

## Illumination Ceremony: Matriculation 2017

Hello! My name is Shreya and I am a member of the Class of 2017, and am now a double jumbo. I am extremely honored to stand before you today as a recent alumna addressing the newest members of Tufts.

You all come from different hometowns, different backgrounds, lived experiences, and traditions, but tonight, you ignite a communal fire. You are putting a light on the hill, but you are also becoming a light on the hill. You are weaving yourself into the fabric and heritage of Tufts. And you are forming a community that will stay with you forever.

The communities I was a part of framed my experiences at Tufts. I felt at home with my freshmen year hall mates. I was energized and challenged through my involvement with the Women's Center and Asian American Center, I learned how to perform on campus with my dance team and not freak out each time. I also studied abroad, worked at the Chaplaincy on the CAFE Pre- O (woot woot!), completed a senior capstone for my colonialism studies minor, and I graduated. Now I didn't know all of this would happen coming into Tufts. Actually, four years ago when I was sitting here, I didn't know anyone around me, I didn't know how good the Dewick dining hall was, I didn't know what my major would be, and I didn't even know how to get back to Hodgdon Hall that night. Thankfully, a lot has changed since when I first lit the candle to when I was here again just a few months ago on the eve of graduation, lighting the same fire. Reflecting back on it, I can think of two of the most important lessons that I practiced between these illumination ceremonies.

The first: I would constantly ask myself what I wanted to get out of my time here, and how I can continue to grow, learn, and leave a footprint on this campus. Through this, I learned to be honest with myself. To ask how I wanted my Tufts experience to be; what classes I really wanted to take, what activities I wanted to be a part of, versus what I thought was expected of me. I learned how to light a flame in myself. To come alive.

And the second lesson: I learned to lean on my classmates and to share my light with them. I learned how important it is to care for those initial strangers around me. To ask how they're doing, cause a lot of them were as nervous and confused as I was. I learned to be kind, and to accept kindness without fear. To spread my light, I had to listen with humility, be open-minded, and sincerely care.

Now while you're navigating the beginning of your first year, and figuring out what classes you want to take, what communities you want to be a part of and how you will leave a positive impact on campus, I'll leave you with a quote that has helped me when I thought about my place at Tufts and helps me now as I practice these skills to contribute to the larger community after graduation. It's a quote by civil rights leader Howard Thurman.

"Don't ask what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive. And go do that. Because what the world needs, is more people who have come alive."

Congratulations Class of 2021 and welcome to the family.