Introduction

The summer of 2007 marked the end of an era. It was the summer we unexpectedly lost Professor Gerald Gill. It created in us a rare mix of feelings – deep sadness, intense shock and an enormous sense of gratitude just for having known him. The start of the academic year that fall would be like no other. We knew we’d never hear his laugh or see him again walking on the quad, giving a lecture or sitting in his office. Despite our collective loss, we also knew that our very presence had been overwhelming graced by his.

As the Tufts community came to grips with our loss of Gerry, there were a number of ideas that surfaced, each aiming to capture what Gerry would have wanted and what mattered most to him. It was only in that way that what we did to honor him would become the most fitting and proper tribute to him. There was overwhelming agreement from our community that the best way to support Gerry’s enduring legacy at Tufts would be through the university’s endowment. Because gifts to the endowment live in perpetuity, we wanted to ensure that Gerry’s legacy was anchored at Tufts. What follows are the ways in which we hoped to provide that permanence.

Undergraduate Financial Aid

Since Gerry loved Tufts and its students, the most natural first step was to establish an endowed scholarship in his name. The scholarship would reflect his commitment to students and provide much needed financial aid. Since our university policy requires a minimum gift of $100,000 to establish an endowed scholarship, our first collective hurdle was a goal of that dollar amount. Once the fund reached that level, it could be immediately classified as a scholarship and would provide approximately $5,000 annually (increasing as the fund’s balance appreciated over time) in perpetuity.

In May 2008, the Gerald R. Gill Memorial Scholarship was established. To bring the scholarship up to the university’s minimum balance while simultaneously optimizing the gifts we had received, the scholarship was funded with supplemental special matching funds from the Pritzker Foundation Challenge*. The Challenge had been designed by the donors who created it to encourage increased scholarship and financial aid funding. To the $75,000 received in gifts in Gerry’s memory, we added $50,000 of these matching funds, and created a new endowed vehicle for financial aid support in the amount of $125,000. We are now ensured that there will always be a Gerald R. Gill Memorial Scholarship on this campus.

*Pritzker Foundation Challenge:
In November 2002, the Jay Pritzker Foundation established the $5 million Pritzker Foundation Challenge at Tufts University. The Challenge, designed to encourage non-donors to become donors and annual fund donors to become major donors, also had as its central focus to increase financial aid for students who wouldn’t otherwise be able to attend Tufts. New donors meeting the requirements of the Pritzker Foundation Challenge were able to double the size and impact of their own named scholarship funds, and make these new scholarship funds available sooner. Under the rules of the Challenge, every gift designated for increasing campus diversity – broadly defined to include political affiliation, geographic, cultural, socio-economic, etc – was matched dollar for dollar up to $5M.

Following the success of the first Pritzker Foundation Challenge, the Jay Pritzker Foundation issued a second $5M Challenge in 2005. The foundation chose to extend the Challenge because they joined Tufts in the belief that a diverse student body enriches the educational environment for all students. The second Pritzker Foundation Challenge was successfully completed by early 2008.
The Gerald R. Gill Memorial Scholar
The Office of Financial Aid has identified and named the first student of this important scholarship. The inaugural Gill Memorial Scholar is Odin Hillery, a senior and History major from Lagrangeville, New York.

Faculty Support
Having established the Gerald R. Gill Memorial Scholarship, we are now hoping to create a second recognition vehicle on campus for Gerry. Another meaningful way to honor Gerry’s memory – one that would also be very important to Tufts and its faculty – would be a professorship in his name. The Gerald R. Gill Professorship, an endowed fund, would support the recruitment of a new faculty member or provide special recognition to a current faculty member. This endowed fund would make permanent his academic legacy, research and scholarship at Tufts. Gerry’s scholarly work in the Department of History in African American History and his research in racial history in the City of Boston and at Tufts are legendary. An endowed professorship would support creating a permanent position for the Department of History in the School of Arts & Sciences, ensuring that the essence of his work continues. In academic circles, being named to a professorship (sometimes also known as a chair) is considered the highest honor that can be bestowed upon a member of the faculty.

Today, the School of Arts & Sciences is the home of 34 professorships, covering a wide range of academic disciplines and concentrations, ranging from Entrepreneurship and Business Economics to American History, from English Literature to Music, from History to Spanish Culture and Civilization. To date, there are 20 professorships in the Arts, Humanities and Languages and 14 in Physical, Social, Behavioral, and Natural Sciences. During the course of Beyond Boundaries: The Campaign for Tufts, the School of Arts & Sciences seeks to add 26 new professorships, bringing the total of these endowed funds up to 60. As of this writing, three have been established during the current campaign, each established by a single gift from a donor or donor family.

However, establishing a professorship – especially one with multiple donors – is no small task. Traditionally, professorships are funded by a single donor. In the case of the professorship in Gerry’s name, we will need to be collectively focused on helping one another reach the ambitious $2M goal.

The $2M target, though challenging is attainable, given the number of people who have expressed strong interest in honoring Gerry in this way. While it wouldn’t be the first such group effort to create a professorship – there is one currently underway for Sol Gittleman, which began in 2002 – it would be the first named for an African American professor.

The past has shown us that patience, a long time horizon, several lead donors, and a team of good volunteers are required to make a group fundraising effort successful. Tufts would be very happy to speak with anyone interested in volunteering.

Graduate Student Fellowship
Gerry was generous with his time and scholarship, sharing his perspectives on the history of African Americans in Boston, as well as the unique challenges facing youth in Boston during and after the 1974 court order desegregating the Boston public schools. His guidance and mentoring helped over 100 interns from Urban Teaching Training Collaborative (UTTTC) better understand the challenges of teaching in Boston (and other urban communities). Gerry believed that it was important that they understood how best they could prepare themselves to be intellectual leaders in urban schools and neighborhoods. An award winning teacher himself, Gerry provided the perfect role model for shaping the hearts and minds of aspiring urban educators. He was always at the ready to guide Tufts graduate students as they accumulated
their own experiences in and out of the classroom. A graduate student fellowship in his name would carry forward his positive impact on graduate study.

Stipends and tuition support in the form of graduate student fellowships enable promising students to come to campus based on their achievements, perspectives and experiences not their economic circumstances. Free from the demands on their time and energy spent on supplemental employment and the worry of debt burden, fellowships permit students to devote themselves to study, research and the application of their knowledge. In the end, these students make major contributions in their fields as productive and contributing members of our world.

**Summary**

All three aims presented in this report – undergraduate scholarships, professorships, and graduate student fellowships – are considered institutional priorities and are cornerstones in the current campaign, *Beyond Boundaries: The Campaign for Tufts*. Because Gerry was so loved, it would be fitting – even uplifting – to make permanent his academic legacy through a scholarship, a professorship and a fellowship in his name.

The Gerald R. Gill Fund will continue to be the repository for all gifts for each designation. Gifts made in this way will help to expedite our collective efforts and concentrate all private funding in one account for the two remaining objectives.

Thank you for reading this report and for your consideration. If you would like more information, or if you would like to participate or volunteer in support of the Gerald R. Gill Fund, please contact Brigette A. Bryant in University Advancement.

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