



**UU Study Abroad Report Form**

Faculty/college:	Science
Level:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Information Science

Destination city & country	Carbondale, USA
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	Southern Illinois University at Carbondale
Purpose of exchange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	01/08/2016
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	21/01/2017

**Preparation**

Exchange/placement application process:

The application process went smoothly. I was notified in a timely manner that I had been accepted so I still had more than enough time to take care of other things (visa, apply for classes, etc.)

Counselling/support at home university:

Enough support was given. However, there is still a lot of work involved which you have to deal with (applying at the university, applying for classes and making sure they fit into your program, getting a visa, etc.)

Academic preparation:

Since I followed courses outside of my program (electives) I was not really prepared for the classes I was about to take. However, it was easy to get into.

Language preparation:

English is not a new thing for me (I doubt it is for anyone reading this) and therefore, not a lot of preparation needed to be done.

Finances:

Staying abroad was rather expensive. I stayed on campus which has a hefty price tag. However, this includes things such as a (really) nice recreation center and a food plan.

**Study/placement abroad period**

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

Since this university uses 2 semesters instead of the 4 blocks I am used to, I was following more



courses at the same time (5 instead of 2). This was very doable and I still had a lot of free time to do fun stuff.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

The quality of education is definitely lower than in the Netherlands. I did feel like I had to do more outside of class than I was used to as the teachers gave homework at least once a week. This homework was very easy, but don't underestimate the work that might go into it.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

The international office was very supportive and always open to help out. I am not able to comment too much on this as I did not take advantage of their counselling services that much.

Transfer of credits:

I had to make sure that I put in a signature on one of my last days there so that they could send home my transcript. I picked up the transcript at the UU international office and delivered it to my faculty. I got all the points I need, all A's were translated to 9.0's.

### **Student life**

Welcome/orientation programme:

The first day was a bit chaotic but they made sure I got all the information I needed to get me started. This included information on what is allowed/what is not allowed, a map of the campus, and picking up my dorm key.

Accommodation:

I stayed on campus in a dorm which was reserved for me in Neely Hall. Staying in a dorm can be a bit like Russian Roulette, even if you have talked to your roommate beforehand. I got lucky with an amazing roommate. I do not regret my decision of staying in a dorm as you always feel like you have someone to talk to (if your roommate is cool) but since our schedules differed, I also had some time alone. I stayed on an international floor at the top of the building, which gave me an amazing view of campus. The food court was a walk away and always had something I liked (although some days were better than others).

Other international students opted to find an apartment. This is a rather straight-forward process. On the introduction day, they simply told the staff they needed a place to stay and the staff helped them out by driving them to an apartment building where they were able to get a room (as you can probably tell, it is way easier to find a room in Carbondale than it is in, for instance, Utrecht). Do note that they had to cook their own food, as they did not have a food plan for the food courts around campus.

Leisure/culture:

There is always something to do on campus. During your introduction, you will also notice that a lot of religious groups organize things as BBQs, ice cream socials, thanksgiving dinner, etc.. I am not religious but I did participate in a lot of these activities. It's definitely a good way to get to know people. Campus nature is amazing and great for walks, I would recommend walking around the lake at least once.

The downside of Carbondale is that it is a small, mid-western, college town. This means that there



is not a ton to do outside of campus. There is a (free) bus system that can take you to places as Wal Mart but it is very bad (bus goes once every hour). Try to do all your groceries in one go. If you're staying for a longer period of time, consider buying a car.

If you want to spend weekends/breaks somewhere else (which is understandable, considering campus activity shuts down on some breaks) you can take a train up to Chicago. If you want to rent a car instead, pay a visit to Enterprise. Their staff is very nice and will sometimes upgrade you to a better car. They even offer to pick you up so you don't need to worry about taking a bus there. Having a car opens up a lot more possibilities. There is a lot of nature around Carbondale (consider going to Garden of the Gods) but Carbondale is also close to a lot of other cities such as St Louis and Nashville.

**Suggestions/tips:**

- Opening up a local bank account is very good to have. I had a credit card from my Dutch bank, but I found it was easier (and cheaper) to open up an account at First Mid Illinois Bank & Trust (there are other banks to choose from but I picked this one due to its close proximity to campus). This also helps you to pay your student bills.
- If you're only going for one semester, it might not be necessary to get immunizations. I did get my immunizations (they told me I needed 2 boosters) but as far as I know, they will just lock your account. This means you won't be able to schedule for classes. However, this is no problem if you already enrolled in your courses (and don't want to change them).
- On the subject of immunizations and healthcare, the insurance they offer you will cover the expenses of the shots you need. Do note that their insurance is more expensive than something like ISO (<https://www.isoa.org/>). Also note that immunization can be expensive.
- There is wifi on campus but I recommend getting an American plan for your phone so that you can always be online and make calls and stuff. Do not go with T-Mobile as their coverage is very very bad in the Midwestern area. Wal Mart has a special section for phone plans close to the entrance of the store. I would recommend getting straight talk which makes use of the Verizon and AT&T network. Never had problems with that.

**Conclusions**

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

Yes. But know what you're getting into. Carbondale is a small town in the Midwest. This can be a very fun experience if you just want to experience American life. A lot of students I talked to did not enjoy Carbondale at all so to each their own.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:



## UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	Humanities
Level:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>bachelor</b> <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Language and Culture Studies

Destination city & country	Carbondale, USA
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	Southern Illinois University
Purpose of exchange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>study/courses</b> <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	29/07/2015
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	12/01/2016

### Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

The application process was not hard, however it was a lot of paperwork that needed to be done. Next to a personal statement it required proof of finances, transcripts from UU courses, I had to fill out forms and ofcourse apply for a visa. It was a lot of writing and waiting, but in the end I got accepted and my host university was not too strict on accepting students in my opinion.

Counselling/support at home university:

I have not used this a lot, so I can't give a good judgement about it. However, I was able to reach the North America counselor Ingrid Dijkstra by email for all my questions and she got back to me quick.

Academic preparation:

In my opinion, I was prepared good enough for my semester in America. I've taken courses at UU in English before so I hardly had any problems with the language. All the aspects of studying I faced at SIU, I have faced at UU before: writing, presenting, testing. I had no particular difficulties with passing classes at SIU.

Language preparation:

As mentioned above, I had already taken classes in English before and I speak English (nearly) fluent, so I did not prepare extra for my semester abroad.

Finances:

Ever since starting at UU I've known that I wanted to take a semester abroad, so I started saving up early. Especially the last year before departing, I've starting working more and spending less so I could not only afford the expenses of SIU but also travel while I'm there. I did spend more money than originally thought, but I saved more than needed so this was no problem.



**Study/placement abroad period**

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

I took four courses at SIU. I wanted to graduate when I came back to Utrecht, so I made sure to choose my courses wisely. I took Spanish, to complete my TCG. Next to that I only needed 15 ECTS to complete my bachelor's programme, so I took three courses to fill those points.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

The Spanish course I took was, in my opinion, of better quality than at UU. There was more personal guidance and since America works with semesters instead of blocks, I had four months to learn the same amount of Spanish instead of the 2,5 months given at UU. I took one level 1 course and I think that is comparable to level 1 courses at UU: a lot of homework, grades for participation and a short paper. I also took two level 3 courses and those were also comparable to level 3 courses at UU: a lot of responsibility for the student, analytical papers and hard tests.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

Again, I did not use this a lot, but there was a team of counsellors for international students. They organized coffee hours where you could meet up with other internationals or ask questions to the team. They were also quick with responding to questions by email.

Transfer of credits:

I did not yet receive the credits.

**Student life**

Welcome/orientation programme:

The week before the classes started, there was a welcome programme where we got explanation about all sorts of things, for example on the campus (what to find where?), culture differences/culture shock, how to act when being pulled over by police, where to go if you have questions. Basically everything we needed to know.

Accommodation:

I lived on campus in a dormroom. I requested a private room and I got that, however the downside was that I lived in a different building than the other internationals. This was sometimes a little hard when they had planned activities and I was not there. But it also gave me the opportunity to get to know the American students, which the other internationals not really had. The dorms were perfectly fine, it had everything I needed, although the kitchen was non-equipped so cooking wasn't really possible.

Leisure/culture:

I experienced that Americans appear to be very open, however they are not. They are super friendly but are not quick to open up to strangers. I was lucky enough to meet some very nice American people that really accepted me into their lives and helped me with everything I needed. On the weekends I took several trips, such as canoeing and a trip to Memphis, or we would go shopping and go to dinner. The legal age for alcohol is 21 in America rather than the 18 years in Europe, and this meant that some of my friends couldn't go to the bar with the rest of us, that was a little disappointing.

Suggestions/tips:

Read the rules! I got in trouble the first week, because we were drinking alcohol in a dorm hall



were this was not legal. We did not know about this, as it was never explained to us, and we were all of legal age and no one was drunk. We thought we did nothing wrong, however they even called the campus police. In the end we did not get persecuted or into trouble with the police but it was quite the experience for the first week. Later we found that somewhere on the internet we could find that it was prohibited. I personally think it would be better if rules like that are explained to new students, but in case it is not, it is a good idea to look for them.

**Conclusions**

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

I would. I had a great time and made some good friends. There is a broad variety of courses that can be taken and the professors all proved to be very helpful and thoughtful to their students. It really gave me the American college experience I was hoping for.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

No.