



**To: Trustees and Members of the Boards**  
**From: Anthony P. Monaco and David R. Harris**  
**Re: The Role of Trustees and Board Members in the Admissions Process**  
**Date: October 23, 2012**

Each year some new and returning trustees and members of the Boards raise questions about the appropriate role for them in the admissions process. As you know, Tufts is one of the most selective universities in the country. In fact, the 2012 edition of *US News & World Report* ranked Tufts 17<sup>th</sup> in the country for undergraduate selectivity among national universities. For the third year in a row Tufts set a new record for selectivity, with 21.4 percent of the 16,379 first-year applicants offered a place in the Class of 2016; transfer admission was similarly selective, with a 23 percent acceptance rate for 95 openings. The typical admitted student ranked in the top 4 percent of her class with SAT scores of 724 critical reading (formerly verbal) and 729 math; accepted students in Engineering had a mean SAT math score of 759.

As a result of these competitive parameters and the increasing desirability of a Tufts degree, applicants and their parents, relatives, and friends often contact us to see how they can support an application. This memo lays out some guidelines and suggestions that we hope you will find helpful both in dealing with these requests and in working with our staff. While this memo focuses on undergraduate admissions because it is the area about which we receive the most questions, we hope it is helpful with respect to graduate and professional admissions as well.

**We invite input from you if you know an applicant personally.** If you personally know an applicant, by all means please share your views with the admissions staff via the Trustees Office or a member of the Advancement staff. (Please refrain from direct contact with the Admissions Office.) Knowledge of an applicant's relatives is far less useful than direct knowledge of a candidate for admission, although family information can be helpful when it puts the applicant's qualifications and experience in context. *We also like to know if Tufts is unambiguously an applicant's first choice.* Before you invest your time on behalf of an applicant, please try to ascertain whether they really intend to enroll at Tufts if admitted.

**Please communicate your knowledge of an applicant in writing.** To ensure that your comments are noted in the applicant's file, please send them to either Paul Tringale in the Trustees Office, the staff in the Office of the Boards, or Eric Johnson in Advancement. Given the volume of applications, a written recommendation is critical.

**It is perfectly reasonable to request that a case receive a close read.** Given the large number of applications we receive, you can provide assistance to an applicant by requesting that his or her file gets a "close read." This ensures that a senior member of our admissions staff will review the file and reduces the chance that any important information will be overlooked. Many

people who call you may be satisfied with “a close read.” Moreover, we always tell them that this is all we can do, and that after the close read the rest is up to the student.

**Feel free to ask for a heads up on the outcome.** We will also be happy to provide you with advance (48-hour) notice of an admissions decision so you can soften the blow on a negative decision, if you wish. For equity considerations, the Admissions Office requests that “good news” should be delivered in the form of the letter of admission itself, with a congratulatory call afterwards. Advanced notice of acceptances has created complications for the Admissions Office among other applicants from the same high school who have not received their decisions. Please let Paul, Eric, or the staff in the Office of the Boards of Advisors know if you would like to receive such advance notice. Typically, Early Decision Round I notifications are mailed by December 15; Early Decision Round II notifications are mailed by February 10; and Regular Decision notifications by March 30. Transfer applications are reviewed and selected on a “rolling” basis from mid-April to the end of May; please remember that opportunities for transfer admission are very limited. Similarly, the Wait List may or may not activate each year.

**We can sometimes arrange for applicants to meet individual faculty or students who share their interests.** Similarly, we are also happy to help make arrangements for students to receive a special tour. This is another way that you can be responsive to those who are seeking your assistance without compromising the integrity of the admissions process. You can make these arrangements by contacting Eric Johnson or Paul Tringale or the staff in the Office of the Boards.

**You might find it helpful to remind people who ask for your assistance that your role is limited to providing input into the process.** Trustees and members of the Boards do not make admissions decisions. We have a professional admissions staff that works very hard to assure that we enroll an outstanding class each year and that everyone in the process is treated fairly. We ourselves make it a point never to intervene in an individual admissions decision. We hope that you too will respect the process. Experience tells us that applicants who have the strongest advocates are often among the weakest in our pool. Often these advocates do not know the full story of an applicant’s record.

**We find it is best never to suggest based upon your own review of an applicant’s qualifications that an applicant is “likely” to be admitted.** In light of our acceptance rate and the depth of the applicant pool (last year, nearly 75% were evaluated as “qualified” for admission), it is *very* hard to predict who will be admitted based on the data that is shared with you (even when the data appears to be “strong”). Such statements can place you in an awkward position later in the process if the student is denied admission. We always emphasize to parents and friends how difficult it is to predict the process. We encourage their kids to apply, say that we will try to ensure that the case will get a good read (see below), but in the end, whether the student gets in will be up to the student.

**Please do not promise admission or suggest that an applicant’s admissions prospects would be enhanced if the family were to make a donation to the university.** We always tell people that while we appreciate their desire to support the university, they will have plenty of opportunities to support Tufts in the future, *after* the admissions process has run its course. We

hope never to read in the press about a Tufts trustee or Board member negotiating for admission of an applicant in return for a gift.

**Please be kind to our admissions staff and understanding of the difficult job that they do.**

Each year the admissions staff disappoints thousands of students and their parents. Their responsibility is to admit an entire class, and the necessary decisions are not easy. The job is not made easier if any of us take offense when the staff decides a case differently from the way we would like them to do.

There is an art as well as a science to admissions. Our staff, when admitting the class, seeks to achieve diversity across a broad range of factors. They seek to assemble a class that will meet the challenge of a Tufts education and be successful in their studies. None of us wants to see a student come to Tufts and fail. We run that risk if we don't hold all students to the same high standard in our admissions reviews. Similarly, many candidates are highly qualified and fine distinctions must be drawn. Your understanding and cooperation will help to ensure that we have a strong class where each student is capable of contributing significantly to our academic community. We are grateful for your engagement and support.