

My Experience in Paris, France 2018



One thing that I observed about the nature of education abroad is that it is its own type of system. As a professional in this field, it is crucial to aware of all its parts or as many as possible, and how those parts functions to contribute to the system as a whole. Sometimes those parts are partnering organizations that provide a service that can traditionally be done in-house but depending on the size of the educational organization some functions will have to be outsourced to ensure that the needs of the students are being met. For example, in Paris because housing is difficult to procure for many students, host institutions require that housing be provided to students. That means that educational

providers are therefore responsible for providing accommodations to students if they want to maintain partnerships with universities. However, because housing is difficult to manage in-house, educational providers work with organizations that provide housing options to students. So this is an example of something that I knew about but never really put much thought into. There are 5 main agencies that most providers work with, and it is also important to know the strengths and weaknesses of the different providers. Although the goal may be to provide housing for all students or for the students that want housing, the health, safety and the wellbeing of the student is much more important because in the end you are the person responsible for those students. It is also important to preserve close contact and relationships with other organizations, that provide other service such as excursions and tours, to be able to provide the opportunity of an experience in Paris.

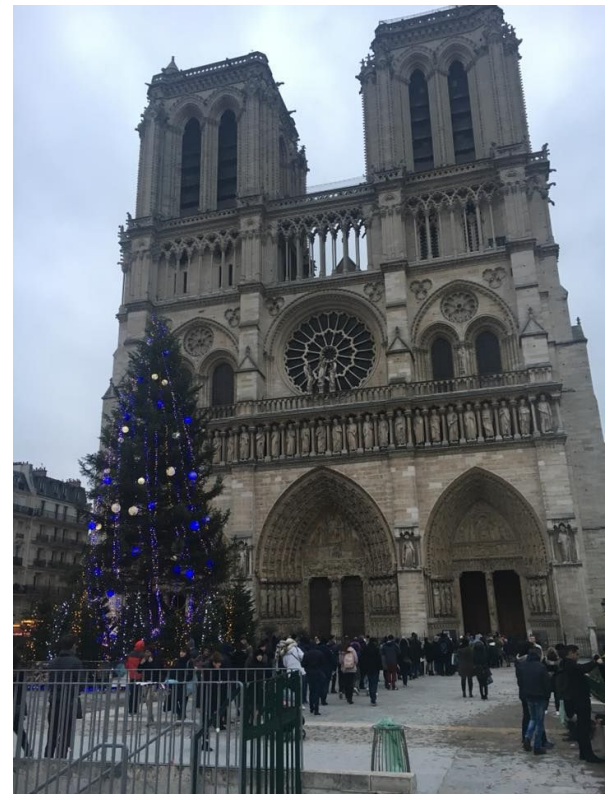
Another thing I observed was how tight nit the international educational community is in Paris. I knew that relationships are needed when there is a service that needs addressing but I didn't fully realize that many of the different organizations personnel were on first name basis with each other. I found it very interesting, the need for and the power of networks that can help support, strengthen and grow your own organization.



A cultural transition I have had to deal with professionally is the idea of time because it is not as rigid or fixed as I am accustomed to at home. Meetings run longer or don't necessarily start on time and it is not a huge deal unless there is a conflict in scheduling. Mannerisms and contextual undercurrent of behaviors are another big thing I am not sure how to navigate. Like when something is done that is upsetting in the professional environment that displeasure I have noticed is not explicitly shared as a displeasure

rather it is passive aggressive comment. I obviously cannot be sure that is true in general or this was a unique situation but it is something that I have observed.

Language plays a major role in how students interact with their host community but not as much as culture. Many people assume that just because they are familiar with a language that they will be able to work and adapt without any problems in that culture in which that language is spoken, but that is not necessarily true. Language can be used as an introduction into a culture or a tool to help navigate through that culture but it never is a foundation of culture because culture is multidimensional and profound. Culture is made up of values, beliefs traditions, habits, institutions, and viewpoints that help people make sense of the world around them, and even within the same culture there can be hundreds of subcultures. So understanding culture is of greater value than the knowledge of the language, but it is also much more complicated because culture has aspects that are visible and invisible.





The experience that stood out to me most was the presentations and orientation at Sciences Po. The series of presentations were very well organized and our hosts provided a very professional atmosphere. It started at the door, Thomas was there to greet us as welcomed guests and colleagues. I honestly felt like I was a professional being greeted by someone who was my equal, and it was there that I started to feel like professional in the field rather than a student taking cues from a higher authority. When the presentations were being facilitated I could feel that the people speaking before us were very sincere in what they were saying and believed in their organization. The President of International Studies at Sciences Po, Francis Verillaud even stopped by and gave us his time. Everyone at this university was busy, as I can imagine because orientations started the next day and yet the people can to speak with us. I must say it was a

humbling experience. I cannot even express how grateful I was to be allowed to and spend meaningful time with the people at this organization and to learn about what each person's role was and how they contribute to the successful running of such a prestigious university.

