

## EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT

**Student Name:** Christiana Dietzen

**Institution where you studied:** University of Copenhagen

**Semester of participation:** Summer

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### 1. Pre-Exchange. Why and Where:

- a. Why did you decide to study in the US or Denmark as an exchange student?
  - Because my mother is Danish, I have always been interested in the Danish language and culture. I have been taking Danish classes at the University of Washington, and wanted the opportunity to further improve my language skills by spending time in the country. Additionally, the research facilities available in Denmark provided me with an opportunity to conduct research that I would have been unable to perform in Washington.
- b. Why did you select the program/University?
  - My primary academic interest is the interaction between soil carbon cycling and climate change. The University of Copenhagen provided an ideal opportunity to study this as several faculty there are involved in the CLiMA!tE project, a multi-university study which consists of a series of climate change treatments that have been in place for 10 years with the goal of testing the effects of warming, drought, and atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> enrichment on a heath/grassland ecosystem. Gaining access to a project like this was an amazing opportunity as these experiments are somewhat uncommon due to the expense associated with maintaining them, yet they are the most realistic means of studying the effects of climate change.
- c. What were your expectations?
  - I expected to improve my Danish through daily opportunities to speak it, to conduct research for my dissertation and to network with members of my department at the University of Copenhagen.
- d. What preparations did you make prior to departure?
  - I reviewed my Danish textbook and worked with my advisor in Denmark to develop a research plan. I also arranged accommodations through AirBnB. Because this was a 6 week summer research trip, I did not have to get a visa or officially enroll at a university.

### 2. ARRIVAL/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

- a. Recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.
  - For a short-term stay, I found AirBnB to be an easy and reasonably priced option, that also gave me the opportunity to meet both fellow travellers and locals.
- b. Comment on the orientation and activities offered at both your home University and the host University, what did it cover and how did it help you prepare / adjust after arriving?
  - N/A as I was performing an independent study.

## 2. ACADEMICS:

- a. Evaluate the instruction you received. Compare the following to your home institution's system: *N/A as I was performing an independent study.*

## 3. HOUSING:

- a. How did you locate your housing?
  - *AirBnB*

## 4. EXCHANGE SITE:

In general, please describe your impressions of the host University campus and its location and surrounding community.

- *I was very impressed by the facilities in the department in which I was working, and the people in the department were friendly and welcoming. I enjoyed that everyone in the department took a lunch hour together in the building's dining area, as opposed to most people eating in their office, which is often the case at US universities. The campus was different than a traditional campus in the US, in that university buildings were spread all across the city.*

## 5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Describe any health or safety concerns (e.g., quality of medical facilities, unsafe districts, theft, etc.) associated with your study.

- *I had none. Copenhagen is a very safe city and I always felt very comfortable.*

## 6. CULTURAL ASPECTS:

- a. How did you integrate into the host country culture and meet members of the community? (e.g., mentors, clubs, sports, extracurricular activities, pubs, etc.)
  - *I was lucky to have several Danish friends who I had met previously either travelling or through other friends, so I was able to spend time with them and meet more Danish people through them. I also met some people through the other guests at the AirBnB I was staying at, and enjoyed spending time with those guests and my host as well.*
- b. Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them. (e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)
  - *Danish people use a surprising number of emoticons when texting. I started doing this too so they wouldn't think I was angry. I really appreciated that there was much more gender equality than in the US, both in people's personal lives and in the workplace.*

## 7. FINANCIAL:

- a. Describe how the Scan|Design Foundation Fellowship assisted you / made a difference in your decision to study abroad.
  - *Without the Scan Design fellowship, I would have been unable to afford this trip, and would never have considered the possibility of going to Denmark for an extended trip. I am incredibly thankful for this amazing opportunity.*
- b. What is the best way to access/transfer money?
  - *I find that having a Charles Schwab checking account is very useful when abroad as they do not charge international transaction fees and reimburse you for any ATM fees.*

- c. How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.
- Probably around \$1,800 would be a safe estimate. I spent about \$800/month on my living situation (this was probably higher than it could have been since it was short term). Until I was able to borrow a bike I used the public transportation system a lot for my first two weeks, which can get fairly expensive, but once you have a bike it is not necessary to use it as Copenhagen is really easy to bike around. I also took some trips to other parts of Denmark and Sweden so had to pay for those tickets as well.
- d. Comment on the relative "cost of living" between your home University and the host University.
- I found that the difference was not as bad as I expected, but that was partially due to the value of the dollar having improved this summer. Even short-term housing was fairly comparable to the cost of a long-term lease in Seattle. Most sit-down restaurants are incredibly expensive, but other than that food seemed pretty reasonable most of the time. Getting a phone plan was surprisingly cheap. It cost about \$15 for a month of almost unlimited talk, text, and data, including international calling.

## **8. EXCHANGE/SCAN | DESIGN FELLOWSHIP COORDINATORS AND ADMINISTRATION:**

### **Coordinator team**

Comment on the assistance by the Scan|Design Fellowship coordinators and administration before your departure, upon arrival, and during your stay. What worked and what could be improved or changed?

- I did not need any assistance in coordinating my stay, but filling out required paperwork etc. for ScanDesign was a straightforward process and it was easy to get any questions I had answered.

### **Activities**

Comment on the number and type of activities arranged by the coordinators. What worked and what would you like replaced with some other activity.

- Because I went fairly late in the summer I missed all of the Scan Design activities in Copenhagen. I did enjoy the events I attended in Seattle beforehand, which gave me a chance to talk with people who had gone before and get their advice.

## **9. PROGRAM/STUDENT TYPE:**

Describe the type of student for whom this exchange is best suited and what advice would you give to future students.

## **10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:**

- a. How would you rate the quality of the overall experience?
- Excellent.
- b. How realistic were your academic and personal expectations and how did the Scan|Design Fellowship Program make a difference?
- I think my expectations were realistic, though several technical difficulties made the research portion of my trip not as productive as I would have liked. However, I think I made a lot of progress in improving my language skills, and hope to continue to improve them going forward.

- c. What did you consider to be the greatest benefit and challenge of studying abroad?
- The greatest benefit was improving my language skills and getting a better understanding of Danish culture.
  - The greatest challenge was leaving.