



December 2017

Dear Parents and Families,

As we approach the hustle and bustle of the holidays and are faced with a season of unending commitments and multi-tasking, I am reminded of the unique and extraordinarily impressive talents of our Tufts student-athletes. These young men and women achieve at the highest levels both in the classroom and on the playing field. They are the consummate masters of “the balancing act,” juggling immense academic and athletic commitments, holding leadership positions in our clubs and organizations, performing service and outreach in the community and engaging in research opportunities on campus. If your student is an athlete at Tufts, you have a lot to be proud of. And if they aren’t, I hope they connect with the Athletics Department at some point in their Tufts career, whether that be in a physical education course, at our Fitness Center, or at a home game as a fan.

Just for some perspective, let me provide some quick facts about Tufts Athletics. The Athletics Department offerings at Tufts include the sponsorship of [30 varsity programs](#), [22 club teams](#), numerous [physical education courses](#) and a variety of [intramural sports](#). Tufts University is an NCAA Division III member of the [New England Small College Athletic Conference \(NESCAC\)](#). The 11 NESCAC member institutions are also among the 451 NCAA Division III members, the NCAA’s largest division. For Division III student-athletes, the higher-education experience is a time for multi-faceted learning and growth, a time to explore interests, develop passions and figure out what the future will bring. It is also a time to realize potential and test competitive limits. Because they are offered such a comprehensive educational experience, one that combines striving for academic and athletic excellence, our student-athletes are afforded the opportunity to have a uniquely well-rounded collegiate experience.

I would like to take a moment to share a few of the things I admire most about the Division III experience and specifically about our amazingly talented Tufts student-athletes.

Why They Play

Division III student-athletes do not earn athletic scholarships, and most don't end up playing professionally after college. Our Tufts student-athletes play for the love of the game, and for that reason, they are incredibly dedicated and passionate about their sport. They are gritty, tough and resilient, and they relish the mental and physical challenges that Division III athletics present. Our Jumbo student-athletes practice with determination, they compete with heart, and with their inherent drive to succeed and will to win, they have helped us build a championship culture and tradition of excellence at Tufts.

Academics First

As I'm sure you've noticed, I have been referring to those who compete on our varsity teams as "student-athletes." This is a term we take very seriously in Division III and specifically at Tufts. Our athletes are students first and athletes second. Demonstrating the paramount importance of academics, the 11 NESCAC member institutions impose stringent limitations on both in-season and out-of-season athletic activity that do not exist at other Division III institutions. For example, NESCAC institutions don't start their seasons until several weeks after other Division III conferences have begun competing, and coaches in the NESCAC are not permitted to conduct any practices outside of their competition seasons. These limitations have been adopted to reflect our commitment to academic success and to ensure that student-athletes have sufficient time to pursue and explore a variety of academic, athletic, social, co-curricular and community-service interests.

The academic success of our student-athletes has been prevalent for decades, and just last year, the Tufts student-athletes combined to achieve a 3.375 cumulative grade point average across all sports. Our Jumbos also earned 295 Academic All-NESCAC honors, a very impressive five Academic All-American honors, four Tufts Senior Awards and one National Scholar-Athlete of the Year Award.

Athletics on the Rise

The notion of playing for the love of the game, combined with our student-athletes being driven, goal-oriented and high-achieving, has translated into phenomenal athletic success for our Tufts teams. The Jumbo varsity teams have won nine team NCAA championships since 2010, including national titles in field hockey, men's lacrosse, men's soccer and softball. In total, our varsity teams have won 46 NESCAC Championships. In the Learfield Directors' Cup competition, which recognizes colleges and universities nationwide with the most success in athletics, Tufts Athletics finished a best-ever 3rd out of 451 Division III institutions in 2017, 4th in 2016, and in the top 10 for each of the past six years.

Our vibrant club sports program has also experienced some impressive successes recently. The Tufts women's soccer club team finished their regular season undefeated (6-0) and qualified for the NIRSA Regionals. In September, Rachel Kramer from our ultimate frisbee team was selected to the USA Ultimate U-24 National Team and will compete for a world championship in Australia in January. The Tufts men's rugby team went 10-3 last spring and advanced all the way to the NSCRO national championship game in Colorado. And last winter, Sami Rubin became the first skier in Tufts history to earn All-American status after placing 15th in the slalom at the USCSA national championship.

Adding to the Transformative Experience

Athletics participation at the varsity, club and intramural level simply adds to the transformative experience offered to all of our Tufts students. Our student-athletes are able to use their athletic success and the abundant amount of life lessons learned on the playing field to further their academic pursuits and launch themselves into great careers post-graduation. I cannot think of a better recent example of a Tufts student-athlete maximizing his Division III experience than Mitchell Black '16. Mitchell was able to capitalize on his cross country and track & field dominance to help him further his academic pursuits and career dreams. A double-major in astrophysics and mechanical engineering at Tufts, Black was a four-time National Champion and a ten-time All-American. His combined academic and athletic success culminated in Black winning the NCAA Walter Byers Postgraduate Scholarship, the highest academic award given by the NCAA.

Black is the only NESCAC student-athlete to ever win this award. Aspiring to be an astronaut, Black utilized his scholarship to earn his master's degree in Aerospace Engineering at the University of Michigan, graduating last April.

Thanks for allowing me to share some of the great aspects of Division III athletics, as well as some of the amazing attributes of our Tufts student-athletes. The many combined academic and athletic successes that our Jumbos experience are proof of just what makes the Division III experience so comprehensive and profound. Tufts provides the opportunities, but it's our remarkably well-rounded student-athletes who maximize them. As you enjoy the holiday season, I hope you take a page out of the Division III student-athlete playbook: do what you love and enjoy every minute. I hope you will also be in touch with the [staff in the Athletics Department](#) if there is anything we can ever do for your student or student-athlete.

Happy Holidays! Go Jumbos!

John Morris
Director of Athletics