Dear Parents,

As a parent of a current Tufts student, you most likely have a strong sense of the extraordinary accomplishments of the university’s students and faculty. Thousands of you were able to join us for Parents Weekend in October, so you saw first-hand the university’s engaging professors, the success of Tufts’ interdisciplinary programs, and the students who enlighten and entertain visitors even while involved in their rigorous studies.

These are not easy times, but at Tufts we remain committed to our students by continuing to have small class sizes, direct faculty contact, hands-on learning, and support for student life and activities. The Parents Program hopes that we can help you partake of some of the Tufts experience, too. Please visit our website at parentsprogram.tufts.edu or sign up for our monthly E-Newsletter so that you may learn about regional events and faculty lectures for the parents, alumni, and friends in the Tufts community. If we don’t have your email address, please email it to us at parentsprogram@tufts.edu or call us at 617-627-3798.

Please mark your calendars for Commencement events (May 14–17) and for next year’s Parents Weekend (October 16–18) and be sure to check our website for details and links that will aid your planning. Parents are important members of the Tufts community and we hope to see you soon!

Best wishes,

Nancy Morrison
Director, Parents Program

Sports Round-Up

Three Tufts University fall athletic teams achieved national success this past season. The women’s tennis doubles pair of sophomore Julia Browne and junior Meghan McCooey won the Division III doubles title at the 2008 Intercollegiate Tennis Association National Small College Championships in Mobile, Alabama.

The field hockey team, whose 19–2 final record was the best in the nation, advanced to the NCAA Championship game and lost a thrilling final to Bowdoin in overtime, 3–2. Coach Tina McDavitt’s squad was just the second Tufts team ever to play in an NCAA national title contest. The volleyball team also enjoyed an unprecedented season, finishing with a 29–4 record. Due to their success, both the field hockey and volleyball teams hosted their conference and NCAA regional tournaments on campus.

Several other fall teams posted major accomplishments. Football (4–4) defeated powerful Williams College for the first time since 1986, 17–7. Sophomore Stephanie McNamara finished 11th out of 279 runners at the NCAA Women’s Cross Country Championship, earning her second straight All-America honor.

Men’s cross country junior Jesse Faller also garnered NCAA All-America honors for the second straight season.

— Paul Sweeney is Tufts’ Sports Information Coordinator
Perfect Harmony
Thousands Study, Perform, and Explore Music at Tufts

When seniors Caitlin Felsman, Mike Pfitzer, and Debbie Neigher were considering colleges, a robust music department was a key attraction—as was a strong liberal arts program. All are on track to graduate this spring with dual degrees from the music and other liberal arts departments. And since the Perry and Marty Granoff Music Center opened its doors two years ago, the music department has seen a large increase in students wanting to study music along with their liberal arts and engineering courses.

Music department chair Joseph Auner says that though music has always been nurtured here, the Granoff Center’s opening created a renewed interest. There are over 180 concerts and events each year and students can study musicology, ethnomusicology, theory, composition, and performance.

“Students can perform in African, Arabic, Indonesian, and Klezmer ensembles or play compositions from the Renaissance to yesterday,” Auner says. There is also a world music room, modern computer lab, dozens of practice spaces, and the building’s jewel—the acoustically perfect Distler Performance Hall.

“We have extraordinary faculty, people like Kareem Roustom, who teaches an Arabic ensemble and has composed for the Philadelphia Orchestra; Andrew Clark, who is the director of choral activities and is recognized as one of the country’s most promising young conductors; a flourishing jazz program under Joel LäRue Smith; and award-winning conductor Gil Rose, who founded the Boston Modern Orchestra Project,” Auner says.

Robert Sternberg, dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, who was interviewed by Tufts E-News after the center opened, states it is “a spectacular place for education, research, and performance.

“Beyond what it does for music at Tufts, it sends the message that Tufts is not a place to stand still,” Sternberg says.

Neigher, who is double majoring in music and sociology, came to Tufts because of the solid teaching foundation and great music classes.

“At Tufts, I can combine my passion with music and social sciences,” she says. Neigher is working on a mix of jazz and pop CD, and hopes to go on tour next summer.

History and music major Mike Pfitzer has conducted six musicals with musical theater Torn Ticket II. “I came out of high school wanting to teach, but Andrew Clark told me I could do more with conducting if I wanted,” he says. “Though it’s a difficult job market, I’ll have more of a safety net coming from Tufts.”

Caitlin Felsman took voice lessons in high school, but it wasn’t until she was cast in an opera as a freshman that she fell in love with it.

“What’s great about Tufts is the ability to pursue other academic interests while getting a wonderful music education,” Felsman says. Double majoring in music and anthropology, Felsman reports that her parallel studies have made her a better singer.

“The academic component makes me a much more informed musician,” she says.

Felsman and Pfitzer, who are also a couple, hoped to attend the same graduate school, though that appears unlikely. Still, both are excited about the future. Tufts has given them many opportunities, they say.

For more information about upcoming events, please see http://www.tufts.edu/musiccenter
Thousands of parents, students, family members, and friends attended Parents Weekend “New Leaders for a Changing World.” Jeffrey Berry, John Richard Skuse, Class of 1941, Professor of Political Science, gave the keynote address on “Presidential Character.” Other faculty talks ranged from the entanglement of leadership and citizenship to engineering and entrepreneurial leadership. Lower campus was transformed into an outdoor arts festival, where student groups entertained guests with gospel singers, ballroom dancing, theater presentations, and more.

Claire Mauksch, A11, and Emily Code, A10, performing a scene from The Madwoman of Chaillot.

Linda Abriola, Dean of the School of Engineering, speaks on engineering for sustainability.

Dean Robert Sternberg delivers lecture on developing wisdom.

Tufts field hockey team beats Williams 3–1.

Parents, students, and friends gather before the Sunday morning run led by President Lawrence S. Bacow.
Professor Jeffrey Berry delivers the keynote address on presidential character.

Co-ed student a cappella group sQ! entertains.

Dean of Undergraduate Education James Glaser speaks with a family at the Deans’ Coffee.

President Lawrence S. Bacow greets Professor Jeffrey Berry.

Ruth Nemzoff discusses how parents can talk to their adult children.

Tae Kwon Do, the oldest martial arts group at Tufts, performs.

Ruth Nemzoff discusses how parents can talk to their adult children.

Sol Gittleman, Alice and Nathan Gantcher University Professor, delivers the endnote.

Barbara Wallace Grossman, AG84, chair, Department of Drama and Dance, discusses her new book about Clara Morris.

Gospel Choir performs.
Juniors Shreya Maitra and Benjamin Sacks are writing history. It may seem like an unlikely time to launch a print publication, but that’s exactly what the history majors have done as editors of The Tufts Historical Review, a peer-reviewed history journal that has found an enthusiastic reception here and at other universities.

Maitra, who was editor-in-chief for 2007–2008, and Sacks, the current editor-in-chief, knew that a historical journal existed several years ago at the university and decided it was time for a journal resurrection. Its first publication was spring 2008 and according to Sacks, the 250 copies printed immediately got snatched up on campus and at Fletcher.

“There are few professional undergraduate history journals in the United States, but we are only one of a very few at most to distribute off campus,” Sacks says. “The Tufts Historical Review can now be found at Harvard, Cornell, William and Mary, and Georgetown. Additionally, Columbia has requested an electronic version.”

Maitra explains that the journal was divided into two sections: research papers from select Tufts students and one from members of the executive board, who write editorials and book reviews. The inaugural issue featured five student essays, including “Cosmopolitan Slavery,” “Delay and Clinton,” and “A Path to Decolonization: British Reactions to the Winds of Change.” And getting an essay accepted is not easy: only 20 percent of submissions are accepted, Sacks explains.

It’s also an expensive publication. “The next edition will cost about $3,000. Funding came from the Tufts Community Union Senate, Jim Glaser’s (Dean of Undergraduate Education) office, the Graduate Student Council, and the Department of History,” Maitra says. The board intends to publish once a year.

President Lawrence S. Bacow, offering his perspective on the Review, says that “Tufts offers students both superb teaching and the opportunity to undertake original scholarly research at a leading university. The Tufts Historical Review is a great example of the intellectual contributions our undergraduates can make.”

James Glaser, dean of Undergraduate Education, is also impressed. “Shreya and Benjamin are entrepreneurial and intellectual, a combination not often found in undergraduates, and the result has been this very fine publication.”

David Proctor, department administrator and part-time lecturer, is one of the Review’s biggest champions and de facto advisor.

“Shreya and Benjamin made the journal come to fruition. The history department has been universally impressed with the quality of the journal,” Proctor says. “These kinds of projects are what Tufts is about. It’s emblematic of the efforts of the students, professors, and administrators.”
Flights of Fancy
Engineers Create Virtual Hang Time

I’m going to do a quick 360 to give you a tour of the landscape,” says Mike Stefaniak, E09, who’s strapped into a cocoonlike sack and suspended in a triangular aluminum frame from an eight-foot-high sawhorse. Mike stares out at an aerial representation of New Hampshire’s White Mountains.

He straightens his right arm and sweeps the frame away from him in an arc, steering the virtual hang glider into a left-hand turn to pan across the mountains. “If you’ve ever seen a car with the bumper sticker, ‘This car climbed Mt. Washington’ that’s the road right there,” says Mike who is virtually thousands of feet in the air, but really only dangling inches from the carpeted floor in the middle of the Center for Scientific Visualization in the School of Engineering’s Anderson Hall.

At the moment, Mike is the pilot for a mechanical engineering design team that includes fellow seniors Daniel Thayer and Rachel Yu. With the help of their mentor and hang gliding enthusiast Professor Lee Minardi, the team studied how real hang gliding pilots control their movements in the air. The goal was to take a program like Google Earth and create a virtual hang gliding experience that responds to a pilot’s directions much in the same way as a real glider might.

The responsiveness comes from a device strapped to the pilot’s hang gliding frame. The student-constructed device contains accelerometers, which act to sense the direction, changes in rotation, and force of the movement the pilot is indicating. “Essentially, this is a much larger scale Wii-type application,” says Rachel. “It’s the same idea that your movements control what happens on the screen.”

Dan calls up another simulation. This time, Mike is flying over Paris and through the Eiffel Tower. “If I pull the bar in, I go into a dive. If I push out, I’m going up,” says Mike as he narrowly avoids the tower’s structural supports. Just as in a Nintendo Wii game controller, the accelerometer senses how quickly Mike tilts the frame toward himself to dive or how he rolls the frame to begin a turn.

“Probably the biggest problem was going from the sensor to the computer,” says Dan, adding that Professor Chris Rogers in mechanical engineering helped them work out these kinks. In the program the engineers created in LabView, the computer continually recalculates where Mike is in space according to the Google Earth interface. An observer is essentially watching a series of still-frame renderings for each new calculation sped up to look like a seamless flight.

In future modifications of the simulator, Rachel says they would want their program to include thermals, rising pockets of warm air that real hang glider pilots use to maximize their flight. “Depending on where you are, you’re not sinking constantly,” says Dan.

Glider pilots look for different geographic indicators to help them control their altitude, says Minardi. “I can see that light patch on the screen there, which is sand. It’s been heated by the sun and may be generating lift. There’s probably sinking air downwind from that lake over there as it is cooler than its surroundings.”

Would these engineers like to take off into the wild blue yonder from their virtual classroom? “Absolutely!” says Rachel. Expense and time became factors for getting the engineers off the ground, but all three say their work on the project has definitely given them a hankering for hang gliding. When asked how her parents might feel about her answer, Rachel says, “My mom says, ‘If you go, don’t tell me. Tell me after.’”

— Julia C. Keller is Communications Manager at Tufts School of Engineering
PARENTS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND the Richard Snyder Lecture series with journalist Michael Pollan, author of *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*, Tuesday, March 24, 4:30–6:00 pm in Cohen Auditorium.

The event is free, but you will need tickets. Please RSVP to rsvpevents@tufts.edu or call 888-320-4103.

Lionel Zupan, associate director for research technology, introduces Tufts’ new Center for Scientific Visualization to visitors. The VisWall, as users call it, is located at the School of Engineering in Anderson Hall, and features a high-resolution rear-projection display that increases the amount of visible detail in an image.