October 14, 2014

Dear families,

Hello from Dowling Hall, the student services center for the School of Arts and Science and the School of Engineering. It’s a beautiful early fall in New England, and the trees on the Medford/Somerville campus are ablaze in autumn colors as I write. If you’re following Tufts on the Instagram and Twitter feeds, I can tell you those terrific images don’t even do the campus justice.

This newsletter series is designed to help parents and families learn a bit more about what’s happening here at Tufts. As the Dean of Student Affairs, I work closely with students in the graduate and undergraduate programs and supervise a series of departments that support student life and engagement beyond the classroom. Now that it is early October, students are settling into their classes and finding a rhythm in their days and weeks: doctoral students are taking their comp exams, undergraduates have their first round of mid-term exams around now.

October brings a few other items of interest to your students that I’ll highlight for you: freshman finding their way, sophomores signing leases for off-campus housing for next year, and all students taking extra steps to stay healthy.

The Class of 2018 has been on campus for about six weeks now. All new students have undergone an intense period of adaptation since late August, living in a new environment with hundreds of strangers, diving into college courses, and managing academic assignments, time commitments and independent living in a way few have ever experienced before. With all this change, most new students put a lot of pressure on themselves to have figured out the whole routine by now. Many think on some level they should be feeling more connected by now than they actually are, and there are daily highs and lows for all new students. If your student is still finding his or her way right now, you can assure them they are in the majority.

You can help by reminding your student that it’s early yet. Encourage your student to distinguish between the comfort of finding an initial early pattern - for their daily routine, their weeks, new study spots, people to hang out with--and the longer term effort of finding richer connections to people, places, and ideas. Campus clubs and groups would be glad to see a new face in October. Programs developed through the Group of Six, the Residential Life staff, and the Extended Orientation series are designed to help students build awareness of resources and opportunities here on campus.

The Class of 2017 has junior year housing on its mind. This is peak season for students to talk with one another about finding an apartment and to talk with landlords in both Medford and Somerville about leases for 2105-16. Many juniors study away from Tufts, and while they are here nearly ninety percent of juniors live off-campus. We are trying to help sophomores and their families get good
information about this process. The Sophomore Class Council recently hosted an information night for sophomores, and our Community Relations Office and the Office of Residential Life and Learning will co-sponsor a resource fair for rising juniors and their parents on Family Weekend. If you are here for family weekend, come by South Hall on Saturday, October 18th from 12:30-2:00 PM to learn more.

Finally, the fall cold and flu season is upon us. The Health Service reports an early peak of students seeking treatment for seasonal colds. We are responding by reminding them all of good hygiene and wellness practices. As students get busier with classes and exams, we encourage them to continue to get sleep, wash hands, keep their apartments or dorm rooms clean, and keep their individual health fore to mind. Almost 1,800 students participated in the on-campus flu shot clinics last week and the Health Service had quickly-moving lines out the door. If your student missed all three clinics, the Health Service can help them find local options for vaccination, including many local pharmacies and minute clinics.

Thank you for reading and for all that you do to support your Tufts student! Please feel free to contact our team of staff here in Dowling Hall if you have questions or comments about your student’s experience.

Best regards from Dowling hall,

Mary Pat McMahon
Dean of Student Affairs