



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

Host University: College for Creative Studies

Host Country: USA

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Photography

Semester: Winter

Date of Report: May 2014

1. OVERALL EVALUATION

How would you rate your exchange experience overall?

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

Please explain your rating.

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

I chose CCS not really for the school itself, but more so for the city of Detroit that it is located in. I was influenced by Detroit's rich cultural history, as well as its vibrant arts culture.

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

I had almost no experience shooting in studio with strobe lights before going to CCS, and after completing my time there I am extremely comfortable with the studio!

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

POSITIVE: Ample studio access time, longer classes (6 hours) allowed for much more in depth learning and time for shooting in class, living on campus made it pretty easy to meet people and make friends

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 am fortunate to be a United States citizen, so I have very minimal preparation In regards to travel documents and visas (I didn't need to get any). I did not open a US banking account, but rather used credit and paid it off as I spent it from my Canadian bank account. I would not have done anything differently.

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

Definitely bring as many basic art supplies as you can, as the little things can add up really quickly if you choose to buy them all there. The campus has an art store so it's very easy to get those things, but can still get pricey.

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 the school and helped me move in since it is only 4 hours away from Toronto. Everyone at the school was very helpful and considerate.

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

I arrived about a week before classes started, when the new student move in day was. It was a perfect time to arrive, as it gave me a few days to adjust to the different atmosphere, walk around the school and find my classes.

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

Yes. The orientation was mostly directed towards students who would be there for a few years, so there was a lot of long term information that I didn't need. But it was good to learn about where all the different offices were and who to contact if I needed something.

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. The office of International Student Services can help with any questions you have.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I lived in the ACB, which is the residence that is on campus. It is an apartment style residence, and definitely doesn't feel like a dormitory. I really enjoyed this, as I'm a pretty independent person but other people might like the dorm in the TC Building better, as it's more residence style.

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

I did not have any difficulties. CCS was very helpful in applying for and giving me information about the dorms.

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

SEE ANSWER ABOVE.

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?

N/A

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 & Challenge:

VERY difficult. The expectation for how much time spent on projects is very high, equivalent or above OCAD's. Be prepared to be doing a lot of work and projects.

Time spent in class (# of hours per week): 20 hours

Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week): 20 – 30 hours

Oral presentations (Individual and Group): At least one in every class

Written assignments: Written artist statements with each project, plus reading responses in most classes

Studio-based work: I took all studio classes, so there was a lot. But each class is 6 hours (instead of OCAD's 3) so if you plan your time right you can get a lot of the work done in class.

Interaction between students and professors: Professors were very accessible. Class sizes are small (my largest class was 12 people, smallest was 5) so there is plenty of space and time to interact with your teacher.

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 were any programs designed specifically for exchange students, but there are many for all students. There were movie nights, rock climbing, gallery visits, plus plenty of on campus activities.

What were the libraries and computer facilities like?

The library is EXCELLENT. It is one of the top 5 art libraries in the country. I always had at least 4 or 5 books out at once, and it was the first place I went when I needed to do research for a project. The computer labs are also well equipt, however most of them are in the basement and can feel like a dudgeon.

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 had help from my parents with my rent and everything else I paid for out of my own savings. I work 2 jobs in Toronto and saved up for the months before going on exchange.

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

The cost of living was very similar to Canada, even a little cheaper. If you get an apartment/room, it was WAY cheaper than living in Toronto. You can get a place to live in the city for \$250 - \$400 a month.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country: 90 cents on the dollar

Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year): January 2014 – August 2014

Would you estimate that you spent more, less, or the same amount as an average, local student attending your host institution? Average. Especially near the end of the year, all students tend to be at school working the majority of the time

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):** \$5000
2. **School supplies:** \$1000
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$700/month
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month
 - B) **Telephone:** \$25 /month
 - C) **Cable:** \$0 /month
 - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$300 /month = \$2000
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$50 /month = \$400
- 7.
8. **Laundry:** \$15/month = \$120
9. **Transportation:** \$0 /month = \$0

9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$500
10. **Travel health insurance:** \$0
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$0
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$0
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$200
14. **Student visa:** \$0
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$0

Estimated Total Expenses: \$8000

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?

The are very much small cultural differences between the US and Canada, but overall it isn't anything that you can adjust to really quickly. However, there are a few major differences between Detroit and Toronto that I had to adjust to. Detroit in general is pretty safe (if you are smart and aware of your surroundings), but there are still areas of the city that you cannot go to by yourself. You also can't really walk around alone once it gets dark, which I had difficulty getting used to.

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?

Just ask questions and strike up conversations! There was just as much interaction as there would be if you were a regular student. Everyone was very kind and friendly, and as long as you have the mentality that you are there to LEARN and not to TEACH, there won't be any problem connecting with other people.

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?

I had been reading about and keeping up to date with Detroit for the past few years, so I was pretty prepared for what to expect. However, like I said above, it is definitely a very different city than Toronto. I was unprepared for just how spread out and far away things in the city are, and everyone (even the majority of students) have a car . If you can I would definitely recommend bringing/buying a bike!

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