

Name: Caitlin Reynolds

Home institution: University of Ottawa

International CO-OP destination (city, country): Paris, France (with UNESCO for education planning)

Travel dates: September–December 2010

Work term (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.): Fourth (and final)

Program: International Development and Globalization

1. Why were you interested in an international work term?

Originally, I was planning on applying for a work term in a developing country because of my program; however, when I became involved with the student group ISIC in the fall of 2009, my review boards kept getting delayed, which led me back to searching for jobs through the COOP Navigator. I ended up finding a job with the Canadian government for eight months, working in education policy, and it was there that I found an opportunity to work abroad in France. I thought working abroad would be a great experience in terms of networking around the globe, where I could meet new people and work in a different environment.

2. How did you fund the travel costs and other expenses for the term?

Working with the government for eight months definitely helped me pay for my work term abroad with UNESCO. Since no funding was provided, I used my savings to pay for most of my expenses. Lunch and a metro pass were covered for me; I also received \$500 from the CO-OP Office.

3. Can you tell me what steps you took to secure your CO-OP position? Was it a difficult process? What advice do you have for other students?

My first attempt at participating in a work term abroad unfortunately didn't work out, and I ended up staying in Canada for two more terms before I was able to go abroad. My advice to students who want to head abroad is to stick with the program! Although things usually don't work out the first time, it doesn't mean they will never work out at all. I kept looking for opportunities and applying for jobs until I found the right one. I applied to UNESCO and within one week, I got the job. I had three weeks to get my visa and all my travel information together, and it was well worth it. Finding a placement is an ongoing process, not a one-time-only event. Always look for opportunities and don't give up.

4. When conducting your job search, did you find that many of the jobs available were in specific sectors (corporate, non-profit, government, etc.)? Where, or how, would you suggest other students focus their search?

I did find that the jobs were available in specific sectors. At first, I wasn't entirely sure which part of my program I wanted to focus on, but as I gained more experience in my other work terms in Canada, I began to narrow down my specific

interests within my program, and figured out what area I wanted to study and work in the most.

- 5. Tell me about the cost of living in (city or country). How did your expenses compare with the salary you were earning? Were you able to save any money? Where did you find savings or discounts to reduce your expenses?**

I wasn't earning any money from my job abroad, so most of the time, I was using my savings. I was fortunate enough to have had the chance to visit France in my third year, and I had made some friends then. I let them know that I would be working in Paris, so actually, I was able to live with them and split rent with them. It was great to be able to rely on friends and have them give me advice on living in Paris. I also found that networking with friends reduced my expenses, and that there are better student discounts in France.

- 6. How did you find accommodations and how much rent should students expect to pay in (city or country)?**

Rent is very expensive in France, so I was extremely happy that I got to live with my friends and split my rent with them. Apartments were not easy to find over there, even with the message boards available. In addition, I would have needed to find a guarantor to cover and sign my lease.

- 7. What, if any, cultural barriers did you have to overcome?**

There weren't many cultural barriers when I worked there. Paris is essentially a Western culture, so the barriers weren't too huge. It was a bit tough at first relating to people my age, and it took awhile to learn how to behave in public (i.e. in stores) and what to do or not to do when greeting people.

- 8. Did you find it difficult to meet new people? What steps did you take to integrate yourself into your new surroundings and make yourself more comfortable in your new setting?**

Well, it wasn't that hard to meet people because I already had friends living out there, so they were my basic social network. Also, the other interns and I would usually just e-mail each other to see if we could all grab lunch together and arrange some sort of rendez-vous. There were also events planned by UNESCO, which we were allowed to attend; it was nice to have that opportunity to go out during the evening after work.

- 9. Overall, what advice would you give CO-OP students who are seeking international opportunities?**

I would say that you need to be patient if you want to work abroad. Things will happen; you just need to make sure you continue putting enough effort and time into searching and applying for jobs. Also, keep an open mind, because you might

not get what you want the first time around. It's important to have back-up interests or an idea of areas that you might want to work in. And lastly, it's so important to plan properly and make sure you always have something to fall back on. Start looking for jobs, opportunities and information as soon as possible! Don't wait until the last possible minute. Planning is key.

10. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience?

N/A