The Experimental College

Annual Report, 2017-18

ExCollege Mission Statement
Through its innovative, interactive, and interdisciplinary programs, the ExCollege strives to enrich the intellectual experience of undergraduates at Tufts. These programs serve as an incubator for new ideas about teaching, learning, and curriculum. They also aim to engage students actively in the design and delivery of new academic initiatives, often in collaboration with faculty. Shared governance, collaborative learning, and involvement with the community are hallmarks of the ExCollege.

Faculty / Student Board
The board of the Experimental College is charged with selecting courses to be offered each semester, of identifying functions for the ExCollege to support, of selecting undergraduate board members, and of supporting the ExCollege’s mission. The board is composed of ExCollege staff, a rotating body of faculty (with frequent assistance from board alumni), and students. This diverse mix of perspectives on Tufts as a community and an institution makes the board a particularly vibrant corner of Tufts and the insights it produces lead to unique and timely programming.

Board members, 2017–18

- **Faculty**: Ariel Goldberg (Psychology), Sara Gomez (Environmental Studies), James Intrilligator (Mechanical Engineering), Claire Schub (Romance Languages), Natalie Shapero (English), Jill Weinberg (Sociology, Fall only)
- **Undergraduates**: Pranav Menon (‘18), Scott Mongold (‘18), Sara Newman (‘18), Madeline Oliff (‘20), Kyle Paul (‘18), Hermes Suen (Fall only)
- **Graduate Student**: James Rizzi, PhD student in English
- **ExCollege Staff**: Joseph Abrantes, Madeleine Delpha, Amy Goldstein, Howard Woolf (Director)

Faculty Chair
Ariel Goldberg served as chair for the 2017-2018 academic year.

Meetings
The board met once a month for 1½ hours to discuss ongoing business. The board also met for a half-day in both October and March to select courses for the following semester. This half-day meeting has traditionally been held during reading period but is now held earlier in the semester in order to submit courses to Student Services in time for normal registration.
The Board’s Major Activities This Semester

1. Increased Enrollment due to Standardized Course Registration

   This year marks the first year that students have been able to register for ExCollege courses during normal registration. As I documented in last year’s report, the ExCollege changed the schedule by which it approves visiting lecturer courses, allowing us to submit these courses to Student Services in time for students to register for them with the rest of their courses.

   This has led to a substantial increase in our average enrollment.

   Visiting Lecturer courses:
   a. AY16-17
      i. Fall: 11 students/class
      ii. Spring: 15 students/class
   b. AY17-18
      i. Fall: 19 students/class
      ii. Spring: 18 students/class

   Total ExCollege Enrollment (across all class types):
   a. F’17: 834 (14/class average)
   b. S’18: 607 (14/class average)

We are also pleased because we are enrolling more engineering students than ever before, broadening our reach across the university. In the past, Engineering students had difficulty registering for ExCollege courses given the relative inflexibility of their course plans. Moving ExCollege registration to the same time as the other courses allows engineers to better plan out their schedule, allowing them to incorporate ExCollege courses into their schedule.

2. Course Selection for S’18 and F’18 semesters

   This year the board updated the way it selects courses from visiting lecturers.
   a. All proposals are initially subject to a quality control process. While in the past nearly all proposals were sent to non-ExCollege faculty members for review, courses that do not meet certain minimum standards are culled. This reduces the burden we ask of the SAS/Engineering faculty at large.
   b. All applicants whose proposals pass the initial review are interviewed by board members; in the past these interviews were mostly conducted by student & faculty volunteers. This provides the board with substantially more detailed information with which to make their decisions.

The ExCollege board met in October 2017 and March 2018 to select courses for the Spring 2018 and Fall 2018 semesters, respectively.
c. October 2017
111 visiting lecturer course proposals for S’18 were evaluated. 15 were selected.

d. March 2017
74 visiting lecturer course proposals for F’18 were evaluated. 15 were selected.
7 Robyn Gittleman Graduate Teaching Fellowship applications were evaluated. 4 were selected.

3. Robyn Gittleman Teaching Fellows Program
The ExCollege was the recipient of a Tufts Innovates Grant to launch a new initiative that provides graduate students opportunities to teach original courses with sustained guidance, support, and reflection. This grant led to the creation of the Robyn Gittleman Teaching Fellows program.

a. Funding
The Tufts Innovates grant ended last year which meant that the ExCollege needed to seek alternate funding to continue program. The ExCollege worked with Tufts Advancement to raise funds to continue this program.

i. Utilized the new Tufts Crowdfunding instrument
https://crowdfund.tufts.edu/project/9191
ii. Initial goal: $10,000
iii. Total raised: $29,242 (72 donors)

b. Graduate Placement
We have tracked former Gittleman fellows to assess whether and how their time in the program affected their progress in their graduate program and beyond. Our fellows have finished their degrees and gone on to find good jobs, suggesting that the program—despite requiring a large time commitment—is a valuable and energizing experience.

i. 5 finished their PhDs this year, 1 finished their MFA
ii. 6 have teaching positions
iii. 1 has a post-doc
iv. 1 has an administrative position

4. Voices from the Edge: Janover Family Lecture Series
This annual lecture series was made possible by a generous gift and 5-to-10-year commitment from Sarah (A’85) and Tom Janover.

a. On April 3, 2018 the ExCollege hosted this year’s speaker, noted documentary filmmaker, director, and professor Tracy Heather Strain.

b. Dr. Strain also met with:
   i. Students in the Directing for Film course
   ii. Students in the Documentary Theory and Practice course
   iii. Members of Tufts Women in Filmmaking (student group)
5. **ExCollege and the University**

In addition to the courses and events the ExCollege originates, the ExCollege frequently collaborates with other programs across the university.

a. **Careers in the Common Good**

   The ExCollege partnered with Tisch College, the Career Center, the Political Science Department, and the International Relations Program to develop a program to educate Tufts students about the breadth and depth of socially responsible career paths available in industries ranging from public service and non-profits to benefit-corporations and social enterprises.

b. **SMFA**

   The ExCollege believes that the acquisition of the SMFA is an important landmark in Tufts’ history and opens incredible opportunities for our students. In order to maximize our relationship with the SMFA and to grow our educational offerings, the board voted to create a permanent position on the board for an SMFA member. This coming year Ashley Peterson will be our first SMFA board member.

c. **Jumbo Days**

   The ExCollege is used heavily in Jumbo Days programming. Our courses are featured as sample classes including sample classes and this year former ExCollege instructor Ian Pilarczyk taught a mock law classroom session for the annual Law Day on the Hill.

d. **Incubated Courses**

   Over the years, many courses and programs originating at the ExCollege have found permanent homes in other areas of Arts & Sciences. The following courses have or are in the process of “graduating” from the ExCollege:

   1. Documentary: Theory and Practice
   2. Tisch Scholar Fieldwork Practicum
   3. Special Topics: Philanthropy, Social Enterprise, and Community
   4. Special Topics: Dialogue, Identity & Civic Action
   5. Graduate Professional Development Fellowship (PDF)

6. **Student and Faculty Board Members**

   We selected student and faculty members for 2017-18 (see below).

7. **Chair**

   I, Ariel Goldberg, will be stepping down from the ExCollege Board in in the 2018-19 academic year. The next board chair has yet to be determined.
Next Year (2018-19)
Faculty Chair
As of May 2018 the chair of the ExCollege board has not been selected.

Board members, 2018–19

- **Faculty**: Sara Gomez (Environmental Studies), James Intrilligator (Mechanical Engineering), Ashley Peterson (SMFA), Claire Schub (Romance Languages), Natalie Shapero (English), Philip Starks (Biology)
- **Undergraduates**: Hezekiah Branch ('21), Julie Chotivantanaong ('21), May Hong ('19), Setlio Louka ('21), Christopher Panella ('21), Gabriel Yerdon ('21)
- **Graduate Student**: To be determined

On behalf of the committee,

Ariel Goldberg, Chair