

Final Report STINT Teaching Sabbatical Arizona State University 2023

School of Social Work

Watts College of Public Services and
Community Solutions



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To begin with. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the STINT foundation, faculty and staff at the Arizona State University and at Jönköping University for making my Teaching Sabbatical possible.

The Host Institution

Arizona State University (ASU) is a public university founded in 1885 under the name Territorial Normal School. Today, ASU is one of the largest Universities in U.S. and compile of many Campuses and Schools (<https://www.asu.edu/about/locations-maps>). The Tempe Campus is the main campus and there are other Campuses in the Phoenix area and around Arizona (e.g. Yuma, Tucson, Lake Havasu).

The School of Social Work, established in 1961, is situated at Watts College of Public Services and Community Solutions (Watts Collage). The school of Social Work has 6 Campuses: Downtown Phoenix, West Valley, Tucson, Yuma, Online and Sync/Zoom. The main campus for the School of Social Work (SSW) is located at the Downtown Phoenix Campus. SSW offers programs in person and online. For example, they offer master's courses and a full master program online. More recently also a full Social Work program online on Bachelor level. The SSW is the largest school at Watts College. In the autumn of 2023, the SSW had 1900 students enrolled, 80 Faculty (full-time) 131 staff and 167 Faculty Associates/Co-institutors (part-time) employed.

Prepare and Plan

A couple of days before Christmas 2022 I was offered a STINT Teaching Sabbatical Fellowship at ASU, autumn 2023. More specifically I was offered the chance to do my STINT Teaching Sabbatical at Watts College of Public Services and Community Solutions and the School of Social Work.

Me and my family were excited, and we did some initial investigation before I said yes. I contacted my son's school to enquire about the regulations and possibilities if we would live in the U.S. for one semester. My husband investigated his opportunities to take time off work, and everything seemed to be possible. So, I agreed to spend the fall of 2023 at ASU and started spreading the news among friends and colleagues. The first couple of weeks were characterized by positive thoughts about the forthcoming sabbatical from everyday life at home, both workwise and privately. February 1st, 2023, I participated in the STINT Teaching Sabbatical Seminar in Stockholm. Meeting STINT and all (alumni and outbound) fellow Stintoniens was most helpful and inspiring.

Initial planning

STINT provided names and contact information of a few people who had a key role for my visit at ASU. I contacted the Director at the School of Social Work, Elizabeth Lightfoot, who immediately welcomed me to Watts College and the School of Social Work. Shortly after I had a meeting online with Professor Elisabeth Lightfoot and Dr Melanie O'Neil, Associate Teaching Professor and Associate Director for Student Services and Programs at the School of Social Work.

We talked about different possibilities and decided that I would be responsible for a full semester long Master course called SWG 533 Diversity, Oppression and Social Justice in Social Work as my main activity. Besides this we discussed how I could participate in daily activities at the School of Social Work (SSW) and join other teachers in their classes when suitable during my sabbatical. We also decided upon dates for my planning trip. Professor Lightfoot put me in contact with Leah

Tyler, Assistant to the Director, who was most helpful and scheduled some meetings for my planning trip.

Another person of importance early on was Karen Engels, the STINT contact person at ASU. We had an online meeting where she provided me with information about practical matter such as possibilities for schools for my son or living arrangements ect. All which I am most grateful for.

Planning trip

At the end of Mars, me, and my family (of 3) visited Phoenix for a week. This visit gave us clarity on how to proceed with preparations regarding housing, schools, and my teaching at ASU. I had a couple of meetings at the SSW, Downtown Campus. Leah Tyler and Director Lightfoot took me on a tour around Watts College. I met Melanie O'Neil who clarified my course obligations as a course leader, and she gave me a quick introduction to the portal My ASU. Later, it was most helpful to have a basic understating of how this portal works before I got my own My ASU in August. I also had a meeting with Dr Stephanie Lechuga-Peña, Lead Instructor of the course I was supposed to teach. We discussed the course content, and I received the coursebook.

I also had two meetings at the Tempe Campus. Firstly, one with Karen Engels focusing on getting to know each other and on providing me with some helpful information. Secondly, with a staff member at the International Students and Scholars Center (ISSC). I learned a lot about the Visa process and important things to consider about entering the country. Besides these meetings did I also visited some accommodation possibilities in Tempe. The visit to Tempe made me realize that I would rather stay close to my office than commute to work.

It was of importance for me to have my family's full support and therefore did I not only bring my husband on the planning trip but also our son. While I had meetings at ASU my husband took our son around as many skateparks and indoor facilities as possible. In retrospect I understand that this was crucial. Especially since this gave my son an opportunity to see and experience for himself the grate opportunities Phoenix offered him concerning skateboarding. So, when we were back home again, he was so keen on going back that he seldom talked about that he might miss his friends.

During the planning trip, me and my family acquainted us with Phoenix and especially Downtown Phoenix. Since we live in the countryside back home, we wanted to experience living in the city center, so we decided early on that we wanted to live Downtown. Short term leasing is expensive in Phoenix, and it is notable that it is almost impossible to find furnished apartments. Furniture needs to be either rented or bought.

We ended up visiting many apartment complexes in Downtown Phoenix and ranked them in accordance with our preferences. Unfortunately, it was not possible to sign any short-term leasing contracts for the autumn already in Mars. So, we just had to wait until closer to our arrival, knowing where exactly we would live.

Getting all in order

There was a couple of things we needed to get in order before leaving for U.S. Planning of tasks, responsibilities and activities at ASU went smoothly. Most time and efforts were spent on the Visa application process, finding an apartment, solving my son's schooling, or making sure that we have the right insurances.

We managed to get all our visas issued in time so we could travel abroad as planned. ASU was sending our DS-2019 early on so no stress on that part. The online application system is time consuming, and it took hours to complete even if we had all documents at hand.

Finding an apartment in Downtown Phoenix from back home in April/May/June for the autumn was not as easy as it seemed when we visited different apartment homes during our week in Phoenix. Hours were spent on digital tours, digital meetings, and e-mails without success. I almost gave up at one point and convinced myself that we will make the arrangements from an apartment when we arrive in Phoenix.

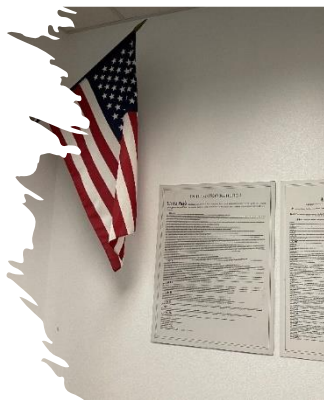
One sleepless night I scrolled through ads on Airbnb, and that's how I found our forthcoming apartment in Phoenix. I got in contact with the owner, and we spoke over the phone. Soon after it was booked. This two-bedroom apartment was fully furnished, perfect for our needs. It was on the 2¹st floor with a marvelous view, a pool, barbeque possibilities on the rooftop, indoor parking, co-working space, and a well-equipped gym.

Together with some suggestions, under Recommendations I will describe how we solved my son's schooling, transportation in Phoenix and other practical matters.



Tasks and responsibilities during the Teaching Sabbatical

I was responsible for a master course called SWG533 Diversity, Oppression and Social Justice in Social Work. SWG533 is one of the mandatory courses for all master students in social work at ASU and it runs for different groups of students at the same time both digitally and in person.



I was assigned to lecture hall Dtpnx UCENT 238 which is located at Watts College, Downtown Campus. I taught the class alone every Friday afternoon between 1.30 -16.15 P.M. Time for classes were fixed and could not be changed. One of the first things that caught my attention when entering the lecture room to prepare for the first class was the flag and the constitution on the wall. Later I learned that every classroom at ASU is equipped with the Constitution of the United States and the flag stars and stripes.

Initial preparation and finalizing the course syllabus

I started my duties at ASU two weeks before my course started August 18th. I got a big office and felt most welcomed from the beginning. Those I met at the SSW were friendly and took time to make small talk. During the first week I settled in and got all necessary technical practicalities in order. It was also time to finalize the syllabus and have it published on Canvas.

Luckily, I did not need to make a syllabus from scratch. I received the syllabus for the course SWG533 Diversity, Oppression and Social Justice in Social Work from last year already during the

planning trip along with the coursebook and quite a few articles. I read the course book and started to prepare myself for how I could finalize and partly modify this course before I started my duties at ASU. The syllabus was extensive, 28 pages, and include Learning objectives, dates, titles and course readings for all classes, information of assignments, grading criteria ect. Things as the learning goals and the coursebook were not changeable. I ended up changing or adding a few articles and modified the disposition of the classes.

Sharing experiences

I was responsible for all teaching and examinations in my course, but since there were colleagues teaching the same course during the fall, possibilities to share experiences were provided during the semester. I mainly ended up discussing pedagogical or matters of course content with Dr Stephanie Lechuga-Peña (the Lead Instructor). She has taught the same course for many years and is also one of the authors of the course book. I had contact with Stephanie during all the crucial steps of the course. We discussed the syllabus, assignments and grading, in-class activities and shared experiences of our classes and students. I joined her classes as often as I could. I observed her lecture and when there were in-class activities or group discussions I participated either as a lecturer or as a student. I learned a lot from how Stephanie flipped certain sections in her lecture by letting students discuss, define concepts, and give examples before she showed her slide and added the things that was missing in the students' descriptions and now and then she corrected when student got something totally wrong in a warm and openminded manner.

Classes

For the first class everyone was asked to bring a cultural artifact that had a special symbolic meaning for them. As a cultural artifact, I brought Fika homemade chocolate bolls and Marabou chocolate and clarified the Fika concept and the cultural meaning of Swedish Fika. This was a good getting to know each other activity as well as an activity for paying attention to culture.

Since I had time, I allowed myself to spend generously of time on preparing for classes. There were a few articles I had to read (besides the coursebook) before each class. I also did some additional reading and investigations online about more specific matters around the U.S context. So, I have learned a lot about diversity and oppression in the Southwestern parts of U.S.

As a foreigner I made it clear to the students that my knowledge about U.S policies, and conditions are limited. Instead of making this into a limitation I tried to make use of my experience of the European and Swedish examples to give a broad understanding. This turned out well and was something the students expressed as especially rewarding with the course when we had an oral evaluation during the last class.

From the start I learned that students are engaged and take their studies seriously. For example, had they mostly read all the literature before class. The academic culture and the expectations of mandatory presence in class gave us (students and I) a chance to get to know each other and to improve the learning experience along the way. To get a sense of the students' thoughts about the classes and my way of teaching I asked for feedback and when possible modified accordingly. For example, I conducted a couple of new in-class activities in order to allow students to work more on their own.

Office hours and support of students.

The interaction with students was so rewarding. Some of them lingered after lectures to ask questions about the lecture or on theoretical contents or about the assignments. As a teacher I

was obligated to offer students Office hours. I had these upon appointment only. Students did not ask for individual meetings regularly but rather when they had missed a class or if they had questions about the final paper.

Having office hours is part of the quite close relationship between students and faculty that I experience at ASU. Faculty were more available for students and had a more open approach compared to what I'm used to in my home institution. Teachers did not only educate the students, but they also cared for them. For example, I learned early on that I had to be observant of any signs of mental health issues among students. Two of my students lost close relatives during the semester. I followed the routines for such cases and referred them to the Student Services which offer different types of help and support to students. It was also notable that my colleagues followed up the students' achievements and offered support when needed. I supported two of the students in order to help them achieve the learning goals of the course. I had an extra talk with one of them and referred him to the tutoring and writing center. This student improved his writing vastly and ended up writing one of the best papers in the class. This bears evidence that extra support from teachers and the services offered by the writing center make a difference.

Assessments and grading

The course included 3 individual written assignments and one group assignment. The first assignment was called Who Am I? and was a reflective paper about themselves and which cultural groups/ social categories (gender, class sexual orientation, ethnicity) they belong to etc. In this assignment they were also required to identify an oppressed cultural group that they find to be a challenge for them to work with as forthcoming social workers. I needed to handle these examinations in a sensitive matter since they all contained sensitive personal information about the students. I was struck by their well written reflections and the trust they put in me. I felt so privileged having the possibility to read their very personal papers and I made this clear to them. I did my best to make sure that I earned their trust. I met all of them in person to give personal feedback about the structure and content of the paper. Having these talks helped us to get to know each other better.

The biggest assignment was a 60-point Research paper divided into two parts. Students handed in the first section in the middle of the course and the full paper on the last day of class. The first section was a literature review which was supposed to be graded before the full paper was finished.

When I started assessing part one of the papers, I noticed that the students were not as prepared for making a literature review as I thought. In Sweden master students in social work have written a thesis and this is not the case at ASU. No one had written a big paper before. So, I changed how I gave feedback and when to grade this first section of the paper. I discussed this with Stephanie who experienced the same with her students. And we concluded that I could give feedback on the first section and encourage the students to improve that section and grade it when the full paper was handed in. The ability to improve their texts was most appreciated by the students. And they all ended up getting a few more points on the first section after rewriting it based on my feedback.

Other Activities during the Teaching Sabbatical

I was often one of the few people present on the 8th floor at Watts College where the school of Social Work was situated. I thought that the department would be more populated as soon as classes started on August 17th. But this was not really the case. Mainly teachers were in their offices when they had class or if there was an organized activity such as the Faculty Council meeting or an event. Sometimes it felt like a lonely business being on a teaching sabbatical at ASU. Even if the offices were empty the faculty I got to know was in close reach. I could easily get in contact with them through phone or e-mail.

Formalized activities

During my time at ASU, I got the chance to participate in staff meetings, research seminars and Watts Fall Convocation. The Faculty and Staff Retreat in the beginning of the semester and the Faculty Council Meetings, held once a month provided great opportunities to meet and interact with those who work at the SSW. I also joined the Full-time instructor meetings. These meetings helped me to get in contact with teachers of similar interests, so I met some of them for lunch, coffee or just meeting to share experiences or to learn about their work. I presented my own research on one of the Research Colloquium. This was a great opportunity to discuss my research on body size and fatness. Body size is also a topic that almost all can relate to, so the discussions were lively and most interesting.

The School of Social Work arranged a Christmas party called the "White Elephant Party" in the beginning of December. Everyone brought a Christmas present and participated in a game of how the presents were distributed. It was fun and I had the possibility to interact with some new people and of course with the ones I already knew. During this event I served Gingerbread cookies, and glögg from IKEA. It was a way for me to bring a little bit of Swedish culture to my colleagues and to thank everyone and to say goodbye.

End-of-the-Year PhD student and faculty luncheon was another event happening in December and this gave me the opportunities to interact with both senior researchers and PhD students. On December 12th I participated in the Watts Fall Convocation. This was an experience for life. This is when students receive their master's, bachelor's degree, or doctorate. So, it is a very formal and festive event. Cynthia Lietz Dean and President's Professor, Watts College of Public Service & Community Solutions opened the event with a speech addressed to all graduates. All participating students and faculty were dressed in their regalia. This includes a maroon cap and gown and a hood if applicable (Masters and Doctorate). The director had an extra set of regalia that I borrowed for the event. All faculty are expected to attend in order to support the students. I joined the rest of the faculty and walked in together and sat on the stage during the whole event. It was so fun to have experienced this. Since we do not have this type of event back home. All graduates' students receive their diploma, went up on the stage and had their names called out.

Food and coffee as bridges

Formalized activities at Watts College and the SSW helped me to grasp the organization and to get to know faculty and staff more briefly. I really appreciate participating in these activities. These did not provide any closer contacts with faculty and staff.

I spent quite much time with another visiting scholar at Watts College Rachel Freeman from University of Namibia. We were both feeling a bit lonely and met now and then for a coffee or

lunch just to talk and have a good time. I had lunch and coffee, most of them in December, with faculty members, and this gave us the opportunity to get to know each other better. It was most appreciated, and I know realize they I should have invited more of the faculties to lunch. And much earlier on. But in the middle of the semester all seemed a bit stressed and so was I. I really enjoyed a couple of meetings with faculty for example with Judy Krysik, Associate Professor/ Associate Director for Academic Affairs, School of Social Work and Instructor Ivelisse Lopez-Gonzalez who worked with the pathway program meaning that students go to Senora in Mexico for a week.

When classes and grading were done in December, I had lunch with Associate Teaching Professor Jamie Valderrama who I had only met briefly before. Jamie told me about her courses and how she provides tools for responsive living via mindful practices to students in different programs at ASU, as well as to professionals such as frontline workers (police, healthcare, emergency services). Most interesting and in lines with the discussions we have in the Social Work program at JU. How can we prepare students better to handle stress and other challenges during education and in their forthcoming occupations. I then realized that I was “to late to the party” since there were no classes I could sit in on before I left. Jamie invited me to join in on one of her Online classes. So, I did early January 2024.

In summary, the last weeks were just wonderful. My agenda was filled with fun activities and lunch and coffee meetings with colleagues. As I see it is one semester a bit too short. At least for me It wasn't until the last weeks that I really got to know people at the School of Social Work and. Then it was time to say goodbye.

Important lessons

Spending a semester at ASU has been most enriching and meaningful for me and my family. So, we are all most grateful to STINT for giving us the opportunity to experience everyday life in the U.S and to broaden our perspectives. Most of all, I have received renewed energy and enthusiasm in teaching. Having enough time to prepare myself before classes was most crucial. But this was no new knowledge, only verification of what I already knew.

ASU has an excellent international office and is repeatedly ranked as the best University in the U.S. by International students. Notable is that there were only a few international students in social work during the fall 2023. Students in SSW is seldom gong abroad during their studies. SSW has no international partner universities where they can send their students for a full semester. On the other side, do the SSW have a Pathway program which means that students are offered to go to Senora in Mexico for a week of activities. The lack of international possibilities for the students was not in line with what I thought from the beginning. So, I have come to appreciate the possibilities we can offer our students at JU even more now after the sabbatical.

Receiving a PhD in social work at ASU means that you cannot work at ASU directly after your dissertation. You need to apply for a position at another university in U.S. In Sweden people often start working at the department where they completed their postgraduate studies. This has made me realize that faculty at Swedish universities a less mobile compared to in the U.S. where movements between universities seem to be more common. I have also come to appreciate the safe employment conditions at my home institution.

I have learned that it is most common that master students receive A's and that they must have at least a B (and in certain courses a C) to pass the course. Based on this I now understand better why international students get upset when they receive a C or D during their studies at JU.

Comparisons between institutions

Besides the size of the university and the number of students and faculty/staff at the School of Social Work at ASU there are a couple of things that are different at the hosting university that I wish to address. 1) The inclusive approach and the fact that all students who have relevant qualifications are admitted to ASU differs vastly since only 1 out of 10 applying for the Social Work program at JU are admitted. 2) ASU offers full Social Work programs online. Historically it has been master programs but more recently that whole Bachelor program is offered online. This means that students all over U.S. can study social work at ASU. 3) Students pay for their education and therefore want to get the best education possible. So, if they find classes to be too short or not good enough, they tend to complain. This differs from the students back home who tend to want classes to be as short and studies as easy as possible. 4) ASU is committed to excellence, access, and impact and strive for inclusiveness. The motto "measured not by whom it excludes, but by whom it includes and how they succeed" (quote from the ASU Charter) mirrors the strive for inclusiveness. In practice, given that admission criteria are met this means that all who apply are offered to study at one of the social work programs offered at ASU. At JU, only 1 out of 10 are admitted to the social work program. 5) The student body is very diverse at ASU. The location of Southwestern U.S. is especially framed by diversity and the historical and political background. This part of U.S. host ethnic minority communities such as Native Americans, Latinx and Mexican and African Americans. This differs from JU where the social work students are mainly white. 6) I was addressed as Professor or Dr Ekman by the Students at ASU. This was not just a matter of use of terms it was also mirroring the fact that ASU students have more respect for their teachers compared to what I'm used to. 7) The importance and process concerning the course syllabus is different. At ASU it needs to be finalized only one week before the course starts. If the course enables the students to reach the learning objectives teachers have more flexibility about the course content and the course literature compared to the more strictly controlled curriculums at JU. 8) Grading criteria differ. At ASU E-D is equivalent with Failing only A, B, C are grades referring to that the student has passed. On master level student need to have at least an B to pass. 9) Having Office hours was new to me. In reality, I have office hours by appointment back home but to put it up explicitly in the syllabus indicate that I supposed to be available for students if they have questions or just wish to discuss a topic or concept. I'm always available if I'm at my office and have time for academic conversations. Students mostly contact me if they face challenges or to calm insecurities. 10) ASU has an excellent Tutoring & Writing Centre offering free academic support both tutoring and support in Academic writing. This center is open every weekday and students can book an appointment both in person and online if they need help to improve their academic writing or tutoring in the subject which they study. JU is also offering support in academic writing. But this support cannot be compared to what's offered at ASU. 11) At ASU students are offered possibilities to engage in different activities on both voluntary basis and as being employed. For example, students were employed to work at the front desk Front Desk at the School of Social Work. There was always someone at the front desk helping visitors to get to the right office, answer questions, answering the phone, and give everyone a warm welcome. Another example is that the president of the Phi Alpha honors society

for students majoring in social work at ASU is student. This society hosts events and/or volunteers at events once a month in the Phoenix area. JU do not have a honor society for their social work students. 12) Similar to back home Faculty council meetings were held regularly, every month. But what differs was that lunch was served and that all Faculty council meetings were hybrid meetings. Even if many participated in person there were always a couple of faculties joining the meeting online. Other things that stood out was the democratic decision-making process. All participants voted in all critical decision making during these meetings. 13) I also learned that the Social Work programs differ between ASU and JU. Two things that stood out are that all students had to pass a centralized License test to get their license in U.S. We do not have this type of license test in Sweden. Another thing that differs is that all students take a master's in social work at ASU. Having a master's degree will give them better jobs and higher salaries. In Sweden it makes no notable difference if you have a master's in social work or not. Therefore, very few are enrolled in the master program at JU.

Recommendations

As I see it was the planning of tasks, responsibilities and activities that were the easiest part. It was other practical things during the planning phase that were more challenging. So, I will pay attention to these first and then add some recommendations for more practical things during the sabbatical period.

Visa Application

The Visa Application process was stressful. I strongly recommend forthcoming Stintoniens heading to ASU to engage themselves with the J-1 Scholar Handbook offered by the ISSC before starting your visa process. It provides excellent information about the visa process and all the required documents that need to be collected and payment to make. This handbook is also providing information about the process upon arrival to the U.S., recommendations for accommodations ect.

The Digital Visa system appeared a bit outdated, and a recommendation is to save often because you might have to sign in over and over. No use calling the embassy, use the webpage and the offered channels for information and inquiries. If you bring your partner, you need to be married to qualify for the J-2 status. Common law marriage does not apply. If you are not married your partner can apply for another type of visa.

Planning for children's schooling

School is compulsory for children in Sweden and taking children out of school temporary needs to be approved by the board of education at the municipality. If you intend to bring school aged children, I recommend that you contact your children's schools in Sweden as soon as possible. Make sure that you make a registration *to temporary complete compulsory schooling in another way* (Anmälan om att fullgöra skolplikt på annat sätt). Another important thing is that American schools and Swedish schools do not follow the same curriculum. In our case, if our son had gone to school in Phoenix, he could not have had his grades transferred. And since he was in grade 9, including national test, it was not hard for us to decide and apply for Sofia Distans. Sofie Distans (<http://www.sofiadistans.nu/>) offer schooling based on the Swedish curricula to children who are between grade 6-9 and abroad for a shorter or longer period.

Sofie Distans worked out find for our son. The flexibility and not having to do schoolwork on a fixed schedule was also making it easier to fit in his hours in the skateparks easier. Having the

flexibility to do schoolwork and assignments in the order you find best during the week or month did also have its challenges. Sometimes, my husband had to work hard to motivate our son. Going to school, meetings friends and doing things in class was missed, especially in the beginning. Due to our son's interest in skateboarding we did not have to plan for any extra activities so he could find friends. After only a few days he found both brief friends and more long-term friendships in the Skateboard community. If you're planning to let your child study by Sofia Distans I recommend that you find an activity (sport or other) enabling interactions with local youngsters for your child.

Getting settled in Phoenix

We arrived in Phoenix two weeks before my work at ASU started. I strongly recommend having at least one week to make the necessary arrangements before starting to work. The day we arrived in Phoenix it was 48 degrees Celsius. It was a bit of a shock for all three of us. And the heat stayed for weeks and even months. No day under 45 degrees for the first month.



We got used to this new type of living and stay mostly inside except walking back and forth to the car or taking a swim in the pool. Thanks to effective Air conditioners everywhere life was good and at least different.

There were a couple of practicalities and requirements we needed to do shortly after arriving in Phoenix. When entering the U.S. on a J-1 visas the SEVIS check-in is crucial. My recommendation is to book an appointment for this already before arrival if you plan on traveling somewhere during your first day. Early on, we arranged new U. S. SIM cards and mobile subscriptions. This was fairly easy. Good to know is that calling home to Sweden is quite expensive. So, we used WhatsApp for keeping contact with family and friends in Sweden.

I have experienced the outstanding services and activities offered by the international office at ASU, more precisely the International Students and Scholars Center (ISSC). Based on the experience it is not surprising that ASU is ranked as the Nr 1 public universities among international students. I strongly recommend that you use J-1 Scholar Handbook offered by the ISSC.

Transportation

If you are doing your Stint Teaching Sabbatical at the Downtown Campus of ASU and wish to be within walking distance of work the Downtown area offers different leasing possibilities. It is also easy to commute with Campus buses that run between Campuses in the Phoenix area. These are free and most comfortable. Tempe is another possibility. If you stay in other areas, you will need a car since public transportation is limited.

Phoenix cannot brag about excellent public transportation. Uber works fine but we needed to arrange long-term transportation. Phoenix is big and we needed a car to transport our son to his daily skateboard practice or to do grocery shopping. At first, we investigated renting a car and found this to be pricy, so we decided to spend our savings on buying a car. I'm still convinced that this was a good choice.

Getting integrated

I strongly recommend others to start at least one week before class and to make an effort to meet faculty and staff from the beginning. Spontaneous meetings were challenging. Partly because few were in those offices and no coffee machine or Fika breaks. Having lunch or coffee was the only option to be able to talk with colleagues besides the common curtesy talk. In the second half of my time at ASU I started inviting colleagues for lunch or coffee. This was an excellent way of getting to know them better. My recommendation is not to wait for others to invite you. Start having coffee or lunches with faculty members early on. This will improve your experience.

Traveling with family

If you are planning to take your family with you, note that funding for your dependents only covers basics like flight tickets and minimum support. We have learned this the hard and expensive way. We had not calculated our economics as needed. Probably because we really wanted to implement the STINT Teaching Sabbatical. Another contributing factor is that Phoenix was very expensive when we were there. Almost everyone we met talked about the crazy prices on everything during the last year. Since both me and my husband were on leave from our jobs the scholarship did not cover the lost salary of my husband. We needed to use our savings to cover cost (electricity, utilities) for housing back home, house mortgages, and all other every month running costs in Sweden. So, my recommendation is to calculate your economics very well if you plan to bring your family.

Action plan

The STINT Teaching Sabbatical at ASU has provided an outstanding platform for exchange of teaching-related knowledge and practices. I have improved as a teacher in higher education and got new experiences, skills, and networks to "bring home" to JU. I will share my experiences with students and colleagues across JU. For example, will examples from Arizona and U.S. be included in my teaching. I will also share my new experiences at meetings on the departmental, faculty and university level.

I really enjoyed and saw the importance of office hours during my stay at ASU. So, I will include office hours when planning upcoming courses. I will also include some of the in-class activities conducted at ASU in my teaching at JU. The first activity is already scheduled for early February.

The focus on internationalization at home at the social work program at JU can as I see it be strengthened by including theoretical and practical knowledge from the Culturally Grounded approach to Social Work. This concept has provided me with a new way of framing what I have

taught about for years. Integrating the culturally grounded approach in the social work program will most likely provide students with a unified package of theoretical and methodological tools for acknowledging culture in social work practice.

The established contact with the host institution will be maintained. For example, can we continue investigating possibilities to collaborate in the future. Digital possibilities as Virtual Exchange (VE) are one already highlighted possibility. The most challenging aspect seem to be time. Firstly, in terms of the 9 (or 8) hours' time difference between Sweden and Phoenix. Secondly, lack of time for faculty/teachers to develop and implement a VE module including students and faculty at both ASU and JU. I really hope to be able to add a VE including students in social work from ASU and JU to a forthcoming action plan.