

Executive Director of Office of International Studies, Jacques Fuqua Jr.'s View on Global Programs in campus

Interviewer: Tiffany Tilley, Graduate Student in Sociology

Interviewee: Mr. Jacques Fuqua Jr., Executive Director of Office of International Studies

Start of Interview

Within the campus of Texas A&M University-Commerce, there is an Office of International Studies. The mission of the department is to provide information, assistance, and scholarships for academic international study programs. These programs help students to develop their understanding of international and multicultural surroundings and issues amongst a changing world. The purpose of this interview was given to the Executive Director, Jacques Fuqua Jr. The interview took place via phone.

Interviewer: Let us begin. What is the basic function for the Global Programs on campus?

Interviewee: I believe when you say “global programs on campus” you are really referring to the study abroad program. The study abroad program is comprised of many functions such as developing the program, recruiting students, and studying internationally. Global Programs is the name of the department, but for the students considered the study abroad program.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you for clarifying that for me. I was not aware there was a difference.

What is the main goal for the study abroad program?

Interviewee: There are many goals for not only our department, but also the program. There is an importance to understand that one does not only get to travel, but learns how to function multiculturally. Students learn how to go up against others within the world and demonstrate multicultural competency. There are 1.7 million international students in the U.S. right now. Times have changed today when it comes to study abroad programs. It used to be that only the rich students could attend. Now anyone can do it. Today we don't even have to leave our own country to find diversity, it is all around us. The study abroad program helps students to become globally understanding of society.

Interviewer: What are the enrollment rates into the study abroad program based off class rankings, such as freshman, sophomore, junior, and seniors?

Interviewee: I am not precise in the rates due to being new to the program since January 2015. There would have to be research done and analyzed to find out the answer. I do know the numbers are growing especially in the individualized programs. I can say based off class ranking that the majority of students are between sophomores and juniors. A few seniors and no freshman have yet to be in the program.

Interviewer: Would you say there is a difference in academic rates in students whom participate in the program versus those who do not?

Interviewee: I cannot give academic rates within the program, because no research has been done. Again, I am very new to this program. I can only give my opinion on the matter. I feel on a whole those students whom participate do better academically. I've seen this not only on this

campus, but at universities nationwide. Study abroad students develop a new skill set, it increases confidence, intellectual engagement, curiosity, and skills for an increase in research involvement. Thus of what I've said make up a "global citizen" which is mentioned all throughout the campus.

Interviewer: That was a very good definition of a "global citizen" when I hear it I am often curious of how the term is exactly described. Is there a study abroad program proposal for future development? In other words, there is a strategic plan on campus that involves the notion of globalization. How does the study abroad program want for the future and the development for an increase in student involvement?

Interviewee: We are always trying to get higher numbers; there is always room for growth. There were only about 86 students last year whom traveled to the U.K. and a faculty-led trip to Costa Rica. This year we are in the process of hiring a full-time Study Abroad Program Coordinator because I cannot do it all on my own like I have been. This year we have 2.5x more students than last year. We now have more diverse locations this year. We have a faculty-led group going to Cuba, a medical sociology based program studying in Sweden, the Equine center going to Europe to study riding techniques, a group going to Poland, and a section of the business department going to China to study marketing and networking. There are more individualized trips being made than faculty-led ones. The department hopes to grow strategically by 10% next year, but I am working to increase the percentage of this goal.

Interviewer: Based off your experiences as Executive Director, what advice would you give students whom are considering the program?

Interviewee: Don't walk away from a window of opportunities; don't let it shut on you. I have 2 daughters and I tell them this constantly. Don't be scared, be a little different, always ask questions, and know that the program can accommodate anyone. It will be worth it in the end when college is over and reality sets in. This is my first time living in Texas. One needs to step out of their comfort zone, be curious, and be ready to contribute to the future. Boundaries between countries are diminishing quickly in society and we are more connected than ever before. Are there any more questions?

Interviewer: No, that was all the questions I had. I want to again thank you for this opportunity and taking time out of your busy schedule to speak with me. I hope students are able to take your advice and join the study abroad program. I hope the newsletter will reach students and hopefully your numbers will continue to increase for future years. Have a good day.

Interviewee: I hope our numbers will rise for the future as well. Thank you. Have a good rest of your day. Goodbye.

End of Interview

The interview did help to give me more insight into the study abroad program, which I was not aware of before. It made myself curious into the program and interested to learn more about any graduate level trips. I hope for the future that research can be done in the areas I mentioned that had none available thus far. Studying abroad can help ones intellect and

education within the academic realm and socially within society. I feel as though everyone should take this opportunity and that it would make a positive impact.