Resolution on the Retirement of Robert Maxwell Hollister
Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning

In what he calls his best professional decision ever, Rob Hollister moved from M.I.T. to Tufts in 1980 to become the first chair of the Department of Urban and Environmental Policy (UEP). For twelve years, working closely with faculty colleagues, he led the development of UEP, establishing its national reputation as a top graduate program, widely recognized for our special focus on educating “practical visionaries.”

In his 36 years as a professor and administrator at Tufts, Rob has been an influential pioneer in the global higher education civic engagement movement. His career has been driven by the vision of moving beyond the ivory tower model. He has carried UEP values and educational strategies to a series of other roles at Tufts.

Rob has published several books and many articles. And he has taught over a dozen different courses. But far and away his greatest achievements have been in the area of program leadership and development. With great energy and enthusiasm, he has been a practical visionary at Tufts – designing and building public service programs, and raising funds to support them. In addition to guiding UEP during its formative first stages, he directed the Lincoln Filene Center for Citizenship and Public Affairs for five years and then served as Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS). As Dean of GSAS, he championed integration of graduate and undergraduate education, and guided the creation of several new degree programs.

In all of his work building new programs, Rob has been a collaborative leader without parallel. He would be the first to say that all of his greatest achievements have been entirely group efforts. He is an extraordinary coalition-builder, both within and outside the academy. To mention just a few of the coalitions for change that he co-organized: Environmental Diversity Forum, Boston AIDS Care Consortium, The Research University Civic Engagement Network, Massachusetts Youth Services Alliance, and Boston Neighborhood Network.

In the late 1990’s, Rob chaired a faculty-student task force that planned the University College of Citizenship and Public Service (later renamed Tisch College) and then served as the founding Dean of Tisch College from 2000 to 2011. And Tufts’ comprehensive approach to civic education has powerfully influenced many top research universities across the country and around the globe. His cumulative fundraising achievement for Tufts public service programs, in partnership with others, exceeds $100 million.

Rob has had a lifelong love affair with Talloires, location of the Tufts European Center. For two summers as an 11 and 12 year old he attended the MacJannet Camps in Talloires and each year won the prize for Best All Around Camper. (Being named Best All Around Camper was the pinnacle of his life achievement; he has handled with grace the long slow decline since that recognition.) So it was a special pleasure for him to run multiple conferences at Talloires and for a period to supervise the European Center. In 2005, he led the organization of a conference in Talloires of university heads from around the world to envision the future civic roles and social responsibilities of higher education. This group launched an ongoing alliance, the Talloires Network, which has become the primary international coalition on university engagement. The Network now numbers 360 member universities in 77 countries and is a major resource and advocate for universities around the world.
Rob Hollister has served Tufts well in his teaching and research, and in several program leadership roles. As he retires, we especially want to salute Rob’s lasting contributions to making Tufts an innovative leader in public service education and research. He is a genuine citizen of Tufts. We wish him well in his next chapter; we wish for him many moments of inactive citizenship.