



## Student Mobility/Exchange Program Returning Student Report

OCAD U Program: Environmental Design  
Host University: PUC-Rio  
Host Country: Brazil  
Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Architecture and Urbanism  
Semester: Fall 2017  
Date of Report: June 7, 2018

### 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 wanted to go somewhere completely different than other places that I had traveled to before.

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

I made amazing Brazilian friends who studied design as well. Meeting people from across the world who have similar interests as you was special. Biggest challenge would be the language barrier at the beginning.

### 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?**

Student visa took a lot of planning- months in advance, especially because I am an American. TD bank allowed me to take out hundreds of dollars from the ATM which made it possible to pay rent every month. Some other banks were iffy like Bank of America, which only let me take out \$100USD at a time. I would for sure bring more than one debit/ credit card, and bring cash with **Are there any important items (e.g. art and design supplies, documents, specialty foods, health items) that a student should take to your host country?**

I always photocopy all of my travel documents, credit cards, ID's etc before I go anywhere, and put these copies in different suitcases, purses etc. That way if anything is to ever get stolen you're somewhat okay. I didn't bring special foods or anything, Brazil is way more modernized than you would expect. I had a vegan friend who got along just fine. I brought my scale and a few supplies but they really do have everything there for your consumption.

### **3. ARRIVAL**

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

Yes, I emailed a couple of days before and a man from the exchange office was there to pick me up and drop me off at my host home along with other students. I felt very safe.

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

I arrived a day or two before orientation period. I think that arriving before courses started really benefited me and gave me sometime to get a grip on the language, would certainly recommend it.

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

Yes there was, different events for maybe 4-5 days. I attended all of the activities and it helped me to make friends that I knew once classes started which is I guess the whole idea.

**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- Linda Sousa is the head of the exchange office, she was amazing!

### **4. ACCOMMODATION**

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

I lived with two elderly women in an apartment in Copacabana, the location was great and the family was nice.

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

No difficulties whatsoever- I filled out a short questionnaire and then my host school matched me.

### **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:** Design courses were difficult. Humanities courses- moderate

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

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

**Studio-based work:** 20

**Written assignments:** 10

**Interaction between students and professors:** 6

## 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, these were arranged through the host school and were great. We visited a farm once and it was a fun day.

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

The library was very sacred there, unlike any that I had been to in the US or Canada, completely clean and SILENT. They are very on top of security to prevent stealing so you always have to swipe in with our ID, and put your backpack in a locker before you enter.

## 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 loans and/or financial awards (scholarships or bursaries)? Did you have help from family?**

Yes, I worked all summer to pay for my trip. OCAD gave me no money even though i applied for bursaries.

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

Similar, but only because i chose to live with a host family in a safer neighborhood, I could of paid less in rent and been in a different situation.

## 8. EXPENSES

**Exchange rate with host country:** 1 USD= about 3 BR

Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year): 5 months

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

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: \$	50
3. Rent or university residence: \$ /month = \$	600
4. Rent-related expenses:	
A) Electricity/Water: \$ /month	0
B) Telephone: \$ /month	0
C) Cable: \$ /month	0
D) Other (specify) \$ /month	0
5. Groceries or Meal Plan: \$ /month = \$	200
6. Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.): \$ /month = \$	50
8. Laundry: \$ /month = \$	0
7. Transportation: \$ /month = \$	40
9. Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.): \$	300
10. Travel health insurance: \$	
11. Medical expenses in host country: \$	
12. Round trip plane ticket: \$	1,800
13. Travel/trips during exchange: \$	2,000
14. Student visa: \$	200
15. Other expenses (please specify): \$	
Estimated Total Expenses: \$	about \$5,500

## 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?**

Of course, but I mean that's why you travel right? I tried to learn the language as fast as I could and ditch my western ways (always having an iPhone out etc.)

**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, but mainly because I took regular courses with other Brazilians so I had a different experience than that of my peers who were exchange students from other universities. Brother Carioca was a group formed by Brazilian students to bridge those gaps and they were great!

**Was there anything that you felt was strikingly different from what you expected?**

I went with no expectations and was amazed!

## 10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

*Please email your report to International Student Services at [international@ocadu.ca](mailto:international@ocadu.ca).*