(l-r) Lauren Rose, A13, Gabriel Lewenstein, A12, and Rebeccah Marrero, A13, participate in interfaith dialogues. For more on campus religious life, see page 7.
FROM THE PARENTS PROGRAM STAFF

Sports Round-up

Academics
Summer Scholar Sanya Ramjattan works on creating an organic light-emitting device
Experimental College students explore untraditional courses
Sarah Cannon and Allister Chang are recipients of major academic awards

Campus Life
Counseling and Mental Health Services tackle homesickness
An interfaith campus experience

SAVE THE DATE!
Commencement is May 20, 2012
commencement.tufts.edu
**Dear Parents,**

One of the special pleasures for us is having the opportunity to meet with many of your children over the course of the year. We interview them for articles, work with them in our office, and sometimes even meet them for lunch! We are always impressed with the level of commitment, intelligence, and motivation they possess, as they spend time researching the algorithms of a math formula or helping establish a coffee farm in Guatemala. Whatever paths students may choose, we come away with the sense that the world is a better place because these young people are in it.

It’s a two-way street at Tufts, and we know that our small class sizes, top-notch professors, and unparalleled undergraduate research opportunities give students the chance to pursue their passions. For many of your sons and daughters, this may be their best year at Tufts, the most challenging, their most memorable. Best wishes to all for a good one, and good luck to your students as they pursue another year in search of their personal best!

The Parents Program
Melissa White, interim director
Gina DeSalvo, associate director
Linda Levin-Scherz, A09P, assistant director
Deborah Hand, staff assistant

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**Sports Round-up**

The 2011 fall sports season is under way and already there is plenty of good news to report. Through October 10, women’s soccer (5–2–2 record) and volleyball (14–3) are both second in the New England Small College Athletic Conference. The much-improved men’s soccer team has a 4–2–2 record, while men’s cross-country recently ran to an excellent eighth-place finish at the New England Championships, featuring Division I, II, and III teams.

To kick off Homecoming, Tufts presented its annual Distinguished Achievement Award to alumnus Mike Savicki. He is a 1990 graduate who is currently one of the best wheelchair marathoners in the country. Tufts athletes are also contributing in the community this fall, as the Jumbos have partnered with the nonprofit organization Level The Field to provide sports clinics for students at the nearby East Somerville Community School. Several recent Tufts graduates have continued their sports careers professionally, including 2010 NCAA women’s tennis singles champion Julia Browne. You can read about all of this exciting news and more at GoTuftsJumbos.com.

—Paul Sweeney, Director, Sports Communication

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**Travel-Learn Program**

Tufts parents continue to trek the globe with the Tufts Travel-Learn program! They have cruised around Alaska’s impressive glaciers, marveled at Dordogne’s castles, walked the souks in Istanbul, and witnessed the drama of the great migration in Tanzania.

For a complete list of destinations, check our website: www.tuftstravellearn.org or contact Usha Sellers at 617–627–5323 or on email at usha.sellers@tufts.edu.
Let There Be Light

In Matthew Panzer’s Green Energy and Nanostructured Electronics Lab, Summer Scholar Sanya Ramjattan works on creating an organic light-emitting device, or OLED.

Today, the acronym LED is commonplace. Generally, we know that LEDs are more efficient and last longer than traditional incandescent lightbulbs—and that LEDs are found everywhere in headlights, flashlights, TVs, and cell phones.

What most people don’t know is that most LEDs are created with inorganic semiconductor materials that can be costly to produce, and that some inorganic LEDs might be less efficient than LEDs created with organic materials.

In Matthew Panzer’s lab, Summer Scholar Sanya Ramjattan, E12, is working on creating an organic light-emitting device, or OLED, that could light up the world with new, energy-saving possibilities.

“When we say ‘organic,’ we have to be careful not to imply that this is what makes the technology ‘green’ or ‘environmentally friendly.’ The polymer we’re testing to create a functional, energy-efficient OLED is created using organic chemistry, which gives us a lot of flexibility in how we engineer an LED,” says Panzer, an assistant professor in the Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering.

In Panzer’s Green Energy and Nanostructured Electronics Lab, Ramjattan tested an organic polymer containing a conjugated carbon backbone that, by itself, emits blue light.

“By adding different functional groups to this backbone, a chemist can create an organic polymer to get a different emission spectrum, like red or green light,” says Ramjattan.

To create and test the OLED, Ramjattan uses a machine called a spin coater to deposit this polymer, which looks like yellow ink, in a thin layer around one thousand times thinner than the width of a single human hair. (Watch Ramjattan prepare the device in the lab: goo.gl/YjMc3.)

“After spin coating, you can barely see the layer of polymer; it’s very transparent,” says Ramjattan.

Panzer says that this kind of technology might allow for something like a display in an airplane cockpit where a pilot could review important graphical information but still see through the windshield. In addition, this thin polymer could be uniformly deposited on anything, opening up the world to flexible lighting displays or even illuminated textiles.

Another advantage of this process is that “it can take place at atmospheric pressure and near-room temperature,” says Ramjattan.

Inorganic LEDs, like the ones found in cell phone screen displays, are made using crystalline inorganic semiconductors such as gallium nitride, which can require high temperatures or low pressures to produce. Creating those conditions can be expensive and energy-intensive.

“If you can save on those energy costs in producing LEDs, and if they’re also more efficient when they’re running, it really is a win-win in the long run.”

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—Julia C. Keller is Communications Manager at Tufts School of Engineering
Robyn Gittleman, dean of Tufts Experimental College (ExCollege), sees the unique school as “whipped cream on top of a sundae. Our goal is to offer something not in the traditional curriculum,” she says. In fact, she continues, many courses now offered at Tufts were born at the ExCollege, like Hebrew and Swahili. Students have studied “Crisis Mapping,” analyzed themes and plot lines from the hit show “Lost,” and can currently examine topics such as “Introduction to Forensic Anthropology,” “Architecture and Climate Change,” and “Nature Encounters Through Art.” Each semester, nearly 1,500 students explore nontraditional and multidisciplinary courses taught by their peers as well as by instructors. ExCollege courses earn regular Tufts credit and count toward graduation.

Established in 1964, ExCollege is the oldest program of its kind in the country, and from its inception students and faculty have worked together on equal footing. Since 1966, students have been full voting members of the governing board, have served on committees that evaluate course proposals, and have designed their own classes.

“There are two types of courses at the ExCollege: one that is peer taught and the other is taught by visiting lecturers. The lecturers typically have graduate level degrees, like Ph.D.’s, J.D.’s, and M.D.’s. We send out over 500 fliers and emails to get as broad an applicant pool as possible,” says Gittleman.

First-year students can sign up for “Explorations” or “Perspectives,” which are taught by upper-level students. Both of these full-credit, semester-long programs provide new students with an instant community and long-term support, Gittleman explains. In Explorations, leaders select a topic about which they feel passionate or have an expertise and create a 13-week syllabus. In Perspectives, all the groups work with a shared topic idea. Both the students who are teaching and the students taking the course receive a pass/fail grade. “None of the requirements toward a major allow for pass/fail grades, so this removes the competitive atmosphere,” Gittleman notes.

“Often a student will come back after studying abroad with a passion for that country. This year, for example, we have classes on the cuisine and culture of France,” Gittleman says.

Visiting lecturers teach in the evenings, in small participation and discussion-based courses, for which students receive letter grades. Each semester, the staff and students sift through approximately 130 course proposals and take 22.

“We had a police lieutenant teach a class on forensic science and he set up a crime scene. This semester, we are offering live illustrations of birds and animals. The biology department is very excited about this, and many students are attracted to a class like this,” Gittleman says. “It’s an opportunity for students to try new things.”

A student draws in a class on art conservation.
Profiles in Excellence

Extraordinary Students Gather Awards—and an Impressive List of Accomplishments

A co-author on several math publications, senior Sarah Cannon is trying to explain her research on minimal surfaces in layperson’s terms: “When you dip a wire frame into soapy water, the soap film you get is a minimal surface,” she says. “We studied mathematical properties of certain minimal surfaces.”

The 2011–2012 Astronaut Scholarship winner, awarded to “promising students in science and engineering,” and a 2011 Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship recipient, has also been endorsed for this year’s Rhodes Scholarship competition. And when she’s not researching “comparative strengths of tile self-assembly models,” she’s tearing up the field as a standout defender on the field hockey team, and was the recipient of an NCAA “Elite 88” Award, presented for academic excellence to only 88 student-athletes in the nation.

“I’ve gotten very good at time management,” she says. Laura Doane, program director for advising and scholarship, calls Cannon a “dynamo in the classroom, lab, and playing field.”

As a member of the Computational Geometry research group at Tufts, Cannon says that the team is trying to find ways to arrange triangles in the plane so that a single line goes through as many of these triangles as possible.

“We’re also trying to find out how many bounces a light ray has to make in order to illuminate all of an oddly shaped room. We think the light ray only needs to bounce off of half of the walls,” she explains.

Her mathematical research has also taken her to the Brigham Young University Summer Mathematics Research Experience for Undergraduates, where she spent two months applying complex analysis to the field of minimal surface theory. There, she led her group of four undergraduate research students, proving their first important result. The work she did contributed to the chapter “Minimal Surfaces,” by Michael Dorff, in Explorations in Complex Variables, currently under review to be published.

“There have been so many opportunities at Tufts. I’ve had great professors who had interesting problems and who urged me to get involved,” she says. “Their pursuits haven’t always overlapped with mine, but they are always happy to work with me.”

It’s sometimes hard to remember that Allister Chang is still only a senior.

A finalist for the prestigious Truman Scholarship, Chang has, among many accomplishments, run the Boston Marathon and passed all official U.S. Figure Skating Association tests; holds a Paderewski Gold Medal from the National Piano Guild and worked on farms through the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms network; and was co-president of the Tufts Queer Straight Alliance, and treasurer of the Tufts Mountain Club. He is a fellow in Humanity in Action Alliance (HIA), an international educational organization that educates and connects a network of students and leaders, committed to promoting human rights, having participated in HIA’s core program in Lyon and Amsterdam in 2010.

“It’s all interconnected—public health issues, environmental issues, sexual health. It’s important to be involved with everything to make any effective change,” he says.

As an HIA fellow in Lyon, Chang pursued his passion of studying lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues.

“When I was in Lyon, I looked at the 20 plus LGBT organizations for the purposes of streamlining resources,” he says. His senior thesis is exploring the history of the first Asian gay organization, formed in Taipei, Taiwan. Chang conducted interviews there, in his parents’ homeland, last summer and will return in January, thanks to grants he received from Tufts Undergraduate Research Fund and the Institute for Global Leadership. Laura Doane, program director for advising and scholarship, says that Chang “never veers from a challenge.”

Chang credits the Institute for Global Leadership’s Synaptic Scholars, a program meant to provide a forum for students to take risks, with providing him the opportunity to do much of his work.

“There’s a sense of community at Tufts,” Chang says. “There are small classes and good teachers.” History professor Jeanne Marie Penvenne has provided mentorship when Chang took an independent study with her as a sophomore and also as his advisor.

“Allister Chang is among the most gifted, ambitious, and accomplished young people I have ever had the pleasure to know and teach,” Penvenne says. “Better yet, he is a joyous and passionate learner! Allister typically takes on and accomplishes an astonishing array of important work, often on top of things like training for a marathon. He wears his gifts lightly and with endearing humility.”
Homesickness

A Conversation with Health and Wellness Services

In the first few weeks of college, parents expect to hear about all kinds of issues from their college students: life with a new roommate, cafeteria food, classes. What they might be surprised about is getting a phone call about homesickness, especially if the student has never been away from home before. Nonetheless, college is a time unlike any other, and homesickness is common. The Parents Program spoke with Julie Ross, Director of the Tufts Counseling and Mental Health Service (CMHS); Marilyn Downs, Supervising Clinician and Director of Outreach at Tufts CMHS; and Michelle Bowdler, Senior Director of Health and Wellness Services, about this frequent issue.

Q. Should I be worried when my child says she’s homesick?

Julie Ross (JR): Over half of students attending college away from home experience some degree of homesickness. Parents may hear about this issue anytime, from the initial days of the semester onward. It quite frequently arises after the first few weeks of school, once the initial excitement settles down.

Marilyn Downs (MD): There’s so much going on in the beginning, students may not have time to process their feelings for a few weeks.

JR: It’s important to remember that close friendships develop over a period of time. The friendships your student has from home may have grown over many years, but students can forget that, and become sad and even alarmed when it takes a while for them to make friends at school. If your students are experiencing anxiety about this, it may be helpful to remind them of experiences they have had in the past of connecting with others and building relationships based over time.

Keep in mind that each student is different, and some will have more trouble with transition than others. You can help your first-year students build resilience by considering some of the following “Dos” and “Don’ts”:

DO

• Support their efforts to connect with others at school.
• Encourage them to be proactive and not sit in their room with the door closed—an open room door suggests to others that the occupant may be available for a quick “hello” or chat.
• Acknowledge homesickness and the painful feelings it carries, while remembering that it is a temporary condition.
• Encourage them to stay present and available at school so they can begin bonding with others rather than spending all their time texting and/or on Skype with friends and family from home.
• Encourage them to explore the many and varied activities, clubs, and events on campus, and generally to get involved in campus life in whatever ways they can.

• Remember, with them, how they have coped successfully with similar situations in the past—what did they do that helped them get more comfortable with a new situation, how did they reach out to and meet others, etc.?
• While there are no general rules that apply to all students, it’s often reasonable to encourage a student to try to stay on campus for a few weeks before a visit home.
• Help your students make their dorm room comfortable and cozy. Favorite photos and other familiar items from home, as well as new things to enjoy, can help make their room feel like “home away from home!”

DON’T

• Don’t emphasize to your students how lonely or sad you are without them at home. Students making this transition need to focus on themselves rather than worrying about how parents are managing.
• Don’t focus your conversations on all the fun and/or familiar things your student is missing away from the rest of the family—even college students don’t want to feel as if they’re missing something important at home.
• Don’t intervene by calling Residential Life yourself if the living situation is less than ideal; it can take some work on the students’ part to adapt to living with a roommate. You can help support your students by brainstorming with them how they can adapt. If they need additional assistance, encourage them to speak with their Resident Assistant or Resident Director themselves about their situation.

(MD) It sometimes takes a while, but most students create a home here.

Although homesickness is a common experience for many students, for a small percentage of students homesickness can become a real problem. It is cause for more concern if your student becomes despondent, has trouble with daily functions such as eating, sleeping, and/or maintaining appropriate hygiene, or develops a lasting depressed mood. There are many resources on campus to assist you, including the Dean of Student Affairs Office and the Tufts Counseling and Mental Health Service. CMHS provides individual and group counseling, emergency psychological services, and psychiatric consultation. We also frequently consult with family members who have concerns about their student, within the limits of our ethical and legal obligations to respect students’ privacy. For more information, please feel welcome to explore our website: http://ase.tufts.edu/counseling/.
Sixteen different religious groups offered readings, prayers, and reflections at the 10th anniversary of 9/11, a symbol of the respect of interfaith on Tufts’ campus, says University Chaplain Reverend David O’Leary, noting that the gathering was consistent with the university’s commitment to modeling interreligious harmony and well-being. O’Leary, who oversees campus ministries, notes that there is a robust weekly gathering of students partaking in religious services. “Over 300 students attend Catholic mass, Hillel is always packed, and the Protestant and Muslim services are also very well attended,” he says.

The religious centers provide myriad opportunities for student involvement. Rabbi Jeffrey A. Summit, Neubauer Executive Director, Tufts Hillel, says that “just as our beautiful Granoff Family Hillel Center has many doors, we provide many ways into Jewish community to ensure that every student can enter and explore the richness of our culture, traditions, and people. We are also deeply committed to interfaith programming, such as our service trips to Rwanda, to build understanding and cooperation among the different religious communities on campus.”

Naila Baloch, the Muslim chaplain, states that the Muslim student board has hosted several multicultural celebrations. “They are always festive and exciting. Students take a lot of initiative,” she says. The students also participate in religious and political discussion groups, host fun events like dessert night, and have a breaking of the fast after Ramadan, she says.

Student-run interfaith groups, like pre-orientation’s Conversation, Action, Faith, and Education (C.A.F.E.), aims to spark interfaith dialogues on subjects like focusing on relationships or religion in society. Junior Rebecca Marrero says that the group visited several religious sites and planned discussions with each of the chaplains. “For us, it doesn’t matter what your faith is or even if you have one. Instead, we wish to spread further understanding of other beliefs through our four points of conversation, action, faith, and education,” she explains.

Senior Gabriel Lewenstein, president of Hillel, says that he is grateful to have a diverse campus. “I really appreciate both having the opportunity to connect and learn more about my own faith, as well as having so many other active religious groups on campus that allow me to have some really interesting, powerful conversations.”

However, Stephen Goeman, president of the Freethought Society at Tufts, which represents nonbelievers, including atheists, agnostics, humanists, and secularists, doesn’t feel as represented on campus. “Campus events such as matriculation are heavy with appeals to a creator and calls for prayer—while these tactics may solidify communal bonds between monotheists, they isolate those of us who don’t believe in God,” the junior states. “However, I believe this is changing.”

Lauren Rose, a junior and vice president of the Freethought Society at Tufts, finds learning about others’ faiths has been enriching. “I believe that working together will help reduce the stigma that is attached to atheism. Interfaith action will show to others that those of us who are irreligious can have the same compassion and drive to make the world a better place as those who are religious,” she says.

For Anisha Reza, a junior, participating in Tufts Christian Fellowship has meant finding a loving family here that makes her college experience complete. “I know I always have my brothers and sisters there to pick me up when I fall and to help me grow in my faith,” she says.