ISC works to secure scholarship funding

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For many students, the prospect of financing a college education is a daunting and draining challenge. Still, these students can usually find some relief within the financial aid department at Tufts.

But for international students, Tufts does not offer aid of any kind to help them combat the soaring prices of an education at this institution. In basic terms, this means no scholarships, no grants, and no emergency aid.

In response to this deficiency, last year the International Scholarship Committee (ISC), founded specifically to address the problem of international student financial problems. At present, the committee is still in its infancy and is active in establishing itself monetarily in order to extend the services it hopes to offer.

Formed and officially recognized by the Tufts Community Union Senate last year, the organization is entirely student-run and cites its objectives as the following: to establish a financial aid loan fund for continuing international students; to establish an endowed emergency scholarship fund for continuing international students to help students in time of monetary crisis; to establish an endowed scholarship fund for incoming international students in need of financial aid; and the expansion of the existing loan fund which offers small, short-term emergency loans (up to $100).

President of the ISC Diaia Al-Alami hopes to have these goals realized through the many activities the ISC has planned for fund raising, such as the bake sale held in the Campus Center on Tuesday, and the upcoming semi-formal that the ISC will co-sponsor with the International Club. But she would also like to see more of a commitment to raising funds for international students through the Administration.

“The ISC is supported by the International Center and the Development Office, but I would like to see financial aid as a top priority for this university,” Al-Alami said. “I am hoping that the new president will make international financial aid an important item on his agenda, especially since our goals are so high.”

Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid David Cuttino supports the ISC and other groups trying to help the international community, noting that the Administration is doing all that it can.

“We simply do not have sufficient funds to help international students. We do not have the ability to use loan and work funds to meet the needs of the international community has, and therefore do not have the resources we would need to make a dent in the problem,” Cuttino said.

“But we are anxious to see the international community grow, and the International Scholarship Committee’s existence comes at a very opportune time, considering the fact that our international community at Tufts is growing so rapidly,” he added.

The ISC itself hopes to raise $250,000 in order to support its five loan and scholarship programs, and in viewing the $7,500 raised by the group last year, it is obvious that there is much work to be done. Until the ISC can gain a visible grasp on its monetary goal, it will not be able to divulge money for its actual programs. Al-Alami stated that the focus of the fund raising activities will change in relation to the Committee’s small beginning last year, in the hopes of increasing its financial base.

“We are still keeping up the campus fund raising activities, and letter-writing to alumni and parents, but this year we are also attacking corporations and businesses for donations,” Al-Alami said. “And it would be a great help for us in establishing and working with our alumni network if the Administration would do more to support us.”

So far the provost’s office has promised a computer to help them with file-keeping and in establishing a database.

Al-Alami also said that the opinion of American students on campus does much to stabilize the ISC’s cause. “Many American students believe that international students are well off and don’t need financial aid, but this isn’t true at all. Our organization is here to help students already at Tufts to continue their education in times of financial crisis, and also to help international students who otherwise wouldn’t be able to pay tuition begin their education here, which would do even more to increase diversity on this campus.”

Since Dean Cuttino does not predict a change in the Administration’s policy on international financial aid for the near future, the importance of the ISC for international students grows as the cost of tuition rises. But in realizing the Administration’s stance on international financial aid, international students know that the work will have to be done by the ISC and that students, parents, and alumni will be responsible for making it a successful organization.

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