



**2013-2014 Student Mobility/Exchange Program
Returning Undergraduate Student Report**

Host University: College for Creative Studies

Host Country: USA

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Fine Art

Semester: Fall

Date of Report: January 8, 2013

1. OVERALL EVALUATION

How would you rate your exchange experience overall?

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

Please explain your rating.

My exchange experience was one of the best experiences of my life. The faculty were amazing, all very knowledgeable and it was so helpful to me to have a fresh perspective on my work. The class sizes were small and I learned a lot from my classmates.

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

I chose CCS because my sister lives in Detroit and someone who goes to her church works there which is how I first learned about it. The key factor for me was that I didn't have to pay rent while living there which made it the most logical and feasible choice.

What was the most meaningful thing you learned while studying off campus?

That people are actually interested in what I am doing. And that building a community of artists around you can really keep you motivated and inspired.

Please share three of your most positive experiences and three of the biggest challenges you faced.

My three most positive experiences had to be going out to paint on site around the city at Belle Isle and the train station, doing a 30 mile bike ride around Detroit in September with 6,000 other riders, and feeling like I was really integrated and accepted into the school and the art community right away.

The biggest challenge was the additional fee that the school charged me which I was not expecting.

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?

I set up an American bank account before I left at Royal Bank who also does international banking. In retrospect I would have waited until I got down there to set one up and I would have chosen a bank that was close in proximity to where I lived.

The visa application was easy, the school sent me the immigration form I had to fill out, and then I paid the fee and brought the form and receipt to the border when I crossed. They stamped my passport and I was good to go.

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

Check about health insurance, I bought some before I went down there but didn't need it because apparently that was one of the fees that the school is charging me for. So I was covered by the school insurance while I was there.

3. ARRIVAL

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

I drove straight to my sister's house. No difficulties.

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

I arrived for class the day of. But I had taken a tour of the campus some months before when I was down for a visit with my sister.

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

Yes, there was but I didn't attend.

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, I dealt with Jennifer Dickey at the international students office. She was able to help me with most of my questions.

4. ACCOMMODATION

Where did you live during your exchange? Would you recommend your accommodation to future exchange students?

I lived with my sister. They had dorms on campus though.

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

N/A

If you lived on-campus, which residences would you recommend? Are there any that should be avoided?

N/A

If you lived off-campus, do you have any recommendations for future exchange students? For example, does rent include hydro and other utilities, or are they extra? Which location in the city is ideal for exchange students?

Rent is pretty cheap anywhere in the city. But you want to stay to the busier areas like Midtown, Corktown, Ferndale, and Hamtramck. The east and west neighbourhoods can be more dangerous.

Also, you need a car to live in Detroit. Public transportation is not safe.

5. STUDIES AT HOST INSTITUTION

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

Level of Academic Difficulty & Challenge:

The difficulty was about the same.

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

24

Time spent outside of class (# of hours per week):

20

Oral presentations (Individual and Group):

I only had oral presentations in liberal arts classes, none in studio.

Written assignments:

There was a significant amount of writing for my liberal arts classes. More than I was used to. I had a 5 page paper due every 3 weeks for one class, and I had weekly journaling assignments, a research paper and business plan for another.

Studio-based work:

Studio work was less structured and was more based on developing bodies of work instead of setting out parameters for a certain number of projects. I felt even though there was less structure I was much more productive with this model because it allowed me to take my time and explore my ideas and thoughts without worrying about the pressure of due dates. It felt more like real professional studio time where there are no requirements, you just have to sit down and work.

Interaction between students and professors:

I gained more valuable advice from my professors at CCS in one semester than I have in the 2 years I've been at OCAD. CCS professors are extremely dedicated to their students and love to take time discussing their work individually at great length and because the class sizes were so small, they allowed for that. I felt very supported and encouraged at CCS which allowed me to grow exponentially in my work there.

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 didn't research them or attend.

What were the libraries and computer facilities like?

Extensive and large library and computer resources similar to OCAD.

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 chose CCS because my sister lived in Detroit and I could live there for free. So I sublet my apartment in Toronto which made it very reasonable to move there. I received my regular OSAP loan and used my savings from summer work to fund art supplies, gas, etc. I received a bursary on my OCAD tuition which also helped.

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

Everything in the US is cheaper. Especially food and gas. Rent in Detroit is dirt cheap compared to Toronto. You can get a 2 bedroom apartment not far from the school for less than 500\$ a month.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country:

1.09

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

Sept 2013 to Dec 2013

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

Less because I lived with my sister and I didn't pay for rent or food.

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): \$2,993.75

2. **School supplies:** \$1200.00 (this is what I spent, I spent more than usual because I saved money in other areas)
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ /month = \$450? (estimate) $450 \times 4 = 1800$
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month (Not applicable)
 - B) **Telephone:** \$ /month (I didn't have a phone)
 - C) **Cable:** \$ /month (I didn't have cable)
 - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ /month = \$200? (I didn't pay for my food) $200 \times 4 = 800$
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ /month = \$25 $25 \times 4 = 100$
7. **Laundry:** \$ /month = \$ (I didn't pay for my laundry)
8. **Transportation:** \$ /month = \$60 a month for gas (more if I made a trip back home to Toronto) $60 \times 4 = 240$
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$ (I didn't spend anything on this)
10. **Travel health insurance:** \$ (I spent 90\$ on health insurance before I left, but I didn't need it because the school covered me)
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$ (Not applicable)
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$ (No)
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$ (No)
14. **Student visa:** \$200 for Sevis I-901 payment
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$ 1100.00 (fees that CCS charged me which I didn't know about – I'm assuming for health insurance and administrative fees)

Estimated Total Expenses: \$8,523.75

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?

No culture shock for me because I've visited there many times. You need to make sure you are always aware of your surroundings and never staring down at your phone. When people see you are vulnerable you can be robbed of your phone or anything else. Never roll your windows down for anyone, car jackings are frequent in Detroit.

**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?**

The students are so friendly at CCS, and the class sizes are small so it is easy to connect with people and make friends. Best way to develop friendships is to ask them to hang out and grab a beer or go see an art show. Or comment and discuss each other's work.

Did you have any unforeseen problems? Was there anything that you felt was strikingly different from what you expected? If so, is there a way that you could have prepared yourself?

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

My exchange at CCS was the best part of all of my post secondary experiences so far (and this is my 2nd degree). The people were so friendly and it was incredibly easy to feel part of the art community and the greater Detroit community. There is a collective sense of camaraderie because people feel they need to take care of one another because of all of the trouble Detroit has seen. But it's not all bad, crime is down 13% this year, people are moving in and starting businesses and gentrifying the city by fixing up abandoned homes. Artists are the key to this gentrification because as soon as artists move in, neighbourhoods become hip and shops and restaurants open and businesses thrive. You can see the strength and determination of the Detroit people and it's so inspiring. And there is so much inspiration to gain from the landscape and from what's going on there. Detroit is amazing. It was likely one of the best experiences of my life. I'm so glad I had this opportunity.

Please email your report to Susan Kemp, Student Mobility/Exchange Coordinator, at skemp@ocadu.ca