

NYU Berlin Site-Specific Advisory Committee Meeting

March 9, 2015 (11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. EST)

IN ATTENDANCE

- Jesse Bransford (Steinhardt)
- Mosette Broderick (CAS – Art History)
- Youssef Cohen (CAS – Politics)
- David Darts (Steinhardt)
- Tom Ertman (CAS – Sociology)
- Gabriella Etmektsoglou (Site Director – NYU Berlin)
- Reindert Falkenberg (NYU Abu Dhabi)
- Christiane Frey (CAS – German Studies)
- Regina Gramer (Liberal Studies)
- Beth Haymaker (Liberal Studies)
- Karen Hornick (Gallatin, Committee Chair)
- Kevin Kuhlke (Tisch)
- Tyra Liebmann (Global Programs)
- Patrick McCreery (Gallatin)
- Linda Mills (Global Programs)
- Anne Rademacher (Environmental Studies)
- Matthew Santirocco (Provost's Office)
- Jochen Steinbicker (NYU Berlin – Sociology)
- Josh Taylor (Global Programs)
- Oliver Buhler (CAS – Math)
- Stephanie Leahy (Global Programs)
- Chris Nicolussi (Global Programs)

INTRODUCTIONS

Several new members joined the Committee, including Anne Rademacher (replacing Chris Schlottman for Environmental Studies); Andrew Monson (replacing David Levene for Classics); and David Darts re-joined the Committee from NYU Abu Dhabi representing the Arts at NYUAD.

WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT: TELLING THE GLOBAL ACADEMIC STORY

Website and Site Visibility

Josh Taylor presented on NYU Berlin's website and noted several planned updates for the global academic centers' websites. He noted in particular that NYU Berlin is ahead of the new design curve, and NYU Berlin's website serves as a model for other sites. Gabriella said that it is important to think both about distinguishing NYU Berlin academically, while also being conscious of the need to integrate seamlessly with the web structures for all global sites.

NYU has also been engaged in a University-wide project to develop an Academic Planner that helps students map their course of study throughout their time at NYU. Responding to faculty requests to introduce this planner more quickly to the global sites, a parallel widget, the “Global Study Planner,” has been created to inform students of the various Pathways and courses offered at the global sites, based on their disciplinary and language preferences. The Global Study Planner will be available on the Global Programs website and is designed to help students understand the opportunities available before meeting with their advisor. Website updates and the Global Study Planner are scheduled to be live by the end of the Spring 2015 term.

In addition, Global Programs is in the process of reaching out to departments and Schools to develop pathway templates and academically focused printed materials. The pathway templates will help students identify the optimal time and place to study away for a specific departmental Pathway, and they can be posted on both the global and departmental websites. The content of the printed materials, which is provided by departments and schools in New York, highlights the site identity, departmental course offerings, and Pathways at the global site. The Global Study Planner, printed materials, and Pathway templates are intended primarily for NYUNY students; NYUAD and NYUSH will develop parallel descriptions and websites tailored to the timing and requirements of the curriculum for each campus.

Committee members welcomed the web tools and printed materials and agreed they will be helpful to students as they plan their academic career at NYU. Josh noted that all materials shared with the Committee are still in development and are being refined based on faculty feedback.

SITE EVALUATIONS

A committee convened by the Provost Office comprised of Site Directors and faculty from several Site-specific Advisory Committees has redesigned the site evaluation and piloted the new survey in Abu Dhabi (to study away students) and in London. [Note: NYU Berlin has utilized its Student Ambassadors to gain feedback on the program while the new pilot survey is underway at other sites.] The new survey is shorter in length and aims to gauge both academic quality and student life at the global sites by asking students to supply more factual data, and not just their level of satisfaction.

The new survey has received a higher response rate than the previous survey. After a few minor adjustments, the survey will be administered to all students at the global sites in May 2015. In addition, the survey committee is working on a pre-departure survey to capture student expectations and motivations prior to the study away experience. The two surveys may provide additional insight into the academic outcomes of study away and allow the University to analyze data from various perspectives (for example, by school, department, cohort, etc.). The Committee expressed great interest in longitudinal analysis conversations this data would inform.

In addition, the Provost's Office will convene a larger conversation about academic global learning outcomes and how to assess them in ways that go beyond self-reported surveys. The committee is also interested in following students after graduation and seeing how the study-away experience may impact career choice and employment opportunities. Gabriella noted she is aware of approximately fifteen NYU Berlin alums who are currently in Berlin and remain in touch with the academic center for various networking events (e.g., Thanksgiving dinners, internship connections, etc.).

With multiple disciplines and multiple sites throughout the world, Matthew noted the GNU is uniquely positioned to become a leader in this field of research.

UPDATES FROM SITE DIRECTOR GABRIELLA ETMEKTSOGLU

Gabriella started by thanking the Committee members for their responsiveness and close work with the NYU Berlin academic staff and instructors. She also provided an update and shared photos of the new academic space at St. Agnes which is complete, in operation, close to students' dorms in Kreuzberg, and receiving rave reviews. St. Agnes houses a large studio, a state-of-the-art digital lab, smart classrooms and office spaces. Currently, programs on studio art, architecture and drama are offered at St. Agnes. German language courses will also be held there beginning in Fall 2015.

Gabriella noted that the site continues to receive very good feedback from students regarding how supported they feel during the semester. In order to further normalize the challenges students face while studying abroad, the Wellness Counselor's office at NYU Berlin is now referred to as "The Retreat." This new room is not just a place where individual therapy sessions are held but also a place for group work, discussions with student ambassadors, and wellness workshops. In spring semester 2015 "the Retreat" acts as a mindfulness space under the direction of an interim practitioner from NYU New York. A new German wellness counselor with a Ph.D. from the Humboldt Universität has been hired to begin work at the center in May 2015.

Gabriella updated the Committee on the work of the local NYU Berlin Academic Advisory Committee comprised of local site faculty who meet voluntarily once a month (in addition to the twice-a-semester all-faculty meetings) to discuss topics including, but not limited to, academic orientation, best teaching practices, German high school interaction programs and courses developed in collaboration with local German Universities.

Gabriella noted that the academic immersion trips remain ongoing and successful, and often include German student ambassadors. Cologne was identified as an upcoming destination for returning students, and Munich may be an upcoming potential destination as well, in addition to the GLS-exclusive trip to Görlitz. More of these types of academic trips will be occurring in the future, focusing on border city destinations, and intertwining academics and student life goals.

The Urban Greening Lab

Anne Rademacher updated the Committee on the “Urban Greening Lab” at NYU Berlin, which Urban Studies is currently developing as a research center on urban ecology that engages multiple disciplines. The program allows comparative academic studies between New York City and Berlin. Three long-term research initiatives are currently in the works, and a group of faculty will be convening in Berlin over the summer to launch research projects. The goal is to engage with the field research. The summer work will also look at external funding sources and continue the discussion with Global Programs regarding infrastructure.

SITE DATA OVERVIEW

The Committee discussed the data packet distributed at the meeting (and available on the [Committee website](#)) and noted trends, including:

1. Enrollment numbers are up but visiting student numbers are down. Gabriella pointed out that this was indirectly and anecdotally a good development occurring for two reasons primarily: (a) Duke now has its own program which attracts its own students and (b) some previous visiting students had a pass/fail attitude and little appetite for academic rigor while studying abroad. Such students, Gabriella reports, are no longer seeking NYU Berlin due to the reputation for academic rigor that the site has developed.
2. Janet noted that a significant percentage of the German majors study away and a number of students declare a German minor after returning from study away at NYU Berlin. Christiane thanked Global Programs for providing this data and noted that there are approximately 25 German majors each year. Karen asked if the popularity of Berlin is driving this uptick, which several Committee members confirmed was the case.
3. More sophomores are choosing to study away during the spring semester. As CAS students have not yet declared their majors at this time, it can be difficult to connect this growth with specific Pathways at the site.
4. Berlin is also one of the few sites where the junior population is rising as well.

The Committee had a lengthy conversation on homestays and their value to students. Tom noted that the University should not restrict eligible students from homestays in Berlin for University financial purposes. Matthew noted that homestays are complex beyond just the need to fill our own beds, since assessing homestays requires significant staffing resources, (as are available at some sites such as Madrid and Paris). Gabriella noted that the current size of the NYU Berlin staff cannot accommodate more than 20 homestays, but alternative options such as Wohngemeinschaften have been explored. Tom encouraged the idea of having multiple options, though Gabriella cautioned that the growing younger population at NYU Berlin often lacks the basic language skills needed to maximize the learning experience of homestays. (Policies such as a one-day-per-week German language requirement in student housing encourage language development in the residence hall.)

Regina brought up the idea of mixing German dorm populations with NYU's. Gabriella noted that Berlin's current student population of 150,000 has overwhelmed the current supply of dormitory rooms in the city, making partnerships at the moment nearly impossible, but conversations are ongoing. Tom noted it is also difficult to find Germans willing to pay NYU's housing rates, and Gabriella added that Germans are typically not accustomed to our style of housing arrangement, and don't prefer it.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

The following information was announced:

- The AY15/16 course lists were provided to Committee Members to bring back to their departments for review and discussion. Please advise global.academics@nyu.edu of any changes for AY16/17 prior to May 31st, so as to allow time for coordination with the sites. If there are no changes, AY15/16 courses will rollover to the following year. AY16/17 courses will be posted online on July 1, 2015.
- Members were informed of two new faculty discussions underway:
 - *Europe* – a group is exploring ways European sites can collaborate with student trips, events, etc.
 - *Performing Arts* – conversation designed to ensure that arts programs (particularly those with large overhead costs) are developed with a cost-effective strategy and are not duplicated (e.g. studio space is used in both fall and spring).
 - Other suggestions included discussions on Public Health and the Americas. These discussions will not necessarily be long-standing committees and will meet on an ad hoc basis.
- The FAC-GNU committee has asked that Members share information discussed at the Advisory Committee meetings with their departments so as to familiarize all faculty with activity at the global sites.
- A snapshot of summer courses at NYU Berlin and their enrollments over three years was also provided to the Committee.

Course and Program Approval Process

A new diagram detailing the procedures for introducing new academic programs and courses to the sites was distributed to the Committee and added to the Committee website.

NEXT STEPS

- Partner departments will take a look at their enrollment histories, particularly identifying any trends among low-enrolled courses and discuss with their schools/departments. Should any such trends emerge, the department should be in touch with Janet Alperstein (jalperstein@nyu.edu).

- Topics for the next meeting: general language issues (requirements, immersion); getting students out of the “NYU-bubble.”