November 27, 2013

Dear CGES Alumni,

Greetings from the Hilltop! I hope this letter finds you and yours in good health and spirits. I’m writing because, for the first time in the 23-year history of the Center, we need your help.

The Center has always been special. I noticed this first thing when I arrived in the fall of 2000 as a one-year visiting professor. Everything about the place, and especially the MAGES program, reflected a care and concern for quality. Now this is not necessarily unique; many MA programs, in SFS and beyond, stress quality. What makes us distinctive is that quality is combined with a quintessential Georgetown value: cura personalis, or “care of the whole person”. Even casual visitors to the Center come away impressed with the warm and welcoming climate, the open doors of faculty and staff offices, and the strong bonds that exist between and among the students, which actually resemble attachments more commonly associated with the undergraduate experience. This powerful ethos was forged during the first decade of the Center’s existence, and my main goal as Director since 2002 has been to preserve and strengthen it.

One of my responsibilities as Center Director is to think about the long term health of the Center and its central mission, the MAGES program. I am pleased to report that our future is promising. The Center is on a firm financial foundation, drawing on stable endowment and tuition revenue flows. Thanks to grant writing and a recent bequest/gift to the Center, we are on the cusp of creating a new core faculty position in the Center, focusing on business economics/political economy. The number of applicants and the size of our entering classes have held steady over the years, bucking broader downward trends in higher education in the United States, and the quality of our entering classes continues to impress. And thanks to an engaged faculty and professional staff, the MAGES curriculum and broader professional development program remain innovative, nimble, and relevant in a changing and challenging environment.

There is a cause for concern in this upbeat narrative, and it relates to the MAGES program’s ability to attract international students. Up until 2005, we could expect stable proportions in the admissions cycle: approximately one-third of our applicants and a corresponding fraction of the matriculating class hailed from overseas, almost always Europe. Since then, these proportions have dropped steadily and in tandem, to the point where we are now down to ten percent international. The reasons behind this decline are clear and, I regret to say, beyond the control of the Center; they include rising graduate tuition costs, declining availability of student loans to non-US citizens, and the growth of low-cost options for master’s level study in Europe.
We all benefit immensely from having a critical mass of international students who participate in the rich and variegated intellectual life of the Center. International students bring unique perspectives and experiences into the classroom, which enrich the learning environment for American students. And the opportunity to study alongside Americans in Washington, DC is a transformative experience for our international students. The resulting ties-that-bind are not just a microcosm of the larger transatlantic relationship, they are part and parcel of that relationship. My fear – shared by colleagues as well as alumni I have talked to – is that we are now perilously close to losing our critical mass of international students.

To address this worrisome situation, the Center is launching a long-term fundraising campaign to create endowed tuition scholarships for international students. The scholarship support will be given in the name of Dr. Gregory Flynn, a co-founder of the center back in 1990 and the architect of the MAGES program. Greg, who passed away ten years ago in November, was fiercely and passionately devoted to the MAGES students, and to the mission of the Center in furthering their education and their careers. We want to honor Greg’s devotion by naming these critically important scholarships in his name.

Please consider making a tax-deductible charitable donation to this worthy endeavor, using the gift envelope provided by the Georgetown University Office of Advancement. This is a standard template, so please don’t be put off by the high end of the donation range! We would be grateful for any amount you feel you can contribute.

We thank you for your support of the Center and its important mission. Stay connected through the newsletter sent out via email by Julia Sylla, Supervisor of Academic Programs, and our website. And please stop by and visit us should your travels take you near the Hilltop!

Best Wishes,

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