

EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT

Student Name: Michael Carrizosa

Institution where you studied: Aarhus School of Architecture

Semester of participation: Fall Semester

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1. Pre-Exchange. Why and Where:

- a. Why did you decide to study in the US or Denmark as an exchange student?
 - Even before I applied into my major I had heard about the exchange between Aarhus School of Architecture and the University of Washington, and it sounded so compelling to study in a country that has become so well known for its novel approach to architecture. Once I got into my major I had the chance to get to know a few people that had gone on the exchange on previous years and a few exchange students from AAA, and they encouraged me to apply to this amazing program.
- b. Why did you select the program/University?
 - A few Scan|Design fellows told me all about AAA and the program and methods they use. Based on that I decided Aarhus School of Architecture fit my profile better. Moreover I did some independent research about architecture schools in Denmark, and I found AAA is becoming a very influential institution in Denmark.
- c. What were your expectations?
 - I was expecting to arrive in a very welcoming community that cared about architecture.
 - I knew that Denmark was a very safe country.
- d. What preparations did you make prior to departure?
 - I had to find accommodation on my own prior to my departure. I chose to not accept the offer I got from the school, as my Danish friends told me it was a bit far away and the neighborhood itself wasn't the best.
 - The Visa application was probably the most important preparation I had to deal with as it involved investing time and money.
- e. How could you improve your preparations?
 - I believe I was able to prepare all I needed before the time I departed. I consider myself lucky I didn't encounter any obstacles with any of the required paperwork.
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2. ARRIVAL/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

- a. Recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.
 - Aarhus is a student town, so it is very hard to find accommodation on your own. It's not impossible but it takes a lot of patience to find a decent place, so it is sometimes easier to accept the dorm offer the schools sends you.
 - I chose to go and find my own accommodation as I received help from fellows and people from Aarhus, so I can list a couple of good resources online:
Aarhus Internationals (Facebook Group)
Student Bulletin Board (Architecture School Bulletin, Facebook Group)

- 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?
- Architecture schools often have many facilities, so they have to show students how to use them. So in both schools once admitted we are given a tour of the facilities.
 - Also at AAA, we had an orientation where we met other international students. That helped us meet other students who were new to the school and town.

2. ACADEMICS:

- a.** Evaluate the instruction you received. Compare the following to your home institution's system:
- class registration
 - At the AAA we were placed into a Unit according to our samples of work we sent prior.
 - classroom structure
 - The studio culture seems to be the same at every architecture school; however, the only different thing was the fact that at AAA architecture students only have one class, which is studio. They do however have a series of lectures, students are required to attend every week.
 - instruction
 - The supervisors (Professors) were really nice and understanding. The way they teach is slightly different from my home university as they expect you to explore your own ideas and develop them. They expect you to have a high level of independence as well.
 - teacher/student relations
 - The relationship is very close and informal. I can say I quite enjoyed communicating with professors in such informal way.
 - grading/exams
 - Final presentations were the same as in my home university. There are no other types of exams.
 - administration
 - The administration was really helpful even before my departure, they replied my emails very quickly and they always resolved my problems.
 - library, computer, and classroom facilities
 - The facilities were very good at AAA, however the only thing they didn't have was a large computer center that was open 24/7 like in my home university, but since most students have their personal computers that wasn't an issue.
- b.** Evaluate the quality and content of instruction.
- The unit (E) I was placed in had a very abstract approach to architecture (which I was expecting) But I can honestly say that I explored a new approach I couldn't explore at home. So I highly value this experience.
- c.** In general, what did you like best and least about the academics?
- There wasn't as much pressure as I had experience at my home university, and while that is a good thing, it can also be harmful as you don't feel you have an obligation.
- d.** Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?
- Although you don't choose your classes at AAA, I would recommend aspiring students to try to use the different facilities at the school, even for small personal projects.
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3. HOUSING:

- a. How would you assess the housing arrangements?
 - If looking for a place on your own expect to look for a long period of time before you find housing. It's easier to accept the dorm offer your school provides you with.
- b. How did you locate your housing?
 - I mostly looked in Facebook groups, where people post their offers. This took a lot of patience but sometimes you can find really good housing for cheap, especially compared to prices in Seattle.

4. EXCHANGE SITE:

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

- AAA is centrally located, it's composed of several separated buildings along Norreport. It's a small school where it's pretty easy to run into people you know. Especially at the Kantine (Cafeteria).

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

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

- Overall Denmark is a very safe country, and Aarhus is a clear example of that. Though there are neighborhoods where it seems to be more criminal activity it's still not as dangerous.

Also consider wearing the appropriate gear if you'll be riding a bicycle especially during the winter.

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.)
 - I was quick to make friends, first with my room mates, International students and then with local students. In all those cases we shared a lot in common as we were all architecture students.
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- b. Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them. (e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)
 - I witnessed Danish culture first hand and I can concur with the stereotype that says that Danes are shy at first but then become really open and nice!
 - One negative thing I experienced though not first hand was the way most old people view minorities. However most young Danes don't share the same prejudice I found.

7. FINANCIAL:

- a. Describe how the Scan|Design Foundation Fellowship assisted you / made a difference in your decision to study abroad.
 - Without the Scan|Design Foundation Fellowship I wouldn't have been able to go on this amazing adventure. Most things are relatively more expensive in Denmark than in Seattle, so the fellowship really helped me cover almost all of my living expenses, including trips and recreational activities.
- b. What is the best way to access/transfer money?
 - The best way I found is to use your bank account from home and withdraw money in fairly large amounts so that you don't get charged a withdrawal fee every time. Also if staying for a year, it is very convenient to open a bank account, there are several banks that offer student accounts.

- c. How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.
 - 700 would probably cover all expenses in a month.
- d. Comment on the relative "cost of living" between your home University and the host University.
 - Rent was relatively cheaper in Aarhus than it is in Seattle, however I found food and transport are more expensive in Aarhus. Eating out is particularly more expensive in Aarhus.

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?

- Once admitted into the program I wish we were given more information about the visa. I mostly found everything out by looking online and calling the embassy.
- Other than that the coordinators in Aarhus were really helpful and very fun to interact with.

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.

- We had really nice events and a couple of trips; I really enjoyed meeting with the other fellows as well, we shared our views about Denmark and shared our personal experiences.
- Also Coordinators shared their own experiences as fellows. They also shared very important information about the Danish health care system and school system.

Suggestions for activities we should add to the program

- As I was in Aarhus and most fellows tend to go to Copenhagen, I could tell that there were far more activities going on Copenhagen than in Aarhus. It'd also be cool we could have more weekend activities as well.

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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.

- If you really want to challenge yourself and want to learn new things this program is for you. You'll get the chance to meet cool people and new connections. It really helps you to come out of your shell and meet to people.
- My advice for new fellows would be to try to attend events at your school, and try to visit neighboring towns and cities.

10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

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

- I had the greatest time! It was all I expected and more. I cannot wait to get back to Denmark for an internship or a job

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

- Since I talked to many people before even applying, I had a realistic idea of what it was going to be like. I was still very impressed by the school I attended and its students. The quality of education was really good!

- Not having to worry about my financial situation really helped me enjoy my exchange.
- c. What did you consider to be the greatest benefit and challenge of studying abroad?
- Studying abroad is all about meeting new people and sharing ideas, and I think that is what I took from it.
 - The greatest challenge I encountered was adjusting to the semester system. It all seemed to have a slower pace, and that was a bit disorienting at the beginning. Also I had more time to do other activities besides school work which is a rare thing in my home university.

FEEL FREE TO ADD OTHER COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE.

Though it might seem like you're going abroad for a long time, always take the time to do and see everything you want, because it will be over before you know it. Time goes by fast!