To: Anthony Monaco, President, Tufts University  
David Harris, Provost and Senior Vice President  
Patricia Campbell, Executive Vice President  
Jim Glaser, Dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, ad interim  
Cc: Mary Jeka, Senior Vice President for University Relations and General Counsel  
Linda Abriola, Dean of the School of Engineering  
James Stavridis, Dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy  
Nancy Bauer, Dean of Academic Affairs, School of Arts and Sciences  
Barbara Brizuela, Dean of Academic Affairs, School of Arts and Sciences  
Margery Davies, Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs, School of Arts and Sciences  
Scott Sahagian, Executive Administrative Dean ad interim, School of Arts and Sciences  

From: The AS&E Committee on Faculty Work/Life and the undersigned members of Tufts University  

Date: 3 September 2014  

Dear President Monaco, Provost Harris, Vice President Campbell, and Dean Glaser,

We write to you about the university's July 16 decision to cease operation of the Tufts Educational Day Care Center (TEDCC) and lease the center to Bright Horizons, Inc., effective September 1, 2014. We strongly object to both the process and the substance of the decision, which regrettably represents a serious setback to recent progress on work/life issues in the Schools of Arts and Sciences and Engineering. While it is now too late to reverse the harm to our community caused by the loss of TEDCC, we call on you to make a strong and unswerving commitment to supporting Tufts employees’ families in the future. We ask that you act immediately to form an authoritative task force, appointed by the Provost and peopled by appropriate stakeholders, to conduct a data-driven, objective, and independent study of childcare producing a multi-year plan for improving childcare at the university. The task force should be instructed to take into account not only institutional needs such as liability and cost—things that we recognize are serious and valid concerns—but also the needs and desires of the users of childcare: Tufts faculty, staff, and graduate students.

The decision to outsource the childcare center has hurt many in our Tufts community, including faculty, staff, and students. In what follows, however, we focus on one impact of particular concern to us, and also to you as you steward core academic goals at Tufts: the damage to the University’s relationship with its faculty and to its efforts to recruit and retain an outstanding faculty in the future.

The process of decision-making was seriously flawed in a number of ways.

1. The secrecy of the process violated Tufts norms of faculty governance. The bylaws of the AS&E Committee on Faculty Work/Life clearly state that the committee "shall be consulted on matters concerning changes in school and university policy and procedure related to AS&E faculty work/life," including childcare. Instead, the committee’s co-chairs were simply informed in early June that the decision had been made. Subsequently they were asked for their reactions while at the same time being told they must keep the information confidential. The failure to consult faculty, staff and students deviated from best practices recommended by the AAUP about decision-making concerning childcare provision. The majority of the Work/Life Committee co-
chairs’ suggestions, including postponement of the transition to Bright Horizons and the carrying out of a study considering other models of childcare provision, were rejected outright.

2. The AS&E Executive Committee was also not consulted on a matter that deeply concerns faculty ability to carry out its core mission.

3. The decision was made without benefit of input from the many experts in early childhood education on our campus. Most importantly, the nationally renowned Department of Child Study and Human Development, which has deep historic ties to TEDCC and runs its own model lab school, was not consulted at all.

4. The choice to announce the closure of TEDCC in mid-July—when many faculty members were away doing research, and months after faculty families had signed contracts for the coming school year—was deleterious to faculty members’ ability to do their work. The last-minute timing of the change interrupted the summers of many faculty members, including at least half a dozen AS&E tenure-track assistant professors who urgently needed this time to focus on their research. Instead, many had to engage in a frantic search for replacement childcare; some found acceptable care elsewhere, while others find themselves unhappily locked into what they see as a lower-quality situation.

In brief, we find it short-sighted that TEDCC, which has helped to establish best practices in early childhood education and helped train leaders in the field nationwide, has been abolished with so little care. In its rush to free itself of what we agree are real and pressing liability and cost issues, the administration failed to conduct even cursory benchmarking of childcare provision at peer and area institutions. Such a study would have revealed that other universities employ multiple creative ways to provide childcare that balance their concerns about cost and liability with employee childcare needs and desires, any of which might have provided a model more appropriate to our situation.

Let us briefly address the substantive outcome. Tufts has negotiated a disadvantageous contract with Bright Horizons that leaves many issues unresolved and does little to preserve the most distinctive features of TEDCC: highly qualified teachers (many earning MAs from Tufts), a close relationship with the University as well as with Somerville and Medford Public Schools, and inclusion of children with special needs. Furthermore, the culture, mission, and quality of the center are threatened by the Bright Horizons business model relying on lower compensation and lesser benefits than TEDCC staff had. The upshot is that as of September 1, the center lacks many features that made it such a contributor to faculty productivity and such an effective enticement in recruiting top young academics. Again, we will focus particularly on the impacts on AS&E faculty:

1. A cross-section of AS&E faculty see high-quality, independent childcare as crucial to their productivity and happiness, as the attached quotations attest (see Appendix 8).

2. Excellent childcare is key to faculty diversity, a pillar of Tufts’ faculty recruitment and retention efforts. Studies have documented that childcare policies have disparate impacts according to gender, income, race/ethnicity, and tenure status. Junior faculty are, unsurprisingly, most heavily affected. One 2008 Boston University study found that overall job (dis)satisfaction among female junior faculty correlated more strongly with “stress related to childcare” than with such obvious factors as teaching load, service obligations, and department atmosphere. The lack of good work/life policies, including childcare, is especially deleterious for women in
STEM fields. However, a dramatic generational change in many men’s desire and need to take on family responsibilities is currently underway, and as a result younger male faculty and their families also rely on and indeed cannot do without high-quality childcare.

3. This issue affects even faculty without young children. University-supported, high-quality childcare is fundamental to the working lives of all faculty members. A colleague with unreliable or poor-quality childcare can be a drain on a whole department, be it through less flexible teaching schedules, limited attendance at extracurricular events, reduced availability to students and colleagues, missed meetings, unexpected absences, or simply being preoccupied and worried on the job.

4. Further, outstanding university-sponsored childcare is a critical asset in recruiting and retaining rising stars to the faculty. Indeed, professors surveyed in a Harvard study cite better childcare options as one of the very few reasons they would consider switching jobs even after tenure. Testimonies from our colleagues at Tufts confirm these findings (Appendices 8 and 9).

Where can we go from here? TEDCC as it existed for 40 years is now gone, leaving us without a powerful tool for hiring and retaining excellent faculty. We must remedy this situation as we work to make Tufts an attractive employer for the new generation of faculty members who will replace retiring Baby Boomers in the coming years. Furthermore, it is imperative that, as we consider the long-term health of Tufts as an institution, a more productive, more meaningful partnership between the faculty and the administration come into being.

In order to further these two goals, we, the undersigned, strongly urge you to convene immediately a one-year task force under the leadership of the Provost to conduct a data-driven, independent, and objective plan for Tufts’ childcare provision. It should consider the issue in its full context, taking into account faculty, staff, and graduate student childcare care needs, Tufts' financial and liability concerns, and the appropriate administrative and reporting structure for on-campus childcare. It might seek the guidance of a university work-life consultant, of which there are several excellent examples in the Boston area. It should incorporate the findings of the AS&E Committee on Faculty Work/Life's faculty, staff, and graduate student dependent care needs assessment study currently underway. It should analyze the policies and practices in place at other universities and consider innovative approaches to providing university-sponsored childcare. The pros and cons of center-based solutions such as affiliated non-profits, joint ventures, and subsidies for external providers should be objectively assessed, and non-center supports such as vouchers, matching services, and investment in community providers should be considered as well. The task force’s membership should include a variety of stakeholders at Tufts, including, of course, relevant administrators, but also, at a minimum, faculty and staff who are parents of young children; department chairs; members of the CSHD department; junior faculty; a graduate student representative; representatives from the Boston, Grafton, and Medford/Somerville campuses; and member(s) of the Committee on Faculty Work/Life. Most importantly, the task force should be authoritative, and all of the stakeholders should commit to respecting its results and implementing its recommendations, whatever they may be.

We believe this task force is the best way for the Tufts community to fashion a thoughtful, comprehensive approach to childcare that could make us a leader, rather than a laggard, in that area, and set the stage for faculty excellence in the future. Finally, it offers the administration an opportunity to re-commit to faculty governance, and to demonstrate transparency in decision-making.
We look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

The faculty members of the Arts, Sciences & Engineering Committee on Faculty Work/Life:
Elizabeth Remick, co-chair, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science
John McDonald, co-chair, Professor and Chair, Department of Music
Laurie Baise, Associate Professor, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering
Amahl Bishara, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology
Hugh Gallagher, Associate Professor, Department of Physics and Astronomy
Barbara Parmenter, Lecturer, Department of Urban and Environmental Planning and Policy
Ken Garden, Associate Professor, Department of Religion

(add signatures from faculty, staff, and students here)
Endnotes

1 See Appendices 1 and 2.
2 See Appendix 3, letter from affected Tufts faculty.
3 Members of the central administration have acknowledged in public meetings, e.g., at the meeting with TEDCC parents on July 24, 2014, that the only solutions they considered or researched were closing the center or outsourcing it.
4 See Appendix 4, preliminary benchmarking of Tufts peer institutions and Boston-area university childcare provision.
5 The contract is disadvantageous to the Tufts community in the following ways: (1) the only grounds on which Tufts can break the contract should things go badly at the center is if Bright Horizons uses the space for something other than childcare; (2) the contract includes priority access to the center, but no tuition discount for members of the university community, something that many other universities negotiate with BH, and something that is of utmost importance in the Boston childcare market, the most expensive in the country. Other institutions in our peer group and in our area address the problem of cost through such mechanisms as taxable childcare scholarships, sliding scale tuition, tuition discounts, grants, and other types of subsidies to members of the university community; see Appendix 5 on discounts and childcare subsidies; (3) Bright Horizons has designated 10 infant and toddler priority access slots for Tufts community members at four Somerville/Cambridge centers, at full price. While this is a step in the right direction, the care is so prohibitively expensive that it is unusable for all but the wealthiest members of our university community; see Appendix 6 on cost. (4) In choosing a vendor owned/operated type of contract, Tufts also forfeited its influence over the center, including staffing, operations, and sharing of university values.
6 One of the major losses created in the transition to Bright Horizons is the center’s ability to engage in inclusion of children with special needs. The cities of Somerville and Medford declined to continue providing on-site therapists, such as speech, occupational, and physical therapists, for residents of those two cities after September 1, 2014. As of September 1, 2014, Bright Horizons had committed to paying through May 2015 for on-site speech therapy for children whose families had signed contracts for 2014-15. OT and PT had not been contracted for as of September 1. In May Bright Horizons will re-evaluate and cease this provision if it is too expensive; any children subsequently found to have special needs would be excluded in any case (see minutes for 8/20/2013 transition committee meeting). Tufts families will surely feel the impact of this because (1) there are few other centers where children with special needs can receive services and support and (2) the number of children with special needs requiring services is skyrocketing in the US. See Houtrow, A., et al., “Changing Trends of Childhood Disability, 2001-2011,” Pediatrics 2014-0594.
7 As of September 1, only five of the 12 teachers from 2013-2014 remain at the center in the classroom full-time, while two others will be in the classroom half-time (see Bright Horizons Tele Square FAQs and the minutes of the center’s transition advisory committee, July-August 2014). We believe that teachers who have opted to stay on are likely to move on in the next year because of their diminished compensation and status; we also believe that new hires are likely not to have long tenures for similar reasons. See Appendix 7 comparing TEDCC staff compensation and benefits with Bright Horizons benefits in years 1 and 2 of the new center. Academic literature shows a clear connection between high teacher turnover and poor child outcomes. See W. Steven. Barnett, “Policy Brief: Low Wages = Low Quality: Solving the Real Preschool Teacher Crisis,” NIEER Policy Brief (Issue 3, May 2003), and Deborah J. Cassidy et al., 2011, “The Day-to-Day Reality of Teacher Turnover in Preschool Classrooms: An Analysis of Classroom Context and Teacher, Director, and Parent Perspectives,” Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 25 (1).
8 See for example the COACHE 2007 survey showing that among junior faculty, women and faculty of color are significantly more likely than men or white faculty to say that childcare policies were crucial to their success and effectiveness. COACHE, “Tenure Track Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey Highlights Report,” August 1, 2007.
