For the eighth year in a row, students, alumni, parents, faculty, and friends of Tufts joined together for the 26.2-mile Boston Marathon as part of the President’s Marathon Challenge, raising over $435,000 in support of nutrition, medical, and fitness programs, including research on childhood obesity at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy.
Parents News

A NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS OF TUFTS UNDERGRADUATES

Spring 2010

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SAVE the DATE
Parents Weekend will be held
Friday, October 22–Sunday, October 24

This year’s theme is “The Intellectually Engaged Campus.”

For hotel information, please visit parentsprogram.tufts.edu
From the Director  Beyond the Classroom

Dear Parents,

For many of your sons and daughters, this year at Tufts may be their best, their most challenging, their most memorable. For us, the year has been exciting and rewarding. Our professors continue to be honored with national awards and we have hired several dynamic professors to continue the level of research and love of teaching your children deserve. Our students have also earned top recognition—we’ve profiled several of our exceptional undergraduates inside.

Seven years ago, President Lawrence S. Bacow commissioned a task force to examine the undergraduate experience. As a result of recommendations made, for example, the Undergraduate Research Fund was increased, the Summer Scholars Program continues to provide grants for summer research to undergraduates, and the Richard E. Snyder Lecture Series was launched.

We hope that you’ll be able to join us for Parents Weekend, October 22–24, when our theme will be “The Intellectually Engaged Campus.” We look forward to showcasing our talented students and professors.

Thank you for remaining generous in support of the university so we can continue to offer an exceptional educational experience.

Best wishes for a wonderful summer.

Nancy Morrison
Director, Parents Program

Off and Running  A record 225 Tufts runners join President’s Marathon Challenge Team

“We leave no runner behind,” says President’s Marathon coach Don Megerle—and Marlo Hittman, A88, is grateful. Hittman, who ran the grueling 26-mile course with the Tufts team, finished it in 10 hours 12 minutes. “Don said he’d wait for the last one, and he did. They were disassembling the tower when I finished,” Hittman says. And when she put her swollen feet into sandals Megerle had waiting for her, her toe bumped into something unexpected: a medal. “I don’t know how he managed to get one, but he did, and that meant so much to me,” she says.

Megerle says it was the most successful Tufts showing to date, with 225 runners wearing the ‘Tufts insignia. Runners raise money to support nutrition, medical, and fitness programs at Tufts University’s Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, and the team exceeded its goal by over $40,000, according to Megerle.

In an e-mail to Megerle, Joshua Silver, A12, wrote that wearing the yellow singlet put stride in his pride every step of the way. “There was nothing like hearing ‘Let’s go Tufts’ along the course,” he wrote.

The coach’s office is already beginning to fill with mementos from his runners as well as e-mails filled with accolades. Silver’s note, like most of the hundreds Megerle receives, is filled with gratitude. “Thank you for all your support, coach. You are the man!” he wrote.
Friday afternoons are notoriously quiet on college campuses, but not inside a work space at Bray Laboratory next to the School of Engineering. In a back room, a group of students were working on a car as they did every Friday afternoon for months, preparing for the fourth annual Formula Hybrid Competition, organized by the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth.

While speed and endurance are critical—so is fuel efficiency. The competition challenge is to design and build an open-wheel, single-seat racecar, that emphasizes drive-train innovation and fuel efficiency. Thirty teams from engineering schools around the world competed; Tufts’ team came in 12th, losing significant points when their car broke down during the speed and endurance races.

“All of us share a love for cars and hybrid or electric is really interesting and useful for the future,” says Tom Williamson, E10, an engineering student who graduated in January, a semester early. “This gives us a real opportunity to apply what we’ve learned in the classrooms. It reinforces how things work.” The core team—Williamson, Tom Russell, A10, Andrew Nelson, E10, and Eric Potkin, E10, and several other students—will spend time in the near future assessing exactly what went wrong, though Williamson believes a brake failure caused the slowdown and eventual stop.

Assistant Professor of Mechanical Engineering Tom James, who serves as faculty advisor of the racing team, notes that the students’ efforts were about as real and applied as you can get. “This is the real deal—they’re either ready to race or not, there’s a budget, teamwork, and competition. The team really comprises all the elements of what we teach,” he says.

“Recently, Dr. Bernard Gordon committed to invest $40 million over a number of years to the School of Engineering to develop engineering leaders and this project creates leaders,” James says.

“I am enormously grateful to Dean Linda Abriola and Executive Associate Dean Scott Sahagian. They have been so supportive, finding us the physical space to work on the car, as well as helping fund the project,” he says.

Williamson calls the engineering school far from typical. “There are so many great research opportunities here and I was able to take liberal arts courses that wouldn’t be available at another school,” Williamson says.

Williamson admits to being initially disappointed with the car’s performance, but has no regrets, seeing the competition as a way of networking with other future engineers.

Parents have been instrumental in funding the team. Lane Potkin and Jodie Jacobs, E10P, Donald and Jan Williamson, E10P, Susan Bergenn, A10P, Anthony Jackson and Betsy Taylor, E13P, and Irene Chan, E13P, have all made contributions.

Bosch Power Tools is the team’s biggest sponsor and SolidWorks provides computer-aided design (CAD) technology. “We’re able to do rapid prototyping of car parts in days thanks to CAD,” James says.

Despite the departure of several seniors, Williamson has hopes for the car’s success next year. “I’ll just be a phone call away, and the other seniors have jobs in the area. We intend to see the team flourish,” he says.
Health Matters

Questions and Answers with Tufts’ Health Care Professionals

The end of a year at college often means transition time for students and families. Accustomed to making their own decisions, many students balk at rules they find are still in place when they return home. Michelle Bowdler, Senior Director, Health and Wellness Service, Julie Ross, Counseling and Mental Health Service Director, and Margaret Higham, Medical Director of Health Service, sat down recently with the Parents Program to address re-entry and other issues.

Q: My underage child seems to consume a lot of alcohol. Should I intervene?
A: (Ross) It is important to have a conversation about house rules and explain why you feel the way you do. Often, parents think they can’t do anything in situations like this, but they don’t need to abdicate their roles as parents. If they feel—or have been told—their child might be in danger from drinking too much, they should share their concerns with the student.

Q: My child has changed so much. Should I be worried?
A: (Bowdler) Don’t be surprised at how much your child has changed. Students change their political views, they might have a different openness about sex and sexuality, awareness of social justice issues, and religion. (Ross) Parents should be respectful of changes and try to listen without being judgmental. College is a time of incredibly rapid growth and change, as part of getting an education is figuring out who you are as a young adult. It’s helpful if parents don’t make too many assumptions, but take the time to get to know what the student may be thinking and feeling about things.

Q: My child doesn’t seem to be looking for a meaningful job. Should I push?
A: (Ross) College students are under incredible pressure today, and sometimes parents unwittingly play a role in this. Students often feel that because their parents are spending so much on their education, they need to have a specific career path that’s desired by their parents. Sometimes, this is a cause of undue stress and unhappiness, as it may not be the path that is right for them. Parents should do their best to encourage their children.

Q: H1N1 took its toll on campuses throughout the country. What will Tufts do differently or keep doing next year if serious illness strikes again?
A: (Higham) A new system we developed this past year was the online illness notification system so that students could communicate illness directly with their professors. As to whether we will recommend isolation again next year for influenza-like illness is not yet clear. We will wait for updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control. My guess is that isolation in special rooms will not be needed next year. We will focus instead on encouraging students who are ill with fever to stay out of class and to limit their usual activities. We will also continue our handwashing campaign and our “cover your cough” campaign.

Q: How does the new health care law impact my recent graduate?
A: (Bowdler) If you have the student insurance plan, you are covered until the end of August. Likewise, any graduating senior is eligible for our services through the summer months, regardless of the type of insurance you have—because you have paid the health fee. For those who do not have the student insurance plan, the health insurance is likely to expire soon after they graduate. The new provision that allows dependent children to stay on their parents’ plans until the age of 26 does not take effect yet. Please see http://parentsprogram.tufts.edu/ and click on resources, then health insurance, for a letter to seniors regarding coverage.
Mapping Solutions
Institute for Global Leadership Students Use Mapping Technology to Aid in Crises

Seniors Sabina Carlson and Rachel Brown and sophomore Cody Valdes are literally mapping paths to help in crisis situations. The students, all affiliated with Tufts’ Institute for Global Leadership (IGL), are using mapping technology developed by a multinational group called Ushahidi, after Kenya’s 2007 post-election violence left over 1,000 people dead. Using GPS coordinates to map and categorize places where there is urgent need, volunteers on the ground in Haiti receive texts, “tweets,” and calls to pinpoint where help is needed.

Carlson is a founder of Research and Engagement Supporting Poverty (RESPE), an IGL program that is a community-led research and development project in rural northern Haiti. Because of her knowledge of basic Creole and experience in Haiti with RESPE, Carlson was brought into the deployment of the Ushahidi platform for Fletcher, she says. She became the point person for outreach to the Haitian community, incorporating them into both the current process and the long-term development phase.

“I began putting anywhere from 40 to 70 hours a week into the project, and began to help oversee the eventual transfer of the tool to Haitian hands,” she says.

“Sherman Teichman [director of IGL] has been a mentor to me from the beginning and IGL has been instrumental in supporting both the vision and operation,” she says.

“Sabina is the classic definition of a force of nature,” Teichman says. “She is as vital and compelling as any of the students I’ve had in the 35 years I’ve been teaching. She is a rare fusion of intellect, imagination, and tenacity.”

Brown spent a semester studying in Kenya and will move back there for two years when she graduates in May. “Violence is just one side of what’s happening there; it’s important to tell the whole story,” she says. “If Kenya is going to become peaceful, it’s because Kenyans did it.”

Valdes will take an extra year of college to spend in Kenya getting Sisi Ni Anami running. “Being at Tufts enables me to do this,” he says. “I was a competitive hockey player before I came here and I’ve undergone a huge transformation. IGL changed my life.”

In recognition of their project idea, Brown and Valdes have been selected as semifinalists in the 2010 Dell Social Innovations Competition and as attendees of the Clinton Global Initiative University 2010 Meeting. Finalists in the World Bank’s Innovation Fair: Moving Beyond Conflict competition, the duo emerged from a field of 223 proposals from over 40 countries along with Adam White, A09, a former IGL student, who submitted a separate proposal.

“Rachel is a brilliant, truthful, and sensitive student with an iron will gloved in the friendliest persona you would ever want to meet,” Teichman says. “And Cody is a remarkable fusion of passion, intelligence, and kindness.”

“It’s a wonderful, albeit shocking, realization that three of the independently approved projects evaluated by the World Bank are derived so closely with IGL. The university has charged us with being an incubator for innovation, and it’s a responsibility we shoulder proudly,” Teichman adds.

“The university has charged [IGL] with being an incubator for innovation, and it’s a responsibility we shoulder proudly.”

Sherman Teichman, A09P
Director, Institute for Global Leadership
Passion for Plants
Senior is Honored with Astronaut Scholarship Award

Senior Adam Steinbrenner has a passion for plants. His mother is a gardener and he grew up surrounded by them, identifying them. So it was natural, he says, that he got into plant science. “I’m interested in when plants defend themselves against certain insects. What kinds of chemicals do they put out?” he says.

His research has earned him the prestigious Astronaut Scholarship Award, one of 17 students nationwide to receive the $10,000 scholarship. This is the highest monetary award given in the United States to science and engineering students at the undergraduate level based solely on merit.

Steinbrenner credits biology professor Colin Orians for his mentorship and for his class “Tropical Ecology and Conservation,” which provides students with an in-depth understanding of ecology. “We wrote grant proposals, designed our own experiments, and then traveled to Costa Rica for two weeks over winter break for intense field experience. This is how science really works,” Steinbrenner says.

The class began in 2001 to “give students an opportunity to study science from concept point to communication point,” Orians says. “Students work as a team and come up with research proposals.” The class goes to two field sites—one on the Atlantic side and one on the Pacific—and students are asked how seasonality influences ecological interactions, he says. They also work closely with a colleague of Orians based in Costa Rica. “There is a lot of problem solving, which is the most important part of the scientific process,” he explains.

While in Costa Rica, Steinbrenner observed insect communities that collected in pools of water in plants. “It was interesting to see how certain plants resisted disease pathogens,” he says.

Orians is effusive with his praise for his prodigy. “Adam is the most remarkable undergraduate I have ever taught. He thinks deeply, reads the literature, makes the connections, and he’s incredibly organized,” Orians says.

“Academically and socially Tufts has been perfect. I came here because I was offered a Neubauer Scholarship [established in 2000 by Trustee Joseph Neubauer, the program attracts and enrolls intellectually talented students from across the country and around the world]. The opportunities have been great. I got to study abroad at Oxford and I really appreciate how the university supports studying abroad as a way of life,” Steinbrenner says. He is also the recipient of two other Tufts scholarships: the Paula Frazier Poskitt Scholarship and the Benjamin Brown Scholarship. He was a runner-up for a Goldwater Scholarship.

“In high school, I knew people researched plants, but I didn’t know the magnitude of the biology community. So many people think of plants as sterile. I love the thought that they are actually defending themselves,” Steinbrenner says.

“I got to spend a year studying at Oxford. I really appreciate how the university supports studying abroad as a way of life.”

Adam Steinbrenner, A10
A ssociate professor Harry Bernheim’s immunology class was what José Ordovas-Montanes, A10, calls “formative.” Indeed, studying immunology has become a career path. The research that he initially became interested in—the study of the decrease in T cell function as people age, earned him a Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, one of science’s most prestigious awards for undergraduates, providing up to $7,500 per year for educational expenses to sophomores and juniors who intend to pursue careers in mathematics, the natural sciences, or engineering. About 300 sophomores and juniors are recipients nationally.

“The research I discussed with Professor Bernheim was being done in London,” Ordovas-Montanes explains, “so I spent my junior year at University College in London with the Tufts in London program.” He obtained blood samples from friends and compared the results with blood from older people, noting the differences in lipid function when T cells were about to be activated, simulating an immune response. When he returned to Tufts, he began working with researchers at Children’s Hospital Boston to help children with primary immune deficiencies. iPSC can be generated in a patient-specific fashion starting from skin cells and have the ability to generate all cell types present in the human body. “Currently, the only treatment for children with these inherited disorders is bone marrow from a sibling or from an unrelated donor,” he says. “With iPSC, we hope that patient-specific cells can be corrected for their genetic defect to provide a perfect match.”

José is brilliant. He took my class as a sophomore when most people in the class were seniors or graduate students. He would present a paper that was profoundly perceptive, but also extremely accessible,” Bernheim says of his student. “He has the tenacity to spend long hours reading and thinking—he doesn’t shrink from that.”

Ordovas-Montanes got accepted into the seven PhD immunology programs to which he applied; he’ll attend Harvard in the fall.

“I’ve had such great opportunities here and in the Tufts program in London. Here, I’m able to walk in before my classes and have access to all my professors. I couldn’t find that elsewhere,” he says.