During the 2009-2010 academic year, much of the committee’s discussion centered on implications of the national and international economic situation for undergraduate admissions at Tufts.

In the fall of 2009, Dean Coffin reported to the committee on the class of 2013; despite the acute economic situation, there was only a small drop in the number of applicants from the previous year. On the other hand, the status of financial aid reflected the economic situation somewhat more; the admitted class of 2013 had more financial need than the class of 2012. At the same time, the financial aid budget remained the same. As a result, admissions for the class of 2013 was no longer need-blind; this change resulted in no loss of academic prowess in the class, but probably did result in some loss of socio-economic diversity.

In a meeting in December, discussions in the committee led to a sense that it should express support for an increase in the Freshman financial aid budget. In January, a letter was drafted and signed by the faculty and student members of the committee and sent to the University administration. This letter concluded:

... Dean Coffin and his office have overseen some remarkable gains in both the academic profile and the socio-economic diversity of entering students. The University should make a serious effort to retain these advancements. Of course, given the current economic environment and the resulting budgetary consequences, it is no longer possible for the University’s admissions process to be “need blind”; in our view, this unfortunate setback highlights the importance of the financial aid budget. Indeed, the administration should act to minimize the loss of socio-economic diversity of entering Tufts students which could result from economic hardship.

The committee was very pleased to learn in its final meeting of the year that the Freshman financial aid budget was indeed increased for the class of 2014; it applauds the administration’s efforts in what was surely a difficult budgetary environment. The committee was also pleased with Dean Coffin’s report on the class of 2014; it contained good news regarding both the academic profile and the socio-economic diversity of this new entering class.

The committee invited Travis Brown (Manager, Center for STEM Diversity) to its final meeting in order to discuss a pilot program known as “Bridge to Engineering Success at Tufts” (or BEST) for which he is an organizer. This new program, to be implemented by Brown together with the office of admissions, is designed to assist incoming, underrepresented, Engineering-interested students during their transition from high school to college; in particular, it targets underrepresented students who are structurally inadmissible for the engineering program Tufts because of, for example, inadequate mathematics preparation in high school. The committee hopes that this program will be a success.