



2014-2015 Student Mobility/Exchange Program Returning Undergraduate Student Report

Host University: Cleveland Institute of Art

Host Country: U.S.

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Sculpture and Expanded Media

Semester: Fall 2014

Date of Report: Jan 2015

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.

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

I choose CIA because of three main reasons: Cleveland used to be a major industrial centre, the school is offering glass working classes and because I was curious about experiencing the American culture firsthand.

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

I learned a lot of things, but the most meaningful might have to be the complex dynamics of collaboration in a project with another artist involving independent on-site exploration and research on an unfamiliar environment.

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

A very positive experience was exploring the steel mills and the industrial valley with another classmate while interacting with the locals in the area. It was great to be able to learn outside of school.

Subtle but major differences between Canadian and American social culture was not most challenging but it did take some adjusting on my part. The recognizable “segregation” and “homogeneity” in the area and school was something I was not used to, being in OCAD U. I had to adjust and work my way around the different structures in the school in terms of the department and shops.

CIA is in the process of moving all the shops in one building, so as of the moment, all the shops are separated in the two buildings. It was a bit challenging to transfer materials from one building to another when I was working on different mediums. One thing that was also challenging was the lack of supply store within the school. Although there were some supplies we can purchase, we had to source out and transport some materials from outside.

The individual studio spaces for all students were very convenient. The shops in the JMC building had high ceilings and were very spacious.

Many professors and shop technicians were very encouraging in giving me additional guidance in some independent projects I was interested in pursuing even if they were not my official professors or I was not officially registered in some of their classes.

Most of the other students in the school and my classmates were very helpful, warm and accommodating.

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 had to prepare the paperwork for OCAD side of the exchange, and then coordinate with the staff at CIA. The student visa was \$200, which I paid for within less than 3 weeks before moving to Cleveland. 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?

I brought a lot of my own materials during the exchange. Certain art and design supplies were not easily available in Cleveland like electronics supplies etc.

3. ARRIVAL

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

My family drove me to the place, so I did not experience any difficulties when I arrived. One thing that could be considered as a "difficulty" might be the fact that I paid for the space I was to stay in for 4 months in less than a week and I felt slightly worried that it could have been a scam considering I did not spend enough time checking for the credibility of the landlord and contact person. When we arrived, I met with the custodian, so it was a relief that their ad was legitimate.

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

It depends on the place and the host university. I arrived on the weekend right before the first day of school. I would definitely have benefited from arriving earlier, but arriving just in time did not cause me any problems.

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

I believe there was an orientation session in the school, but I was not able to 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?

Lori Brindsi is the person in charge of international and exchange students. She was very helpful and thoughtful.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I stayed in a house, 15 minutes away from the school (by walking, 5 minutes by biking) with other roommates who were students from the CWRU. I was happy with my accommodation. I had to rush into looking for a place to stay in 2 weeks before moving to Cleveland, so I was relieved to find that the place was good.

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

The host institution's website had a link to a database of renting places in the area. I found my space there. I was fortunate enough not to encounter difficulties in arranging accommodation for myself; given the very short period of time I spent looking for a place without a 12-month lease.

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:

I find the level of academic difficulty and challenge in CIA lesser than in OCAD U. The workload is less and there is more leeway in terms of deadlines.

Time spent in class (# of hours per week): 15

Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week): 15

Studio-based work: 5

Oral presentations (Individual and Group): 1

Written assignments: 5

Interaction between students and professors: 5

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?

Yes, there were a lot, but I did not attend any of them. I heard they were good.

What were the library and computer facilities like?

CIA students had access not only to the school library but also to all the Case Western University libraries, which were larger libraries. The computer facilities were also similar to the OCAD computer facilities. Thinkbox is a wonderful resource that CIA students also had access to. They have 3d printers, cnc milling machines, 3d scanners and other amazing machines that are free for students.

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?

It was a combination of personal savings, a bursary (Joubin-Selig) I received which amounted to \$2400 and a loan arrangement with my mother.

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

The living cost I think was considerably less. I did not have to pay for any transportation because I used my bike to travel back and forth to school and CIA students had free access to the public transportation in the city. The cost of food was also pretty low.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country:

Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year): Aug 2014 -Dec 2014

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

I imagine I spent less compared to the local students attending CIA because their regular tuition fee amounted to something like \$30,000 + while I paid the regular OCAD U tuition fee with an addition of \$2,000 + for CIA facilities fee. A lot of my classmates also drove cars, so they probably had to pay for gas and insurance.

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):** \$ 5,000

2. **School supplies:** \$ 200
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ 550 /month = \$ 1650
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ 0
 - B) **Telephone:** \$ 50 /month
 - C) **Cable:** \$ 0
 - D) **Other (specify)** \$ 0
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ 150/month = \$ 600
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ 10/month = \$40
7. **Laundry:** \$0 /month = \$ 0
8. **Transportation:** \$ 0 /month = \$ 0
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$ 100
10. **Travel health insurance:** \$ 0
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$ 20
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$ 0
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$ 100
14. **Student visa:** \$200
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$ 0

Estimated Total Expenses: \$ 8,060

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?

I did experience a bit of a “culture shock” in regards to a difference between the overall culture in Ohio with that of Ontario. OCAD U and CIA also had noticeable “art school” differences in terms of mindset, culture and etc. I am usually open-minded and curious, so it helped with dealing with the differences but in the beginning, I was overwhelmed and homesick, so the adjusting lasted for a few weeks. I think students could benefit a lot by being open-minded and curious.

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?

I think there is a good amount of interaction with local students and exchange/international students, but I have noticed that since the school mostly consisted of students from the same age range and cultural background, people were not too exposed with the kind of diversity that OCAD has. Everyone was generally friendly and mostly warm but there is something about the homogeneity that affects interaction amongst students. I do not know how to advise on a “best way to develop friendships”, but I think respect and honesty will contribute greatly to an exchange experience, since people respond to respect and honesty encourages people to be receptive.

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?

There were no problems I consider to be unforeseen or big enough to be considered as “problems”. If anything, there was the tension in the segregated areas in Cleveland that was a cause for concern. I just had to be more vigilant and keep in mind that the socio-cultural state of the U.S. is different from Canada. While I feel safe walking the streets in Toronto or Mississauga late at night, I did not feel safe enough to do it in Cleveland. There are ways to go around it, like having a proper means of transportation like a car or a bike.

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

People in CIA seemed to be genuinely interested in having exchange students. I did have such a positive experience and towards the end of the semester, they did say they would like to have more people from OCAD to come visit and do an exchange there.

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