

EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT

Student Name: Aaryn Kealty
Institution where you studied: DIS
Term(s) of participation: Spring 2015
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1. WHY AND WHERE:

a. Why did you decide to study in the US or Denmark as an exchange student?

b. Why did you select the program/University?

At first I wasn't set on Denmark at all. I was looking at different Scandinavian countries, very focused on Sweden, and read an article about Denmark that made me curious. At this point, I don't think I could have put Denmark on a map. I knew nothing. I didn't know what language they spoke or anything. And I decided to apply for the University of Copenhagen. But I accidentally did the application for DIS. But when I actually went through and looked at the programs after my advisor informed me of my mistake. I stayed with DIS. As a Human Development and Family Studies major, the idea of getting to work in a school once a week and live with a host family with children really made sense. I stuck with DIS and it was truly one of the greatest academic decisions I have ever made.

c. What were your expectations?

I had pretty high expectations for DIS. I think they did a very good job of telling us off the bat they had a high academic bar set for us.

d. What preparations did you make prior to departure?

I mean I really didn't make any. I packed a bag and I left. I had no clue what I was getting myself into.

e. How could you improve your preparations?

I think what I really would have liked to have done is take a language course before I left. I was told everyone speaks English. True. However everyone speaks Danish. I wasn't ready for that.

2. ARRIVAL/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

a. Please recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.

b. Please 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 adapt?

I felt all of the orientations I went through were very well prepared and helpful. I can't think of a thing I would change.

2. ACADEMICS:

a. Please evaluate the instruction you received. Compare the following to your home institution's system:

- class registration

Class registration was much easier abroad than at my home University.

- classroom structure

I enjoyed the way DIS ran classes in a discussion based way.

- instruction

I felt I was more challenged abroad than ever before to really think critically and take what I was learning into my own life. Abroad I wasn't studying to test take, I was reading and learning to apply concepts to real life experiences and to write papers where I proved what I was learning and how I was using new ideas in my thinking.

- teacher/student relations

I got along very well with nearly all of my teachers.

- grading/exams

I felt, for the most part, that I was graded fairly abroad

- administration

I loved everyone that I worked with on the DIS faculty

- library, computer, and classroom facilities

They had phenomenal facilities for students at DIS

b. Please evaluate the quality and content of instruction.

Content was very high quality. I felt like everything was covered very extensively. Content wasn't just rushed over or taught to test on.

c. In general, what did you like best and least about the academics?

I loved the open classroom approach at DIS. I also loved field studies where we really learned from people in certain professions outside of the classroom.

d. Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?

The CDD program at DIS is wonderful for anyone working with children or families. It really was an amazing experience.

3. HOUSING:

a. How would you assess the housing arrangements?

I lived with a host family in Roskilde. It was myself and another DIS student and our family; mom, dad, and three girls (and our dog). I think living with a host family was the most impactful thing about my time abroad. My host sisters became my sisters. My host parents were some of my best friends abroad. I loved spending time at our house and being with my family. They have changed my life so very much. I can't wait to go back to visit them. They truly became my family.

4. EXCHANGE SITE:

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

DIS is in the perfect location in Copenhagen. Close to Central station and close to many sites for students on field studies or who are wanting to explore the city.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

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

None

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.)

b. Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them. (e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)

I had a lot of friends who were very attached to home while abroad. Either they left a significant other behind or they just weren't ready to be anywhere but home. For me, I tried my hardest to disconnect from home. Because of this, I felt I was as integrated into Danish culture as anyone I knew. I was learning Danish, working in a school, living with a host family, and dating a young Danish man for almost my entire trip. I really felt like my life was there when it was time to go. It killed me to leave and it kills me to write this because I can't wait to go back. I really never faced any challenges with cultural differences, I did my best to embrace everything that came my way.

7. FINANCIAL:

- a. Please describe how the Scan|Design Foundation fellowship assisted you / made a difference in your decision to study abroad.

Without ScanDesign, I don't think I would have been able to go abroad.

- b. What is the best way to access/transfer money?

I do a lot of my banking online.

- c. How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.

Depending on if you're planning on traveling or not, I'd save a few hundred dollars per month. The thing is, you never know if you'll lose a transportation pass, or if you'll have to spend money on something that you didn't build into your budget. Always set aside more money. That way at the end of your trip, if you've saved more than you expect to spend, you have money for gifts, or maybe even a last minute trip.

- d. Please comment on the relative "cost of living" between your home University and the host University.

Cost of living was much much much higher in Denmark than Madison, Wisconsin.

8. EXCHANGE/SCAN|DESIGN FELLOWSHIP ADMINISTRATION:

- a. Please comment on the assistance and activities by the Scan|Design Fellowship coordinator before your departure, upon arrival, and during your stay. What worked and what could be improved or changed?

ScanDesign was so incredibly helpful before and while I was in Denmark.

- b. Please evaluate services and effectiveness of the University administrative offices.

Very high

9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:

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

This exchange is best for someone who is open-minded and ready to take on a new life. You can't come to a place like Denmark and plan to travel every single weekend. Denmark isn't Spain. You have to be ready to take on Denmark. There is so much to do and explore. I traveled twice and both times I was so happy to walk into Copenhagen Airport. Denmark is a country you live in, it isn't a place you keep your things while you go explore other countries.

10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

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

10 out of 10

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

Fairly realistic

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

Knowing that there was only so much of what I learned abroad that I could use in the states in my quest to make an impact. I couldn't come back here and get longer paid maternity and paternity leave, I couldn't raise taxes on higher incomes, I couldn't enforce free child care, I couldn't enforce free health insurance. It really was upsetting to realize the states won't and can't follow Denmark's example. That really was challenging to realize. It was challenging to see myself, for the first time, as an American. Not a Wisconsinite, not a Badger, but an American. Where we have a lot of bad to our name. It was challenging to see the world in a way I never thought I would. But it made me grow as a human being. I feel I gained greater compassion for others around me and an ability to critically analyze information being given to me.

FEEL FREE TO ADD OTHER COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE.

I just wanted to add, thank you. To anyone and everyone reading this. I feel like giving someone a scholarship is sort of like saying "ok, we're going to fund your education because we believe in you. We believe you have something others don't." I agree. I think I am determined to make an impact in this world, so determined that I will. This experience has changed my life in so many ways. It has changed me as a person, it has changed the way I think, and it has changed the way I see. I would not have been able to afford this experience without ScanDesign, so again, thank you.

Aaryn Kealty