

CAFCE International Committee
Student Engagement Sub-Group

First Name: [Matthew Vander Kooij](#)

Institution: [Seneca College](#)

Academic Discipline: [Flight Program \(Aviation\)](#)

Where did you work abroad (city, country): [Port-au-Prince, Haiti](#)

When did you go abroad: [May 26 – August 20](#)

Which work term (1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.): [1st](#)



1. What motivated you to seek out an international work term? [I am interested in becoming a missionary pilot overseas after I complete my studies. Spending a term overseas in the field seemed like a good place to start.](#)
2. How did you fund the travel and other costs associated with this opportunity? [Through support from friends and family and a scholarship through my college.](#)
3. Can you tell me what steps you took to secure your co-op position? Did you feel it was hard to secure your co-op position and how would you advise other students to make the same effort? [I called the headquarters of Mission Aviation Fellowship and was instructed to fill out an online application. I then had some phone conversations/interviews with people at the MAF Canada's](#)

headquarters. The staff at MAF made the process very simple, making contact by phone is the best way to go if there is any uncertainty and the staff will give guidance.

4. When conducting your job search did you find that many of the jobs available were in specific sectors? (ie: corporate, non-profit, government, etc.) Where, or how, would you suggest other students focus their search? After pursuing some jobs listed on the Seneca co-op website, which were in corporations, I decided to do a Google search for something that interested me, a few clicks and a phone call later and the process was under way. The organization I went with was a non-profit but it was the only non-profit I had become aware of or pursued.
5. Tell me about the cost of living in (city or country). How did your expenses compare to your income based on the salary you were earning? Were you able to save any money and where did you find savings or discounts which reduced your expenses? The cost of living in Haiti is higher than North America mostly because of the earthquake last year. My expenses were all fixed by the organization before I left and everything was covered without a problem.
6. How did you find accommodations and what rent can you expect to pay in (city or country)? MAF provided accommodations with the missionary families living in Port-au-Prince. They didn't charge for rent, I only had a fixed daily rate for food. From what I heard rent is higher in Haiti than in most places.
7. What, if any, cultural barriers did you have to overcome and what were some of these challenges? The biggest cultural barrier was the language – Creole. I knew some French and in most cases I could get by with that since the languages are fairly similar but in many cases French and English did not cut it. I learned some basic Creole from the Haitian staff that works for MAF.
8. Did you find it difficult to meet new people? What steps did you take to integrate yourself into your new surroundings and make yourself more comfortable in a new setting? I didn't venture out on my own very often because of the potential dangers but everyone I met was very friendly and outgoing. Culturally, Haitians are much less reserved than North Americans so meeting new people was not difficult. The North American staff were also very friendly so feeling comfortable in my new surroundings wasn't hard.
9. Overall, what advice would you give co-op students who are seeking international opportunities? I would recommend that international co-op students find a position that most closely fits with what they want to do after they graduate.

10. Is there anything else you want us to know about your experience? [More information about Mission Aviation Fellowship can be found at www.maf.org or www.mafc.org.](#)