



**2012-2013 Student Mobility/Exchange Program  
Returning Undergraduate Student Report**

**Host University:** San Francisco Art Institute  
**Host Country:** United States of America  
**Faculty/Department at Host Institution:** Printmaking  
**Semester:** winter / spring 2013  
**Date of Report:** Sept. 2013

**1. OVERALL EVALUATION**

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

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

**Please explain your rating.**

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

I learned that there are a large variety of approaches to teaching art. And also that building community is a very key element to a strong art practice

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

The openness of the community around the school was a highlight. Being able to make work all through the middle of the night. And having drinks at the local bar with famous and talented visiting artists, whom I had previously admired. Challenges mostly came in the form of assimilating to the big city. Very difficult house hunting, buying bicycle, figuring cell phones out, all the mundane discomforts that come from moving to a new city

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

CALIFORNIA – hard to need any other reason! The sun, the history of the city. The climate, the proximity to the ocean!

**Please describe your preparation for the exchange, including banking, travel documents and student visa application. In retrospect, would you have done anything differently?**

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

Take an unlocked iphone! It can be so difficult to get a cell phone there, its nothing like Europe!

## 2. ARRIVAL

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

SFO is right on the BART subway system and it only takes 20 mins. To get right into the heart of the city. The apartment I rented happened to be 3 blocks from a BART stop so it was very accessible.

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

I arrived 1 month too early! It was nice to have the prep time, however I think only 2 weeks would be necessary! The semester doesn't start in SF until february

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

I did attend it was kind of fun! I met a few friends! And was shown around the maze like campus

**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, and her name is JILL TOLFA! She's great!

## 3. ACCOMMODATION

**Where did you live during your exchange? Would you recommend your accommodation to future exchange students?**

Finding a place to live in San Francisco can be incredibly difficult! I managed to find a sublet through Craigslist. I posted an ad saying I was looking for a room, and a gentleman contacted me offering his place to me, it was incredibly lucky! I would absolutely recommend posting an ad!

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

Again, yes it was very difficult the institution didn't have much help to offer, I was kind of on my own in that regard. My biggest advice would be to not get discouraged!

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

The school offers two residency buildings right downtown, they seem great, albeit, expensive. If worst comes to worst, take a room in the residencies!

**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?**

Rent is very expensive in San Francisco. Most places don't have central heating so that is not a utility cost that is accrued. I lived in the MISSION DISTRICT, it's a very fun and vibrant neighbourhood most students end up living in the TENDERLOIN DISTRICT, it seems a little dangerous on the outside, but it is in fact a very safe and interesting neighbourhood.

#### **4. STUDIES AT HOST INSTITUTION**

**To better understand the similarities and differences between academic studies at OCAD and at your host university, please comment on the following:**

**Level of Academic Difficulty & Challenge:**

3<sup>rd</sup>. Year. – the curriculum demands a strong sense of independence. The instructors expect you to be working on your projects outside of class, and the class times end up being used for discussions and informative sharing times. I found the work load very manageable however.

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

The class time at SFAI is double of OCADU. As a student you are expected to be in each class 3hrs twice a week amounting to 6 hrs per class per week / this amounted to 24hrs a week of class time.

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

I tended to attend the school at 8:30 mon-fr, and I would leave around 10pm – 12 am  
So I think I spent about 20-30hrs working or being on campus outside of class time.

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

There was an expectation to present a lot of the information we were engaging with to the class, this created a very engaged learning style, and required a constant diligence on my part to be prepared for presentations. In my Installation class we mounted an exhibition as a group outside of the institution in a real gallery, it was a great experience!

**Written assignments:**

I was expected to write competently about my work and my understanding of the information being taught from day 1. I took primarily studio classes, and was expected to provide written statements for the majority of the work I presented.

**Studio-based work:**

The studio facilities at SFAI were great! I had such a good time printing in the large sun-filled studios.

**Interaction between students and professors:**

I developed strong relationships with all of my instructors! It was one of my favourite parts of my experience there! I feel like I forged relationships with instructors that will last for a very long time!

#### **5. 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?**

Well, I went to the grad student / exchange bar mixer. That was really fun. There wasn't too much other programming going on, but the community was small and I was able to take part in lots of different activities on campus!

**What were the libraries and computer facilities like? Would you recommend that students bring their own laptop?**

The library at SFAI is so old and beautiful! I loved writing and reading in there. I would expect anyone would bring their own laptop, however the computer labs at SFAI were quite accessible, and really welcoming, so im not even sure if you'd need to bring your laptop to campus.

**6. 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?**

It's very expensive!!! I managed to save up a bunch of money, but still relied on help from Financial Aid and bursaries. They really came in handy.

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

My day-to-day cost of living was lower than life in Toronto. I lived in a neighbourhood where I could buy very affordable produce. I like to go the bar in the evenings and have a few beer usually, and that was much more affordable in San Francisco. Transit is affordable, and you can bike everywhere, so I definitely found it cheaper!

**7. EXPENSES**

**Exchange rate with host country:**

I paid OCADU tuition which is a very small percentage of what the other students spend on tuition there

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

January 2013 – June 2013

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

I spent less money drastically. I was on a very tight budget, and I paid drastically less 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):** \$3000
2. **School supplies and books:** \$500
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$3000
4. **Rent-related expenses:**

- A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ 50/month
  - B) **Telephone:** \$65 /month
  - C) **Cable:** \$ 25/month
  - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month
5. **Groceries (or meal plan) and housekeeping supplies:** \$ 500/month = \$2500
  6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ 300/month = \$1500
  7. **Laundry and /or dry cleaning:** \$ 50/month = \$250
  8. **Transportation:**
    - A) **Public (Bus, Taxi, Subway, etc.):** \$ 20/month
    - B) **Private Car (gas, parking, ins.):** \$ /month
  9. **Clothing:** \$0
  10. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$300
  11. **Extended medical coverage:** \$1000
  12. **Travel / trips:** \$1500
  13. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$500
  14. **Student visa:** \$125
  15. **Medical expenses:** \$0
  16. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

**Estimated Total Expenses:** \$14, 050

## **8. 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?**

There is a very different feel on the streets in San Francisco compared to Toronto. It can be dangerous, there is blatant class distinctions, there are very prevalent racial tensions. There are streets to avoid, and gangs. But all in all it only takes a few weeks to feel safe and settled

**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?**

BE OPEN, FRIENDLY, AND TALKATIVE

**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?**

IT ALL WORKS ITSELF OUT! Things that may seem like problems or challenges at first really do a good job of evaporating and going away. All in all a very positive experience!

**9. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**