

## **Leaders in the Civic Engagement Movement: Dr. Anthony P. Monaco**

by Lorlene Hoyt

December signals the sixth installment of our *Leaders in the Civic Engagement Movement* series. This issue features Dr. Anthony P. Monaco, Tufts University President, Professor of Biology, Professor of Neuroscience and Ex-officio member of the Talloires Network's Steering Committee.

President Anthony P. Monaco is a first-generation college graduate who received his undergraduate degree from Princeton University, and his M.D. and Ph.D. through Harvard Medical School's Medical Scientist Training Program. He is a distinguished neuroscientist, whose research is focused on the genetic roots of human disorders, including autism and dyslexia. His doctoral research led to a landmark scientific discovery: the gene responsible for X-linked Duchenne and Becker muscular dystrophies.

Before succeeding President Lawrence Bacow and becoming Tufts University's 13<sup>th</sup> President, Monaco spent twenty years at Oxford University. From 2007 to 2011, he served as the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Planning and Resources. At Oxford, Dr. Monaco spearheaded initiatives aimed at funding interdisciplinary research and improving student recruitment with regard to diversity and inclusion. He brings these interests and strengths to Tufts where he is currently leading a strategic planning effort. President Monaco points out that it was thanks to a generous financial aid package that he was able to be the first in his family to attend a private university, and raising funds for scholarships is a priority for him.

Tufts' longstanding tradition of civic engagement was one of the things that most attracted President Monaco to the university. In his Inaugural Address, he noted that this tradition "is passed from one generation to the next. Our students take it with them on graduation day, along with their diploma." Increasing Tufts' impact on society is a key goal of the university-wide strategic planning process he launched this autumn.

President Monaco sees interdisciplinary research as an important component of Tufts' institutional civic engagement. He believes that "traditional academic disciplines can only

generate partial answers to many of the most pressing questions in today's world." In the next five to ten years, President Monaco expects Tufts' current interdisciplinary programs "will develop and new programs will be addressing interdisciplinary themes." In particular, he sees great potential at the intersection of environmental, life and health sciences.

One of the best parts of his current position, according to President Monaco, is talking to students and alumni about their public service. He finds students who "integrate their passions inside and outside the classroom" essential to changing the world for the better. For example, he was inspired by "a dental student who set up a clinic for Boston's homeless residents" during her time at Tufts, "before she served as a dentist in the military." The varied and numerous projects headed by the university's Tisch Scholars for Citizenship and Public Service align with President Monaco's belief in "learning through service and serving through scholarship."

President Monaco has welcomed the opportunity to engage with the Talloires Network and its supporters, since he believes university civic engagement is "one of the most important ways that higher education can address pressing social challenges."

*Further comments from President Monaco on active citizenship at Tufts appear in a recent issue of the Tisch College newsletter: <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/president-monaco-reflects-on-active-citizenship-at-tufts/>*