



THEME 2

Enabling and Integrating  
Transformational Experiences



*Top: Tufts student interviews a Haitian resident about access to health care.*

*Bottom: Professor leads an interactive lecture.*

**A**t Tufts we know that life is a collection of experiences that affords us knowledge about ourselves, one another, and the world. This learning process compels us to question prior assumptions and beliefs. Experience teaches us that while learning is often intentional, it is just as important to be open to the power of serendipity. A vital part of the educational process is learning how to learn, embracing new opportunities, and developing skills to explore the world and discover one's place in it. The Tufts community facilitates this journey of meaningful learning through the relationships that students, faculty, staff, and alumni develop with one another. The combined effect creates an environment that encourages intellectual curiosity by helping students develop, and faculty members hone the skills necessary for sustained critical and creative thinking in this ever-changing world.

To be a student—no matter the degree or discipline—is to be directly engaged in this process of continuous learning, development, and discovery. An important element of this process, which cannot be overstated, is that it often includes multiple failures, learning from those failures, and adapting accordingly. Our students, in their academic and nonacademic pursuits, must learn to take risks, not be afraid of failure, and move beyond the boundaries of their comfort zones. In this way they will expand their capacities beyond what they thought possible. As a student-centered university, we provide the expectations, opportunities, and support for our students to pursue transformational experiences.

Transformational experiences can be defined as experiences that fundamentally challenge a

person's assumptions and preconceptions, as well as their beliefs and values, affecting how they understand themselves, others, and the world. These experiences are likely to occur when people venture beyond their comfort zones—physically, intellectually, socially, culturally, geographically, or otherwise. The novel thinking that often accompanies unfamiliarity can lead individuals to appreciate unexamined parts of their environments, discover new parts of themselves or others, and achieve in ways previously thought impossible.

Transformational experiences can occur inside and outside the classroom, and these experiences can be positive and negative. Students benefit from assistance in drawing as much meaning and insight as possible from their explorations of the unfamiliar. This assistance

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often comes from professors, peers, coaches, advisers, chaplains, counselors, and others who are dedicated to helping students embrace and process transformational experiences. We believe that we have a responsibility to ensure that students have the appropriate level of support, and at least one adult in the community whom they trust for open consultation, to integrate the different levels of learning that emerge over the course of their undergraduate or graduate years. Tufts will cultivate a challenging, supportive environment that enables and integrates transformational experiences, one that would be difficult to replicate through online or other nonresidential learning environments.

Students and faculty meaningfully reflect on and leverage their experiences by integrating their personal revelations into their studies, aspirations, and the broader intellectual life of the university. Transformational experiences are perhaps best modeled by the life of a student, but our student-centered orientation drives an ideal of the learning lifestyle that extends to all partners in teaching and learning processes. Therefore, faculty and students reap the

transformational benefits of an environment geared toward relentless pursuit of knowledge, inclusion, innovation, and impact.

Tufts students and faculty find transformational experiences in the classrooms where they are intellectually challenged by faculty employing both well-established and highly innovative pedagogical approaches; in research and creative environments where they participate in making discoveries that have long-lasting impact on their fields of study; and in many other venues where our diverse population develops deep and lasting relationships. Of course, life itself is full of such experiences, and all the more so for life on a university campus, which can and should be truly transformational.

A prime example of how we promote our unique capacity to have transformational and lifelong impact is the Graduate Institute for Teaching (GIFT). Focusing on training graduate students for deeper and more effective teaching and evaluation of undergraduates—an often-neglected but critical component for most in their future careers—this program showcases how our student-centered ethos ultimately integrates the



*Top: Top o' the Hill Tribute and Illumination Ceremony welcoming students.*

*Bottom: Installations at the Aidekman Arts Center offer a great opportunity to meet others from around the university.*



*Top: Students engage in hands-on equine medicine.*

*Bottom: An alumna leads a career services discussion on networking.*

education we provide at all levels, and applies it to all aspects of the teaching and learning interface. Graduate students have transformational experiences while learning how to create transformational learning environments for undergraduates. Similarly, the annual Arts and Sciences Graduate Research Symposium and similar programs in other schools provide graduate students with an opportunity to introduce their research and hone their presentation skills to an audience of fellow students, faculty, alumni, and invited guests. At the undergraduate level, Summer Scholars is one of the programs that provides students with faculty-mentored opportunities to experience the transformational impacts of conducting and presenting original research in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. The challenge for Tufts is to find ways to make comparable experiences available to all students, both early, when a budding interest can be encouraged, and late, when a maturing interest can be fully engaged.

Through our commitments to active citizenship, public service, international engagement, and wellness, many students find institutional support to supplement their academic lives with extracurricular activities, athletics, entrepreneurial ventures, internship opportunities, and other activities outside the classroom. Intentional, innovative programming offered through university entities—such as the Tufts European Center, Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, the Institute for Global Leadership, and the Office of Programs Abroad

(approximately 45 percent of Tufts undergraduates study abroad for at least a semester), annually provides thousands of students with unique learning experiences that reach beyond the confines of traditional higher education and the comfort zones of the students involved. These programs appeal to students of widely varying interests and immerse them in new environments with the appropriate prior preparation, including language study and inquiry into relevant practical complexities and ethical implications. Tufts Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine run programs in global health in several countries providing students with collaborative research, education, and training opportunities while serving populations in need. In Milot, Haiti, students work side by side with Tufts clinical faculty and Haitian physicians in variety of outpatient adult, pediatric, HIV, and specialty clinics as well as inpatient medical, surgical, and obstetrics. Closer to home, the Tufts at Tech Community Veterinary Clinic is a unique partnership between Worcester Technical High School and the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, in which all Cummings students provide compassionate and affordable veterinary care in an underserved community. This experience exposes them to the animal-care challenges and ethical dilemmas important to their development as health professionals. In its inaugural year, Tufts at Tech provided preventative and primary care services to 3,000 companion animals.

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#### T10 STRATEGIC GOALS – TUFTS IN 2023

Every Tufts undergraduate and graduate student has meaningful and supported transformational experiences, and our faculty has the resources required to enable and to participate in transformational experiences. New technologies have been implemented that provide our faculty with the necessary tools to enhance and redefine the classroom and cocurricular educational experience. New programs have been developed that assist our students with their intellectual and social growth. The university has developed and faculty members have become accustomed to regularly participating in engaging sessions that expose faculty to proven and novel teaching and learning techniques that have transformed their teaching and enabled higher levels of student learning. Through partnering with our engaged and generous alumni community and our faculty, the number of local and global research opportunities has increased, as well as the number of students and faculty who participate in these projects, resulting in unique opportunities for discovery. Traditional educational methods have been augmented with real-world internship opportunities from

our local and global alumni and partners that provide students with new experiences and perspectives that are grounded in effective preparation and thoughtful reflection as they prepare to launch their careers.

#### T10 INITIATIVES

To best facilitate the achievement of our stated T10 strategic goals, the following initiatives have emerged through the strategic-planning process. These initiatives reinforce and strengthen Tufts' value proposition as a leader in higher education during a time of uncertainty, provide our students with the skill sets they will require as they determine their place in the world, support our faculty to be on the cutting edge as educators, as well as provide opportunities for our alumni to become more engaged with the campus community.

After approval of the strategic plan, and in collaboration with the Tufts community, these initiatives will be advanced through the development of detailed implementation plans.



Top: Faculty member engages students during a computer science lecture.

Bottom: Student participates in Community Day.



*Top: During a humanitarian response training exercise, students negotiate with actors playing a rogue militia.*

*Bottom: Students participate in a Graduate Institute for Teaching workshop.*

**1. Provide faculty with the resources necessary to create a greater number and range of transformational classroom experiences.** Through its faculty, Tufts is committed to providing students with evidence-based teaching and learning opportunities. Central to this commitment is promoting research about teaching and learning, and ensuring that faculty members have a range of stimulating opportunities to engage the latest research on teaching and learning, to experiment with new techniques, and to network with colleagues who are grappling with similar challenges. Most Tufts faculty already find ways to keep their teaching current through seminars and workshops offered by the Center for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT), the Educational and Scholarly Technology Services (ESTS), and many other Tufts-based and external opportunities. Given the rapid changes in technology, teaching and learning research, and student demographics, Tufts will develop a new program, Teaching and Learning Engagements (TALEs), which will focus on the effective use of technological innovations, lessons from recent research on pedagogy, and best practices for fostering an inclusive learning environment. Rather than a single seminar or training, TALEs will build on existing CELT, ESTS, and other resources to offer a broad array of engagement opportunities from which faculty will be encouraged to regularly select those that will best meet their individual needs. This initiative will ensure that the time and resources students, parents, and governments invest in Tufts result in transformational educational experiences.

**2. Identify and promote best practices for enabling and integrating transformational experiences.** By bringing together leaders of the Tufts curricular and extracurricular programs that most often enable transformational experiences and learning what each does best, we will draw upon lessons learned and use them to enhance existing programs and guide the development of new ones. An important part of this initiative will be expanding opportunities for students to share their experiences and their impact with faculty, family, friends, and local and global communities, thereby enhancing their own learning and encouraging others to get outside their own comfort zones. The university will appoint a coordinator of transformational experiences for a limited term to lead this effort and will develop programs that will ensure that all schools are enabling and supporting transformational experiences for their students.

**3. Renew and expand our commitment to active citizenship, including a new 1 + 4 Undergraduate Program.** For more than a decade, Tisch College has worked with faculty, staff, and students in every school to enhance the student civic experience and to conduct original research. Through curricular and cocurricular active citizenship activities, thousands of students have gone beyond their comfort zones, worked with faculty, staff, and peers to interpret their experiences, and used these transformational experiences to inform their intellectual, social, and civic development. In the years ahead, Tisch College will continue in its role of champion,

catalyst, and center of excellence for this signature value of the university.

One example of a new initiative to develop the civic lives of our students is the launch of a 1+4 program. Focused initially on undergraduates, it will provide students with an opportunity to spend a year engaged in full-time national or international service and community engagement before beginning their traditional four-year undergraduate experience. The program will provide participating students with transformational experiences as they immerse themselves in new cultures and communities, while building connections to the university through innovative programming and digital learning opportunities. By ensuring that all participating students are supported, and by partnering with established organizations approved through an emerging national certification system, the 1+4 program will democratize the gap year, thereby allowing a more diverse group of students to increase their direct experience with innovative approaches to local and global challenges, including social entrepreneurship, and develop leadership skills that will enhance their undergraduate experiences and career opportunities. In identifying financial resources to support this program, extreme care will be taken to avoid competition with the scarce, critical resources required for undergraduate and graduate financial aid.

The list of certified domestic and international partners is likely to include such programs as LIFT and Global Citizen Year. LIFT has offices in

six U.S. cities. In Boston, dozens of Tufts undergraduate students already volunteer as part-time advocates for local community members pursuing economic stability and well-being. Global Citizen Year is a full-time, full-year, pre-college program in which young people contribute to education, technology, health and environmental projects in developing countries. Both programs provide training and support to students, and ensure that there are substantial benefits to participating students as well as host communities.

**4. Enhance and expand engagement opportunities for our substantial alumni community.** With more than 90,000 alumni of record, Tufts' alumni base spans the globe. Of these alumni, more than 29,000 live within a one-hour drive of one of our campuses. This extraordinarily rich resource provides opportunities to develop a broader and deeper set of mentoring relationships, which have a unique reciprocal quality in that they can be transformational for students and alumni. One example is the Tufts Financial Network (TFN), an affinity group created in 2008 to connect Tufts alumni and friends who work in financial services with the university. Through a speaker series, panel discussions, and highly-interactive forums, the TFN provides its alumni members with networking opportunities, connects them with Tufts faculty and industry experts, and complements the critical liberal arts and engineering educations of students interested in finance careers.



*Top: Tufts community participating in the Boston Marathon.*

*Bottom: Alumni tour the health sciences campus.*



*Top: Tufts alumni network in Washington, D.C.*

*Bottom: Students network with Tufts alumni.*

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Another example is the Connecting Alumni and Student Experiences (CASE) network in Washington, DC, established in 2006. Annually, alumni leaders in DC identify summer internship opportunities for Tufts undergraduates. Engaging actively in the recruitment, selection, and orientation processes, these alumni also coach the more than 20 summer fellows and organize 15 or more alumni panels on a range of career and policy topics. They also match alumni mentors to each fellow, as well as any other Tufts students in D.C. for the summer on their own internships. Mentors provide guidance on starting careers in D.C., navigating the alphabet soup of organizations, graduate school options, and career paths. Networks are essential for career success in Washington, D.C., and Tufts alumni are providing that for our students.

Working with our alumni, we will develop additional student internship programs and other means of engagement through which students can gain practical experience and work skills that will help launch their careers. There will be opportunities for speaking engagements so that alumni can come back to campus and share their experiences and perspectives. We will also explore traditional and emerging online opportunities to increase the number and range of lifelong learning opportunities available to our alumni. In collaboration with deans and faculty, the Office of Alumni Relations will explore and implement these opportunities as well as develop interest-specific programs to engage our alumni and benefit our students.

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