



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

**Host University:** University of the Arts  
**Host Country:** Philadelphia  
**Faculty/Department at Host Institution:** Printmaking  
**Semester:** Fall 2014  
**Date of Report:** Jan. 2015

### 1. OVERALL EVALUATION

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

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

**Please explain your rating.**

I learned a lot and my professors were more like mentors to me. I produced some really high quality work and grew my practice into a place that I am ready to do thesis. Overall my artistic growth was drastic so it was a very good experience for me but I have to say that the major reason I made such progress with my art is because I had the drive to work really hard.

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

I choose the institution because it is very conceptual and interested in experimentation, I was really excited to be in Philly because it has a really cool hippie art scene and it is really close to New York and I had researched the professors and was interested in studying under them.

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

Professional practice, I participated in two exhibition and did everything from installation to marketing/ advertising. I learned a lot of practical skills.

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

The students were so friendly and made me feel welcome and comfortable so quickly and the professors were very experienced giving really good feedback and critique for my work. At Uarts I had access to the editioning studio which was a space that you could print alone. It was really beneficial to not have any distraction while printing.

Challenge was to be in a place away from those who I am close to, I had two roommates so that helped but I wasn't just away for a semester because I was working a job up off the Georgian

Bay since June. So by Oct. I had been away from friends and family for quite some time and by Dec. I was ready to come back and see them. But if it had only been for a semester this wouldn't of been a challenge.

## **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?**

Getting the Visa was really easy the institution sends you a DS2016 and then you have to pay a Sevis fee and you get your J1 visa when you cross the border. Banking I had set up in June because I went to look for an apartment then so I just opened an account. I am with TD so I just opened an account with the American TD and there is free cross border banking so it was easy. I wouldn't have done anything different it was all very simple.

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

If you are a printmaker paper is more expensive in the states so I would have brought some if I had known that. Philly isn't too far from Toronto so they pretty much have everything the same.

## **3. ARRIVAL**

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

I drove down, it's only 8hrs so it made sense especially since the apartment I was renting was not furnished.

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

I had arrived a day before classes only because I was working a contract job and it didn't end until the day before. It was a crazy hectic move since I had a day to get everything organized, there was nothing I could do about it but arriving a few days before class started would have been nice. I also missed the international student orientation and the freshman orientation so I had a lot to figure out on my own when I got there. I wasn't too fazed because I was in forth year when I went and am a very independent person. But it was a lot of extra stress that can be avoided if you go to the orientation. And you get to meet friends right away so it took me a bit longer to make friends because I wasn't at orientation.

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

Yes and No (see above).

**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 I didn't find anyone to be very helpful, I did a lot of research for my Visa myself.

#### **4. ACCOMMODATION**

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

I lived in an apartment in west Philly with two roommates. I was very happy with it, I had a 18min bike to school everyday which was nice.

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

Yes, a lot because I was only there for a semester so landlords wanted at least 6mo lease or 1yr leases. The host institution was VERY unhelpful, they pretty much said that I could pay 7 grand to live on campus or I'm on my own. This was a major headache for me and I tried to find an apartment from Toronto over the internet but that wasn't working so I bought a bus ticket and went to Philly for a weekend to find an apartment. I have done my fair share of apartment hunting in Toronto so I knew what to look for/ questions to ask but as that was my first time in Philly I wandered into lots of neighbourhoods that I should not of been in. I am very surprised that I was not assaulted/ robbed.

#### **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:**

Lower than OCAD, less importance on editing and lower standards for writing.

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

24hrs

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

6hrs

**Studio-based work:**

Same as OCAD, very conceptually driven, they expect the same amount and quality, they want you to produce a ton of work. The edition is not important at Uarts.

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

Same as OCAD, Critiques are very similar and there are discussions on exhibits and artist talks that you have attended that week.

**Written assignments:**

Less than OCAD, quality of writing is lower than OCAD.

**Interaction between students and professors:**

Professors are very invested in the students as they are at OCAD. Although it ranges from prof to prof.

#### **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 international lunches almost every Wednesday, they were enjoyable. Other than that I'm not sure.

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

The library was good but the computer facilities/ printers were so crappy especially if you're in printmaking and you need to print out a positive for screenprinting, good luck.

## **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 was awarded a scholarship so that took care of some of the tuition, although the tuition wasn't any different than usual. Rent was a bit more expensive than I was used to it Toronto but I didn't have much time to look for a cheaper apartment. I paid for it all with money saved up from working.

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

Very similar, you can find much cheaper rent if you are willing to live in rundown, higher crime areas. Food/ alcohol is pretty much the same, art supplies are more expensive though.

## **8. EXPENSES**

**Exchange rate with host country:**

10 cents on the Canadian dollar.

**Time spent in host country (month/year - month/year):** 4 months

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

A little more just because of the place that I was renting.

**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:** \$800
3. **Rent or university residence:** \$ /month = \$700/mo

4. **Rent-related expenses:**
  - A) **Electricity/Water:** \$ /month include above
  - B) **Telephone:** \$ /month I went the 4 months without a cell phone plan
  - C) **Cable:** \$ /month NA
  - D) **Other (specify)** \$ /month Internet was more expensive than what I normally pay in Toronto, \$21/mo in Philly but I included it in above rent price
5. **Groceries or Meal Plan:** \$ /month = \$40/mo
6. **Personal expenses (toiletries/cosmetics, etc.):** \$ /month = \$10/mo
7. **Laundry:** \$ /month = \$6/mo
8. **Transportation:** \$ /month = \$15/mo for when I didn't feel like riding my bike
9. **Leisure (Sports, Entertainment, etc.):** \$50
10. **Travel health insurance:** \$NA
11. **Medical expenses in host country:** \$40
12. **Round trip plane ticket:** \$NA
13. **Travel/trips during exchange:** \$200
14. **Student visa:** \$150
15. **Other expenses (please specify):** \$

**Estimated Total Expenses:** \$5000

## 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?**

Not really, the main/ biggest different was crime and possibility of being assaulted.

**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, I shared a studio with 5 other students so I made friends with them, I also made a few friends in classes that I had. I would say the best way to make friends is just to talk to people.

**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?**

No

**10. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

Overall I really enjoyed my experience at Uarts, I wish it was a full year exchange.

*Please email your report to Susan Kemp, Student Mobility/Exchange Coordinator, at [skemp@ocadu.ca](mailto:skemp@ocadu.ca)*