

Editorial

Third time's the charm

University President Larry Bacow's Task Force on the Undergraduate Experience is just getting under way after receiving its official mandate and the trustees' endorsement last weekend. The Task Force will file a report next June, and Bacow envisions it will help shape the priorities for Tufts over the next few years. As the University will soon embark on a new capital campaign and Bacow implements his vision, the group's influence could be enormous. Should the Task Force deliver on even a fraction of its charge, most importantly, finding the consensus Bacow is demanding, its report could have a substantial impact.

The committee's eight faculty members and three students, however, are well aware of the dismally ineffective task force tradition in which they follow. Former Vice President Mel Bernstein's Task Force on Race, as well as the Higher Education Initiative (HEI), were both models of bureaucratic mediocrity that began with similarly lofty ambitions, but did not reap meaningful dividends. Both reports are currently gathering dust online, and no recent news of them is indication enough that they did not have nearly the impact originally hoped for.

The HEI was instructed to examine nearly everything related to Tufts, while the new Task Force's mandate has a sharper focus — strictly exploring the undergraduate experience. Bacow is also requiring a bottom-line "recommendation," which must consider the feasibility of its implementation. The Task Force on Race did offer recommendations, which raised important points, many of which went unfulfilled. It's clear Bacow has studied both reports and their outcomes. He's devised a mission for his new Task Force that builds on and learns from previous mistakes.

It's far too soon for any definitive judgment, but the Tufts community should keep a close watch on the Task Force so it amounts to more than its predecessors. It's currently assembling an advisory group, to which interested students can apply beginning tomorrow. Bacow should be applauded for the initiative and the Task Force should be determined to surpass its ineffectual precursors.