Resolution on the Retirement of
David Cochrane, Department of Biology

His colleagues in the Department of Biology join with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences to express our appreciation for the companionship and contributions of our colleague David E. Cochrane upon his retirement after thirty-eight years of service.

Dave’s interest in biology started through his work on his family’s chicken farm in Fishkill, New York where he cared for the birds, candled the eggs, delivered them, and participated in the general upkeep of the property.

Graduating from Wappingers Central High School, Dave entered the Cornell University College of Life Sciences with the initial intent of pursuing a career as a veterinarian, but he soon developed an interest in scientific research. As a result, Dave pursued graduate studies in the Department of Animal Science at the University of Vermont where he identified the source of bovine luteinizing hormone as the pituitary. After earning his M.S. degree in 1968, Dave continued his graduate studies in the Department of Physiology at the University of Vermont Medical School examining the process of neuronal desensitization at the frog neuromuscular junction. He went on to earn his Ph.D. in Physiology and Biophysics in 1971. In Burlington, Dave also met his wife Pam. They married and soon after they moved to Connecticut, where Dave pursued post-doctoral work at the College of Medicine at Yale University. It was at Yale, that Dave developed his long-term scientific interest in the process of mast cell exocytosis, the mechanism by which cells release a variety of biologically active chemicals from cytoplasmic storage depots.

Dave came to Tufts in 1976 and began a long and productive research career on the physiology of mast cells, whose storehouses of histamine are all too familiar to allergy and inflammation sufferers. During his professional career Dave, who was aided by grants from the National Institutes of Health, has published fifty-eight peer-reviewed papers, which have greatly expanded our understanding of the cellular processes involved in the inflammatory response. In addition, he has mentored several graduate students and ninety-six undergraduates in his laboratory, representing an extraordinary contribution to student participation in scientific research. Many of his former students have gone on to be successful clinicians and have contributed significantly to their chosen professions and specialties.

A distinguishing characteristic of Dave’s work at Tufts has been his willingness to work collaboratively with his colleagues both at Tufts and at other institutions. Dave worked closely for many years with Emeritus Professor Ross Feldberg on the molecular aspects of mast cell exocytosis. In addition, he has collaborated with Professor Jan Pechenik in the Department of Biology and Professor Harris Theoharides at Tufts Medical School, and in so doing, helped break down the silos that often separate one research laboratory from another. He has also worked closely with Dr. Robert Carraway from the University of Massachusetts Medical School on the role of the neuropeptide, neurotensin, as an activator of exocytosis in mast cells. This collaboration on the connections between the nervous system and inflammation has proved to be both enduring and highly productive.

During his almost forty years at Tufts, Dave has taught introductory biology, a two-sequence course in human physiology, a laboratory in physiology, a course in neurobiology, and a seminar on inflammation. Dave was a lively and engaging lecturer whose command of the material and
teaching techniques enabled him to maintain student interest in and enthusiasm for challenging material. Even more notable, Dave’s calm and encouraging demeanor (together with his familiar sweaters) led his intro. Bio. students characterize Dave as the “Mister Rogers” of the department and indeed Dave always made the students feel welcome in his “scientific neighborhood.” Students appreciated Dave’s encouraging attitude and his accessibility.

Dave has been unstinting in his work for the university. In addition to his significant contributions to the biology department, Dave served two separate terms on the Tenure and Promotion Committee, both times serving as committee chair. He has played a major role in the pre-medical aspirations of generations of Tufts students, serving on the Health Professions Recommendations Committee for over thirty years and as its chair for seven years. Dave also facilitated the research of many Tufts faculty members by chairing the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, for twelve years, a committee on which he still serves.

During his retirement Dave will continue his community activities in Acton, a community in which he has lived since arriving at Tufts in 1976. He is currently the Vice President of the Acton Conservation Trust, Vice Chair of the Land Stewardship Committee and Vice President of the Acton Historical Society. In addition, Dave will continue his daily running routine, an activity he has been engaged in for almost fifty years, as well as continuing his biking sojourns with his wife Pam, who is retiring from her private practice as a clinical psychologist. He also will continue cultivating his gardens and enjoying the visual beauty of them as well as the bounty they supply for his and other’s tables. Both Dave and Pam plan to do a great deal of traveling, including visiting more often their daughter Jessica and her husband, Jona, in Wyoming and their son Alec and his wife, Robin, in Vermont. We should note in this resolution that Dave has climbed all forty-nine of the mountains in the Adirondacks that are 4,000 feet high or higher and a total of 145 mountains with his longtime friend Dieter Gump, MD, who is now an eighty-year-old Emeritus Professor of Medicine and Infectious Diseases at the University of Vermont Medical School. This activity will continue each summer for as long as both Dave and Dieter are physically able to get out and enjoy the mountains.

His students and colleagues alike will sorely miss Dave’s many contributions to the Department of Biology and to the university. We wish Dave a long and happy retirement and we trust he will remain in close contact with us through the years.

On behalf of the Department of Biology, be it resolved that this resolution on the retirement of David E. Cochrane be spread on the minutes of the faculty of Arts and Sciences and that copies of it be sent to our honored colleague, to his wife, Pam, and to his children Alec and Jessica.

Sergei Mirkin, Professor and Chair
Department of Biology