

TEACHING SABBATICAL REPORT 2022
Edson College of Nursing and Health Innovation
Arizona State University



Sepideh Olausson

Preparation & Planning visit

Our journey started when I was notified of the fantastic news of being offered a scholarship for a teaching sabbatical at Arizona State University, ASU (Edson College of Nursing and Health innovation) in December 2021. I started early in January 2022 to prepare my planning visit and documentation for visa. I was informed by STINT of a few names who had a key role for my visit, people at the Dean's office and STINT's contact person at ASU. '

The initial contact with the Dean's office was very smooth and Dean Karshmer responded immediately and welcomed me to Edson. Within a week we had a zoom-meeting where we briefly discussed a time window for the planning visit to Phoenix and I provided a background about me, my teaching area and my research. We agreed that March/April was an appropriate time. Dean Karshmer referred me to her secretary for administrating the documentation and assisting me with what was needed in continuing the process. I learned from the information in the email correspondence between the Dean and her administrator that I needed to be registered at the International Office at ASU, before I could take any further steps with applying for a visa from Sweden. This process took at least four weeks. Therefore, in the coming weeks I repeatedly emailed the office and asked to be registered to the international office portal in order to be able to start the process of visa application. As the email correspondence was slow and it took several weeks before I could actually file an application for me and my family, I was worried that we wouldn't apply for visa in time.

As soon as I received the information needed I filed in all the needed documents. Parallel with this process I had a very informative meeting with STINT's contact person. She advised me of housing areas that were suitable for families in regards to the safety issues and commuting distance to Edson and schools for our three children (14, 17, 20). Later, she also connected me to another STINT candidate at ASU, Maria Swanberg, who then was at ASU, but at a different campus. They were leaving ASU in late Spring. I am very grateful for all the valuable information that Maria provided. Later in the process we discussed to buy Maria's and her family's furniture and household items. Their family was the same size as ours, i.e., three children. We ordered a moving company and stored all the items at U-Haul until we got there. This was both sustainable and saved us time.

The time period between my initial contact with Edson and the planning visit in March/April was quite challenging (before being introduced to Maria) because it was not possible to figure what I needed to prepare. There was an absolute lack of information and I had to actively and repeatedly ask for information. A couple of days before my departure to Edson I had no idea who my contact person was, I hadn't received a schedule for my stay and the people I was supposed to meet, or plans for my teaching. However, after emailing the

Dean's office and STINT's contact person again, I finally received the information and when we arrived to Phoenix it worked out. I guess for me it was about not-knowing and not having control over the situation that was frustrating and blurred my expectation.

At the end of April I still hadn't heard anything from the international office about our case and I felt that I was running out of time considering the post covid slowness of bureaucracy and the lengthy processes of issuing a visa in Sweden. We strongly considered to postpone our stay for the next semester, but we were lucky that our case was processed and we could move forward with the project.

In order to find out what exactly was needed I used the information provided from the international office at ASU. It helped me to understand the process of visa and documentation needed. It is my strongest advise to use their homepage and download the information broacher for visiting scholars. There you will find the information about all the application forms (there are several) and fees that needed to paid. Please see <https://issc.asu.edu/>

- Read the information provided at ASU, international office homepage and prepare accordingly
- Read the requirements for scholar visiting visa at US embassy in Sweden
- Prepare all the documents
- Pay the fees
- Await the documentation from ASU
- Register and file in an application at the homepage of the embassy for an interview (if needed).
- Send all the documents to the embassy and wait for a reply

Planning visit

At the end of March, early April, my partner and I visited Phoenix for a week. This visit was an essential part of planning and helped me to puzzle the pieces together and form a clear picture of how to proceed with the preparation regarding housing, schools for our children and discussing my teaching and other duties there. I received an schedule a few days before our arrival to Phoenix, and beside the Dean I met a group of faculty who had been identified as key persons for me considering my field. I learned that there was a Swedish STINT Fellow already at Edson, but due to lack of communication I was not aware of it. I strongly believe knowing that had helped me to understand the process in a better way. Following the advice of STINTS's contact person I scheduled a visit to ASU's International Office located in Tempe to follow up the paper work. We stayed a few days in Phoenix down town and a few days in Tempe to so see the differences between these different part of the town. STINT's

contact person was very helpful and shared insights about what schools were available to apply for our youngest child and the characteristics of each area.

Upon our arrival to Edson Dean Kashmir and I discussed different possibilities of teaching



and research that I could be involved with. It was easy to communicate with her and she was very open to different suggestions and we explored several options. Dean Karshmer is a wonderful host and whenever I needed her she was available for my questions. We agreed co-teaching would be a great way to get to know the pedagogical approaches at Edson and how teaching was administered. I also met the vice Dean for education, vice Dean for research, program director for the nursing education, program director for doctorate in nursing practice, DNP and the directors for Edson's research centers. I was as well introduced to Barret Michalec the director of CAIPER, Center for Advancing Interprofessional Practice, Education and Research and Associate Professor at Edson who asked me to join his team for a project linked to ASU and Edson College of Nursing and Health Innovation. The project was about sense of belongingness among nurses to their nursing profession. This is a theme that is currently discussed all over the world, due to the lack of educated nurses and a high nursing turnover (we know from research there will be a shortage of 11 million nurses, globally in the coming decades) .



Photos of the entrance of Edson, North College and where I had my office

Moreover, we tried to find an appropriate home for our family and after visiting many different types of housing, private houses and apartment complexes we chose an apartment complex in Tempe. We visited five different locations for apartments and houses before we made a decision, it was difficult to find an apartment with three bedrooms. Tempe is a

vibrant part of the town, has many international students and a beautiful campus with a nice atmosphere. Below you can see a few photos from the campus area.



Photos of Tempe Campus

From Tempe I could easily commute to Down-Town phoenix and to Edson by taking the Light Rail. The best advice I can provide is to search on the web for leasing companies and schedule a visit to see the places and discuss the leasing terms before signing up. A difficulty is that lease contracts are usually for a period of at least 6 months or as long as a year. However, we could negotiate the terms and agreed with the leasing office at NEXA to rent the apartment for a shorter period of time. We also contacted a few schools in the vicinity of our apartment and visited them for a discussion of a potential study plan for the children. The time for our planning visit coincided with spring training (college football that draws crowds of people to Phoenix) so the hotels were very expensive, we had difficulties in finding accommodation for our stay. Unfortunately, we faced extremely many problems with Swedish School authorities, a very lengthy and slow administration and difficulties concerning the process of visa. Because of that we were forced to replan the children's stay and plan several visits for them instead of having them stay with us most of the time, as originally planned. My partner and I have children from previous marriages so they stayed both with us and their other parents back home.

[My position and work responsibilities at the host institution](#)

My work responsibilities were diverse and I was given the opportunity to choose between different tasks and collaborate with several different people and courses at Edson. This was, on one hand, enriching and helpful in grasping a picture of how the institution was organized and administered teaching. On the other hand it was a bit challenging, I had to specifically identify people and ask them to involve me in teaching, which worked out fairly well. I must stress that I was treated with so much respect and felt a lot of appreciation for the work I did, both from the students and faculty.

My activities can be summarized like this: lectures for students in DNP-program, Doctorate in Nursing Practice, PhD-seminars, and a webinar for Honor Barret students. Moreover, I did observations and study visits at Grace Clinical Training Centre several times and visited Mayo Hospital where students do their clinical practice. The latter was very important for me because of clinical background and interest in the American Organization Model “Magnet model” that has shown to be successful in securing staff competencies and nursing prevent turnovers in hospitals. At Mayo clinics I was introduced to instructors and preceptors for students, and also participated in Nursing professional development week at the time of my visit at the Mayo Clinic. I am very interested in academic leadership which lead to that I did observations at ELT (Executive Leadership Team) meetings to learn about how the leadership was organized and oriented. I also recorded teaching materials for a research project and assisted two different research groups at Edson in collecting data and reviewing research plans (see other activities).

I participated at a faculty meeting in the beginning of the semester where I presented myself, my teaching and research background. Shortly after my presentation I was contacted by Dr. Meadland, who was one of course directors of the DNP – courses and asked if I could give lectures in her course. It was the start of my contact with the faculty and teaching. I’m very grateful that she took me under her wings and guided me and instructed me in preparation of my lectures. I was impressed by her ability to enthuse the students and encourage and support them in their academic carrier. Dr. Meadland had a background in leadership and Critical Care, a perfect match to my profile. Not only from a social perspective but also from an academic perspective. It meant a lot to have someone who in a genuine way was interested of who I was, what I knew and what I could contribute with. We had a lot of academic discussions related to pedagogical and practical topics. She became a very good friend.

As I was not placed with a specific education group / teaching team, the topics of my teaching varied. I taught research methodology, held lectures on Space and Culture of care in hospital settings, Person-centered care and, presented the Swedish health care model. Most of my teaching was digital besides the time I spent at Clinical Training Centre. In that sense I felt a bit lonely at Edson, as still many of faculty staff worked from home to a great extent. I was placed at Dean’s suite which was very nice but I was difficult to connect with other people and have a sense of belongingness to the faculty and teaching staff. I believe that having a contact person at the host institution with a background in teaching and research would have been more appropriate. In practice, the Dean became my contact person and the one I turned to for different issues, considering Dean’s busy schedule it would have been better to have someone else.

Other activities during the Teaching Sabbatical

Besides the teaching activities, I attended a conference in San Antonio / Texas. The topic of conference was “Design and Health” which is my field of research. This multidisciplinary conference has both a teaching / education and a research focus. Here I connected to nursing and design researchers and to Clemson University and their department for nursing and architecture which added a great value to my stay later on.

Other activities that I was involved with at Edson was to critically review a project plan and collect a limited amount of data with the aim to evaluate the Team Model from the students’ perspective. My involvement in the project was due to my knowledge of, and experiences from Qualitative Research Methods. I performed focus groups interviews with students enrolled in the Team Model at Edson. This activity gave a deeper insight of how the nursing education was structured in a more detailed way, not to mention how fun it was to meet the students and be trusted with their narratives about the specifics of being nursing students. In order to be able to be involved in this activity I was required to take an online course in research ethics provided by ASU.

Other activities that I was involved with was producing a video instruction (lecture) about one of the research methodologies that I have used through my research. I created a video-PPT related to the specific method of Photovoice, which was recorded in order to instruct participants in a research project investigating their sense of belongingness. This pilot project was conducted at Edson, Barret Michalec was the main investigator.



Photos: Mercado building where many lectures are held and a photo of me where I record teaching material

Important lessons – Pedagogical reflections

My reflections are built upon the class room experiences, observations and meeting faculty members. There are several difference when it comes to how students and faculty interact, compared to Sweden. One of the observations is that the relationship between students and faculty was closer than I’m used to in a Swedish context. The students were treated

differently as the faculty were more available for students and had a more open approach. One may say that their role was dual in the sense that the teachers educated the students, but also cared largely for them and fostered them in a gentle manner. The students' goal and achievements were carefully followed up and whenever needed they were offered support. The language and the choice of words between the students and faculty was sincerely polite and heartfelt. I do not mean that the relationships are not respectful in Sweden, but a more distant and 'less caring'. The teachers offered open office hours that were available for students to come by their offices or on Zoom to ask questions or just talk. I believe that having a mutual and respectful relationship is a factor that enhances students' learning process and entices further knowledge seeking behavior. Students were very active during the lectures, they asked a lot of initiated questions and were keen to know more.

The DNP-program I was involved in had a hybrid design meaning that the students had immersions two-three times each semester, followed by weekly and monthly classes on zoom. I found the course well-structured and students were informed about what was expected from them for each part of the course. The communication between course director / teachers was not only informative but also encouraging and supportive. The faculty were engaged and invested a lot of time and energy to provide feedback to the students. Moreover, the immersions were carefully planned including the administrative part (preparing lists, stencils and additional material) and all the course teachers were presented and contributed to the discussion and made sure that each group was involved. After the class the teachers touched base and briefly evaluated the class and students' achievements. If there were any issues, it was discussed and a plan was made on how to follow up.

I found the emphasis on students' preparation before the lectures very interesting. The students were required to prepare by reading the literature before attending the class, since many times the lectures are interactive as well. As you see in the photos below from my observations the lectures start with a theoretical section, where the lecturer guides the students through the topic and asks questions, followed by reflections on different ways to solve, for instance, a clinical case. Thereafter, the students simulated a scenario related to the topic that they just had talked about according to the procedures they received from an instructor. The simulation was recorded and observed by us teachers and when the instructors felt that the students were ready, they called them back to the lecture room. Afterwards, when the students were gathered, they received feedback on their achievements, with a focus on assessment, decision-making and evaluation of the clinical case they had simulated. Also, other important topics as team work and patient and staff safety were discussed. The teaching team give a summative assessment on students' achievements at the end of the course.



Photos of my observations from Clinical training center

Despite the large number of students in each class, ASU has applied a so called Team Modell, i.e., students are divided into smaller groups when enrolled to Edson and accompany each other in different activities such as, labs and simulations. They also have the same placement for their clinical practice during their transition to clinical practice course which aims to provide skill training for their coming profession. Team Model definitely has its pedagogical benefits, not least when it comes to the theoretical part of the education. Working in smaller students cohorts create a sense of security and safety, and I believe this is a key component in the learning process. The students get to know each other and rely on each other's support, and subsequently, they create a community where knowledge can be shared and incorporated. Also, from a social perspective it is an advantage. Of course, it necessitates that the members of each team can collaborate. Each student has a fair chance to be seen and hopefully supported by the teachers which probably impacts their learning outcomes positively.

[Comparison between the host and the home institutions](#)

The number of students and the size of the institution are factors that immediately come to mind when I compare my institution in Sweden with Edson. Naturally, the model of paying for your education makes a huge difference in what the students' expectations are on the university, and impacts all the services that are provided. I observed how strategies were undertaken and efforts made by ASU in helping the students to achieve their learning objectives and move forward to their next level, as well as teachers and staff were encouraged to be attentive to student's mental health. What I learned was that one of ASU's visions' "inclusion" not only related to how to finance students' education (scholarships, working at the university while you study etc.) but also concerned inclusion in terms of ethnicity, rase and gender. Coming from an Scandinavian context, this was quite unfamiliar to me, as we talk less openly about these factors. However, I definitely see the benefits and importance for equality and justice in the education system, especially if you reflect to the historical and political background of the USA.

The structure of the leadership is saturated with professionalism and efficiency. The institute is run by a team of vice-Deans and the Dean. Bi-weekly agenda less meetings were held for 1 ½ hours and I was welcome to participate and observe. Each vice-dean had a team of their own and made sure that the institution was moving forward aligned with the goals of ASU and according to the values outlined by the president of ASU. To my knowledge there were no managers in the teams, but the vice deans had the authority to staff different positions. It meant that they were responsible for strategic planning and were provided with recourses to operate according to the strategies.

When it comes to decision making, democratic processes and transparency I could see a different approach between my institution and Edson. There were workplace meetings twice each semester, and the meetings had a host, a faculty member who managed the meeting agenda and the program for the meeting. Important and general information was provided at the meeting, also each vice-Dean reported to faculty of the advances / progresses in their area and provided related information about this. Moreover, decisions that concerned the whole faculty were prepared and presented at these meeting before voting. In that sense you can say that most of the decisions were made in a democratic way. These meetings were held both digitally and in person which enabled for remote staff to participate.

I also was struck by the similarities when it comes to challenges academia meet in providing education and educating new nurses post covid. I believe that as a result of covid, many nurses have left their job which has largely increased the turn-over rate which impacts the number of available preceptors in the clinical settings and clinical education. In that sense both of our institutions share the same challenges in terms of clinical placements. Another challenge is the increasing number of students that are enrolled in the program. Edson has extended the number of students, similar to my institution, in order to meet the future needs of health care. This means that we need to educate a higher number of nurses with the same available resources, which will be challenging. When it comes to the use of technology, we use the same system, which made it quite easy for me to follow how teachers communicated with the students. One of the biggest differences is the almost every teacher has her/his teacher assistant or TA who supports them in their administrative work.

Organizational difference

Based on my observations and experiences from the university system in the USA there are rich possibilities for changes to our education in Sweden. Concerning the pedagogy, I believe that the structure of a hybrid course design is something that we can implement in a better way. I think it would be possible to attract and enable for more students to be enrolled in

our courses and the flexibility of that design is appealing for a system where we face a decreasing number of students in educations in the field of health care. I also believe that the American system is easier to grasp in how they offer courses and the way course syllabuses are managed. This particular issue is unfortunately heavily administrated in Sweden which means it take months and several critical examinations and reviews before a syllabus is confirmed. This process was smoother at ASU. However, one thing that I noticed was that the course schedule was already set three months ahead. The pedagogic model of teaching is conducted in a similar way and the technology used in ASU is exactly the same as we have at my institution, this fact made in quite easy for me to navigate my teaching and information seeking. However, my understanding is that ASU had a much larger staffing rate in their courses. This, together with the fact that many students for example in DNP or PhD - program are offered to work (and get paid) at ASU, secure enough time in the courses that they must pay for. This is not merely an indicator for a good or high quality but creates a less stressful working environment for teachers and students.

Moreover, my observations of the status of pedagogical merits compared to research merits is that ASU teaching and research go hand in hand, teachers with a specific research background teach in classes that are related to their topic of research which seems to create a synergy effect. Division between teaching and research depends on teachers' academic status and achievements, for example a tenured teacher teaches 30 % and the rest of the time is spent on research.

One striking difference was the massive research administration support that researchers had access to. As I was involved in a research project I could see that for example an ethical application was written by a project manager, often a person with background in teaching and not by the project leader who is responsible for the design of the studies and constitution of the group members. Besides a background in teaching project managers have also some research experience. Moreover, all the application requirements were gathered by this person, the data collection process was organized and supervised by them. I found this an effective way of working that also facilitates more research time for the researcher. This is also beneficial to the career opportunities for teachers.

Another organizational difference that I observed was the connections and collaboration between ASU / Edson and the community. Their collaboration was mainly in regards to research and teaching topics (plus clinical practice/placements for students). Problems that needed to be researched were mutually identified which lead to that ASU/Edson designed courses and a research project related to the topic. In designing the courses an analysis was performed by a group of faculty at Edson who first assessed and evaluated, followed by the design of a course (commonly available online or self-paced). I believe we can become better in opening up for research question and identify needs for new knowledge.

General recommendations to future participants

Based on my experiences I can say that it is important to make sure that most of your time is spent at your host institution. There appears to be a different culture in following up emails, so don't wait too long for an answer, call people if you need to get hold of anyone. Make sure initiate contact with people who you identify are important to collaborate with at your host institution.

Action plan

The time at ASU has been most enriching and meaningful on many levels, personal growth, renewed energy and enthusiasm in teaching. I have incorporated open office hours in my course schedule at home, and adopted the interactive pedagogical approach that I referred to previously. I'm going to consider a hybrid course design to a greater extent. For the hospital department I will continue a dialog about the Magnet Modell with the Mayo Clinic and my contact person there, hopefully we can implement aspects of it at my clinic in order to improve a more sustainable staffing situation in Critical Care settings. Research-wise I hope to continue my collaboration with the Center for Advancing Interprofessional Practice, Education, CAIPER and publish papers on sense of belonging as well as on students' perspective and experiences of the Team Modell. My home institution is interested in continued relationship with Edson and hopefully their staff can visit us next spring. Together with scholars at Edson and Clemson we have planned to give talks for my colleagues and faculty during the coming spring (2024).

I am most grateful to STINT for the working life adventure the USA and for giving me and my family the opportunity to broaden our perspectives. It has been a tremendous enriching experience.