

THE DEAN'S LETTER FOR TUFTS NUTRITION



IN THIS ISSUE ...

JUNE 2008

GRADUATES BRING NEEDED SKILLS TO A NUTRITION-CHALLENGED WORLD	1
AGRICULTURE SECRETARY SEEKS MORE FOOD FROM SAME LAND ...	2
NIH GRANT TO BRING SCIENCES OUT OF THE LAB	3
SYMPOSIUM TACKLES ISSUES FACING WOMEN IN SCIENCE, MEDICINE, ENGINEERING	3
HERE & THERE	3
FRIEDMAN FACULTY IN THE NEWS	4
COMING RIGHT UP.....	4
BECOME AN ALUMNI ADMISSIONS AMBASSADOR	4
JOIN THE CAREER MENTOR LIST	5

GRADUATES BRING NEEDED SKILLS TO A NUTRITION-CHALLENGED WORLD

With food and nutrition issues—from the high cost of food to lifestyle diseases—affecting both underdeveloped and industrialized nations, **Dean Eileen Kennedy**, D.Sc., told the audience at the school's 27th commencement ceremony that the world seems ready to put the skills of this year's 69 graduates to work.

"It is unambiguous to me, with your talent you will be high demand," Kennedy said at the start of the ceremony, held May 18 in Cohen Auditorium on the Medford/Somerville campus.

Robert Russell, M.D., director of the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging, agreed, but added that few graduates will end up doing what they expected to do. Russell related his own experience in his commencement address, saying that after finishing medical school, he was certain he would be a psychiatrist. Instead, he was drafted during the Vietnam War. Seeing the diseases suffered by malnourished war orphans inspired him to embark on a career in nutrition and public health, including

more than a quarter century at the Friedman School.

"A lot of your learning now is going to be accidental learning," he said.

Russell, who was named a professor emeritus earlier in the day at the university-wide commencement ceremony, also spoke of his setbacks. He spent several years researching beta-carotene, which had shown some strong promise as a cancer-fighting nutrient. But his hopes were dashed when it was discovered that high doses of the compound can actually stimulate lung cancer in smokers.

"Since a lot of my career up to that point had been invested in beta-carotene, I thought this was devastating, and I was going to have to find another career," he said. But he decided to

look at the reasons behind these effects and found four new genomic and cell-signaling mechanisms that could explain the paradox, opening up a whole new research area.

The upside of failure was also a theme for **Jennifer Layne**, a Ph.D. recipient, who revealed in her class address that she did not pass her doctoral qualifying exams the first time she took them. She learned, she said, that it's important to be able to articulate what you know, and to admit what you don't know.

"If we can be humble enough to view each mistake as an opportunity to learn, then we will be successful, both personally and professionally," she said.

A. Dana Callow Jr., A74, a member of the Tufts University Board of Trustees, also encouraged the graduates to embrace their disappointments.

"You can't fail what you don't try," he said. "If you don't make mistakes and have some failures, you won't have some very, very valuable lessons."

To see photos from commencement day visit:

<http://www.tufts.edu/home/feature/commencement2008/images/nutrition/>

AGRICULTURE SECRETARY SEEKS MORE FOOD FROM SAME LAND

Food prices worldwide have risen 57 percent in the last year, according to the United Nations, igniting food riots from Cameroon to Indonesia. The cause, analysts say, is a "perfect storm" of higher food consumption, rising energy prices, demand for biofuels and poor harvests. Yet when the storm passes, says U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Edward Schafer, don't expect calm seas to follow.

"Too many people say, 'Well, if energy prices go down, or we back off on our effort for biofuels, or the dollar value goes up, things will change again,' " Schafer says. "But the reality is our globe is changing and people's demands are getting stronger and more food is being consumed as economies increase around the world. And we can't change that back."

Speaking to an audience of students and faculty at the Friedman School on April 30, Schafer said that an evolving middle class in countries like India and China is boosting demand for meat, dairy products and processed foods, as well as grain for livestock. At the same time, the world's population is growing by 57 million mouths each year.

"The question today is how can developed nations find new, creative ways to meet the critical demands for food aid?" Schafer says.

The world needs to grow more food on the same amount of land, he says, yet in Europe, Africa and some parts of South America, yield is virtually flat or declining. "We need to increase the yields of our crops in every country around the globe or we're not going to be able to meet the demand," he says. For more on Schafer's talk, including a webcast, visit <http://tuftsjournal.tufts.edu/2008/06/features/05/> .

NIH GRANTS TO BRING SCIENCE OUT OF THE LAB

Tufts Medical Center and a consortium of schools at Tufts University have won a \$20 million federal grant to streamline the process of turning laboratory research discoveries into real-world treatments for patients. The Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) will provide funds over five years for the new Tufts Clinical and Translational Science Institute.

With the institute as a resource, researchers from across the university and at three neighboring schools will work with health-care organizations, community groups and medical companies to translate scientific breakthroughs into widely used drugs, therapies and good clinical practices.

The Tufts institute will serve as a “virtual home” where scientists can get help with their research, as well as an education program for the next generation of biomedical scientists. The institute will assist researchers at Tufts’ health sciences schools: the Friedman School, the School of Medicine, the Sackler School, the School of Dental Medicine and the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine. The School of Arts & Sciences, the School of Engineering and the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service are also included in the award, as are schools at Brandeis, Northeastern and the University of Massachusetts. Visit: <http://tuftsjournal.tufts.edu/2008/06/features/02/>

SYMPOSIUM TACKLES ISSUES FACING WOMEN IN SCIENCE, MEDICINE, ENGINEERING

At the Tufts Symposium on Women in Science, Medicine and Engineering, held on the Boston campus in April, a number of women spoke of their struggles and inspirations, emphasizing the need for positive role models and active mentoring. Unconscious biases held by both sexes, work-family balance and the “two-body problem” that occurs when married academics look for work in the same town were also recurring themes. **Simin Meydani**, D.V.M., Ph.D., professor of nutrition and immunology, chaired the organizing committee, which included **Eileen Kennedy**, dean of the Friedman School. Read the full story here: <http://tuftsjournal.tufts.edu/2008/05/features/02/> .

HERE & THERE

On April 23, **Beatrice Rogers**, Ph.D., gave a talk at a conference on “The Right to Food: How Can the U.N. Respond to the Global Food Crisis?” The conference, which was organized by the Global Policy Forum and hosted by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in New York, included participants from U.N. organizations, national governments, civil society groups and research institutions. Her topic was “Effective Policy and Program Responses” and focused on program options to help U.N. and other aid agencies cope with the rising price of food.

Kristen Cashin, J97, N02, a maternal and child health and nutrition specialist with the Food

and Nutrition Technical Assistance (FANTA) Project of the Academy for Educational Development (AED) in Washington, D.C., received a 2008 Technical Leadership Award from AED for her outstanding technical leadership in the development of training modules for Community-Based Management of Acute Malnutrition. The modules were developed in collaboration with UNICEF, Valid International and Concern Worldwide, with technical input from WHO and funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development.

FRIEDMAN FACULTY IN THE NEWS

Assistant Professor **Kathleen Merrigan**, Ph.D., spoke about organic food nutrition and legislation with the local television news magazine *Chronicle*. "We know from many surveys that consumers are buying organic food primarily because they think it's more nutritious or healthy for them," Merrigan said. "We have some tantalizing research at this stage in the game that is suggesting such things, but I couldn't tell you right now that it's completely conclusive."

Professor **Katherine Tucker**, Ph.D., discussed her research on cola and bone density with *Eating Well* magazine. She said that phosphoric acid, which is unique to colas, may cause the body to draw calcium from bones to neutralize it. While the occasional cola drinker probably needn't worry, Tucker said, "the real risk is for those who drink cola every day."

Professor **Patrick Webb**, Ph.D., answered questions for Boston.com on the logistics of bringing international aid to Burma in the wake of the cyclone. "Unhindered access of caregivers to those in need is a key to successful humanitarian action," he said.

COMING RIGHT UP

The 2008 Friedman Symposium will be held September 24–26 at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel. This third annual event is expected to bring together hundreds of researchers, educators, program implementers and policymakers from the food, supplement and health professions. Topics will include labeling, health claims and dietary guidelines. A panel will look at the ways changes in climate, water, economies and genetically modified plants will affect nutrition worldwide. Speakers will also address the latest research on cancer and vitamin D, artificial sweeteners and children, and the latest risks and benefits of probiotics. For more information and to register, go to www.friedmansymposium.com.

BECOME AN ALUMNI ADMISSIONS AMBASSADOR

The Friedman School offices of Alumni Relations and Admissions are looking for alumni volunteers to join the new Alumni Admissions Ambassadors program. You would be asked to:

- Periodically answer specific email inquiries from prospective students.
- Attend the admitted student open house in Boston, if possible.
- Field phone calls from prospective students.
- Answer questions at graduate school fairs in your city.

The level of involvement is entirely up to you, but you could expect to receive one email

request per month and one or two phone calls throughout the year. If interested, please email Sean Devendorf, director of annual giving and alumni relations, at sean.devendorf@tufts.edu for more information.

JOIN THE CAREER MENTOR LIST

The school continues to build a list of Career Mentors willing to network with current students and alumni. If you are interested in being a Career Mentor, which means including your name, job title and email address on a list made available to students and alumni, email sean.devendorf@tufts.edu or call 617-636-2949. The list is given to Friedman School students and alumni upon request.

The deadline for the next issue of the *Dean's Letter for Tufts Nutrition* is Wednesday, August 27. Please send your submissions to Julie Flaherty at julie.flaherty@tufts.edu.