

TUFTS OBSERVER

TUFTS' STUDENT MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY 8, 2008



7%

...of Tufts students are in the lowest income bracket. What is Tufts doing about it?

Featured Articles



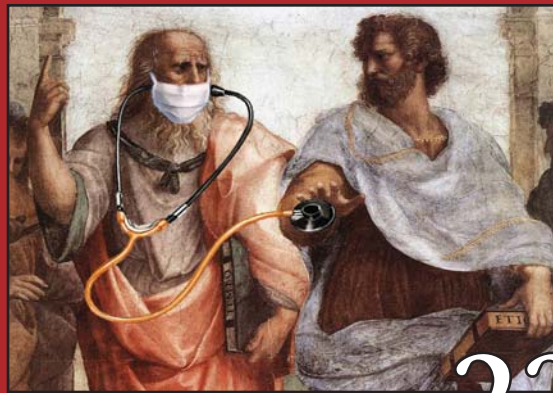
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The Observer has been Tufts' weekly publication of record since 1895. Our dedication to in-depth reporting, journalistic innovation, and honest dialogue has remained intact for over a century. Today, we offer insightful news analysis, cogent and diverse opinion pieces, and lively reviews of current arts, entertainment, and sports. Through poignant writing and artistic elegance, we aim to entertain, inform, and above all challenge the Tufts community to effect positive change.



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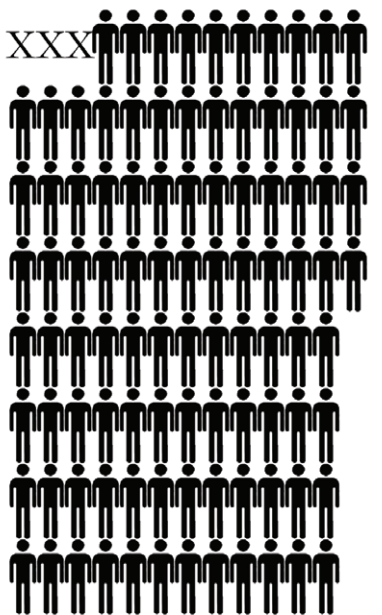
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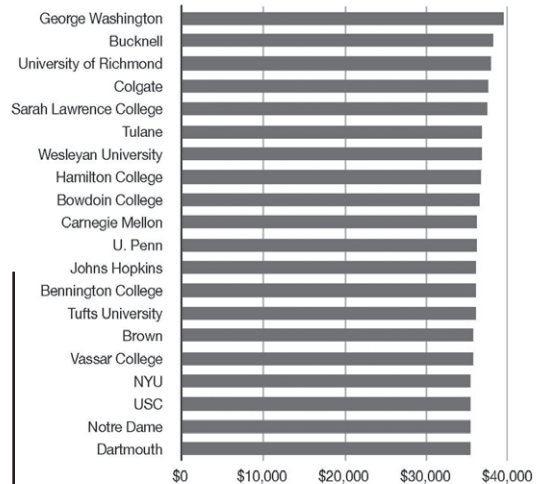
FOOTING THE BILL. THE RACE TO THE BOTTOM QUARTILE:

**WHY TUFTS
AND OTHER
RICH
SCHOOLS
ARE EXPENSIVE**



Members of America's lowest income quartile make up only 3% of the population at top universities. At Tufts the figure is greater, 7%.

Tufts is consistently one of the most expensive schools in America. To the right are the top fifteen most expensive private universities.



SOURCE: THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

To Loan or to Grant?



BY PATRICK ROATH

Princeton started it. In 2001 Princeton University was the first American college to announce that it would start replacing student loans with outright grants, relieving a significant portion of its financial aid recipients of debt. Not to be outdone, Harvard, Brown, Dartmouth, and Stanford universities quickly re-tooled their own financial aid packages to reduce their reliance on student loans. The race to offer the best financial packages to low-income students has compelled a number of colleges to publicly shift away from loan schemes.

On December 19, 2007, Tufts followed in kind by announcing a new program that replaces student loans with grants for students whose families make less than \$40,000 a year. This change affects seven percent of Tufts' undergraduate

population and is seen as an integral part of the administration's campaign to attract a more socio-economically diverse pool of applicants.

While increased financial aid is no new phenomenon, colleges have begun to move away from the system of student loans that characterized many aid packages during the past decade. Though many students are happy to avoid debt, the trend has raised questions in some quarters. Are universities like Tufts really interested in being more accessible or merely trying to head off federal regulation? How helpful are grants for some students if tuition is still sky-high? How much is a college education worth, anyway?

Tufts' decision to follow the national trend reflects more than just a commitment to accessibility. The new loan-replacement program is suggestive of a nationwide sea change in the way that universities approach the many needs of America's less

SHABAZZ STUART
affluent young men and women.

Not-So-Enlightened Self Interest

By setting the cap at \$40,000, Tufts is deliberately targeting lower-income students. "Students in this socio-economic group are the most vulnerable in terms of their access to college—only three percent of students in that low income group are in the 146 best schools. It seemed that it was a group that needed an additional commitment from Tufts," said Dean of Undergraduate Admissions Lee Coffin in an interview.

The new program comes at a time of heightened unease about ballooning university fees. "There is a concern on the part of the public, students, and the Congress on the affordability of American universities," said Matt Reed, a policy analyst at the Project on Student Debt, an organization that focuses on financial aid. Over the past five years the average cost of four years at

a private college has increased by almost 30 percent — appreciable growth even when adjusted for inflation.

Universities with both high tuitions and large endowments have been especially criticized for failing to control costs. Currently at \$1.45 billion, Tufts' endowment is now the 49th largest of American private institutions, according to a new report by the National Association of College and University Business Officers (NACUBO). Thanks to a national uptick in donations and the university's aggressive fundraising efforts, the endowment grew by 26.4 percent between 2006 and 2007, one of most brisk rates among Tufts' competitors.

Yet, despite the university's deepening pockets, tuition will almost certainly rise for the next academic year. Although the hike will not be official until the Board of Trustees votes sometime in February, sources close to the admissions office suggest that the increase will be on the order of several thousand dollars. "I haven't seen the final figure but I would guess we're going to be around 50,000 dollars a year," said Dean Coffin. Tufts is consistently one of the

top 15 most expensive private universities in the country.

With tuition on the rise, parents are feeling the pinch — and politicians are beginning to react as well. In a letter sent to the richest 146 Americans, the leadership of the U.S. Senate's Finance Committee berated universities for unfair practices. "Tuition has gone up, college presidents' salaries have gone up, and endowments continue to go up and up. We need to start seeing tuition relief for families go up just as fast. It's fair to ask whether a college kid should have to wash dishes in the dining hall to pay his tuition when his college has a billion dollars in the bank," said Senator Chuck Grassley, the Ranking Member on the Senate's Finance Committee.

At Tufts, many financial aid students wash dishes for Tufts University Dining Services as part of a work-study program. In defense, Dean Coffin contests that the size of the endowment is a poor indicator of the university's commitment to financial aid. "When you look at the endowment you see a lot of zeros but there are a lot of zeros in the budget too," he said, suggesting

that fiscal realities dictate the burden that is ultimately passed on to students. The loan replacement program itself cost Tufts \$250,000 last year — a large amount but still only a small chunk of the \$42 million earmarked for financial aid each year, explained Director of Financial Aid Patricia Reilly in an email.

Universities are free to spend however much of their endowment they like, whenever they wish. In contrast, other nonprofit and tax-exempt groups have strict legal limits on the minimum amount of money they must spend each year. What some critics advocate (and universities fear) is that the government may begin to oversee how much of a private institution's endowment is spent in a given year.

In light of a potential regulatory backlash from Congress, Tufts would seem less generous and more self-interested. Is the university's focus on diversity enlightened self-interest or simply an effort to head off steeper regulation? "There's some of both in there — many colleges have long had programs that distribute aid with the goal of making the university more affordable

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to attend. Many have a genuine interest in that," said Mr. Reed. "The recent pace of announcements we've been seeing is definitely a result of response to public pressure," he said. The university rejects the notion that the timing of the announcement can be seen as a direct response to the Congress' action. The new program had been under consideration for a year before it was announced.

Caught between the threat of Congressional pressure and budgets strained by an influx of students, even some elite schools are struggling to accommodate changing expectations about the importance of socio-economic diversity on campus. Georgetown University is often criticized as the "sick man" of the near-Ivy League; its \$1 billion endowment pales in comparison to its chief rivals. Universities like Georgetown that don't have the flexibility to subsidize the tuitions of large portions of its applicants may soon face a distinct disadvantage. "We are not considering any changes to our policies at this time," said Julie Green Bataille, a spokesperson for Georgetown University.

Other schools are eager to spend freely to improve affordability. Dipping into its \$34 billion-deep reserves, Harvard cast aside federal regulations and flung the grant doors open to upper middle-class students whose parents make between \$120,000 and \$180,000 each year. As the first university to drop the early application process and an early adopter of loan-replacement, Harvard is often seen as a trendsetter in admissions policies. The move suggests that universities may, before long, feel obligated to provide more aid for a greater portion of their applicants. "More recently, the concern has spread to middle-income families," Mr. Reed affirmed.

How Now?

At issue is not only who receives financial aid, but how it is dispersed. When they were

"There is a concern on the part of the public, students, and the Congress on the affordability of American universities."

first instituted, student loans were thought to be a way of making higher education more accessible while at the same time engendering a sense of responsibility and self-determination among recipients. As tuitions have risen, however, many now think that the amount of debt students accrue is simply too great.

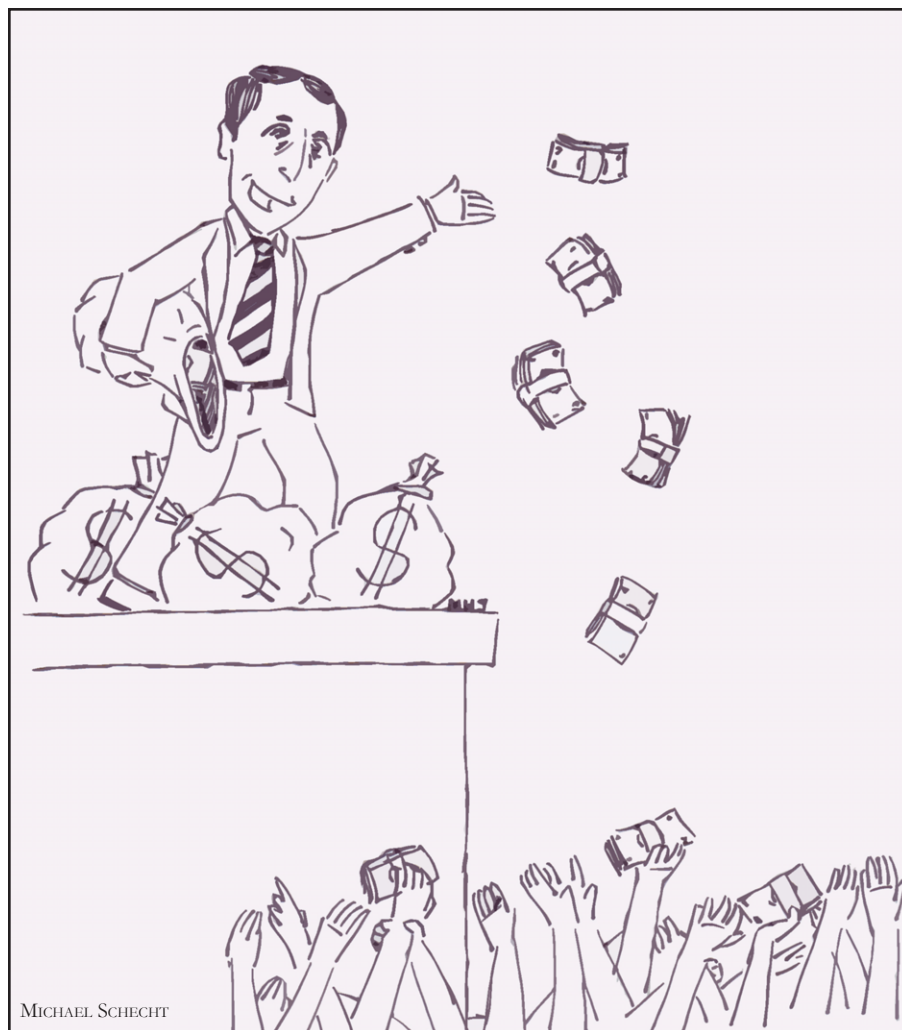
According to the most recent data, Tufts students with loans are graduating with an average of \$14,200 in debt — a figure just under the national average of \$19,200. Nationally, the average amount of money students owe lenders has more than doubled over the past ten years. Because of this, student loans have been criticized for forcing students away from low-paying jobs in favor of high-paying private sector career paths — fueling an already saturated job market for graduates. In 2001, a student at Princeton told the *Daily Princetonian* that

the then-new loan-replacement program meant that they "won't have as much pressure to make millions." In October 2007, Tufts responded to the growing problem by announcing a precursor to its current scheme that would help repay loans for students who pursue careers in the nonprofit sector.

Recent turbulence and allegations of widespread corruption in the student loan industry have also diminished the appeal of loans. Over the summer Andrew A. Cuomo, the attorney general for New York, began an investigation into a number of student lenders, alleging that universities and firms were working in collusion to the disadvantage of students. Though his investigation is ongoing, the first victim, Student Financial Services Inc., has recently settled out of court. A number of universities, including Columbia, Johns

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Hopkins, and NYU have reimbursed students. Mr. Reed of the Project on Student Debt sees ill will towards the loan industry as only one reason for the shift from loans to grants. “There’s more of a general concern. The scandals have definitely helped focus public attention. There isn’t necessarily a line between the two but it has contributed to the publicity around student loans and the amount of debt that students graduate with,” he said.

Despite its recent popularity, the grant-based approach pioneered by Harvard and adopted by many colleges since is not without its critics. In an opinion piece appearing in the *New York Times* on January 22, Roger Lehecka and Andrew Delbanco, two academics from Columbia University, wrote, “The problem is that most colleges will feel compelled to follow Harvard and Yale’s lead in price-discounting. Yet few have enough money to give more aid to relatively wealthy students without taking it away from relatively poor ones.” The

authors worry that a few well-endowed schools will monopolize the market for talented low and middle-income students. Though students reap the benefits in the short run, they claim that the trend is a worrying one and threatens the health of American higher education.

Critics also contend that such a scheme perpetuates an economic stratification at universities, in which low-income students attend for free and middle-income students are neglected or saddled with student loans. Concern is centered on students who fall just outside of established thresholds for grants. “Families just above that level should expect with dead certainty to qualify for need-based aid,” said Srikanth Sivashankaran, a research associate at the Project on Student Debt.

“Someone who makes \$41,000 a year is as poor as someone making \$40,000,” Dean Coffin concedes. “The line between that isn’t one big bright line. The financial aid staff has some professional judgment; the policy can be elastic on the margins.”

The university says it pays attention to the middle of the income ladder and although no such review is in place, they are receptive to upping the income threshold in the future. “It’s one part of the policy that’s open to revisiting,” said Dean Coffin.

The Bottom Quartile

Looking at the quickly evolving face of university tuition, the *Economist*, a British newsweekly, recently observed that “high prices for rich students help offset modest prices for poorer ones and families are less reliant on federal grants and government-backed loans.” In recent years, Congress has lost interest in subsidizing higher education. Federal grants for students — Pell grants — have steadily devalued over the past decade: such grants used to cover 60 percent of tuition and now cover less than 30 percent on average. This trend, combined with the accompanying surge in tuition bills, has molded higher education into something vastly different than it was 10 or 20 years ago.

“The piece I’m worried about is the three percent figure. How can we provide access to this bottom quartile?” asked Dean Coffin, referring to the percentage of low-income students at top universities. “We run the risk of having big chunks of the country be uneducated and financial aid will always be a finite resource.” Students studying abroad often grapple with the oddities of America’s system of higher education as compared to those of other rich nations, which are usually much less expensive and more accessible. On balance, many are obliged to contend that the exceptionally high cost and consequent elite nature of American universities are balanced out by their academic strength. The recent experience of Tufts and other universities suggests that this calculus is changing quickly. The complicated hodgepodge of financial aid packages available to applicants often complicates the already stressful process of applying to university. As schools struggle to find a balance between financially sustainable aid strategies and the need for diversity, finding the right formula for the American breed of higher education remains a formidable obstacle on the path to a strong, inclusive system of universities. Tufts has begun to rise to the challenge; it remains to be seen how much farther it will have to go. ☐

Financial Aid Brings Beneficial Diversity to Campus

BY DAN ROSEN

Observer editor Dan Rosen recently sat down with Tufts sophomore Santiago Gasca to interview him about his financial aid situation.

The Observer: A number of students argue that instead of Tufts increasing its financial award aid to students, it should use its endowment to decrease the price of tuition. Would you agree?

Santiago Gasca: I first would like to say that believe in the program for need blind admissions. I think that admissions should look at all students equally, as individual candidates, before reviewing their financial status. I know there are a number of students who can't afford tuition right now, and that there is a large portion of the student body receiving financial aid. A lot of people don't realize that Tufts already contributes a substantial amount of its endowment toward lowering financial aid costs for individual students. Lowering tuition would just make prices for the school increase.

TO: It has been suggested that many bright young American high school students do not work as hard because they simply don't believe they will ever have the financial ability to attend. Is this a common trend?

SG: Definitely. There are a huge number of students with that mentality, especially in schools that serve lower-income areas. For example, my middle school served generally very poor students. Most of the children didn't even believe they would graduate high school, let alone college. Most of them thought about community college or vocational schools, if at all. I had so many friends who were very intelligent, very bright, and very talented students but they knew they couldn't afford an education. So, rather than setting their sights on higher learning, they simply resigned themselves to doing what they believed they were limited to.

TO: Should students from lower-



ERIN BALDASSARI

income families receive preferential admissions treatment, similar to current affirmative-action programs based on race, to help minimize the income gap in universities?

SG: In short, yes. Having need-blind admissions is just one small step toward evening the playing field. It is important to realize that most lower-income students do not have the same early benefits as more affluent students. From the beginning, most of the lower income students do not have access to as good an education, even from nursery school, which puts them at a disadvantage. Even if wealthy students take advantage of the public education system, it is likely that they are attending a public school in a wealthy area. Students at schools that serve primarily low-income students will often find decrepit buildings and teachers that need to spend more time disciplining their students rather than motivating them to succeed. There is a quality-in-education gap that extends beyond even the school system itself, in SAT preparation for example. Many lower-income students cannot afford the expensive prep programs that other students attend, such as those offered by Kaplan and the Princeton Review, for example.

TO: Do some students' flashy displays of wealth, such as expensive cars,

ever make you feel uncomfortable or unwelcome?

SG: Because I was in a special program that paid for me to go to a private high school, I don't really feel uncomfortable. I went to a school that hosted some of the most affluent families in my area, so I am definitely used to it. However, I see it affecting a lot of people here. One of my good friends has had a hard time because they really focus on the disparities. Some students treat [this person] differently, not in a racist or condescending manner, per se, but because they come from a different background they may just act differently. To help avoid such problems, all parties involved really have to make an effort to educate each other and not think of any differences as being negative.

TO: Does it really matter?

SG: Of course there is a benefit to everyone. We at Tufts pride ourselves in being part of the global community. How can you consider yourself global without having your student body encompass all types of backgrounds and cultures? By increasing the range in who we admit, we will also have a larger impact on more communities. Students from non-traditional backgrounds will hopefully go back home and employ what they have learned here to better their communities. ☺

Campus Opportunities Abound for Students in Need

BY HAI-JUNG KIM

Whether catching a quick bite before much anticipated three-hour labs, stocking up

it in the toaster adding, “When I’m not busy, I do some homework.”

One-third of Tufts students are qualified for the Federal Work-Study Program. The work-study jobs available

Terhys Persad, a freshman, works twelve to fifteen hours a week for Jumpstart. “On Tuesdays and Thursdays, I’m [at the Jumpstart] from 8:30 until 11. I leave at eight because there’s a twenty

minute transit time.

During these morning hours, I assist the teacher in the classroom. Then I have class at Tufts from 12 to 1:15... I return for work at 2:45 to 5:30, and we spend one-on-one time with the children.” She admits that “Jumpstart is time-consuming and sometimes I’m tired when I get back.”

When asked what the most rewarding part of her job is, she says enthusiastically, “The kids are really fun and cute. They are

always happy to see you. They give you a lot of energy when you are with them and it’s really easy to be with them” and also “The support we get from our bosses Laura Mandell and Mari Rutkin is extremely helpful. They make the job a little less stressful.”

Julian also raved about the people he works with, citing “working with great co-workers” as the most reward-



RACHEL GEYLIN

on gratuitous amounts of goodies, or simply “turning tricks”; hundreds of Tufts students enter Hodgdon Dining on a daily basis. From burritos to bologna subs, a significant proportion of Hodgdon is operated and maintained by none other than students of Tufts themselves, some under the Federal Work-Study program (FWS).

The Federal Work-Study program funds part-time jobs for undergraduate and graduate students with financial need. According to the U.S. Department of Education website, the FWS program awarded \$1,175,000,000 to participating institutions in 2007, with \$1,335 being the average award per individual.

Aaron Cantu, a freshman, works nine hours a week making \$8.50 an hour at Hodgdon Dining Services. “I make sandwiches and sometimes I eat sandwiches as well,” he said, as he cut a loaf of whole wheat bread in half and stuck

at Tufts are diverse and the students interviewed for this article hold jobs both on and off-campus, from the Financial Services Office in Dowling Hall, Hodgdon Dining Services, and Jumpstart.

Asked if he has a hard time balancing work and study, Aaron answered, “not really, because I don’t work that often. But I could see how it could be for someone works longer hours.”

Julian Lopez, a senior who works six to eight hours a week at Student Financial Services, said that maintaining a job and schoolwork is “not overly difficult,” adding that “it’s just simple time management that allows me to do both with ease.”

ing part of his job. After describing his job rather methodically as “basic clerical duties, answering the phone, filing, general organization, and working the front desk,” he mentioned working with his boss Rita Moreno as often being “the highlight of my day.”

“Julian emphasized the **difficulties** of students without **work-study** in getting jobs.”

On the other hand, Aaron said that money was the most rewarding part of his job, adding that at the moment he saves most of the money he makes. Teryhs said that she spends a lot of her money “ordering out and lately piercings,” while Julian attributed “credit card bills” to eating up most of his wages.

All of the students answered that having work-study contributed positively to getting a job, saying that work-study was specified as a requirement when they applied for their jobs. Julian emphasized the difficulties of students without work-study in getting jobs, especially those on campus, adding that “students with work study are taken before those without.”

When asked what they thought of the work-study program overall, there was a lot that was said, much of it constructive criticism.

Julian said, “I think more people should take advantage of it because a lot of people don’t. A lot of people that need money but don’t have work-study

don’t get jobs while some people that have work-study don’t use it.” In a similar thread of thought, Teryhs said, “Sometimes I think that it is unfair because most of the jobs here are work-study and some people who want to work can’t find work,” adding that “There should be some way that people could choose to receive work-study. So that if you qualify for it but don’t plan on working then you could forgo the money so they could give it to someone else.” ☺



RACHEL GEYLIN

Students Go Far For New Energy Solution



COURTESY OF TUFTS ENERGY SECURITY INITIATIVE

BY STEVE GERSHMAN

Eight members of the Tufts community have recently returned from a research trip to the

United Arab Emirates (UAE) sponsored by the Tufts Energy Security Initiative (ESI). The trip, spanning from January 14 to January 24, took the students to Abu Dhabi and Dubai for the first annual

World Future Energy Summit (WFES).

The Tufts representatives were one of only four college delegations admitted to the symposium. They were the only undergraduate students at a conference that included over 11,000 people, 230 companies, and 230 media outlets. The esteemed guests included top energy officials from the U.S., the United Kingdom, Kuwait, the UAE, and Morocco.

In his home country, Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan opened the conference by pledging the largest single investment ever in the future of clean energy: fifteen billion dollars. British Petroleum (BP), an oil company revealed plans for a \$2 billion hydrogen plant while its former CEO, Lord Brown, discussed the past and current energy markets. The Tufts delegation fortunate enough to have the privilege to address the conference. Seniors Jesse Gossett and Alex Wright made a thirty minute presentation to the audience on the role of universities in improvement and implementation of renewable energy. Jesse and Alex discussed how universities

are unique places in the energy sector because they incubate technologies and offer the market a place to test technologies in a controlled environment. They also talked more about the specific energy advances that Tufts students have made and the methods the university has used to incorporate renewable energy into society. They suggested that Tufts can serve as an initiating, uniting force for various communities, on campus, in Massachusetts and around the world.

This issue strikes close to home in Abu Dhabi. The country is home to the Masdar Initiative, an endeavor said to parallel the Manhattan Project in ambition. The Initiative involves the non-profit Masdar Institute, which is currently under construction; it will become a state of the art graduate school for renewable energy-focused science and engineering students. The company has invested of over \$250 million into clean energy technology, start-up companies, and global companies whose products adhere to the ideals of the UAE. In addition, the vanguard of the Initiative is an entirely new city being constructed in the middle of an Abu Dhabi desert. Entitled Masdar City, the metropolis will

to model the viable potential for more alternative energy environments while also exemplifying the productive manners in which other countries can use oil profits to improve their societies and ensure growth through diversification.

In their study of Abu Dhabi and the

investigated by Daniel Enking and Renee Birenbaum, dealt with the effect of both oil and renewable energy on the UAE. They also analyzed the effect a global change from fossil fuels to renewable energy would have on the country. The third topic, examined by Alex Wright, and

David Mou, explored the shift toward renewable energy from the perspective of the UAE government, concentrating on the motivations behind its heavy investments in new forms of energy despite the country's energy abundance.

Once in Abu Dhabi, the group met first with Mr. Ali bin Towaih, the executive director of EnPark. EnPark was built using a development model focused on energy efficiency in both residential and commercial construction. The company's archetype hopes to become the new standard of living in Abu Dhabi. Next, the students visited a member of the Executive Council of Dubai, Walid Tabanji, who expanded bin Towaih's concept of UAE developmental success by discussing the



MICHAEL SCHECHT

WFES, the Tufts students focused on three main areas of energy policy. Prior to the trip, they wrote papers outlining their intended research and their objectives for the trip; they are currently in the process of writing more thorough papers of their findings. The first topic of examination, studied by Jared Rodriguez, Jayson Uppal,

UAE's foreign policy and tourism stances. On the floor of the WFES, several students had the opportunity to talk briefly with Sam Bodman, the U.S. Secretary of Energy, as well as Dr. Sultan Jabar, the leader of the company responsible for the Masdar Initiative, which includes Masdar City and the Masdar Institute.

“We just wanted to grab her by the shoulders and shake her and tell her to save the world.”

be entirely solar-powered with zero-waste and zero-carbon ecology, as well as sustainable transport, materials, food, and water. The self-sustained city is meant

Jacob Mandel, and Jesse Gossett, was a direct comparison between the United States' approach to energy development and that of the UAE. The second, in-

To learn about the latest recycling technology, the group met with one of *Time Magazine's* “Heroes of the Planet,” William McDonough. They discussed a shared hope to design products practically so that they can be recycled into their original states without waste. He reevaluates the world from the standpoint of design, and introduced the students to his ideas for solving the energy cri-

sis. For example, Mr. McDonough worked with Nike to design a shoe sole that is not only biodegradable, but also feeds plants when the shoe wears down. From a design perspective, reevaluating the products people use when they work and travel reestablishes how all of these aspects of people's daily lives have an impact on the environment.

The group came to many conclusions regarding their research topics. One general conclusion the students made is that because the UAE

is a monarchy, the country has a planned economy and can implement changes to its infrastructure with less friction than there would be in a more open society. The country is also exceedingly wealthy which allows them to invest large amounts of resources into the future of energy. Due to the theory of "peak oil," which postulates that 50 percent of the world's oil will have been extracted by the end of the next 10 years, the government



COURTESY OF TUFTS ENERGY SECURITY INITIATIVE

body the goal of the ESI, a program run by Tufts' Institute for Global Leadership (IGL). The IGL founded the Energy Security Initiative two years ago in response to the success of that year Education for Public Inquiry and International Citizenship class in the ExCollege that concentrated on "Oil and Water." Since its inception, the group has grown both in personnel and reputation, while simultaneously bringing recognition to Tufts.

outlooks on the energy crisis the world faces. In reference to BP's Executive Vice President, he remarked, "we just wanted to grab her by the shoulders and shake her and tell her to save the world. The [people we met with] may not seem to agree with every idea and ideal that we hold and they may not have the same sense of urgency, but they are incredibly intelligent people who have the possibility of being a savior of the world. It's hard

"The Tufts representatives were one of only four college delegations admitted to the symposium."

of the UAE is looking for a long-term solution to the energy crisis. Since a large part of the UAE's income is derived from its oil wealth, when its oil resources are exhausted it will have few significant sources of income. Consequently, the UAE is racing to diversify. It is actively seeking a leadership position in the emerging alternative energy industry and hopes to profit off exclusive rights to the next form of energy.

The research trip to Abu Dhabi and the group's attendance at the WFES em-

The Initiative has previously researched renewable energy throughout the world, starting in Germany with an exploration on solar energy, and since then traveling to Colorado, Washington D.C., Brussels, the Netherlands, and, most recently, to the UAE. In addition to the ESI's goal of giving Tufts students new perspectives on energy, the group seeks to incite interest in working in the constantly expanding energy industry.

One of the students, Jesse Gossett, encompasses many of the emotions and

to wrap our brains around why we can't all be on the same page." Through the trip to Abu Dhabi, the students have created a lasting partnership with many renowned energy companies and figureheads with whom Tufts University hopes to continue developing ties. The ESI plans to continue events such as the WFES and send more ESI researchers in the coming years. In the meantime, students like Jesse can share their newly acquired knowledge of renewable energy and pursue the goals of the ESI by spreading awareness. ☺

U.S. Economy Faces Trouble from Falling Housing Market

BY JULIANA SLOCUM

As the United States prepares to elect its next president in November, candidates are facing tough questions from citizens frustrated with the state of the U.S. economy. Many voters say that they will base their decision largely on economic matters and will vote for whichever candidate seems most capable of turning the economy around. The eventual winner will have a difficult time fulfilling civilians' expectations and transforming the national economy.

In past months, an increasing number of economists have voiced concern that the United States may be heading toward a recession. Technically, the country is not currently in a recession. Professor Daniel Richards of the Economics Department at Tufts writes that "an official recession is when the economy's output fails to grow for at least two quarters (six months)." The country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth began to slow down at the end of last year but so far, the decline has not persisted long enough to constitute an official recession.

Many Americans are unconcerned with official labels and are simply frustrated with current situation. They do not care if the nation is officially in a recession or not; all they know is that their lives are now more difficult as a result of the struggling economy. Indeed, signs of a downward trend are evident in all sectors of the economy. The decrease in GDP means that there is less production and thus less demand for workers. As a result, the national unemployment rate has risen, peaking in December 2007 at five percent. Some cities have experienced even higher increases in their unemployment rates; in December the New York Times reported that there were 7,655,000 unemployed New York City residents, a 13.2 percent increase from the previous year.

The weakening power of the U.S. dollar abroad is another sign of the struggling economy. For the past several years,

the value of the U.S. dollar has fallen steadily in comparison to other foreign currencies, especially the Euro and the Canadian dollar. Professor Richards explains that the decline in the value of the U.S. dollar reflects a combination of forces. "First, over the last six years or so, the borrowing by households coupled with the borrowing by the federal government (thanks largely to the Bush tax cuts of 2001) means that the U.S. as a whole has had to borrow a lot from the rest of the world. That borrowing means we've given the rest of the world a lot of paper IOU's denominated in dollars," he said. Currently, many foreign investors are trying to cash in their dollar assets because the U.S. economy is slowing. This intense demand for cashing in IOU's is driving the value of the U.S. dollar down and reflects the declining state of the U.S. economy, especially in relation to other global economies.

Analysts are now trying to determine why consumers are spending less today, and thus driving the GDP down. This decrease in consumer spending is largely due to the struggling housing market and Americans' poor borrowing habits. According to Richards, consumer spending on goods and services did not slow down in the past several years because "consumers have borrowed heavily to sustain that spending." As a result, the number of households in debt has certainly increased in recent years. "About 18 percent of household disposable income now goes just to pay interest on outstanding debt – that's about three percentage points more than in 2000."

Interestingly, this extraordinary debt has not prevented Americans from spending until very recently. In the past, high consumer spending was supported by a robust housing market. While the average consumer's take-home pay wasn't rapidly increasing, the value of their house was. Therefore, taking on an extra \$200,000 in debt, for example, did not seem to be as much of a burden

What is the Fed?

BY JEREMY HABER

The Federal Reserve, commonly referred to as the Fed, helps set the United States' monetary policy. Its main tool for setting policy involves changing interest rates to help control the growth of the economy.

As the central banking system in the United States, the Fed is composed of a Board of Governors, the Federal Open Market Committee, and a rotating group of members from some of the Federal Reserve Banks of major U.S. cities. Ben Bernanke is currently the Chairman of the Board of Governors.

The Fed has multiple purposes: to act as a central bank for the United States, to strike a balance between the interests of private banks and the government, to manage the nation's money supply and control monetary policy, and to help maintain liquidity in the economy when needed. By following these goals, the Fed greatly helps maintain the stability of the nation's financial system.

The Fed is vital to the U.S. because it keeps the volatility and unpredictability of the economy under control. When banks are strapped for cash and consumer borrowing decreases, the Fed lends money to the banks to increase liquidity. When fears of recession arise, the Fed lowers the interest rate to spur bank lending, leading to an increase in consumer spending. Basically, the Fed acts as a stabilizer for the economy, using its policy to keep inflation and recession at bay, all while keeping the American economy increasing at a nice pace. ☺

if the value of their house had risen by \$300,000.

The downward trend in the housing market is the primary cause of the decrease in consumer spending. For much of the 1990s and early 2000s, the price and value of households rose. Families felt secure knowing that they could sell their house for a good price, so they didn't worry about spending a lot on consumer goods. But now, house prices are declining. Professor Richards notes that "the housing bubble has burst – people are buying homes less frequently and that means that if you want to sell you have to do so at a lower price. Home prices fell for the entire 12-month period of 2007 for the first time in 40 years." The Boston Globe reported that in November, 2007, sales of single-family homes in Massachusetts dropped over 15 percent from the previous November and that the prices for both condominiums and single family homes were

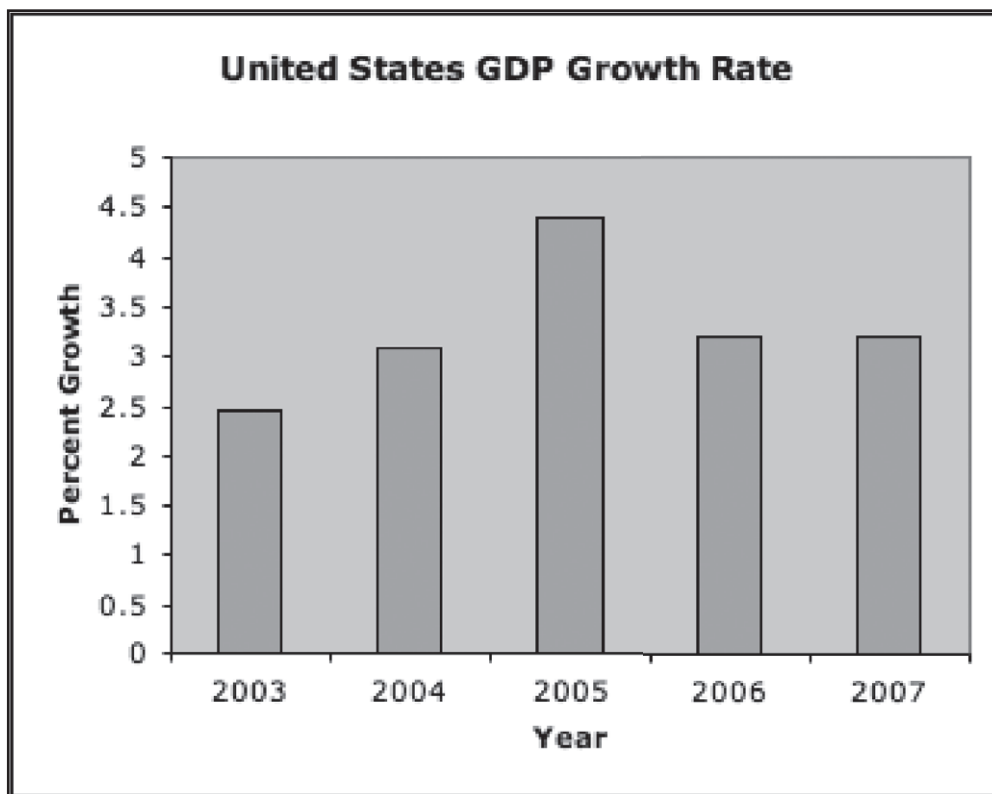
down. Many families, no longer certain that they can sell their homes for a comfortable profit, are growing increasingly uncomfortable with the large debts they have accrued. For this reason, many families have chosen to cut back on spending in order to repay debts and save for the future. "When all the debt that households have accumulated is combined with the loss in home values," explains Richards, "many [people] are going to cut back their expenditures and try to rebuild their savings. When enough people do that, though, consumer spending drops and so does GDP"

In recent weeks, the government

has enacted a number of measures designed to improve the economy and help the American public. On January 22, 2008, the Federal Reserve issued a three-quarter-point interest rate cut, the largest single-day rate cut in the agency's history, in an effort to boost investment and expenditures. A second cut of half a point followed eight days later. According to Richards, "an important reason that people stop spending is because they cannot get credit to finance their spending or can only get it at very high interest rates. Reducing those rates

While many lawmakers and civilians praise the package, other analysts contend that it does not do enough to alleviate the problems with the economy and will not have a significant effect. According to Richards, "the one group of people who would spend most of that money now are people who are really up against it — people who are unemployed, or so poor that they qualify for food stamps, etc. Unfortunately, the tax cut stimulus package gives most of its benefits to people who are high in the income distribution, e.g., small business owners."

Some senators agree with Richards and insist that the package should extend unemployment benefits and increase money for food stamps. Senator Max Baucus, Democrat of Montana and the Chairman of the Finance Committee, has proposed an alternate \$160 billion package that would extend



THE CIA WORLD FACT BOOK

should make it easier for households to continue spending and thus avoid recession."

The President and the U.S. House of Representatives have recently reached a tentative agreement on a \$150 billion economic stimulus package designed to give more money to consumers. The package would provide stipends, or tax rebates, of between \$300 and \$1200 to more than 100 million American households, as well as provide tax incentives for businesses. The goal of the package is to provide more money to citizens and businesses so that they can spend more on goods and boost the economy.

unemployment benefits, provide more tax relief to seniors, and provide heating assistance for the poor, among other things. According to the Boston Globe, the U.S. Senate is expected to pass Baucus' alternate package, while the House is on the brink of approving the original package, setting the stage for fierce negotiations between the two bodies. Only time will tell if such measures will succeed in boosting the economy and preventing a recession. In the meantime, Americans are trying to adjust to these tough times, and are looking to the presidential candidates for hope for the future. ☺

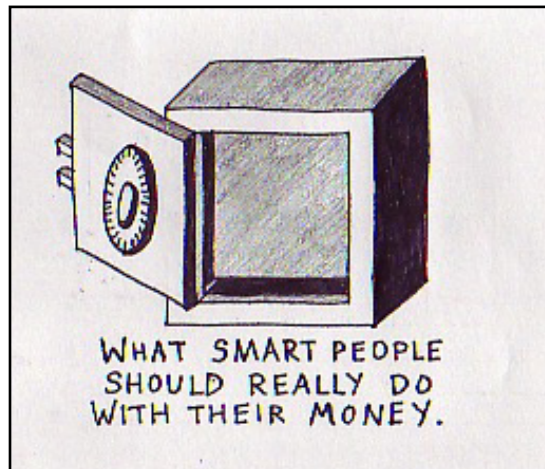
Footing the Bill

In the midst of students leaving campus last semester, the university announced a small change to its financial aid policies. Following on the heels of other elite institutions like Harvard, Yale, and Dartmouth, Tufts will now replace loans with grants for students whose families earn less than \$40,000 annually. *The Observer* commends the university for its steps to preserve the socio-economic diversity on campus by making college more affordable for those least able to foot the bill. Nonetheless, this publication reminds the administration of the larger picture: with college costs rising annually, and the university's endowment growing at unprecedented rates, providing financial aid for a larger segment of the student population must be a top goal. A college education remains a financial burden for all but a small percentage of families in this country, and *The Observer* hopes the administration plans to act on this growing economic reality.

Recent figures suggest that colleges and universities across the country are more fiscally robust than ever before, with a record 76 schools achieving endowments of one billion dollars in the last year. This financial windfall did not pass over Tufts, as the university saw an increase of 26.4 percent in its endowment, raising its value to \$1.45 billion. Despite the historic riches accumulated by the university, annual tuition will likely reach \$50,000 next academic year, keeping Tufts among the 15 most expensive private universities in the country.

With these numbers in mind, one can put the university's new financial aid plan into perspective. While providing grants to the lowest-income brackets should be a significant priority, the announced plan will cover only seven percent of the Tufts student body. Tuition of \$50,000 is an expense that few can afford without financial hardship, and providing grants

that cover seven percent of the student body fails to combat fully the rising costs of higher education. *The Observer* understands that the university does not have the endowment of Harvard or Yale, and cannot realistically offer grants to higher income families without taking away aid from those in greatest need. Nonetheless, it is hard to ignore the disconnect between the growing endowment and rising tuition costs without questioning whether the university can devote greater resources for expanding financial aid.



SARAH LEEENEN

Perhaps the university continues to withhold financial aid from middle-class families because the lack of such aid will likely not sway the majority of applicants from applying to Tufts because of financial concerns. Even in the face of growing tuition costs, applications to Tufts rise annually as the school becomes more and more selective. The simple fact remains that students and families are still willing to accept costs, however high, for a college education.

What ought to concern the university is not how its financial aid packages will affect the students it is trying to attract, but rather how the economic realities of higher education will affect the students who will eventually graduate. Every student at Tufts knows that the university

places a great emphasis on “active citizenship,” an idea that students should strive to contribute, however they can, to the betterment of society. The number of Tufts students who decide to volunteer for the Peace Corps, work for Teach for America, or join non-profits after graduation reflects the university's call for “active citizenship.”

The downside to “active citizenship” positions is that they are often not lucrative at the entry level. Students faced with great debt (with more to come with graduate school), may simply choose to enter the private sector upon graduation in order to begin paying off student loans. Even students during their time at Tufts, faced with a choice to volunteer in their spare time or earn spending money, may well see a paying job as necessary given the rising costs of tuition.

Students have every right to focus on their own economic self-interest, even at the sacrifice of “active citizenship.” Therefore, if the administration wishes for students to use their education for the common good, it needs to provide the

aid that would not make such a decision a sentence for a life in debt. While the administration in October 2007 announced it would repay student loans for some graduates who take positions in the non-profit sector, earmarking more money for grants should be the end goal.

Quite simply, rising endowments should lead to financial aid for a greater segment of the student body. While the day-to-day costs of the university are certainly great and may necessitate large tuition costs, not doing more to help the students may undermine the administration's goal of producing “active citizens.” Tufts students desire to change the world, but not at all costs. *The Observer* hopes the administration recognizes the breaking point of our collective altruism. ●

TICKER TAPE

Bite-size news you might have missed since our last issue.

Coming soon: ESPN

Tufts is hoping to bring the long coveted ESPN channel to all undergraduate dorms. Dean of Student Affairs Bruce Reitman is working with University Information Technology (UIT) and Tufts' cable provider, Falls Earth, to expand the station from its current locations in Carmichael, West, Haskell, Hodgdon, Houston, Lewis, Stratton, Sophia Gordon, South, and Wren Halls to make the station universally available.

Universities are Targets

A “phishing” scam swept across University campuses recently. Although Tufts was not targeted, UIT warns students not to give out any personal information, such as passwords, in e-mails. Director of Information Security Charles Young told the *Tufts Daily*, “The only defense against something like this is savvy computer users. Everyone should know that when you are asked for your password in an e-mail, there has to be something wrong. It’s not a legitimate e-mail, and you shouldn’t respond to it.”

To Prevent Future Embezzlement...

A new position to oversee the finances of student organizations is in the process of being created by the TCU Senate, in conjunction with Dean Bruce Reitman. TCU President Neil DiBiase told the *Tufts Daily* that he

feels a staff position for monetary oversight would have prevented the alleged embezzlement of \$300,000 by previous Office of Student Activities Director Jodi Neally. “There’s a committee that will be started in the next week or so. They’ll write up a job description and start a job search. I would hope [to see this employee hired] by next fall. The new position will handle student

been a terrific collaboration of students and staff and faculty to create ... a vital, beautiful space,” Reitman told the *Tufts Daily*.

Bacow Honored

President Lawrence Bacow is this year’s recipient of The Council for Advancement and Support of Education’s (CASE) Chief Executive Leadership Award. Bacow will be given the award in a ceremony on February 11.

Finally Here...

The Joey can finally be tracked by students on the website joey.tufts.edu, which depicts a map and locates the Joey on its route from around campus. Matt Shapenka, a 2009 TCU Senator, has been working on the project for the past two years.



RYAN STOLP

Scheduling Cancels Lecture

The Fares Lecture Series has been cancelled this year, the *Tufts Daily* reported. Due to scheduling conflicts within the university, the annual event hosted by the Fares Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies will have to resume next year, when scheduling may be less deterring. Last year, the series brought former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to Tufts.

finances across the board — really just look at everything from a macro level,” DiBiase said.

Club Hotung is Back

Hotung Café officially re-opened on January 24, with a ribbon cutting ceremony by TCU President Neil DiBiase, Senator C.J. Mourning, President Lawrence Bacow, Dean Bruce Reitman, and Director of Dining Services Patti Klos. “We should all be very proud of not only this facility but of what has

—Compiled by Kate Schimmer

Embracing My Last

BY MARA SACKS

In contrast to the anticipated *firsts* that college promises, the *lasts* have a devious way of arriving prematurely. The expansive in-between collapsed into flashes of late-night Espressos orders and flashcard-induced panic attacks. As I brace myself for the last months of the last semester of my last year of Tufts, I want to create a cohesive story of the moments, people, and experiences that have defined the past four years. A *Saved By the Bell* montage of my college years.

In the stacks of *Observer* issues that cover the coffee tables and bookshelves of my Philadelphia and Boston homes, I find this narrative. Disjointed and unpolished, the print resists coloration by time. Its desirability is debatable, the ugly moments as indelible as the pristine, yet the record of experience is unparalleled. Looking back through articles I have written, I return to forgotten moments and lost thoughts. I revisit concerts, art galleries, fashion shows and performances I have covered. I remember deep convictions that have since dissipated and others that have intensified. I relive the frustration, excitement, and passion that compelled me to write various pieces. Fragments of my life stare back at me in print.

I feel a bit like a child in her mother's heels, my concept of Editor looming larger than my frame. I am not significantly wiser or older than the girl who was terrified of her Editor-in-Chief three years ago. The memory of her poise and intelligence still intimidates me. The responsibility of producing this magazine has been so daunting at times that accepting the position of Editor-in-Chief seemed masochistic. Still, I can't imagine my last semester any other way.

For four years, *The Observer* has been a place for me to experiment and investigate. Writing for various sections on diverse topics has fomented intellectual exploration apart from what I have experienced in academics. Admittedly, I'm no Woodward or Bernstein, my flirtations with journalism being more benign than groundbreaking. Still, I believe the topics I have examined and the questions I have asked in my time on the magazine have helped me to understand myself, and the world around me, a little bit better. *The Observer* has shaped who I am, and has facilitated the growth college is intended to inspire. In addition to cultivating my own beliefs, and experiencing things I would not have otherwise, the magazine has been a home for me. It is my

with them this spring.

Although *The Observer* has been published continuously since 1895, the magazine continues to evolve with each semester's staff. Each editor transforms the mission. Each contributor leaves his or her mark. I have seen *The Observer* struggle to establish its identity, reconciling its divisive history as both newspaper and magazine. This year, the magazine has reached a level of sophistication that exceeds its earlier editions. The writers and artists who currently contribute to *The Observer* are some of the most talented I have seen.

With this exceptional staff, I hope to advance the quality of the magazine to new levels of excellence. This semester we intend to produce a publication that

is both relevant and provocative. We hope to inform, challenge and entertain. We will experiment with new approaches, and accept the possibility that we may make mistakes along the way. We encourage our readers to engage with us by sending letters or posting comments on our website (which will be updated regularly once again). As always, we welcome new members to *The*



Observer community. Maybe *The Observer* will be *your* thing. As I reflect on my time at Tufts, it is with tremendous gratitude. Although this emotion derives from a variety of sources, none approaches the swelling pride I feel when I hold an issue of *The Observer*. Working on a publication of such character and quality has been my greatest achievement. Commencing my last semester with *The Observer* I embrace the challenge of meeting my predecessors' standards and guiding the magazine through new firsts. ☺

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"Issue as Muse 2008: A Night of Artistic Inspiration" — Performances inspired by global issues, sponsored by the Tufts program in International Relations. Photos by Brittany Sloan.



Top Left: Nick Dynan, New Orleans; Top Right: Nicki Sobecki, Palestinian Refugee Camp, Lebanon; Bottom, Left to Right: Jessica Anderson, Jo



Anderson, Joe Slovo, Langa, South Africa; Jessica Anderson, Uganda; Adam Levy, Nepal.



The photos above were taken by Julie Furbush in Belize. She also captured the images featured in her short story "Tight-Rope Walking Through Mondays." See page 33 for poetry and prose.

The Economy of Death

BY PAULA KAUFMAN

“Blood and bodies were everywhere,” said U.S. Airman Ryan Hager, as he described carrying the bodies of slain Iraqis. That night Hager could not eat because “the lasagna looked like brain matter.” Hager was eighteen. Now, five years later, the Louisiana native has two children, one whose birth he missed because of the war.

I spoke with Hager and ten other members of the Air Force in the Atlanta airport; they had come from base training in Valdosta, Georgia. Within the hour they would be on a plane to Iraq. This would be Hager’s 14th military tour.

Jeremy, age 23, from Grand Rapids, Michigan, entered the Air Force after high school. This would be his fourth year in Iraq. Softly, he explained to me, “Just because you are fighting does not mean you agree with everything. War means casualties, war means loss. If you haven’t experienced a death, or been there, you can’t understand.”

For five years we have been fed the cryptology of war — the lies and the half-truths. Under our noses the truth comes home. In body bags. Where is the fury? Where is the sorrow? As Plato said in the *Phaedrus*, we are neither cattle nor sheep. We must use our voices, our minds.

Jeremy said he spent his free moments in Iraq weight-training, viewing movies at his base, and fixing his defective humvee. “It’s stupid, American [civilians] having Hummers,” he scoffed. “Buy a Jeep.”

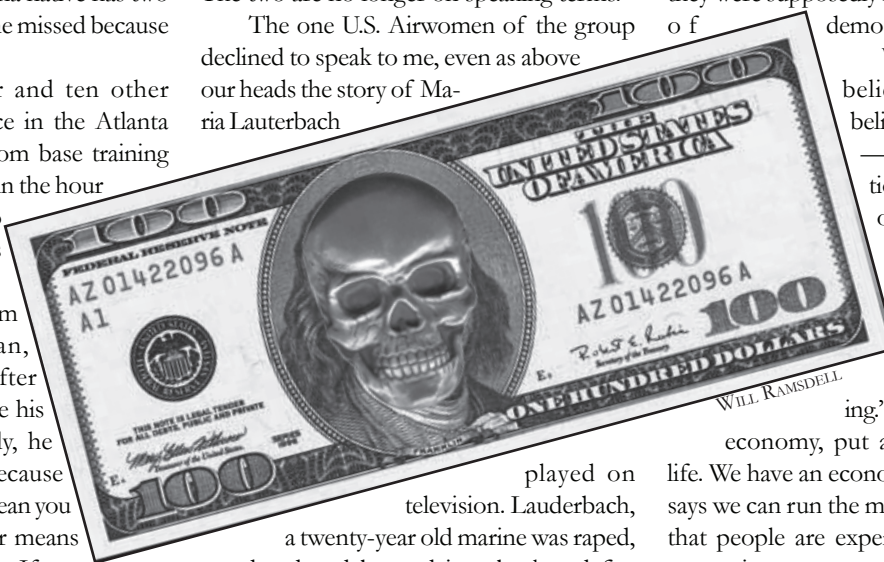
Jeremy watched their military packs, green with wide hip straps, while the others dispersed in the airport for lunch. Billy, the youngest of the group at age 18 and a denizen of Salisbury, MA, returned with a sandwich. “Are there a lot of hippies at Tufts?” he queried. “Some,” I said. He laughed. But the laughter could not cut the edge or dispel the tensivity of the group.

Of the Airmen and women, only Jeremy had attended college for any length

of time. When I mentioned that my school was small, he made eye contact with me and said, “There’s nothing small about an education.”

Billy had enlisted for six years in the Air Force — two more years than the required four — for the “money and the stripes.” His mother vehemently opposed the decision. The two are no longer on speaking terms.

The one U.S. Airwomen of the group declined to speak to me, even as above our heads the story of Maria Lauterbach



played on television. Lauterbach, a twenty-year old marine was raped, murdered and burned in a backyard fire pit by a comrade in North Carolina. In the military, sexual harassment persists but is ignored. Meanwhile, attention is trained on the killer, who himself will likely die at the hands of the state he enlisted for and swore to serve.

As of January 31, 2008, 422 Californians have been slain in Iraq, as well as 362 Texans, 167 Floridians, 165 Ohioans, 128 Pennsylvanians, thousands of other Americans, and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, according to icasualties.com, cited by the BBC and the *New York Times*.

Can anyone oscillate between anarchy and peace; bombings and sleep; mayhem and kissing your child goodnight? According to a recent *New York Times* report, there were 121 cases in which veterans committed a killing in this country after returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. These killings were attributed to combat trauma.

And what, then, does this tell us? We must fight with our words, voices, and most importantly, ballots. War does not help the dead. We must shut down Guantanamo.

Reinstate habeas corpus. Obey our Constitution. Bring our soldiers home. I asked one soldier if he was going to vote in the presidential election — he said he would try, but didn’t know the protocol for Americans casting absentee ballots in Iraq. What sick irony if our American Service Members had more difficulty voting than the Iraqis they were supposedly instructing in the ways of democracy.

We need leaders who believe in people, who believe in weapons of life — food, houses, education — not in weapons of death. *Boston Globe* columnist James Carroll once wrote, “Life is too short not to find something else to do besides killing.” If you care about the

economy, put a price on your own life. We have an economy of profligacy that says we can run the market into the ground, that people are expendable, that killing is normative.

Since the war began, the ratio of power has not changed. It has always been 300 million to one — Americans vs. a president or his lasting legacy made real in a Supreme Court that is not responsive to the peoples’ wishes, that chooses when and when not to take cases of the utmost importance, and above all else, may not once be held accountable by the people they serve for the entirety of their remaining lives. The people do not choose, but they suffer the enduring consequences for years to come.

Take my cousin, for example, a Vietnam veteran who is dying of Agent Orange. He sleeps in the day and is terrorized by the thought of bombs detonating at night. Mark could never hold a steady job, convulses at certain sounds, and never married. He was recently evicted from his apartment and may now be living on the street. He is a living casualty of the thing called war. Meanwhile, in Iraq, we’re still dropping bombs. ☹

Paula Kaufman is a sophomore who has not yet declared a major.

If Plato Went Pre-med

BY MIKE SNYDER

As the new semester gets underway, another round of pre-med students is stressing over problem sets, yawning through early-morning lectures, and handing in unfinished lab reports.

But the spring is special, as it marks the time when many Seniors must evaluate, maybe for the first time, their prospects of seriously making it into medical school. Lots of freshmen, having botched up their first semester of science class and not finding part two to be any easier, wonder if they should pursue their high school interest in psychology or history. Certain seniors in their home-stretch discover that their favorite accredited medical schools don't feel the same way about them, and do they really want to spend four years in the Dominican Republic's *Escuela de Medicina*? It was the second semester of my sophomore year that I decided to "postpone" my med school plans until well after Tufts. Something about the long, looming summer promised lots of time for reflection.

One more pre-med down. And, well, suddenly I find myself having to answer major life questions, like what are my sincere interests? What do I stand for? What matters in life? What do I want to do for a living? The questions that most four-year college students must grapple with from their first course in political science, sociology, or philosophy, are the same stumpers that I could afford to dodge with my first course

in physics, biology, or math.

What was my pre-med rationale? *I want to be a doctor because I'm fascinated by the human body, because I want to promote healthcare for all, because I want to make a difference in the world, because my mentor inspired me to want to save lives...*

Those may be reasons enough for medical schools, who request

only one or two pages of just such contrived justifica-

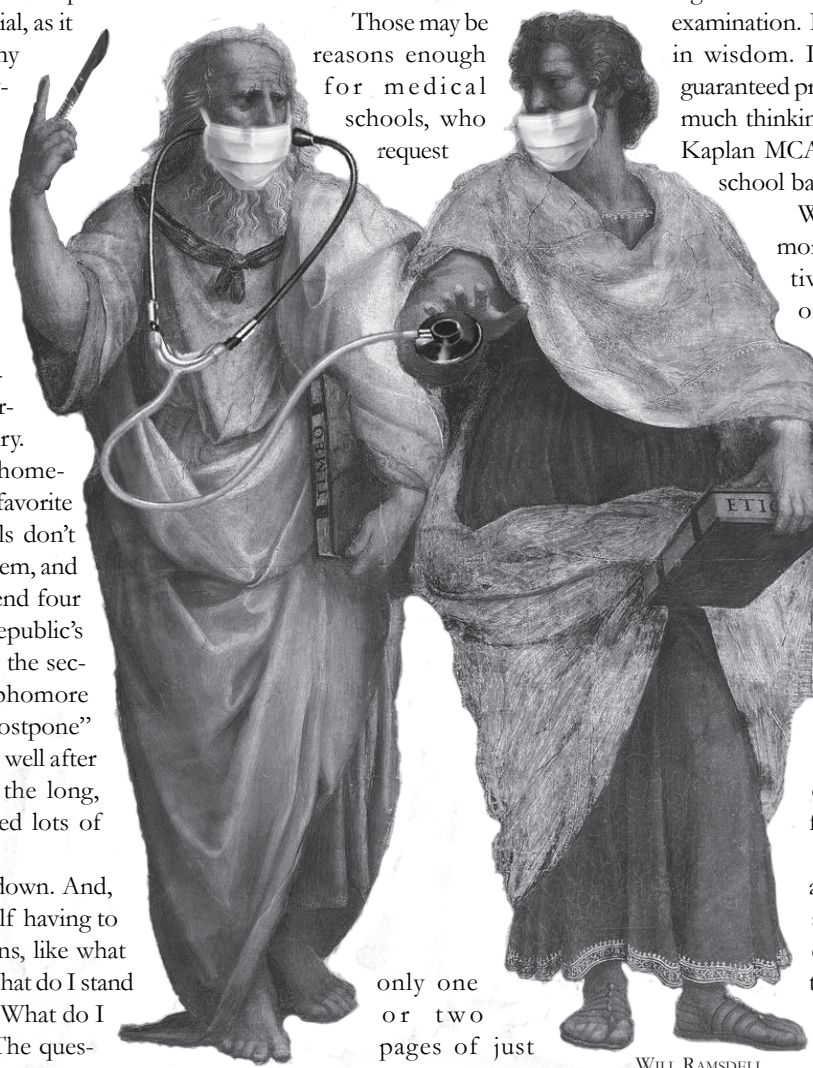
tion in their mandatory essay, but I think that if you can't write a hundred-page thesis on why it is you're doing what you're doing *for the rest of your life*, then just who do

you think *you* are, anyway?

Choosing pre-med as a freshman is not a major life decision; it's a way to avoid making major life decisions, albeit — it's one of the most challenging ways to avoid making major life decisions there is. It's high on self-discipline and short on self-examination. Rich in knowledge, but poor in wisdom. If you want a short-cut to guaranteed prosperity in life — without too much thinking *about* life — then start the Kaplan MCAT prep alongside your high school band practice.

What's scary is that if I were more stubborn and less reflective, I might still be taking organic chemistry. I would have missed a good chunk of the most illuminating experiences of my (half-finished) college career, including a rewarding semester abroad, liberal arts courses that have altered my perspective a hundred times over, skill-building extracurriculars, and even some stimulating late-night discussions — which I never would have stayed awake for with bio and chem midterms dogging my footsteps for four years.

I blame a medical school admissions system that forces students to start crunching as early as possible in order to tackle the heavy requirements. Pausing to take a time-out means falling irrevocably behind, unless one scrambles for summer classes, post-baccalaureate programs, and last-minute research opportunities. This disproportionately feeds for people who are positive before their



“Choosing pre-med as a freshman is high on self-discipline and short on self-examination.”

20th birthday that they want to be physicians; ready at 20 to commit 'til 28. Except who's positive of anything when they're 20? Instead it feeds for the most obstinate, ambitious, and competitive among us, while weeding out lots of people who probably should be my doctor. The whole process is kind of like running for president (see insert on page 24).

I do, however, have enormous respect for those students entering medical school at a riper age. What age that is depends on the individual, but it's almost never 22 or 23. This applies to all pre-professional students, be it law or international diplomacy, as it's really the exceptional among us who can write that 100-page thesis earlier on in life.

Hypothetically, if one were to create a national minimum age for applying to medical schools, and set that age at 24 or 25, I predict the overall number of applicants would tank right away. Thousands of prospective medical students, faced with two years of having little to do except search for a job, travel the world, or contemplate life — essentially, making up for all that lost time during college — would discover that medicine isn't their calling after all. Thousands more would realize with redoubled certainty and resolve that it is, and aren't those the kinds of thoughtful, well-rounded students medical schools are really searching for? ☺

Mike Snyder is a junior majoring in American Studies.

Ramsdell's Ramblings: Searching for the Higgs

BY WILL RAMSDELL

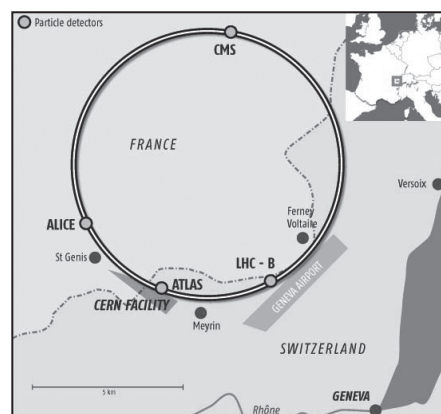
For those who have yet to catch wind of what is arguably one of the greatest advances in human scientific history, you might want to read up on the LHC or Large Hadron Collider. For a crash course on this beast machine, it is an enormous 30-mile long track (see photo) designed to propel particles using 12,000 superconducting magnets along its length, which runs through both France and Switzerland, and eventually collide packets of protons 30 million times per second into one another at 99.9999991% the speed of light, shattering the particles into their constituent, subatomic parts. To put that percentage in perspective, recall that conversion of matter into light requires infinite energy, something we certainly don't have in excess.

The goal here is to find the Higgs Boson. Bosons are rather quirky if not quarky. They are the carriers of forces, like casino chips of electromagnetic charge, the strong and weak forces as well as, ostensibly, mass. The Higgs is the one scientists hope will be the boson of mass, the final elusive piece to the Standard Model puzzle. When scientists detect, in the 25 nanoseconds of particle soup the proton collisions create, a single floating hunk of mass with nothing to claim it, we will have

found the Higgs boson and maybe even the keys to a new age of physics, although the LHC might also glean some insight into beautiful or Bottom Quarks, antimatter or cosmic fireballs of quark-gluon plasma.

Although concern has been voiced in response to the notion that we might inadvertently create a black hole into which all of humanity and its hallowed machinations might plummet, the experts at CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research) feel certain that the risk of such an event is pretty low. But since we are trying to recreate the conditions at the very beginning of the universe, who really knows? ☺

Ramsdell's Ramblings is a when-possible column devoted to intellectual acrobatics.



Students Respond to 'If Plato Went Pre-Med'

“Having a minimum age does not affect anything because in the long term, no one is really a doctor until they are in their 30's. While you're alive, you'll be experiencing life, and at 30 still have plenty of time left to keep experiencing the world, especially with that nice income you will soon have coming in to afford your own travels abroad.”

– **Stephanie Tam**, *Bio-Med Bound Freshman*

“Most people are shocked that I am pre-med because of my vivacious aura, but I really like scientific stuff, I even find it sexy, so if those are the horizons I want to expand then I should be able to do what I want. Besides, all we need right now is more laws telling us what we can and can't do, and forcing our geniuses away from the fields they want to be in, even temporarily, might not be the best plan. Side tracking Jonas Salk would have been bad news no matter how good of a badminton player he might have been.”

– **Alene Kellogg Rhea**, *Freshman Majoring in Entropy*

Why Going Pre-Med is Like Running for President

(Continued from p.23)

1. In both cases, flip-flopping is a big no-no. Give the illusion of always knowing what you stand for.
2. It's necessary to know the ins-and-outs of the system and exploit its weaknesses.
3. Falsely congratulating the successes of your opponents is all too common.
4. For serious contention, it helps to know it's what you want when you're 18 years old.
5. Making early contributions to various special interests can really come in handy when the big day comes.
6. Unbreakable stubbornness, a competitive streak, and lofty ambitions are generally useful qualities.
7. Thinking too hard about the irrationality of the process can really get in the way of achieving your goal.
8. Just because somebody gets selected, doesn't mean they should really be there.

Read This and I'll Like You

BY SOPHIE PACK

The friend who is overly-friendly at all times. The perfectionist who collapses under pressure. The person who constantly relies on the advice of others. What do these (hypothetical) people have in common? I'm sure you can match the description to the face, because these types are everywhere. They are clingy and dependent, and once they go down the road of indecisiveness, they have a hard time finding their way back again. Why does it happen? Is it healthy? Science has yet to give us a definitive answer.

But researchers have made some remarkable discoveries. This type of behavior usually stems from a "need to be cared for" — a mark of what psychiatrists call "dependent personality disorder." When people control their impulses to run for help, this trait can work positively in stressed relationships. Robert Bornstein, a psychologist at Adelphi University, says these people "learned to make others feel good about helping them." Studies found that needier students did better in their college academics.

However, my hunch is that there may be negative long-term implications. The better grades of these needy individuals may suggest someone who is grasping for control in one aspect of their life as compensation for a lack of control in social situations. These types may also fall into a nasty pattern of giving up control

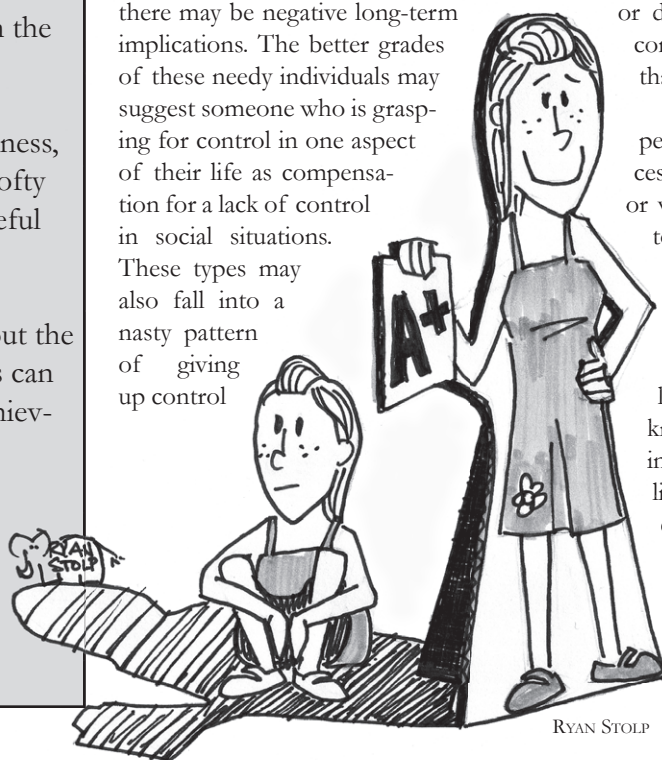
to external sources, sacrificing self for security, and leaning on friends or spouses to prop up their unstable egos. They could easily be taken advantage of, lack the autonomy they need to live on their own, or be more prone to following their parents' advice instead of forging their own life path. Some may appear fake or behave in an overly forced manner, projecting a persona that they believe will insulate themselves against their worst fear: being alone.

The question is: why do some people catch this character flaw, while others don't? More often than not, they were reared by overly-protective parents. Bornstein says, "The message growing up is: You're fragile, you're weak, you need someone powerful to look after you." That's where the seed of self doubt is sown. The inability to be decisive, confident and a leader might well stem from parental megalomania, a fiendish parenting ploy to mold children into replicas of what parents view to be the "correct" lifestyle. These are often the parents who cram stress into their kids' lives and, like a bad film, add superfluous, incessant narratives and voiceovers to a life-script they should only guide, not write.

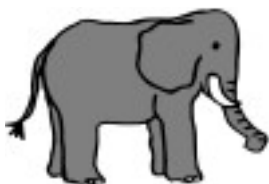
However, the trouble arises when the sons or daughters tolerate this sadistic yet common form of child abuse rather than rebel like normal adolescents.

In an age of extremism, where people are either successful or unsuccessful, cool or unpopular, normal or weird, people think if they appear to have it all on the outside — and avoid figuring out what actually makes them happy — success will diffuse into their lives like osmosis. Application of scientific laws to human interaction aside, we know this to be a false hope. Giving up control to others may look like the easiest option, but it will drain away all empowerment over time. So keep your autonomy. You might need it one day. ☺

Sophie Pack is a freshman who has not yet declared a major.



RYAN STOLP



Late Night With TUPD

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Mon. Feb. 11	Lewis
Wed. Feb. 13	Hill/West at Hill
Wed. Feb. 20	Bush/Hodgdon at Hodgdon
Mon. Feb. 25	Miller
Wed. Feb. 27	Haskell/Tilton at Haskell
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Wed. Mar. 5	Carmichael/Wilson at Carmichael
Mon. Mar. 10	Houston
Wed. Mar. 12	Wren/Carpenter at Wren

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You Are Branded and On Display

BY BRIAN McLOONE

Capitalism has postponed self-reflection by convincing naïve consumers that ours is a culture of individuality and self-expression. In fact, even a superficial analysis shows quite the opposite to be true. Within very narrow boundaries, American consumers exhibit personality and flair. But in a broader respect, this individualism is often just topical or, in many cases, simply nonexistent. In the realm of fashion, as one example, individual expression is limited to what the corporate fashion industry deems acceptable.

We read the New York Times and Vanity Fair to see what's "new" and "in." But we quite proudly rely on no other outlets to consult. A great deal of the American elite acts as though corporate enterprise alone can provide advice on how to escape the supposedly banal fashion interests of the poorer, less-cultured status quo. Put another way, the extent of our individuality is limited to the market interests of a relatively limited, profit-driven industry. Active or passive deviations from this norm — wearing last season's clothes, for instance — result in cultural marginalization, or, when the phenomenon becomes popular enough, cultural integration. Hence the anti-consumer is uncivilized, while the faux vintage shirt-wearing hipster is "down with the scene."

Such an outlook is the essential tone of "Branded and on Display," one of Aidekman Art Gallery's current exhibitions. A collection of art showcasing capitalism's cultural conquest, "Branded" has drawn on a wide variety of artists to portray and establish an important social critique. While the artists in this exhibit use a variety of media and content, this actually works more to unify and further establish the theme of the production — consumerism's broad reach — than it does to create artistic disunity. The most explicit of pieces in a largely downplayed exhibit is probably a floor projection of various corporate logos — IBM's, BMW's, Playboy's, etc. — morphing into each other. This effect is a fascinating artistic achievement

in itself — people watching disparate shapes and symbols shaping themselves into pictorial and alphabetic alternatives. More interesting, though, is the piece's portrayal of the overall similarity of seemingly diverse corporations. Insofar as they tell us what we want (and then sell us the relevant product), can we really say Dell

They tell us what we want (and then sell us the relevant product), can we really say **Dell** is so different from **Disney, Motorola** from **Honda**, or **Bell** from **HP**?

so different from Disney, Motorola from Honda, or Bell from HP?

With other pieces, "Branded" is more didactic than it is overtly critical, as it often relies on the obviousness of America's addiction to corporate consumerism. Any other approach, one would at least hope, would be superfluously preachy. This fact is perhaps the most fascinating point of a fascinating exhibit: realizing the corporate superficiality of our culture doesn't take a whole lot of thought. All the evidence is, quite literally, surrounding us. Whether or not such an approach is effective is

largely a matter of individual psychological temperament, I suppose. There is always the risk, after all, that the exhibit may come off as a celebration of capitalism, rather than an implicit declaration of its inanity. This would certainly be a sad consequence, but it would, fittingly enough, prove

the artists' point.

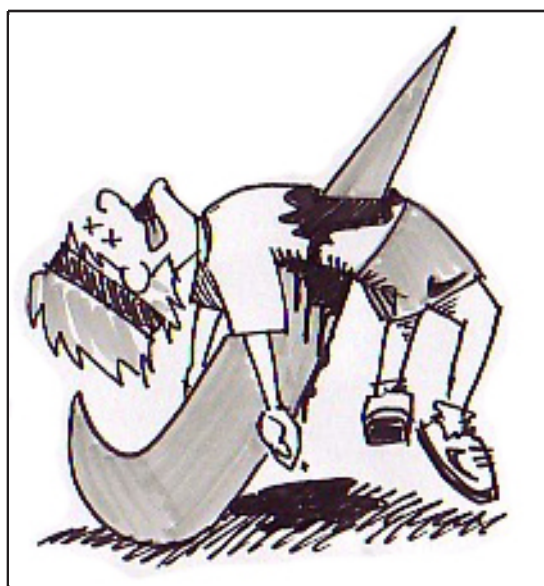
A particularly interesting piece in the exhibit is a picture taken of University of Illinois fans at a college football game. All

clad in the orange of their school, students in the picture capture the overwhelming de-individualism of large, self-conscious groups. As members of the crowd, I imagine many of the fans see themselves as identified with an individual unit — their school. It's not clear, though, how an identity of this type creates a distinct

self-conception. Within a broader society, one conceivably achieves a certain measure of individualism. But within the society of the school or (arguably) intercollegiate sports, each fan is simply an insignificant, unidentifiable member of the collective whole. Artistically, the picture is striking and captivating. But I was sad to realize that the artist took various pictures over the span of a few seconds, then duplicated them over and over. So the sea of orange inaccurately displays the size of the crowd; in actuality, the crowd is much smaller, and the artist has used a photographer's technique to put it all together.

There is one other piece which deserves particular attention, for it varies from the others in a key respect. Toward the end of the exhibit, there is a picture of the back of a man's head. The head, eerily, has a Nike symbol seemingly emblazoned on his bald skull. To me, this diverges from the tone of the rest of the exhibit in that the insignia hints at our imbedded love of all material items. That is, the Nike symbol is part of the faceless man; it is his naked, natural identity, rather than a vestige of his strictly external social ornamentation. This is an important point, I believe, because it seems clear to me that consumerism is tapping into very real psychological facts about ourselves. Our tendency to seek inclusion in social groups is driving us to spend absurd amounts of money on quite obviously useless and redundant items. ☹

"Branded and on Display" will be exhibited until March 30, in the Aidekman Art Gallery, Tuesday through Sunday, from 11:00am to 5:00pm, 8:00pm on Thursdays. Admission is free.



RYAN STOLP

Tim Blane:

Not Your Average White Guy With a Guitar

BY KATIE CHRISTIANSEN

Most guys with a guitar end up sounding the same after a while. It's somewhat of a hackneyed act that starts to quickly lose appeal. Tim Blane, however, strives to challenge this stereotype with a quirky and catchy blend of straight up folk-pop. Along with a bassist and cajónist, Blane performed at WMFO's inaugural Acoustic Café performance on January 31. Each Thursday at 8:30, a different artist will perform an hour-long set at Brown and Brew in an effort to expose Tufts students to new music and to help fledgling artists gain recognition. Blane's performance was the first of the semester.

Blane's set was a straightforward, no-frills sampling of his two current albums, *Clockwork* (2007) and *In the Meantime* (2005). Among the songs played were "So Life," which Blane described as a "carpe diem kind of song" and "Drifting and Driving," a song he wryly claimed is fast becoming the most requested first dance song at weddings.

Although very similar in style and quality to artists like Jason Mraz, Blane's influences branch out to other genres. Many of *In the Meantime's* tracks seem to draw from the style of alternative-country artist Lyle Lovett, with quirky lyrics and a subtle undertone of country melodies. Blane also cites various jazz and blues artists as major influences, both of which clearly contribute a certain funk and groove to his song writing.

One cannot overlook, however, the striking similarities between Blane and pop-rock superstar John Mayer. Both write honest, soulful lyrics that set them apart from the average "white dude with a guitar"

persona of many current folk-pop artists. Even their performance styles are similar; a certain microphone-biting, head-bobbing idiosyncrasy works its way onstage with both of them. "Tennessee," a bittersweet, melodic ballad, is very reminiscent of Mayer's "3x5," replete with melancholy lyrics and driving percussion that move the song along. Incidentally, both attended Boston's Berklee School of Music (Mayer was a dropout. Blane, you win).

Blane brings with him Adam Olenn on bass and James Williams on drums. Due to Brown and Brew's space constrictions, however, Williams brought his cajón, an Afro-Peruvian percussion instrument that enables the player to create many different sounds without the unwieldiness of a drum set.

In an effort to break up the set a bit, Blane performed covers of Fall Out Boy's infamous "Dance, Dance" and Ray LaMontagne's "Trouble." It took most of the audience a few minutes to figure out what exactly Blane was going for when he started with "Dance, Dance." Although it was a valiant effort, the preteen angst anthem is better off performed by Fall Out Boy.

Blane explained that the band chose "Dance, Dance" because "we like to keep people guessing." In addition to the Fall Out Boy classic, Blane and company have performed songs by Kelly Clarkson, injecting mainstream pop into their otherwise uniform setlists.

While the band fell a bit flat on "Dance, Dance," the cover of "Trouble" did due justice to the musical flair of Ray

LaMontagne. A simple, soulful rendition of the song garnered the most applause from the audience of any song that evening.

After the hour-long set at Brown and Brew, Blane and his band members headed upstairs to WMFO's studio for a live on-air set and a brief interview. They replayed many of the same songs, including the single "Me Being Me," one of Blane's catchiest tunes. Although Blane commented that the studio was "about 107 degrees," his voice was consistently clear.

In the ensuing interview, all three band members were asked several probing

Blane gently tried to explain that heroin is, in fact, referred to as "angel dust."

questions, each of which received a witty response. The first question was rather benign: what's on your iPod right now? Olenn remarked that his current favorite song was Colin Hay's ("Men at Work") solo on vinyl, eliciting a laugh from the entire studio. Williams confessed that he was working his way through the Beatles collection for the first time in his life, while Blane cited his current favorites as Lupe Fiasco and "a mix of different jazz stuff."

When asked which food they would most like to be reincarnated as, all three men gave very different responses. Olenn immediately jumped in with his contribution: honey dust. After Blane gently tried to explain that heroin is, in fact, referred to as "angel dust," Olenn described his choice as simply powdered honey.

After a stint this summer playing on a musical Caribbean cruise, Blane says that he's glad to be back in the states and playing his new songs for fresh audiences. All in all, it was a rewarding evening of music, and future Acoustic Café shows should offer much of the same. ☺

Tim Blane will be on tour until April 18, but will return to Somerville to play at Johnny D's on February 23. WMFO, Tufts Freeform Radio, will be hosting the Acoustic Café series every Thursday at 8:30 at Brown and Brew.



COURTESY OF TIM BLANE

Choral Color

BY RYAN YANNALFO

Walking out of Granoff Music Center after the "The Creature's Choir," I wondered about the performance I had just seen. It was a strange presentation; very unique. I realized that "The Creature's Choir" had shown me two things: a new perspective on animals, and that John McDonald and Jessica Bowers are extremely talented musicians.

The concert, written and co-performed by Mr. McDonald, was presented by the Tufts Community Concert Series. It is based on a series of poems by Carmen Bernos de Gasztold, translated by Rumer Godden. Each song or interlude in the presentation is based on a different poem, each of which is a short prayer to God from the perspective of — you guessed it — animals.

Musically, the suite is largely atonal. It also has little to no tempo or rhythm. Due to the complexity of the music and the extensive interplay between voice and piano, the musicians had to have been very well rehearsed. The overall sound, despite the difficulty involved, was spotless. From flitting sparrows to burrowing moles, from prancing gazelles to overstretched mother hens, the music was written perfectly for each poem. Quick arpeggio-like piano work accompanied by hurried singing provided the sound for "The Caterpillar," simulating the fast movements of the animal's many legs. All the songs worked to create the feel of the animals. By "feel," I mean Gasztold's interpretation of each creature; loneliness, joy, dejection, pride, and exhaustion are all concepts covered by Mr. McDonald's music.

In addition to the virtuosic piano parts, the vocal parts were also incredibly difficult and emotional, and Jessica Bowers was absolutely perfect. She displayed fantastic versatility as she sang each progressive song, changing characters every few minutes. She sang with disgust as the toad, and she sang with arrogance as the lion.

I was deeply impressed with Ms. Bowers' ability to change her performance every few minutes. Rehearsing and performing under such conditions must be extremely taxing and draining, and I commend Ms. Bowers for her endurance and unwavering skill.

A particular highlight of the performance was "The Mother Hen." Most of the other songs in the piece end with the word "Amen," — only two songs end in a different manner. "The Mother Hen" ends with the sentence, "Lord, my heart is so choked with loving care, how can I say amen?" These lines offered new perspectives on the plights of average animals. Another high point of the suite was "The Swallow." This particular piece ends with the lines, "Lord, a day will come, a chill gold day when my babes will take wing on their own affairs./Oh! On that day, when there will be nothing more to bring,/Console me with the call of countries far away. Amen." The point of this piece was to focus on the simple loneliness of a bird with nowhere else to fly. The raw beauty packed into this piece, as well as the

The overall sound,
despite the difficulty
involved, was spotless.

others, was astounding.

However, as stated before, the suite was very atonal, and no song fully resolved or finished on a tonic. This helped to heighten the tension and hold the audience's attention for subsequent pieces. At points, the atonality could bring the music to the dark depths of the ocean, while at other times, it could take it to the top of the trees. The piano and vocal parts relied heavily on one another, as either would have sounded disjointed without the other. Somehow, though, when they combined, they made a fantastic and enjoyable presentation that flowed from song to song. I would highly recommend John McDonald's "The Creatures' Choir" to any classical or modern music fan, as it has so many fantastic attributes that most enjoy, but no one can deny. ♪

The Community Concert Series will host performances Sundays at 3:00pm, throughout the Spring Semester. Admission is free.

ARTS THIS WEEK

TUFTS:

Sunday, Feb. 10, The Tufts Community Concert Series presents "Colors of the Afternoon," Hindustani vocal music. Distler Performance Hall, Granoff Music Center. 3:00pm. Admission is free.

Tuesday, Feb. 12, The 2008 Transatlantic Slave Trade Film Series presents "The Middle Passage." Sophia Gordon Multipurpose Room. 7:00pm to 9:00pm, admission is free.

Friday, Feb. 15, The Tufts Dance Program is offering a free, beginners' course on how to Argentine tango. Think you can dance? Come out to learn the moves and grooves to impress any coed. No one wants to be the frat-party wallflower. 5:30pm, Jackson Dance Lab. Admission is free.

BOSTON:

Wednesday, Feb. 13, American Repertory Theatre presents William Shakespeare's "Julius Casar." Director Arthur Nauzyciel blends 1960's pop-culture and imagery with this on-stage classic. For more information visit www.amrep.org.

Thursday, Feb. 14, T.T. the Bear's hosts Carnival D'Amour, a blending of circus, carnival, burlesque, and cabaret. Featuring Boston burlesque troupe Boston BabyDolls. For more information visit www.bostonbabydolls.net.

Friday, Feb. 15, The Coolidge Corner Theatre hosts The Sex Workers' Art Show. A cast of all-sex-industry performers will present through many different artistic mediums the different aspects of the sex industry. Tickets are \$12 general admission, 18 and older.

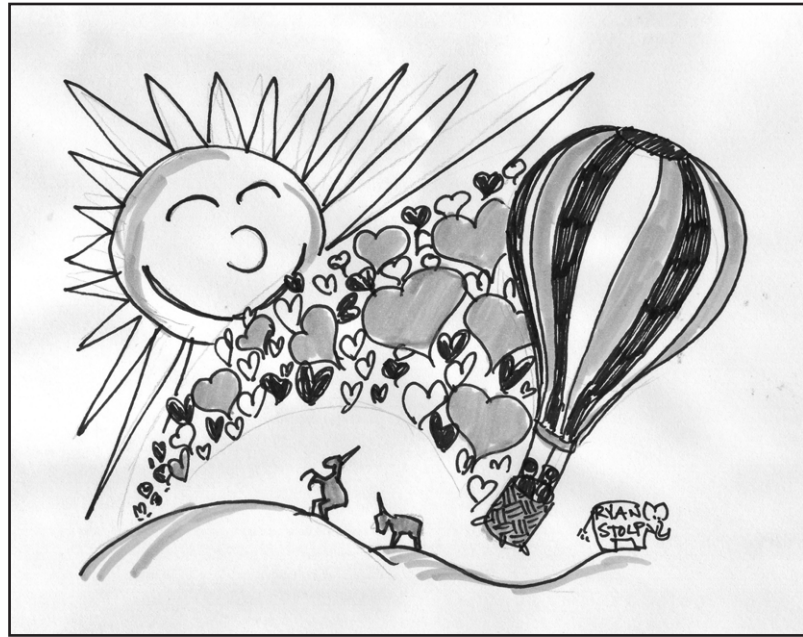
A Bearable and Enjoyable Valentine's Day for Singles and Couples Alike

BY ALINA SHEVLAK

It's looming. There are teddy bears and cheap boxes of candy hitting the shelves in every pharmacy, more sappy love songs playing on the radio, and that familiar anxiety is starting to creep up on many of us. An inherent pressure surrounds this particular holiday: Valentine's Day. This year, relieve yourself of that pressure.

As the days inch closer, boyfriends and girlfriends are biting their nails and wondering what to expect, what presents to buy, or where to spend that special romantic evening. If you're single or if you've just gotten out of a relationship, you might find yourself particularly depressed on the fourteenth of February. In either case, there are plenty of options out there for making the day not only bearable, but also enjoyable.

If you're in any sort of relationship, commit yourself to doing something. Although lying in bed all day can be fun, Valentine's Day is one of the few days of the year that you should and (I insist) must go out of your way to make special. If you've just recently committed to each other and don't want to break the bank, take a fun trip to the aquarium. With a student I.D., admission will cost you only \$13, though you'll have to go before five, seeing as they close relatively early. Another alternative to the traditional Valentine's dinner is a romantic movie night at the Brattle Theatre in Harvard Square. They will be showing *Casablanca*, a perfect fit for the old-school venue. Top off the evening with a fancier-than-usual homemade cocktail. A tequila sunrise is both festive and easy to make. Pour 1 ½ teaspoons of grenadine, ¼ cup of tequila and ½ a cup of orange juice into a large glass over ice. Let the grenadine settle at the bottom of the glass to create a layered look and use an orange slice as a garnish. When stirred together, the colors blend to create a bright reddish orange color perfect for the romantic occasion.



RYAN STOLP

Be adventurous. If you two have said, "I love you" and have been saving up your money, splurge. It's almost guaranteed that your loved one has never flown over Boston in a hot air balloon. Give him or her an experience never to be forgotten! Flight time is usually around an hour (though the whole process takes about three) and it will cost you approximately two hundred dollars per person. Though the price tag may deter many, those few hours will be well worth your hard earned dollars. Check out high5ballooning.com to get prices and information. Gift certificates for this incredible experience can be purchased online at any time, but you may have to wait for warmer weather before you schedule your flight. So, if you are confident in the longevity of your relationship and want to do something that will blow your sweetheart away, hot air ballooning is something that he or she will be sure to remember for the rest of his or her life.

For those Jumbos who are single, it may seem hard to stay optimistic on the most lovey-dovey holiday of the year. While most single people gorge themselves on chocolate, drink an excess of al-

cohol, or spend the day moping around campus, you should make the most of it. Get together with your single friends and have a night on the town. Dining out at a fun tapas restaurant is an entertaining and original way to spend time with other single friends. For those of you who may be unfamiliar, tapas are small Spanish appetizer dishes (both hot and cold) meant to be ordered to share with your party. BarLola, located a block from Newbury Street, serves great food and awesome sangria in a cozy, brick interior. An added bonus is the attractive wait staff...

Above all else — have some fun. Take the opportunity to get off campus during the week. During these cold months, we all could use an excuse to spice things up. Remember though, if you're going out for dinner, make sure to get reservations well before hand, otherwise you'll be stuck with your staple order from Panda Palace. If you aren't with anyone this Valentine's Day, don't fret, own it. Celebrate your singledom. And couples — make this February 14 the best your girl or guy has ever had. It will be well worth your while at the end of the night. ☺

Apartment Hunting 101

BY JULIE LONERGAN

Looking for an off-campus apartment is frightening. You have to think about things like shower water pressure, how expensive heating is, and whether or not you can live without a dishwasher. Still, thanks to the fact that Tufts' housing system seems to be in a permanent state of awfulness, almost every Tufts student will at some point have to find an apartment. For some of my upperclassmen friends, it was a relatively easy process: they looked at a few places and quickly found one that they liked. For others, it involved a frantic last-minute scramble months after most apartments were taken. In preparation for living off-campus over the summer and next year, two of my friends and I began our search about two weeks ago. Hopefully, sharing our experience will help other students navigate the Medford/Somerville apartment scene with knowledge and ease.

Our search began in the most convenient place: Tufts' off-campus housing website. Landlords can post listings of apartments for rent in Medford and Somerville. After making a list of about 20 apartments we liked, I organized the list based on pluses and minuses for each. Pluses included things like free washer and dryer, as opposed to coin-operated or, even worse, "close to laundromat." Minuses were mostly based on location: we almost immediately decided against any apartments that could be classified as uphill, since we're all ardent downhillers, and we lazily but wisely cut out any that were described as having more than a five minute walk to campus. These were our apartment preferences, but making similar lists based on your own preferences can help narrow your search.

Most of the listings were basically

the same. None included utilities, many claimed to be the "best apartment you'll see all year!!!!," and most had hardwood floors. The few exceptions to this general description were amusing rather than enticing: "Pets is ok," or "This place is a SPACE MACHINE," or even "2 minutes walk from Davis and 5 from Tufts" for an apartment that seemed to be located almost in Porter Square. Generally, as long as the apartment has the right number of bedrooms, you can't decide much from the listing description. We learned this with our first apartment tour.

The address was a little too far for us, but it was significantly less expensive than everything else on our list, so we decided to try it out. From the outside the house was unkempt, bland, and had an overgrown and weedy front yard. The inside felt crowded even without furniture, and the unwashed yellowed windows didn't help matters much. The bathroom had a cinder block in it. Our tour lasted about six painful minutes.

Our second apartment visit was completely the opposite. The address was on a side street very close to the end of Professors Row, and the house was brightly painted and welcoming. The bedrooms were huge, the dining room had broad windows, and the house felt comfortable. We left thinking that we

had found our apartment. I think that we were a little shocked at finding a place we wanted so quickly that we didn't realize that simply because we liked it, and told the landlord that we liked it, it did not suddenly become our apartment. When I called the landlord two days later telling him that we would like to look at the lease, he informed me that someone else was al-

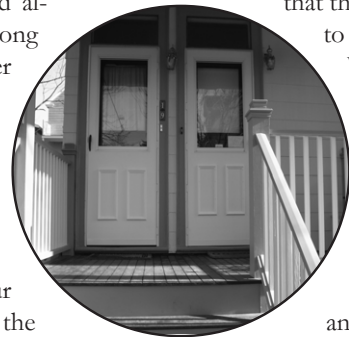
ready signing it.

If lesson one of apartment hunting is to reserve judgment until you see the inside of the house, lesson two is do not wait. Anything can happen, even if it's only been two days: every other house for rent could explode in some freak accident, or maybe suddenly every landlord will decide that they will only rent to people from Wyoming. Your house will be taken if you are not decisive enough in these matters. It will happen, I guarantee it.

We looked at a few more apartments, and didn't find anything we liked enough to feel anything more than apathetic about. This is not a good state to be in if you're getting ready to pay almost \$700 a month for the next year. We had also been having problems finding enough subtenants to fit into our somewhat complicated summer and studying abroad schedule for next year, since we kept switching between two- and three-bedroom apartments.

There is a happy ending, however. The absolute last apartment on my list, with the last landlord to respond to my email, and the last apartment we scheduled a tour for, turned out to be even better than the first one we liked. We haven't yet signed the lease, so I won't give too many details or someone else will definitely steal it. Let's leave it at this: it's not perfect, but it's close enough for us. It has what we deem most important, like deep closets, great bedrooms – one has a balcony, and one has enormous bay windows – and a nice-looking exterior, but does not have a dining room and is a little further from campus than we'd like. Still, it felt like it could be home, and in the end, that's most important. ☺

Photos by Julie Lonergan.



Newbury Street's Affordable Spring Trends

BY EMILY ROITMAN

Remember when you thought Newbury Street was limited to people with wads of hundred dollar bills sticking out of their Chanel handbags? Although the fancy boutiques and sky-high prices might sometimes send you screaming all the way to Target, there are indeed places to go on Newbury that cater to the college student's meager budget. Here are seven fabulous trends to get you in gear for Spring 2008.

Midnight Blue Nail Polish

Every fashionista can remember when the press was abuzz with Chanel's Black Satin polish. A runaway hit last winter, the color featured iridescent sparkles to jazz up the usual manicure no-no. This spring is going to be all about the blues. Head to Salon Giuliano at 338 Newbury to pick up OPI's Russian Navy (\$7), a bargain compared to this season's Chanel Blue Satin nail polish (\$19, department stores).

Ruffles

Although most of us left our white Abercrombie ruffled miniskirts back in high school, fashion's top designers have decided to revive this trend for spring. Christian Lacroix's latest runway show featured a beautiful Venetian red ruffled trench. However, it's quite a pricey coat. So, for those of us who spent hundreds on textbooks this semester, a more viable ruffled option exists. American Apparel's Sheer Jersey Ruffled V-Neck tank, on sale for \$16, is a fabulous match for skinny jeans and ankle boots, two winter trends to keep on rocking for spring. American Apparel is located at 138 Newbury Street.

Yellow Ballerina Flats

Stroll down Newbury Street on a sunny day, and chances are, you'll spot a pair of

Tory Burch's Reva Ballerina Flats. This season, the designer has come out with a neon line of her most popular shoe for hardcore fans. However, at a whopping \$195 per pair, not everyone can afford these bright kicks. Savvy shoppers will find a snazzy lemon-colored flat complete with a rubber sole for treading up the Hill at Aldo at 180 Newbury. Called the "Malissa," it is on sale now for \$20.

Wide Belts

Flattering for ladies of all shapes and sizes, wide belts around the waist are an easy way to dress up plain blouses or solid colored dresses. Urban Outfitters at 361 Newbury stocked a glamorous metallic belt as a part of its winter collection that would look fabulous with a black dress, tights, and knee-high boots for that perfect April day. Snatch it up before it disappears; it is currently on sale for \$4.99.

Floral Print Mini Dresses

Flowery rosettes, although normally reserved for your grandmother's bingo getup, are covering the catwalks at this season's runway shows. To keep you sweet yet sassy and to satisfy your trendy needs, United Colors of Benetton at 140 Newbury is carrying a line of above-the-knee dresses in bold floral prints for just \$48.99.

Textured Flip Flops

Lately, flat sandals have been getting a makeover. Kate Spade just came out with a "Maui jelly flip flop" in a bevy of colors ranging from light pink to neon green. Comfy and cute, your squishy new companions will ring up at \$60 and last you all summer. If you can make it past the Sinbad-looking security guard, check out Kate Spade at 117 Newbury.

Tangerine Accessories

Spotted: bright orange belts, shoes, and



PHOTOS BY EMILY ROITMAN

bags on fashionable ladies and celebutantes alike. Although not normally known for their trendy totes, Gap has recently placed a gorgeous orange-peel colored handbag on their shelves. Featured in the February issue of *In Style* magazine, the bag is large enough to hold your organic chemistry notebook, gym shoes, and roommate all at once. The bag is \$25 a pop at 201 Newbury.

Oversized Clutches

Normally reserved for fancy dinners and formal occasions, clutches are getting a funky makeover for spring. Anything but small and demure, this season's version is flashy and bold. From bright yellow to discotheque silver, Aldo at 180 Newbury is carrying a line of fun clutches to suit your fashion needs. The most adorable piece on the rack was covered in bright gemstones and rung up at only \$14.99.

Voila! There you have it, folks: fashion without breaking the bank. Happy spring wardrobe shopping! ☺

Tight-Rope Walking Through Mondays

BY JULIE FURBUSH

I leap over door-frames, reminding myself to pick up the soles in case they catch, I run up inverted staircases and jump jump jump until the skim of my hair fuzzes the couch. I've learned to read upside down by now, so the price tag on the bottom of my mirror is no longer 66.61\$ but a rightful Jackson bill. And South America looks like it has an idea with its finger pointing out of its Brazilian fist. Getting to work is kind of loopy. It took me a while to figure out. I thought that maybe I'd be scrambling to keep my core above the trees' under-canopies, taking hopscotches to get from branch to branch. But trees got too far apart too fast, so tight-rope walking on contained electricity is the way of my day now.

That was last Tuesday and my gravitational coup d'etat plans are continuing to develop nicely. All of this masterminding occurs, of course, while I am alone on my bed at night, my long brown hair trailing dreamlike on the floor and my neck crammed back. As if not every other busy bustling busy-body human does that in their spare time; the hours after my grocery runs and other small errands loft into purposelessness, and I have to wonder how everyone else fills their evenings. By Tuesdays, after the unbearably long two-day work week thus far, and with three more doom days to come, my body is wont to find itself horizontal and hoping for better worlds. Who wouldn't want a better world? A much better world, much much better, where the clutter of your C-life floor is stuck above you, your white ceiling's emptiness now new clean lounging space. Freeing, it would be. I think it would greatly improve

the murkiness of my murky cyclical days. Murkiness makes me think of bogs and upside-down bogs just seem so much more interesting to me.

I am learning that I don't live in my life. I am learning that other people do. They move into my mornings and take up space in the office bathroom. They have



“I am learning that I don't live in my life.

I am learning that other people do.”

names like Penelope and Garrett and need me to fill the air after they hello me. They pull me down to the ground with directed prompts, and holding on I get dragged until my feet are heavy again on Earth. It's their small demands that I be in this world that are momentary reminders that I am required to be being in my life. Those how-are-you yanks quickly float to poof-nothing-land though as I slurp myself back into the other worlds I occupy.

I walk along the thread of my comforter, hopping from strand to strand until I make it the crossroads where one giant feather has been sucked into the teal-colored earth. I blow on it with all my toothpick weight and watch it just barely budge in my breeze. My pillow is looming mountainous far off into the distance and

my horizon warbles with a rumpled quilt folded at the foot. Getting to the ground where my slippers await larger feet would be tricky, possibly dangerous, and definitely needs being done. After bounding across a large inch of eternal-drop space I land on my bedside table where a few books, a looming set of emergency red digits, and

a tissue box reign. I wrap my pale arms around the alarm clock cord and position my body like it's a fire-pole. I'm scared at first, so clinging there, I hang for a few moments until my arms get tired and then woops I'm half down already and jump the rest, falling onto the carpet but still hitting my hips hard.

This is my first time so small, so I haven't adjusted yet to my titanic life-style of before. Under the bed really does look scary, and it occurs to me that that's the kind of valley of death that Psalms 23rd is referring to. I

hear myself muttering “I will fear no evil,” as I scamper past hair that my head had shed onto the floor. It was gross, my floor, I should probably fire my vacuum and re-hire. I wandered over to my bra, which I had thrown to the ground last night getting into bed. One of its boobs became my love-seat and I drew my legs into Native-American style sitting.

Getting to work would be hard. Fortunately it was only a few blocks to my office cubicle but I would still have to leave hours earlier, possibly even before sunrise. I considered the materials I would need to fashion a hard-hat that would protect me in case I got knocked over or stepped on when side-walk traffic increased around 8:00. Dewder would probably make some stupid comment about me wearing a helmet

to work. Cross-guards aren't supposed to make people feel bad on their way to their bad jobs, but this one does. He probably wouldn't see me tomorrow anyway. Just in case, I could jump down from the curb and hug its gutter until I round Dewder's corner. Now the ten seconds to cross the street would be a problem.

Today Carlos handed me a memo that I slapped onto my desk, unread, like the ones underneath it. When Boss called a team-meeting in conference room B and announced the three people who were transferring to the center six miles away

“We were all underwater. At first water pouring in from the ceiling tiles, loads of it dumping itself over our keyboards... Not to worry though, this was a usual occurrence.”

I was surprised. No one else seemed ruffled. Must have been that ignored memo this morning. Walking back to my square working space I let the feeling seep into my schedule. This would change my life! I would have to meet bus 68 which is down past Dewder's corner, I would have to bring an extra granola bar for my bus ride home, and I would get to see my way to work at some 34 miles an hour. All of these changes were improvements, I could tell already.

Carlos came by again, lingering over my post-its and my highlighters to see what

I thought of the switch. It meant I'd be leaving the carpet and the spin-chair and the wall that I had been with for three years. It also meant that I'd be working with a different group of cubiclelers.

“So what do you think?” he asked, not looking at me. I was surprised to see his coolness that was trying to cover care. I had figured that for most people it wouldn't matter that I was leaving.

“I guess, I guess it's alright. It doesn't seem like it will be too much of a change. I mean, it's the same work, right?” I was surprised at my coolness hiding reality.

Dang it, I thought, I was really going to miss my great chair that could spin in slow 360s. I looked up at Carlos who was waiting for more, watching me lingering in the clouds. I knew at that moment that they all knew about me and my worlds. No wonder they didn't bother dropping by more often. What was Carlos doing?

“Well, hey, I just thought I'd let you know that it was great having you here, and that if you ever feel like reminding yourself of...” he looked up over the sea of low-walled boxes and finished, “like reminding yourself of this, just give me a

call.” He said this knowing he was handing me a life-saving life-preserver. A chance to save me from myself. He fluttered another post-it note onto my desk. Digits breathed into the air as they stuck to my already post-it noted place. I picked it up in my fingers and watched his back as he made his way to the sixth cubicle to the left. I shouldn't be offended, should I? It occurred to me that the normal woman would maybe even feel flattered. That was out of the question.

Today I watched bus 93 stop at the light at the intersection and pass me by. I

counted the number of red cars that passed and wished all cars were red – imagine the confusion in parking garages! Bus 68 pulled into my standing space to let me on. \$1.80 went into the metal box at the front and the moustached driver waved me in, his large steering wheel spinning on his lap to take us away. There were only a few spots left so I chose the one near the window in the back, the right place for me, a window to the world passing in a blur. When I say near the window, I mean next to someone who was sitting near the window. My hands are folded on my lap, my knees together, my lunch and my baggy briefcase at my feet, and my eyes staring outside. The man next to me had politely shifted over as I sat down so that none of him would be touching me, as society demanded.

I notice the frame of his glasses, black, like his eyebrows, his hair. His brow, furrowed over the paper he's probably not actually interested in, matches his concerned outfit. Strict for a work that needs to be important. Black overcoat, shoes dusty with dry snow, a well-tied tie buried somewhere under his layers no doubt.

Before I can catch myself I ask him, “Don't you wish every day was Monday so that planet Earth could get over their obsession with hating Mondays?” He looked up, surprised at noise. He seemed like a Steve, or a Michael, the full name. No Mike. “Monday is actually my favorite day of the week,” he replied. Wrong. Untruth. How could anyone like them? “Why?” I



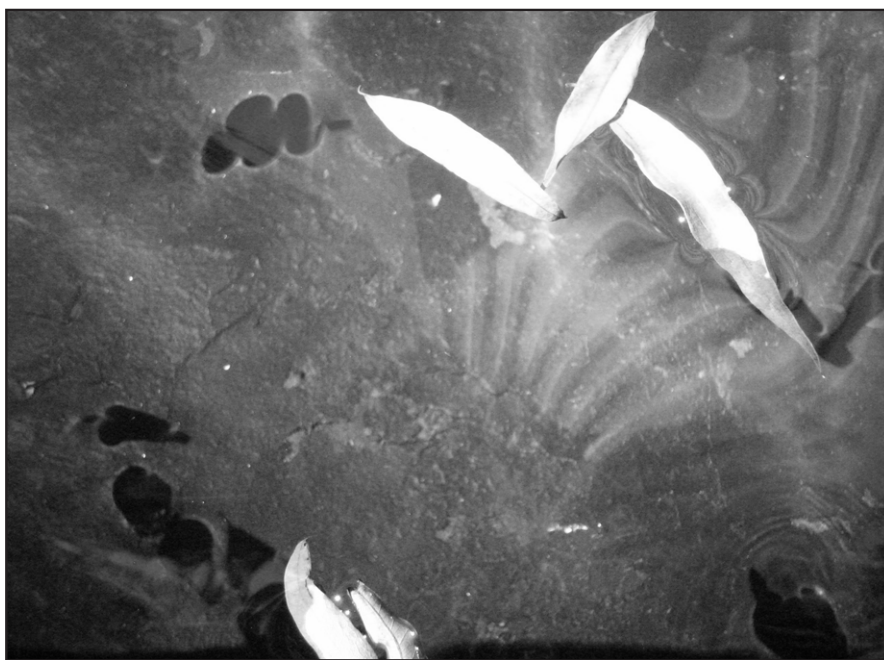
gave back. I noticed that despite society's restrictions to stay cool, calm, collected, my hope was leaning forward. I was anxious to hear about the regular world in a non-regular light. "They're just like test days back in school, loved them," was his answer. Wrong. Another untruth. Not answer enough. I wanted more but didn't say anything, feeling restrained in giving him my incredulous attention. Here was a world I didn't know about. His stop came to a stop and he smiled, stood up, handed me the paper, got off.

Work was work, but in a different chair, a farther cubicle from the water fountain, and under pinker fluorescent fixtures. I tried my best to smile at these new people over their morning coffees, fixing my own only to have something else to put on my desk's empty surface. The woman across the two-foot mini cubicle hallway of stretched air had pictures covering her low walls. They were all of dolphins.

We were all underwater. At first water pouring in from the ceiling tiles, loads of it dumping itself over our keyboards, splashing into our faces, our blouses, our buttons, our ties. Not to worry though, this was a usual occurrence. At precisely 9:32 every work-day morning The Flood happened. We wait patiently for it to finish and after only about thirteen minutes our whole lives are underwater. By 9:45 we're back to work, seatbelts securing our bottoms to our seats, snorkel masks on, women have to tie their hair back.

Men start their trip to the bathroom free-styling through the teal air and at about the second cubicle finally resort to the breast-stroke, tired and unable to learn their lesson from the women who leave and return in a relaxed fashion. The doggy-paddler is always the funniest to watch. He tends to get up around eleven to do his business. I get to watch him pass my door-less doorway, his large white-collared shirt blossoming and billowing around him, untucked, his untied shoelaces suspended and looking a lot like antennae to bug-feet. The best part of this underwater life is that everyone still has their shoes on. It's perfect.

Today Steve or Michael was where he was yesterday. Hesitation slowed my steps for a second or two until I sat next to him again. He still got the window. He looked up from his paper, nodded, smiled, looked



back down. My hands are holding my lunch, my baggy briefcase is on the floor, my scarf is too warm for this morning. That's not too weird, right? Sitting next to the same stranger on a bus two days in a row? Steve/Michael was well-playing his role in normalcy. I let the window occupy my senses. Trees passed outside and I wished they were all holding hands, they seemed so much closer together at this speed.

He was done reading. He looked at me looking out the window, and his eyes joined my trees.

"So how was your Monday?" he asked, still looking past the glass. "Hateful?" It sounded like it was followed by a smile.

"I guess not really," I paused. "Just boring."

"So you're bored," he diagnosed.

I looked at him. He glanced over at me, a glance that locked our eyes but had him inspecting my whole person. I felt his thoughts on my skin. It wasn't that they were touching me, more like probing to reach the deeper whole-image-me. Other people occupy my life I think to myself. It was them that moved in and out of it, flitting through with little permanence, nodding in my direction. I give nothing back. This man with the concerned wardrobe, he somehow is sticking. He's holding me up against light. Challenging the me that hovers over my walked steps instead of stepping. He's watching me think, watching me grow quiet. He pushes once more,

this time playing a role beyond normalcy, a risk in a must-be-kind world.

"I've always been told that if you're bored you're boring."

My hands hold each other a little bit tighter, my lunch bag crinkling under folded knuckles. I'm looking out the window intently now, my eyes only for what's beyond the bus, focused, as if importance was outside, not here, with me. That was strong, outlined, an opaque shape he handed me. I feel the need to feel offended.

Suddenly, I'm not. Simply that. My lunch bag is released from grippy hands, and I shuffle my feet, moving again. An interesting choice I just made. Let me not be offended and instead give this challenge acknowledgement. Let me stay here, on the ground, make importance with me. Strangely, I want to be here for what I'm about to say, for what I'm thinking. It's easy.

"The trees look like they're holding hands," I slap that onto the table.

Our something like 34 miles per hour slow to an approximate 5 and then a certain 0 as the bus pulls up to Jefferson Corner. Steve/Michael gets up, it's his stop. He passes my knees with silence. He's smiling. His extended hand surprises my face, and I shake it. "Nice to meet you," he says.

Later I told Deborah the dolphin-lady that I liked her calendar pictures. ☺

Julie Furbush is a senior majoring in English. She not only wrote this piece but took the photographs that accompany it.

Lookin' Ahead:

Sex on the Hill

Monday, February 11
Campus Center

and

Valentine's Day Ice Cream and Polaroids with Jumbo

Wednesday, February 11, 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Campus Game Room/Lounge

POLICE

BOTTLE

Monday, January 29

TUPD responded to a call of a suspicious individual on the stairs of the President's Lawn. Upon investigation, officers discovered that the man had been given a no trespassing order from Tufts over the summer and therefore had reason to search him, which found him in possession of both a knife and a copper bracket. He was then arrested for trespassing and carrying a dangerous weapon.

After investigating the area, TUPD found a removed, and bent, copper drain pipe from Ballou Hall hidden in nearby bushes. Charges of destruction of property, receiving stolen property, and larceny over \$250 were then added to the arrest.

Saturday, February 2

While TUPD officers were on Professors Row with a stopped motor vehicle they heard a loud crashing noise from the front door of Mugar Hall. A Tufts student, who was walking in between Mugar Hall and Blakely Hall at the time of the incident, was stopped by officers and questioned. He denied responsibility for having knocked a barrel over and damaged a window screen, however, he conceded to the officers that he had had a "few" drinks (totaling six) previously that night. After searching the student, TUPD found a marijuana cigarette in his pocket and a few beers in a gym bag he was carrying. After this, the student admitted to knocking over the barrel, although he still denied the damage to the window screen.

Sunday, February 3

At 10:43 p.m., TUPD responded to a call at Oxfam Café. Witnesses reported that students were throwing beer bottles out of a window above the café. Upon entering the room where the bottles had supposedly been thrown from, officers found three students who denied any involvement in the incident. However, after further investigation, TUPD found empty Heineken bottles (the same brand as the smashed bottles on the street) in the trash outside the room. Officers also found two liters of alcohol under a student's comforter and six bottles of Heineken in the room. After this, two students admitted their involvement and cleaned up the mess on the street.



—Compiled by Molly Posner



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