

Summary Report to STINT

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Home Department: Department of Psychology, Umeå University, Sweden

Visiting Department: Department of Psychology, Haverford College, PA, USA

Visiting Period: August to December, 2011

Accompanying Family Members: Wife and two children (ages 10 and 15)

Preparation and planning

I visited Haverford during the spring of 2011 for a week to meet with members of the department, arrange for housing, investigate transportation issues and make arrangements at the public schools where my children would be attending during our stay. I had made contact before the trip with the people I would need to meet to ensure that I would be able to maximize my time there during the week.

Haverford has a long history of hosting guests, so there was a high level of awareness among staff as to what would need to be done to ensure an easy transition into my position. During my week in Haverford I was able to secure housing, make arrangements for a work space, began the process of getting a user ID for their computer network (which was completed well before the fall term so that I could access their intranet even before officially arriving), as well as meet my future colleagues at the psychology department. I had the good fortune to be there during the week that seniors were presenting their thesis work and I was able to participate one day in this process.

It is imperative for STINT fellows who are travelling with children to the US that they visit and discuss the admissions procedures with the schools that their children will be attending. Rules vary greatly between states in the US regarding admissions, but in general you will find that they demand a fair amount of paperwork (previous school records, immunization records, physical exams, etc.) to be submitted when the child is going to be enrolled in a school and you can save time (and headaches!) by having prepared these documents in the spring when the Swedish schools are still in session.

Preparation for my teaching was completed mostly via e-mail correspondence with the department chair. A course description and syllabus was submitted in the spring and guidance was given about practical matters (use of electronic platform, faculty guidelines, grading policies, etc.).

We arrived to Philadelphia about 10 days before the start of the fall term, which in hindsight was too short of a time to adequately prepare. I would recommend arriving least 2 weeks before the start of the term if you are traveling with a family. Our preparations were somewhat hindered by an earthquake and hurricane that struck the east coast of the US during our first week which caused a 2 week delay in getting our furniture delivered and some problems getting the utilities started in the house. However, even without this extra burden, 10 days was a bit too short.

Teaching responsibilities

During my stay in Haverford I taught a course called Applied Cognition. It was required that students had completed at least the introduction course in psychology to sign up for my course, so most of the students were seniors, juniors or sophomores. After the dust had settled (students have a short period of time at the beginning of the course where they can add/remove courses from their schedule) I had 17 students in my class. My class met 3 times a week for one hour per session. Additionally I held office hours twice a week (two hour session) for individual or group meetings. As

part of their grade, my students completed a group project which stretched throughout the term. I was the advisor for all four groups and held regular meetings with the groups.

Activities during the term

Most of the activities that I participated in during the term were related to my course. My course was organized around 4 main activities, two lines of lecturing, a group activity and a seminar series led by the students.

Every other week of the course, I lectured on a specific methodology (Cognitive Work Analysis) for designing and developing complex work environments. Each week featured a specific part of the analysis with two lecture based one the analysis techniques described in the textbook and one lecture featuring case studies of the techniques being applied in real working environments. Coordinate with this material was a group project where each group was to do cognitive work analysis of a real work environment. So as they would learn a methodology, they would then apply it to a real world situation. Using the same environment for each phase of the analysis, each group then presented their total analysis of the work place at the end of the course, complete with recommendations as to how the environments could be changed to improve efficiency and safety.

The other line of lecturing was centered upon more general aspects of applied cognition such as expert systems, human-computer interaction, and the effects of the physical environment on performance. The format was similar here, each week had a theme and the first two meetings during the week featured lectures on the subject – based primarily on research articles available in advance to the students. The last meeting of each of these weeks was used for a student-led literature seminar based on one or two articles chosen by the students themselves. Every student participated as a discussant for at least one article during the term.

Group project, a midterm and final exam determined 30% each of the student's final grade. The final 10% of the grade was determined by the level of participation (attending class, participating in discussions, their performance as a discussant for the seminars, etc.).

Outside of my course, I participated in (nearly) weekly faculty meetings for the department and the occasional college wide faculty meeting. As it would happen, during my term at Haverford the college was just starting the process of searching for a new college president after the previous one had abruptly resigned just before my arrival. This resulted in many college wide faculty meetings which while sometimes passionate and sometimes terribly bureaucratic often were not particularly relevant for me except as a casual observer. However, more relevant to me, the Psychology Department was recruiting a new faculty member during my stay and was able to participate in and follow this process. Five candidates were identified who came and gave talks at the department. I attended all of these and shared my impressions and opinions with the search committee, both orally and in a short written review of the candidates. At the request of the college, I also wrote a review of an application for full professorship that was made by one of the Psychology Department faculty members.

Important lessons

Two aspects in particular of my experiences in Haverford stand out in my mind. First, faculty (and staff) take teaching seriously and appear to take great interest in it. Teaching is a priority and everyone I met seemed to be genuinely enthused about their role as a teacher. Second, at most likely related to the first, there was a great deal of focus on the students **as individuals**. This manifested itself in many ways. Significant periods of time during departmental faculty meetings would often be spent talking about specific students or teaching situations all in an effort to maximize the learning potential for each student. Each student has a specific academic advisor (called Deans at Haverford) and it was not uncommon for one of them to contact me with concerns about a specific student (say for example if the student was falling behind in another class the dean would contact me and ask how they were doing in my course). I was frequently reminded that I could

and should raise any concerns I had about a student as soon as possible to my colleagues, the deans and of course the student themselves. All of this with an effort to be able to identify problems early and to get the student the proper support. We have student councilors in Sweden who serve many of the functions that Deans did at Haverford, with the exception that they work almost exclusively with the student and rarely directly with teachers. Thus, a student may be having problems that they discuss with a counselor, but that information does not necessarily get back to the teacher who might be able to offer much more specific help or guidance to the student.

Comparison between Haverford's way of working and how we work in Sweden

Haverford is one of several relatively small, elite liberal arts colleges which serve mainly to help students along to advance degrees. It has long history and tradition and is relatively rich in resources partly through an extensive network of successful alumni and partly through high tuition costs. This is in stark contrast to Umeå University which is relatively large, young, state-run research university, with a clear mandate to prepare people for working life. Thus, some differences are inevitable due to differences in size and orientation.

Admission and recruitment

Much more care and deliberation goes into recruiting and admitting students at Haverford compared to Umeå. They consider far more aspects of the applicant than just grades and test scores. They are interested in finding a good match between the student and the college. All the students I met were highly motivated and engaged. Furthermore, being a liberal arts college, students are encouraged (and required!) to take courses outside of their major which I found surprisingly refreshing with the students in my course. Only about a fourth of my students had psychology as their area of focus and the blend of having diverse interests really made for interesting discussions.

The care in selection is not only from the college's side; during my one term at Haverford my course was frequently visited by prospective students. These students were visiting the campus and sitting in on lecture in order to get a feel for whether Haverford was the right match for them. In general in the US, visiting a prospective college/university is widely practiced by students approaching the end of their high school education. Higher education is expensive in the US and many students want to take a close look at where they will be studying before they decide where to apply. While Umeå University also organizes days when potential students can visit the campus, it is done in a much more artificial way (busloads of teenagers, a fair-like environment with booths with information and some demos of lectures or other activities). That which I thought was kind of interesting with the visits in Haverford were that they seemed to be much more representative of student life. The students that came to my lectures were by themselves (no guide showing them around) and they were seeing what a "regular" day was like for a student.

In Sweden we have a lot less flexibility in how we recruit and admit students and of course we are admitting a lot more students which make individual evaluations difficult. However, I would argue that we have equally smart and ambitious students that study our clinical psychology program (where we have 12 applicants to every spot in the program); but once they are in the program they will not study any other area for the 5 years we have them and they will never meet other types of students.

The classroom

The classroom environment was relatively similar between Haverford and Umeå. One subtle difference I observed was that the focus in Haverford seemed to be more geared towards the actual meeting between student and teacher and not so much on the "tools" or medium for teaching. Swedes in general have technology and design fixations (I'm guessing a by-product of the

combination of having so many successful IT companies and designers together with a relatively high standard of living). You will probably not find better equipped lecture halls in the world than you will find in most Swedish universities. In Umeå we are constantly being pushed to use internet-based technologies, interactive media, digital media, etc., without much reflection given to how it affects our pedagogy – technology for technology's sake. Many of the lecture halls at Haverford were well “used” – outdated furniture, worn down carpeting, scuffed up walls – and in the building I was located permanent computers and projectors had just been introduced that term. Other advance equipment was available and some people were using it, but that is not where the focus was. Rather, the focus was on the meeting/interaction with the student.

While the atmosphere was relatively informal, I found students at Haverford still maintained a respectful and courteous attitude towards faculty. They were good about making arrangements in advance about meeting for help outside of my regular office hours and seemed to be genuinely concerned about not wasting my time by not being prepared for meetings or discussions. Because nearly all students live on campus and even most faculty live on or in the immediate area around campus, it was possible to be very flexible with meeting students – early morning, late evening and even weekend meetings were not uncommon.

The Honor Code

Perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of college life at Haverford is the Honor Code and the influence it has. The code encompasses both academic and social life on campus and is not a list of rules per se, but a set of ideals and expectations regarding intellectual inquiry and personal interaction with the goal of creating an atmosphere of trust, concern and respect. It provides students with a safe environment while at the same time challenging them to work hard. Collaboration is emphasized over competition. The Honor Code permeated through most areas of college life. Sometimes the Honor Code was exercised in concrete forms such as taking exams without proctors and letting a student run council settle conflicts and accusations of cheating. Sometimes the effects of the Honor Code were more subtle. For example, generally in Sweden after returning graded exams one anticipates a steady stream of students coming to argue over how certain questions were scored. Interestingly enough, no one has ever raised the argument that I have given them too many points for a certain response! So after returning the midterm exams to my Haverford students, I wasn't surprised that several students contacted me to make appointments to come in and talk about their exam results – “just like back in Sweden” I thought. However, none of these students came to argue for more points or a higher grade. Rather, they were interested in discussing how their answers could have been improved in order to be better prepared for the final exam. I believe that this is an indirect influence of the Honor Code. They trust that I have made a sincere, thorough and honest evaluation of their exams and thus aren't focused on trying to squeeze a few more points out of the exam but rather are interested in how they can improve their performance on the next exam.

Integration of research

Haverford's primary focus is on education at the undergraduate level, but the vast majority of their students will be progressing to advance degrees so there was still a clear and strong focus on research. Most faculty members seemed to have active research programs and students were encouraged to do their thesis work within these areas. This allowed students to participate in real research while at the same time helped faculty members maintain an active research program. While this is done in Umeå as well, my impression was that they worked much more systematically with this at Haverford. The research focus was also evident in the classroom, where I was encouraged to use articles as course literature as much as possible. Students frequently asked for recommendations of other articles to read when they wanted to dig deeper into a subject.

Being a research university, Umeå has a lot more to offer for the student who is genuinely interested in research than Haverford in terms of breadth of research opportunities. We have approximately 35 PhD working in our department in Umeå and thus can offer a larger variation in research opportunities. Additionally, Haverford is not large enough to support some types of research activities (such as fMRI or advanced simulation labs) that simply too costly or require specialized equipment or competencies.

Preparing students for the future, alumni contact

Haverford College, like many American universities, was acutely aware of what their students did after graduation. Records were kept on alumni and alumni were actively recruited to come back and hold seminars for the students about life after graduation. As most students were going to pursue professional or graduate schools after their time at Haverford, workshops and information meetings were organized to help students with the application processes for these schools. We have only recently in Umeå (particularly at the departmental level) begun working with career planning and alumni networks and it was informative to see how they had integrated these processes with their normal way of working with students at Haverford.

Relationship with the surrounding community

Haverford College seemed to have high standing in the community and was a quite visible member of the community at large. Having two children in public schools while there, I was able to get an “outsiders” perspective of the college since most (in fact, all) of the families we got to know through our kid’s classes were not affiliated with the college. Residences of the town of Haverford spoke overwhelmingly positive about the college and its presence in the community. Haverford College had several community outreach programs that were designed not so much to showcase their “talent”, but to actually help and interact with the community. The college offered mentoring and tutoring programs to kids in the public schools who needed help or guidance – free of charge. They organized sports camps for kids at a nominal fee and opened up the astronomy telescope for public viewing. The freshman dorm every year organized a haunted house open to the public (and free of charge) for Halloween celebrations. The campus itself was an arboretum and a popular oasis in this big city environment for locals to come for walks and picnics. Haverford is not a publically funded institute of higher learning and thus not obligated in any way to pursue these activities, but their strong Quaker traditions of community seemed to guide their actions. In Umeå we have as well many outreach activities to the community, but they are much more often in the form of showcasing the university – public talks and presentations from successful teachers or researchers – and almost exclusively involving only faculty and not students. Many students naturally do part of their practical coursework or thesis work with companies or public institutions in the surrounding community; but this is part of their formal education and not done out of a sense of “community”.

Fika

One aspect of working life I missed from Sweden during my stay was the Swedish tradition of “fika” or coffee breaks which I think could be favorably implemented at Haverford. Most workplaces in Sweden will have a designated time in the morning and the afternoon for people to meet and drink coffee in a lounge or common area. Of course, no one is obligated to come, but it does provide a short break from the daily grind of work and create a forum for informal dialogue. The Department of Psychology at Haverford is small and intimate (most faculty members live on campus) and physically compact so you inevitably run into everyone else on a regular basis, so meeting up twice a day may be overkill. But I believe that having a couple of designated “coffee break” times a week would provide an excellent forum for informal meetings and an opportunity to touch base with coworkers. Despite being a small department, they seemed to have a steady flow of short-term appointments and a couple of semi-active emeriti professors and a more formal coffee break time would probably help facilitate contact with these members of the faculty.

Some of the most important take home lessons I got from my stay at Haverford are:

- On a personal level
 - o Focus more on meeting/engaging the student; less on the medium or content
 - o Work consciously with following the individual students' progression, try to identify early when problems start occurring
 - o Work more explicitly with the students with trust and responsibility
- Departemental level
 - o Look into implementing a local version of the honor code, if not formally at least some of the ideas and principles.
 - o Increase our awareness of the progression of individual students; work to increase the collaboration between student councilors and teachers
- University level
 - o Work towards raising the status of teaching
 - o Work towards better integration of teaching and research
 - o Emphasize the service aspect of administration and other university services
- Higher educational system in Sweden
 - o Even here much more work has to be done to raise the status of teaching

Plans for continued contact

Currently I have no concrete plans for continued contact with Haverford. Several students have contacted me since I have returned to Sweden inquiring about summer school or intern opportunities in Umeå. Unfortunately, we do not offer any summer course and most labs are shut down in the summer, so there are no intern places available either. One student has expressed interest in pursuing a PhD in Umeå, since we have a specialization in sport psychology which she is interested in. She still has one year of undergraduate studies, but I have kept in touch with her and hopefully next academic year she will visit Umeå to take a closer look at our PhD Program

I have extended an open invitation to my colleagues in Haverford visit Umeå and in particular to consider coming when they have some sabbatical time. Our department in Umeå offers on occasion financing for guest lecturers from our partner universities and from other universities where we have a strategic interest in collaborating. The next time we announce the possibility to apply for such funding; Haverford will be included in the list of institutions eligible to apply.

Regarding the Excellence in Teaching Program

How can STINT further develop/improve the program

I have no complaints about the STINT program per se. It is well funded and managed. Given the diversity of recipients and hosts I am impressed at how smoothly the process worked. The only area where I see a specific "hole" is regarding insurance options (particularly when travelling with a family); however, I am well aware of the legal difficulties involved and understand it is not an easy nut to crack. Given that the grants are generous, I think that most people are able to find a reasonable solution.

I understand that STINT is looking more and more at collaboration with larger, more research oriented universities. The advantage of this, of course, that these places more closely resemble the environments we come from and thus may increase the chances of "transfer" of knowledge and more long term collaborations. However, I would like to argue that it is important for STINT to keep a portion of the program reserved for small liberal arts colleges. It is truly inspirational for a teacher

from Sweden to be in these environments; even if the differences between our two environments may make it difficult to directly implement changes. We seldom meet in our large universities this wonderful intersection of highly motivated students, enthused competent teachers and well structured environment for studying – a golden standard of higher education at its best. I will never be able to replicate the Mona Lisa, but by studying it I can become a much better painter. . .

General advice to future STINT fellows

Do as much work in advance as possible so that you can spend as much time as possible at your host institute exploring what they have to offer outside of your classroom! It just so happened that my period abroad was directly after finishing a three year position as department chair for a large department. Thus, I did not have much time to prepare my course before coming to Haverford since I was working intensively with handing transitioning in the new leadership at our department. Starting a new course at a new place is already a work intensive endeavor even when fully prepared, so any head start you can get before arriving is golden.

Also, I would strongly advise you to not sweat the details. You will be pleasantly surprised how helpful people will be and the number of exciting opportunities that will present themselves during your stay. Seize the moment and embrace each new opportunity! For those of you travelling with kids, remember that children are in general much more flexible and open than we are. They readily adapt, make friends quickly, and absorb the culture and language like a sponge.

Advice to future STINT fellows who travel to Haverford

Don't forget to visit the Bryn Mawr campus; it is just as lovely as Haverford.