I first set foot on the Tufts campus as an undergraduate student 50 years ago. There was no Tisch College back then, but the university was already a place where young men and women learned far more than what was in our textbooks. We developed as citizens and acquired a deep sense of responsibility to improve our communities, our nation, and the world. That Tufts education changed my life, transformed my ambitions, and shaped my personal and professional journey in ways that still reverberate today.

Decades after I graduated, Tisch College was founded to embody, channel, and strengthen that quintessential Jumbo commitment to the greater good. Later, I returned to the university to lead Tisch College at a time when its work has never been more vital.

Around the world, old and new problems like climate change, food insecurity, racial injustice, and refugee crises resist easy solutions while causing untold suffering. At the same time, disengagement and distrust continue to erode the civic and political institutions at the core of our democracy. These challenges are connected. They call for individuals and communities who are empowered to develop innovative approaches and to take action. And higher education is called upon to fulfill its historic responsibility to prepare a new generation that will rise to those challenges.

For the past 15 years, Tisch College has undertaken that important mission. Now, at this crucial inflection point, we must do more. Our impact must deepen and our reach must extend further.

This strategic plan will serve as a road map to guide Tisch College for the next seven years. It is the product of a comprehensive effort among leaders, researchers, students, faculty, and partners, across the university and beyond, to define key objectives and promising strategies. Framed by an ambitious vision of how we can improve civic life, the plan outlines where we will go and how we will get there.

Stronger programs will guide students as they grapple with intractable issues, will challenge them to take part in something greater than themselves, and will enable them to effect lasting social change. An expansive research agenda will search for answers to the most difficult questions about the role of citizens in our world. Diverse collaborations will marshal the knowledge, skills, and experience of partners across the globe in service to our communities. New initiatives will make the study of civic life an indispensable part of a Tufts education, and shape the way other universities approach their social responsibility in an ever more complex world.

We are excited by the opportunities and undeterred by the challenges that lie ahead. We are sustained by the foundational belief of Tisch College: that communities, nations, and the world are stronger, more prosperous, and more just when citizens actively participate in civic and democratic life.

With thanks for your support and partnership,

Alan D. Solomont
Dean, Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life
At Tisch College, we know that the task of creating, sustaining, and improving our civic and democratic institutions is not confined to the classroom or the boardroom; the town hall or the town square; the soapbox or the ballot box.

We all are engaged in civic life when we organize and debate, when we serve, and when we advocate and act on the issues that affect us. The more active our civic life, the more just, equitable, and prosperous our world becomes.

Our communities face tremendous challenges, and universities have a responsibility to develop the next generation of active citizens who will address them. For 15 years, Tisch College has answered that call.

Today, as the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life, we move forward with a new plan to carry out our mission and prepare young people for a lifetime of effective engagement in civic and democratic life.

We educate students and help them develop the knowledge, skills, and values needed to address our most pressing social problems. Through groundbreaking research, we study civic life and the institutions that shape it. And we utilize that knowledge to promote practices that support the efforts of individuals and communities who seek the greater good.
A strategy for the future built on three pillars

Our work is grounded in a deep understanding of civic life and in a commitment to constantly expand and refine our knowledge of how to strengthen it. By more vigorously creating, sharing, and applying that knowledge, Tisch College will take on a stronger role in the academic life of Tufts University while helping citizens address society’s most pressing problems in communities near and far.

Education—sharing knowledge

Tufts students should graduate with more than expertise in their chosen fields of study; they must also emerge prepared to contribute to civic life as informed, ethical, and engaged citizens. To strengthen our work with students across all Tufts schools and academic disciplines, we will:

• Enhance the Tisch Scholars Program by improving its foundational academic course, offering credit for community-based work, and including a capstone element for seniors
• Evaluate, refine, and expand the Tufts 1+4 Bridge-Year Service Learning Program, which allows accepted students to do a full year of community service before their academic studies
• Strengthen existing partnerships and form new collaborations across schools and campuses that allow us to reach every Tufts student
• Expand and increase support for co-sponsored courses and for successful programs like the Tisch Summer Fellows, the Tisch Fund for Civic Engagement, and the Tisch College Distinguished Speaker Series
• Promote social entrepreneurship and social innovation by contributing to a new Center for Entrepreneurship at Tufts

Research—creating knowledge

Tisch College conducts, supports, and applies research that helps us foster civic learning and engagement locally, nationally, and globally. We also forge strong partnerships across Tufts University with more than 50 faculty members who incorporate civic engagement in their teaching and research. To bolster both areas we plan to:

• Expand our current research efforts through the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE), Institute for Democracy & Higher Education (IDHE), and the Tisch College Community Research Center (TCRC)
• Add more Tisch Faculty, deepen their engagement, and create a stronger intellectual community
• Support more Faculty Fellows and increase individual grants

Practice—applying knowledge

Tisch College applies knowledge to improve democracy and civic life, and to engage citizens in addressing shared problems. We strive for impact in communities and in higher education:

• Promote civic practices at Tufts, such as increased recognition of faculty for civically engaged research, teaching, and public service
• Strengthen local and national partnerships with community-based organizations, schools, and government agencies
• Expand our global reach through a stronger relationship with the Talloires Network, an international association committed to the civic role of higher education around the world
Staying the course while charting new ones

While much of our strategic plan builds on existing efforts, we propose two major new initiatives that will take Tisch College and Tufts University in new directions.

Civic Studies

Civic Studies is an emerging interdisciplinary field that studies civic life and helps citizens improve it. It includes scholarship that combines ethics, knowledge, and strategies to guide citizens in shaping their communities.

Already home to students and faculty engaged in Civic Studies, Tisch College will make Tufts a leading intellectual center in this field by:

• Engaging other Tufts faculty members, academic programs, and departments to shape a cross-cutting initiative housed at Tisch College
• Connecting and strengthening curricula and scholarship across the entire university
• In partnership with other schools, recruiting new faculty members in fields related to Civic Studies who will develop new methodologies, theoretical models, and applied research

Institute for Democracy & Higher Education

Tisch College is building the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education to be a leading venue for research, resources, and advocacy that will shape how colleges and universities foster political learning and engagement. The institute will:

• Work to engage college students in politics, social action, and democracy
• Advance social and political equity
• Make Tufts a national leader in research and in practical approaches to educating for democracy

Its signature initiative is the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE). The only objective study of student voting rates in the nation, NSLVE offers more than 800 colleges and universities:

• An opportunity to learn their student registration and voting rates
• A closer examination of their campus climate for political learning and engagement
• Correlations between specific student learning experiences and voting

Looking ahead.

Our strategic vision charts a clear, ambitious plan for the future. It builds on our strengths and adds important new dimensions. It will allow us to better understand how citizens participate in civic life and tackle challenges in their communities. It will shape a new generation of leaders, strengthen civic life and democracy, and support lasting change at Tufts University and beyond.
We are all engaged in civic life when we organize and debate, when we serve, and when we advocate and act on the issues that affect us. The more active our civic life, the more just, equitable, and prosperous our world becomes.
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Introduction & Overview

Our Belief:
We believe that the task of creating, sustaining, and improving our communities and democratic institutions is not confined to the classroom or the boardroom; the town hall or the town square; the soapbox or the ballot box. We all are engaged in civic life when we organize and debate, when we serve, and when we advocate and act on the issues that affect us. The more active our civic life, the more just, equitable, and prosperous our world becomes.

About Tisch College

The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life is a national leader in civic education and engagement that sets the standard for higher education’s role in advancing the greater good.

Tisch College is charged with a broad and vital mission: to prepare students for a lifetime of engagement in civic and democratic life, to study civic life and its intersections with public and private institutions, and to promote practices that strengthen civic life in the United States and around the world.

We pursue that mission in a variety of ways. Tisch College builds an enduring culture of active citizenship at Tufts. More than half of all undergraduate students report participating in community service or civic engagement activities while at the university. Through curricular and co-curricular activities, these students address pressing social issues by working with local, national, and international organizations.

These university-wide efforts complement the Tisch-based initiatives that form the pillars of our work. Tisch College offers an intensive leadership program for undergraduates, an honors society for graduating students who demonstrate excellence in civic engagement, and a new bridge-year service learning program for incoming students. We offer an array of special internships, courses, and events. We engage with faculty from across the university through professional development, support for research, collaborations with local organizations, and other opportunities that shape a community of scholars committed to civic engagement.

We also conduct some of the most influential research about civic engagement in the United States. We use that scholarship to inform both our own programming as well as national conversations about the role of citizens, especially young people, in civic life. Tisch College is the home of the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE), the nation’s leading source of research on youth civic engagement. We also house the new Institute for Democracy & Higher Education (IDHE), which conducts research on student political agency and democratic participation on college campuses.

Tisch College combines education, research, and practice to serve as a hub for students, faculty, and community members who are committed to civic engagement and to its ability to change the world for the better.
History and Background

Tisch College is heir to a rich tradition that dates back to the Universalists’ founding of Tufts in 1852 and to their belief that higher education could be a force for good in the world.

A century after its founding, the university formalized this commitment to civic learning and engagement. In 1954, Tufts created the Center for Civic Education, later renamed the Lincoln Filene Center for Citizenship and Public Affairs.

In the following decades, the Lincoln Filene Center played a vital role in the growing movement to study and strengthen civic life. The center organized gatherings like the National Conference on Citizen Participation and the National Conference on Civic Renewal. It undertook research and published scholarly work on civic engagement.

In 1999, recognizing the importance of civic engagement to the Tufts’ academic mission, Tufts created the University College of Citizenship and Public Service.

In 2006, thanks to extraordinary philanthropy, the University College was renamed the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service. In 2016, the name was updated to the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life to better capture the nature of our work and the challenges ahead.

Over the past 15 years, Tisch College has evolved into a vibrant platform for local and global partnerships, for myriad student learning and service opportunities, and for groundbreaking research. We are informed and inspired by past accomplishments, and we seek to build on them as we chart the future direction of the college.

“Today, civic engagement is more important than ever. Our communities, our nation and our world face unprecedented challenges — from sustaining our environmental health, to ensuring access to education, to growing the global economy and addressing widening income inequality. It is clear that these issues are too big for any one entity or one person to tackle alone.

At Tisch College, we believe that each of us has a skill set that can, should, and must be used to forge collaborative and innovative solutions. Through our hallmark combination of education, research and practice, Tufts students develop the knowledge, tools, and civic values that equip them to be effective leaders. Higher education is among the most effective means to instill our shared responsibility to make a difference. Executing our strategic plan will allow Tisch College to continue its leadership in strengthening democracy and preparing young people to participate in civic life."

— Jonathan M. Tisch
A Critical Moment: Why Tisch? Why Now?

Our aspirations for a more comprehensive and influential role for Tisch College coincide with the completion of the Tufts University T10 strategic plan. Several of that document’s central themes—enabling transformational learning experiences, enhancing diversity and inclusion, creating innovative approaches to social problems—align with our own priorities and serve as a framework for amplifying our impact at Tufts.

Our commitment to an expanded mission for Tisch College also responds to a growing sense of urgency about the state of civic life in the United States and around the world. Many experts express deep concern about the level of civic engagement and the condition of our democracy in the face of worrisome, decades-long declines in voting and other forms of civic participation.

At the same time, communities throughout the U.S. and around the world face old and new intractable problems like racial injustice, food insecurity, illiteracy, epidemics, and climate change that call for innovative solutions. There is vast potential in taking a civic approach to these and other problems, applying the concepts and methods of civic engagement in order to leverage the assets of individuals and communities.

Tisch College already plays a role in many of these efforts, and we are singularly equipped to do much more. We stand out in higher education as the only institution focused on civic life constituted as a college and led by a dean who serves alongside the deans of Arts and Sciences, Medicine, and the other schools, thereby influencing the direction of the entire university. This position not only elevates our mission, but affords us opportunities to work within a broader and deeper framework than comparable institutions.

Unlike a typical school of public policy or public affairs, we aim to reach all students and faculty at Tufts University, regardless of their school or academic discipline. Unlike a center for public engagement or community service, Tisch College combines the work of students with rigorous theoretical and applied scholarship about civic life and with advocacy for institutional and policy changes. Correspondingly, unlike many research centers, our scholarship informs and is deeply informed by practice.

That comprehensive scope, and our ability to work within education, research, and practice, give Tisch College a comparative and competitive advantage. We leverage a wide variety of resources, chief among them the boundless energy of students who are passionate about making the world better. Rich collaborations with local, national, and global partners enhance our work and provide opportunities for learning, research, and direct impact on challenging social issues. Our scholarship and advocacy help shape the field of civic engagement, and they have attracted national and international recognition. In 2014, the White House helped to convene a Summit on Civic Learning and National Service at Tisch College. In 2015, our annual Summer Institute of Civic Studies drew participants from the Netherlands, Mexico, Singapore, Chile, Liberia, and Zimbabwe. It also spawned a German-funded “sister institute” in Ukraine.

The priorities and major new initiatives outlined in this document will serve as a blueprint for Tisch College to build on existing strengths in order to help fulfill the university’s strategic vision as we work to make Tufts and Tisch College leaders in revitalizing the civic and democratic ideals that the present moment demands.
Three strategic priorities provide a road map for our work and guide our progress: Education, Research, and Practice. These priorities are interconnected and mutually supportive. In each critical area, we will focus on creating, expanding, and refining programs, partnerships, and other opportunities in order to maximize our impact.

Our combined work in these areas will move Tisch College in strategic directions that build on our current strengths and add important new dimensions to our work:

Tisch College will play a stronger role in the academic life of the university, contributing more directly to students’ education in the classroom and offering curricular and co-curricular programs that foster deep, transformational learning.

An expanded research agenda will ambitiously pursue ideas and practices that help citizens address society’s most pressing problems and will more deeply inform policy and public discourse about civic life.

Our global reach will increase significantly through new and existing international programs that both create opportunities for our students and faculty and effect change in communities around the world.

Education

Tisch College works with students across the university—in all disciplines and at all schools. Whether they are motivated by academic interests, professional ambitions, or personal passions, each year hundreds of students interact directly with Tisch College, acquiring the values, knowledge, and skills to be active citizens. Through our programs, many students have transformational learning experiences that inform their views of themselves and the world, that shape their future trajectories, and that enable them to become effective agents of change. Thousands more are inspired by the culture of civic engagement we foster on campus.

We aim to play a still larger role in the education of Tufts students. We believe that all students should graduate from Tufts University prepared to contribute to civic life as informed, ethical, and engaged citizens, regardless of their academic majors or career aspirations.

The following concrete steps will enable us to achieve these goals:

Reenvision the Tisch Scholars Program

The Tisch Scholars, a signature initiative, is a selective, developmental civic leadership program for students. Students take a foundational course on active citizenship limited to program participants. They address social issues through progressively complex projects with local community partner organizations, and they form a community of leaders on campus.
We plan to strengthen this high-impact program by reframing its structure while honoring the deep commitment felt by current Scholars and Scholar alumni. We will modify the timing, duration, and content of the program’s foundational academic course, which will run concurrently with Scholar project work rather than the semester prior. This shift will link the experiential element of the program more closely to its curricular component, while providing students with increased space for critical reflection. The program will also offer several new opportunities, including academic credit for community-based work, skill-building and community-building events, and a capstone project for seniors.

Evaluate, Refine, and Expand the Tufts 1+4 Bridge-Year Service Learning Program

The Tufts 1+4 Program offers incoming students the opportunity to do a year of full-time community service before starting their formal academic studies. We provide financial assistance to enable students of all backgrounds to participate in this transformational learning experience, and we support the fellows before, during, and after their service year to ensure that it functions as a true bridge to their college education.

We will carefully evaluate the program in order to expand and refine it, including through the addition of alternatives for domestic service to complement the initial international locations. We will document its impact on individual students as well as on the culture of the undergraduate campus. These findings will guide efforts to make the Tufts 1+4 Program a model that changes the paradigm of how to prepare students for success in college and in life.

Expand and Increase Support for Our Most Effective Initiatives

The Tisch Summer Fellows Program offers stipended summer internships for Tufts students at nonprofit and government agencies. Each summer, more than 70 students work in Greater Boston, New York, and Washington, D.C. The program also supports international student projects.

We will expand the number of Summer Fellows and the variety of internships. We will offer more opportunities in the public sector, including local, state, and federal government.

Honos Civicus is an honors society that recognizes graduating students for exemplary work in the classroom and as active citizens. They receive a pin to wear at graduation, and they are officially recognized at Commencement. Since its launch in 2009, more than 600 undergraduate, graduate, and professional school students have been selected for Honos Civicus.
We will introduce Honos Civicus at the Fletcher School and at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, so that students at every Tufts school will be eligible. We will also evaluate expanding the program beyond Tufts University.

The Tisch College Distinguished Speaker Series brings to campus high-profile leaders from a variety of fields to engage with the Tufts community on important public issues. Speakers share their stories and their expertise through public talks, roundtable discussions, and classroom visits, helping us to educate informed citizens.

We will continue to showcase diverse and engaging guests who challenge and inspire members of the university community. By partnering with other Tufts schools, departments, and student organizations, we hope to increase student/faculty involvement and reach wider audiences.

The Tisch Fund for Civic Engagement, available to all Tufts University students, supports events, projects, and programs connected to civic engagement. Part of the fund is reserved for activities that address issues of race and discrimination.

We will increase the funding available through the Tisch Fund in order to support more student-led efforts to engage their peers and local communities in addressing social problems.

Finally, Tisch College will continue to sponsor courses, in areas like philanthropy, social entrepreneurship, community organizing, and politics, that further imbue civic life into the Tufts curriculum. We seek to expand these curricular opportunities by partnering with current faculty and by bringing leading scholars and practitioners to campus as visiting instructors.

**Form New Partnerships and Strengthen Collaborations**

While hundreds of students engage directly with Tisch College through our programming and events, our goal is to reach as many of the university’s 10,000 students as possible. This can only be achieved by establishing and reinforcing relationships with other entities at Tufts.

Tisch College introduces itself to students by offering common reading books to incoming undergraduate and medical students, and by participating in Orientation and other pre-matriculation programming. We will pursue a more visible and robust role at each school’s orientation for incoming students in order to help new Jumbos explore their passions, challenge their beliefs, discuss across differences, and understand all the opportunities for active citizenship on and off campus. We will work in concert with the Dean of Undergraduate Education, with Tufts’ professional schools, and with deans across the university to reach more students and to highlight the connections between academic study and civic engagement.

We are currently involved with a variety of student organizations on campus. We house the Tufts University Jumpstart office. We advise and support the Leonard Carmichael Society, the Andrew Goodman Foundation’s Vote Everywhere Ambassadors, and a new organization, CIVIC, that focuses on nonpartisan political dialogue. We partner with Generation Citizen and collaborate on events with the Tufts Democrats, Tufts Republicans, and the Alliance Linking Leaders in Education and the Services (ALLIES).

We will strengthen our support of these student organizations and develop relationships with other groups on campus dedicated to active citizenship, community service, and advocacy. By adding our expertise and support, we will improve the student learning experience and help students maximize their impact.

In partnership with the medical school, we administer the Community Service Learning (CSL) program at the School of Medicine, which requires medical students to complete at least 50 hours of community service as part of their medical education. We also support community service learning activities at the School of Dental Medicine. We will build on these successful efforts, and we will look to engage in similar programs at other Tufts schools. With the expertise of Tisch College, service and experiential learning can be informed and enhanced by best practices, including pre-service preparation, development of cultural competencies, reflection and discussion, and integration with professional goals.
Promote Social Entrepreneurship

Tisch College is working with the Tufts Entrepreneurial Leadership Studies Program (ELS), the Fletcher School, and the Provost’s Office on the creation of a Center for Entrepreneurship at Tufts. We bring to this effort a focus on social entrepreneurship and social innovation. Tisch College aims to make these dimensions of entrepreneurship an important part of the university initiative. We currently support a course on social entrepreneurship that is offered through the ELS Program, and we intend to develop additional curricular, co-curricular, and research opportunities for students and faculty as our contribution to the center and to this university-wide initiative.

Research

Tisch College conducts and supports research, and the application of that research, to build a deeper understanding of practices and policies that foster civic learning and engagement locally, nationally, and globally.

Our work includes empirical studies of civic life in America—especially about what works to strengthen the civic education and civic participation of young people—as well as philosophical work that aims to illuminate and elevate ideas crucial to a stronger civic life.

Our research is independent, objective, and highly rigorous. It is informed by practice and community-identified needs, and it strives to inform policy and practice. It is driven by a pressing need to answer vital questions, and to ask new ones, about the best ways to shape stronger communities and a healthier democracy. This approach distinguishes Tisch College’s research and strengthens our ability to impact civic life in America and around the world.

This work is conducted by a 10-person research team—a full third of our staff—divided into two distinct but interconnected centers overseen by an associate dean. Additionally, Tisch College also develops strong partnerships with faculty across the university who conduct their own research on civic life, or who address major societal problems in ways that engage citizens. For example, Tisch College supports faculty research at Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, which led to the creation of the Tufts Institute for Human-Animal Interaction. We support the Global Literacy Project, which uses electronic tablets to teach children how to read in some of the world’s most vulnerable countries. Tisch researchers have also collaborated with Engineering faculty to evaluate and improve service-learning courses.

We are poised to take this research agenda to a higher level, not only to bolster the university’s intellectual life but to promote and elevate discourse about some of the most pressing issues of our time.

Two concrete actions will help fulfill this potential:

Expand Current Research

Tisch College conducts internationally recognized civic engagement research through the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE) which focuses on youth engagement, especially among marginalized youth, and the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education, which studies college student political learning and engagement. We focus on youth because they can benefit from high quality civic learning experiences in schools, colleges, and youth-serving organizations, and because these institutions can be influenced to improve their policies and programs.

Tisch College will identify and study existing and promising new interventions that boost civic and political knowledge and action. We will increase our efforts to bring these solutions to the attention of citizens and leaders, and we will bolster the connection between our educational and research missions by promoting best practices in civic learning and engagement. We will rigorously evaluate these practices.
by studying the impact on students’ educational experiences and professional trajectories and the impact on issues and communities with which Tisch College has engaged.

The Tisch College Community Research Center (TCCRC) was created and is funded by Tisch College. TCCRC engages Tufts faculty and students from across the university in community-based participatory research conducted in collaboration with local community leaders and organizations. For example, through TCCRC, Tisch College seeded the Community Assessment of Freeway Exposure and Health (CAFEH), which has attracted more than $6 million in external funds. This study has generated new knowledge about the harmful effects of highway pollution and has begun to change local policy to mitigate those effects.

We will expand our efforts to match faculty scholarship with community-identified needs in order to generate and disseminate influential scholarship that also serves the interests of communities.

Strengthen Our Engagement with Tufts Faculty

Members of the Tufts University faculty engage with Tisch College in several ways. The Tisch Faculty consists of more than 50 faculty members from every Tufts school, and from a wide variety of academic disciplines, who incorporate civic engagement in their teaching and research. They hold a secondary appointment at Tisch College and strengthen the college’s connections across the university.

The Tisch Faculty also serves as a unique, interdisciplinary community of scholars. When Tufts faculty members engage with communities or participate in public debates, they encounter questions about whether, when, and how citizens should take action and how institutions should engage with citizens and communities. By sharing insights from their various perspectives, the Tisch Faculty strengthens connections among Tufts schools and develops important new knowledge about civic life.

We will recruit additional Tisch Faculty members, and we will deepen their engagement to create a stronger, more cohesive intellectual community devoted to interdisciplinary research, pedagogical innovation, and discussion.

Each year, Tisch College selects Faculty Fellows from across the university who work on their own projects related to active citizenship. We provide funding for research, curricular development, and public events that advance the mission and the work of Tufts faculty. Recent projects undertaken by fellows include field research on female political leaders in West Africa, a new course on social entrepreneurship, and an initiative that engaged Tufts students to provide remote veterinary care in the global south.

Tisch Faculty Fellows meet regularly throughout the academic year for interdisciplinary discussions about their teaching and research. Since 2002 more than 100 Tufts faculty members have served as Tisch Faculty Fellows.

We will strengthen the scale and depth of this program by increasing the number of Faculty Fellows, increasing individual grants, and opening the program to previous Fellows. This increased investment will allow Tisch Faculty Fellows to make more substantial contributions to understanding civic life, to addressing societal problems, and to strengthening curricula and pedagogy at Tufts University.

Practice

It is central to the work of Tisch College to channel our educational work and to apply our knowledge to strengthen civic practices.

Civic practices are defined as activities that improve democracy and civic life and that engage citizens and communities in addressing shared social problems. These range from everyday acts of volunteer service, to participation in social movements and electoral politics, service in government, campus-community partnerships, and work with non-governmental organizations.
Tisch College supports civic practices by embedding them in the education of Tufts students and the overall work of the university, by studying and promoting change in higher education, and by fostering stronger practices through research, evaluation, advocacy, and thought-leadership. We also provide an important platform for scholarship and debate about what constitutes civic practices and what makes them work best.

We aim for impact throughout Tufts University and beyond in the following ways:

**Promote and Model Civic Practices at Tufts**

We work to reinforce Tufts’ institutional commitment and leadership in civic engagement. We will advocate for having Tufts faculty better recognized and rewarded for their civically engaged research, teaching, and public service. Currently, civically engaged research by Tufts faculty is mostly recognized for its ability to produce scholarly publications and external funding, but not nearly as much for its civic value. Tisch College intends to raise this issue with university leadership, faculty, and individual schools to urge changes that recognize high-level service and civic engagement. At the same time, we will champion the University’s commitment to include measures of university civic engagement in college rankings and other assessments of higher education.

We also wish to increase the capacity of the Tufts community to engage in collaborative problem solving and democratic dialogue on difficult social and political issues. Our cross-cutting role across the university and our research-based expertise on deliberation uniquely position Tisch College to contribute to this work. Tisch College will involve itself with issues of diversity and inclusion in ways that complement and augment the work of the chief diversity officer, the university chaplaincy, the Center for the Study of Race and Democracy, and other parts of the university. We will be attentive to equity and social identity at Tufts, and we will collaborate on programs and practices that address these issues.

**Strengthen Local and National Partnerships**

Since its founding, Tisch College has been a leader in university-community partnerships, and these collaborations continue to be a cornerstone of our work. They lay the foundation for deep and robust faculty engagement, and they serve as vehicles for transformational learning experiences for students.

Tisch College partners with more than 80 local community-based organizations, public schools, and municipal agencies. Through volunteering, service learning, and internships, students who participate in Tisch College programs work locally. We partner with leading national organizations like YouthBuild, Jumpstart, and Generation Citizen, helping to build their capacity and advance their missions while providing service learning opportunities and research collaborations. The Franklin Project, a movement to promote national service as a rite of passage for all young Americans, counts the Tufts 1+4 Bridge-Year Service Learning Program as one of the initiatives it has inspired.

We recently developed a partnership with the Institute for Nonprofit Management and Leadership (INML), which equips nonprofit leaders with the skills and resources they need to make their organizations effective and sustainable. The INML runs training programs with input and support from Tisch College. We hope to capitalize on this relationship to provide service learning and research opportunities for Tufts students and faculty.

Tisch College will continue to collaborate with a wide range of organizations, and we will seek new partners, especially those with innovative civic ideas and strategies.
Expand Our Global Reach

In some ways, Tisch College has always reached beyond our shores, but most of our work has been local and national. Our efforts in host communities and our attention to American democracy will not diminish, but we do plan to promote civic engagement and global citizenship beyond the United States, to influence the role of higher education in civic life globally, and to address major issues worldwide.

Potential for expanding Tisch College’s global outlook lies in the Tufts 1+4 Bridge-Year Service Learning Program, the Tisch Summer Fellows Program, and in expanding collaborations with the Fletcher School, the International Relations program, the Institute for Global Leadership, and others.

We have also begun the return and reintegration of the Talloires Network, which was launched from Tisch College. The Talloires Network is an association of more than 300 colleges and universities from around the world who are committed to the civic role and social responsibilities of higher education. Cementing our ties with the network will provide additional scale for research and education and will promote the sharing of best practices with institutions across the globe.

Future Initiatives

Strategic planning is not a static process, and this document cannot possibly include all of the initiatives we will pursue in the coming years. While we have outlined our principal priorities, several other items are on our agenda to explore in the near future:

• We believe that a presence in Washington, D.C., will enable Tisch College to offer learning opportunities to Tufts students related to public policy, government, politics, and global affairs. It will also be a platform for showcasing current research, initiating new research, and amplifying our voice in national discussions about civic health and democratic reform.

• Tisch College is committed to preparing Tufts students for a lifetime of active citizenship, and we wish to apply that commitment to Tufts alumni as well. To that end, we envision programs for older Tufts alumni interested in social impact who are thinking about encore careers and other ways to enrich their lives and the lives of others.

• In addition to existing student programs like the 1+4 Bridge-Year Service Learning Program and the Tisch Scholars, we would like to create other opportunities for immersive, semester or yearlong service learning that can occur at various points in an undergraduate’s career. These might be structured like study abroad programs, involving domestic or international experiences, with sufficient academic content to warrant college credit.
While much of our strategic planning builds on existing programs and capacity, we also propose two major new initiatives which will chart a new course for the Tisch College and for Tufts University.

**Civic Studies**

Tisch College will make Tufts University a leading intellectual center for Civic Studies, and the source of new thinking and scholarship in this field.

Civic Studies is an emerging interdisciplinary field that studies civic life and helps citizens to improve it. Broadly, it includes any empirical or theoretical scholarship that investigates civic life, either as the core focus or as an important component of research on another topic. For example, scholars who study voting in U.S. elections or Confucian ideals of citizenship are engaged in Civic Studies, and so are researchers who address problems like obesity or illiteracy if they are concerned with promoting or assessing civic action.

More narrowly, Civic Studies aims to develop new models of inquiry helpful to citizens. Whereas much of social science implicitly asks, “What should be done?” Civic Studies asks: “What should we do?” It is an intentional combination of ethics (what is right and good?), facts (what is actually going on?), and strategies (what would work for people in given situations?). These questions are fundamentally “civic” in that they are meant to guide citizen inquiry and action.

Tufts is already home to students and faculty engaged in Civic Studies. More than 100 faculty members across the university have been Tisch Faculty Fellows whose work reveals strong, shared concerns about the quality of civic life and how to improve it. Tufts is especially well-known for research on civic engagement in local government by Tufts political scientists, for examining adolescents’ involvement in community service through the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development, for the university’s nationally recognized success enlisting local communities to fight childhood obesity and highway pollution, and for scholarship on youth engagement and civic education by Tisch College’s own researchers. Moreover, the Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning (UEP) and the Peace & Justice Studies Program have explicitly acknowledged the umbrella term of “Civic Studies.”

We will engage these and other faculty members, academic programs, and departments in helping us shape and drive a cross-cutting Civic Studies initiative that will be housed at Tisch College and will connect and strengthen curricula and scholarship across the entire university.

Additionally and in partnership with other Tufts schools, a cluster of new faculty members whose fields relate to Civic Studies will be co-located at Tisch College and in schools throughout the university. We hope to attract established scholars through endowed professorships, as well as promising junior faculty members, all of whom will offer new courses and co-curricular activities and whose scholarship and research will add to the field of Civic Studies across a variety of academic disciplines. Working with other Tufts faculty and students, they will develop new methodologies, theoretical models, and applied research that will establish Tufts University as a recognized leader in the field of Civic Studies.
The Tufts approach to Civic Studies will include new academic pathways such as Civic Science, the movement to put civic skills and democratic practices at the forefront of scientific inquiry and to make scientific knowledge a vital public resource. Civic Studies at Tufts will also restore a central place for civic ideas in the humanities, social sciences, and other disciplines.

As a complementary project, Tisch College is exploring the feasibility of establishing a National Service Archives at Tufts University. These archives would house documents and records related to the history of national civilian service in the United States and would serve as a valuable resource for scholars at Tufts and elsewhere who wish to study national service and civic engagement.

In short, Tisch College aims to create an intellectual and academic hub at Tufts which creates a new discipline of study, influences other disciplines, asks new questions about active citizenship, and informs political and social movements that renew civic life. This will ensure that Tufts University is the leading institution in the country for learning, teaching, studying, and practicing civic engagement.

The Institute for Democracy & Higher Education

Tisch College will build the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education to serve as a leading venue for research, resources, and advocacy. The institute will work to increase college student political agency, social action, and engagement in democracy, and it will advance social and political equity. Its signature initiative is the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE), which currently provides more than 800 participating colleges and universities with accurate data on their students’ registration and voting rates.

The time is right for this institute. The troubling decline in civic participation, especially among youth, has been well documented. To address this crisis, the Department of Education convened, in 2012, the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. Its report, A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future, calls for investing in higher education’s capacity to make educating young people for democracy a widely shared national priority. It urges institutions to make civic learning and democratic engagement expected parts of every college student’s education in the 21st century. In October 2014, the White House and Tisch College hosted at Tufts a national, invitational conference of educators and policy makers to discuss why civic learning in higher education has yet to achieve its potential. Civic learning remains marginalized rather than embedded in the learning experiences of all students, and too many programs are assumed to be successful without adequate evidence. Civic learning also faces a democracy problem. While many civic experiences may foster in college students empathy for others, these experiences do not always teach students to do democracy: to share responsibility for making democratic systems, communities, and culture work the way they should.

The timing for this institute is also right for Tisch College and Tufts University. With the growing NSLVE database, we can pursue influential research that can significantly inform higher education’s efforts to improve students’ education for democracy. For example, our research suggests that voting is not just a result of what happens during an election season. It is a result of overall campus climate, a combination of institutional norms, attitudes, structures, and programs that shape student experiences. The institute will continue this line of research to identify promising practices in political learning and engagement, and it will share, promote, and advocate for these practices.

The institute will also develop tools that colleges and universities can use individually to assess and bolster their commitment to political learning and democracy. These resources will include assessment tools, a syllabus and resource repository, online seminars, multicampus working groups, faculty development workshops, and technical assistance to campuses participating in NSLVE. While IDHE currently offers these resources, including the campus voting reports, free of charge, we will strive to develop a self-sustaining funding model in order to free-up resources for additional research. The institute will also play a convening role by bringing together key stakeholders, combining to leverage resources and networks in order to facilitate change in higher education.
We will initially focus explicitly on colleges and universities in the United States, but aspire to eventually turn our attention to higher education globally in collaboration with the Talloires Network and other international associations.

Finally, the institute can play a role at Tufts University by working with faculty and students to learn more about what works at our institution. Tufts can serve as a “laboratory” to test the replicability of programs viewed as successful on other campuses. These efforts will amplify the broader work of Tisch College to help Tufts be a leader in research and in practical approaches to educating for democracy.
Challenges

In order to fulfill our bold ambitions for Tisch College, several key challenges must be addressed:

Tisch College Identity

Tisch College is one of the only institutions of its kind in higher education. While this is a strength, it also presents a challenge. Our unique structure and the dearth of similar institutions make it hard to communicate who we are and what we do. For example, we do not confer degrees, and some of our stakeholders do not understand our academic mission. At the same time, the breadth of our work may make our goals and activities appear diffuse.

Our own qualitative and quantitative research has confirmed that our identity has often lacked clarity, our name recognition has not been as strong as it could be, and our “brand” has lacked a simple, memorable message. We are addressing this challenge by embarking on a process to strengthen our brand and to communicate more clearly and strategically as the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life. Achieving our strategic goals will depend significantly on these rebranding and communication efforts, which are vital to building a stronger base of supporters.

Resources

Tisch College has been able to employ limited resources for an outsize impact on Tufts University and beyond. But the expansion of student programs, increased faculty engagement, and major new initiatives outlined in this strategic plan depend on developing a different revenue model and a significant expansion of our resource base.

Because we work across the university in all schools, and because we are relatively new at Tufts, we lack a natural group of stakeholders who associate primarily with Tisch College. As such, it is both more challenging and more necessary to create avenues for deeper engagement with Tisch College, so that students, faculty members, and community partners form a stronger base for fundraising and support.

Critical to building support will be developing a Tisch College alumni program that engages former Tisch Scholars, Honos Civicus members, and other Tufts graduates who have an affinity for our mission. It will be vital to partner with other Tufts schools on shared priorities such as new faculty hires, new courses, and additional student programs.

It will take significant philanthropy to realize our vision for all of our ambitious initiatives. We have begun working with other deans on shared advancement opportunities, and we are already benefitting from greater university investment in Tisch College’s advancement capacity. Increasing philanthropic support for Tisch College will enable us to realize the important priorities we have identified in this plan.
Conclusion

The Path Forward

This document charts a clear and ambitious course for Tisch College based on the guiding framework of Education, Research, and Practice, and it lays out concrete steps we will take to achieve greater impact.

Through new and more robust education initiatives, including the addition of new faculty, we will expand our ability to prepare students across the university to be lifelong active citizens and meaningful participants in democracy. Our research, magnified by a leading Civic Studies program and by the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education, will continue to shape scholarly and public conversations about civic engagement and its effect on practice and policy. And by applying what we learn to real-world problems and supporting promising civic practices, we will strengthen Tufts University’s position as a model institution, making ethical and effective civic engagement a central feature of its education and scholarship.

As a result, Tisch College will cement its reputation as a national and global leader that is transforming higher education’s ability to strengthen democracy. We will promote needed solutions and create lasting change in communities near and far, and we will shape the lives of countless Tufts students who will be prepared to tackle pressing problems and to strengthen civic life.
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