Parents News
A NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS OF TUFTS UNDERGRADUATES

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The Parents Program at Tufts University
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Parents Program at Tufts University
Dear Parents,

If you’re a parent of a freshman, welcome! And if you’re the parent of a returning student, welcome back!

Parents frequently ask us in the Parents Program how they can get involved at the university while recognizing the evolving relationship with their adult children. As a Tufts parent, you are a member of the Tufts community and there are several ways to stay connected:

Attend regional events organized by the Parents Program or the Office of Alumni Relations. These may be particularly interesting when members of the faculty or administration are the featured speakers. There are also special-interest groups like the Tufts Financial Network that you may participate in. Events will be highlighted in our monthly e-mail newsletters, and can also be found on the Parents Program website parentsprogram.tufts.edu.

Come on campus to attend events, many of which are listed in our monthly e-news. Other web sites you can visit for special lectures, performances, and athletic matches are news.tufts.edu and ase.tufts.edu/athletics.

Sign up for the monthly e-newsletters so that you know what is happening on campus. Recently, many of you expressed appreciation for updates about H1N1 swine flu—we like keeping you informed. If you have not already done so, please visit parentsprogram.tufts.edu and click “join our mailing list.”

We look forward to welcoming you to campus or to an event in your hometown soon!

Best wishes,

Nancy Morrison

From the Director  Beyond the Classroom

Off and Running

President’s Marathon Challenge

You are invited to join the 8th annual President’s Marathon Challenge on April 19, 2010. Each year, 200 runners make the journey from Hopkinton to Boston to support nutrition, medical, and fitness programs at Tufts University, including research on childhood obesity at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy. The President’s Marathon Challenge is the largest known collegiate marathon program in the United States, attracting runners from around the country. Find out how you can take on the challenge as a runner, sponsor, or volunteer. We welcome your participation and support! Find out more at www.tuftsmarathonchallenge.com.

(l–r) President Lawrence S. Bacow, Joe Findaro, A78, A12P, and Coach Don Megerle at the Boston Marathon.
Kofi Aninakwa, E11, sees the future of monitoring health literally in a patient’s hands. The electrical engineering student worked on the device as part of the Summer Scholars Program, a university-wide initiative that offers research apprenticeships with faculty mentors to motivated Tufts undergraduates. Each student receives $3,500 for full-time research that ideally will lead to a senior honors thesis. In addition, a $1,000 grant to defray research expenses will be made available to each recipient up until the time of graduation.

“I’ve been interested in medical engineering and I spoke to Professor Sameer Sonkusale about working on wearable health sensors. The model I’m working on is much smaller than what is currently available,” Aninakwa says.

According to Sonkusale, the project is an example of how electrical engineers can make a significant impact on technologies related to managing chronic conditions that require continuous health monitoring. “Kofi is helping design a device that is compact and runs on a single battery to capture many vital signs, such as heart rate, ECG, and even glucose. The device can be fitted on the individual as a watch or a bracelet, or even as a flexible band-aid patch, and alert the health care provider in case of emergency,” he says.

“Summer Scholars provided Kofi with a keen sense of how what he is learning in the electrical engineering curriculum can be used to make a difference,” Sonkusale says.

Provost and Senior Vice President Jamshed Bharucha says that the Summer Scholars Program “is learning that’s engaged. The program speaks to what Tufts is about—connecting students and professors.”

Junior Neha Wadekar spent her summer examining outsourcing reproductive assistance surrogacy in India. “Medical tourism is a relatively new phenomenon, as more people explore less costly medical treatments in other countries. One of the branches that has evolved is couples who seek surrogate mothers in India. Couples will pay around $25,000 for the medical treatment, airfare, and other expenses to an agency,” she says.

Often destitute, Wadekar says, the surrogate may get just $5,000 of that fee.

Wadekar, a community health and English major, cites English Professor Modhumita Roy as her mentor on the project. “Professor Roy was so accommodating,” she says. For Roy, “One of the first things one notices about Neha is her exuberance. She is bubbling with energy and ideas. What is remarkable about her is that she matches her enthusiasm with hard work and dedication.”

Ross Thuotte, A11, went to Senegal last summer where he researched Africa’s largest bank EcoBank, and its impact on banking in the country. The international relations major was motivated by Professor Pearl Robinson to study the effects of ecobanks on regionalism.

“I ended up speaking to the head of the bank about whether or not Africa will have a single currency system,” he said. “The contacts I made are invaluable.”

Dean of Undergraduate Education James Glaser states that “by every measure, this program has been a great success. It helps prepare students for the next intellectual adventure—a thesis, a graduate school program, a career in research, sometimes all three.”

For Aninakwa, who left his native Ghana “to enrich his academic experience,” his work at Tufts is challenging but not overly so. “I have help from my professors as well as graduate students. They make it possible.”
The Parents Program and Health Service have partnered to bring parents answers to their most frequently asked questions. This is part of a regular series of conversations with Michelle Bowdler, Senior Director of Health and Wellness, Margaret Higham, Medical Director of Health Service, and Julie Ross, Director of Counseling and Mental Health Service.

**Q** Can you explain what Tufts is doing to deal with a possible outbreak of H1N1 (swine) flu?

**Higham:** One of our goals is to have a lot of information available on the pandemic website publicsafety.tufts.edu/emergency/flu, including a list of frequently asked questions.

**Q** What advice do you have for students if they do become sick?

**Higham:** First of all, anyone running a fever should come to Health Service. Students should not go to class if they’re sick. We’d like everyone with influenza-like illness to go home or stay with family or friends if they possibly can. There are a small number of isolation beds available on campus, but Tufts does not have an infirmary, and the isolation beds are unmonitored. Dining Service has developed a plan to deliver some basic food and fluids for students who do stay on campus in isolation. Health Service will help students access these services if necessary.

**Q** Will students have access to the vaccines for seasonal and H1N1 swine flu?

**Higham:** We had a record number of students receive seasonal flu vaccine at our first two clinics and we have ordered more vaccine. Parents are probably aware that production of the seasonal flu vaccine was delayed, in part because manufacturers were also producing H1N1 vaccine as rapidly as possible. We plan to hold additional seasonal flu clinics when the vaccine becomes available, most likely in late October to mid-November. Since seasonal flu does not typically arrive until January or February, we anticipate being able to vaccinate students before that illness arrives.

In terms of vaccinating against H1N1 flu, healthy college students are currently in the second tier of priority to receive vaccine. We have ordered vaccine but don’t know how much we will receive or when. Once we have concrete information about vaccine availability and clinics are scheduled, we will post dates on our website, ase.tufts.edu/healthservice, and advertise widely.

**Q** Can my child get medications on campus?

**Higham:** We don’t have a pharmacy at Health Service, so we don’t dispense medicines, but we do write prescriptions and there are several pharmacies in the area. We also have a relationship with a pharmacy in Cambridge, called Inman Pharmacy, that delivers prescriptions two to three times a day to Health Service. Parents can look up information about this very convenient service on our website, ase.tufts.edu/healthservice/pharmacy.htm.

**Q** What if my child is exposed to the swine flu?

**Higham:** Don’t panic! If your child has a serious underlying illness, she or he should come to Health Service to discuss preventative treatment. Otherwise, they should practice good hygiene and monitor their health carefully. If they develop a
fever of 100 or greater, then they should come to Health Service for evaluation. All students should have a working thermometer, and if they don’t, parents can help by sending them one. I can’t emphasize enough how important a tool a thermometer will be this year.

Ross: We have seen an increase in anxiety about illness, so keeping a level head and sharing accurate information is important.

Q Should I be worried if my child doesn’t return my calls?

Ross: Every relationship has its own norms, but if you have contact with your student every week or so, that’s pretty typical. If there is a sudden change in your student’s contact with you or they stop responding to your calls in the context of other worrisome behavior changes, such as depression, you will want to find a way to check in with them to make sure they’re okay.

Bowdler: Parents should expect relationships with their children to change when they go off to college. It’s helpful to have one form of communication that you find reliable in terms of hearing from your child—text message or e-mail, for example. Expect the frequency of contact to change and continue to let them know that you are a source of support when they feel the need.

Ross: It can be helpful to let your student know what kind of contact you need in order not to worry, but be aware that it’s normal and healthy for your relationship to evolve, and less contact with home is very likely to be part of that.

Q Can my child be calling too much?

Ross: If your child is really homesick, you can expect more phone calls in the beginning, but also expect that things will change as she or he settles in. In this situation, parents should feel comfortable listening, reassuring, and helping their student explore options for making connections with others in the school community.

Bowdler: It’s not a good idea to send repeated e-mails or text messages telling your child how much you miss her or him. Just send a line or two to show that you’re there and thinking of your child.

It can be very difficult for parents to tolerate their child’s discomfort. At some point, parents need to realize that they can’t fix everything, even when their children get lonely. It’s important to listen and not jump in and try to intercede.

Ross: If a student is dealing with extreme homesickness, or loneliness, parents may want to suggest a visit to the counseling service. It is important to let the student know that you support their seeking assistance, as students often worry about parents’ disapproval. I strongly suggest that parents visit our website, particularly our parents’ page, for more information. They may also want to suggest to their student that they visit the website as well. We are also available to consult with parents, within the limits of students’ right to confidentiality, about concerns they may have regarding their students. Parents can call 617-627-3360 if they want to talk to someone here.

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JULIE ROSS, DIRECTOR OF COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

Ross: When it comes to drinking and drugs, I really encourage parents to communicate openly. Although parents can acknowledge that underage drinking is against the law, it would be naïve to ignore the reality that experimenting quite often happens in the college years. Even though you may have, understandably, strong feelings against your student using alcohol or “street” drugs, it is safer for your student to be able to talk with you honestly about their choices and experiences.

While it may come as a surprise to many parents, there is abundant evidence both from our clinical experience as well as from lots of research data, that students rely on family for a lot of their information regarding health-related topics, and that their parents are highly influential resources for them. Open communication is therefore an important element in assisting students to make smarter choices. Similarly, we know that when kids are struggling, they will go to family and friends for assistance long before seeking help from faculty, staff, or a mental health professional.
Campus Safety

A Discussion with the Senior Director of Public Safety

For John King, Senior Director of Public Safety, being prepared is key to a smooth-running campus. He chairs the 65-person pandemic planning group, and has been part of several groups responsible for developing safety improvements, including the implementation of the Tufts Emergency Alert System. Right now, flu seems to be on everyone’s mind.

“Tufts has had a pandemic planning group for three years, which includes representatives from all campuses and schools. We’ve attended numerous awareness programs by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Boston Consortium of Higher Education to help us prepare,” King explains. “Larry [President Lawrence S. Bacow] and Patricia Campbell [Executive Vice President] are aware and have been very supportive of our planning efforts. We’ve already had several flu clinics and we’ll continue to have more as we receive more vaccines.”

We are in the early stages of a pandemic now, King says. “Our goal is to help prevent the spread of infection. We’re directing people to the pandemic website for the latest information publicsafety.tufts.edu/emergency/flu and we’ll be communicating frequently with the community,” he says.

“We have the mechanisms to make the community aware of important safety communications through the Tufts Emergency Alert System, which notifies subscribers via text, e-mail, and phone. If there’s a chemical spill, severe weather, or a weapon threat, we can get messages out immediately. The subscription process is an opt-in one; about 65 percent of students do so,” King says. If anyone on campus needs emergency attention, Tufts Emergency Medical Services, run by students who are Massachusetts-certified Emergency Medical Technicians, respond.

There are nearly 100 emergency blue light phones throughout campus and students can request a safety escort at any time, though if the call is far from campus, sending a safety escort will be at the discretion of the duty supervisor, King says. “Students should plan ahead. We have a campus system that runs until 2:00 a.m.,” he adds.

John also notes that Tufts has an “excellent relationship with the Medford and Somerville police, at the administrative as well as the rank-and-file levels. If there is an incident, local and Tufts police respond as an effective public safety team.”

Residence halls have security screens at the ground level and all have card access, though King points out that there has to be a level of personal responsibility as well. “Tufts’ residence halls are equipped with fire-sprinkler systems, and we also provide training for Resident Assistants from the fire marshal,” he says.

King points out that one of the university’s key attractions is that it is a city school; members of the surrounding communities have always been welcome on campus, just as our students have been well integrated in the communities.

“Somerville and Medford are reasonably safe cities, but crime does happen. However, the vast majority of crimes are non violent and usually happen when things are left unattended,” King says.
Bridging the Gap

Tisch Students Organize Through Social Networks

This fall, Tufts students will help bridge the gap between traditional community organizing and online organizing through social networks. In the new class “Facebook, Social Networking, and Community Organizing,” students will develop a Facebook application to map local civic networks. The result will then be used by area residents to promote volunteerism, collaboration, activism, and problem solving.

Taught by Peter Levine, Tisch College Director of Research and Director of Tisch College’s Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), the course is offered through the Experimental College/Communications & Media Studies. Additionally, the course is part of a three-year project on using social media to increase civic participation supported by the Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS).

The students will help to build one large, public, online “map” of the civil society of the Boston region, which can be used to find service opportunities, to recruit volunteers, to analyze power relationships, and to assess how well organizations collaborate. Once the map is more robust, it will be accessible through a special public website and through applications that can be downloaded for Facebook and MySpace.

“Students in this course will help guide the application’s development and its adoption at other Boston-area colleges. This is a unique opportunity for students to apply modern tools to traditional community-organizing strategies.”

PETER LEVINE

do not collaborate. “Building on the framework developed in earlier semesters, students this year will work in teams with community partners to understand and map those organizations’ networks,” says Levine. “Additionally, participating Tufts students will collaborate and share their work with their peers at UMass/Boston, Suffolk University, and other institutions, allowing them to expand their understanding of the Boston network.”

Since the CNCS grant includes CIRCLE as the lead organizer among five other groups, students will also have the opportunity to critique and interact with projects around the country that are using social networking software to support volunteerism or activism.

Submitted by Sarah Shugars, Communications Specialist

Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service
The Newly Renovated Cousens Gymnasium

The Tufts University volleyball team christened the newly renovated Cousens Gymnasium with a 3–1 victory over Wesleyan University. The court at Cousens, which originally opened in 1932, was rotated 90 degrees during the summer and several other enhancements were made to bring the arena up to modern standards.