

A Light on the Hill

Hi everyone!

Most of my public speaking experience comes from giving tours on campus. Tour groups are great because they all think that if they laugh at my jokes then I'll get them into college. Since you're all already at college and that doesn't apply, I'm a little more nervous.

Luckily though most of you are too busy flirting with the person sitting next to you to pay attention to what I say anyways.

I was asked to speak to you tonight about light. As most of you probably know, Charles Tufts, the founder of our university, wanted this school to be known as a light on the hill. It's a nice idea but it's very vague. What does it really mean to be a light on the hill? We're all on the hill right now so I guess that part is taken care of, but how do we make sure that there is light? And what does it even mean to "be a light" at all?

All of you are holding candles and soon you'll light them, thereby truly bringing to life this concept – even if it does feel a bit cult-like. Just go with it. But I think that this ritual illustrates something really important. Each of us has our own light, and although it might be small, it's ours and it's not something that anyone can take away. (On that note, your RAs might try to confiscate your candles later - don't let them!)

But, lets remember that light isn't just nice and pretty. Light is fire and fire can be dangerous. Light illuminates, and makes us see things that we don't always want to see. Light is not just the opposite of darkness but its partner – without one we couldn't have the other.

So, each of our lights has power and I think it's what we choose to do with this power that not only shapes who we are, but also what makes this university what it is. And if we each have power on our own, think about the collective power that's created when we all stand together.

Someone vaguely famous once said "with great power comes great responsibility" and although it's cliché I think it's important. You're about to join an amazing but often flawed community and each of you has a responsibility to do what you can to improve it. No pressure.

At the end of the day, your light belongs to you but it isn't just for you. Spreading that light makes it stronger and if you can use it to connect with a community or fight for justice or even just be there to support a friend then you will be helping to truly make Tufts a light on the hill for everyone.

As a senior, I've been reflecting a lot on what kind of light I've spread during my time at Tufts and what I can do with the time that I have left. One of the ways that I feel my light

most strongly is when I am helping to create spaces and communities where other people can feel at home. I encourage you all to think about where and how you can best use your light and then to actually go do it! This school is nothing without the people who go here and we need all of you to invest in making it a better place, no matter how you choose to go about doing that.

Now I recognize that this is kind of a heavy idea and I don't mean to stress you out. Rather, what I'm trying to say is that all of us here are so excited to have you and can't wait to be inspired by your light, your fire and your passion. So, good luck as you embark on your journey at Tufts and know that we'll all be here to help you, support you, work with you and cheer you on!

And before I stop talking, I want you all to look at the people around you. Maybe you're sitting next to your hall-mates, or the people you met in pre-o, or someone that your parents awkwardly introduced you to this afternoon. No matter who it is, remember them. Because more than anyone else, these are the people that are going to be by your side throughout it all. And if you're anything like me and my friends, before you know it you'll be looking at the pictures you took holding your candles and wondering where the time went.