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When I started at the Multimedia Design program at KEA, I knew it was an opportunity to study abroad on the third semester. I knew I wanted to go, as I have had great previous experience with similar travels. I went to Los Angeles, America, to study abroad. The school I went to in Los Angeles was FIDM – Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising.

I did not know anyone who had been there before myself, until my friend connected me with another KEA student who was studying there the semester before I had to travel. She helped me a lot as I talked with her on the phone and answered all my questions.

I had never been to America and experiencing Los Angeles has always been on my bucket list. Another major motivation of mine was learning how to be on my own and working/studying in different terms than I was used to in the Danish school system. I wanted to challenge myself and develop skills both professional and personal.

What classes did you take during your semester abroad? Please briefly explain what each class was about.

At FIDM I had 2 quarters, where I had to have 4 classes each quarter to align the points to KEA's ECTS points.

In the first quarter (summer quarter) I had the following classes:

Introduction to UX design

- The focus of this course was to teach students Adobe XD and how to use it effectively. I learned a lot about how to create a website or app prototype from it. Sketches were the basis for the entire process, which culminated in a finished interactive app prototype. Additionally, it taught me how to conduct a competitive analysis of other companies' and brands' apps in order to enhance my own project.

Introduction to Social Media

- The fundamentals of social media and how to leverage it for business are covered in this course. The evolution of media, the various platforms, content creation, and how to master it as a social media manager or business owner are all major topics. Sometimes the assignments required you to develop your own posts for a certain brand or to conduct a thorough investigation of a brand while also creating content for it.

Visual Storytelling

- How to tell a good story and not lose your audience midway. The class teaches you how to edit movies to tell a story. It teaches about the structure of a great story. It is very “learning by doing” in this class, which I liked a lot. You must write a storyline and after feedback from the class, you will have to make a short movie about it with found footage. It does improve your knowledge about keeping the audience engaged and the story on point as well as improves your editing skills.

New Public Relations (PR)

- What is PR and how is it working with it? This class teaches about the whole business of Public Relations. Many people might think it is a fancy job to work in PR and it is often associated with social media, influencers, media, and “glamour” but this class reminded me about all the other sides of PR as well. How to react in a crisis as a company? How to react to the crisis or challenges in society as a company? What is a press release and how to write a good one? All this will be taught in this class.

Unfortunately, I didn't get a spot in my chosen classes for the second quarter. Therefore, I had to make some other choices. But it turned out fine in the end. For the fall quarter I had the following four classes:

Digital Imaging

- How do you use Photoshop to modify a photo so it looks perfect?

How would you respond if a client requested that you create a lookbook for their upcoming launch? You will learn in this course.

Beginning with very simple instructions, the class will help you become familiar with Adobe Photoshop. You will get a lot of experience because the work you do in class will correspond with your homework. The homework will help you prepare for the final, a larger project that requires you to develop various sorts of content imaging for an imaginary client.

Brand Managing strategies

- It was a little different from my previous classes in school. Even if the entire class is online, zoom is not used. It is a one-on-one session every week where the instructor uses pre-made Powerpoint slides to go over the themes in accordance with a certain brand book. In addition to the lessons, you will be working in groups on a significant project. The first project is a thorough competitive study of two brands you chose within your group. Your final assignment will consist of you and your team developing your own brand using the information from Part 1.

You learn a great deal about brand equity, customer relationships, brand awareness, brand knowledge, etc. in this course. It causes you to consider all the time and effort that goes into developing a single brand so that the target market will love and support it.

Edit for Documentaries

- What makes a good documentary? How to tell the story you want out in the world, and what components are important? This class is all about meeting the genre of documentaries by editing yourself. You will get the same footage as your classmates, but the outcome of your movies will probably be very different from each other's as we all have different perspectives or stories to tell even with the same content. Watching your classmate's movies forces you to think about feedback and will make you realize the stuff you haven't thought about when editing on your own.

Master for Audio

- This class is a master class for the Digital Cinema program at FIDM. You will make acquaintance with Pro Tools which is a program for editing audio. It will learn you the basics of the program and how to adjust audio perfectly and how to make it work with Adobe Premiere Pro.

Academic Experience

How helpful was the receiving school in the process of choosing classes and settling you in?

All in all, FIDM was very helpful and made me feel "safe" when I arrived and had my first day of school. Being an exchange student could be a little difficult in class, as the professors didn't pay attention to it, and making groups and being alone without knowing the class could be a little tough. But it made me openminded and finding my own way to make study-buddies.

One thing I have found a bit frustrating is how I have to buy books and equipment for some classes, and then none of it was used. For example, I was told by FIDM to buy a specific Canon Camera for my first quarter, and they told me that my Sony camera wouldn't work. But I did not use the camera for class one time and spent almost \$700 on it.

Sarah Repetto, the international director of FIDM is an angel. She was extremely helpful throughout the whole stay and before arriving. From helping me with my Visa to register for classes. She made sure to check in on me and would always find a solution if needed.

What classes/study experiences did you find the most rewarding? Why?

The study experience I find the most rewarding is differently time-management. Due to the weekly homework and constantly grading, I had to work on how I used my time to make it all happen. This is something that I will remember moving forward as well.

What classes/study experiences did you find least relevant or least valuable to you? Why?

Being honest, the second quarter was not so valuable for me, as I had expected. The classes I find interesting were taught with low engagement from the professors, which made it hard to follow and staying positive about it myself.

The Edit for the documentary and masterclass was really nice, as the professors are extremely kind and are communicating with the students on a new level (Paige and Gene) for me, these classes weren't that relevant to my studies as Multimedia Designer, but I liked them anyway!

What classes would you advise other KEA students going to the receiving school to choose or not to choose?

I find it a little difficult to advise on this, as every student has different goals, interests, and learnings. Anyway, I will say that the Digital Cinema and Digital Media majors have some great teachers, and you will learn a lot about the content in the classes. My favorite class for the whole stay would be New Public Relations as it challenged me and taught me not only about the PR business but how to present and communicate on a more formal and professional level.

Cultural/Personal Experience

What challenges did you experience culturally while being abroad?

Being the only danish student was difficult for me in the beginning, as it could get lonely quickly. It is tough making relations as a young adult and at the same time studying. But I think it is a very natural reaction and feeling.

A challenge I had, was the surrounding in Downtown LA. There is extremely many homeless people on the streets, outgoing and some of them a little to creepy. Not feeling safe if walking on the streets after sunset, and having a peberspray in my keychange, just to feel a little safe. In the beginning it was difficult to settle, but with time I learned to live with it and feeling more safe – or at least care / focus less on it.

How helpful was the receiving school in this process?

Sarah Repetto was very kind to me, and asked a lot how I was doing as I just got to Los Angeles. She took me and an Italian exchange student to lunch, which made it possible for us to connect and also talk about how we were and what we thought about the experience.

What was the best cultural/personal experience during your studies abroad?

The best cultural experience during my studies abroad was defiantly the relations I got. My roommates are now friends living abroad, and even though we all lived in Los Angles, none of us were born there. I am from Denmark, one is from Arizona, one is from North Carolina and the third is from Peru.

My best personal experience is learning how to enjoy my own company and still experience things like going to the beach, taking public transportation to sightseeing, traveling to other states, and getting myself out there to talk with strangers and create new friendships.

Good advises:

- Buy a peberspray. Even though I didn't use mine while living there, Downtown can seem a little off in the beginning as it is very different from Copenhagen regarding homeless people. It can make you feel a little safer, and you can buy it in every supermarket for \$10.
- Enjoy the pool! Make the best out of your rent and take a swim in the pool and the hot tub. I will guarantee you will miss it when being back in Denmark again!
- Get the Starbucks app! If you are a caffeine lover like me, Starbucks will become a part of your (almost) daily routine and it can save you money!
- For signal and American sim card, I used the app "mint" and it worked impeccably.
- The restaurant Dune makes the best wraps, make sure to eat there at least once!
- A trip to Walmart can save you money if you do a weekly grocery as CVS or target can be a little bit more expensive.
- If you have the money for it, go explore some of the other states or cities. Take some weekends to travel out of LA, as I have heard it will give so much more for the memories! Enjoy it if you can, and if not the money is there for it LA is also great in itself.
- Finding it hard to connect with others and finding friends? Download the app Bumble. It is known as a dating app, but it has a "friend"-feature where you are looking for likeminded people who mostly are new in town and looking for friends as well. Bumble BFF can be a way to get out of your comfortzone and meet other people that are not students at FIDM.

What advice would you give other KEA students going to study abroad at the receiving school?

Go for it. Whether it is talking to some classmates, wanting to see some specific places, or joining one of the school's clubs. People, there are very accommodating and you will regret not doing it when coming

home to Denmark again. If you get lost, ask someone. I haven't experienced anyone being rude when I asked for help. People can seem arrogant, but they are 95% of the time very kind.

Also, four classes are enough. Make sure you have time to explore other things than just your homework, as four classes are a lot of work and you will learn a lot through them.

Be safe. Tell your roommates where you are going, if going alone. Let someone have your location. It is a big city and it is always best to have someone around you in case you need help.

Practical Experience

How was the application process?

The application process was a bit more hectic than expected. At some point everything needs to get done fast, as deadlines was not matching with KEA's and it felt a little overwhelming. But it all turned out just fine. Kea (Anne Dibbern) helped me communicating with Sarah Repetto about potential classes for the two quarters. She helped me if I had any concerns or questions regarding the application.

Sarah Repetto (From FIDM) helped me with my Visa process and the English test that was required. She helped me with how to approach the English test and some Visa stuff as well.

Did you have any practical difficulties settling down in at your destination?

The unit I was first assigned to turned out to have cats. The roommate I was supposed to live with had three cats, even though it is not allowed. The School and the RA (resident assistant) handled it so well, and as I am allergic to cats, they quickly found another unit for me. Other than that I haven't experienced any practical difficulties.

How helpful was the receiving school in this process?

I lived in student housing which made it a little help to make relations

and be surrounded by other students. Also, I had a list sent to me from the school with stuff I would need to buy when arriving such as a blanket, pillow, towels, laundry basket, and kitchen equipment if wanted.

Every student unit has a RA, who is also a student at FIDM. But their job is to make sure everything is okay within the unit with cleaning and keeping good relations within the roomies. If there is anything off, you can talk to your RA and they will make sure to help you whether it is your roommates not cleaning, being unfair or you being homesick.

Where did you live?

I tried to find accommodation outside the school, but it was difficult as I was all alone and hadn't been to Los Angeles before. Therefore, I didn't know the area or have a car either.

I thereby chose to live in student housing. I lived 700m from the school in a unit with 3 other FIDM students, which means I shared a room with one as well. Studenthousing is in my opinion very expensive. For each quarter I payed \$4000 (28100DKK) which included a shared room. The building and utilities was nice as there was 2 gyms and three pools I could use. But Los Angeles is quite expensive itself.

What kind of expenses did you have in general? a. Did you spend more or less money than you budgeted with?

I haven't made a specific budget before traveling as I have never been to Los Angeles or America before, which made it a bit difficult for me to expect how it was and would be for me. But I used more than I had in mind, as it is expensive to experience things in the city. If you don't have a car, you must take Lyft, Uber, or public transport but as mentioned earlier Los Angeles has a lot of homeless people which can make public transport a bit creepy and unsafe if it is after sunset.

Expect to use a lot of money if you want the full Los Angeles experience. Today I feel like I missed out on some things due to

economics even though I spent more than I expected. But with that said, Los Angeles and the whole stay were worth every dollar.