



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

May 2018

Dear Parents and Families,

Greetings from the Hill, where students, faculty, and staff are finally enjoying some warmer weather and where final exams and review boards are just coming to a close. As we head towards summer, I'm writing to provide parents and families with a brief look back at some of this year's highlights, and to outline the next steps the Division of Student Affairs will be taking in our ongoing efforts to support students' co-curricular experience at Tufts.

It has been almost 18 months since President Monaco first announced the creation of the [Student Life Review Committee](#). Throughout Spring 2017, the SLRC sought input from students, alums, parents, and other community members. At the start of this academic year, we shared the committee's [recommendations](#) with the Tufts community. Since then, my colleagues and I have been working alongside students, faculty, and staff in various departments in order to implement short- and long-term plans to enhance student life. We've focused our attention on seven key areas — Safety and Wellbeing, Diversity and Inclusion, Campus-Wide Community, First Year Experience, Residential Life, Greek Life, and Space — and I'm excited about the steps we've taken in each this past year. Many of those first steps had an immediate and positive impact. We've gotten excellent feedback from students thus far, and I'm eager for your feedback as well.

Reinvigorating Residential Life

Some of the most immediate outcomes of the SLRC's recommendations involve a renewed vibrancy in our student residential communities. The Class of 2021's experience in dedicated first-year residence halls has been overwhelmingly positive. Res Life leaders also hosted a slew of new residential programs this year: a Community Garden Clean-Up, a

Middlesex Fells Reservation outing, a “Puppies, Pixar and Parfaits” movie night with therapy pets and desserts, an orchard outing and pie-making event, and Winter Olympic-themed study breaks with faculty members and homemade snacks in Houston Hall -- just to name a few. Two weekends ago, a group of our Fenway-based SMFA students also lunched on the Charles River before coming to Medford for the [Spring Fling concert](#):



We’ve seen other exciting developments this year in Residential Life. Our Residential Education program saw its number of student-leader applications double in comparison to previous years, and we are currently planning enhanced RA and Pre-O Leader trainings for this August. There was also very strong student interest in our [Theme House program](#) for the 2018-19 academic year, including great enthusiasm for Rainbow House and Start House, spaces with programmatic ties to LGBT and Asian-American student programs, respectively. As a result of student advocacy, both Rainbow House and Start House will have expanded footprints in upper-class student housing next year, and the Office of Residential Life plans to work closely with all Theme House Managers as they look for opportunities to host community events and support the health and wellness of their residents.

Expanding Space

The SLRC report also noted a need for more student-dedicated program space. In response, a campus working group shepherded improvements to a number of existing meeting rooms and also increased overall student access to program space. Breed Memorial Hall, a 300-person function space, hosted 88 separate events this spring -- more than twice that seen in past semesters. Tisch Library hosted several afterhours programs, with hundreds of students attending Film Society screenings and special events like mini-golf and laser tag. Lounges in Hodgdon Hall, Carmichael Hall, Harleston Hall, and the first floor of Curtis Hall have also become dedicated spaces for student performances and social events. Music, dance, and improv groups, student clubs, and academic departments have hosted over 155 events in the Curtis Hall Multipurpose Room this spring alone. This increased access has benefited many of our student organizations, including the [Buddhist Mindfulness Sangha](#), which was recently recognized as Student Organization of the Year, and the [Tufts University Social Collective](#), whose marketing team was honored with the Publicity of the Year award.

Enhancing Student Safety and Wellbeing

I expect that many of you have been following the national conversation around hazing and substance abuse on college campuses. At Tufts, we recognize that any such incident is cause for concern, and we have long-standing policies [against hazing](#) and the [misuse of alcohol](#). We have also been fortunate to see a steady decline in the number of serious alcohol-related incidents on our campus in the last 5 years. Through another SLRC recommendation, we renewed our efforts in these important areas this year by joining a national [Hazing Prevention Consortium](#) and developing a [Hazing Prevention Plan](#) for all our student organizations. We also built a [central hazing prevention resource online](#) that includes guidance, resources, and transparent reporting options. Our goal is for all students to understand the effects of alcohol and recognize and address hazing even in its subtlest forms. The Division of Student Affairs is partnering with senior leadership, faculty members, and student-facing staff to ensure a broad

understanding of our educational efforts. We're also asking student groups to reexamine their own policies and traditions to help ensure that members can enjoy a safe, healthy, and supportive environment. A campus climate survey was administered in April as part of our work in the Consortium, and we're look forward to assessing the student feedback it provides. A campus visit from the Consortium leaders this spring will also soon result in a blueprint of more specific recommendations for our 2018-19 student leaders.

Ongoing Efforts with Greek Life

The [Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life](#) continues to work with student leaders and a cohort of staff advisors to implement updated [new-member processes](#) for fraternities and sororities. All students interested in joining a Greek organization must now participate in month-long education and training programs to familiarize themselves with campus resources and expectations. In January 2018, we also announced a new policy requiring students to complete their first year of college before joining an [NIC fraternity or NPC sorority](#). We join the ranks of a small but outstanding group of colleges and universities that have adopted this sophomore recruitment policy, and we're working closely with Greek Life leaders and national organizations to ensure its success going forward.

Promoting Equity and Access

The SLRC report also asked that we more transparently address the hidden financial costs of participating in student life at Tufts. In response, our [FIRST Resource Center](#) for first-generation, low-income, and undocumented students will be launched this fall at 20 Professors Row. The work of the [Equity, Access, and Student Equality \(EASE\) committee](#) also continued in the 2017-18 academic year and has supported a number of programs across campus designed to centralize information about student resources and supports. These programs include [Swipe It Forward](#), which allows students to donate meals to a shared bank for use by those who would otherwise miss a meal, and a [Hardship Fund](#), which allows us to provide financial support for students when the cost of participating in an

event might be prohibitive. We have also developed targeted programming and resources for low-income students through the [Career Center](#), and our partners in [Financial Aid](#) have increased their outreach to incoming high-need students while offering [web-based scheduling with their Financial Aid Counselors](#). The Deans of the Schools of Arts & Sciences and Engineering also announced an increase in the Textbook and Personal Expense Allowances for students on financial aid in 2018-19.

Supporting Collaboration and Community

Several campus departments will join the FIRST Resource Center at 20 Professors Row. Located next door to the Mayer Campus Center, the building is the new home to [Residential Life](#), [Student Success and Advising](#), and the [Center for Stem Diversity](#) at Tufts. Support for the BLAST and BEST programs are also housed at 20 Professors Row, and the new proximity of all these offices has helped better establish intentional collaborations between them: staff and student leaders have begun working together to generate programs and create a consistent network of student support.

Looking Forward

These are just some of the developments and happenings across the Medford/Somerville and SMFA campuses this past year. Our team is looking forward to making further progress during the summer and in 2018-19, and we'll be keeping you informed via future Parent Newsletters. Look for an update soon about programs and initiatives through the FIRST Resource Center, and for action items related to the work of our Mental Health Task Force.

For those of you joining us on May 20 for Commencement, my colleagues and I are looking forward to celebrating your student's extraordinary accomplishments at Tufts and the Class of 2018's contributions to this community over the past four years. For those who have a student returning home from their first, sophomore, or junior year, I hope the summer brings opportunities to relax and reconnect. Please be in touch

with [a member of my office](#) any time you think we can be helpful, and thank you again for your continued feedback and engagement with the Tufts community.

Sincerely,

Mary Pat McMahon
Dean of Student Affairs, AS&E