



April 24, 2020

Anthony Monaco  
Office of the President  
Tufts University  
Ballou Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Medford, MA 02155

Dear President Monaco,

We write as chair of the advisory board, executive director, and deputy executive director, respectively, of the [\*Academic Engagement Network\*](#) (*AEN*), an independent and non-partisan national organization comprised of nearly 750 faculty members on more than 245 campuses across the United States. AEN seeks to counter the delegitimization of Israel on campus, helps to defend campus free speech and academic freedom, promotes robust discussion of Israel in the academy, and responds to antisemitism on campus when it occurs. A number of Tufts University faculty are members of our organization.

We write to express our dismay that Tufts-Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) has recently received a “Collaboration Award” from the Office for Campus Life, which distributes a set of ten awards annually that are designed to celebrate the hard work and accomplishments of the winning registered student organizations (RSOs) during the school year. We understand that the recipients are selected by an Awards Committee made up of student leaders and “administrators from various areas of the campus community” who review the nominations and select the winners. As noted on the [website](#) of the Office for Campus Life, the “Collaboration Award” is given “in recognition of a co-sponsored program that demonstrates synergy and success as a result of working together”. It further celebrates an RSO that has “made collaboration a top priority” and that has demonstrated an ability to “break down barriers between diverse student populations and foster greater communication between different organizations on campus”. Thus, the recipients of this particular award are deemed by the university to have “enhanced the Tufts experience” and to have made a “larger contribution to the community with their collaboration”.

Based on these eligibility requirements, we believe that Tufts-SJP’s troubling track record of behavior toward your school’s Jewish and pro-Israel communities disqualifies it for this award. Tufts-SJP has worked to polarize and divide the university community and has repeatedly undermined the inclusive, intellectually-vibrant community that you aspire to be. It is therefore not a worthy recipient of this prestigious honor.

Tufts-SJP is a chapter of the national organization *Students for Justice in Palestine* (SJP), among the leading campaigners of BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) in the United States. We stand opposed to the BDS movement because it is unfairly obsessive in its orientation to Israel, rejects the very idea of academic freedom and an open exchange of ideas, hinders intercultural understanding, and singles out one nation above others for condemnation and ostracism. On campus, SJP activists prevent thoughtful dialogue on complex social and political issues related to the Middle East conflict, over which reasonable people can disagree. SJP campaigns enjoin students to engage in hateful and hurtful rhetoric that often involves the targeting of Jewish and Zionist students. On many campuses, SJP has thus created a toxic

environment where many Jewish students report feeling unwelcome and unsafe. For more information on SJP, please see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

The SJP chapter at Tufts has a history of divisive behavior targeting Jewish and pro-Israel students and seeking to ostracize and exclude them from full participation in campus life—even on issues that have nothing to do with Israel or the Middle East conflict. For example, as a result of their non-inclusive coalition building, Jewish students who work with various RSOs have been prevented from participating in campaigns like Tufts Climate Action. Tufts-SJP has also been engaged in a multi-year effort to rope other RSOs into a divisive, virulently anti-Israel, and [widely condemned campaign](#) known as ‘Deadly Exchange’—which is the very co-sponsored program that the “Collaboration Award” shockingly celebrated. Last February, in the wake of an antisemitic incident at Hillel which garnered national and international media attention, we wrote to you out of concern that this ‘Deadly Exchange’ campaign’s anti-Israel animus and anti-policing message was contributing to social and racial divisions on the campus and already alienating and marginalizing Jewish students. In such a climate, as we wrote, it was not surprising to us that antisemitic flyers linking Israel to alleged US police brutality appeared on your campus.

Tufts-SJP has the right to promote a pro-Palestinian cause. But it should be encouraged to do so by advancing the core values of the academy—dialogue, open inquiry, and civil discourse on contentious issues. Giving it the Office for Campus Life’s “Collaboration Award” sends the wrong message, namely that the university condones and even applauds its activism, including its promotion of the [deeply offensive ‘Deadly Exchange’ campaign](#). Such a stance can only undermine your efforts to address hate and intolerance, to repair divisions among students that are already manifest, and to signal to Jewish and pro-Israel students that they are valued members of the Tufts community.

We therefore urge you to direct the Office for Campus Life’s Awards Committee, which evaluated nominees for the 2020 “Collaboration Award”, to reconsider its decision to recognize Tufts-SJP for this honor and to rescind the award. We also recommend that you engage with your faculty and your senior officials in equity, diversity, and inclusion to devise appropriate educational opportunities and antisemitism awareness training for both students and staff. If we can assist in your efforts, please call on us.

Sincerely yours,



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