New Faces on Tufts Campus

The First Year Experience

Alvaro Genie and Zoe Muñoz, Class of 2014

By: Clarissa Rivas, ‘12

Senior year of high school is spent entirely on preparing oneself for college: multiple AP courses, standardized testing, and filling out both scholarship and university applications take up much time and effort. In this preparation stage, one tries to imagine the excitement and hesitancy that accompanies admittance and attendance into a university. The stories heard from former classmates now in college all seem so grand and are designed to make college sound as inviting as possible. However, as both Freshman Zoe Muñoz and Alvaro Genie understand, it takes complete immersion into the college culture in order to fully experience it for oneself.

Mexican-American Zoe Muñoz, born and raised in Los Angeles, California moved 3,000 miles across the U.S. in order to attend Tufts University. Prior to her official arrival, Zoe attended Voices in April. This program, designed to give potential Tufts students a little glimpse of college life, enabled her to “view Tufts through a positive lens” – all of which convinced her that Tufts was the school for her. Thus far, Zoe’s

Focus on Faculty: Wanda Montañez

Wanda Montañez

By: Ariel Ortiz, ‘13

Wanda Montañez is the Coordinator of Undergraduate Retention at Tufts. Born in Caguas, Puerto Rico and raised in Massachusetts, Wanda has had many experiences that have helped guide her into her position with the University.

Montañez’s family came from Puerto Rico to the United States when she was three years old. She was raised in Jamaica Plain, Everett, and Roxbury where she lives today. After graduating from high school, Montañez attended Framingham State where she encountered many hardships that led her to a strong interest in undergraduate retention. She says that she “doesn’t know how she did it” and because she struggled she “wanted to help others so they wouldn’t have to feel the same way” she did. She decided to pursue a major in Psychology, with a concentration in culture in order to fully experience it for oneself.
freshman year has been a success. She is not only involved with multiple organizations, she is also doing very well in each of her classes. For Zoe, it is comforting to know that she was prepared well enough in high school and that she “can keep up with her workload and excel in all of her classes.” Throughout it all, the Latino Center and community has provided a strong support system. She is greatly involved with the Latino community and met most of her friends through the Latino Center-sponsored events. Although she is barely beginning her college career, Zoe already has plans for what she wants to do next year. She has decided that she would love to be the president of Mujeres and “feels that there can be more collaboration with other women’s groups on campus.”

Nicaraguenzo Alvaro Genie immediately knew that Tufts was the school for him during his first Tufts visit. Pure emotion is what convinced him to move from his hometown of Arlington, Virginia to the Northeast. Alvaro didn’t expect to fall in love with Tufts as fast as he did, but once it happened, he hasn’t looked back. Alvaro’s first few months here have been a rediscovering of his ethnic identity. Although he attended a high school that was 50% Hispanic and 30% African American, Alvaro still had trouble identifying as a Latino. Most of his classmates and friends refused to believe he was Latino because he didn’t “look” Nicaraguenzo. Upon arriving at Tufts, Alvaro felt the desire to disengage himself from that “persona.” He immediately became involved in the Latino community by attending the orientation events set up for freshmen, as well as the Jamaica Plain trip and Thompson Island Retreat. He was also voted to become the Freshman Representative for the A.L.A.S. and is excited to be a part of the changes that A.L.A.S. is experiencing. Overall, his participation within the Latino community has enabled him to “become really comfortable with his roots and [has] allowed him to see that he is Hispanic” and to receive a “different support than what he is used to receiving (cultural ties).”

Despite Alvaro’s dedication and participation within the Latino community, he still understands the need to maintain a balance. He is not only involved with A.L.A.S., but is also a part of Model U.N., Build: Guatemala, and a staff member for the Leonard Carmichael Society. Although each group is different, they all offer Alvaro a chance to grow and learn about himself and Tufts. He understands that “some people are afraid to get out of their comfort zone [and] are used to being put in a box and are okay with being confined that way.”

Although both are a freshman, Zoe and Alvaro have grown considerably since their arrival at Tufts in September. Each unique and amazing, and have much to offer to the Latino and greater Tufts community. Their passion, fearlessness, and determination show us that we must keep an eye on these two freshmen because they still have three more years to transform the Tufts community.

Focus on Faculty: Wanda Montañez (Cont’d)

counseling and a minor in Sociology. She went on to obtain a Masters in Community Counseling from Boston University and her doctorate from U Mass.

Montañez has a large role to fill within the University. As Coordinator of Undergraduate Retention she is faced with many tasks. These include examining existing programs as well as creating new ones in order to ensure that students from underrepresented groups remain at Tufts the full four years and receive their degree. She works closely with the Group of Six and is looking forward to working more closely with the students themselves. When asked why she chose Tufts, Montañez stated that while working for her doctorate in U Mass she developed an interest in retention. When the opportunity presented itself for a position at Tufts she was quick to jump on board and apply. Wanda expressed her love for Tufts students because they “know where they are going” and are “willing to go the extra mile to ensure their success”. She also enjoys the “warm family feeling she gets from everyone on campus.”

Montañez’s goal is to increase awareness of her position on campus and to let all the underrepresented students know that she is there to help them. She hopes to hear from students who feel they need help in order to make sure that their experience at Tufts is the best that it can be. The Latino Center welcomes Wanda Montañez to Tufts University.

You can contact Wanda at (617)627-5908 or reach her by e-mail at wanda.montanez@tufts.edu
Going abroad to Chile has definitely been one of the best decisions I have made while at Tufts. It has given me the opportunity not only to better my Spanish, but learn more about Latin America. I have been able to visit other countries as well and have been able to see, not only the differences there are within Latin American countries, but also how much we have in common and value.

- Gabriella Gucho Oliva, Class of 2012
Latino Heritage Month

Opening Reception

Latinos Take Over Hotung

Bliss Tyler

Tim Wise

In Pursuit of A DREAM

Film Series
LEARN HOW TO CONTROL STRESS; DON’T LET STRESS CONTROL YOU

By: Clarissa Rivas, ‘12

We all have or will experience stress at one point or another in our college career. Unfortunately, it is inevitable. However, simply because we cannot control whether or not we feel stressed does not mean we cannot overcome it. Approach and perspective are important in learning how to both acknowledge and manage this overwhelming emotion that makes us feel like running towards the door and calling it quits. It is crucial that we learn how to handle those skyrocketing stress levels in order to retain our mental and physical well-being.

Here are a few tips to take full advantage of. Throughout it all, remember that you are not alone; there are plenty of resources on campus that you can turn to.

- Write in a journal
- Don't sweat the small stuff.
- Talk to a supportive friend or family member. It is important that you develop a support system. Choose some one you feel safe with, who you know you can share your hopes and fears with, without being judged. Just verbalizing feelings can be a great source of relief.
- Learn to accept and adapt to change. Learn to have faith and practice being optimistic even in uncertain situations.
- Learn to accept the things you can not change. Keeping busy and understanding that life is cyclical and ups and downs are all a part of the process will help.
- Develop a personalized anti-stress regimen. This regimen should emphasize a healthy diet, exercise, and relaxation. It should be convenient, time effective, inexpensive and most important of all, enjoyable.
  - Practice relaxation techniques
  - Listen to soothing music
  - Exercise, preferably outdoors, if weather permits
  - Meditate or meditation-in-motion such as Tai chi, yoga, Qi (chi) Gong
  - Take a "mindful" walk
  - Get off campus for a break
- Don't take it personally. By not taking other's negative behavior personally, you can break the stress cycle.
- Believe in yourself. Know that you have all the resources within you to make the changes you need to make and to meet all the challenges that life presents you with. This doesn't mean you have to do it alone. True strength is in knowing when to ask for help. Self confidence is trusting in yourself to meet life's challenges with a smile.
- Studies have shown that caring and providing for the needs of others promotes greater longevity and strengthened telomeres, which is good for fighting the risks of heart disease, cancer, and other ailments. By doing nice things for others we also feel good about ourselves.
- Seek out your advisor or Residence Life staff for assistance.
- Plan study breaks for 10 minutes each hour—include yoga, stretching, or a quick walk outside
- Explore stress reducing programs being offered on campus, including programs offered by the Physical Education Department, and by the Office of Residential Life and Learning

Resources at Tufts
- Need help with writing or tutoring for a class? How are your Time Management and Studying Skills? Tufts Academic Resource Center is here to help! http://uss.tufts.edu/arc/
- Tufts Counseling and Mental Health Services: http://ase.tufts.edu/counseling/
- Immune System in Need of a Boost? Go to Tufts Health Services! http://ase.tufts.edu/healthservice/
Life after Tufts: Valerie Avila

By: Apryl Rosas ’11

The Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) field is currently one of the highest fields in demand. However, the “overall landscape of Latinos in general in the STEM fields is low,” states Pilar Montoya, chief executive officer for the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHPE). “Although Latinos represent 12 percent of the total population, less than 3 percent of the engineers and scientists are Latino.” Despite this, Valeria Avila, a Tufts alumna, is defying the statistics and making her mark on the world as a Latina rocket scientist.

As a Chicana raised in San Antonio, Texas, Valerie grew up with the belief that education was the only opportunity for her to better her life. As a result, Valerie pushed herself throughout high school, participating both in school organizations and in community service projects and eventually graduated as Salutatorian.

There was very little community support pushing Valerie to go to college. She recalls thinking, “Wow, am I really going to go to college?” Despite the fact that she had received various scholarships and grants to help fund her scholastic endeavors, the idea of college still seemed far-fetched to Valerie. Still, she pursued college despite how challenging it was, initially, both academically and emotionally.

Valerie, who is gifted in both math and science, decided that she would pursue a degree in engineering based on a guest speaker she heard in high school. She notes that it was hard to figure out what to do in life, but “that is a question that remains throughout life.” While at Tufts, Valerie involved herself in numerous organizations and continued her community service projects and eventually graduated as Salutatorian.

At Tufts, Valerie found that there were no real organizations or study groups to which she could turn to for help. Valerie looked to other campuses for a community. She had hoped to join MIT’s SHPE chapter, but there was none. Nevertheless, she didn’t let that stop her. Where she saw a need, she helped to fill it. Along with another female friend, Valerie helped to start a chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) at Tufts. Valerie was also the treasurer of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) and a sister of Alpha Rho Lambda Sorority.

According to Valerie, at times, minorities forget how great college is. A lot of her classmates tended to focus on negative aspects of campus life, such as the lack of diversity or resources tailored specifically for minorities, and let that hold them back. Instead, “what you get out of college is kind of paralleled with what you make of it.”

Valerie stresses that “your outlook really makes a difference in your life. Don’t quit trying!” There are many resources and organizations for Latinos to help you succeed. Valerie chose to seek out whatever help was made available to her. “College can be cutthroat,” she says, “you really can’t do it alone. Join study groups if you need help or create a study group if you need to.”

Valerie sees education as something that is lifelong. Much of her ideas of perseverance, she credits as stemming from her experience in the Air Force, which she joined after college. It was in the Air Force that Valerie gained traits and experience that she would not have received elsewhere. “The Air Force shaped me into a leader with experience...and paid for my Masters in Systems Engineering.” She is currently working as a rocket scientist for Charles Stark Draper Laboratory, a non-profit engineering research and development laboratory.

Valerie continues to commit time outside of work to community service. It is her belief that in order “to be a good leader, you have to be a good follower and bring somebody up with you. In order to be successful, you have to seek out help not only for yourself. You have to help other people and build a support group.”

Currently, Valerie is living in Boston and is working on re-establishing the Latino Alumni Association at Tufts. She has graciously offered to be a mentor and is passing along her e-mail (vavila@draper.com) to share if anyone is interested in contacting her. Make sure to stay tuned for more information!
On October 19 an overflow crowd of students, alumni, faculty, administration, and high school students crowded the multi-purpose room of Sophia Gordon Hall to witness the premiere of the long-awaited documentary, *Latinos on Campus*, in production for more than a year. In September of 2009, Roberto Arévalo, director and filmmaker, began following the lives of several Latino students at Tufts. The final product is a probing, intimate look at the journey of Latino students into mainstream American higher education. Implicit in their stories are both the scope and the limits of our society’s challenging process of achieving full integration and equal opportunity to quality education.

The first step in making the film was to break down the barriers of fear and hesitation that many students felt about being in front of a camera and telling their stories. Sophomore Andrea Diaz, who was a freshman at the time the film was being made, stated: “I’m going to be 100% honest. I was scared to death when the documentary was being screened. I hadn’t seen the finished product and I continuously wondered how well the message was really being brought out. I was afraid that it would be too negative, or maybe even too superficial.” Junior Kelvin Perez Macario also had similar thoughts. “Initially I was a little scared to see how Latinos would be portrayed onscreen.” Andrea and Kelvin’s reactions and fears are all too real – they understood how one individual can become representative of an entire population. Although it was not easy for Roberto to chase down elusive and uncertain students, he eventually succeeded and was able to create an honest and moving documentary.

After viewing the screening, Andrea and Kelvin’s fears dissipated. They felt that Roberto did an excellent job of telling their stories and came to believe that the final product was worth their invasion of privacy and the relinquishing of their private thoughts. Rubén Salinas-Stern, Director of the Latino Center, felt that the documentary “empowered the students and made the community more visible to the rest of the campus,” while Andrea Diaz believed that “the documentary did an excellent job of capturing the hardships and the transitions that Latinos, especially those who are from less fortunate backgrounds, have experienced and are experiencing here at Tufts.” While this documentary gave some Latino students a chance to reveal a side of themselves that isn’t always easy to do at Tufts, some felt that the film should have gone further. Junior Amira Mattison would have liked to have seen more on students who don't "feel Latino enough", either because they don't speak Spanish or because they look White. She believes that talking to more of those students would have made the film more representative of Latinos at Tufts. This film is a reminder that Latinos vary in both physical attributes and cultural characteristics and that it’s always best not to make assumptions about a person’s culture or ethnic background.
Overall, *Latinos on Campus* did an excellent job of showing college life from a Latino’s perspective, which had never been done before at Tufts. At the end of the screening applause filled the room. At this point, the audience participated in a discussion with both the participants and the viewers. Many students commented on their experiences and conceptions of the film. Roberto felt that “the honest discussion further exposed the harsh realities facing many of the Latino students and it highlighted their endurance and desire to grow. The tears, laughter and personal thoughts shared by the audience at the premiere meant a lot more than any award I could receive.” Rubén stated that he had “never seen Latino students at Tufts speak up in such a powerful way in a public forum.” Despite the great turnout and discussion, there were some important people missing from the audience. Roberto was “surprised by the lack of presence of administrators and faculty at the premiere of *Latinos on Campus*, especially because it took place during Latino Heritage Month.” This is not acceptable for a school that prides itself on diversity. Students, faculty, staff, and administration must work in conjunction to live up to Tufts’ mission.

The film screening and discussion tell us that the experiences of students of color at Tufts are important for everyone to hear and understand. Discussions on race and class need to continue on this campus beyond this screening and the hope is that the film will be used as a teaching tool that can be shown to other students, faculty, and administrators. Plans are being made to show the documentary to the staff at Admissions, the Counseling Center, and to upper level administration. Eventually the film will be shown at conferences, universities, and film festivals. Junior Amira Mattison would also like to see the other centers from the Group of Six complete similar projects.

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**NQR Safety Tips**

If you choose to participate, here are some tips to make sure your night is safe and fun!

- Use the buddy system: Run with a friend who you trust to look out for you.
- Do not binge drink! If you choose to drink, drink in moderation: Drinking will not make your night fun if you can barely walk, let alone run.
- Naked does not mean consent! If you chose to be sexually active, remember condoms and consent.
- There are other ways to celebrate the end of the semester: NQR is not the only way to blow off some steam.
- Hats, gloves, and scarves! Nothing can ruin finals more than a case of pneumonia so wear as much as possible.
- Wear shoes appropriate for running: Nothing is more embarrassing than arriving at the hospital in nothing but boots and a hat and having to explain to the doctors why you’re naked and your ankle is broken.
- Respect the runners: NQR is not a spectator sport and you do not look cool for standing around and watching people run and taunting them...you just look creepy.
- If you or one of your friends is severely hurt, do not be afraid to call TEMS: As upset as they may be at the time, eventually they will thank you for looking out for their safety.
Poetry Café

Poema

When my daddy was a little boy, growing up in Bakersfield, California his mother never let him hear Spanish, He was raised speaking English, Like me……………………
He was pocho too

Because back in the day “good” Mexican parents taught their children to speak English
And “good” Mexican parents didn’t let their children hear the rhythms and rhymes of that other lan-
guage, that language soft as silk…………

Because speaking Spanish in school meant getting hit
Because those dirty greaser mex beaner kids with Spanish accents were put in special ed.
And signs in storefront windows read: “No Dogs or Mexicans Allowed”
This is a history marked by barriers; violent social constructions built strong and solid
Built to cut me off from oral tradition
Lacerated and split from my unwritten history, from my grandmother’s stories,
from knowledge and self-assurance
Seems like my identity is tearing at these invisible seams
Ripping, tearing, cleaving………………falling to hold together all the pieces of me
My spirit and biology struggling to meet at a point of symmetry
How could I ever write my own autobiography, when I’ve been systematically cut off from my own his-
tory……………………Who is me?

Let me break it down for you: A Pocha is a white washed bitch……………………Is me?
The pocha-fied third generation
I been ma-ma-marinating in this melting pot for just a little bit too long…………Learning to speak Spanish
in school
Learning the language of my people from predominantly white Institutions where my peers are disap-
pointed by my lack of authenticity
Sometimes the pocha in me, the red white and blue washed but still proud Chicana bitch in me says fuck it

I am the living proof of ritualized bastardization inflicted upon my people for generations
I can’t make-up for the damage done to the expression of my genetic make-up
No amount of structuralized education or cultural re- integration can give back to me what has been
lost.

No. What has been taken.
Because to memorize is not to internalize, is not to feel, is not to understand
Understand?

- Zoe Muñoz, Class of 2014
Upcoming Events!

Diversity Network Night
March 14th
6-8:30PM
Alumnae Lounge
Meet alumni and employers. Learn networking skills.

ALAS Culture Show
The Association of Latin American Students is proud to present its Annual Culture Show. The extravaganza will feature dancers, singers, live music, and good food. The event will take place in March. Contact lisnerva.nuez@tufts.edu to get involved!

Mujeres
Join Mujeres for discussions on Latina issues, interracial dating, film screenings, game nights, and more!

Mujeres meets Thursday nights at 10PM at the Latino Center

ALAS
The Association of Latin American Students (ALAS) is a student-run organization that seeks to bring together students that are part of, or interested in, the Latino community at Tufts. ALAS’s primary goal is to meet the needs of the Latino student population at Tufts as well as providing an arena for intellectual discourse on issues facing the Latino community at large.

ALAS meets Wednesdays at 10 pm at the Latino Center.

Get Involved!

Live in La Casa next year!
La Casa Latina (Latino Culture House) provides a support system to the Latino community at Tufts. It welcomes students who are interested in the Latino Culture and Latino issues. Residents sponsor activities and events to promote a greater understanding and appreciation of Latino culture in conjunction with the Latino Center. The Latino Culture Unit is currently located in Milne House, 8-10 Whitfield Road.

Applications available: January 24th.
Interviews: January 31st-February 14th
Roster announced: February 14th

Apply to Become a Latino Peer Leader!
The Latino Peer Leader Program was created to support first year students. Latino Peer Advisors organize fun and helpful activities and programs designed to help first year Latino students make their transition to college life a success.

Applications available: February 21,
Interviews: February 28th-March 14th
LPL Selection: March 16th

For more information on the program visit:
ase.tufts.edu/latinocenter
**Did You Know...?**

- Puerto Rican men are more than twice as likely as their Mexican peers to be out of school and out of the labor force.
- Latinos make up nearly one-third of New York City’s population between ages 16 and 24.
- Susana Martinez (R-New Mexico) will be the nation’s first Latina governor.
- Jaime Herrera (R-Washington) will be the first Latino to represent Washington in Congress.
- Latino Heritage Month begins on September 15th, the anniversary of independence for five Latin American countries—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico declared its independence on September 16th, and Chile on September 18th.
- The first New York Puerto Rican Day Parade was held in “El Barrio” in Manhattan on April 13, 1958.
- There are 21 Spanish speaking countries in the world.
- 60% of Latinos voted Democratic in the last election compared with 80% of Blacks and 37% of Whites.
- There were 11.1 million undocumented people in the US in 2009 as compared with 12 million in 2008.
- 49% of Hondurans and 48% of Guatemalans have no health insurance in the US.