Pitch Perfect

The Beelzebubs, Tufts’ oldest all-male a cappella group, entertained millions with their dazzling performances on NBC’s “The Sing-Off.” See page 3 for the story.
Commencement will be held on Sunday, May 23, 2010. Visit commencement.tufts.edu for complete information.

Hotel with room blocks for Tufts parents as well as other area hotels can be found at parentsprogram.tufts.edu.
Dear Parents,

Despite the snow lightly falling, there are hints of spring in the air: shoots are just starting to poke their way through the hard dirt; preparations for Commencement on Sunday, May 23, are well under way (be sure to check our website, parentsprogram.tufts.edu for hotel information); and there’s a buzz surrounding the latest applications for the freshman class of 2014.

Tufts recently changed a portion of its admissions application—students can now submit a one-minute video about themselves and more than 1,000 high school seniors have done so. You may have seen the news articles about this additional way of better understanding applicants, but look at our webpage where there’s a link to a Boston Globe article with a few of the accompanying creative videos.

The university also made national news when our beloved Beelzebubs came in second on NBC’s “The Sing-Off”; see the accompanying article on page 3 of this newsletter.

We at the Parents Program are delighted that parents continue to be invested in life at Tufts. You packed the classrooms and performance spaces during Parents Weekend; attendance at parent events held around the world has grown significantly; and despite economic uncertainty, parents have remained generous in their support of the university.

You can become involved with Tufts by attending events in your area, hosting an event, and by giving to the Parents Fund so the university can continue to offer an exceptional education for your child.

Best wishes,

Nancy Morrison
Director, Parents Program

Sports Round-Up

Tufts University’s winter sports athletes and teams reached several impressive accomplishments during the 2009–2010 season. Men’s basketball senior Jon Pierce became the program’s all-time leading scorer with 1,855 points. Women’s basketball earned its third consecutive NCAA tournament berth.

Men’s track & field senior quad-captain Jared Engeling won the New England Division III pentathlon. The women’s track & field team’s 4x400 meter relay was the fastest at their New England Division III meet. Senior diver Lindsay Gardel was the New England Small College Athletic Conference women’s champion in the one-meter event.

Hockey and men’s squash both finished with their best season records in several years. A young women’s fencing team had four competitors qualify for the NCAA regionals.

The men’s swimming & diving and women’s squash teams were preparing for post season competition.

—Paul Sweeney, Tufts’ Sports Information Coordinator
The Beelzebubs, Tufts’ oldest all-male a cappella group, are not the least bit disappointed to come in second in NBC’s “The Sing-Off.”

Really.

Bubs’ member Conor Flynn, A12, says the chance to perform on a national stage was a “once-in-a-lifetime experience. Sharing the stage with Nota [the winners], however, was an honor and a privilege. From day one, all of the Bubs were huge Nota fans. We took so much joy in watching each others’ performances evolve, and we developed a very special relationship. I can’t wait for their album.”

The Bubs won the hearts of millions of adoring fans and the judges with their upbeat personalities, great voices, and what judge Boyz II Men member Shawn Stockman said epitomized the college a cappella movement. They are recognized in the streets and airports. “It’s pretty funny,” Flynn says.

Senior Matt McCormick, a computer science and music major who will tour with his band All Out when he graduates, says that the group was honored to come in second. “There were no hard feelings at all. Nota is fantastic. Losing to them is like winning. I think I yelled joyously when they won,” he recalls.

“All the groups were fantastically nice,” he says, “and playing with Ben Folds was a special treat. He’s so goofy and upbeat. The practices were a blast.” For Folds’ part, he joked on the show that “You guys are what everyone prays that college boys are really like.”

The original Beelzebubs formed in 1962, when a handful of Tufts men gathered to sing, calling themselves Jumbo’s Disciples: The Beelzebubs. Since then, the group has recorded 29 albums and has an active alumni association who raise money for music in Boston’s public schools. Schedules are demanding: This academic year, the Bubs will perform in over 30 shows, including Singapore and Los Angeles, as well as locations throughout New England.

Balancing the Bubs and classes is a learning process, according to McCormick. “Time management is the key. It’s the same with students who play varsity sports,” he says. “There were definitely challenges being on the show. The biggest concern of the administration and professors was our learning, and some of us had to take incompletes in classes to manage, but I’m confident all the guys will pull through,” he says.

“The university is very proud of us and we’re extremely proud to represent our fellow Jumbos at every performance,” Flynn says.

So do the Bubs get sick of each other?

“Absolutely,” McCormick laughs. “We totally get sick of each other, but the whole experience, putting you in the same places at the same times with each other, makes it impossible not to get really close to all these guys.”
Working in Concert
Motivated Students Pursue Tufts and New England Conservatory of Music Degrees

When Michael Gleichman was looking at schools, he wanted a “normal” college experience, where he could study economics and business but also play his beloved jazz drums. “My interests don’t really blend, but I only looked at schools where I could do both,” the quantitative economics and jazz major says.

“Doing this program was the best decision I ever made... I’ve made great friends at both schools and it blends two distinctly different experiences.”

Michael Gleichman, A10

The Tufts/New England Conservatory (NEC) five-year dual degree program gives students the opportunity to pursue solid foundations in both music and liberal arts without sacrificing one for the other. Students receive either a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science degree from Tufts as well as a Bachelor of Music degree from the conservatory.

“These students have figured out how to do multiple things at once from an early age,” says Jeanne Dillon, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education and pre-major advisor to the dual degree students.

Dillon shepherds the students through the demanding program, helping them with their class schedules and choices on the two campuses; her cell phone number is given out to both students and parents. A shuttle bus transports students several times a day back and forth between the Tufts and the NEC campuses.

Students apply separately to Tufts and NEC and must be admitted to both institutions and be selected specifically for the joint program, Dillon says.

Gleichman, who has been playing for almost 15 years and performs regularly at private events, is ultimately looking to do something with economics in urban planning or community health; he has a job this semester as a research data analyst with Partners Health. “I found the internship through the Career Network—thank you, Tufts!” he says.

“Doing this program was the best decision I ever made,” Gleichman says. “I’ve made great friends at both schools and it blends two distinctly different experiences. The Tufts administration has been very supportive—we can register at both schools before anyone else does. Plus, Jeanne Dillon is the best and [Music Department Chair] Joseph Auner has been so supportive.”

Auner also gives credit to the new Granoff Music Center for creating a space that allows students to connect more. “The Granoff Center enables us to be part of the integral offerings at Tufts. There are more opportunities for students to become involved in the musical life here, whether it’s being part of ensembles, working on recordings, or giving dual degree concerts,” he says.

“This program is part of what elevates Tufts—it’s a special offering and it makes the university unique,” he adds.

For junior David Schockett, NEC was the main attraction because of its contemporary improvisational department. But he didn’t want to lose the social side of interacting with academically educated people who study other fields, like politics or engineering; he is a philosophy major. “Sometimes it’s hard to balance both sides, but the group of students is like a family. And Jeanne Dillon is the best. She has incredible energy, knows everything, and is so supportive,” he says.

Participating in the dual degree concerts are the best nights, Schockett says. “The two worlds connect and it’s magical. The students are totally in charge and it’s a true highlight of the year.”

Still, it is the internal struggle that remains the most difficult for him. “Tufts is more academically rigorous and I spend more of my time doing work here. But music is my priority. I am a musician,” he says.

“These students are so fun and gifted. They have figured out for a long time how to do two huge things,” Dillon says.
Everyone’s Business

Entrepreneurial Leadership Program Offers Students Real-World Opportunities

In the midst of this liberal arts campus is a vibrant entrepreneurial leadership program that offers students opportunities to develop innovative strategies to real-life challenges. The Entrepreneurial Leadership Program is part of the Tufts Gordon Institute, within the School of Engineering, and offers undergraduate students the opportunity to earn a minor in Entrepreneurial Leadership. According to Director Pamela Goldberg, it is the university’s fastest-growing minor. Alumni of the program include the founders of Emergent Energy, MicroWind, Reviewed.com, and Combat Studios. The company founded by senior Greg Hering, Emergent Energy, which consults on wind-power projects, was recently listed in BusinessWeek’s top 25 businesses run by entrepreneurs under 25 years of age.

“There are 450 students taking entrepreneurial courses this academic year,” Goldberg says. “Fifty seniors completed the Entrepreneurial Leadership Studies (ELS) minor last year, and there’ll be 60 this year.”

While the Entrepreneurial Leadership Program is within the School of Engineering, Goldberg says that engineers comprise about 20 percent of the students enrolled in the minor.

Students take classes in entrepreneurial marketing, finance, and business planning as well as leadership and innovative social enterprises. There is also a $100,000 Business Plan Competition, which includes two categories—one classic business plan (for profit) and one social entrepreneurship competition, Goldberg explains. Finalists from each of the groups are awarded $50K in cash and in-kind services.

Lecturer John Hodgman, who began teaching 13 years ago after he retired as president of the Massachusetts Technology Development Corporation (MTDC), knew he wanted to focus on liberal arts majors. “There is no academic credential necessary in order to become a successful entrepreneur—certainly not business school,” he says.

“A liberal arts education provides students with a breadth of knowledge, critical thinking and communications skills, and the framework in which to identify and test one’s values.”

LECTURER JOHN HODGMAN

For Ashley Osgood, also a Museum student minoring in ELS, her classes have taught her how to market her own jewelry and products made from recycled materials. “I have also been able to more accurately break down my expenses and profits. The classes have provided me with a formula (if there really is any) of how to structure a successful business. You can never do enough research and there’s no substitute for passion,” she says.
Global Learning
Educating Students Beyond Campus Boundaries

For many, a Tufts education goes beyond the boundaries of the Medford/Somerville campus. Nearly half of the student population spends time abroad during the undergraduate years either in one of Tufts’ programs or in one of the hundreds available from other fully accredited colleges and universities, according to Programs Abroad Director Sheila Bayne, A07P.

Tufts’ own foreign study programs are in Chile, China, Ghana, Hong Kong, Japan, UK, Spain, France, and Germany. There is a summer program in Talloires, France.

“Our model is immersion with support,” Bayne says. “We have predeparture meetings and use examples from previous evaluations to guide the students. Our goal is to put students right at the foreign university and make the experience as authentic as possible,” adding that students live in dorms or with host families.

The actual instruction is done by the host country, Bayne explains. “Learning how to learn in a different setting is part of the education process,” she says.

In China, for example, students spend a lot of time rote learning, which can be hard for Americans. In most European countries, there’s not a lot of participation and students are expected to gain knowledge outside the classroom, she says.

The university takes responsibility for all Tufts students and there are resident directors on all of the campuses who are either natives of the country or have lived there for a substantial period of time, Bayne states. “The directors are up on all of the issues,” she says. “They have a flow chart of what to do in an emergency and are always available to help deal with all issues. Students’ safety is our first priority.

“We keep the directors updated on our laws and customs and they visit the Medford campus once or twice a year,” she says.

Bayne fields many questions from parents after their students have settled in. “There’s often a time when a student feels homesick or anxious. I call that the ‘red flag of culture shock.’ I ask the students to step back and put their experience in perspective and not judge the education as better or worse. Invariably, students become more confident and happy.”

There are many non-Tufts program abroad options, which are included on a recommended list. If students opt for one of those programs, they take a leave of absence and accept transfer credit.

Tahira Pratt, A08, found the experience one of the best of her life. “I grew so much. I saw extremes—poverty, HIV, and sexual assault are major issues in the country, but the resilience, growth, and potential is amazing. Especially for me as an American studies major, to go to South Africa and learn about and see firsthand how issues like race and class play out over there was truly irreplaceable. For me as an African-American woman, it was important for me to go back to the motherland and experience the totality of the African Diaspora,” she says.

Devin Toohey, A09, spent a year with the Tufts in London program and commented, “I’ve grown a lot. Also, I had a ton of fun. I’ve said it over and over: best year of my life.”
Parents Weekend 2009 Snapshots

It’s Not Easy Being Green: Environmental Exploration at Tufts

Parents, grandparents, siblings, and friends flocked to the university during Parents Weekend, taking classes, attending workshops and lectures to learn about Tufts’ environmental research and scholarship, from engineering to politics, public health to literature. On Saturday afternoon, student groups entertained the crowds.