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EXCHANGE REPORT FORM

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Program: Bachelor of Commerce - Finance

Host University: Universidad Carlos III de Madrid (UC3M)

Host Country: Spain

Semester: Fall Year: 2019

Hello and welcome back from your exchange! We at Concordia International hope that you had a truly wonderful and life changing experience. In order to lend a hand to future exchange students, and for our staff's information, we ask that you fill out the following information sheet regarding your exchange. Please be as precise and inclusive as possible in the details you provide in your report.

Please complete and save this form on your computer, and e-mail it as an attachment to the International Liaison Officer responsible for your exchange.

SECTION 1 – CHOOSING YOUR HOST Please provide information here for students who are thinking about applying to your host institution, or who have been accepted and are preparing for their time abroad.

1. Why did you choose your host institution and country? Please list the pros and cons of your choice.

I chose this university because I heard a lot of great things from a friend who completed his semester abroad there before I did. He told me it was a great university with a great business program, and that most of their courses covered the same topics as the courses in JMSB. I also looked closely into that university because it was located in Spain, a country that I love and have visited countless times. I took Spain as an opportunity to practice the language that I already spoke: Spanish.

Some positive points include the fact that the university offered courses in English and Spanish so I took the opportunity to register for some courses in Spanish to even further improve my language. The university also had enough advanced commerce and finance courses that almost identically matched those offered at JMSB so it was a good opportunity to take those courses abroad.

2. What were the semester dates at your host institution? How are the semesters called and split? What are the main holidays and breaks?

The semester dates for when I attended were from September 4th, 2019 till December 20th, 2019 (unofficially) and about January 17th, 2020 (officially). As most european universities, UC3M had their official exam period in January after the winter holidays but gave special permission to non-european exchange students to be allowed to complete all their exams in the december exam period. There were two official holidays, Hispanic Day and All Saints Day, where we were given a long weekend, but that's it.

3. What facilities were available at the school (library, gym etc), and did you pay any extra fees to be able to use them?

The university had several facilities including two libraries, study rooms that could be reserved ahead of time, two large cafeterias and a sports center (which involved an extra fee). The sports center was big and had a great variety of activities, including group sports, two big machine rooms, group classes, a pool, a spa and private gym sessions.

4. How easy/difficult was it to match courses with your Concordia courses? Do you have any specific suggestions for future students?

It was very easy to match my courses with my concordia courses. As a finance student, UC3M offered many courses that were identical to those offered here. From my experience at the host university, and through experience from my friends there, I suggest UC3M for business students; particularly, finance, marketing and administration students.

5. What can students expect out of the classes they will be attending? How difficult were the courses? What was the grading/ evaluation system like?

The classroom and method of teacher felt very highschool-like. The classes were not difficult in terms of content and examinations, but were much more interesting in terms of content compared to the courses I have taken at Concordia. I enjoyed learning new material from a European perspective on things. The grading system was out of 10. A passing grade was 4/10. Most classes had a rule which was: you must pass the final with 4/10 or above to pass the class.

6. What were the immigration procedures and requirements for your host country? Did you need a visa (please mention your citizenship)? How much did the visa cost? Are there any special options available to Canadians/Quebecers?

I need a study visa to be able to attend the university in Madrid. I am a Canadian citizen and I issued a study visa at the Spanish embassy office in Montreal. It cost me approximately CAD 125 for a 6-month visa.

7. How much (approximately) should students budget monthly for the following: housing, local transportation, food, health insurance, going out, travel to and from the host country as well as within?

For the following mentioned above, based on experience and knowledge, I would recommend

Housing: 500-1000 euros depending on whether you are looking to live with one or many people, or alone.

Local transportation: the public transportation service in Madrid have a student card that allows you take all buses, trains and metros for only 20 euros a month.

Health insurance: I am not sure of, I depended on what the Quebec government/concordia would cover.

Going out: for restaurants and clubbing combined (including alcoholic drinks), I would probably say a monthly budget of 100-200 euros depending on how much you like to go out.

Travel: Depending on how much you will be traveling and how far, but you could easily budget roughly 100 - 300 euros per weekend trip to include transportation, accommodation, and food/activities there. There are some travel agencies that host trips for international students for really cheap. I traveled to bilbao for 2 days, transportation and accommodation included for only 90 euros.

SECTION 2 – HOUSING

1. Where did you live while you were on exchange (i.e. on your own or in a student residence)? Were you happy with your decision?

I lived in the student residence. I was very happy with my decision. The rooms were like mini studios, each with their own kitchen and bathroom. There was a cafeteria where you could register for a meal plan, which is what I did to save myself the hassle of cooking and cleaning. There were bi-weekly/monthly cleaning services offered in your rent fee. There was 24/7 security, a gym, a big laundry room, study rooms, movie rooms, game room and a music room.

2. How difficult was it to find housing? Did the host school assist you with the housing process?

It wasn't difficult to find housing. All I did was apply and await an email saying I was confirmed a spot and to finalize the process I had to put a downpayment.

3. Do you have any suggestions on good places (i.e. websites) for students to look for housing? Do you have any suggestions for locations in the city students might want to live?

The only place I could potentially recommend to search for housing would be on a Facebook group called 'Madrid Roommate and Flat Search'. In terms of location, I would recommend any area around the university or in neighborhoods like Sol, Chueca, Gran Via, Malasana etc. all of which are in the Center of Madrid.

SECTION 3 – SETTLING IN In this section please provide details for what students can expect in their first few days in their new home and during their exchange.

1. What orientation activities were there for incoming exchange students? If possible, please provide a brief summary of what your first week was like.

I unfortunately arrived a day late and missed all the orientation assemblies, however throughout the first month there was a committee that works with international students who had prepared a different activity/trip for each day of September. Some activities were free, like volleyball, picnic outings etc and others were for a small fee, like salsa classes, shows, trips etc.

2. Are there any non-academic related formalities to be taken care of upon arrival?

Other than getting your visa, phone plan and maybe a bank account opened, I am unaware of other non-academic formalities to be taken care of.

3. What are the school related formalities to be taken care of upon arrival?

The only things I had to take care of were getting my certificate of arrival from the international office at the host university and issuing my student ID card there.

4. Where and how did you set up a bank account? How did you go about activating a cell phone?

I didn't set up a bank account, I used an international credit card that I own.

I activated a sim card with a carrier called Orange. I paid 20 euros/month for unlimited calls, texts and 15 GB of data. The data can be used all around the EU as well, which was very useful for when I traveled.

5. Do you have any travel tips, information about must-see places, or tips on places to go out for students attending your host school?

Some must-see places would be:

- Prado museum
- Reina sofia museum
- Gran Via street
- Retiro park and palacio de cristal
- Plaza Mayor
- Templo de debob
- Try to go watch a Real madrid or Atletico Madrid football match
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Some trips that you could take to nearby places include:

- Salamance
- Valencia
- Toledo
- Bilbao and San Sebastian
- Barcelona
- Segovia

Some restaurants to try include:

- Mercado de San Miguel
- Chocolateria Valor

- Takos al pastor
- La mejor tarta de chocolate del mundo
- Goiko grill

Some clubs to try:

- Goya social club
- Kapital
- Theatro barcelo
- Florida retiro

6. Did you encounter much culture shock during your exchange? Is there anything that Concordia students studying in your host country should be aware of?

I didn't experience a culture shock because I am very used to the European culture, I grew up in Europe and spent a lot of my time in Spain already so I was very much used to the culture. I would advise students to research a bit about the culture prior to going, definitely attempt to learn some Spanish; even a few words will go a long way.

SECTION 4 – FINAL THOUGHTS Now that your exchange has come to an end, take a bit of time to reflect on your experience.

1. How has your exchange affected you in your academic and personal life?

Honestly, not to sound cheesy, but this exchange has really changed my personal life. I wasn't going through an easy time in Montreal before I left and going on exchange really opened my eyes to what's out there and what could be waiting for me after I graduate from Concordia. I made some lifelong friends that I didn't expect to make. I went on trips I

never thought I'd go on. I saw and did things I only dreamed of doing. I really made the most out of my exchange. I pushed myself out of my comfort zone and made sure to have the best experience.

Academic wise, I wasn't too affected. It did help by saving me from taking some hard classes at Concordia, and it gave me a break from the intense studying but overall nothing too dramatic. Like I mentioned before, it was very interesting to take in all this finance-related material from a European perspective because now I feel like I can look at things from a different side and I can share that knowledge with my classmates at Concordia.

2. Do you have any further advice for future exchange students or any other comments you would like to add?

Some advice I could recommend is that the beginning is probably going to be hard but I promise you the trouble is worth it. I went through a really rough period my first month there. I was borderline depressed, stressing about how I was too shy to talk to anyone, too scared to talk in class, too stressed to even pass my classes etc. But after that terrible month I woke up one day and decided to go about things differently and told myself I only have a couple of months before this awesome experience comes to an end so I decided to change my mentality and make the most of things. This is all to say, no matter how hard it is, remember you're not alone and there are always people to talk to.