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Preparation and planning: Brief description of how the activities at the foreign institution were planned.

A general observation with regard to preparation and planning could be that the earlier you start the better it is. The amount of time you can invest in these activities is limited, anyway, as you are expected to fulfil your duties at your home department until the end of the spring semester, by the time when it is too late for most preparations.

On 14 February, I was informed that I had won the STINT-scholarship “Excellence in Teaching” and that I would go to OSU, and before the introductory meeting at STINT on 9 March I did very little except rejoicing. The information that I and the two other scholarship recipients going to Columbus received at this meeting was crucial for any serious preparations on our part. Moreover, only about mid-March I knew for sure that my family would not be able to come with me due to my wife’s working obligations. This meant that my stay in Columbus would be a lonely one, but it made preparations much easier than they otherwise would have been as I did not have to find lodgings for the entire family, schools for my children or a car, which would have been necessary if it had been impossible to find a sufficiently big house downtown. I did not have time to go for a reconnaissance trip to Columbus until early May, but by that time I had fixed both a place to live, established contact with my department and agreed on what class I was going to teach. I found this very fortunate as I could spend the reconnaissance trip on getting to know Columbus instead of having to handle various practical arrangements. Again, I would probably not have got off this easy had I had responsibilities for more people than myself.

My housing problem was solved already in late March, when one of the other STINT-fellows returned from her reconnaissance trip and generously shared with the other two of us a contact that she had established in Columbus (eventually, all three of us ended up having the same landlady). I rented a section of an old villa (constructed in 1888), containing two rooms, a bathroom and a kitchen, with a separate entrance and a small porch. When my

family came to visit for three weeks in late October–early November, this was sufficient to house all four of us.

During April, I started to negotiate with the department on my teaching assignment via e-mail. I was offered to choose between those undergraduate classes in military history which had not yet found a willing teacher for the coming semester. I first chose to teach World War II and was told that this was a very popular class with some 150 students, which would mean that I would also have two–three teaching assistants (graduate students) assigned to me who would take attendance and do all the grading. I would only have to lecture. In a moment of exaggerated ambitiousness, I turned this generous offer down and told the department that such an arrangement would not differ much from the teaching I was already doing at home and that I would much rather teach a smaller class and get the opportunity to get to know my students well. I was then offered to teach World War I instead, which I accepted. Although later, there were times when I felt burdened with grading and cursed my stupidity to turn down such luxury as teaching assistants, I still think I made the right choice. Again, had I brought my family with me, I might have preferred a different arrangement which would have given me more time to spend with my loved ones. Now, when I was alone, it really did not matter much.

When I finally set my foot in Columbus in early May, I visited my landlady to inspect my lodgings, which I had so far only seen on photograph, and also visited the department and met with people with whom I had so far been acquainted only via e-mail. I also had the opportunity to meet with Alan Beyerchen, the professor who had taught the World War I-class until then (he would retire in the fall), and to sit in during one of his lectures. Although my version of the course would differ from Alan's, his help and advice was certainly valuable.

After my return to Stockholm I initiated the visa-process, which I should have done earlier as most time-slots for interviews at the U.S consulate are booked out some two months in advance this time of the year. I would therefore strongly recommend future STINT-fellows to start earlier than I did, especially if they are bringing their families along. Also, had I given notice to the Office of International Affairs at OSU that I was coming to Columbus in early May, I could have personally collected my DS-2019 form and gained at least a week in this time-critical process. I also arranged health insurance via *Kommerskollegiet* (when during my stay in the US questions were asked about the validity of this insurance, I had the pleasure to announce that Swedish *Kommerskollegiet* has been in business since 1539, much longer than any American insurance company...).

In early August, I prepared and sent in my syllabus. In doing that, I was greatly helped by looking at existing syllabuses at the OSU History Department for the World War I-course.

Finally, during the weeks before I left on 19 August I did a lot of reading on World War I, the subject I was going to teach. This was about as much as I could do. There were no time to prepare actual lectures while still in Sweden, and I am quite sure that any such work would have been wasted before I had had the chance to meet my students.

Tasks and responsibilities: Description of your position and work responsibilities at the foreign institution. Specify if the tasks were carried out individually or in cooperation with local resources.

During my stay at OSU I was tasked with teaching course 3270, History of the First World War. I was solely responsible for everything: choosing literature, preparing the syllabus as well as lecturing, examining and grading the students and reporting their final grades.

Activities during the semester: Summary of the main activities carried out at the foreign institution, including how you have participated in other activities than (co-)teaching your own course(s).

The time-slot assigned for my class was 55 minutes each Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 11:30 AM to 12.25 PM – all in all 39 sessions, which took place in the same class room (Page Hall 060). As a rule, most professors at the department taught two classes parallel which would have meant a double workload for me. Once you have had the time to prepare your classes and can rerun them through a few semesters, this is probably a quiet manageable work-load (= 5.5 hours of teaching a week). For me, who gave a university-course in English for the first time and who presented a series of power-point slides with each lecture, one class was quite sufficient. When I was not teaching, I was as a rule busy preparing my next teaching-session.

The students had to write two 5-page mid-term papers and one 10-page final paper, in addition to which they also had to answer five multiple-choice quizzes in class. I had to prepare all these exams and grade them, and calculate the students' final grade based on their overall-result (attendance contributed 5 %, the quizzes 5 %, each of the mid-term papers 25 % and the final paper 40 % to the final grade).

In order to widen my teaching experience, I sat in on two lectures and one graduate seminar given by colleagues at the department. I found these experiences valuable.

In addition, I also followed the seminar series offered by the department's Centre for Historical Research during 2012–2014: "Health, Disease, and Environment in World History". Finally, I attended a number of seminars at the Mershon Center for International Security Studies, where recent research in military history and security studies was presented.

As I am employed at the Swedish National Defence College and thus occupied both with the education of officers and with research in military history, I would also like to mention two study visits during my stay which were very valuable from a professional point of view: at the ROTC-department (Reserve Training Officers' Corps) at OSU and at the US Army Center for Military History in Washington DC.

With regard to research, I found some time in the beginning and at the end of my stay to do preparations for a certain project with the help of the OSU Library, although I did not find as much time for this as I had hoped for.

Important lessons: What knowledge of importance for your role as teacher/researcher have you gained during your time as a STINT-fellow?

Apart from an increased personal self-assuredness as a teacher and a deeper knowledge about the First World War, I have learnt to appreciate certain traits in our European educational system, such as early specialization for students.

I have also realized the possibilities to history-teaching offered by materials available for free on the internet such as pictures, film-clips, maps and documents. It does require more preparations than I am used to (by making decent power-point presentations or by giving well-defined reading/viewing assignments in advance), but I am sure it is worth the time.

Finally, to lecture uninterruptedly for 55 minutes instead of for two 40 minute-periods with a break in-between (as I am used to from home), has made me more sensitive to the need to focus and prepare your teaching thoroughly – not only with regard to content but to form. Under these circumstances and in view of the varying educational background of American undergraduate students in a history class (each student at OSU is required to take at least two history classes, regardless of what they are majoring in), you simply have to "groom" your audience to a great extent. During the final 10–15 minutes of your talk, due to mental exhaustion their ability to take in what you have to say will be very limited. Consequently, you have to announce your main points and the general contents of you are going to say already at the beginning of your lecture – preferably with the support of power

point – and spend the last minutes either repeating your core message or activate the audience through questions or a quiz etc. You have to think through carefully the structure of what you are going to say and you have to support your talk with power-point slides with little text and lots of illustrations. This takes time to prepare but the chances that your message will be received increases immensely. In the humanities, the traditional class-room culture is somewhat different and no power-point slides can of course replace a truly knowledgeable teacher. Rather, it takes a truly knowledgeable teacher to prepare efficient power-point slides.

Thus, to strive for focus and clarity – “optimizing” your presentation in the class room – is the third important lesson from my semester at OSU.

Comparison between the foreign and the home institutions (in Sweden)

OSU, Columbus is the second biggest campus in the United States with some 56 000 students. Over 43 000 of these are undergraduates, who have to include at least two history courses in their bachelor’s degree, regardless of what field they are majoring in. Each of these courses equals a quarter of a semester, or 7.5 credits according to the system practiced in Sweden. This was also the format of the course I was teaching during my stay at OSU, although the amount of class room-time available – some 35–40 hours – was about three times as generous as it would be under the Swedish system. The history department at OSU with a faculty which is not much more numerous than that of the history department of Stockholm University, thus registers some 5 500 students each semester which of course creates an entirely different economic basis for this department compared to that of a Swedish academic institution of a similar size (I do not include my own department at the National Defence College in this comparison at all – we are five people who teach about 80 students each semester within the civilian academic program in military history). In my class, I had students who were freshmen and those who were seniors, those who were history majors and those who majored in Fashion, English Literature or Chemistry and had little previous knowledge of the subject. Many of my colleagues at the history department acknowledged this lack of specialisation and progressivity in the selection of students as one of the major teaching challenges at the undergraduate level.

One of the things I missed in Columbus was working seminars at an advanced level, which offer an intellectual community for the department as a whole and not only serve as a platform for instructing graduate students. I was present at a meeting with all graduate

students in military history at OSU which contained some planning with regard to a spring excursion (referred to as a “staff ride”), but this was the only time during the academic year when they all sat down together. The training of graduate students seems to take place primarily through individual tutorials instead of through seminar discussions, as was the case during my own time as a graduate student at Stockholm University in the early 1990s.

Much of the research done at the department is concentrated to the Centre for Historical Research, which during my stay as I have mentioned focused on the history of health, and to special centres for Medieval and Renaissance History and Jewish Studies respectively. For the majority of faculty members, who are not active in these fields, the department as a research milieu seems confined to their own offices. I know that in later years Swedish universities have moved in these directions as well (from “research communities” to “researcher’s hotels”), but I am not sure if in our country things have gone this far yet.

It could be argued that the relationship between teacher and student is more formal than in Sweden, and yet more relaxed. At a large university such as OSU, professors do not take on the same pseudo-parental attitude towards their students as I have understood is common at elite liberal arts colleges in New England, where faculty and students often live closely together on campus. At OSU, you are nonetheless expected to be available for your students as much as possible and they return this kindness with a reverential attitude which makes you feel much older than you really are. One colleague told me that to get your students to learn you have to get them involved, and that is much easier if you can get them to like you. Therefore, it is important to include jokes and personal memories in your lectures, to learn the names of your students as quickly as possible and to acknowledge their existence as individuals as often as you can. This is not mere popularity-seeking on the part of American university professors, he said, but a conscious strategy to create a positive climate for learning.

Some students will come to your office to discuss their grades and ask you to comment on drafts for their assignments before they hand them in, and these students are not regarded as seeking special favours or trying to cut corners but rather as being particularly ambitious and serious. That many Swedish university professors would judge such behaviour among undergraduates differently probably has to do with differences in the view of breadth versus specialization in education. As I have pointed out already, many of my students had never had a history class before and some of them were even newcomers to the university. With an educational background in natural, economic or behavioural sciences (or none at all except high school!) they would sometimes feel in need of steady guidance in the humanities,

and it would be the professor's job to provide that guidance, to offer encouragement and support and not necessarily to penalize these students by giving them lower grades than those students who wrote equally good papers independently. Only about a third of the students in my class were history majors and the rest were there to improve their general education, would perhaps have one more history class during their four years at college and then nothing more. In such an environment a history professor's job cannot primarily be to identify talents for graduate school but to propagate for the general value of historical perspectives and knowledge of the past in society.

Competence as a teacher is highly esteemed although there are no mandatory courses in pedagogics for university teachers like in Sweden. Your service as teaching assistant in graduate school can be regarded as a kind of preparation and an opportunity to learn from watching senior colleagues, and later, when you have started to teach yourself, frequent student evaluations will provide information on how successful you are. Observable pedagogical skills (rather than pedagogical merits in the form of documented training) seem to weigh heavier than in Sweden, although research merits are of course decisive if you are going to get tenure. Unlike Sweden there is no inbreeding in the recruitment of teachers (that is – you do not hire people who have graduated at your own department). In Sweden, where almost all academic positions are government jobs, there is an elaborate system to secure an impartial recruitment process (a cumbersome reviewing of all applicants by an external committee, a right to appeal if you are not selected etc) although in later years an equally elaborate system has developed in order to reduce the risk of ending up with an undesirable individual (the way you formulate the recruitment add, the people you select as external reviewers, the possibility to cancel the recruitment process if the outcome seems uncertain etc). In the US, unfettered by European job security regulations, there seems to be a greater willingness to take risks and to actively recruit certain individuals whose expertise you are interested in. The fact that American professors do not have to retire in their mid-60s unless they want to also makes it possible to keep positions occupied until you have found a suitable successor to fill them with.

Whereas my own small unit is specialized in teaching military history and can really not compare with a large institution such as the OSU History Department, nor can any other Swedish university institution. The OSU History Department offers a wide range of courses in the following fields:

- [African History](#)
- [African-American History](#)

- [American History to 1877](#)
- [US History since 1877](#)
- [Ancient History](#)
- [Atlantic World History](#)
- [Business History](#)
- [Diplomatic History](#)
- [East Asian History](#)
- [Early Modern European History](#)
- [Modern European History](#)
- [Islamic History](#)
- [Jewish History](#)
- [Latin American History](#)
- [Medieval History](#)
- [Military History](#)
- [Russian, East European & Eurasian History](#)
- [Women's History](#)

No history department at any Swedish university can mobilize specialists within such a wide arrange of fields. As I mentioned, the fact that the financial basis of the history department at OSU is not only the students majoring within the field but virtually all 43 000 undergraduates at OSU, who are compelled to take at least two classes “about the past”, explains this. In addition, donations and private funds play a more prominent role in the American system than in Sweden. The Chair in Military History at OSU, for instance, is financed through a private donation (the General Raymond E. Mason, Jr. Chair in Military History). When I compare the curriculum at OSU within military history with that of offered by my own institution, I feel we hold our ground pretty well considering how few we are:

<https://www.fhs.se/sv/utbildning/kurser/militarhistoria/>

In Sweden, where teaching at the universities is adapted to the issuing of credits and to the government student loans system, semesters are sub-divided into short course segments and each segment as a rule examined only once, through a major final assignment or test. The American system, with drawn-out courses which are examined continuously through minor mid-papers and a final paper at the end, is probably to be preferred from a pedagogical point of view as knowledge is allowed to mature with the students and they have received feed-back on their mid-papers before they write

their final papers. The Swedish system contains structural obstacles against introducing a similar form of examination. During a five-week long course, the teacher hardly has the time to hand out an assignment half-time-through, grade it, write constructive comments and return it to all the students before it is time for their final assignment. However, I still believe the American system worth emulating.

I was also charmed by the system of using multiple-choice quizzes. Some academic pedagogues would probably argue that this form of examination makes students focus on learning facts and data instead of developing a deeper understanding of a subject, although I myself have never understand that there must be a conflict here. The quizzes keep students alert, make them keep up with their reading and by asking questions about certain details instead of others, the teacher can communicate what aspects of the subject that are especially important.

As I believe I have pointed out, the history subject can thrive well at OSU without having to conform too much to labour market needs, as all students are compelled to include some history course in their bachelor's degree. There is nonetheless a lively interest in communicating with the surrounding world, to introduce new technologies, to facilitate distance education and to support high school-history teachers in various ways. The history department is home to the [Harvey Goldberg Center for Excellence in Teaching](#), which has a three-fold mission:

- To provide professional development, focused especially on pursuing the best strategies for teaching with technology
- To produce a series of publications designed to provide quality teaching and learning materials
- To engage in significant public outreach, especially aimed at teachers and students of history

My stay at OSU has opened my eyes to the rich resources that are available on the internet for teaching history like maps, pictures, documents and various kinds of primary sources (at least in English) that you can easily use in your teaching. This is something that I will keep in mind for the future.

Action plan - topics to address and if possible introduce in Sweden

This fall, I will be responsible for the course on warfare in antiquity, which is also the introductory course in our undergraduate program in military history. I will try to reorganize it somewhat and bring in more of primary sources, classical texts that the students can download from the internet (unfortunately in English translation instead of Swedish). I have also started already to adjust my power point-presentations according to the more focused “American pattern”, described above. I am also scheduled to talk about my experiences in Ohio to the Research and Education Board, as well as to the entire college faculty during the competence development days this spring.

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