



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

**Student Name:**

**Host University:** SAIC

**Host Country:** Chicago

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

**Semester:** Fall 2016

**Date of Report:** 28/12/2016

### 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?**

Because its reputation as one of the most prestigious art schools in N-America and I found their cross-disciplinary program important influence to my practice.

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

The faculty members all exceeded my expectations all in their different ways. I was pushed forward both intellectually and technically in my practice. My work transformed and by the end of the semester it had matured to a great extent. The workload was more than I had experienced at OCAD, both the readings and projects but I was grateful for such an intense work period and I learned so much from 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?**

I had to take some extra vaccines and proof that my parents or I had certain amount of money. The visa application was rather easy. The process was easier than the one I went through when I was applying to study in Canada. It took time though and the actual study permit is just a piece of paper that you must take care of your after your studies and even your whole life. I've heard

that if you want to study or work in the States in the future you must be able to show this document. It's very competitive to get into courses so make sure you do that early.

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

Not any that I can think of, you can pretty much everything there.

### **3. ARRIVAL**

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

No, but I stayed with my cousin my first week because I didn't have a place to live. I had to rush to find a room because school had already started so I took a room that was 750 USD per month (all included) but that is rather expensive there, most students I knew were paying from 500-650\$. The transport system there is easy just like in Toronto so there is a train that goes straight downtown from the airport, you can also order an Uber to pick you up there.

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

School starts in late August so it's good to have a room by that time, usually rent is a monthly thing so it would probably be good to be there in late July early August so you will have time to find a place and explore the city. I arrived just a few days before school started and I think it would have been less stressful if I had arrived earlier.

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

Yes, there was a mandatory orientation day for the exchange students where we got all the important information. I met the other exchange students there and we became a close group of friends after that, which was amazing.

**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, there is. It's all very easy, Norman that works there helped me a lot.

### **4. ACCOMMODATION**

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

I lived in the Ukrainian Village, which is a really nice neighbourhood. It was expensive but a safe place. I feel like I was really scared in the beginning because there is so much gun violence in the city, but I felt rather safe the whole time I was there. Other nice neighbourhoods are Pilsen,

Lincoln Square and any place that is close to the Blue Line (CTA). In the winter it gets cold so it's good to live close to a train station or a bus stop.

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

The school didn't help me but I'm sure they could though. I found my place on Craigs List, and I think most of the people there find their places there. Some of my friends found their places through student Facebook pages.

## **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:** Difficult but manageable

**Time spent in class (# of hours per week):** 24 hours (but I only took 12 credits or 2.0 in Canada, usually I think students spend around 30 hours in a class per week)

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

**Studio-based work:** 24 hours

**Written assignments:** 6 hours

**Interaction between students and professors:** Rather personal and free from hierarchy

## **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?**

Not that I knew of, but there are always all sorts of talks and things happening at the school every week.

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

The library is fantastic and there are computers in every building, however I think it's hard to go through some of the courses without a laptop, but it just depends on your courses.

## **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 get loans from Iceland (where I'm from) for my education and living expenses. However I worked a lot before I went there to pay some things that my loans did not cover such as health insurances, which are around 1200 USD and rent for the first month. I think I spent around 8000 CAD in total on rent, food, art supplies and all that but I'm sure it would be possible go there with 5000 CAD for the semester. I did not apply for any scholarships or awards. I got help for my family for my last month because I didn't have money for food and rent.

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

It was higher, a cup of coffee was maybe 2.50\$ like in Canada but the Canadian dollar is way lower so it was a lot more expensive. The city is not expensive like New York or Los Angeles though, it's relatively cheap for being the third largest city in the US.

## **8. EXPENSES**

**Exchange rate with host country:** 1 USD = 1.35 CAD

**Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year):** August/2016 – December/2016

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

More because I had to buy some things that a local student would already have. Both art materials such as oil paint and spray paint and some things for the house.

**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):** \$ 12000 (I'm an international student)
2. **School supplies:** \$ 1300
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ /month = \$ 760
4. **Rent-related expenses:**
  - A) **Electricity/Water:** 40 \$ /month
  - B) **Telephone:** 60 \$ /month
  - C) **Cable:** -20 \$ /month
  - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ 400 /month = \$
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ 100 /month = \$

7. **Laundry:** 0 \$ /month = \$
8. **Transportation:** 40\$ /month = \$
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** 200 \$
10. **Travel health insurance:** 1200 \$
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** 0 \$
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** 900 \$
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** 3600 \$
14. **Student visa:** 500 \$
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

**Estimated Total Expenses:** \$ 25.500

## **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?**

No, it's multi cultural Western city but it is segregated and the South side where mainly African American people live was created because of institutional racism and racism in general. So racism is a huge issue in the city and racial tension, especially after the elections. I think it's best to educate yourself on the situation and cultural issues before and while living in the city. I think that no matter where you are as a guest or a tourist its always your responsibility to be as well informed as you can.

**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?**

It's an English speaking country so I think speaking the same language makes all the difference. Exchange students are not excluded at all and go to the same classes as other students. Keep open to others and talk to the person next to you.

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

In the beginning of the semester I had a show in Iceland so I went there for the opening. Then there was a death in my family so I had to go there again, which meant that I had missed two classes and you are only aloud to miss 3. I was a bit nervous with my attendance because of that. I took 12 credits, which I though was equal to 2.5 Canadian credits but it's actually just 2 Canadian credits. I don't recommend exchange students to take 15 credits per semester (2.5

Canadian) because that could be way too much. The school is a lot of work but that's the greatest thing about it.

**10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

I highly recommend this program for ambitious students who want to explore different practices and develop their work further in a fresh environment. Chicago is a beautiful city and I had the best time! I kind of didn't want to leave because I think the school is better than OCAD.

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