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Prague, Czech Republic
Fall 2009

- 1) a. Upon arrival, the program arranged to send one of the directors to pick all of us up in vans and transport us directly to our apartments.
b. We had an orientation the second day after we arrived. It was beneficial to my transition because we were given a presentation on information ranging from holiday traditions, to ways to get around the city, to basic history and other facts about the country. Our program directors, both of who had grown up in the city, had made all of the students detailed booklets that listed the best restaurants, bars, clubs, movie theaters, as well as places to bowl, ice skate and swim! We were also able to meet the other people in our program and get to know each other.
- 2) a. The classes were smaller in size, limited only to the 30 people who were in our study abroad group, which was different than attending large lectures like I do at the University of Washington. This also allowed for closer relationships with the teachers, to the point where we would often go out to a pub after class and continues to discuss material from class. The instruction methods were structured similarly, with the professors lecturing for most of the class with time allotted for answering our questions, and then we either took written or multiplication question exams. The classroom facilities were adequate; there was a projector and chalkboards, which is all we really needed.
b. The quality of instruction was very high. The professors were all very knowledgeable, and extra help was offered if needed.
c. I would recommend taking a class with Jiri Holub, who was my favorite professor. Not only is he a teacher, but he is very involved in international politics, and propelled our interest in his class by taking us to various political conferences of local, national, and international officials.
d. When I first came to UW, I was planning on majoring in Political Science. I have since changed my major, but when I studied abroad, I was able to take all political science classes and thus learn about other subjects that I am passionate about.
- 3) a. The only housing option was to live in an apartment with three other people from our program.
b/c. This particular housing arrangement was actually a contributing factor when I decided to travel to Prague through this program. It gave the students a lot of freedom in terms of how late we could stay out and what we ate, as well as ensured general privacy.
- 4) The campus was in the middle of the city, and was pretty much just a nondescript building. This was nice because it was easy to get to, but also because it gave us a chance to participate in the urban lifestyle of the city.
- 5) Overall, I felt safer in Prague than I have in most cities in the United States. Although they do have a fairly serious problem of pickpockets, the rate of homicide and assault is quite low. I had no issues walking around the city by myself at any time of day, or with friends at any time of night. In reference to medical facilities, we were insured with health care through our program. I did not find myself in a situation where I needed

medical attention, however, when others in my program needed to go to a hospital, they were able to see a doctor and be adequately treated.

6) a. Going out to pubs and bars is an essential part of the culture in the Czech Republic. Locals allot hours of their day to drinking beer and eating large, traditional meals with close friends, often spending hours talking. I found that by engaging in this pastime, I was able to learn a lot about Czech politics, sports, history, and various other cultural nuances through simple conversation. In addition, I participated in a weekly language exchange with students from the local university, where I met people my age who gave me advice on places around the city to visit and other worthwhile things to do.

b. there were a significant amount of cultural differences that I experienced. Despite increasing "Westernization" taking place in the surrounding countries, the Czech Republic has managed to maintain traditions dating back for centuries. Although the extent of the cultural divide was often daunting, keeping an open mind and fully committing to immersing yourself in the culture was the best method of addressing any frustrations. A major reason for studying abroad is to learn about how people live in other parts of the world, so encountering differences was a part of fulfilling that goal, thus, very welcome.

7) a. I used my debit card to pull out large sums of cash from ATM machines because the businesses in my city did not often accept credit cards. I used a credit card to make larger purchases, such as plane tickets.

b. It is hard to estimate how much spending money I used; rent was included in the cost of the program, and I was often out of town on the weekends. I was in Prague for a total of four months, and I would say that I spent a total of \$3000 on expenses on food, transportation, going out to bars and clubs, and having a phone.

c. I had a lot of trouble transport my belongings to, from, and around Europe. I had fit all of my stuff into one large suitcase and one small suitcase, but they were often heavier than most airlines allowed. Some airlines charged up to \$100 dollars for one overweight bag per flight, but for some trips, I needed to switch planes up to three times and was charged each time. It was also costly to have a phone. The best option was to buy a phone once I had arrived in Prague, and buy credits to refill it. Though when I used it outside the country while traveling, there was a higher charge to refill it.

d. N/A

8) a. N/A

b. Although the process of transferring credits was slightly confusing in the sense that it was hard to find departments at the University of Washington that offered classes that closely corresponded to the courses I took abroad, I found that IP&E was prompt in answering my questions, and notifying me of deadlines, and following up on any corrections I needed to make on my forms.

9) I believe that this program would best be suited for an independent student who is interested in history and politics. The Czech Republic also has a unique drinking culture

that is well respected, and someone who is interested in beer can definitely learn everything there is to know about it.

10) My expectations going into the program were that I was going to have learn about a country and get to know a city that is vastly different than anything I have ever experienced, and I think that I definitely accomplished that goal. Academically, I believe I gained a lot of knowledge in the classroom, but by living in the country that I was studying about, I gained a valuable insiders view into their unique history.