Construction Starts on Tufts Tuberculosis Research Lab

BOSTON (February 2013) – Construction has started on Tufts University's planned tuberculosis research laboratory. The Arnold 8 Biosafety Laboratory is slated to be built within Tufts' existing medical research building at 136 Harrison Avenue.

The laboratory, to be built by Shawmut Design & Construction, will focus on new ways to detect, prevent and treat tuberculosis, a disease found in Boston and around the world.

Tufts will seek approval to operate the biosafety level 3 (BSL-3) laboratory from the Boston Public Health Commission. The commission currently oversees 11 BSL-3 laboratories operating at major Boston hospitals and academic institutions.

At 1,700 square feet, the planned laboratory represents less than 1 percent of the total space of the existing 260,000 square foot Biomedical Research and Public Health Building in which it will be located.

Members of the project's Community Advisory Committee toured the laboratory space in November, before construction began. The group also toured an operational microbiology research laboratory in the same building in order to get an idea of how the new facility would look and function—from research equipment such as centrifuges and biosafety cabinets to card readers that control laboratory access.

"We are committed to sharing as much information about the planned laboratory as possible," said John Leong, M.D., Ph.D., chair of the Department of Molecular Biology and Microbiology at Tufts University School of Medicine. "There is no substitute for seeing things first-hand, so we thought a tour would be helpful to the committee."

The CAC functions as an independent body whose members apply their individual experience and expertise to any questions or issues raised by the laboratory project. Their goal is to objectively assess all aspects of the project, from its benefits to potential risks. The committee is meeting regularly throughout the permitting process and may continue to provide an ongoing voice when the laboratory begins operation.

The CAC currently includes seven members of the community: Janelle Chan, Paul Chan, Richard Chin, Gilbert Ho, Chau Ming Lee, Bill Moy, and Ruth Moy.
"Community members who want to learn more are welcome to get in touch with us," said Community Relations Director Barbara Rubel. "Our phone number is 617-627-3780 and we have a website at www.medicine.tufts.edu/Research/Arnold8BiosafetyLab."

Tufts hopes to obtain approval to begin operating the Arnold 8 Biosafety Laboratory by mid year. For information, call the Tufts Office of Community Relations, 617-627-3780, or go to www.medicine.tufts.edu/Research/Arnold8BiosafetyLab.

Tufts University, located on three Massachusetts campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville, and Grafton, and in Talloires, France, is recognized among the premier research universities in the United States. Tufts enjoys a global reputation for academic excellence and for the preparation of students as leaders in a wide range of professions. A growing number of innovative teaching and research initiatives span all campuses, and collaboration among the faculty and students in the undergraduate, graduate and professional programs across the university is widely encouraged.

Tufts University School of Medicine and the Sackler School of Graduate Biomedical Sciences at Tufts University are international leaders in innovative medical education and advanced research. The School of Medicine and the Sackler School are renowned for excellence in education in general medicine, biomedical sciences, special combined degree programs in business, health management, public health, bioengineering and international relations, as well as basic and clinical research at the cellular and molecular level. Ranked among the top in the nation, the School of Medicine is affiliated with six major teaching hospitals and more than 30 health care facilities. Tufts University School of Medicine and the Sackler School undertake research that is consistently rated among the highest in the nation for its effect on the advancement of medical science.