Bacow forum frustrates senators
Many left wanting answers, greater access to Pres.

by EMILY CHASAN and
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Many Tufts Community
Union (TCU) senators
expressed disappointment
Sunday after University
President Larry Bacow
addressed the Senate following
a meeting between senators and
his Task Force on Undergraduate Life.

Though senators were
responsive to the Task Force’s
ongoing quest for facts and
ideas, many felt that Bacow’s
good intentions were overshadowed by what they saw as his
unfamiliarity with the workings
of the Senate. Some senators
said that his responses to ques-
tions were evasive and left them
dissatisfied.

Topics ranged from the state
of students’ mental health to
recent incidents of racist graff-
iti on the door of Capen House and
senators’ thoughts on the Task
Force. At the meeting’s open-

Senators listen to President Bacow pitch his newly created
Task Force on the Undergraduate Experience.

ing, Bacow said he wanted to
“address issues and resources
necessary to implement recom-
endations” and to use the
“information session” as an
“opportunity to listen.”

TCU Senate Vice President
Melissa Carson said she felt that
Bacow spent a disproportionate
amount of time discussing back-
ground information on issues
that Senators were already
familiar with. She added that
she hoped the president and the
students can find a better means
for discussion.

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Tommy Calvert: not enough students on Undergraduate Task Force

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“I think he had good intentions and I think he has a lot of potential, but no students, especially student government, have figured out the right way to work with him,” she said.

Despite senators’ complaints, she said the meeting was productive. “We don’t know how to work with him and he doesn’t know how to work with us yet, but both sides are trying to make an effort and last night was a good first step.”

Bacow told the Daily that he “thought the meeting was productive. It was good to hear views of student leaders on a variety of issues,” he said.

Carson felt that both sides might have misunderstood the meeting’s purpose. “I think that there has been some miscommunication with what each side wanted to get out of the meeting, or perhaps what each Senator wanted to get out of the meeting,” she said.

Citing a nationwide increase in the stress level of college students and Bacow’s efforts to deal with mental health issues while serving as MIT chancellor, freshman Senator Jon Gold asked the president if he would consider implementing a mental health task force at Tufts. Bacow said he felt that he has not observed Tufts’ overall mental health situation to be as problematic as that at MIT and therefore he did not feel a task force was necessary at this time.

But mental and community health remain very important issues, he said. “Modern drugs and therapy allow individuals to attend the elite institutions, incentive to pursue a more civil level of discourse on campus.” Bacow feels that in the age of the Internet, when campus dialogues are cataloged in various places, these disputes could potentially misrepresent the University. “Tufts students are better than what’s been thrown around lately,” he said.

Carson said she thought Bacow’s meeting with campus trustees representative Tommy Calvert said that Bacow’s “honey moon is over,” and that he is going to have to make some serious changes in his interactions with students and to stay and hear more of the Senate’s presentation, Carson felt that the president lost out on what the Senate is elected to do. “He declined to be that person [we present student concerns to], while he was already sitting at the table,” she said.

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Gold said he thought the meeting was productive for some, but that it left others unsatisfied. “I know people had a lot of questions for him and they have trouble getting a hold of him. It was productive to have him there to answer our questions,” he said. “I know some would like greater access to him, and some were satisfied, but I guess it varies among different members.”

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Carson pointed to Dean of Students Bruce Reitman and Dean of Academic Affairs Kristine Dillon as administrators who have learned to work effectively with the Senate. She said Bacow still has a lot to learn about the Senate-Administration relationship.

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