Resolution on the Retirement of
David Dapice, Department of Economics

With this resolution, the members of the Department of Economics join with the Faculty of Arts, Sciences, and Engineering to recognize the career of our colleague and friend, David Dapice.

David began life in New York City and his family soon moved next to a dairy farm. Their next move was to the somewhat greener pastures of Connecticut. He attended Williams College, where he majored in political economy, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and graduated in 1966. He then undertook graduate work in economics at Harvard, where he began his affiliation with what later became Harvard Institute for International Development and interrupted his studies for a two-and-a-half years to work on their Indonesia project. He received his Ph.D. and joined Tufts Economics in 1973. Over the years that followed, he continued his HIID affiliation and took leave for prestigious, temporary positions at the Brookings Institute and the Rockefeller Foundation.

Throughout his career, David’s interest has been economic development. Initially, he worked on development issues and policies in a variety of emerging economies including Indonesia, Bolivia, Columbia, and India; and later in Mongolia and Ukraine. These last two countries suggest David’s most serious lapse in policy judgment. You see, he chose to do on-site background research during our break between semesters in the hopes of escaping a bit of the New England winter. Surprisingly, it took him over two years of December and January visits to realize that neither Mongolia nor Ukraine were optimal choices for this purpose. Once learned, however, this lesson was deeply internalized. For the rest of his career, David’s research would focus on deriving policies to promote economic growth and financial stability in the less wintery climes of Southeast Asian countries, in particular, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Indonesia.

Wintering in Ukraine was probably David’s only policy miscalculation. Though not an economic theorist, David has always had a keen intuition for how modern economic theory is relevant to the case at hand, and he is a gifted interpreter of economic data. His nearly 100 policy and technical advice papers are each a judicious blend of theory and practice combined with a deep appreciation for political and institutional realities. This is true whether his topic is rural finance, exchange rate management, tax policy, urbanization or a host of other issues. David provides an outstanding model of how an applied economist can contribute to society and how sound economics can make a real positive difference.

David’s passion for working on the economic problems facing developing economies is matched by his tremendous dedication to his teaching and his deep concern for student learning. All who know David know that he holds Tufts students in the highest regard and that he has always gone the extra mile to help and even insist that our students achieve their best. Through his teaching,
advising, and mentoring David has shown considerable talent as a “development economist” of a different sort.

David has long served key roles in the International Relations Program, the Institute for Global Leadership and the local chapter of Phi Beta Kappa. He also served as Chair of the Economics Department in the late 1980s. In recent years, he has been buying half of his time from Tufts to work with the Kennedy School’s Vietnam Program (later expanded to include Myanmar) and has been the program’s Chief Economist for over a decade. We have missed seeing David in Braker Hall as much as we previously had. Yet, even half of David Dapice has provided an enormous flow of subtle insight, quick wit, and plain, honest, friendship. So, the loss looms large as he now leaves Tufts to continue his work in Southeast Asia and to spend more time with his adored wife, Belinda, their four children and eight grand children. We wish them all the very best.

On behalf of the faculty and staff in the Economics Department, and the countless other faculty, staff and students who have appreciated his 43 years of service to Tufts, I move that this resolution on the retirement of David Dapice be spread on the permanent record of this faculty and that a copy of it be sent to him.