

US rivals take aim at Scottish university's expensive courses

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Glasgow Caledonian, which brands itself as the “university for the common good”, has so far spent \$15 million on its US ventureGetty Images

A Scottish university’s plan to charge students almost \$35,000 (£27,000) for a masters degree at its Manhattan base undermines claims that its expansion is aimed at helping the poor, rivals have said.

At a hearing in New York to determine whether Glasgow Caledonian University will finally be granted permission to award degrees at the US campus, the private Fordham University rejected the claim that the project was part of a “social mission”.

Glasgow Caledonian has won support from high-profile US-based businesses in its efforts to offer four masters courses at the New York satellite campus, which has had no students since opening in early 2014.

However some established competitors have claimed that granting the licence would harm their interests.

Glasgow Caledonian, which brands itself as the “university for the common good”, has so far spent \$15 million on its US venture.

The university said its desire to open a New York base was driven by a “defining social mission” which includes “creating a better and fairer world”.

Joseph Muriana, a vice-president at New York’s Fordham University, ridiculed the idea that Glasgow Caledonian was seeking to cater for poorer students, pointing to the \$34,650 cost of their masters degrees, which is mid-market in New York in terms of cost. The degrees would take one year to complete for a full-time student.

He also warned that granting a foreign university the right to offer degrees in New York could “open the floodgates”, raising the prospect of more prestigious institutions opening offshoots on its doorstep.

Mr Muriana added: “An application from the University of Connecticut, or from Rutgers [in New Jersey] or UPenn [the University of Pennsylvania] to establish a campus in New York would be seen as absurd. The application from Glasgow Caledonian University should be seen in a similar light.”

The university’s plan was challenged by one member of a three-person “board of regents” that heard the application, because it was seen to contradict the “America First” agenda that helped President Trump into the White House.

Thomas Dunne, vice-president for administration at Fordham, said his 176-year-old Jesuit university already offered business and fashion degrees with a focus on sustainability. “Existing business schools have had difficulty in fulfilling their capacity,” he said.

Cara Smyth, vice-president of Glasgow Caledonian’s New York base, admitted that it had been difficult to run a campus with no students and

accepted it was “new in the market, with a name difficult to pronounce”. At least two members of the board seemed to struggle over the name of Glasgow, pronouncing it “Glass-cow”.

However, the university, which hopes to offer degrees in luxury brand management, international fashion marketing, risk management, and social business and microfinance, was supported by clothing giant PVH Corp, which owns Calvin Klein, Speedo and several other clothing brands. Ms Smyth also cited backing from the Macy’s store and Tommy Hilfiger brand.

A representative from the New York City Economic Development Corporation also voiced strong support for the application. It is understood that the university plans to offer scholarships in New York if its application is approved. A final ruling is expected next month.

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