From the Director

I am delighted to serve as the new director of the Tufts Parents Program. Having served previously as associate director of development for Tufts’ School of Engineering, I come to the job knowing well the high regard people throughout the world have for our liberal arts, sciences and engineering programs, our breadth of research, and our students’ passion for exploring beyond the boundaries of our campus.

Tufts is an exciting place to be. Those of you who attended Parents Weekend last October can attest to the spectacular array of talent and scholarship. A record 3,500+ family members attended, participating and watching events from ballroom dancing to gospel. The one-year old Perry and Marty Granoff Music Center, an architectural magnet for students who want to study music and one of the best acoustical spaces in New England, was the center for many performances, while the university’s newest and “greenest” residential building, Sophia Gordon Hall, played host to several compelling talks and events as well.

Your generosity makes these and other programs possible. You may know that we have just crossed the mid-point of the university’s most ambitious campaign, Beyond Boundaries that will continue to transform our campus and the lives of our students for generations to come. An impressive $735M has been committed against a $1.2 Billion goal.

Each gift we receive enhances the strength of our community and readies our students and faculty to help the world. Your generosity is inspiring.

I look forward to meeting you on campus or at one of our parents’ events. Check our website parentsprogram.tufts.edu for current events.

Sincerely,

Nancy Morrison
Director, Parents Program

A Springboard for the Future

Beyond Boundaries Campaign Will Enhance Athletic Facilities

Number 57, defensive lineman Jeremiah Lechleiter, E08, is an engineer and an athlete. “The longer that I coach, I realize the success that most teams have correlates from senior leadership and he’s one of the leaders on this team,” Coach Bill Samko said. “He is an excellent student in the chemical and biological engineering department, plays football beautifully, and is one of the most humble and kind young men that I have ever met,” added Kim Knox, associate dean for Undergraduate Education. This fall, Lechleiter was named a New England Small College Athletic Conference (NESCAC) 2007 Fall All-Academic student-athlete as a varsity letter winner with a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.35.

Lechleiter is just the kind of student athlete that Tufts wants to keep attracting. Now, the university is poised to dramatically enhance its athletic complex as part of its Beyond Boundaries campaign. Steve Tisch, A71, the Academy Award–winning movie and television producer, and chairman and executive vice president of the New York Giants, has given the project a major jump start with a $10 million gift. An additional $10 million for the $30 million project has been pledged by members of the Athletics Board of Overseers and other alumni.

Don Megerle, coach of the Tufts Marathon Challenge Team and retired Tufts swimming coach, said that “our teams compete in the finest academic athletic conference in the nation, yet in some sports our facilities fall well short of our peer institutions. Our new complex will enable the university to fulfill its commitment to athletic excellence and a healthy campus.”

JEREMIAH LECHLEITER PROFILE

BY JULIA KELLER
Engineering Marvels

School of Engineering Nurture Leaders

From soccer star to ACL repair: Rebecca Abbott is the bees’ knees

Often-injured soccer player Rebecca Abbott works to develop artificial knee ligaments made from silk.

Soccer player and engineering student Rebecca Abbott, E08, researches the development of silk-based tissues to repair ligaments, specifically the anterior cruciate ligament, or ACL. The ACL is one of the knee joint’s four main ligaments connecting thigh bone to shin. When a soccer player tears her ACL—which she’s done twice—recovery time is slow, often lasting half a year or more with continual physical therapy. Abbott works with researchers at Serica Technologies Inc., to get athletes back into the game more quickly, perhaps as quickly as three months.

Abbott would have benefited from quicker healing the second time she went in for ACL surgery because the tear happened just before Hurricane Katrina hit her hometown of New Orleans. “I had my ACL surgery the 25th of August. The hurricane hit the 28th,” she said. “I was lying there watching the news because I couldn’t move,” Abbott says. Though Abbott’s three siblings, mother and father, fled the city unscathed, her knee and her home required major repair.

Since the initial cleanup, Abbott hasn’t spent much time in New Orleans, adding that she usually doesn’t spend more than a week away from Tufts. When not in the lab at Serica, Abbott rides her bike, serves on the Tufts board of the Society of Women Engineers, and despite her chronic injuries, has played center-mid for Tufts varsity soccer. “Soccer has always been my outlet,” said Abbott who graduated a semester early and has joined the staff at Serica Technologies full-time. “I’m not good at taking breaks.”

Tracy Van Tassel’s sweet vision for SWE

Van Tassel, a chemical and biological engineer, is expanding engagement with the engineering community.

Tufts’ Society of Women Engineers president Tracy Van Tassel, E08, has some sweet ideas to improve the chapter’s diversity and communication, including keeping the chapter website current and housing better records of alumnae. Van Tassel also wants to encourage all Tufts women engineers to become involved in the SWE national society.

This fall, Van Tassel organized society members to attend the national SWE conference, in Nashville, Tenn. “It’s great having a presence at the conference,” she said. “It reflects really well on Tufts.” Not only does conference attendance improve Tufts SWE visibility, it also provides a golden networking opportunity, she said.

Though Tufts’ SWE has become more of a career stepping-stone for future women engineers, Van Tassel said she realizes SWE is still an important bulwark against gender discrimination in engineering and science. “Male friends sometimes joke that women can’t be engineers,” said Tracy. “And while they’re joking, it’s not funny to us because it’s something that we actually are working against.”

Van Tassel draws inspiration and support from many places, including her parents. Her tenacity Van Tassel attributes to her mother, who returned to law school for her degree when she was 10. “My mom has been a great motivator for me in staying in a male-dominated field, even when my grades aren’t straight As,” she said. Her work ethic, said Van Tassel, is inspired by her father. “My dad has had a good balance between having to work and being with his family.”

“Male friends sometimes joke that women can’t be engineers,” says Tracy. “And while they’re joking, it’s not funny to us because it’s something that we actually are working against.”

—TRACY VAN TASSEL, E08

Profiles by Julia Keller, Communications Specialist
School of Engineering
Over 3,500 students and their families attended the Parents Weekend “Connecting the Arts,” a celebration of the arts on campus. Guests heard faculty speak on subjects ranging from the examination of technology and art to giant robots and Pikachu. Lower campus was transformed into an outdoor arts festival, where student groups entertained guests with gospel singing, ballroom dancing, theater presentations, and more.
Robert J. Sternberg, dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, discusses good and bad leaders.

Tufts celebrates a 14–10 win over Trinity.

Women’s field hockey battles against Trinity for a 2–0 win.

Tufts’ Ballroom Dance Club and Team performs.

Tufts Symphony Orchestra.

Tufts’ Big Band entertains the crowd.

Susan Napier, professor, Department of German, Russian, and Asian Languages, discusses Japanese popular culture.

Active Citizenship Summer Fellow Diego Villalobos, A09, talks about his mural project along the Mystic River during Saturday morning’s Mix and Mingle.

Turbo, a student break-dancing group, performs.

Jonathan Wilson, A04P, A08P, director of the Humanities Center, Fletcher Professor of Rhetoric and Debate, discusses his book Chegall.
Anjali Nirmalin uses art as an opportunity to equalize class disparities.

Nirmalin, A09, went to the Dominican Republic with students and medical professionals with the Tufts Timmy Foundation, creating a program that linked American students with children on the island by providing paper bag kits filled with medical supplies and postcards illustrated by students at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, as well as by children in West Somerville and at Tufts daycare.

Nirmalin is the recipient of a Tisch Civic Engagement Fund award, a university-wide initiative at the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, which provides opportunities to make active citizenship a hallmark of a Tufts education.

“The children can’t give a lot of material things, but they can give their own creativity” said Nirmalin.

This type of community action is what the university-wide interdisciplinary Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service is about. Beginning as the University College of Citizenship and Public Service in 2000 with seed money from Pierre Omidyar, A88, founder of eBay, and his wife, Pam Omidyar, A89, the school was renamed the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service after a $40 million gift from Tisch. Its mission is to prepare students to be committed public citizens and leaders who take an active role in building stronger communities; it accomplishes this by providing opportunities for students to bridge academic and research interests with their dedication to community service, and by building active citizenship into the existing Tufts curriculum.

According to Tisch director and associate dean Nancy Wilson, there is no other school like this in the country. “Others may piece the work we do—using a selective leadership development program, for example. But the overall commitment that every Tufts student should have skills and habits of engaged students is unique,” she said, noting that 50 faculty members serve as adjunct faculty.

“Summer internships are an important part of our work—providing opportunities for students to apply their academic learning to the real world and learn something about local action and the systems and policy environment impacted,” she said. This summer, Tufts will be the only university in the country that will have students in public policy internships with the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Washington, she added.

Rachel Brown, A10, had a life-changing experience after spending the summer of her junior year in high school in India. She returned with Andrea Shadick, A10, to Vadamalapuram, a remote Indian village as Tisch College Active Citizenship Summer (ACS) students last summer, where they taught English and held art classes.

“We brought a suitcase full of art supplies and after helping to teach English during the day, we held art classes at night and during the weekends,” Brown said.

“I chose Tufts because I knew I could work on issues like poverty and make a difference,” Brown said, though both Brown and Shadick were cautious about the kinds of long-term changes they could effect.

“I went optimistically thinking I could change the world, but in a way, the trip taught me to keep my optimism in check,” Shadick said. “It was wonderful to see how the students started using art as a way to open up,” Shadick said. “I think it’s important to get the West involved with the rest of the world.
Part of what Rachel Bergenfield studies is how functioning justice systems in West Africa enable a country to develop and interact with foreign powers. In Cameroon, she completed a field research project examining barriers to justice in the country. During a recent trip to Uganda, she began looking at the relationship between local government efforts to rebuild capacity and the international presence in development and humanitarian organizations.

“I'll see how this relationship engages into post-conflict social repair, focusing on issues of unintended consequences,” she said.

What makes Bergenfield's work even more remarkable is that the Tufts junior is one of several dozen undergraduates doing what is often only found at graduate and postgraduate-level research as a Synaptic Scholar, a leadership program within the Institute for Global Leadership (IGL) designed to encourage and enable students to pursue passions in an intellectually creative and supportive environment.

“I came to Tufts because there are opportunities here that don't exist anywhere else, especially for undergraduates,” Bergenfield said.

Sherman Teichman, director of the IGL, began the program when he saw a need to have an “intellectual fellowship of learning, rooted in a deeply supportive peer community, rather than isolated scholastic efforts.

“I wanted to create an experimental framework where students would truly enjoy thinking in interdisciplinary ways, one that would encourage active engagement with the world,” he said.

For Teichman, a perfect example is the experience of Sam James, a five-year Tufts Museum School student. After a Synaptic-sponsored research trip to Lagos, Nigeria, last winter, he is engaged in a multi year plan of study on mega cities. James has taken a leave of absence to pursue his studies on global poverty and inequality by interning with a Nigerian NGO, working on issues of evictions and environmental justice.

His research and photographic essay on Lagos, “Urbicide,” will be published in a new IGL-sponsored journal,

“I came to Tufts because there are opportunities here that don’t exist anywhere else, especially for undergraduates.”

—RACHEL BERGENFIELD

Discourse, edited by Synaptic peer Padden Murphy, A09.

Key to the program's success is its peer and professional support structure and its interdisciplinary freedom. “We have established a broad network of Tufts faculty, external scholars, and professionals who value integration of theory and practice to support the students. The Nigeria trip was supported by an IGL board member who is vice president for the African Region of the World Bank,” Teichman said.

James Glaser, dean of Undergraduate Education, sees the importance of having students drive their own priorities.

“The great thing about the program is that it comes from very motivated, deeply intellectual students who want to foster an intellectual environment at Tufts,” he said.

Hannah Flamm, A09, recently returned from Guatemala on a trip led by IGL's Scholar/Practitioner In Residence Program (INSPIRE) fellow José María Argueta, the former—and first civilian—National Security Adviser of Guatemala, to study how the elite in government and the private sector can affect, for better or worse, the persistence of poverty.

“The problem is when the elite conceive of their own interest as identical to the national interest,” Flamm said, “when it is not.” Using indicators from the Millennium Challenge Account as a lens—a new U.S. government foreign aid program designed to reduce poverty through economic growth and to
encourage the transition of formal democracies to functional democracies—Flamm and her fellow students interviewed government officials, representatives of major industries, development organizations, and the press. “To determine what might ultimately reduce poverty, we were looking for its most foundational causes—in other words, how the whole country works,” she said.

Kelsi Stine, A10, who was part of the Guatemalan group, noted that, “It’s important to have space provided where intellectual interests converge at different levels.”

Political trauma and the conflicted collective memories of those who were witnesses inspired Mie Inouye, A09, to see how memory impacts current political issues. Studying in Chile, Inouye became interested in how the Pinochet dictatorship changed the culture and how people see and write about an event. “I’m going back to do interviews with authors and workers in human rights organizations,” she said.

Morissa Sobelson, A09, who began examining health disparities in Kenya and Zambia in high school, organized a major symposium on the issue in the greater Boston area on campus this fall. “My interest came out of global health experiences but became locally focused. What does it mean to be healthy? There are so many factors; it’s not just about disease,” she said.

“IGL empowers students to take risks, think outside the box, in a collaborative environment,” she said.

Mae-Ling Lokko’s, A10, dream is to create sustainable architecture in African countries where military and humanitarian relief organizations have a presence. Lokko, who spent her high school years in her father’s native Ghana, envisions using the red soil commonly found there to make small structures that are wind- and solar-powered. “Gregg Nakano (another IGL INSPIRE fellow) gave me the idea to design an eco-structure that would be used by the military or relief workers, but would be habitable for the local population once the workers left. It’s mimicking the environmental system that’s already in place,” she explained.

Eyal Amit, A09, is writing about his experiences as an Israeli soldier during the Lebanon war from a humanitarian perspective, illuminating his own feelings and those of his fellow reservists. The idea to write the book came from Dean Glaser and was fully supported by Teichman.

“The breadth of projects which I’ve been exposed to, the endless energy and eagerness of some of our group members to really change things is, to me, inspiring,” Amit said.