



R.E.A.L. NEWSLETTER FALL 2020



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LETTER FROM THE DEANS:

After a challenging spring and fall semester due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are excited to celebrate the accomplishments of REAL students who continue to demonstrate resilience, even as everything around them is in flux. 2020 marked the 50th anniversary of the founding of the REAL program. While we could not have an in-person celebration, we hope to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our first graduating cohort in 2022. To learn more about the REAL program, visit: go.tufts.edu/REAL. To donate to the REAL program visit [this website](#).

Carmen Lowe & Kendra Barber

RSO PRESIDENT PROFILE

Fanny Cai, February 2021 Graduate

What is the RSO?

The Returning Students Organization is a student organization dedicated to supporting and empowering returning students at Tufts. Returning students may be adult learners who aim to complete their undergraduate degrees or students pursuing their graduate studies.



Fanny Cai

What are some of the highlights of your time as RSO president?

I loved working alongside my board members, and planning events for fun and destressing from our studies. I have fond memories of our REAL Lounge game nights and chats!

What do you feel you gained from the REAL program?

I've gained an education that I had only dreamt of acquiring, and an unwavering support system through my professors, mentors, and friends who continue to cheer me on.

What are your post-graduation plans?

I am currently working as a research assistant at the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma, and I will be applying for a Master's in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies and a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology.

ALUMNI PROFILE

Joey Gottlieb, A20 Spanish

What do you feel you gained from the REAL program?

The REAL program gifted me a lot, but two things in particular come to mind. One, it gave me the opportunity to return to school at a time in my life where I felt I was intellectually and emotionally prepared to make the most out of my education. I didn't arrive on campus with clear professional ambitions, so I was able to get curious about what I was learning, choose classes that were personally

meaningful to me, and go deeper into the intellectual and emotional content with other adult students. This brings me to the second great gift the REAL program gave me: a wonderful, diverse group of peers. We all have different backgrounds, but I believe we share a common curiosity, humility, and levity. We're not a large group, but I continue to take both inspiration and nourishment from those friendships.

What were some of the more challenging aspects of the REAL program and your time at Tufts? What advice would you have for incoming students?

A REAL student occupies an unusual place in the Tufts ecosystem. It can feel like hiding in plain sight. You're a student, just like everyone else, but due to your background, age, etc. it can be hard to connect with peers and feel like a part of campus culture. I sometimes felt isolated, and as many REAL students have reported, like an impostor on campus who constantly questioned my worthiness to be at Tufts. This was especially true while studying abroad in Madrid, Spain, where I not only felt socially isolated without any other adult students around but was also dropped into the deep end of advanced Spanish language and culture classes, to which I had almost no prior academic exposure. As many of us have highly independent personalities, I've observed that some REAL students prefer to navigate Tufts' demands and stresses on their own. But my advice would be to put in the effort to make connections with others. By far the most successful semester I had at Tufts was the one in which I spent the most time in the company of other REAL students. This in turn led me to form deeper connections with professors and even traditional undergrads. It built up my confidence and made me eager to come to campus each day, which was so important to my mental health and academic success.

What role did professors and staff play in making your academic and personal experience at Tufts successful and meaningful?

My time at Tufts wouldn't have been at all successful without the incredible professors present along the way. They offered so much and so generously, and pushed me to become a better writer, reader, thinker, and human being. Many also helped me to find the joy that can come with being a student. The enthusiasm for their subjects and emotional investment in the material is clear in class, but becomes even clearer during office hours and coffee shop chats. It made my own enthusiasm for each



Joey visiting his friend in Japan

class bubble over. It fueled, then and now, my curiosity about and joy for learning different subjects, and I'm immensely grateful to each of them. I also found so many staff members to be incredibly supportive. From financial aid to study abroad, academic advising to scholarship development, I genuinely felt like Tufts' staff wanted me to succeed. There's a lot of factors that contribute to student success outside of academics, and I was so well supported in those areas. Again, gratitude.

What are you up to now and what plans do you have for the future?

I'm currently teaching third grade at the Meadowbrook School of Weston. Starting a teaching job during a pandemic has proved to be one of the most difficult tasks I've undertaken, but my incredible young students and wonderful colleagues make it so that most days, I really love it. Ultimately, my aim is to work as a psychotherapist integrating holistic modalities and spiritual wisdom into clinical practice. I'd also like to teach, but I think that's much further down the line. To get started, I applied for a Fulbright to study in Israel for the coming year, and then hope to complete my clinical education right here in Boston. A lot's up in the air these days, so there's always plans A through D, but I'm optimistic!

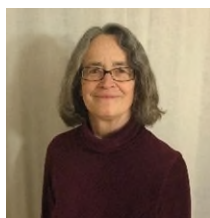
2020 GRADUATES (Feb, May, & Aug)

- Charles Abakah**, BS Biology
- Ruchelly Almeida**, BS Computer Science
- Brittany Blasetti**, BA Psychology
- Alexa Bosworth**, BS Computer Science
- Blyss Cleveland**, BA Sociology (*summa cum laude*)
- Joey Gottlieb**, BA Spanish (*summa cum laude*)
- Nathan Hollinsaid**, BS Clinical Psychology (*summa cum laude*)
- Philip Jucewicz**, BA English
- James Kennedy**, BA Political Science
- Alexandra King**, BS Psychology
- Daniel Kraynak**, BA Philosophy (*cum laude*)
- Jon Neralich**, BA Psychology
- Robert Reppucci, Jr.**, BS Mechanical Engineering (*magna cum laude*)
- Malyar Sadeqzad**, BA Middle Eastern Studies
- Deisy Schon-Adao**, BS Psychology (*cum laude*)
- Jessica Smith**, BS Chemistry
- Kai Stewart**, BS Applied Physics (*summa cum laude*)

FACULTY PROFILE

Patricia Smith, Lecturer, Romance Studies

What are some of the characteristics you think REAL students add to the classroom?



Patricia Smith

The REAL students are among the most motivated that I have come to know at Tufts since I began teaching here in 2003. They truly appreciate the opportunity to get an education, and they do not want to waste a moment of their experience on campus. For many, it is probably the second time they have embarked on this journey. Many have made mistakes in the past, and now they have the hindsight and the maturity to avoid those errors. Besides being motivated, the REAL students are appreciative of all efforts made on the part of their professors. They are very willing to share in class, and are not afraid of making errors in Spanish. Some of them have served as mentors to the younger undergraduates.

What advice would you give to incoming REAL students based on your previous experience working with REAL students?

Step forward immediately to get to know your professors and academic deans. Visit office hours whenever possible. Participate in class. Do not be afraid to communicate with your classmates. They will greatly appreciate the voice of an older adult who has the "real" experience of life. Let your younger undergraduate colleagues know that you are eager to work with them cooperatively on class projects, if that is a possibility in a particular course.

What would you want other faculty to know about REAL students?

I would want other faculty to know what a pleasure it is to have REAL students in class! I have learned tremendously from them, as have my students. Encourage them to come to office hours and to ask you questions. If the REAL students are willing to share their experiences with the class, have them do so in breakout rooms or in small groups. Try to remain in contact with them once they leave your class.

STUDENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Fanny Cai, nominee for the Marshall Scholarship. Recipient of the REAL Prize Scholarship awarded annually to a senior who has demonstrated perseverance and generosity in helping REAL students achieve their academic goals.

Rachel Callahan, recipient of the Dolan Family Endowed Scholarship fund based on achievements and attributes in Arts & Sciences.

Michael Feltis, admitted to the Tufts BS/MS program in Mechanical Engineering.

Jesse Lauden, admitted to the Tufts BA/MA program in Urban & Environmental Policy & Planning.

Edward Robinson, admitted to the MD/PhD program at Morehouse College.

Sam Yhanto, recipient of the Osher Scholarship. Admitted into the Laidlaw Scholars program.

Newsletter compiled by Kendra Barber