

STINT

Grants for Teaching Sabbaticals

Final report

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visited

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1. Preparation and planning

One shouldn't start with the conclusion but this was one of the best professional and personal experiences ever! All started with my application for STINT Teaching Sabbatical in 2018 that unfortunately never realized. So when STINT announced that they are introducing a new model for teaching sabbaticals called Grants for Teaching Sabbatical where the applicants were responsible for finding an appropriate host at a higher education institution (HEI) abroad, I was immediately on the phone and email trying to arrange with some known universities abroad. I got full support from my home division and department, and recommendations so I started to discuss with several universities about the possibilities for this visit. I thought that this should not be a problem since the host universities could only have use (as they had eventually) of me visiting them but administration showed to be an obstacle, as usual. Finally I got the invitation from Associate Professor Dawn Russell, University of North Florida (UNF), Coggin Business School, Florida, US to join them for three months, January-March in 2020. The timing was perfect since I didn't have teaching obligations at my home university in that period so it was easy for my division since they didn't need a replacement for my teaching tasks. And, of course, to avoid those grey and cold months in Sweden was extremely appreciated! Unfortunately during my visit COVID-19 pandemic hit, particularly in March, and disturbed some of our plans.

Although the GTS allows visits of up to 5 months, my plan was to stay 3 months (88 days) for several reasons. One reason was that three months were a reasonable period for me to be away from my work at Chalmers since GTS grant differs from STINT Teaching Sabbatical. With GTS the applicant is still employed at home university while with STINT Teaching Sabbatical one has to take leave of absence for those 5-6 months. Another reason for 3 months was to facilitate the US Customs and Border Procedures since travel for 90 days or less can go under regular ESTA business visa obtained online. Stay of more than 90 days requires much more documentation, interviews, embassy visits etc.; more complicated process. And, the third reason was my husband who joined me and who could take leave of absence from his work for that period of time.

The University of North Florida (UNF) is a public university located in Jacksonville, Florida, US. UNF was recently included among nationally ranked universities on U.S. News & World Report's Best Colleges list and is recognized by many elite organizations and is showing up on nearly every national college ranking. Today, nearly 4,000 students graduate each year from UNF and the enrolment steadily increases. UNF employs nearly 600 full-time faculty and over 1,200 staff members, and offers 60 undergraduate degree programs, 36 graduate-degree programs and five doctoral programs. They offer small class sizes that allow their faculty to know their students by name and serve as mentors, often conducting research projects together.

Transportation and Logistics Program at UNF, Coggin Business School is one of the best in USA and as such well suited to provide valuable experience in line with the goals of the GTS. UNF Transportation and Logistics Flagship Program is one of only

seven universities to achieve The Intermodal Association of North America distinction of an unrestricted annual financial gift.

Dawn Russell, my contact person, is an Associate Professor of Transportation and Logistics at UNF, and the Director of the Transportation & Logistics Flagship Program at UNF as well as Director of Marketing and Logistics department. I have known Dawn Russell since long ago, we visited each other and collaborated as researchers on several studies and co-authored papers. But now it was about teaching and as convenient as it can be, her role as the Director of the Transportation & Logistics Flagship Program facilitated my visit to a great deal! Furthermore, with her awards/recognitions as Coggin Exemplary Teacher in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 she was a perfect contact/host person for the purpose of my visit!

2. Tasks and responsibilities

Tasks at the host university depend very much on their program and the teachers, how well arranged and flexible courses are and on the length of the guest's stay. My stay was of 3 months January-March so I was not directly involved in organization or planning of the courses in which I participated since the same were organized months in advance and run according to predesigned and standard schedule. Neither I was assigned a course to run on my own due to the same reasons but also because we decided that co-teaching would be most beneficial for me! I suppose that the visits of 6 months or in other period of the academic year could generate higher level of involvement in the course organization, but not necessarily.

During the three months of teaching sabbatical I participated in different courses and different educational moments at UNF such as co-teaching/lecturing, group works, seminars, exams, development of PhD workshop, shadowing/observing other teachers, attending lectures and seminars of interest as well as study visits to two other universities. I was not in charge of any course on my own; all activities were in collaboration with the host teachers. The choice of courses was based on my own area of expertise and general interest but also on availability and flexibility of the teachers running the courses.

My closest collaboration was with Associate Professor Dawn Russell, with whom I worked on her two courses; one undergraduate course Supply Chain Management and one graduate hybrid course Supply Chain Management. Other additional activities at UNF I've done with her too, like meetings and seminars.

Professor Dag Näslund, Associate Professor Dawn Russell and I worked on a program and organization of a doctoral workshop Nordlog, NOFOMA.

With Professor David Swanson I collaborated as lecturer on his course Logistics Systems Management and also assisted during the midterm-exam.

Some other teachers at UNF I observed during their teaching by attending their courses. And, with some teachers I talked about their teaching methods/styles.

3. Activities during the stay abroad

My main activities during this sabbatical were collaboration on different courses as lecturer, group work assistant, and seminar facilitator/observer; organization of international doctoral workshop; but also as a colleague to give feedback to the UNF teachers' teaching style. It was a great learning process in which I've learnt a lot by collaborating with others but also facilitating their work by helping them with their courses. All these activities were affected very much in March due to COVID-19 pandemic. All classes had to turn online which was not very troublesome for the most of the teachers since they are used to online teaching. Many courses at UNF are done entirely online. Some of the courses were I participated in were hybrid courses, meaning some lectures are done in the classroom but the rest is online. Still many courses are classical style run entirely in the classroom and for those courses the teachers had quickly to turn into online mode. Also our meetings turned online and my physical presence at the campus declined but also due to spring break in the middle of March.

Supply Chain Management TRA4155 undergraduate course

This was the class of 20 students that run on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 18.00. I helped the teacher, Dr Russell, with lectures, group discussions and seminars. And, what was considered very valuable from the teacher's side is that I gave her a feedback on the teaching style, pros and cons after the lectures.



Supply Chain Management TRA4155 - Lecture and seminar

Supply Chain Management TRA6157 graduate course - hybrid

There were 22 students in this class that run on Saturdays. This is a hybrid course so the most of the course is delivered online and some parts in the classroom like this one on the photo below where students presented their group work. The part of the course run in the classroom included also working in this lab on the computers and a guest who is an expert in simulation who explained how to do the task. Then the students would do the rest of the work at home and practice too. For this course I assisted the teacher, Dr Russell, during these seminars in the classroom.



Supply Chain Management TRA6157 Seminar

Logistics Systems Management TRA4202 – undergraduate course

The course is run by Dr Swanson and the content of this course is very related to the course Freight Transport Systems that I run at Chalmers. However, the class is much smaller, 20 students, and therefore organized differently. Due to the similarity of the courses, I delivered some lectures that I do for my course at Chalmers. I also took care of the mid-term exam, which is done very differently than at Chalmers. The exams were done very old fashion way; the examiner decided on the date, style, how to sit the students, etc.; the exams were printed on a paper and the students had 1h15min to write the exam. Closed book style.

Observing different classes at UNF

I decided to observe some classes related to my teaching subjects and/or research area because just by observing one can learn and realize some crucial issues about the teaching and the learning, positive and negative; one learns from both! One thing that is common for all these classes is that the groups are small (around 20 students) and that the attendance was mandatory. The presence is checked either by calling the names at the beginning or the end; or digitally by noting the presence in Canvas or an app via code that teachers provide at the end of the class. Teaching styles differed very much, from pure old-fashioned lecturing to learner-centered teaching; and that resulted in students being either very passive or active during the classes.



Observing the class of Marketing Analytics at UNF

Nordlog Doctoral Workshop

Together with Professor Dag Näslund, UNF, and Associate Professor Dawn Russell, UNF, I worked on organization of full day doctoral workshop Nordlog. The purpose of the workshop, which is scheduled one day prior to big NOFOMA conference, is to enable PhD students to gain knowledge, exchange insights and to network with senior researchers and fellow PhD students coming from different backgrounds and countries. We prepared the programme and decided on the content, the themes (rigor, relevance or novelty) literature, teaching style, group works etc. The workshop should take place on Iceland, Europe (postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic).

Doctoral Day at NOFOMA:
http://nofoma.net/files/NOFOMA_2020_CFP2.pdf

Jax TL Council Lunch Seminars

Jax TL Council is a Jacksonville transportation and logistics council that serves as the promoter for transport industry in Jacksonville. They organize monthly seminars where logistics and transportation academics and professionals and policy makers meet, educate and debate. During that seminar I met many academics and professionals all with the same goal to improve transportation in the area. And, through that network I was invited to give a lecture on my European experiences with transport challenges and potential solutions.



Jax TL Council: Luncheon With JTA's CEO, Nat Ford

The UNF Presidential Lecture Series

Twenty years ago UNF established The UNF Presidential Lecture Series to bring speakers of national and global significance to the metro Jacksonville community. As a part of these series, in February 2020, UNF hosted “A Conversation with Madeleine Albright,” former secretary of state. Dr Madeleine Albright, the first female secretary of state and the highest-ranking woman in the history of the U.S. government, talked about highlights of her career and her upcoming book. The evening’s host was UNF President David M. Szymanski and it was one of the most inspiring seminars/talks ever! Dr Albright, so smart, witty, humorous and super-successful is just a perfect role model! Her advice to women on how to thrive in this world we are living is to “Dare to interrupt! Don’t wait for your turn to speak or to be called; interrupt!”.



Seminar: A Conversation with Madeleine Albright

Fearless Women meeting

This is an initiative to help to pave the road for future women leaders by bringing women together to build trusting relationships and help each other. During the meeting I met many other teachers, researchers and students both female and male. Peculiarly enough my first meeting and introduction to another fearless women during that meeting was to a Swedish American researcher Alexandra, School of Engineering, who is originally from Gothenburg. The main goal with the meeting is to get to know each other but also to share our success stories and “brag about ourselves” as they put it!



Fearless Women meeting

4. Important lessons

I was very lucky to be able to work with Dr Russell whom I consider to be “ a natural born teacher”. The success of her teaching philosophy, her case-based and learner-centered strategies is evident in her high ratings at UNF. The atmosphere at her classes is great, relaxed, but students are attentive, observing and participating. That approach is highly valued by students who indicated that focus on critical thinking and classroom discussion is very important! Working with her and observing her classes was of high value for me. I have a whole list of the things that I’ve learnt from her and that I am going to apply in my courses. Some practical, hands on things that I could use immediately were some tips related to Canvas platform, which UNF and other US universities have been using for some time now but it was very new to Chalmers, introduced recently. From other teachers too I pick some of the tricks and tips on how to improve my own teaching. Some things are very simple, hands-on, but very helpful such as:

- Writing the agenda/rules on the whiteboard before the class starts and that stays on the board for checking. Also to mention learning outcomes of the lecture to come so that students know what to expect.
- To remind that no technology is allowed, so all phones of the desk. Even laptops are not allowed in some courses; Closed laptop policy they call it. It is also stated in the course syllabuses (Classroom Distractions Policy, very strict) that use of phone during the lectures is forbidden and those who disturb will

have to leave for the day and it will be marked as unexcused absence! Not sure this would be possible in Sweden but I'll try.

- Before new lectures start to show some new transport related video (funny or new or eccentric) that students comment shortly together. Get them at ease, relaxing the atmosphere.
- Another good way to start the lecture is to ask the class to remind where they stopped last time and discusses it shortly. This is also one way to check if they are following the lectures and reading the materials.
- To go through all course related practicalities e.g. on the exam rules for the following week, hand in etc. To remind about possibility for tutelage that one could do online via canvas too if the students can not come in person. This is very good to have a certain time occurring every week, usually in connection (before or after) to the lecture, when students can meet for the tutelage either in person or on online rather than have them pop up whenever.
- To have interactive classes, i.e. to get students to talk is not easy and it is impressive how Dr Russell manages it. She asks questions, gives them some time to think and get courage to speak. Encourages by repeating the questions, doesn't rush... And, that is not easy since silence is not comfortable. This approach demands a great knowledge and insight into the material from her side. She manages this great!
- Idea zones – love the name- it is a group work, as a break from lecturing, where students get 3 questions, have time to think about the answers and then discuss in small groups; finally they summarize it and present in front of the rest of the class. Idea zones might be based on the lecture or movies showed (e.g. Supplychainbrain.com good source of SCM interviews/movies). This approach is very interesting and gives great outcome; it is designed to evoke critical thinking about real-world business problems to which the lesson relates. And it is also a good tool for teachers to see which students incline towards wanting to learn (those very engaged in group discussions) compared to wanting to only pass the course (usually those who are quiet and don't bother the discussions very much).
- Something that proved to be very appreciated by students (most of them) is when teachers bring example from their own experiences related to the subject taught, to make it more personal and interesting.
- Active use of Bloom's taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain (Bloom, 1956), which dissects learning into six levels from knowledge to evaluation. As such, the teacher coordinates and combines reading assignments with in-class discussion and relevant projects. In that way the classroom encourages dialogue and self-expression. Students are encouraged to listen to and respect the knowledge, experience, and opinions of others in the class. There are of course disagreements sometimes but guiding the students through the process of reasoning their agreement or disagreement with a particular idea helps to instill critical thinking, which in-turn adds to their personal growth and their academic advancement.
- How to avoid overuse of power point presentations, great Ted talks:
 - How to avoid death by power point:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwpi1Lm6dFo>

- Life after the death by PP
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbSPPFYxx3o>

Canvas related learning, some of those I found very interesting! All the potential of Canvas interface is amazing and I am just starting to learn this since we at Chalmers introduced it only recently. Here are some hands-on tips:

- The first introduction to welcome the students to the course could be done via video so that students get to see the teacher before the course starts.
- Some teachers as a very first task give an assignment where students have to upload own photo and write briefly about themselves and why they study SCM. This is very nice way of knowing each other and possibility for teachers to get to know their students better (if they are not too many)
- It is possible to give audio/voice feedback on the assignments, very fast and time saving; students love it. Go to speed grader and at the bottom of the page choose leave a comment and there it is possible to use audio or video. Very useful!
- Flipped classrooms can be efficiently used on canvas in a version of "Teach-backs" where students have to prepare lectures and lecture to other students. And the teachers just fill in the gaps or correct if necessary.

Dr Russell and her colleagues are very experienced in online teaching so they provided me with online teaching guides, documents and various links that were of huge value now during Covid-19 pandemic when we suddenly had to switch to online teaching entirely!

5. Comparison between the host and the home institutions (in Sweden)

Maybe the most important take away was to realize that there is no American or Swedish style of teaching but it is very personal depending on the teacher running the course. I attended lectures of various teachers at UNF and also visited two other universities during my stay, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University and Florida South Western State College. And, I am very firm in my conclusion that it is impossible to generalize on teaching style or pedagogy on the national level or university level. In US, at those universities, as well as at Chalmers I witnessed variety of teaching styles; from very old-fashioned style of just lecturing in front of the students to very innovative and very engaging styles where the teachers used different teaching methods and did everything in their own power to increase the students learning.

I participated only in handful of courses out of hundreds offered at UNF but one big difference was that all those courses were run in the late afternoons or evenings, like e.g. Supply Chain Management TRA4155 on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 18.00 or some courses even on Saturdays. This is due to the students working; most of the students taking these programs are working and therefore the course schedule has to be adapted to them. At Chalmers, in our Supply Chain Program, all courses are run Monday to Friday between 8-17.

Due to the class size being around 20 students, the exams are done differently too. At Chalmers we have the exams during the exam period that is centrally organized while at UNF, for the courses I participated in, the teachers organize and take care of the entire exam process. Also grading differs very much, they use very detailed grading scale, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D and F; which I found very demanding for teachers. While at Chalmers we have pass/failed and/or fail, 3, 4, 5.

Maybe also the students' behaviour was different to some extent. Students are more engaged and active during the classes at UNF, there is more interaction than what I am used to. It might be due to the language issues, at UNF classes all students were Americans so English was their maternal language while in my Chalmers classes there are no students who are native English. My classes at Chalmers are international, very many nationalities taking the courses. And, also the size of the class matters, at UNF classes are of a small size, around 20 students so easier to establish a contact; while my Chalmers classes are of 60-70 students.

Students always titled the teachers (and me too) with Dr or Professor, never by their names. And I've noticed when I referred to some of my colleagues with their first name that the students reacted, not being used to this. Even teachers titled each other when there are others around. Using our first names for all communications on all levels in Sweden is very common.

Student life is facilitated in numerous ways at both universities (host and home) but the very distinguished facility at UNF was a parking/locker for skateboards. UNF campus is huge and off so students arrive to campus by car or public transport and then many use skateboards for transport within the campus. Bicycles are not that common as in Sweden, actually rather rare. Another difference is availability of numerous restaurants at the campus, like well known chain restaurants with affordable meals.



Skateboard parking, one way of encouraging green transport within the campus

Graduate assistants (GA), this concept has started only recently at Chalmers (my department) but has been used successfully at UNF for years. Graduate students are helping (paid part time job) teachers with administration and course practicalities, sometimes helping with grading weekly homework/simple assignments. We at

Chalmers usually get help by our PhD students, that is the part of their job but sometimes extra help is needed and GAs are good solution.

One of the characteristics of UNF is that they are very well aware that most memorable learning usually takes place outside the classroom. That's why community initiatives, internships and real-world projects are trademarks of a UNF education. Since UNF is located in a major metropolitan area, their students benefit from the strong network of corporate partners that welcome the students as interns and employees. From this perspective I think it reminds very much to Chalmers, Technology Management and Economics department.

UNF is primarily teaching institution and the teachers I collaborated with teach very many courses during the academic year; they do research too but not to the extent we do at Chalmers at the corresponding department. However, as everywhere else, the research outcomes/scientific papers are expected and the rule is the same as in Sweden or the rest of the world "Publish or perish". However, the demands on publishing are much lower than at Chalmers.

And, then some of the visual differences, Chalmers is centrally located in the city; while UNF is not, it is far from downtown, and therefore gives a nice, calming, nature close feeling.



Nature friendly environment- Geoses at the campus area

And, last but not least, fika! No fikas there! Teachers might go to lunch together, very rarely, but no fikas. There is no common lunch area where the employees meet at the department. Offices are mixed with classrooms in the same halls so the teachers sit in their own offices, usually behind the closed doors and no much socializing. I had an office next to my host, Dr Russell, so we two did have our own fika and lunches. And, I think that due to her role as the program director she had more interaction with other staff than teachers commonly do.

6. Recommendations

I can warmly recommend GTS since I've learnt a lot and had a great time at UNF; but how good or bad it will be depends very much on different factors such as the host country, city, region, university, contact person and the applicants personality too. Those who plan to do the sabbatical should be aware of their own pros and cons.

And, be clear from the beginning what are the expectations and duties from both sides. I've read some STINT TS reports where the candidates/visitors didn't feel well or have good experience. And, that was usually when the visitors were given a course to run on their own and had very little interaction with the host staff. I think it is much better to collaborate with other teachers on their courses, even different teachers and get to experience different teaching styles! So good planning and communication of the duties and responsibilities in advance is suggested. In my case I knew my contact person so there were no negative surprises. I loved every minute I spent there. Maybe not just every minute since we had to change accommodation many times due to unavailability of one continuous accommodation for the whole stay. So packing all the suitcases and unpacking again, setting up the living in a new place was a bit dreary. However, it had its advantages too, Jacksonville is Florida's biggest city so we got to know many different and nice city areas. And I would even recommend this to the future applicants; don't rush in booking one accommodation for the entire stay, book the start and then book the rest at the spot when you experience the city.

7. Action plan

My relationship with UNF was long and on-going but related to research, now with this GTS visit it deepened very much not only into teaching and lessons learnt but overall! The next step was to work together on the doctoral workshop here in Scandinavia but due to COVID-19 pandemic it was postponed for autumn 2020. However, Dr Russell is probably not going to visit Chalmers or Europe this year. So we'll keep working on the workshop online.

Different pedagogical tools, the tricks and tips I am going to apply to my course to make it more versatile and interesting, which would benefit both my students and me. I've shared some of my learning directly (during my stay) via email to my colleagues who are also going to get this report. But the plan is to share my experience via seminar at the division and department once things get back to normal.

Another important action is to increase awareness of STINT GTS and Teaching Sabbatical; my impression is that colleagues at Chalmers are not very familiar with these grants and the possibilities! And, also to help my colleagues who plan to apply for the grant.

8. Acknowledgements

I have many big thanks for this experience of a lifetime! It was a joined force of many people that made it happen and I am very grateful for that!

First I would like to express my thankfulness to the STINT foundation for the grant!

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Final thank goes to my husband who put his work aside, took leave of absence and followed me into this adventure!