

## **BARD COLLEGE – AOIFE HOLOHAN**

Semester of exchange: 4 (Spring 2018)  
Period: 23-01-2018 – 22-05-2018  
Place: Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

### **1. MOTIVATION**

*What were your initial reasons for going on exchange?*

I had a couple of reasons for wanting to go abroad, to America specifically. Mostly, I wanted to see the states, check out what all the hype was about and secondly it would be a relatively cheap way of getting to study at an American school.

### **2. PREPARATION**

*How was the preparation in terms of timing and work? How did you find your exchange location? What would you do differently if you would do it again?*

Going to Bard, the process was easier for me as I didn't have to go through a UU admission process as well as a UCR one. Having said that, the Bard application itself is time consuming. There's a lot of different hoops you have to jump through and organising things like vaccinations can be time consuming and hit you with unexpected costs so be prepared for that. Bard being a couple hours out of NYC couldn't be more different from the city itself. It's a quiet, sleepy place and there's not much to do outside of the school community. If I was to go back I would try to get up to NYC more often and maybe try harder to find societies or groups to join at the college itself. I would also definitely have tried to go during the fall rather than spring semester. The campus is majoritively woodland but so when I arrived in January all the trees and lost their leaves and the place was a bit desolate and gloomy a lot of the time I was there, not to mention absolutely freezing.

### **3. UNIVERSITY**

*Why did you choose for this specific university? How was the academic level of the university? Were there extracurricular activities?*

I choose it because it would have a similar environment to UCR. I wasn't interested in a big city campus or large lecture hall based classes where your

professor doesn't know your name or correct your work. I would say the level was similar, however, the workload was less. Honestly, I felt extracurricular wise the selection wasn't great when comparing it to UCR, despite having a much greater number of students. The gym was incredible though. Free classes and access to the pool alongside free membership a stone's throw from the main campus buildings.

#### 4. ACCOMODATION

*How did you arrange accommodation? How was your accommodation in general? Would you recommend living on campus or private?*

Again, many of these questions were answered for me in choosing Bard. It's a student to student exchange so I was guaranteed accommodation. This also means it's not possible to live off campus. I was lucky to get a single room but most of the rooms are doubles, so expect a roommate. The rooms are smaller than UCR and I didn't feel a great sense of community as there was no common areas or places to cook in my building.

#### 5. COURSES

*Which courses did you take? Did they positively contribute to your degree and your personal development? Did you have any trouble transferring credits?*

I took two literature courses – one 200 and one 300, an intro to Buddhism class and a fiction writing workshop. The selection of courses available at Bard was phenomenal and it was really difficult to choose just four courses. It is possible to audit courses (attend class without doing homework assignments) and even add smaller 1 or 2 credit courses to your study. You can do anything from ballet to robotics. There was no trouble with credits as Bard's classes parallel perfectly E.C.T wise. My classes were unquestionably the highlight of my experience. They had a similar set up to UCR but with fewer assessments. The workload at Bard was definitely lighter which made for a more stress-free semester which is nice when you're also trying to adjust to new surroundings.

#### 6. LIFE OUTSIDE UNIVERSITY

*How was life outside of the university? What should you definitely do or visit when you go on exchange to this location?*

Bard like UCR is a bit of a bubble, in fact perhaps even more so than UCR. It doesn't have the backdrop of a city but is sandwiched between two small towns accessible by a free shuttle bus provided by the college. They are quite sleepy towns but nice to explore. Jazz nights in local bars and the renowned Mexican Cancun's are also ways to get yourself off campus. Naturally, I would advise you

to get up to NYC when you can. It's time consuming and expensive but worth it, definitely worth it.

## 7. FINANCES

*Was your semester abroad more expensive than one semester at UCR? What was the most expensive part of your exchange? Is there anything you would have done differently in financial terms if you went on exchange again?*

There's no two ways about it. Bard is expensive. You have to pay for accommodation, an obligatory meal plan and insurance as well as a few more one off payments. This adds up to around 8000 euro which needs to be paid before you arrive on campus. You will also have to pay for your UCR room, the money not being reimbursed until after. It's a lot of cash needed up front. However, because you're not paying for food after you arrive and there's so little to do that's not school related you don't spend a whole pile of cash there day to day.

## 8. WHY SHOULD YOU GO ON EXCHANGE?

You should go on exchange if you have a sense of adventure, want a taste of a new culture and are interested in meeting some great new people. For me, one of the greatest rewards in going on exchange was how it helped me to appreciate UCR. It's difficult to view something when you're part of it. Being away not only allows you to be more objective but gives you an opportunity for comparison. UCR as an institution becomes very evidently a student focused, community orientated and quite simply a warm, friendly place to be.

## 9. WHY SHOULD YOU NOT GO ON EXCHANGE?

The main reasons I can think of are the expense and the fact that you have to lose a semester at UCR itself. Three years may feel like a long time but as a third-year student I can safely say that it goes by very quickly. Many of the people you meet at UCR are international and after graduation they will all disperse out across the globe. When you think of the limited time you get with these people, giving up a semester suddenly feels like quite the sacrifice.

## 10. IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO ADD?

Mentioned earlier but worth mentioning again for a couple of reasons – Go during the fall semester. During your first week, there is an intraweek of sorts (all the talks with none of the fun) and you are matched up with transfer students who will also be newbies at Bard. There is a greater intake in September than January which means more students and more friends for you. The core of the friends I made at Bard was during this week, so the more people –

the more friends. There's also new first years on campus open to meeting new people.

## BARD COLLEGE – RAYO VERWEIJ

Major: Science (Cognitive Science & Computer Science)  
Semester of exchange: 4 (Spring 2018)  
Period: 23-01-2018 – 22-05-2018  
Place: Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

### 1. MOTIVATION

*What were your initial reasons for going on exchange?*

Especially the Computer Science track at UCR is very limited, so I wanted to take more courses than what UCR offers. I also really wanted to go to the US – you hear so much about the county, but I'd never visited it, so living in it for four months seemed like a great opportunity to get to know it a little.

### 2. PREPARATION

*How was the preparation in terms of timing and work? How did you find your exchange location? What would you do differently if you would do it again?*

The application process was a bit unorthodox – at the end of my second semester I was officially too late to apply for my fourth, but at the time no-one else was going in Spring '18 so they let me and Aoife go.

One tip: be very annoying to the Board of Examiners. They're very busy people and easily forget about your application. They hadn't come back to me one week before the application deadline, but when I let them know, they approved the application within two days.

### 3. UNIVERSITY

*Why did you choose for this specific university? How was the academic level of the university? Were there extracurricular activities?*

I chose for Bard because it's a LAS college (meaning easy course transfer) in the US, where I wanted to go. The academic level is up to par if not higher than at UCR, with a fantastic faculty and a comparable workload. There were a lot of extracurricular activities, rather comparable to UCR.

### 4. ACCOMODATION

*How did you arrange accommodation? How was your accommodation in general? Would you recommend living on campus or private?*

Exchange students at Bard have to live on campus. You'll most likely have a roommate. While I was prepared for that, I was rather disappointed by not

having a sink in the room. You'll also be on the meal plan, which is convenient, if super expensive.

## 5. COURSES

*Which courses did you take? Did they positively contribute to your degree and your personal development? Did you have any trouble transferring credits?*

I took a Math 200 *Proofs and Fundamentals*, a CompSci 200 *Introduction to Automated Deduction* (with only two people in class!), a Philosophy 200 *Philosophy of Mind* and a Psychology 300 *Science of Forgetting*. They were all really good courses that I wouldn't have been able to do at UCR, though transferring credits was not a problem.

## 6. LIFE OUTSIDE UNIVERSITY

*How was life outside of the university? What should you definitely do or visit when you go on exchange to this location?*

The best decision I made all semester was to join the Bard Debating Union. Not only did it give me a great and inclusive group of people to hang out with, going to tournaments in Washington DC and NYC was a fantastic opportunity to see a bit of the country.

There's not too much to do in the villages around Bard (though the people coordinating the exchange program will take you on some cool excursions), so definitely make sure you go down to the City when you can!

## 7. FINANCES

*Was your semester abroad more expensive than one semester at UCR? What was the most expensive part of your exchange? Is there anything you would have done differently in financial terms if you went on exchange again?*

In total, I'd estimate the costs for one semester to be around €8000, most of which is for boarding and food. That's definitely more expensive than a UCR semester. I can't tell you whether it's worth it, but for me, the experience definitely was.

## 8. WHY SHOULD YOU GO ON EXCHANGE?

If you want to take courses that UCR doesn't offer, and/or if you want to experience life in a country you otherwise wouldn't go to.

## 9. WHY SHOULD YOU NOT GO ON EXCHANGE?

If you don't have the money. Otherwise, go!