



## Tufts benefits by staying out of international market

By Kathryn Olson  
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Suffolk University is one of many schools across the country that have been forced to shut down their international branch campuses due to financial challenges.

In the wake of the global recession, several American universities in recent years have been forced to close international branch campuses due to mounting financial costs.

Tufts is benefiting from its decision to stay out of the international branch campus market "boom" that characterized the last decade, during which numerous U.S. schools opened foreign branch campuses with the hope of generating additional revenue.

The Tufts University European Center in Talloires, France, which is the site of the six-week Tufts-in-Talloires summer program, was established as a satellite campus in 1978 and thus is not considered a branch campus founded during the recent boom.

Tufts refrained from opening international branches over the last decade, refusing to fall into the "gold-rush" mentality that plagued other schools, according to interim Provost and Senior Vice President Peggy Newell.

"Tufts is very focused on maintaining a global perspective, but as I reviewed these offers — we were approached many times — at the end of the day, it didn't make sense," Newell said.

**Universities opened international branch campuses in an effort to offer a taste of American education to students across the globe, ac-**

**ording to Director of Educational Studies and Senior Fellow at the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government Jason Lane, who studies the topic.**

**Many universities sought opportunities to raise their global reputation but also capitalize on additional revenues, Lane said.**

**"They saw it as the next step in marking their global footprint," he said.**

**Foreign governments underwriting international campuses are also eager to import Western-style college campuses as a means of "soft power" by which they can promote themselves on the international stage, according to Lane.**

**"It represents an opportunity for them to raise the profile of their education system and their country by associating themselves with high-level institutions," Lane said. "This association legitimizes their own interests."**

**In the years following the global financial recession, however, many universities have been forced to shut down their international campuses because costs grew too large and many governments had to cut their education spending, according to Lane. He said that the recession has brought to light the inherent risk of opening an international campus poses to universities.**

**"The most significant drawback is financial risk," he said. "When presented with these opportunities, universities can become blinded by the hope of earning money, which is very difficult to do. Many have ended up losing money."**

Such was the case with Suffolk University, which last spring closed its branch in Dakar, Senegal, which was created in 1999, after losing approximately \$10 million. George Mason University in 2009 closed its campus in the United Arab Emirates, which had been in operation since 2005. Dozens of other universities with international branch campuses have suffered similar fates.

While Tufts administrators were not primarily concerned with potential financial gains from opening international branch campuses, Newell said that the possible monetary gain never seemed to outweigh the risks.

"[Then-University President Lawrence] Bacow made clear, and I agree, that we wouldn't do it just for the money," Newell said. "We didn't go and seek out opportunities. We asked ourselves why such a branch would be beneficial to our programs. In truth, most opportunities I looked at, I was not convinced that they would have been highly lucrative."

**Both Newell and Lane noted that ensuring the quality of branch campuses, the availability of faculty and student interest in the host country presents significant risks in opening international campuses.**

"How can you ensure the quality of its programs? Are they going to be of the same caliber? For many of those institutions, if they had sufficient faculty, they would have created their own institutions," Newell said. "The last thing you want is to close something down. I never saw something that was a great opportunity for Tufts."

**International branches have been branded as opportunities to bring higher education to students in countries across the globe, Lane explained, but many universities have in reality been more interested in revenue generation.**

**"Universities have a definite interest in providing services to the developing world,"**

**he said. "The question is how can we do that in a sustainable way that is beneficial to both the home and host country?"**

**"Opening an international campus is extremely expensive, and unless you are willing to pour a lot of money into it, universities must find another way to forward this goal. They must ask themselves, 'Is this economically feasible?' The reality is that many institutions can't afford it," Lane said.**

Newell added that while Tufts does not seek to open new branches abroad, the university is committed to mutually beneficial relationships with other countries, stressing Tufts' commitment to international education and research.

She noted the Tufts School of Medicine's 35-year relationship with the Christian Medical College/Vellore District in Tamil Nadu, India, which allows medical students to do rotations at the hospital there.

"It's a wonderful experience for the students, but it is also helpful to the hospital which is often understaffed," she said.

Newell also highlighted The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy's Global Master of Arts program, which allows students to take classes online and then meet up to discuss the material abroad.

Newell and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education and Director of Programs Abroad Sheila Bayne said that Tufts' lack of international branch campuses does not undermine the university's philosophy of global education, which places a high emphasis on programs abroad.

"Our programs are important because Tufts is a global institution," Bayne said. "The world is becoming smaller and smaller. Even if you don't go out into the world, the world is coming to you, and we try to prepare students for that."