

*To the members of SWEA North Carolina:*

Thank you for your generous support of my studies in Sweden. My family and I are very grateful and could not have this opportunity without your support. Here is a quick summary of our time here in Göteborg since we moved from Charlotte about one year ago.



First Day at Chalmers

I am studying in the master's programme in Architecture at Chalmers. After working in Charlotte for five years it has been interesting to be back in an academic setting, but in much different circumstances. I have enjoyed the opportunity to study and explore in a way more freely than I could when working. The teaching style at Chalmers (as a reflection of Swedish culture, I think) allows for a great degree of exploration, creativity, and collaboration. Another rewarding aspect of the programme is the international interaction. There are only a handful of master's programmes in Europe taught in English, so in our programme there are many international students and Erasmus students (European exchange). The cultural variety allows us to see new perspectives and even to reevaluate previous perspectives in a new light. I have also enjoyed realising the Swedish approaches and methods relating to my areas of interest, healthcare design and sustainable development.

While studies at Chalmers were a main factor drawing us to Gothenburg, there are many other facets of life in which I/we have matured and experienced this year. One month after my wife and I arrived to Sweden, our son Emmett was born at Mölndal sjukhus. I think the adjustment to parenthood has been more challenging than the adjustment to living in another country!

However, we think that Sweden is one of the best countries in the world to have small children. We have now experienced the low healthcare costs, the lekplatser all around the city, walking amidst the many barnvagnar on Linnegatan, and we hear about the amazing föräldra ledig. Emmett's birthday is on kanelbullens dag, so you can see in the picture how we celebrated with our friends.



First Birthday

I am grateful to have had the rare opportunity to have an internship the past few months. While working in the U.S. I learned to use a 3D design software as a part of my job as an architect, and that skill is in demand here. It has been a great experience to realize the similarities and differences of working in different cultures. I hope that even at your U.S. jobs you can still take fika together!

Being here for a year, we have been able to make a nice mix of friends from childrens' play groups, school, work, church, and even from Swedish class. We really enjoy living in a city where parks and bicycles are prevalent, and where we can go anywhere with public transport. Next, I will take more courses at Chalmers in spring 2012, then write a master's thesis in the Autumn. I look forward to meeting some of you when we are able to visit North Carolina again!

With gratitude,  
*Mike*