

## EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT

**Student Name: Mara Bahri**

**Institution where you studied: Danish Institute of Study Abroad**

**Semester of participation: Summer 2015**

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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?
  - I have always had an interest in Scandinavian culture. The program also offered an amazing course in human health and disease.
- b. Why did you select the program/University?
  - The credits earned at this university applied to my home university requirements.
- c. What were your expectations?
  - Immersion in Danish culture, food, and ways of life.
  - Challenging course material that alter my point of view in health care delivery and care.
  - Meet students from various American institutions.
- d. What preparations did you make prior to departure?
  - Completed all requirements of home university.
  - Followed all requirements to have the DIS course apply to my home institution.
- e. How could you improve your preparations?
  - Made a packing list. I realized I forgot my credit card once I was boarding my plane... Thankfully, I had enough money in cash prior to departure.
  - Packed more black clothing because the Danes only wore black!
  - Saved more money for the trip!

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

- a. Recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.
  - Student housing was available and ready to go the day of arrival
- 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?
  - Home university orientation was quite basic – the main takeaway for me was to keep in mind that you are an ambassador for both the U.S. and your home university so act responsible and be respectful.
  - The host university orientation was limited – it provided a brief overview of Danish culture and customs, places to visit, and how to get the most out of the experience, etc.

### 2. ACADEMICS:

- a. Evaluate the instruction you received. Compare the following to your home institution's system:
  - class registration
    - Very easy process, I registered to take only one course. I wanted to take another summer session, but the dates filled up quickly.
  - classroom structure
    - There were about 25 students in my course. Everyone was very approachable and professional. It would have been nice to have more

bonding time with other students in different living environments. My social group was quite limited to my living situation.

- instruction

- My teachers were intelligent, kind, and professional. I learned much more than I anticipated in the course. The course guidelines were somewhat hazy, so I over-studied for the course material/tests, which paid off well.

- I did not have much exchange with Danish students...
- teacher/student relations
  - Professors were great – open and willing to meet outside of lecture
- grading/exams
  - Grading was A-F, similar to home institution
  - Exams are formal and are proctored on-site
- administration
  - Didn't deal with them very much so not sure
- library, computer, and classroom facilities
  - Did not explore the library computer or classroom facilities.
- b.** Evaluate the quality and content of instruction.
  - 7/10 quality and 6/10 content
  - The course material was easier than I anticipated. I was hoping to learn of health/diseases in a more in depth manner.
- c.** In general, what did you like best and least about the academics?
  - Best: The classroom visit to Stockholm, Sweden was fascinating. I would have liked more free time to visit other sites. The professors were also practicing physicians, which made the course more applicable to real-world patients.
  - Least: The academics were easier, would have appreciated more challenging material
- d.** Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?
  - I was registered for one summer course, so there was no flexibility. I believe I could have made time to take another course. But that was not an option.

### **3. HOUSING:**

- a.** How would you assess the housing arrangements?
  - DIS did not give us laundry payment (reimbursed amount) until the last week of the course) because they forgot, so all students had to make an extra trip to the home office to pick up the funds.
  - We were supposed to have a Danish student live with us at all times, but they were never present. I would have really liked to have more communication and engagement with Danish citizens.
  - Confusion regarding move-out dates and passive approach when discussing how to leave the living situation.
  - Hostile notes left on our bikes for parking them in the wrong spot by neighbors (we were very unsure of where to park them overnight).
- b.** How did you locate your housing?
  - The Danish students that were assigned to live on our floor of the respective building gave us a quick tour, gave us our keys, then we never saw them again until we moved out.
  - I ride in Copenhagen a week before the program started, so I found the housing alone before the Danish students gave us a official tour.

### **4. EXCHANGE SITE:**

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

- The host university campus was in the heart of Copenhagen. There were lots of restaurants, cafes, and places to students to study. It would have been very helpful if the host university gave the students a list of places to buy affordable traditional Danish foods.

### **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 felt very safe in Denmark. However, during our study tour in Sweden there were multiple times when people tried to pick-pocket some students and I. I was not prepared for displaced population that was present in Sweden.

**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.)
  - This was one facet that my program truly lacked in. There was no pre-organized way to meet other Danish citizens. While the program was only 3 weeks long, I would have loved to have more exchanges with their traditions.
  - The only students I interacted with were other U.S. students.

- b. Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them. (e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)
- No significant differences or challenges with the Danish people
  - The Danish people were very nice, but were quite introverted. Many times, I felt the xenophobia present in the country, especially as a middle-eastern student, I felt I was looked at differently than my peers. This feeling in turn made interactions more uncomfortable for me.

## 7. FINANCIAL:

- a. Describe how the Scan|Design Foundation Fellowship assisted you / made a difference in your decision to study abroad.
- The fellowship made this study abroad possible for me, without it, I would have not been able to travel to Denmark.
- b. What is the best way to access/transfer money?
- Use a debit/credit card with no international transaction fees
  - Banks are conveniently located throughout the city
- c. How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.
- Housing was included in my cost of living. I would say someone could get by on \$200-300/month for food and transportation.
- d. Comment on the relative "cost of living" between your home University and the host University.
- The cost of living is more expensive in Denmark
  - Buying food from less-popular areas made the experience more affordable and enjoyable.

## 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?

- The application process was straight forward
- There was no communication by the coordinators during my stay
- Upon my arrival, I did not receive any requests to complete feedback until a significant time after my arrival. If I was asked sooner, I most likely would have had much more feedback.

### 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.

- I was unaware that there were any activities arranged by coordinators. If there were, I would have loved to attend.

Suggestions for activities we should add to the program

- It would have been nice to meet the other fellowship recipients while I was in Denmark. I believe I attempted to reach out to one student prior to my departure, but they never responded.

## 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.

- Undergraduate students of any field
- Stay for as long as possible. I would have stayed for much longer if my pre-medical requirements were not so rigorous.

## 10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

- a. How would you rate the quality of the overall experience?
- 10/10 quality of overall experience
  - I absolutely love Copenhagen. Everything about the Danish system is in place to

benefit their citizens.

- b.** How realistic were your academic and personal expectations and how did the Scan|Design Fellowship Program make a difference?
- My academic expectations were to partake in a more rigorous and challenging course.
  - My personal expectations were to meet more Danish people and immersion in their culture. Perhaps, I would recommend for students to do a home-stay to have the real Danish experience.
  - The Fellowship made this experience possible. Thank you.

- c. What did you consider to be the greatest benefit and challenge of studying abroad?
- Benefit: meeting students from all over the U.S., seeing first hand the benefit of a supportive monarch government, witnessing different ways of life and amazing architecture.
  - Challenge: immersion with other native Danish people, and time to travel all the parts of Denmark.

**FEEL FREE TO ADD OTHER COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE.**

**Embrace discomfort. Don't be afraid to introduce yourself to people – these will be friends for life. Don't stick to the same few people you become friends with early on. Keep meeting other people (including the locals because they'll tell you how to best explore Denmark).**