



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

Host University: Ringling College of Art and Design

Host Country: United States

Faculty/Department at Host Institution: Illustration

Semester: Fall 2014

Date of Report: Jan 31st, 2014

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 decided on choosing Ringling upon the recommendation of my figure painting professor as well as reading another Exchange student report about their experience at Ringling. I decided on applying for schools in the states as I also factored in that I was more likely able to afford an exchange to the States.

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

I learned quite a bit in further experimenting and was provided with an amazing facilities to work in as well as the space to do so which I found was rather helpful in figuring out a direction in where to take my art in.

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

The professors in the illustration program who taught there were extremely helpful in guiding me along the way. They gave insightful and critical feedback for my work. A highlight during my exchange was being able to meet one of my favourite artists Victo Ngai. Ringling has an annual illustration show every year and they invited artists to come in and judge pieces as well as give talks about their own work and experiences.

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?

As a Canadian student studying in the States, I wasn't required to apply for a student visa. Rather I was given the I-20 form by the exchange school to fill out and mail back in order to request an F1 status in the States. In terms of traveling to the school, I drove down to the school and getting through customs was quite easy. I had to declare my status as an F1 student at the border, security checked and validated my status and then I continued on.

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

Depending on the studio courses that you take there and what your medium preferences are, I would say bring what you are usually comfortable with working in. Unless you do have a car, the closest art supplies store is the school campus store where prices are usually a lot more expensive and most students buy in bulk online. Plazas and buildings are pretty spread apart and transit is rather slow and a bit more on the sketchy side, so a car is your best bet. I was able to get around by asking friends that I had met in school to drive me to the store as well so it wasn't too bad. It was more of an inconvenience as I was so used to the accessibility of the TTC and also the walkability within Toronto. Also it would be convenient to bring lots of quarters for laundry if you are planning on living on residence.

3. ARRIVAL

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

Arrival was relatively simple as I drove down to Florida with my family. I arrived at the school, checked in, and got moved in rather quickly. It would still be relatively easy to fly in since there is an international airport a couple minutes away from the school.

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

I arrived at the school on the specified move-in day for Returning students, which was on August 16th, the Saturday before school started. It was recommended that I could move in a couple days earlier with the new students so I could attend the orientation, but it wasn't a mandatory event you need to go to. I would recommend, to go a bit earlier to figure out things like cell phone plan registrations if you are planning to get a plan and also to set up bank accounts as well if you need to.

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

Ringling does offer both a new student and new international student orientation a week before the start of the fall semester. I, however, was unable to attend and arrived at the school the weekend before the start of the semester and arrived on the Saturday before school start.

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 was no specific Mobility exchange co-ordinator for Ringling in particular so I ended up corresponding with the Academic Registrar, Justin Selph, at the school to make sure I was signed up for the right courses and that I was fully registered and input correctly into the school system. He was the person I approached for most of my questions and was available both through email and telephone. I had to talk to separate people for international student forms and applying for residence.

4. ACCOMMODATION

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

I lived on campus for the duration of my exchange. I lived in a double room in the Ulla Searing student center building on campus and found my living space nice and comfortable. I ended up not having a roommate for the semester, so I had a double room to myself, which was quite comfortable. The double room had a bed, drawer, desk and closet space for each person as well as a washroom that is shared between 2 roommates. The benefit of a small campus is also any residence you choose to live in is all very close to classrooms and studios, nothing past a 5 minute walk.

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

Arranging accommodations was relatively easy for me. I emailed the school's Residence Life office as well as called them to double check that I was fully registered and had filled all the proper forms.

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:

Project turnarounds are a little bit longer depending on the professor that teaches it, however I found that professors were very understanding and lenient of changing project deadlines and changing assignments to better fit the class. The difficulty for studio, I'd say is around the same as the OCAD Illustration program.

Time spent in class (# of hours per week): 30 hours for a full course load of 5 classes

Time spent working on projects outside of class (# of hours per week): 18 hrs

Studio-based work: The courses that I ended up deciding to take were all studio courses as I decided to take advantage of the cintiq labs, painting studios as well as the mac labs offered by the school.

Oral presentations (Individual and Group): n/a

Written assignments: As part of the Illustration course that I took at Ringling, 25% of the course was dedicated towards a unit called Professionalism which was aimed at preparing ourselves for the work and being professionally presentable. We were required to write our resumes, cover letters and artist's statements to be handed in a marked by our professors.

Interaction between students and professors: Professors were very accommodating to students and were helpful in providing students with resources and knowledge both for the courses that we were learning and beyond the classroom. A lot of professors discussed topics like preparing for the industry, competitions, and also were able to give good critique on personal work.

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?

Ringling offered a couple trips for students over the fall semester, but there were no events, aside from the orientation, specifically for international or exchange students. The school had organized trips to Disney's Blizzard Beach water park and Universal Studios Halloween Horror Nights, which were offered at discounted prices.

What were the library and computer facilities like?

The Kimborough Library has an extensive collection of books, magazines, periodicals, movies and other resources for students to reference and use. The library is also equipped with mac desktops for use, quiet study rooms and desk space to work. The facilities that were available to the Illustration students were also the Mac labs and the Cintiq labs which were much better serviced than OCAD U. Cintiq Labs are also open 24hrs which was great when students needed to spend more time on projects. Each student attending Ringling is also given a Macbook Pro to use as well.

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?

Financially, I was mainly my parents who helped me pay for the exchange as well as a little bit of what I saved up. I didn't receive any student loans nor did I apply for any financial awards or bursaries. In terms of prepping for the exchange, I used my credit card, which was linked to my Canadian bank account for most things. I also brought down American cash as well as I didn't want to deal with setting up an American bank account for such a short amount of time.

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

Cost of living was higher in comparison to living back in Canada, but also because I live at home when I am studying at OCAD. Food expenses and eating out are a lot more expensive in general in comparison to Toronto. Art supplies can also be more or less expensive depending on what

you buy in comparison to Toronto. It's best to keep a list of what you need to buy and know your prices if you are concerned or need to keep a budget. For example, newsprint pads were a lot more expensive in Florida as compared to Aboveground or Curry's.

8. EXPENSES

Exchange rate with host country: approximately \$1.00 USD = \$1.27 CAD

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?

Including housing and other expenses, I believe I ended up paying more for my semester abroad in comparison to my expenses studying back at OCAD but I'd estimate I probably spent an average amount in comparison with local students. The choice of materials that I decided to use for projects were also a lot more expensive than what I normally work with back at home, but is also because I had to buy a whole new set of oil paints as I had never worked with oils before.

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):** \$ 37625
2. **School supplies:** ~\$450
3. **university residence:** \$3610.00 USD for semester
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
 - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month
 - B) **Telephone:** \$ /month
 - C) **Cable:** \$ /month
 - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month
5. **Meal Plan:** \$2785.05 USD for the semester
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics/dorm):** Total ~\$200.00
7. **Laundry:** \$4.00 /month = \$ 16.00
8. **Transportation:** \$ /month = \$ n/a
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** ~\$100
10. **Travel health insurance:** ~\$300
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$ n/a

12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$ n/a

13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$ ~150

14. **Student I-20 form:** \$200

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

Eating Out: ~ \$220

Phone Bill: \$40/month = \$160 total

Estimated Total Expenses: \$8200

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?

No, I didn't experience much or if any culture shock in the states.

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?

Aside from me, there was only one other exchange student attending the school. The student population at Ringling is also very small in comparison to OCAD and because most students live close to or on campus, it was quite easy to meet people and develop friendships outside and during class. I found that I met quite a lot of people when I was eating in the dining hall as many upper year students still opted into the meal plan option.

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?

10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

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