Tufts Global Reach to host alumni engagement event in London

Courtesy Lora De Felice
Almost 200 members of the Tufts community abroad are congregating in London this weekend to connect with the university and each other for the Tufts Alumni International’s second Global Reach event. The events this weekend include a variety of presentations and networking opportunities for attendees that range from current and prospective students to alumni, parents and friends of the university.

“[The gathering is] an opportunity to get Tufts alums together as well as newly-admitted students and students who are currently studying abroad in the United Kingdom,” Jane Etish-Andrews, director of the Tufts International Center and one of the speakers this weekend, said.

Along with Etish-Andrews, other speakers scheduled to speak throughout the weekend include former Provost Sol Gittleman and Dean of Arts and Sciences James Glaser. The weekend’s itinerary features lectures, social events and more.

Because most of the attendees are based internationally, Glaser is scheduled to update the attendees on the current state of the Medford/Somerville campus and will discuss the university’s continuing international efforts.

According to Etish-Andrews, events like the one in London have itineraries that are designed to attract a high amount of alumni interest, highlighting events such as a tour of the House of Lords by Right Honorable Lord Dobbs of Wylye (F ’72, ’77), theater tours and a chance to see the musical Wicked, which is based on the novel by Gregory Maguire, who graduated from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 1990.
“A big draw is the visit to the House of Parliament and a dinner with Michael Dobbs, who is a creator of House of Cards,” she said, referring to the original writing of the novel.

Alumni events like these also provide opportunities to engage alumni who are not currently as connected to the university as others, Etish-Andrews added.

“[There will be a] presentation by Tufts Financial Network, presenting Tufts entrepreneurs,” she said. “People who’ve been out of touch for a while, who are successful entrepreneurs, are going to have a panel.”

Even though the London weekend is part of an effort to help alumni based abroad connect with the school, the Global Reach program is not exclusively meant for international alumni, she said.

“[The event tends to] draw…expatriates and internationals who live in London, though some Americans will fly over from Boston,” she said.

Tufts Alumni and the International Center organized the first ever Global Reach event in Hong Kong this past January. Etish-Andrews said that efforts to engage alumni through both weekends have been very successful and noted that these events also aim to expand alumni outreach and networking.

According to Gittleman, who is giving a lecture on Sunday morning about changes in Europe since the Battle of Waterloo, the continuation of the program with the London event will help fortify a robust international alumni network.

While most alumni events occur within the United States, Tufts has a sizable international community and a widely-dispersed contingent of alumni, Gittleman said. He noted that it is difficult to organize and sustain a global community and that events like these are important for alumni looking to reconnect with their alma mater.

“[The weekend] is very much part of our international effort, as more of our student body becomes international,” Gittleman said.

University President Anthony Monaco agreed about the importance of the event series.
“Tufts Global Reach enables us to engage with alumni and friends who would find it difficult to come back to Tufts but are eager to talk with us about what is going on at Tufts and share their ideas and experiences,” Monaco told the Daily in an email via Kim Thurler, executive director of public relations.

Gittleman feels that alumni networks are an integral part of the university system.

“Alumni associations are uniquely American,” he said. “There’s nothing quite like American higher education; it’s the envy of the world, much as we beat up on it.”

He also explained that such events will help Tufts serve its students as they continue with their lives after college.

“If you haven’t grown since college, it’s the fault of your university,” he said. “If you didn’t light the Bunsen burner of your intellect, you’d ask for a refund.”