

## **Student Mobility/Exchange Program Returning Student Report**

**OCAD U Program:** Illustration

**Host University:** Rhode Island School of Design

**Host Country:** United States

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

**Semester:** Spring/winter

**Date of Report:** 19 July 2018

### **1. OVERALL EVALUATION**

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

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

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

I chose RISD because it has a very strong illustration program with interesting electives not offered at OCAD.

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

I had some excellent profs and met some talented classmates from whom I learned a lot. I had a rough time with course registration but it ended up working out well.

### **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 apply for a J-1 student visa and get health insurance - I'm not sure I did anything different than I normally do with regards to banking especially since I travel to the U.S. fairly regularly.

**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?**

Asides from prescribed medications which I don't know the process for acquiring in the U.S. (although I imagine it's similar to Canada except for the cost of health insurance), everything I had available in Canada - gouache, Arches watercolour paper, specific foods, etc. - was available in the U.S.

### **3. ARRIVAL**

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

I was very lucky that my dad drove me from Toronto to Providence and I experienced no difficulties. My understanding is that if you travel by plane you need to fly into Boston and then drive to Providence.

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

About a week before classes begin. RISD has a mandatory exchange students orientation in that week as well as course registration for those students. I don't think I would have benefited from arriving earlier.

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

Yes. We received a campus tour, met the other exchange students, and discussed general information like our visa requirements, health insurance, and daily life at RISD and in the U.S.

**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?**

RISD has separate offices for travel courses/exchange programs etc. and International Student Services - these are RISD Global and RISD OISS respectively. OISS was instrumental in helping us get settled with visas and such but I mostly dealt with RISD Global. All of the staff were helpful and willing to answer any questions I had.

### **4. ACCOMMODATION**

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

I lived in RISD student housing - a three bedroom apartment with two roommates, a common area, a bathroom, and a kitchenette. I was happy with these accommodations.

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

RISD helped to arrange accommodations. I had no difficulties.

### **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:**

Roughly the same as at OCAD, maybe slightly more challenging in studio work.

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

Four classes - 5 hrs per studio class and 3 hrs per liberal arts course - 18 hrs in class per week

**Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week) :** 21-36 hrs for all classes depending on upcoming deadlines

**Studio-based work:**

6-12 hrs per class per week (depending on whether I had a final illustration or rough work due the next class)

**Written assignments:**

(liberal arts class) 3-6 hrs per week depending on whether I had readings or a paper due the next class

**Interaction between students and professors:** In and out of class interactions with professors were similar to at OCAD

## **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 not. We could choose to organise activities with the other exchange students but we were pretty busy with schoolwork.

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

The library was spacious and well-lit with excellent resources and the computer labs were good, with easy access to tablets and printing facilities close by and affordable.

## **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?**

My parents pay for my tuition and living expenses (I live at home and commute to classes at OCAD); they paid the costs of the exchange program.

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

I think it was comparable to Canada if slightly more expensive. I can't speak to the costs students living independent of their parents incur and are required to budget for.

## **8. EXPENSES**

**Exchange rate with host country:**

Roughly 0.75 USD to 1.00 CAD at the time I was there (though it may have fluctuated in the time since).

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

02/2018 - 05/2018

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

About the same for materials, housing, food, less for tuition

**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):** \$ 3600 (roughly)

**2. School supplies:** \$500

**3. Rent or university residence:** \$ /month = \$7023 total (2006-7/month)

**4. Rent-related expenses:**

A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month N/A

B) **Telephone:** \$ /month \$60 - cellphone

C) **Cable:** \$ /month N/A

D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month N/A

**5. Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ /month = \$2750 total (785/month)

**6. Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ /month = \$35

**8. Laundry:** \$ /month = \$10

**7. Transportation:** \$ /month = \$ N/A

**9. Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$90 (see #13)

**10. Travel health insurance:** \$627

**11. Medical expenses in host country:** \$ N/A

**12. Round trip plane ticket:** \$ N/A

**13. Travel/trips during exchange:** \$90 (bus to and from NY)

**14. Student visa:** \$230

**15. Other expenses (please specify):** \$ N/A

**Estimated Total Expenses:** \$15,240

## **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 during my exchange. The Northeastern U.S. is very similar to Southern Ontario. There are a few differences in terminology but most Canadians are familiar with them through exposure to American media.

**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'm not sure I understand - RISD is about 30% international students and the domestic and international populations are well integrated. I was able to make friends with classmates and lab monitors in studio spaces simply by interacting and making conversation.

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

No. I found RISD and OCAD to be quite similar academically - except for the 5 hour studio classes that I unexpectedly enjoyed. I wish OCAD's studio classes were 5 hours long. The sort of campus bubble that RISD has (where everyone is living in student housing close to or on campus) made it easier to make friends than at OCAD but this I anticipated.

## **10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

It was a good overall experience and I encourage students to apply for the exchange program in the future.

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