



## 2016-2017 Student Mobility/Exchange Program Returning Undergraduate Student Report

**Host University:** California College of the Arts

**Host Country:** United States

**Faculty/Department at Host Institution:** Industrial Design

**Semester:** Fall

**Date of Report:** Jan 31 2017

### 1. OVERALL EVALUATION

How would you rate your exchange experience overall?

Poor Excellent  
1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10

**Why did you choose this host institution? What key factors or issues influenced your decision?**

I chose this school due to its location and curriculum. I love San Francisco, I've visited in the past and as for courses, I had free range over what I wanted to take. The key factors that influenced my decision were location, local lifestyle, course offerings and networking opportunities.

**Please share a few of your most positive experiences and a few of the biggest challenges you faced.**

I really enjoyed my semester abroad, I was sad to come back! I made some meaningful friendships with people in my residence. One of my favourite memories occurred on my birthday. I went with a few friends for a nice dinner and then we parted ways for the night, or so I thought. When I stepped out of the elevator a group of my friends were singing happy birthday with lighters and cake, since we couldn't have candles. They wrote a card and gave me a nice gift, the whole experience was very endearing, especially since I had only known them for a month and a half or so.

The school offered great resources like free laser cutting, CNC milling and 3D printing. Every single professor I had went above and beyond, they were extremely approachable and understanding. A few of the challenges I faced were commuting and handling the course load. I was taking 4 studios, glass blowing, metal jewelry, ceramics for ID and garment structures. Three of those classes took place in Oakland, over an hour commute, twice a week for 3 hours. I probably spent more time in the studios than in residence. I think I took on too much, but I learned a lot, even if my finished pieces weren't what I had hoped.

### 2. PREPARATION

**Please describe your preparation for the exchange, including banking, travel documents and student visa application. In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?**

Since my parents lived in LA, I went to visit them after second semester was over in April/ May. We took a trip up to San Francisco, where I picked up my J-1 form and DS- 2019. The process went pretty smooth, I emailed the mobility specialist to set up a meeting and answer any questions I may have had. After I filled out the forms, I had to get them signed by one of the mobility exchange coordinators and then pay the SEVIS I-901 fee. I also had to pay for the CCA health insurance. When I returned at the end of August, my parents helped me set up a phone plan and bank account. At the airport, I had to have my travel documents and I went through a different line at customs.

**Are there any important items (e.g. art & design supplies, documents, specialty foods, health items) that a student should take to your host country?**

Before I left, I had to call ihaveaplan to allow me to buy a 3- month supply of medication, which took a week or so. I also got copies of my prescription history from my doctor to try and get a refill in the states, since I could only get enough to last 3 months. To get a refill of my medication as Kaiser Permanente, I had to be reassessed by a psychiatrist, drug tested and have an EKG. The healthcare system there was streamlined and so efficient, I get why it's so expensive!

### **3. ARRIVAL**

**Was anyone at the airport, train station, etc. to meet you? Did you experience any difficulties upon arrival?**

My parents drove me to San Francisco with all of my stuff.

**When should students plan to arrive at the host university? When did you arrive? Would you have benefited from arriving earlier?**

I arrived a week or so before classes, on move in day, as I stayed in residence.

**Was there an orientation session offered at your host university? If yes, did you attend and what did you learn?**

There were several orientation days, I went to the first one, which was mandatory for exchange/ international students, it was pretty dry, I think it was more beneficial for younger students or students who were from a vastly different culture. The last day I kind of went to orientation; I befriended some of the orientation leaders and we went to this beautiful cemetery, overlooking San Francisco, drank beer had some laughs and watched the sun set.

**Is there a coordinating office for international students, including exchange students, at your host university? Is there a staff person you would recommend students approach with their questions?**

Yes, there is the ISAP office, international student affairs office where you can arrange a meeting with Joyna Heinz, one of the coordinators.

### **4. ACCOMMODATION**

**Where did you live during your exchange? Were you happy with your accommodation?**

I lived in residence as it was much cheaper than getting an apartment downtown San Francisco. The Panoramic residence was really nice, brand new, great rooftop and the building was shared

with students from the SF Conservatory of Music. I didn't click much with my roommate since we had opposite schedules, but I made a few good friends there.

**Did you have any difficulties arranging accommodation yourself? Did the host institution assist you in finding accommodation?**

No, I applied for residence, where priority was given to international/ exchange and first year students.

## **5. STUDIES AT HOST INSTITUTION**

**To better understand the similarities and differences between academic studies at OCAD U and at your host university, please comment on the following:**

**Level of academic difficulty and challenge:**

Hard to compare academia because I didn't take any real ID courses, but those that I did talk with, it seemed more challenging. Students in third year had junior review, where each program had to set up a mini portfolio in the school to be assessed by the program chair. Their workload was more than what I've experienced in past core classes. For example, where we may have 5 sketch models due for one week, one student in third year ID had 40 sketch models due! Even though the curriculum was similar, like design for arthritis, design a PEV, the expectations were much higher as their "proposed clients" weren't theoretical, representatives from actual companies would sit in on their final presentations, like Ford or Astral. Another student in 4<sup>th</sup> year working on a PEV concept, actually had to build off of existing cars, which were donated, i.e. wheels, axels, steering wheel, etc. and prototype the body of the car.

I found the available resources for students were better at CCA, like 3D printers, laser cutting and CNC milling could be done for free, but they had to outsource their materials from other stores, like lumber, plastic, etc. As well, they also had visiting artists, who would come and give demos or seminars, which was pretty interesting. In my glass class, a master sculptor came and worked, while students could watch, assist and ask questions.

**Time spent in class (# of hours per week):**

Classes were either 3 hours twice a week or 6 hours once a week.

**Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week):**

Close to 8- 10 hours per class, depending on the project

**Studio-based work:**

24/7

Pretty much spent most of my time between studios, I'd pour my plaster mold, then run to glass for an hour then go to jewelry and check on my piece in the acid bath, then back to ceramics. I was incredibly busy, sometimes late, but kept a good rapport with my profs.

**Written assignments:**

N/A

**Interaction between students and professors:**

Really great. They were very understanding and helpful, would stay after class and replied to emails pretty quickly. For example, my ceramics class was 7:15- 10:15, but my professor stayed until 12 am to help us with our first plaster mold. It was nice experiencing the finer arts side of things, each student would be working on different things. The professors would give demos and then allow us to work. Most of my concepts for the assignments required other processes

or techniques that weren't demoed in class, but the professors would take time to show me whatever it was I wanted to do or learn.

## **6. SERVICES**

**Were there any extracurricular activities/events scheduled for exchange/international students at your host university (cultural visits, trips, workshops, etc.)? Which ones would you recommend?**

There probably were, but I was pretty busy in the studios.

**What were the library and computer facilities like?**

There were two libraries, one on each campus, with an extensive book collection, several mac desktops and 27" Wacom tablets. There were 5 computer labs each with about 30 macs at the SF campus and at least 5 other labs in Oakland. There were labs that had restricted access, i.e program related, that had special large format printers, 3D printers, animation/ software programs etc.

## **7. COST OF LIVING**

**How did you prepare yourself financially for your exchange? Did you pay for the experience entirely out of your own savings? Did you receive student or bank loans? Did you apply for / receive any financial awards (scholarships or bursaries)? Did you have help from parents / family / friends?**

I am very fortunate that my parents paid for my school, rent and phone, I just had to cover costs for leisure, food and school supplies.

**In general, was the cost of living in your host country higher, lower, or similar to that in Canada? Please explain.**

It was definitely higher, things in SF were more expensive even relative to SoCal. I ubered around a lot since things were pretty spread out and the transit was terrible. As well, the US dollar is worth more than the Canadian.

## **8. EXPENSES**

**Exchange rate with host country:**

\$1 USD= \$1.31 CAN

**Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year):**

Sept/ 2016- Dec/ 2016

**Would you estimate that you spent more, less, or the same amount as an average, local student attending your host institution?**

I definitely spent more in SF than in Toronto. Even though things like rapid prototyping were free, I didn't use those as much for my classes. I spent a lot more on materials and special tools. I spent a lot on transit because I hardly need to in Toronto.

**Please complete the following budget to give other students an idea of what they can expect to spend in the host country.**

**Basic Expenses in Canadian Dollars:**

1. **Tuition and general fees (paid to OCAD U):** four classes \$3098.54
2. **School supplies:** \$1500
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ /month = \$ 1700
4. **Rent-related expenses:** N/A
  - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month
  - B) **Telephone:** \$ /month
  - C) **Cable:** \$ /month
  - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ /month = \$ 1000
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ /month = \$ 150
7. **Laundry:** \$ /month = \$ 30
8. **Transportation:** \$ /month = \$ 550
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$ 100
10. **Travel health insurance:** \$ 1400
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$ 0
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$ 800
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$ N/A
14. **Student visa:** \$ 250
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

**Estimated Total Expenses:** \$22000

## **9. ADAPTING TO YOUR HOST COUNTRY**

**Did you experience any “culture shock” during your exchange? How did you deal with it? Do you have any advice for students on how to adapt to life in your host country?**

Not really, the only kind of shock, was that I had never seen such a concentrated area of unstable, down and out, homeless people. The campuses and residence were located in a rougher area, but it didn't really bother me.

**Was there a lot of interaction between local students and exchange/international students? What is the best way to develop friendships with students from your host institution?**

There were only 5 exchange students and the rest were international, I befriended one

exchange student through similar friends. The best way is probably living in residence. Everyone was pretty friendly and welcoming.

**Did you have any unforeseen problems? Was there anything that you felt was strikingly different from what you expected?**

Not really

**10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

Overall, great experience, if I were to do it again, there's not much I'd change. Recommend it if you have the opportunity.

*Please email your report to International Student Services at [international@ocadu.ca](mailto:international@ocadu.ca).*