

EXCHANGE STUDENT EVALUATION REPORT

Student Name: Christopher Sun

Institution where you studied: DIS Copenhagen

Semester of participation: Spring 2016

E-mail address (if possible *not* University email): sun2@pdx.edu

1. Pre-Exchange. Why and Where:

- a. Why did you decide to study in the US or Denmark as an exchange student?
 - I felt that studying architecture in Denmark would be the ideal culmination of my undergraduate studies: an enriching curriculum integrating my architecture and sustainability backgrounds in a city recognized as a global leader in both urban design and social equity.
- b. Why did you select the program/University?
 - I chose DIS Copenhagen because of its focus on experiential learning, expansive elective options, and integrated study tours.
- c. What were your expectations?
 - To learn how to integrate green building technologies, sustainable urban development, and social responsibility from first-hand experience.
 - To challenge my preconceived notions and broaden my perspective by reflecting on and critically analyzing my limited experiences.
- d. What preparations did you make prior to departure?
 - I studied contemporary Danish, and to a larger extent, Scandinavian culture and philosophy to improve my understanding of the differences in our attitudes and lifestyles.
- e. How could you improve your preparations?
 - It would have been nice to have corresponded with an actual Dane before arriving in the country to get a better perspective of the country and culture.

2. ARRIVAL/ON-SITE ORIENTATION:

- a. Recommend accommodations for future students upon arrival.
 - Warm and waterproof (but well-ventilated, if biking) clothes.
- 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?
 - DIS Copenhagen (host university) prepared a great orientation program that helped new students quickly adjust to the new country. Simple, and efficient, the Danish way.
 - Portland State University (home university) had a lot of administrative requirements to complete the study abroad application (not particular to any one program or country), which provided some basic information on being abroad.

2. ACADEMICS:

- a. Evaluate the instruction you received. Compare the following to your home institution's system:
 - class registration
 - Registration was online. Advisors were only a phone call away if there were any issues. Similar to home university.

- classroom structure
 - Much of the curriculum at DIS Copenhagen was didactic, which is different than the traditional lecture format at my home university. However, the architecture studio environment was similar, albeit the spaces were much smaller.
- instruction
 - Many of the instructors were practicing professionals in their respective fields, whereas at my home university, much of the faculty (lecturers/professors) were limited to the academic setting. Therefore, "lectures" were mostly discussions on examples from real world applications as opposed to information strictly grounded in theories.
- teacher/student relations
 - Treated as equals for the most part. Professors at DIS Copenhagen were respected for their expertise, but they were down to earth and open to learning from students as well, which fostered a great learning environment.
- grading/exams
 - Same standards as my home university. Not your typical, "easy" study abroad experience.
- administration
 - Great administrators who improved the student experience as opposed to my home university, where the administrators are inefficient to say the very least.
- library, computer, and classroom facilities
 - Nice facilities, and the location cannot be beat. Smaller offerings than my home university, but more than adequate for the size of the classes and student body.
- b.** Evaluate the quality and content of instruction.
 - The instruction was up to date and relevant to their respective fields of study.
- c.** In general, what did you like best and least about the academics?
 - I liked that the instructors were all practicing professionals, which grounded the course content.
 - I wish there were more ways to integrate our studies with those of Danish students. DIS Copenhagen caters to (mostly) American students, which limits the "Danish" part of the student experience.
- d.** Are there any courses or instructors you would recommend to future students?
 - I particularly enjoyed my architecture studio as well as the "Strategies for Urban Livability" course.
 - You can't go wrong with any of the instructors.

3. HOUSING:

- a.** How would you assess the housing arrangements?
 - I stayed with Danish roommates in an apartment. I had a private bedroom and shared common areas, including a bathroom and kitchen. The space was cozy, and I thoroughly enjoyed my time and experiences with my roommates.
- b.** How did you locate your housing?
 - Provided through the institution.

4. EXCHANGE SITE:

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

- Great location in the center of the city. Easily accessed by public transportation.

5. HEALTH AND SAFETY:

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

- Frankly, you never have to worry about anything in Denmark. Health facilities and treatment are among the best in the world. Crime is low, which is mostly limited to petty theft. Danes can be helpful and friendly, you just need to ask first.

6. CULTURAL ASPECTS:

- 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 lived with Danish roommates, which opened a lot of doors to social functions and activities.
 - Also, ask around, there is always something happening in the city, such as free museum days and public events.
- Describe cultural differences and challenges you encountered and how you addressed them. (e.g., gender issues, social etiquette, stereotypes, etc.)
 - Danes are reserved initially, but if you get to know them, then they are very warm people who are generally open to different ideas and cultures.

7. FINANCIAL:

- Describe how the Scan|Design Foundation Fellowship assisted you / made a difference in your decision to study abroad.
 - DIS Copenhagen is an expensive program, which I would not have been able to afford without the Scan|Design Foundation Fellowship.
- What is the best way to access/transfer money?
 - I preferred to use an ATM (usually from a large bank) to withdraw cash, because my bank does not charge a foreign transaction fee or withdrawal fee.
- How much spending money do you recommend per month? Please include rent, food, transportation, etc.
 - I did not have to pay for rent or transportation, so I only had personal expenses. Food is more expensive in Denmark, than back home in the States, so I spent about \$500/month, which was mostly due to eating out more often.
- Comment on the relative "cost of living" between your home University and the host University.
 - The cost of living in Denmark is generally higher than in the States. For example, in Copenhagen, a single banana was about \$1. In Portland, a single banana is about \$0.19. At a market, a 500ml bottle of Coca Cola is about \$3 in Copenhagen, but only \$1.25 in Portland. However, certain things were similar, such as a slice of pizza, which was about \$3.

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?

- N/A

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.

- N/A

Suggestions for activities we should add to the program

- N/A

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.

- DIS Copenhagen would be best suited for students with a high level of independence. As a nontraditional student, I felt that I received a lot of great experiences from my term abroad because I was able to effectively manage my time between the academic requirements and social opportunities.
- I think an important part of the program is to participate outside the classroom setting to learn about the local culture in order to broaden your perspective.
- Have fun! There are a lot of events in Copenhagen and the surrounding areas.

10. OVERALL EXPERIENCE:

a. How would you rate the quality of the overall experience?

- Excellent. My term abroad exceeded all of my expectations in so many ways, including new experiences that I did not even anticipate.

b. How realistic were your academic and personal expectations and how did the Scan|Design Fellowship Program make a difference?

- I thought I was going to be simply studying in a new country, but DIS Copenhagen provided such a great, comprehensive experience. I was challenged academically, but also personally to meet new people and learn about different cultural perspectives and lifestyles.
- Without the Scan|Design Fellowship, I would not have had the opportunity to study abroad. As Robert Frost once said, "And that has made all the difference." This fellowship provided an experience, which will continue to enrich my life, and I hope to give back accordingly.

c. What did you consider to be the greatest benefit and challenge of studying abroad?

- The greatest benefit is also the greatest challenge, which is to be outside of your daily comforts. In the same environment, we are rarely challenged to grow. Being outside of the familiar, allows you to develop the skills in areas that you are lacking to make you stronger in all ways.

FEEL FREE TO ADD OTHER COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE.