

# Task Force examining undergrad experience

by LISA REITMAN

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Want more elliptical machines at the gym? More classes about sex? There's finally an outlet for all your concerns about the Tufts undergraduate experience — although the President is hoping they will be more on the insightful side of the spectrum.

In his e-mail to the University on Feb. 11, President Larry Bacow wrote that he found the University to be “an institution full of promise and prosperity.” But there's always room for improvement. To this end, the president has created the Task Force on the Undergraduate Experience at Tufts.

Bacow acknowledges that while the University as a whole has made incredible strides in the past decade, it can further develop the quality of undergraduate academics.

“One of the great things about Tufts is that we have made enormous progress in the last 15 to 20 years, from being a good regional university to becoming a university of the first rank. Yet it has been close to 20 to 25 years since we did a self-study of the undergraduate experience,” Bacow told the *Tufts Journal* (2/25).

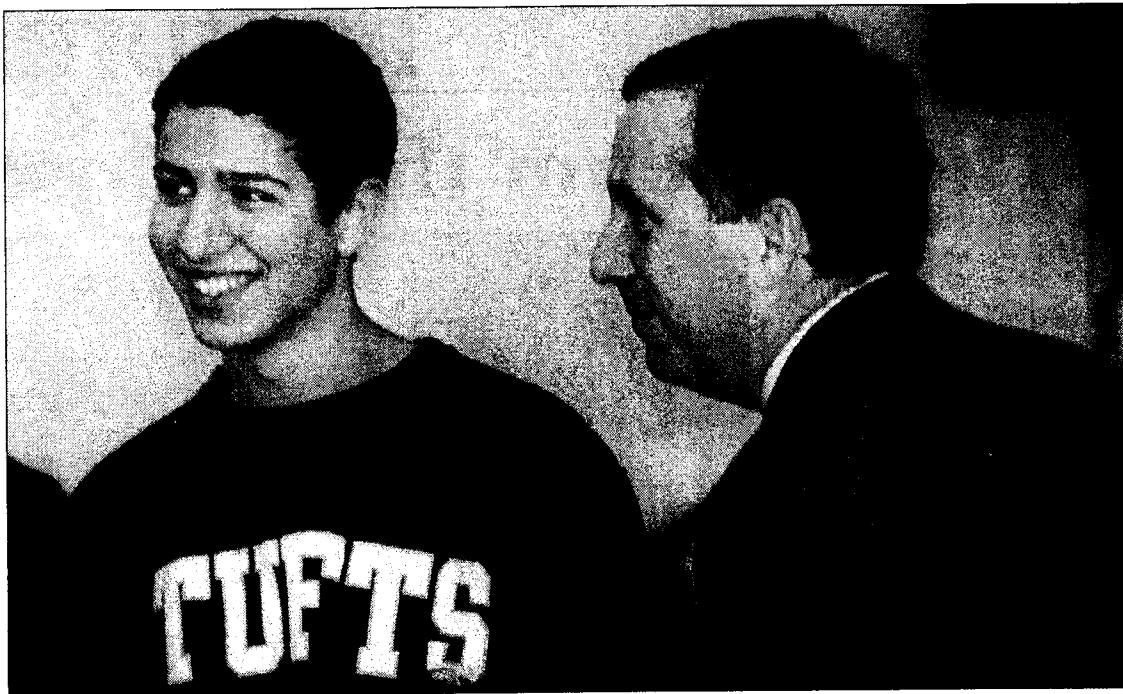
President Bacow's Task Force has a few main objectives. In particular, the goals are to evaluate Tufts' academic curriculum, to assess co-curricular and residential life and its effect on students' experiences at Tufts, and to identify needed improvements and the resources necessary to implement them. Gilbert Metcalf, economics professor and chair of the Task Force, says that Bacow welcomes input from professors and students.

“In a nutshell, President Bacow wants [the committee] to make suggestions to help sharpen the distinctive nature of a Tufts Education for the 21st century,” Metcalf said. “The world is changing, we are competing for stronger students who bring a broader array of experiences and talents to Tufts and we want to ensure that we can provide an intellectually stimulating educational experience.”

Bacow chose three students to sit on the board in order to ensure representation of student interests and viewpoints. The student members will set up a Student Advisory Group (SAG) consisting only of undergraduates. Since its start last month, the Task Force has met a

see COMMITTEE, page 4

DAILY 3/1/02



*Christine Hendrickson/Tufts Daily*

President Larry Bacow (right), shown here with freshman Senator Jon Gold, instituted the Task Force on the Undergraduate Experience last month.

## Metcalfe encourages student participation

### COMMITTEE

continued from page 3

few times to discuss the early stages of fulfilling of its mission. The plan is to meet with various student groups — the first one being the TCU Senate, which will take place this Sunday.

Sophomore Bridie McElroy remembers getting the e-mail about the Task Force from Bacow and said he's impressed with Bacow's founding of the group. "I think that it's great that President Bacow would do something like this, especially in his first year at Tufts," he said. "I think that it will make some sort of a difference. I don't think I'd

ever get 100 percent involved with it, but it is something I would like to participate in."

Students and faculty interested in contributing or finding out information about the Task Force can access the newly-created website, [www.tufts.edu/president/ugtaskforce](http://www.tufts.edu/president/ugtaskforce). Students are encouraged to play an active role in the Task Force and in shaping the future of Tufts.

Metcalfe wants there to be an exchange of ideas between the student body and the Task Force. He encouraged students to utilize e-mail to offer views and suggestions.

"We want to encourage as

much communication between students and the Task Force as possible," Metcalfe said. The email address is: [ugtaskforce@tufts.edu](mailto:ugtaskforce@tufts.edu).

There's also a Dowling Hall Task Force office that students can come to for information, or to drop off comments or suggestions.

"I expect that our recommendations will serve as the basis for the Arts, Sciences and Engineering part of the next capital campaign," Metcalfe said. The Task Force is expected to issue its report on undergraduate academic and student life within 12 to 18 months.