

Task Force Me Badd

At the start of his term, President Bacow called for a “comprehensive evaluation of undergraduate education and life at Tufts University,” which would focus on evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, the relationship between the administration and students, and the contribution of residential life. The Task Force on the Undergraduate Experience has met with the trustees, faculty, staff, alumnae, and a number of student groups, and has conducted forums, inviting greater student outreach. All this input has yielded an interim report, a working draft of policy recommendations to be fine-tuned and then submitted in June.

The interim report correctly identifies underlying issues that cause the more distinct problems at Tufts. A “paucity of opportunities and resources outside the classroom,” “a body fractured by divisions of politics, religion, race, gender, sexuality, socio-economic position, etc., to the detriment of the intellectual experience,” and a “general lack of community” all create student discontent, like the infamous scene from the trustee luncheon last February. The lack of community seems to be shared by both faculty and students across campus communities.

In response to these and other identified problems, the task force has three specific goals: constructing a Tufts College System, promoting intellectual engagement, building community, and strengthening diversity. Four individual colleges would comprise the college system, and once a student is randomly assigned to a college, the affiliation to that college remains no matter one’s place of residence. Students, however, fail to make the link by crediting the student group for their positive experiences, but failing to credit Tufts, as an institution, for those same experiences. Similarly, a student may develop a strong bond with those within the college, much like freshmen living in Tilton, but fail to make the link to Tufts as a whole. A central location where all students could gather would be most effective. Completing the final phase of the Campus Center could transform the current center glorified study area to an actual bustling hub of student socialization and relaxation.

The measures for promoting intellectual engagement, and building community and diversity are well received. Improving the classrooms, dealing with excessive distribution and foundational requirements, and creating more faculty-student interactions would allow students to pursue greater intellectual challenges. Need blind admissions would reaffirm the commitment of the college to admit students based on their intellectual strength, not on their ability to pay, and more naturally creates a diverse socio-economic community. Finally, creating an Alumnae Community Network and a bigger Career Network to enrich both student and alumni experiences puts the college experience into focus. After all, nobody wants to graduate four years later, and \$160,000 poorer, only to be unemployed. □