Tufts Alumni hosts first-ever Global Reach symposium in Hong Kong

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Tufts Alumni hosted the first-ever Global Reach event for alumni, a symposium in Hong Kong, featuring programs led by University President Anthony Monaco, Provost David Harris and the International Board of Advisors from Jan. 15 to Jan. 17. Students studying abroad in Hong Kong and several alumni attended the event to learn about the progress of the university and to build connections with other attendees.

The symposium, titled “Tufts Global Reach: Hong Kong”, began on a Friday evening with a cocktail reception and dinner at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center, where Monaco made opening remarks about innovation in higher education.

“Our university's motto is Pax et Lux—Peace and Light,” Monaco said. “When I reflect on that motto, I think of light as a metaphor for education, and more broadly, the search for knowledge … These are how we, as an institution, through our teaching and research mission, make the world a better place.”

According to Ming Zhong, director of Asia Relations and Development, the symposium’s programming continued on Jan. 16 with events such as a session on international finance, a panel on entrepreneurship and innovation in China and a conversation surrounding university leadership. Speeches were also made throughout the day by Harris, Dean of Engineering Jianmin Qu and various alumni.

In the afternoon, Monaco and Harris met with Peter Mathieson, vice chancellor and president of the University of Hong Kong (HKU), and Dong Qi, president of Beijing Normal University (BNU), as part of a University Presidents
Forum. Both HKU and BNU are highly-ranked within China and have exchange programs with Tufts, Zhong said.

The Jan. 16 events concluded with a casual dinner, serving as a networking and community-building opportunity, according to Zhong.

The symposium concluded on Jan. 17 with an excursion to a nearby island, where attendees hiked and had lunch in a local fishing village, she said.

Zhong said the goals of the symposium were to “provide content-rich, intellectually stimulating, fun Tufts community-building experiences” and to “build specific awareness of Tufts’ outstanding strengths in scholarship, teaching, global presence and community outreach.” A significant part of the symposium consisted of speakers giving updates on university news, networking opportunities and the administration to students studying abroad in Hong Kong and Fletcher students conducting research in Asia, she explained.

“Networking is always a major goal,” Zhong said. “Juniors and seniors need to get to know as many alumni as possible…even younger alumni who are looking for more connections have an opportunity.”

According to Jonathan Kaplan, senior director of Alumni Relations, Hong Kong was chosen as the location for this first Global Reach event because of the large presence of alumni in the area. Kaplan said that there are over 300 alumni in Hong Kong, roughly 400 in mainland China and approximately 2,000 in areas such as Japan, Thailand, India and etc.

The idea for the alumni programming stemmed from the fact that most alumni from China are not easily able to visit Tufts after they graduate, Zhong said.

“We wanted to bring Tufts to their doorstep,” she said. “These sorts of events are common on campus and closer to home, but for faraway communities, it is important [for the university] to have a strong presence.”

According to Zhong, planning for the event began roughly 18 months ago. Both Zhong and Kaplan collaborated with local alumni in the United States, alumni in Hong Kong and individuals on committees such as the Hong Kong Host Committee, a division of the Tufts Alumni International chapter in Hong Kong.

Tufts Alumni is planning on hosting a similar Global Reach event in London from Apr. 29 to May 1, according to Vikki Garth and Ivy Vo, co-chairs of the Tufts Alumni International Committee.

Monaco said the symposium provided an opportunity to engage with members of the Tufts community who are normally harder to reach.

“Tufts Global Reach enables us to engage with alumni and friends who would find it difficult to come back to Tufts but are eager to talk with us about what is going on at Tufts and share their ideas and experiences,” Monaco told the Daily in an email via Kim Thurler, executive director of public relations. “It is always exhilarating for me to meet with members of Tufts’ extended family. It was particularly rewarding to speak with current Jumbos studying abroad through Tufts in Hong Kong as well as with alumni, parents and other friends.”