

EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT

Student Name: Ryan McKernan

Institution where you studied: Denmark Technical University (DTU)

Semester of participation: Spring 2019

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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?
 - I have dreamt about going abroad ever since freshman year of college. For my specific major, I needed to take certain classes in order to finish in 4 years. Copenhagen was one of the options I had, so I began the research process. I have a few friends who have visited the city and I received only the best stories about the city, country, and Danes as a whole.
- b. Why did you select the program/University?
 - DTU is a highly renowned technical university, so I was excited to see that was where the engineering students attend when in Copenhagen. I didn't have much say in what university I would be attending, but it made the decision process easier on my part.
- c. What were your expectations?
 - I knew Copenhagen is one of the most bike friendly cities in the world, and know I was going to be biking every day. I was also a little concerned with how far I was living from the university at first. I knew the skies would be grey and rainy, so I wasn't going to get my hopes up on seeing the sun for a while. After talking with some of the Danes about schooling in Madison, I found out that schooling was nothing similar to UW-Madison. I had expectations of working hard in class, but not busting my butt outside of class like in Madison.
- d. What preparations did you make prior to departure?
 - First things first, I had to increase the amount of black clothing I had in my wardrobe. I knew I needed clothes to make me blend into the culture. I wanted the full Danish experience. I stocked up on all kinds of medicine (just in case), talked with as many people I could about the Danes, and said my final goodbyes.
- e. How could you improve your preparations?
 - I feel that I prepared quite well. I have been to Europe before, so I had a general sense what I was getting myself into. I could've chosen to go earlier before the program was just starting to get my feet wet in the city and surrounding areas, because I arrived late January which was when the program was just starting.

2. ARRIVAL/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

- a. Recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.
 - For anyone who wants to actually be able to experience the city life of Copenhagen day in and night out, I would highly recommend Tasingagade 29. Although it is a hefty (~35 mins) from DTU, it is a quick 15-20 minute bike to the city center. This makes it the perfect in between housing site.

- The other housing situations are all located on or near campus. I had a lot of friends located there and they said it's nice for class, but they haven't gotten to know the city as well as I have.
- 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?
 - Before leaving, we had a nice orientation dinner which consisted of meeting some of the Danes. It was hard because not a lot of them were going to DTU so it was difficult to stay in contact with them when I came to Denmark.
 - DTU's orientation week was beyond anything I ever expected. I met some of my closest friends from DTU through this first week. At times it seems kind of cheesy, but it was worth it to be outgoing and try to make as many friends as possible.

2. ACADEMICS:

- a. Evaluate the instruction you received. Compare the following to your home institution's system:
 - class registration
 - Very straight forward. Had a scare where I didn't get into one class at first, but I eventually got in.
 - classroom structure
 - I extremely enjoyed the class structure. 2 hour lecture then 2 hour discussion/problems made for a great school day.
 - instruction
 - For the most part the instructors were very good. Only one was difficult to understand at times, but it was never that bad. Very fast moving classes because we only met once a week.
 - teacher/student relations
 - It was extremely nice being able to communicate with the teacher on a first name basis. I have never been able to do this before and made me feel very comfortable in the classroom.
 - grading/exams
 - There are not a lot of grades throughout the semester. Other than a couple projects, most of the grade comes from the final examination. Fairly easy semester until finals.
 - administration
 - I never had to interact with administration other than housing and when my email got hacked early on. They were very nice and helped the clueless exchange student (me).
 - library, computer, and classroom facilities
 - The library is very nice, but is missing the areas where you can just sit alone in the quiet section. It is great for collaboration but not self-studying. The classroom facilities are quite nice, I have no complaints whatsoever.
- b. Evaluate the quality and content of instruction.
 - DTU was very fun to be a part of because it just consisted of technical students. It made it nice to "nerd out" with the other students. DTU was a very high quality university even though it felt like I wasn't doing that much school work. They use more practical and real world applications.
- c. In general, what did you like best and least about the academics?
 - I like the little amount of work was expected outside of the classroom compared to Madison. The thing I disliked was that the lectures sometimes went on a little too long and it was tough to stay focused.
- d. Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?

- Coming from a product design point of view. I really enjoyed my Industrial Design 2 class. Other than that I had to take core ME classes.

3. HOUSING:

- a. How would you assess the housing arrangements?
 - Although the rooms weren't huge or brand new, I loved Tasingagade. I had access to a balcony on the 6th floor and it made for a great view of the rooftops. It was amazing being so close to the city center and Faelledparken.
- b. How did you locate your housing?
 - I asked a couple of students who studied here in previous semesters and I wanted to be close to the city.

4. EXCHANGE SITE:

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

- I loved DTU and the campus was really well done. It was fun to be on an actual college campus rather than being in a city at the same time. It was tough because it is a 45 minute commute to downtown Copenhagen. Other than that it was great.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

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

- Copenhagen is the safest place I have been in my life. I never felt scared at any point. I never had to use medical facilities, but had a friend who broke his foot and he said it was a good facility!

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.)
 - It was hard to get to DTU events because I was so far away, so I would engage in activities downtown and met most of the community in and around the city center. I love the culture here a lot and am scared to go back to America after experiencing their way of life.
- b. Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them. (e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)
 - There way of life here is way more relaxed than any lifestyle. I was high strung in the beginning but now feel that I am accustomed to the hygge lifestyle and don't want to give it up. It was challenging sometimes to be with a lot of loud Americans because I would feel out of place at times, but other than that, I love the active happy lifestyle everyone takes on here.

7. FINANCIAL:

- a. Describe how the Scan|Design Foundation Fellowship assisted you / made a difference in your decision to study abroad.
 - It made a bigger difference than I thought. I was able to experience way more of Denmark way more than some of my other friends. It made me make this place feel like home.
- b. What is the best way to access/transfer money?
 - I just had a debit and a zero international fare credit card. I would take out cash with my debit card, and then use almost all other transactions with my credit card.
- c. How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.

- Depends how much you travel or eat out, but around \$1000-1500/month if you want to experience local cuisine.
- d. Comment on the relative "cost of living" between your home University and the host University.
- It is an expensive city, but you can get around cheap if you cook at home and buy the relatively cheaper options. It wasn't as expensive as I was expecting though.

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 wish there were more events before we left, but other than that, everything in Denmark was done to perfection. So many trips and amazing people guiding them. It was an amazing experience.

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.

- There were around 10 activities I believe? I went to almost all of them and have nothing bad to say. The coordinators did a fantastic job.

Suggestions for activities we should add to the program

- Maybe adding a social dinner in the beginning to meet the Danes and others in Scan|design.

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.

- This is best for an active student who enjoys branching out and making new friends. It would be awesome to come by yourself without any of your friends, because I felt myself falling back on some of the kids I knew from UW-Madison rather than getting involved fully in the culture.

10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

- a. How would you rate the quality of the overall experience?
- 10/10, I love this city and the program I was in.
- b. How realistic were your academic and personal expectations and how did the Scan|Design Fellowship Program make a difference?
- N/A
- c. What did you consider to be the greatest benefit and challenge of studying abroad?
- The greatest benefit was living in a foreign city for almost half a year. I don't know if I'll be able to do this ever again in my life, but after doing it, I now realize how livable this place and Europe could be for my future.
 - The biggest challenge was not knowing Danish. I tried picking it up, but kept getting frustrated when I couldn't even communicate where I was living correctly. Tough language.