Tufts tackles fallout from Trump’s travel ban

by Ariel Barbieri-Aghib and Emily Burke
News Editor and Assistant News Editor

University President Anthony Monaco said in a Jan. 29 email to the Tufts community that the university is committed to helping students impacted by President Donald Trump’s executive order that restricts travel to the United States by nationals of seven Muslim-majority nations.

University response to the order
According to Senior International Officer and Associate Provost Diana Chigas, about 73 Tufts students, staff and faculty were affected by the order. The seven nations affected by the travel ban are Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Sudan, Somalia and Yemen.

“Three (community members) were outside the country when the executive order was issued,” she said. “All have returned to Tufts, the last returning on Friday night after he had been stranded overseas for a week.”

Chigas also encouraged those with questions about how the order might affect them to contact her or the Office of University Counsel. Additionally, according to the announcement sent by Monaco’s office, Tufts remains committed to providing legal assistance to those in need of immigration advice.

President Monaco speaks at a forum about Trump’s executive order on Feb. 3.

Assistant General Counsel Dana Fleming noted that students in need of legal assistance should contact university personnel associated with their school. In particular, she said, International Center Director Jane Etish-Andrews is a contact for students, staff and faculty of several schools, including the School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering.

In State of the City speech, Burke promises unity, dedication to Medford community

by Soohyun Shim
Assistant News Editor

Medford Mayor Stephanie Burke affirmed the strength of the City of Medford at her first State of the City address Wednesday evening.

Burke lauded Medford’s success in finances and public works as well as development plans such as a proposed new hotel expected to create 50 permanent jobs.

“We have been involved from the start and will facilitate initiatives such as development, revitalization, public safety enhancements and so much more,” Burke said.

Burke added that the city has worked to improve the lives of residents by creating a new position of constituent liaison and implementing SeeClickFix, a new communication platform that allows the residents to report non-emergency problems to City Hall instantly. She also highlighted the importance of improving communication between City Hall and other residents and organizations in the community.

“In an effort to improve customer service within City Hall for businesses as well as residents, all City Hall employees were required to participate in customer service training which engaged employees in important dialogue and guidance regarding best practices in serving the public,” Burke said.

The mayor also spoke about the city’s growing relationship with Tufts, citing recent meetings the city has had with University President Anthony Monaco and a group of students, with whom she discussed the role of municipal government.

“Establishing and strengthening relationships between Tufts and the city is an important part of us moving forward as a community,” Burke said.

Mayor of Medford, Stephanie Burke, delivers her first State of the City address in Alden Chambers of Medford City Hall on Feb. 8.
Campus Life, ResLife announce changes to leadership roles in first-year orientation

by Simran Lala
Staff Writer

The orientation process for incoming first-year students will undergo changes. Beginning with the Class of 2019’s orientation in August, Orientation Leaders (OLs) will share responsibilities with First-Year Advisers (FYAs). The role of Resident Assistants (RAs) in first-year housing next year.

Howard Woolf, director of the Experiment College and associate dean of undergraduate education, explained that student OLs used to guide first-year students around campus during orientation, while RAs largely did not interact with the incoming students.

He added that this created confusion once orientation ended, because students no longer had OLs and were instead reaching out to RAs due to a lack of engagement with them during the orientation period.

Woolf said, "In accordance with student feedback, we are now progressing toward a focus on residence halls and making the FYAs the key people in the process. The OLs will be available as academic support." Woolf said.

Director for Campus Life Joe Gola added that ResLife is changing in order to unify first-year students and make their transition into college smoother. He explained that, in order to facilitate this, the Office of Residential Life and Learning (ResLife) will also be making changes.

"Residential Life is aiming at housing first-years in the same location, so that they can be amidst students going through the same thing at the same time," Gola said.

Several residence halls — namely Bush, Hill, Hodgdon, Houston, Miller, Tilton and Wilson — will be designated solely for incoming first-year students, according to Gola.

In addition, he explained that more responsibilities will be shifted to FYAs, who will live and interact with the students from the start of orientation until the end of the academic year.

"FYAs, who will be living amongst the students, will be given the task of building, in engage the first-years and make their freshman year a successful one," Gola said.

Assistant Dean of Student Affairs Chris Rossi said that the changes to the orientation process are directly linked to the reorganization of the first-year residential system.

"We identified an opportunity to anchor the first-year experience in individual residential communities," Rossi told the Daily in an email. "Organizing orientation activities around floors allows new students to get familiar with resources for new students while building close connections with their floormates, too." Another new aspect to the leadership structure is the addition of Community Development Advisors (CDAs) that will live in upperclassmen residential buildings, Gola elaborated.

"Tufts was one of the only colleges without a resident advisor for upperclassmen, and so from this year on we will have CDAs to incorporate a support system for them," Gola said. Overall, Woolf summarized that the goal of the switch in responsibilities is to make orientation week a more logical and integrated experience.

The increased involvement of FYAs is to make sure the orientation process makes more sense and reduces the stress of entering students," Woolf said. "As a secondary benefit, the reduction of OL workload will lead to condensed time of training for leaders and also a way to cut costs." Gola emphasized that these changes are ultimately aimed at supporting first-year students throughout the year by housing them in the same location and offering them continued support.

"This way, students in the same situation — that is, moving to a new college — feel more welcome, more ready and more supported for their years in college," he said.

University administrators commit to protecting international community members at forum about travel ban

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In addition, Assistant Director of the School of Medicine’s Office of International Affairs, Hakim, a contact for medical students and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy’s International Student Advisor Belko Morris is a contact for Fletcher School students.

The university’s legal counsel office and the university’s senior international visitor is working closely with ... these offices to provide those affected by the order with information, resources and, in some cases, access to outside legal counsel from immigration law specialists," Fleming told the Daily in an email.

Currently, federal authorities are not enforcing much of the executive order due to a temporary restraining order issued on Feb. 3 by Judge James Robart in Washington. On Feb. 9, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals upheld Robart’s temporary restraining order.

Chigas said she has advised members of the international community from countries that are contingently affected to travel outside of the United States due to concerns that they will not be able to return.

Regardless of national origin, religion or citizenship status, Tufts remains committed to protecting the international members of its community, according to Senior Vice President and General Counsel Mary Jeka.

"We understand that members of our international community are very concerned about what this executive order might mean for their ability to travel and work during the summer," Jeka said. "We have begun discussing these issues with input from the members of our international community and we will communicate our plans when they are finalized."

One community member who was affected by the travel ban is Mehdi Harandi, a visiting scholar from Iran who holds a graduate degree in Environmental Engineering. He was scheduled to return to Boston just days after the president’s executive order, but as a result of the travel ban, Harandi was left stranded with no way of returning to his work at Tufts. Harandi flew from Tehran to Kiev, Paris, Basel and Munich, before finally landing in Boston on Feb. 3.

Harandi said he was grateful for Fleming’s assistance. He explained that everything went smoothly once he arrived at Logan Airport, as the airport was out of the airport fairly quickly.

Student concerns at immigration forum

On Feb. 3, hours before Harandi returned from Logan Airport, several Tufts administrators held a forum in Ballou Hall to inform the Tufts community about how the school is dealing with the executive order. Marcos and Provost and Senior Vice President David Harris hosted the forum, which included Chigas and Fleming as panelists. Monako emphasized that Tufts is committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment for people of all backgrounds.

"The recent executive order regarding immigration from seven countries has been a matter of serious concern (not only) for us here at Tufts but I think across all higher education," Monako said at the forum. "Supporting and protecting our international members is right alongside all of the important values of Tufts as an institution."

Monako stated that Tufts’ commitment to international members of its community is part of the university’s emphasis on offering a global perspective to education, and Harris reiterated that the order clashes with Tufts’ goals and character as a university.

"[The order] hits our core values, and you can see in the strategic plan of the university, we talk about the importance of diversity and inclusion, about the importance of having a representative community here and about having a community where everyone feels like they are a full member," Harris said.

Monako confirmed that he, along with the presidents of 47 other universities, has signed a letter to Trump, asking the president to rectify or rescind the order. Additionally, Fleming said that Tufts signed an amicus brief with seven other Boston-area institutions in support of a lawsuit against the order, filed by Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey.

At the forum, several students from the affected countries expressed concerns about how the travel ban might negatively impact their career options, green card applications and Tufts admissions process.

Monako said that as of now, there are no concrete answers to some questions that have come up, and Tufts is focusing on immediate issues caused by the order. However, panelists confirmed that the school will continue to admit students from the countries affected. Monako also assured students that Tufts will not provide information about students’ immigration status without a warrant or court order.

Monako said it is important for members of the Tufts community to share personal immigrant stories as a form of resistance against Trump’s actions.

"One of the most powerful things that one can do is combat this type of order is [sharing] individual stories of success," Monako said. "Working with us and telling us your stories or your friends’ stories arms us with the ability to explain why it is important to rescind this order."