

Project: FuturePerfect

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Role: Faculty

Description: FuturePerfect: Sustainability Internships in Germany FuturePerfect offers Tufts students sustainability internship opportunities in Tübingen, Germany. There are summer as well as term opportunities. Students who are selected for the program will receive a stipend to defray the cost of living and traveling, and support with visa questions. Germany is one of Europe's Greenest countries, and Tübingen is one of Germany's Greenest cities. With a Green mayor, a cutting-edge program of Sustainability Studies at Tübingen University, an annual "night of sustainability," and many innovative grassroots and municipal sustainability initiatives, Tübingen offers unique opportunities to learn about sustainability solutions. Located in one of Germany's most powerful economic regions, the city of Tübingen is a case study of how economic prosperity and ecological concern mutually support one another. In addition, Tufts enjoys a long-standing relationship with Tübingen University through the Tufts-in-Tübingen study abroad program. Thanks to more than 50 years of collaboration with Tübingen University, there already is a robust administrative infrastructure and a network of public and private partners in place. While Germany and the United States face similar environmental challenges, German society and culture has developed a unique and distinct approach to developing sustainability solutions. Internships with environmental organizations in Tübingen allow Tufts students to experience hands-on how environmental initiatives respond to environmental challenges in a different culture. This way, Tufts students gain surprising insights that will empower them to reflect on environmental challenges in the United States, and to implement innovative sustainability solutions in the United States. All students who are interested in an experiential learning opportunity relating to the environment and sustainability are eligible to apply. Students do not need to speak German.

People Involved: Who are our partners in Tübingen? The resident director of the Tufts-in-Tübingen study abroad program, Dr. Ute Link, will serve as our consultant on-site, helping us to cultivate partnerships with environmental initiatives in Tübingen, and giving administrative support. We are seeking to secure partnerships with the Urban Planning and Environmental Protection departments within Tübingen's city administration, grassroots organizations such as the Umweltzentrum (Center for the Environment) and Tübingen im Wandel (Transition Town Tübingen), and Tübingen University's Studium Oecologicum and Kompetenzzentrum Nachhaltige Entwicklung (Center for Sustainable Development), as well as the experimental Tübingen Solar Village, among others. Who are FuturePerfect's partners at Tufts? Holding the strong belief that sustainability solutions transcend the boundaries of conventional fields, FuturePerfect is a truly interdisciplinary initiative that brings together the humanities, social sciences, sciences, and engineering. Founding partners include Professor Colin Orians (Environmental Studies Program Director; Biology), Dr. Sara Gomez (Environmental Studies) and Professor Markus Wilczek (German Program Director, International Literary and Cultural Studies). Tara Zantow (Senior Academic Advisor) is our liaison to the School of Engineering. We are also reaching out to Nitsan Shakked (Associate Director, Tufts Institute of the Environment) who holds an M.S. from Tübingen University.

Budget: We estimate that we will need \$3,000 during the start-up phase to compensate Dr. Ute Link for her consulting work and to defray the cost of one FuturePerfect faculty member traveling to Tübingen to meet with partners. Assuming that four or five students receive a \$1,500

stipend to defray the cost of living and traveling, the expenses for the first two cycles range between \$12,000 and \$15,000. In total, FuturePerfect would thus need \$15,000 to \$18,000 in seed money. Considering that FuturePerfect is an initiative that is intended to run for many more years after the initial two cycles, the initial start-up costs are an investment into the future.

Timeline: How will you implement FuturePerfect? In a start-up phase during the spring and summer of 2020, FuturePerfect will reach out to and secure partners for internships in Tübingen. The first cycle of student internships will begin in fall 2020. The timeline is as follows: advertisement of FuturePerfect opportunities for Tufts students by 9/1/2020; applications due by 11/1/2020; notification of selected students by 1/31/2021; student internships in Tübingen either in summer 2021, fall 2021, or spring 2022. How will you make FuturePerfect sustainable? We will use the first two years of FuturePerfect to apply for external funding that will allow us to continue offering students this unique opportunity once the seed funding runs out. Professor Markus Wilczek is working with Tisch College for Civic Life to identify grant-giving organizations that support environmental education, and to prepare grant applications. Once we are—thanks to internal seed funding—able to demonstrate the success of the program to external funding sources, we are confident that FuturePerfect can be sustained for future generations of students. Will this work? Yes. A similar initiative at the University of Toronto was launched in 2018 and now is entering into its second cycle. Responses from participating students and organizations praise how productive and mutually beneficial this partnership has been. For more information, please visit <https://german.utoronto.ca/ecohub-freiburg-ipraktikum-promotes-green-sector-experiences-germany/>.

Benefit to Tufts Community: FuturePerfect will offer students a unique experiential learning opportunity. Students returning from Tübingen will be empowered to think outside the box regarding sustainability solutions. Enabling students to take a global perspective on sustainability issues will help them to bring innovation to Tufts and allow them to view sustainability challenges at Tufts and beyond with fresh eyes.