



April 2017

Dear Parents and Families,

I'm delighted to introduce you to the [Office for Student Success and Advising \(OSSA\)](#) at Tufts, which aims to assist first- and second-year undergraduates as they begin their college careers. Our goal is to foster an engaging and enriching post-secondary experience by supporting students' development of purpose within the intellectual community. With a particular focus on underrepresented student groups, the OSSA supports the transition of all students by exposing them to a range of curricular and co-curricular opportunities, increasing their awareness of University resources, and acquainting them with the relationship between personal development and academic achievement.

In partnership with the [Dean of Student Affairs Office](#) – which acts as a central resource and starting point for students and families – the OSSA provides a variety of resources and supports to students. Our main areas of focus are: supporting students in their transitions to college, [Pre-Major Advising](#), [First Year Experience](#), the [Common Reading Project](#), and [Orientation](#).

[Pre-Major Advisors](#) are assigned to students in order to support their transition to Tufts and encourage intellectual curiosity. Advisors are available for conversations around and questions about academic interests. Students have consistently reported to us that their Pre-Major Advisors are helpful, friendly, accessible, knowledgeable, supportive, and provide connections to useful resources. Encourage your student to engage with them, both during the official advising period and at other times during the year!

The mission of the [First Year Experience](#) is to introduce students to the people, resources, and programs that will enable them thrive in their transition to Tufts and provide them with a foundation for [a successful progression into an academic major](#). Students are also educated about individual and community expectations and responsibilities and are exposed to a range of curricular and co-curricular resources so they feel empowered to actively use them. As a part of the First Year Experience program, we strive to create a supportive environment where a diversity of viewpoints and commitment to inclusion are valued.

The OSSA works with the [Common Reading Program](#) each year. This program gives all incoming first-year and transfer students a shared intellectual experience to kick off their time at Tufts. Each year, a committee of students, faculty, and staff selects a book for all incoming Jumbos to read. The goal is to foster conversation and engender a sense of community. The book for the 2016-2017 academic year was [Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America](#) by Roberto G. Gonzales.

The focus when selecting *Lives in Limbo* was broadly on politics. This theme was designed to explore the political dimensions of pressing social problems, and the book was meant to be a springboard into critical thinking and discussion for incoming students. The theme also tied into initiatives underway at Tufts as the university prepared for the national election. The program allowed us to bring the author to campus to discuss his book, and by having film screenings and book discussions, students were offered many opportunities to discuss political issues inside and outside the classroom.

In addition to supporting Advising and the First Year Experience, the OSSA helps support underrepresented students in a variety of ways, especially through [Questbridge](#), [Bridge to Liberal Arts Success](#), and assisting [first generation students](#) and students with [undocumented status](#). Tufts has proudly served as a Questbridge partner school since 2012. Questbridge is a non-profit organization founded in 1994 that connects the nation's high-achieving, low-income students with prestigious colleges and universities. As a partner, Tufts provides financial and social support to scholars throughout their college journey.

[The Bridge to Liberal Arts Success \(BLAST\)](#) develops a strong cohort of scholars from multiple backgrounds who strive for academic excellence, active citizenship, and leadership. This program works to instill leadership values that last each scholar for their entire college career and beyond. BLAST is a six-week residential program in the summer prior to the first year at Tufts, with program commitments during each of the following academic years. These six weeks help prepare students for a rigorous college curriculum and orientation to Tufts culture and resources. Scholars are introduced to engaging speakers in workshops and offered leadership development training that cultivates active citizenship.

We have a fantastic staff of [College Transition Advisors \(CTA\)](#) in the OSSA. CTA's assist first- and second-year students with course selection, campus life questions, exploring majors, locating University resources, and

discovering co-curricular opportunities. Here are our current team members:

- Joie Cummings: School of Arts and Sciences, Last Names A to G
- Danielle Vizona: School of Arts and Sciences, Last Names H to O
- Jared Smith: School of Arts and Sciences, Last Names P to Z
- Eliza Yuen: School of Engineering, Last Names A to Z

Please encourage your first- or second-year student to contact their CTA with questions or concerns about academic and co-curricular life at Tufts. We welcome parents to reach out to your student's [Advising Dean](#) with questions or concerns.

I hope your student enjoys their time at Tufts and reaches out to the OSSA if we can ever be helpful. Please also be in touch with us if we can answer a question, provide direction, or help connect you or your student to all the resources available here at Tufts. We're always happy to help.

Sincerely,

Robert Mack
Associate Dean of Student Success and Advising