged by the coordinators. What worked and what would you like replaced with some other activity.

- I was really impressed with the activities and the involvement of the coordinators. The activities and social gatherings made my stay in Seattle much more enjoyable. While recommending UW to my school mates I always stress how awesome Scan Design is.

Suggestions for activities we should add to the program

- 

## **9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:**

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

- 

## **10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:**

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

- I'm so grateful for the Scan Design experience. I couldn't have asked for more exciting events or better coordinators.

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

- I expected to be a lot more social during my stay in Seattle however school caught up and I had to study hard, so Scan Design was a great opportunity to get out of my study bubble and have a great time with likeminded friends.

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

- Studying abroad is a great opportunity to live in another country and meet new people. It changed my perspective. I got a whole new view on the US and it changed my view of Denmark as well.