

September 14, 2017

Dear Tufts Community Members,

I hope you've enjoyed a restful summer and are enjoying the beginning of the 2017-18 academic year. In early June, President Monaco provided the University community with [an update about the work of the Student Life Review Committee](#), including a brief summary of the Committee's recommendations for enhancing undergraduate student life at Tufts. As we begin the fall semester, I want to thank the SLRC again for their diligent and thoughtful work this past spring. I also want to express my full support for their recommendations, which align closely with ongoing programming and planning efforts within the division of Student Affairs.

My colleagues and I spent much of our summer reviewing the SLRC's report and making plans for implementing a number of their recommendations. To ensure we move forward with the SLRC's recommendations, we have hired a new position in the Dean of Student Affairs Office; Alice Shaughnessy will join the office as a Special Projects Administrator. Below, you'll find a summary of our current plans and an overview of the progress we've made toward several short-term goals in each of the seven key areas identified by the Committee – [Safety and Well-being](#), [Diversity and Inclusion](#), [Campus-Wide Community](#), [First Year Experience](#), [Residential Life](#), [Greek Life](#), and [Space](#). We are most excited to highlight changes students have already experienced this fall, including:

- New social spaces available for student events;
- A completely new Residential Life and Learning model that includes enhanced programming and all-first-year-student housing;
- Enhanced student safety, including a campus-wide anti-hazing initiative with the national Hazing Prevention Consortium.

My hope in sharing this with you is to solicit your feedback on the steps we've already taken, and I'd like to ask for your continued input as we develop long-term plans for establishing a truly student-centered experience here at Tufts.

Sincerely,

Mary Pat McMahon
Dean of Student Affairs

Introduction

The Student Life Review Committee concluded its work last semester with a set of recommendations for enhancing undergraduate student life at Tufts. In partnership with many campus colleagues, staff within the Division of Student Affairs have undertaken a series of initiatives aimed at meeting some of the short-term goals identified by the Committee. These initiatives, and an overview of the progress made on each, appear below.

Safety and Well-being

The SLRC made several recommendations to improve student safety and well-being, particularly at events and within student organizations. This was a top priority for the Committee and remains a top priority for the entire division of Student Affairs.

Many of the SLRC's recommendations require long-term collaboration between students and staff. Beginning this fall, the Dean of Student Affairs Office is working with students to comprehensively review and revise policies and processes related to student events and all student organizations. In conjunction with the staff in the Office for Campus Life, Residential Life, and Fraternity and Sorority Life, we are expanding training and educational opportunities for students related to alcohol, hazing, and the prevention of sexual misconduct. Our goal is to work closely with student leaders from a variety of organizations throughout this process.

To address immediate safety and well-being concerns, Orientation programming was significantly enhanced for incoming students. This year, incoming undergraduates participated in a more robust alcohol and substance-use program through the Office of Residential Life and Learning, and they enjoyed presentations from several outside speakers, including Dr. Jason Kilmer, whose talk on the "The Science of Alcohol and Marijuana" was highly acclaimed by students in 2016-17. The work of the Mental Health Task Force is also being used to proactively address safety concerns in the cultures of our student organizations. Most significantly, the offices of Community Standards and Fraternity and Sorority Life have worked this summer to have Tufts join the [Hazing Prevention Consortium](#), a multi-year membership program that will put cutting-edge research into our ongoing hazing-prevention efforts.

Diversity and Inclusion

The SLRC's recommendations for Diversity and Inclusion align with the goals of many offices across campus, including Admissions, the Group of Six, and the Equity, Access for Student Equality Committee (EASE). The Dean of Student Affairs Office continues to support these initiatives and has helped coordinate several new developments this summer. There was new diversity programming during Orientation for our incoming students, and the Provost's Office will be facilitating conversations about "Bridging Differences" designed to help all students create space for respectful disagreement and dialogue.

We also welcomed a Senior Director of Diversity, Pluralism and Inclusion, Dr. Linda Daniels, who will help coordinate the efforts of the Group of Six. Within the Group of Six, we welcome new directors in positions of long-standing importance in our community: the [LGBT Center Director](#), [Women's Center Director](#), and [Latino Center Director](#). In concert with these leaders and the Directors of the Africana Center, Asian-American and International Center, as well as the University Chaplaincy, the Division of Student Affairs will be working to develop robust intergroup dialogue programs and expanded campus groups focused on social justice, diversity and inclusion.

We are also excited to welcome the university's new Chief Diversity Officer and Associate Provost, Dr. Amy Freeman, who will be an important collaborator and resource for staff in Student Affairs and elsewhere in the Schools of Arts and Sciences and Engineering.

Campus-Wide Community

The SLRC's recommendations include calls for a more cohesive and meaningful campus-wide community at Tufts. In particular, the Committee stresses the importance of student organizations to the student experience and a need for a comprehensive review of student leadership programs and supports, as well as organization funding.

We recognize the importance of student leadership opportunities at Tufts, both for individual student leaders and for the members of student organizations who look to student leaders for direction and support. The Dean of Student Affairs Office is committed to preparing students to lead a variety of organizations thoughtfully and effectively, and we will be working with current student leaders throughout the 2017-18 academic year to improve leadership development and the mentoring experience that so many of our students benefit from as members of student organizations. Tufts will hire a new Assistant Director of Recreation and Club Sports to continue health and wellness promotion and support student leaders in Club Sports. The Office of Campus Life will also offer [Tufts LEADS](#), a series of immersive leadership workshops and annual conference.

First Year Experience

A student's first year sets the tone for their entire undergraduate experience. The SLRC greatly appreciated this fact and placed emphasis in their recommendations on the First Year Experience. The Dean of Student Affairs Office has used the input of the SLRC this summer to inform ongoing efforts in this area, and has worked closely with the Orientation Team and the Office of Residential Life and Learning to support work already in progress to enhance students' introduction to the Tufts community and the University's opportunities and resources.

To this end, Orientation 2017 included [new programming](#) and several outside speakers, including Dr. Becky Martinez of the [Social Justice Training Institute](#) and Dr. Jason Kilmer, a leading alcohol and substance abuse prevention speaker. The structure of the student experience during Orientation also was remodeled, placing students in cohorts according to their [first-year residence halls](#), which greatly enhanced their connection to their class, as well as the larger Tufts community.

Several other recommendations for improving the First Year Experience provided by the SLRC will require longer-term planning and community input. We will be asking our newest students for feedback on their Orientation experience, and we will be looking to our [First Year Assistants](#) on the Residential Life Student staff to provide us with their insights about how first-year students can be best supported as they transition to college and learn to become members of our residential community.

Residential Life

The Office of Residential Life and Learning has undergone significant change since the 2016-17 academic year and is a current point of focus for the Dean of Student Affairs Office as we begin to plan and implement all of the recommendations provided by the SLRC. Student Life at Tufts is, at its core, a residential experience, and we plan to devote a significant number of resources and staff hours to plans and programs that will fulfill recommendations in each of the seven key areas identified by the SLRC.

Several [professional roles in Residential Life](#) were repurposed this summer in order to better serve student needs and focus on residentially-based community building. In July, a new Director of Residential Education and three new Assistant Directors of Residence Life joined Residential Life to provide a renewed focus on programming. We have also hired an Associate Director of Housing and Operations, who has already begun to make important improvements to housing operations and the lottery system. Finalists are interviewing this month for an Off-Campus Housing Specialist, and we expect to have a professional in place this semester who will help build community for off-campus students.

The Residential Life [Student Staff](#) has also been restructured to better meet the differing needs of first-year and returning students, and to provide more meaningful leadership and skill development. The First Year Assistant program will provide new students with trusted and trained mentors in their residence halls, and Community Development Assistants will help foster community and develop social programming for upper-class students in residence.

The physical landscape of campus living changed in September as well, with the vast majority of the Class of 2021 living in first-year designated spaces.

Greek Life

The SLRC determined that significant changes to Greek Life at Tufts were essential both immediately and in the long term. Its report calls on the university to enhance administrative oversight and improve risk management practices within Greek organizations while requiring high standards of conduct from members; to emphasize leadership development; and to address financial and systemic barriers to participation and inclusion. The Dean of Student Affairs Office supports all these goals, and we have spent the summer developing long-term plans and implementing short-term projects designed to initiate a 3-year period of reform and evaluation for our fraternities and sororities as recommended by the SLRC. These efforts will determine the feasibility of Greek Life at Tufts and tell us whether it can correspond with our community's values and contribute to the student experience.

In the 2016-17 academic year, the subject of fraternity and sorority life created spirited debate for members of our community, as well as for members of the SLRC, and the recommendations provided by the Committee very wisely establish short- and long-term goals for the Greek community. Over the summer, the [Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life](#) and the Dean of Student Affairs Office made Greek Life a significant point of focus, and they dedicated a great amount of time and effort to ensuring that Greek organizations in operation for the 2017-18 academic year function safely and thoughtfully. The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life worked with chapter presidents this summer to improve safety and transparency for the [new-member processes](#) scheduled for this fall: all new-member events will now be shared with the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, new members will attend weekly educational events run by the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, and information will be published by each chapter about their individual processes and the cost of recruitment.

Tufts will also join the second cohort of the [Hazing Prevention Consortium](#), which will include significant leadership development and policy review for current Greek Life leaders. During the 2017-18 academic year, the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life will also work closely

with Greek leaders under an improved [advising model](#) to set long-term goals for each chapter. In addition, the Dean of Student Affairs Office has created a [new, central resource for students about hazing](#), which includes full information about Tufts' Policy, Massachusetts Law, and options for reporting (including anonymous options).

Space

We know that space has been an ongoing concern for students, and the work of the SLRC reaffirmed that. While several of the Committee's recommendations for creating new social spaces and buildings necessarily require time to plan, fund, and implement, in the shorter term, the Dean of Student Affairs Office is identifying new uses and policies for existing campus spaces.

Several event spaces have been moved to the student reservation system for weekend use as social space. Lounges in Hodgdon, Carmichael, Harleston, and the 1st floor of Curtis Hall (formerly Brown and Brew) have become dedicated spaces for student performances and social events. The 1st floor of Curtis Hall will be available starting in November 2017. The Office of Campus Life, in conjunction with faculty and Campus Planning, has also been working diligently to optimize the use of these spaces for student life. Central Finance is working with various university groups, including the Operations Division, Office of Campus Life, and AS&E, to lower some costs for student organizations using campus spaces for future events.

Conclusion

The Division of Student Affairs welcomes feedback on the steps taken to date, and asks for continued input as we develop long-term plans for establishing a truly student-centered experience here at Tufts.