Committee on Foreign Programs

Annual Report 2016-2017

Tufts Foreign Programs

The committee, a subcommittee of the Educational Policy Committee, met regularly throughout the year to oversee and advise the administration of Tufts various foreign programs.

The subcommittee was asked to consider a change in the partner institution of the Tufts-in-China program from Zhejiang University in Hangzhou to Beijing Normal University in Beijing. After lengthy discussion, and briefing from Mingquan Wang, Xueping Zhong, and John Barker, the subcommittee unanimously approved the move and agreed that the program will be called Tufts in Beijing starting in fall 2018.

Following the merger of Tufts with the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in July 2016, the office of Tufts Programs Abroad has taken responsibility for study-abroad and exchanges for SMFA students. An existing exchange with the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris (known as “Beaux-Arts”) has been incorporated into the Tufts-in-Paris program. A new partnership with University of the Arts London, in the framework of the Tufts-in-London program, was proposed, and the subcommittee agreed that it can go forward.

The Tufts-in-Ghana Program received our attention, as some students have lodged complaints about the running of the program in a letter dated October 17, 2016. The subcommittee responded to the students on March 13, 2017. We asked if that letter still “accurately expresses your concerns,” since their letter was written before the end of their stay in Ghana and their views may have changed. We did not hear back from the students until several months later. At that point, no one apparently had anything to add.

One direct result of the letter was that the Resident Director of the Ghana Program, Dr. Bilson, was informed of these complaints and had a chance to respond to the subcommittee. Another was that he will be visiting Tufts campus in 2017-18 to meet with Tufts faculty, administrators and students so that all may better understand the situation there.

Non-Tufts Programs

Over the course of the year, the subcommittee assessed 24 petitions from students to attend non-Tufts foreign programs that were not previously included on the recommended list of non-Tufts programs.

New Developments and Trends

Two positive developments in foreign programs are worth noting. First, with the acquisition of the SMFA, we are seeing greater interest among artists for study abroad. In response, we have
established are presently looking for more opportunities to study the arts abroad.

Second, more engineering students seem to be interested in studying abroad. Seeing this, we have begun actively looking for campuses where our STEM students might study. We are also creating a list of campuses abroad that have engineering programs that might be of interest to our students.

On the down side, we notice a decrease in the number of students who are willing to spend an entire year studying abroad. Semester-long programs are becoming more popular.

We can only speculate about the reasons for this decline. Perhaps it has something to do with anxieties about future employment and the need to focus on more “practical” endeavors. But what is more practical than learning the languages of the world and understandings its cultures?

On behalf of the committee,

[Signature]

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