

## The impact of a Tufts education

Thursday, June 11, 2020

Jumbo engineer and serial entrepreneur Guy Simonian, E76, discusses his experiences at Tufts and the joy of giving back.



For Guy Simonian E76, Tufts University was the perfect place to prepare for a career in business, providing him with skills, values and relationships that have stood the test of time. During his career, Guy has founded several companies including Check Fund Manager and Cotal Systems. He attributes much of his success to his Tufts training, and faculty members in the School of Engineering who helped him build the diverse skills of a well-rounded engineer and entrepreneur.

Two faculty members who made Guy's Tufts experience especially valuable would go on to achieve wide acclaim beyond the University: Allan Cormack, professor of physics and co-recipient of the 1979 Nobel Prize in physics for his work in computer-assisted tomography; and John Sununu, associate professor of mechanical engineering, who served as Governor of New Hampshire from 1983-1989. For Guy, memories of these two remarkable educators are still vivid:

"We all knew that outside of class Dr. Cormack was working on computed tomography 3D reconstruction algorithms, real cutting-edge medical technology, but here he was teaching the 101 fundamentals to us undergrads. Going from the large lecture hall to the smaller laboratories, I was really fortunate to have him assigned as my group's lab instructor. Dr. Cormack had a casual manner unlike any teacher I had known. He was very easygoing and yet he was also fully engaged, so you really paid attention. He successfully tapped into our scientific curiosity and it made us focus intensely on our neutrino research."

Guy remembers Dr. Sununu for encouraging him to bolster his expertise in academic areas beyond his comfort zones of math and science, in order to grow and challenge himself, both academically and personally. Looking back, Guy recognizes that this approach to learning has served him extremely well as a business leader and entrepreneur.

"Dr. Sununu opened up my exposure to other academic departments and their schools of thought. He convinced me that my goal at Tufts should be to develop competence in areas that I struggled with. This approach paid huge dividends later in my professional life. Scientific programming came easily to me, but once I went off on my own, I had to take on multiple personas. I had to be an author who wrote business plans, a psychologist who motivated my employees, an economist who set the company direction and a philosopher who adhered to the code of ethics under which we operated."

Along with the faculty who shaped his Tufts experience, Guy also values his lasting connections to fellow Tufts students, including his sophomore-year housemate Daniel Byrne, with whom he reconnected during a series of business trips to Seattle. As part of the sale of the consumer portion of Cotal Systems, one of the companies he founded, Guy spent time in Seattle vetting potential buyers. Guy explains that Cotal Systems was one of the first companies to move into then-new territory on the internet, and operated one of the largest direct to consumer people locating services. With the advent of social networking looming circa 2007, he decided to sell off the consumer portion of the business. The sale was secured, and as an added bonus, he renewed his friendship with Daniel, one of many friends from his days at Tufts.

In recent years, Guy and his wife Darlene have been happy to give back to Tufts University with a series of generous gifts. Because they share a love of animals, one of those gifts was to Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts. They have also made numerous contributions to the School of Engineering. A number of their gifts to Tufts have been in the form of a charitable gift annuity, for which they are proud members of the Charles Tufts Society. "Annuities give retirees the peace of mind of knowing they have an income stream for life," says Guy, "and the Tufts Gift Annuity program gives you a double dose of satisfaction knowing that you are making a contribution to one of the world's outstanding institutions."