



SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING
Dean of Student Affairs
Dean of Student Affairs Office

December 2018

Dear First-Year Parents and Families,

Greetings from Medford and the Fenway! The last full week of classes is just coming to a close here at Tufts, which means students are busy writing final papers, preparing for Exams and Review Boards, and looking ahead to their well-deserved Winter Break. As we bring Fall 2018 to a close, I'm writing to provide you with some of the highlights from campus life this semester. I'd also like to offer a few quick words about helping your first-year student engage with each opportunity at Tufts once they arrive back on campus for Spring 2019.

Students returning home after their first semester of college will likely arrive with a lot of reflections on a quick and fairly intense first semester at Tufts. A few questions from you could further that reflection, including: What discussions have you had that you are still thinking about? Why? How did your experience compare to what you were expecting in August? Who do you think you'll be able to learn more from in January, and how do you plan to deepen your connection with them? Encourage your student to celebrate their achievements and examine the challenges they may have faced, including how they managed their time with study strategies. How did they engage the material in their courses? How might they adjust their approach in the spring? The new term will provide an opportunity to review and adjust any early habits. It might be useful to remind your student that they aren't done exploring Tufts. Far from it. Winter Break is a great time to pause, ask questions, and set new goals, both for the Spring Semester and beyond -- and it's a perfect time for first-year students to use parents and family members as a sounding board. As you reconnect, I hope you'll have some engaging and terrific conversations.

Selected Highlights: Fall 2018

FIRST Resource Center: October was an exciting month at Tufts. We saw the grand opening of the [FIRST Resource Center](#), a new space dedicated to supporting first-generation and low-income students, as well as students with undocumented status. FIRST officially opened its doors on October 1, and it has quickly become a vital resource for students who identify with the first-generation experience. The Center provides space, connection,

programming, and overall support, and it is helping bridge the gap between students and the resources for success at Tufts. Housed in 20 Professors Row, FIRST is neighbors with our [Office for Student Success and Advising](#), [Center for STEM Diversity](#) (which is celebrating its 10-year anniversary this month), and the [Office of Residential Life and Learning](#). Located next to the Mayer Campus Center, FIRST and all of 20 P Row have quickly become a hub of student engagement and campus connection.

Updated Student Code of Conduct: In February 2018, the [Dean of Student Affairs Office](#) approached the [Committee on Student Life \(CSL\)](#) to review and revise our Student Code of Conduct. Working collaboratively for seven months and inviting feedback from the entire Tufts community along the way, the faculty and student members of the CSL reviewed and updated a number of key policies, ensuring they reflect the University's mission and values, provide students with clear guidance, and align with relevant laws.

In October and November, the Dean of Student Affairs Office and CSL re-engaged with students who wanted to offer additional feedback on a policy central to student life and civic engagement at Tufts: the [Gatherings, Protests, and Demonstrations policy](#). In addition to circulating another call for feedback on this particular policy, the CSL and Student Affairs staff sat down with representatives from student groups, numerous student leaders, and several faculty members to discuss the policy in detail. These conversations led us to revise the Gatherings, Protests, and Demonstrations policy, making the registration of protests and demonstrations optional. Through this collective effort, we were able to reach an outcome that makes more sense for our community while still enhancing communication and steps to ensure student safety. I'm grateful to each student, faculty member, and staff member who participated in the revision process.

The [revised Student Code of Conduct](#) is a shared compact for the Tufts community. I encourage you to review it and to [be in touch with my office](#) if we can answer any questions.

New Events and Initiatives: A number of departments organized and hosted new groups and events in Fall 2018, offering students fresh opportunities to connect, engage, and have fun. The [Tufts University Social Collective \(TUSC\)](#) organized "Escape Tisch," a fantastic event that brought students together to problem solve escape-room style. Co-sponsored by TUSC, the Dean of Student Affairs Office, and Health and Wellness,

Escape Tisch was one of our most popular events this semester. You can check out the [Promo Video](#) produced by TUSC to get a sense of the fun.

Our [Asian American Center](#) also hosted a series of great new events this semester, including a series called “Accented America,” which brought four dynamic speakers to campus to discuss race, power, and difference. The Africana Center also launched several new initiatives this semester, including their [Art Gallery](#), which is currently featuring the work of a talented artist from the SMFA at Tufts, as well as a local artist living and working in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Each of our Centers and many other offices in the Division of Student Affairs are busy launching new initiatives and programs. I look forward to sharing information about other new efforts this coming spring.

Residential Life: This semester, the [Office of Residential Life and Learning](#) has continued its efforts to support students at various stages of their Tufts experience with programming, leadership development, and a connection to campus resources. Among many creative events in the res halls this fall, a “BOlympics” field day was hosted by Res Life for more than 800 first-year students. President Monaco also joined Res Life’s Pumpkin Carving Event in Metcalf Hall, and a “Keep Carm and Carry On” campaign in Carmichael Hall encouraged students to share their goals for the semester.

This was also the first academic year where all first-year students were assigned to roommates through the University’s matching process -- a shift from years past, when new students could select roommates themselves through previous connection or social media. We adopted this consistent, University-assigned process at Tufts because it is better aligned with our educational mission, which includes a residential experience that encourages undergraduates to meet, study, and connect with one another in meaningful, ongoing ways. This shift was accompanied by a renewed emphasis among our First Year Assistants (FYAs) and Community Development Assistants (CDAs) to foster ongoing engagement in the residence halls, and early indications point to a more dynamic, connected, and communal experience for our newest Jumbos. One key data-point helped us measure our success in this area: when we opened the option for students to request room changes this year in October, we actually saw a lower rate of roommate reassignment requests than in years past.

Over the summer, Tufts also completed the first phase of [Community Housing \(CoHo\)](#), our newest housing option for juniors and seniors. The

first group of juniors and seniors living in CoHo this fall have greatly enjoyed this new on-campus community, and we're looking forward to opening additional CoHo units both this spring and next fall.

Residential Life and the Student Affairs team have also been deeply engaged with students around the [new tiered structure for on-campus housing](#) starting in Fall 2019. We have been helping both individual students and student groups understand the multiple layers involved in this shift, as well as the ways Tufts will be adjusting financial aid awards so that students on aid will not have to pay more for housing in different tiers. We remain deeply committed to supporting full access to the Tufts experience for students of all financial circumstances. Tufts' financial-aid commitment sets us apart from many of the peer institutions we reviewed when contemplating this change. If you or your student have questions about the tiered-housing structure, please contact reslife@tufts.edu.

Off-Campus Housing Series: This fall, sophomores looking to live off campus in 2019-20 have been able to participate in our new Off-Campus Housing Series, which included sessions on the off-campus housing market, the process for securing a lease, and tenant rights. (Thanks to those parents and families who joined us for sessions via [Facebook Live](#)!) We've also expanded online and in-person resources to better support students and families searching for [off-campus housing](#). For those of you whose student is currently participating in the on-campus Housing Lottery for the 2019-20 academic year, [please let them know that they can be in touch with Res Life](#) at any time with questions. We're happy to help your student think through all their options both on and off campus, including [Special Interest Housing](#).

Mental Health Resources and Supports: On November 29, Tufts was honored to host an event called "[The Mental Game with Kevin Love](#)," which featured the NBA All-Star and champion in a conversation about mental health with New York Times columnist Juliet Macur. The talk commemorated Tufts' receiving the inaugural award of a [JED foundation](#) grant, sponsored by HBC. This event was a major semester highlight -- selling out approximately 450 tickets in mere minutes -- and it helped to underscore the importance of mental health and self-care to our students. It also provided us with additional opportunities to emphasize the work of Tufts' [Mental Health Task Force](#), which will be concluding its work in the near future.

If you were on campus over Parents and Family Weekend, you may have joined the conversation around ways the University is working to meet a growing demand for mental health services, an increase which aligns with current national trends. Our objective is to support students' needs through high-quality, accessible clinical services while also creating a broader, proactive community informed about care options and student wellness. One recent initiative from the Task Force is the adoption of telehealth resources at Tufts. This Fall, we have made special efforts to encourage students to consider using two such resources: [BetterHelp](#) is a service covered by Tufts' [Student Health Insurance](#) plan and offers students its own panel of licensed therapists via ongoing text communications, live chat, phone, video, and groupinars. [iHope](#) is a similar service accepted by most major insurance plans, including Tufts' [Student Health Insurance](#) plan, and offers students access to licensed therapists via videoconference. Both these resources may be helpful for students seeking long-term care beyond the [time-limited counseling services](#) offered by CMHS, and they can also be a supplement for students who have upcoming counseling sessions with staff at CMHS or a local provider in the community. Please encourage your student to try BetterHelp and/or iHope if you think they may be helpful.

Thanksgiving Programming: Finally, the Division of Student Affairs hosted a series of events during the Thanksgiving break for students staying on campus for some or part of the four-day break. For the fifth year in a row, students who stayed on campus were able to find one another and connect through community activities, including a “Games and Crafts” night with pizza and other snacks, and a Thanksgiving meal hosted in Tisch Library that brought more than 75 students together for a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. Almost 500 students participated in our Thanksgiving Meal Money program as well, which provided eligible students with extra JumboCash or Rhino Bucks to help them with groceries and food while our dining halls were closed. As Tufts’ population becomes more global, these programs have become an annual tradition. I’m grateful to the many hard-working staff members who volunteer their time and energy each year to make these initiatives and events possible.

I want to wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday season. [Please be in contact with my office](#) if we can ever help connect your student to resources, if we can answer a question for you, or if we can offer you advice about how to have a conversation with your student -- either over Winter Break or after. A good first point of contact for all first-year students, parents, and families is our Associate Dean of Student Affairs,

Chris Rossi. He can advise all first-year students looking for support, resources, and opportunities to connect. Assistant Dean Laura DaRos is also available to assist all SMFA at Tufts students. I know that Dean Rossi and/or Dean DaRos would be very happy to hear from you and your student.

My very best to you and yours -- and Happy Holidays,

Mary Pat McMahon
Dean of Student Affairs