



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

**Student Name:**

**Host University:** Pacific Northwest College of Art

**Host Country:** Portland, OR. America

**Faculty/Department at Host Institution:** Printmaking

**Semester:** Winter/Spring

**Date of Report:** July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2014

## 1. OVERALL EVALUATION

**How would you rate your exchange experience overall?**

### **Please explain your rating.**

My exchange experience was very enjoyable. I got exactly what I wanted out of the trip. A new perspective, the challenge of starting in a new environment, and the freedom to focus on my studies without distractions.

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

I chose PNCA primarily based on the city. Portland is a beautiful city with a big community of bookmakers, printmakers, artists and crafters. I was intrigued by the school because it has a smaller population than OCADU, and a strong focus on academics.

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

I learned how to work with students, and how to relate more to each class mate. As each class was a lot smaller, and I got to know everyone pretty well.

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

I had various positive experiences. I made a lot of friends, which I still maintain an online relationship with. I had incredibly caring and involved teachers, that helped me develop my projects. And I was also able to work in the large studios that had a lot of open hours. One of the challenges I faced was finding affordable accommodations. Occasionally I felt homesick, although that feeling passed with time, as I made more friends and became more comfortable at PNCA.

## **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?**

My preparation included filling out a j-1 student visa, which PNCA mailed to me. Then I took my balance, and opened up an American bank account once I arrived in America. I also bought traveler's insurance, and a plane ticket before leaving.

**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 found that America had everything that I'd need. PNCA has inks in the printmaking studios for students to use, so I didn't even have to bring mine. Although I brought my bone folder, thread, pens, and other pencil case type utensils, so that I didn't have to buy new ones.

## **3. ARRIVAL**

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

There was nobody to meet me, and I did not experience any difficulties.

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

I arrived about 2 weeks before classes started. I felt like it was beneficial to arrive earlier, to find a place to live, get comfortable, and explore the city a little bit.

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

There was an orientation session held at PNCA for new students. That included foundation students, transfer students, and exchange students. It was very enjoyable, they provided lunch, showed us all the resources in the school, and had a couple of presentations about the school. We also played icebreaker games, which was a great way to meet people before classes started.

**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?**

There is a coordinating office for exchange students. Sarah Lonquist took care of all the details regarding exchange students. She is very friendly and approachable, and can answer any questions an exchange student could have.

## **4. ACCOMMODATION**

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

I lived in an apartment building with a couple near the school. I found the apartment purely by chance. I was happy with my accommodation, because it was a nice room, in a new building, with my own bathroom.

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

I had difficulties arranging accommodations. PNCA has a residence, but I could not afford it. Although student services helped me by introducing me to the other residency in the city – Goose Hollow. It was mostly full, but had people posting on craigslist for sublets. I searched for an apartment on craigslist, and asked everyone that I'd meet in Portland. Eventually I met someone that knew someone that was looking for a roommate.

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

PNCA's residency (Art House) is a very nice new building, although it is very expensive, and most of the tenants have to share rooms. Goose Hollow is the other residency, it is very big, full of students, and more affordable. I heard a lot of unpleasant stories about that building though.

**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?**

My utilities were included in the rental. I was very fortunate to find an affordable place to live near the school. Because PNCA's neighbourhood is very expensive. Almost anywhere else in the city would be a good place to live for exchange students. I believe that South East is a good location with a lot of good restaurants, coffee shops, galleries, and affordable rent.

## **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:**

Every professor that I had, expected a lot out of me. Every class assigned a lot of readings, including the studio classes. It was difficult, only because I had to do a lot of readings and research. Otherwise, it was very enjoyable to learn about my practice.

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

Roughly 15-16 hours. Excluding lunch. Everyday everybody in the school had lunch at the same time, at 12:30-1:30pm.

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

I spent most of my time outside of class working on projects, just because the school was an enjoyable environment, and I was very enthusiastic about my projects.

**Oral presentations (Individual and Group):**

I gave oral presentations in all of my classes. I had to research and present on a contemporary artist for both of my studio classes. I also had to write two research papers, and present them in my liberal class.

**Written assignments:**

All of my classes assigned written assignments. My studio classes only assigned one. The written assignments were very self-directed, which I loved because I could focus on what interested me the most.

**Studio-based work:**

Most of my studio-based work was self-directed as well. Which allowed me to steer my work anyway I like. My professors gave me a lot of guidance and suggestions for all of my projects.

**Interaction between students and professors:**

Professors were very involved and enthusiastic about students' works. The input that I received from each professor was very valuable for all of my projects.

**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 a lot of extracurricular activities, such as trips and clubs in the school. They were not necessarily specific to international students, as much as open for everyone.

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

The library and computer labs were excellent and full of resources.

**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 lived off of my savings during the whole trip. I also received a couple of grants and an OSAP loan.

**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 generally the same.

**8. EXPENSES****Exchange rate with host country:****Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year):**

January 2014 – May 2014

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

I spent a lot less on my tuition than the other local students.

**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):** \$2500
2. **School supplies:** \$400
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$600 /4 month = \$2400
4. **Rent-related expenses:**  
A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month  
B) **Telephone:** \$ /month  
C) **Cable:** \$ /month  
D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$300/4 month = \$1200
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$50/4 month = \$200
7. **Laundry:** \$8/4 month = \$32
8. **Transportation:** \$ /month = \$
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$800
10. **Travel health insurance:** \$100
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$150
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$500
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$
14. **Student visa:** \$50
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

**Estimated Total Expenses:** \$8332

**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 not experience any culture shock. I was comfortable in Portland. The only thing I wasn't expecting was that everyone drove a car, and it rained the majority of the time. I would advise students going to Portland to get a bicycle and a proper rain jacket.

**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 made friends with a lot of local students just through classes, and interacting with them in other places around the school. Since everyone at PNCA has lunch at the same time, it is quite easy to join clubs and meet people through them.

**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?**

My studies in PNCA were very enjoyable. Everyone at the school made me feel welcome and comfortable.

**10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

PNCA is a great school, and I will cherish this experience forever. I highly recommend any student to take advantage of studying in a different school for a semester. The fresh perspective on how an institution works is very useful.