IT University Travel Report

Host University: Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT)

Study Programme at IT University: Digital Design and Communication

Activity Abroad: Study abroad

Exchange Period: Semester Autumn, year 2015.

My stay abroad:

It had always been a dream of mine to study in the U.S. Therefore, I pursued the opportunity when I learned about Rochester Institute of Technology. It is one of the leading technologically focused Universities in North America and I was positive that their course selection was both the right fit for my professional profile and a great opportunity for me to academically challenge myself. I had been studying the first part of my specialization in Service Design at ITU, but felt I needed to broaden my academic knowledge in the field and decided to design an individual specialization for my study abroad.

At RIT I took Marketing and Commercialization concepts, International Media, Digital Printing and Publishing, and History of Media Technology. While the courses I ended up taking were not all my first priorities, I was able to make good with what limited courses ITU had granted me permission with. Thankfully, the courses did turn out to be a great mix for me combining interesting content with difficult challenges throughout the entire semester.

Studying at RIT has been an amazing experience and adventure. It is obvious to me that the students in the U.S. have a wider range of options in terms of class selection, University 'campus life', and greater career opportunities. Some of this is due to the large amount of money they pay to study at the Universities. It is my impression that my host university expected a lot more of me every week in comparison to ITU. It was a tough semester, but working hard turned out to be all worth it.

My initial motivation for going abroad and whether it met my expectations:

I simply needed a change in pace. Having studied in Denmark my entire life I just needed to get out and see the world from a different perspective, try new things, and get out of my comfort zone. RIT fitted what I desired for my academic profile so it seemed like the obvious choice to me. It was an opportunity for me to expand my academic horizon and educational experience.
My expectations for RIT was that I would be studying in a highly professional and competitive environment and that I would be challenged on academic, personal, and cultural levels. Furthermore, I also expected my English speaking skills to excel and improve.

RIT met every single expectation. The environment was extremely professional and, due to high expectations from my professors, I grew immensely and learned the value of hard work. The lectures were exiting and every student was met with respect and equality academically as well as personally. There were always a good mix of lectures and field trips as well, which provided the hands-on experiences that are sometimes missing at ITU.

My semester abroad in Rochester, NY has been an eye-opener in terms of what else is out there for me. It has been a true adventure that I will treasure forever, and will serve as motivation for future endeavors.

What I got out of my stay, both personally and academically, and how I expect it to contribute to my further studies:

My semester at RIT helped me to grow as a person. I became more confident in speaking up in class and sharing my ideas with fellow students. Due to the fact that the classes were smaller (sometimes only nine students in a class) I was forced to come thoroughly prepared every day for class, and participate in the lectures.

Academically my English improved immensely. Languages have always been a strength of mine, but studying abroad made me much more comfortable and relaxed when speaking English. I especially improved in terms of speaking English confidently with native speakers and strangers. Studying abroad has also taught me the value of hard work and juggling lots of assignments each week while still having a social life next to my studies.

The courses I studied at RIT certainly contributed to my understanding of Service Design. It has broadened my horizon in the field but has also provided me with skills that go far beyond the field of Service Design. I believe it will provide a solid foundation for all of my future studies.

Arranging your stay

The process involved in arranging my stay:

You have to keep in mind that arranging a semester abroad takes a whole lot of time. Be prepared for frustration in waiting for involved parts to get back to you. Thus, begin planning at least half a year before you are planning to study abroad.
First of all I suggest you have a meeting with the study guidance at your school to figure out what you will need to do in preparation. They will most likely advise you to apply for pre-approval of credit transfers, and this process will make your hair turn grey. You have to be really sharp when writing to SAP at ITU, tell them the exact combinations you want to study and as a compensation for what at home. Explain the progression between the courses, how they link well together with DDK as a whole (if that is what you are studying), and how you believe it will help you academically and personally.

Furthermore, the host university will most likely demand recommendations from teachers, former jobs, etc., they will want you to pass a TOEFL test. However, I suggest you contact the programme director at your host university and keep good friends with him or her. If you have a legitimate reason as to why you can do without the test she or he will perhaps remove the demand and can all in all be a huge help in the process of getting to the university and while you are there as well.

Alfa omega - begin as early as possible!

What resources I found helpful in planning my stay and the people I used in making it happen:

I have family nearby Rochester who almost all had at one point attended my host university. Thus, in planning my stay I primarily used them as my help. They were a valuable resource in educating me on RIT. Besides them, I spoke to the professors at my host university an awful lot. I made sure to be in contact with them all the time. It is a good idea to reach out to the Director of your programme and the professors of the courses you are interested in, often they are very helpful.

How I arranged practicalities such as accommodation:

I have family nearby the University in Rochester so to my luck I could stay at their place. Thus, I did not really have to make any arrangements in terms of accommodation. I did have to rent a car through my entire stay though, as public transport was practically non-existing and there are no paths for bikes. Also I do know that housing options on and around campus are pretty expensive.

Expenses and Financing

Expenses connected to my stay abroad:

As I was living with family near the university, my expenses were relatively limited to flight tickets, monthly rental car fee (this was expensive!), gas, food, and entertainment. Still, in living with family, I was able to save money in the long run by avoiding the pricey cost of living on or nearby campus.
Scholarships and recommendations:

By the time I applied to RIT, I was too late in applying for scholarships. However, I was lucky that my host university gave me a scholarship removing 60% of the cost (I discretely implied the expensive cost of studying abroad, as to study for free at home). However, this should be done in a very subtle way, do not ask for it! Furthermore, I was granted a job as a graduate assistant which was a nice supplement to my SU. Nonetheless, I would definitely recommend that you try applying for scholarships, there are a ton out there.

Recommendations for other students

Get out there! You will learn so incredibly much about yourself both professionally and socially. Studying abroad will only make you grow and give you countless awesome cultural experiences. Just do it!