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

Host University: École de design Nantes Atlantique
Host Country: France
Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Brand Design
Semester: Winter 2017
Date of Report: August 15, 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 choose this school mainly because their International Program was very interesting. Basically, all of Brand Design exchange students are put into one class with French students and take same classes. I thought it would be a great way to learn about different culture and people all over the world. Also, when I researched the school, I felt like the school focused on having good system of exchange program like having International program. They also have campuses in India, China, and Brazil.

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

The most positive experiences I had were getting to know many international and French friends. They were very friendly and nice. Later we became really tight with Internationals since we were staying together most of the times. We arranged some nights out and went out to the bar often. The International office was very helpful at first when we came in. They helped us with residence, health insurance, and visa (preparing for OFII). They were really nice and friendly as well. The biggest challenge I faced was obviously the language. I don't speak French so it was a struggle when I was wandering around the city, but many people tried to help me or I could use Google translator. Some students could speak French (like students from Quebec), which was good for me when I was with them. Another challenge I faced was the school system was so much different to OCAD U. Most of the classes didn't have any class outline, and teachers were giving assignments just by saying what's expected instead of in a written format. This was very confusing and unclear for most of the students, and even with French students too. I don't know

if this is how French universities work, but I don't think it's the best way to receive assignments because there's confusion and unclearness to it.

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?

When I got accepted, they asked me to send certain documents through email. I also had to apply for student visa, it only took two weeks and apparently it's easy to get French visa if you are Canadian. Make sure you tell your bank that you are going to be using your card in Europe and ask about fees and everything. I used my credit card mostly cause it doesn't apply fees, but I opened a French bank account anyways. Also make sure to check about your credit or courses you are going to get (which credit you will be receiving and what you need to take in order for you to graduate within 4 years).

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

No, you can buy everything from there. Don't buy shampoo or toiletries because there's a big supermarket 5 minutes walking distance. If you don't want to waste your money on art supplies, maybe bring pens and markers it might be helpful for the product design people. Brand design, we didn't really need materials.

3. ARRIVAL

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

The international office offers what's called a 'mentor' and mentor emails you asking if preparation is going good. My mentor welcomed me at the Nantes airport because I asked her to help me with my luggage. We took the bus to the centre and to my residence. There wasn't any difficulty because she helped me to check-in to the residence and translated everything for me.

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

I arrived on February 9th and the school started on the February 14th. It was good for me to be settled and wander around the city and buying necessities. Before the school starts, there is an International welcoming and the school insists to come earlier to be there for the welcoming. You get to meet all the Internationals and French students.

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

Yes, as I said earlier there is a two day welcoming and orientation. First one is for just the International students, and this tells about the school and school's learning method and forms

we need to sign and visa and everything. They also tell which phone company or bank to use and how to open. Second one is for both French and International students. We get to eat little snacks and chill out and talk to others.

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, International office is located inside the school building and they are very nice. They can speak English really good and we mostly talked to Orianne about most of the things.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I lived in Chanzy residence. This is where most International students get to live in. I get to have my own bathroom and room but there's a shared the kitchen with other students. The room is quite small but it was fine for me. There's a bus that goes to school right away, and the same bus goes to the center of the city as well. Location and price wise, I was very happy with the residence.

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

No, I didn't have any difficulty finding the accommodation. The school asked for accommodation and you would mostly likely get in. They did it for us.

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:

A little below to OCAD, we did a lot of basic stuff such as, figure drawing (nude drawing), visual arts, and photography.

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

Depends on which week, the methodology week and International design week we had to do was a week long project and we stayed 10am-6pm at school. On regular schedule was 25-35 hours

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

4-10 hours

Studio-based work:

Most assignments were studio-based work. I took photography, visual arts, 3DS MAX, after effects, illustration, long- project (Brand design core class),

Written assignments:

There was a French class and semiology (which most classmates didn't understood why we were taking it)

Interaction between students and professors:

Professors are helpful and very nice. They can be confusing sometimes so if you are unclear, make sure to ask them until you are clear.

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?

They arranged a boat tour and a Nantes island tour from school. Boat tour was very nice we went along the Erdre River and could see different chateaus. The Nantes island tour was arranged in French class. In photography, we went out to the centre or by the castle area to take pictures as well.

What were the library and computer facilities like?

There isn't a school library but we share with other universities. International office also made a day for students to come in and visit the library. It's right beside the school. I think most of the books are in French, but I didn't use the facility.

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 applied for exchange student bursary and received $4000. I used that money mostly and my parents helped me to buy the flight tickets and other things as well.

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

I think the cost of living is cheaper compared to Toronto, but if you convert it to Euro to CAD, it's about the same. The rate was 1Cad =1.42 euros but when I left Nantes, it was about 1 cad = 1.50 euros. However, all the groceries are way cheaper and phone bills were really cheap too. I used

Free Mobile and it was 19.99€ for unlimited calls/text in European countries and 50GB data. The rent in Chanzy residence was 254.40€.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country:

1.42 CAD = 1€ in February and 1.50 around June.

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

February/2017 – June/2017

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

I think I spent less compared to when I studied in Toronto. Just by looking at the rent price, there's a difference. But I travelled a lot on holidays or vacation so I guess that adds up the amount.

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. **School supplies**: $40

3. **Rent or university residence**: $350 CAD /month = $2 100

4. **Rent-related expenses**:
   A) **Electricity/Water**: Included
   B) **Telephone:** $35 /month
   C) **Cable**: no
   D) **Other (specify)** no

5. **Groceries or Meal Plan**: $300 /month = $1 500

6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** $200 /month = $1000

7. **Laundry**: $20 /month = $100

8. **Transportation:** $60 /month = $200

9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** $

10. **Travel health insurance**: $400

11. **Medical expenses in host country:** $0

12. **Round trip plane ticket:** I didn't book round trip. Toronto to Nantes was $900.

13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** $ 3000

14. **Student visa:** free

15. **Other expenses (please specify):** $

Estimated Total Expenses: $9415

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?

Yes, I went some culture shock. European countries seem to eat dinner very late, and restaurants mostly served food starting around 8pm till 10pm. Most shops would close on Sundays, so only choice if I could go was probably Starbucks. One thing I noticed about French people was that they don't reply to text messages fast (or really late), and there was a trouble trying to communicate with my project partner during brand design project.

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?

Yes, since the class is mixed with French and International students, we have lots of interactions. We also have to do a project with French partner for long project, which was interesting and challenging as well. We arranged some nights out or went to French student's house and chill out there too.

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

I would have to say that the school is new and the class system is very unclear. The city is amazing and meeting new people are really nice and great, but in academic wise the school doesn't do a great job on having course outlines clear. Honestly, it was very confusing sometimes trying to figure out what the teachers wanted. There wasn't any specific grading scheme, percentage of assignments, and rubric. For example, on Thursday, one teacher gave us an assignment to do on the day and asked us to finish it before Sunday, but it was a week off and students (including myself) already made vacation trips starting Friday. Also, I was in Brand Design, and our project was about redesigning a commune nearby Nantes. The client wanted us to design furniture and exterior of the town (ex. bench, tables, park design). It was very conflicting from what we were expecting and they didn't want any brand identities because

another company was doing it for them. Later, we did some trouble solving, but at first we were all confused.

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

I would really recommend student to go to Nantes if you are looking forward to meet great group of friends all over the world. I was never homesick when I was there because I met such amazing people. It should be one time experience to go to Europe and to study. I think it is a good opportunity to learn a different learning method because in the future, you will not be sticking to ocad's teaching method.

Please email your report to International Student Services at international@ocadu.ca.