

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

news & views

VOLUME V, ISSUE 3, WINTER 2006

TUFTS PROGRAM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Rebirth of Tufts Model United Nations

By Daniel Crenshaw, IR 2006

Ever hear of Tufts Model United Nations? No? Maybe that's because it hasn't been called by that name in, well, forever. Tufts Model United Nations, previously known as the Tufts Council of International Affairs, is making a comeback on campus in a big way.

With over 50 members so far, there's no shortage of interest in Model UN, which shouldn't be surprising considering the high affinity for International Relations that Tufts students are known for. Model UN has proven to be the perfect opportunity for students to expand on



Voting procedures in the Special Committee on Counter Terrorism
Photo courtesy of Daniel Crenshaw

their interests in international affairs, debate, and the UN in general. But what is Model UN exactly? Model UN is essentially a simulation of the real United Nations. Participants play the role of a country's delegation, and are expected to represent that country's policies and opinions within the UN body. This body could be any one of the UN's Commissions – such as the Disarmament Committee or the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee – or even the Security Council. Many Model UN conferences even have special "crisis committees", in which delegates debate what actions should be taken in the event of a made up international crisis. Many universities throughout the nation annually hold Model UN conferences, drawing in literally thousands of wannabe diplomats at a time.

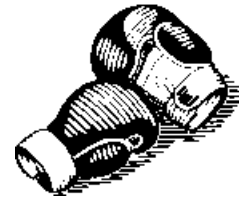
This year, Tufts MUN sent 14 delegates to the prestigious McGill Model United Nations

Conference (or McMUN for short) in Montreal. There Tufts represented the countries of Spain, Syria, and Honduras, and battled it out with the best of them in 3 days of debate and resolution writing.

Preparation before the conference was key, and each delegate had to write a short position paper outlining his/her country's policies regarding their assigned committee. Detailed knowledge of these policies would prove to be vital during the committee sessions, when each student was expected to represent their country during debates.

In the counter-terrorism committee, freshmen Neil Dibiase took harsh criticisms and demanded his rights of sovereignty as the representative of Syria. He even won a commendation for his performance. In the committee on the UN Environmental Program on Urban Development, freshmen Nancy Henry said that "the committee was challenging and stretched me to think and act outside my comfort zone." Nick Malouta, representing Honduras in the Special Session on Globalization and Interdependence, said "it was a great experience and I learned a lot". Freshmen Malek al-Chalabi commented that "the conference was interesting for the same reason many other MUN conferences are: because they force you to take on the opinions and policies of a different country, which may or not be synonymous with your own. It creates a conflict which really helps

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Mufti/Taliaferro Debate

By Neil Sood, IR 2007

Recently on a Wednesday night in February, over three hundred Tufts undergraduates crammed themselves into Cabot auditorium to hear Professor Jeffrey Taliaferro, Associate Professor of Political Science, and Professor Malik Mufti, Associate Professor of Political Science and the International Relations Program Director, debate the merit of democratization in Iraq.

The IR debate series was conceived by the Director's Leadership Council (DLC) - a ten member body composed of IR undergraduate students who serve as a liaison between the IR director, faculty, and administration and the IR student body - to help students observe refined rhetoric skills, to have some students hone their own, and to spark intellectual discussion

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IR Student Attends 48th Academy Assembly in Colorado

By Chloe Snider, IR 2006

Senior IR major Chloe Snider was selected to attend this year's U.S. Air Force Academic Assembly conference, sponsored by the IR Program.

From February 6th -11th, I participated in the 48th Annual Academy Assembly. The subject of the conference, hosted by the US Air Force Academy, was "US-Canada Relations: Bridging the Common Border." At the literally breathtaking altitude of Colorado Springs, which stands at over 7,000 feet above sea-level, delegates from universities across North America congregated to discuss the relationship between these neighboring countries and the issues the relationship might face in the future.

The opening address of the Assembly was delivered by the Right Honourable Joe Clark, a former Canadian Prime Minister and Member of Parliament. In his address, he outlined the various strengths and weaknesses of the relationship, also recounting his own experience. He emphasized that the relationship is strongest when both sides work hard.

The Assembly itself was comprised of four roundtable discussions. At the first roundtable, we discussed the shared values of the United States and Canada. As liberal democracies, Canada and the United States share a similar commitment to democracy and the rule of law. However, we noted many differences in values. While the population of the United States is certainly divided politically, there was agreement that Canada tends to be more socially liberal. We expect that immigration trends, East Asians to Canada and Mexicans to the U.S., might have an impact on each nation's values.

The subject of the second roundtable was defense. Canada and the United States have

a very tight military relationship. The best example of this is NORAD, the North American Aerospace Defense Command, a bilateral military operation. We also discussed Canada's participation in Afghanistan and refusal to join the American coalition in Iraq. Hope was expressed that despite disagreements in the foreign policies of the two countries, support for each other would remain.

Our discussions on the second day began with a roundtable on border issues, including security, trade, and the concerns of citizens who cross the border regularly. Delegates were concerned with the impact of the new legislation that will require those crossing the border to carry passports or other secure documents. Also, the tariffs being placed on softwood lumber entering the U.S. from Canada was a touchy subject among Canadians. The final roundtable concerned the relationship between the two governments and what efforts could be made in both countries to ameliorate the relationship. It was pointed out that a lack of knowledge about Canada on the part of the Americans frustrates Canadians, who pay so much attention to their Southern neighbor. However, it was argued that this did not merit the current surge of anti-Americanism in Canada.

Admiral Keating of the U.S. Navy, and the commander of NORAD, delivered the keynote address at the final dinner. He discussed the threat of terrorism and ballistic missile defense, an issue on which Canada and the United States cannot find agreement.

The conference provided the opportunity for delegates to participate in academic debate. As an International Relations major, it was interesting in discussing the way Canada and the United States may respond to one another and what strategies they might use to maintain their friendly relationship. I left the Assembly confident that relations between the two countries are strong. The bilateral command of NORAD is evidence of this. Despite the tight relationship, issues such as border security, free trade, and ballistic missiles continue to pose challenges to the friendliness of the relationship.

As well as providing the opportunity for debate, the conference provided the opportunity for delegates to share personal experiences. Canadians and Americans shared with each other their perceptions of the relationship between the countries and their perceptions of each other. The diverse backgrounds of the students, American liberals and conservatives, as well as Canadian liberals and conservatives, provided for dynamic discussions. Finally, interacting with the thirty delegates from the U.S. Air Force Academy, as well as the US Naval Academy delegate in my roundtable, provided a window into a world about which I knew nothing. I was impressed with the dedication of those in the armed forces and realized their important role in debates about foreign policy and international affairs. Their perspectives tended to be well informed because their future careers will be highly affected by American foreign policy.

Scholarship Winners

Anne E. Borghesani Memorial Prize



Vera Belitsky

“Culture, Society and Health”

Summer internship working with TB in Russia

Location: Moscow, Russia



Anna Gollub

“Islamic Feminism in Western Europe”

Location: Barcelona, Spain



Unaza Khan

“Understanding Development in the South: Case Study
Kyrgyzstan”

Location: Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan



Sarah Newton

“Civil Society in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan”

Location: Almaty, Kazakhstan



Edita Zlatic

“Rural Development Projects in Morocco”

Location: Rabat and vicinity, Morocco

Congratulations to all the winners!

IR Program News

Debate

Continued from page 1

amongst members of the IR community at Tufts. During the fall 2005 semester, the DLC realized that the majority of IR students did not have sufficient opportunities to improve their public speaking skills. Consequently, the DLC thought the Debate Series would be a great way to encourage students to practice, while also facilitating more discussion within the IR community.

The debate started off amicable with both professors in a very good mood, frequently teasing each other, in fact, and ended in a serious intellectual standoff with both sides accepting a difference in opinion and an unofficial audience vote siding with Prof. Taliaferro. Professor Mufti began his opening statement with "I'm glad that I was allowed to go first, this way [Professor Taliaferro] won't have to embarrass himself!" Professor Taliaferro retorted by referring to Professor Mufti as his "much older and deluded colleague." While comical, their remarks were very informative. Professor Mufti argued that democratization in Iraq was inexplicably tied to the nuclear question in Iran. He believes that the U.S. should be able to check the power of individuals who act against the grain and threaten stability in a region. Saddam Hussein was one such individual, and the Supreme Council in Iran along with the new Iranian president are other such entities that need to be checked as well. Professor Taliaferro countered this connection and instead argued that the costs were much higher than the perceived benefits, and that the end result will probably be unfavorable for the U.S. However, this event was not meant to solely revolve around the professors strong speeches, but to include students too.

At the midpoint of debate, Oleg Svet, a DLC member and the moderator of the event, invited six students to speak, three in support

of Professor Mufti and three in support of Professor Taliaferro. Each student was allotted three minutes and some knew ahead of time that they would be speaking, but most came unprepared and improvised their speech. Speakers ranged from confident, well-spoken seniors preparing for the outside world to sophomores who were visibly intimidated by the three hundred plus crowd. Nonetheless, each student who spoke did a tremendous job and raised several points that even the professors neglected to mention. One student speaking on the side of Professor Mufti argued that the U.S.'s spread of democracy to Iraq would be a successful policy given the democratic peace theory, which holds that democracies - specifically, liberal democracies - never or almost never go to war with one another. The philosophical roots of this theory are grounded in the works of Immanuel Kant. Another student debating on the side of Professor Taliaferro insisted that the preemptive strike and subsequent invasion of Iraq set a bad international precedence. This

student went so far as to say that China could possible invade Taiwan and use the U.S./Iraq War example as precedence.

Svet, who was charged with coordinating, in addition to moderating, the event, described the process as complex because reaching a consensus between all parties involved was time consuming. Nonetheless, the debate went very smoothly and deemed a success. Students who participated felt more confident after speaking, those in the audience were thoroughly entertained, and perhaps a little enlightened, and both professors enjoyed themselves too. In fact, the DLC is planning another debate, potentially with Professor Robert Devigne, Associate Professor of Political Science, and other IR core faculty members. The hope is that the IR Debate Series will continue to provide opportunities such as these to enhance students' debate skills, to create a closer Tufts IR community, and to promote better understanding of the complexities of current global affairs.



Professor Mufti, Oleg Svet and Professor Taliaferro at the IR Debate Series event on democratization in Iraq.

Photo courtesy of the Tufts Daily

IR Program News

Tufts MUN

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you grow and understand other perspectives.”

The sessions weren't always full of heated debate and inter-country conflict, however. A large portion of the time was spent forming alliances and agreements with other delegations, and then drafting resolutions pertaining to that particular committee. Many of the Tufts delegates were active participants in sponsoring resolutions within their committees.

All in all the McGill conference proved to be a very positive experience. The organization of the conference was stellar, as McGill has been doing it for years. Each night they had planned activities for students to let loose and enjoy the Montreal nightlife, such as the Pub Crawl and the “McParty”. The conference took place in the upscale downtown Sheraton, and each committee had its own large meeting room.

A little less than a month later, Tufts MUN also participated in the Harvard National MUN Conference, or HNMUN. Here Tufts represented the country of Paraguay, and debated in Committees such as the Commission on Human Rights, the Disarmament and International Security Committee, and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Nancy Henry said about the conference, “It was pretty well organized, there was good competition there, and the committees ran smoothly.” HNMUN is often thought of as a great conference to start out in, since it's close to home and conducive to less-experienced delegates. As in McGill, the Tufts delegates made a strong showing and engaged in heated debate and resolution drafting.

Aside from these larger conferences, Tufts MUN has tried to bring the MUN experience back onto campus as well. This is being accomplished through Tufts “mini-conferences”, in which any student interested in the UN can come, choose a

country, and debate a given topic in the style of UN parliamentary procedure. One such mini-conference has already been successful, and there are certainly more to come, as they are a great opportunity for students – in and out of Model UN - to learn more about the UN and the international community through debate and diplomatic dialogue.

What else does the future hold for Model UN? The answer is A LOT. In the next academic year, Tufts MUN plans on attending both the McGill and Harvard conferences again, as well as the University of Pennsylvania Model UN Conference (UPMUNC) and the Harvard-sponsored WorldMUN. WorldMUN takes place in a different international location each year, and attracts thousands of participants. Students all over the nation, and even the world, come to these conferences demonstrating their strong concern for the importance of the United Nations and the

vital dialogues that it fosters. All understand the powers of diplomacy and the real-world consequences of actions take in the UN arena. In a sense, Model UN gives students the chance to truly feel like they are making a difference; like they themselves could help change the world.

With more and more exposure to such prestigious conferences, Tufts MUN hopes to quickly make a name for itself as one of the top programs in the nations. And why shouldn't it? We already have one of the best IR programs in the country, and MUN and IR walk hand in hand. With the support of the school and the IR Program, and the continued interest from the student body, Tufts MUN will hopefully grow into one of the most well-known and respected organizations on campus.

IR HAPPENINGS



Prospective and current IR majors network with IR Assistant Director, Kirk Lange, at the IR Social Event held in February

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*The IR News & Views
newsletter highlights events
and people in the Tufts IR
community and provides
selected information
about the larger Boston
community. The
publication appears twice
a semester and welcomes
feedback from students and
faculty.*

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